

SELF-SURRENDER (PRAPATTI) TO GOD IN ŚRĪVAIṢṆAVISM

**Tamil cats and
Sanskrit monkeys**

Srilata Raman



Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

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This book deals with the history of interpretation of a theological concept of self-surrender — *prapatti* — in late twelfth and thirteenth century religious texts of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community of South India. It is a unique textual study, which shows that medieval sectarian formation in its theological dimension is a fluid and ambivalent enterprise, where conflict and differentiation are presaged on “sharing”, whether of a common canon, or two languages (Tamil and Sanskrit), a common saint, a common corpus of rituals or of a “meta-social” arena such as the temple itself.

Arguing that the core ideas of *prapatti* in these texts reveal the description of a heterogeneous theological concept, its nature dependent on the status of its practitioner, this book demonstrates that this concept is theologically moulded by the emergence of new literary genres, such as commentaries with hagiographical elements, in this period. The author puts forward the idea that this original heterogeneous understanding of *prapatti* is a major contributory cause to the emergence of sectarian divisions among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas, which lead to the eventual formation of two sub-sects, the Teṅkalai and the Vāṭakalai, who stand respectively, for the “cat” and “monkey” theological positions.

The book contributes to a new, intellectual history of medieval Indian religion with a specific emphasis on South Indian Śrīvaiṣṇavism. It will be of interest to scholars of Śrīvaiṣṇavism and Hindu and Indian Religious Studies.

Srilata Raman is Assistant Professor for Hindu Studies at the University of Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. Her main research areas include medieval South Indian religion, hagiography and historiography as well as the modern socio-religious reform movements in South India and the transformation of religion in colonialism. She has published several articles on medieval Śrīvaiṣṇavism, and is the co-editor of *Words and Deeds: Hindu and Buddhist Rituals in South Asia* (2005).

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First published 2007
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2007.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0-203-96781-X Master e-book ISBN

ISBN10: 0-415-39185-7 (hbk)
ISBN10: 0-203-96781-X (ebk)
ISBN13: 978-0-415-39185-6 (hbk)
ISBN13: 978-0-203-96781-2 (ebk)

In memory of my beloved grandmother
Mrs. Jayalakshmi Duraiswamy —
born a Teñkalai, through marriage a Vaṭakalai,
she saw no contradictions in the tradition.

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SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

The *Routledge Hindu Studies Series*, published in collaboration with the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, intends primarily the publication of constructive Hindu theological, philosophical, and ethical projects. The focus is on issues and concerns of relevance to readers interested in Hindu traditions in particular, yet also in the context of a wider range of related religious concerns that matter in today's world. The Series seeks to promote excellent scholarship and, in relation to it, an open and critical conversation among scholars and the wider audience of interested readers. Though contemporary in its purpose, the Series recognizes the importance of retrieving the classic texts and ideas, beliefs and practices, of Hindu traditions, so that the great intellectuals of these traditions may as it were become conversation partners in the conversations of today.

This is the most comprehensive and textually detailed account to date of the theological dispute and cultural difference of the two schools of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, popularly known as the “cat” and “monkey” schools. These two schools have been associated with an emphasis on salvation through grace alone, the Lord saving souls out of his compassion (as a mother cat carries her kittens), in contrast to salvation that requires some effort on behalf of devotees (as a baby monkey clings to its mother). Srilata Raman shows how the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition developed into these two sub-traditions which came to be known as the northern school (*vaṭakalai*) and the southern school (*teṅkalai*), the former claiming allegiance to the important theologian Vedānta Deśika and predominantly using Sanskrit in its theological language, the latter to Piḷḷai Lokācārya and predominantly using Tamil. This distinction, however, only comes to be used in the 17th century and the characterisation of the schools as ‘monkey’ and ‘cat’ only seems to have first occurred in the nineteenth century. Raman shows how the distinction must be historically located in political developments with the decline of the Vijayanagara empire in the 16th century and rise of Nāyaka kingdoms of Madurai and Tanjavur and a shift in the kings’ caste allegiance to Telugu śūdra (i.e. non-Brahmin) castes.

SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

In the context of this political change that sharpened the division between the two schools, Raman offers a nuanced reading of the textual sources of the traditions, tracing the interpretation of a key term for taking refuge in the Lord or “surrender”, *prapatti*, from its earliest use in the *Bhagavad-gītā* and Rāmānuja's Sanskrit commentary to the later Tamil and Maṇipravāḷa commentaries on this and other texts. For the Vāṭakalais, *prapatti* was one of several paths to God for those incapable of other paths, for the Teṅkalais it becomes the only path to God, complete self-surrender distinct from ritual in which the devotee does nothing and is saved purely through grace. Raman shows how the Teṅkalais adopt, therefore, a much more radical position over the issue of salvation, even to the extent that the Lord who freely bestows grace, relishes the defects of the soul and empathises with human suffering. This is innovative in the history of Indian religions.

Raman presents a fascinating account of this ‘grace’ vs ‘works’ dispute in medieval India which she addresses at a theological level as expressed in commentaries and furthermore links this to historical and political developments. The strength of this work lies in its ability to deal competently with Sanskrit, Tamil and Maṇipravāḷa sources. It shows the development of the doctrine of *prapatti* at a commentarial and theological level and also links these developments to historical, and political changes in South India but without reducing the theological coherence of the different accounts. Only now are pre-colonial, medieval developments in South Asian religion being studied seriously and taken not as degenerations of a glorious past, but as historical developments in their own right that demand scholarly attention. This is an exemplary and important work that greatly contributes to our understanding of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition and to the developments of medieval Hindu traditions more broadly.

Gavin Flood
Series Editor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book owes much to the guidance, support and generous encouragement of people in different countries and continents — in Germany: Heinrich von Stietencron for taking me on as his doctoral student, for guiding and supporting me and encouraging this research, Heidrun Brückner for jointly making possible the stipend which enabled me to research and her doctoral seminars which were vital for the original thesis and Axel Michaels who offered the ideal conditions and support under which one can both think and teach at Heidelberg; in England — the late Friedhelm Hardy for pointing the way to the commentarial literature and for his pioneering work on Śrīvaiṣṇavism which has influenced mine, and Sanjukta Gupta for her much-needed encouragement on reading the Rāmānuja chapter; in America — Frank Clooney for his careful reading, support, stringent critique and encouragement from all of which the book has greatly benefited, Patricia Mumme (as well as the second, anonymous reviewer for Routledge) for the acute and immensely helpful comments which went into the re-worked manuscript and Don Lopez for perceptive suggestions on how one might open up the book to non-specialist readers. In India — Professor M. A. Venkatakrishnan of Madras University, from whose encyclopedic knowledge of Śrīvaiṣṇavism and the commentarial literature I have regularly profited, Arayar Srirama Sharma and his family in Melkottai with whom I worked on the Īṭu 36000 and Shri Lakshmithathachar for his generous hospitality in Melkottai. The constancy and encouragement of my close friends and, in the case of some of them, their critical reading of my work — V. Geetha, Françoise Chapman, Robin Hicks, Hari Sankaran, Smriti Srinivas, James Heitzman, Kavita Singh and Kate Teltscher — has sustained me through the years. My parents V. Raman and Sudha Raman and the extensive family — here particularly my brother Aroon, my aunts Susheela Padmanabhan, Sarala Krishnan and Indu Ramachandran — have expressed keen interest in what I do and have advised and helped me when I most needed it. To four other people I owe a special debt: Gunthard Mueller who rescued the core of this thesis and helped and supported me in my academic career in every way and Adelgund Mueller, Norbert Mueller and Hartwig Betz for their unwavering support through all my formative years in Germany. There are a few people to whom one owes either an intellectual or emotional debt, but usually a combination of both, which

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

is not repayable — Vidvan N.S. Venkatanathacharya of Mysore who taught me Sanskrit and maṇipravāḷa and much else by his wise example, Alexis Sanderson of Oxford who initiated me in the art of reading commentarial literature, encouraged me first to work on Śrīvaiṣṇavism, and remains an exemplar of inspirational teaching and enduring friendship, and Vasudha Dalmia of Tübingen/Berkeley who taught me to see theology through the lens of history, saw me through the agonies of thesis-writing and much else and is both staunch critic and friend. My last word of thanks goes to my husband, Christoph Alexander Emmrich, for trees planted, and poetry — in der “Hälfte des Lebens”.

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The Tamil transliteration is based on the system used in the *Madras Tamil Lexicon*. In the Sanskrit transliteration the standard system for Indological Sanskrit is used. In transliterating *maṇipravāḷa* I have used a combination of the above diacritica as dictated by the nature of *maṇipravāḷa* itself. Hence, for example: *ācāryarkaḷ*.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1920s the humorist “S.V.V.” wrote the satirical piece *An Elephant’s Creed in Court*, originally published in *Everyman’s Review*.¹ The article mercilessly poked fun at the interminable quarrels over seeming trivialities between the two Vaiṣṇavite sub-sects² of the Śrīvaiṣṇava³ community of South India, the *Ṭaṭakalais* and the *Tenkalais*.

It begins:

The dispute was whether the temple elephant should wear the *Vadagalay* or the *Tenkalay* caste-mark. We believe our readers know that the *Vadagalays* wear on the forehead a caste-mark resembling the shape of the U and the *Tenkalays* that of Y. The fights over the caste-marks between these two important Vaishnava sects in southern India, has long been of an acute and rancorous character, especially in places where there are rich and famous temples. The omnipotent God was often kidnapped out of his shrine to be compelled to wear this or the other *Namam* (caste-mark) and if he stuck to his shrine, was forced to submit to the varying moods of mundane Judges. Vessels, umbrellas, curtains, bells, vehicles and other paraphernalia belonging to the temple suffered a similar faith and had their persuasions fixed by decrees in courts, which changed as often as each higher tribunal reversed the decree of that immediately below. The turn now came to the temple elephant. Till now he belonged to the *Vadagalay* creed and piously munched the palm-leaves under a *Vadagalay-namam* bristling broad and thick on his forehead. But the *Tenkalays* said that he was not born, or bred in the *Vadagalay* faith and could not be permitted to wear that *Namam* consistently with his duties in the temple.⁴

The story goes on to detail the numerous court proceedings between the two communities:

The matter went up before a civilian District Judge in appeal, who reversed the decree of the lower court and dismissed the plaintiff’s suit.

The High Court considered the matter in Admission, Second Appeal, Letters Patent Appeal, and the matter was considered by every Judge of that court under one nomenclature or another.⁵

The proceedings thus drag on, not culminating even with the death of the elephant concerned!

Natural historians say that the life of an elephant is only a 100 years. The elephant in suit piously lived its full term of life, and before ever the High Court could rudely shake its faith, died a devoted *Vadagalay* in the interior as well as the exterior, despite decrees, judgements and executions. And another young elephant took charge of the temple functions adopting his predecessor's creed. ... We understand that the *Tenkalays* are now consulting the seniors of Madras as to what next ought to be done. We are not in the secret of the result of that conference but this much we know: the young elephant is now gambolling in the streets in perfect good humour with an aesthetically painted *Vadagalay Namam* on his forehead and with an air of perfect assurance that on whichever side truth and justice might be, law was certainly on his.⁶

Thus, by the 20th century, the sectarian split within the Śrīvaiṣṇava community had been reduced, at least in popular perception, to a petty squabbling about external appearances, a fit subject for some pointed social satire. Certainly, contemporary Śrīvaiṣṇavas or “Iyengars” as they are more commonly known today, are, for the most part, somewhat unclear about what it means to be a *Vaṭakalai* or *Tenkalai*. They are likely to walk past the gigantic *Vaṭakalai* caste-mark, *nāmam*, on the walls of the Varadarājasvāmī Temple in Kāñcīpuram or the *Tenkalai nāmam* on the walls of the Pārthasārathisvāmī Temple in Madras without a backward glance. Inter-marriage between the two sub-groups is not uncommon and historical circumstances in Tamil Nadu as well as modernity, globalization and the internet have created certain pan-sectarian, not to say defensive, pan-brahmanical, solidarities among sections of Śrīvaiṣṇavas. Indeed, the lay Śrīvaiṣṇava/Iyengar would share S.V.V.'s impatience with these “ancient” quarrels among the sectarian orthodox.

Yet, there were times in the past when the dispute was neither quite so abstract nor so abstruse and altogether far more virulent. It succeeded in splitting a community which had been one in the twelfth century into two by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We cannot, as yet, understand each stage of its development nor answer, with any degree of certainty some of the fundamental questions which arise about its trajectory. We cannot pronounce confidently on the process by which some theological aspects of the dispute fell into obscurity over time — such as the exact differences over the nature of *kaivalya* or how God pervades the soul — even as other ritual aspects — differences in aspects of ritual initiation,

how women should preface their prayers, who has control over the management of important temples — have remained or even flourished. Yet, we can, through paying attention to hitherto neglected stages of the dispute's trajectory, hope to gain greater transparency about specific features of it and thereby shed further light on the entire process which led to the division of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community. This is the intention of this book.

Most contemporary Śrīvaiṣṇavas are not different from other “Hindu Indians”, in being interested, however marginally, on how to make sense of the connections between an ill-understood, ancient tradition and its existence, however transformed, in modernity. The Śrīvaiṣṇava/Iyengar community in India and abroad today is extremely active through its web-sites and in its contribution to the construction of temples among the diaspora.⁷ This activism is accompanied by the desire to understand the tradition, its historical roots and textual sources. Books which deal with the history of the community are actively featured on the web-sites and discussed, and they contribute to a living debate whose future impact could be significant. Further, the modernization of “Hinduism” both within the Indian and the Hindu diaspora context displays certain common features, even while these features are adapted and modified within specific and unique contexts. These features, as Vertovec (2000) sums them up, include “the rationalization of belief and practice (Bellah 1965); an incorporation of facets drawn from neo-Vedānta philosophy into popular (largely Purāṇa-based) belief (Fitzgerald 1990); an insistence that Hinduism does not essentially differ in nature from Christianity or any other world religion (Bharati 1971); a diminution of beliefs and practices surrounding parochial or so-called ‘little traditions’ in favour of those of the Sanskritic or ‘Great Tradition’ (ibid.); and an emphasis on *bhakti* or loving devotion to God in any form, an orientation which ‘inspires not so much sectarian and denominational formations as a diffuse emotion of brotherhood, which softens the rough edges of group differences’ (Singer 1971:158). And in keeping with a centralization of the ‘Great Tradition’ aspects together with *bhakti*, there seems to be a dominant drive towards Vaiṣṇavism (devotion to Viṣṇu and his incarnations, particularly Rāma and Kṛṣṇa) as probably the single most prominent orientation of worship.”⁸

In the context of this modernization, it feels much more enlightened to ignore specificities regarding the *Vaṭakalai–Teṅkalai* dispute with its uncomfortable connotations of unenlightened sectarian strife, despite its persistent virulence in orthodox quarters even in these times, and instead resort to some selective appropriation of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition along universalistic, neo-Vedāntic guidelines.⁹ Further, the *Vaṭakalai–Teṅkalai* dispute seems particularly arcane from the perspective of the twenty-first century, since in its core and in its early stages it remained theologically complex and a search for identity and meaning in modernity, often goes hand-in-hand with an impatience towards theological doctrine.

Yet, it is crucial that the interaction and the inter-penetration of theology and socio-religious practice in the creation of the religious ideology of a community

be grasped and this is the task of scholarship. For, scholarly activity is concerned with issues of excavation and preservation: to retrieve the historical dimension of religion through scrupulous scholarship and to make it available in all its subtlety and diversity. One way of doing this, attempted in this book, is to focus on the cultural and historical specificity of theology at the expense of its own claims to a trans-historical universality. In order to do this a journey into the past is necessary. For, in an age which grapples with increasingly rigid conceptions of what constitutes a “Hindu” identity bolstered by a highly selective use of the past, it should be a matter of urgency both for those from within a religious tradition and those who study it (and the two are sometimes the same) to focus on the past of religion and the location within time, of living religious traditions. The continued existence of a problematic past in the present, to paraphrase Arjun Appadurai, should compel us into an excursion into the past.¹⁰ A scrupulous examination of the theological sources of the Śrīvaiṣṇava religious dispute in the past, in the medieval period, the stress on its multi-dimensionality and its inbuilt capacity for negotiation that this study hopes to reveal, must and can lead to a more profound understanding of both the past and the present of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community.

1.1 The historical dispute

Most general studies of Śrīvaiṣṇavism which attempt a historical chronology would trace the beginnings of tensions in the Śrīvaiṣṇava community to a century or so after the great theologian Rāmānuja (traditional dates: CE 1017–1137) and to his successors who lived in the 13th and 14th centuries of the common era. In this period *ācāryas* of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community of South India evolved oppositional views on a number of doctrinal matters in their scholastic writings. The *ācāryas* most directly concerned were Vedānta Deśika (traditional dates: CE 1268–1369) who was domiciled mainly in Kāñcīpuram in the northern part of Tamil territory and Piḷḷai Lokācārya (traditional dates: CE 1264–1327) domiciled further south at Śrīraṅgam in the Kaveri delta. Even though neither of these two *ācāryas*, nor even their immediate followers, saw themselves as founders of separate schools or as instigating sectarian rivalry, it is clear, with hindsight, that if the theological argumentations of one of the *ācāryas* were to be unilaterally upheld to be correct, this would necessitate the rejection of the views of the other — in other words, the divide was potentially irreconcilable.¹¹

This, in fact, was what occurred with the passage of time. The evidence that needs to be examined to determine what happened is from a wide variety of sources: archeological, inscriptional and textual. A series of studies on the history of the major Vaiṣṇavite temples of the Tamil region such as Raman (1975) on Kāñcīpuram, Hari Rao (1976) on Śrīraṅgam and Viraraghavacharya (1974–82) on Tirumala as well as the work of Ramanuja Tatachar (1937) on the Vānamāmalai *maṭha* and Desikacharya (1949) on the Parakāla *maṭha* have provided valuable perspectives on the growth of sectarianism from the fourteenth

century onwards. Appadurai's (1983) examination of the dispute in his study of the Pārthasārathisvāmī temple in Triplicane, Madras appears to be the most comprehensive and convincing version thus far, in that it cumulatively evaluates all this evidence regarding kingdoms, temples and sectarian *maṭhas* starting from the fourteenth century and seeks to give the broader picture. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that, impressive as this evidence is, it does not and cannot by any means offer us the complete picture. By its very nature it focuses almost entirely on the arena of the temple and the elites connected with it. Thus, as far as the development of the historical dispute is concerned, we have scant means of evaluating how it affected the lives of the vast majority of non-elites in the pre-colonial period and the nature of their allegiance to one or the other branches of Śrīvaiṣṇavism.

In examining the dispute's development one may formulate three broad phases: one between 1350–1500, the second between 1500–1700 and the third from the eighteenth century with the rising impact of colonialism. The first two phases show that the emergence and rise of sectarianism among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas is linked to the growing power of the tradition as a result of the rise of the Telugu warrior-chieftains of Vijayanagara. Vijayanagara historiography, as Burton Stein has pointed out, has linked its origins and existence with a pre-colonial Indian nationalism arising from the overthrow of foreign, “Muslim invaders” and the restoration of Hindu orthodoxy and temple worship.¹² In actual fact, successive Vijayanagara dynasties patronized several religious institutions and depended for the strength of their armies on Muslim soldiers, thus adopting the religiously tolerant and socially pragmatic policies of South Indian kingdoms before theirs. Nevertheless, several of them starting with the Sāluva dynasty were staunch Vaiṣṇavites, and later the Rāya kings of Vijayanagara, Kṛṣṇadevarāya (1509–29) and Acyutadevarāya (1529–42) had as their personal or family deity Veṅkateśa at Tirumala.¹³ The Vijayanagara period also saw a substantial increase in temple building, with new temples being built and old ones renovated and enlarged. The resources flowing into the temples also led to ritual innovation, with elaborate and well-endowed new rituals being created, necessitating a corresponding increase in the categories of persons associated with temple management and services.¹⁴ This political and religious environment proved advantageous to a spectrum of Śrīvaiṣṇava leaders already associated with temples — elite males, *ācāryapuruṣas*, who came from prominent families closely associated through kinship with Rāmānuja, and Śrīvaiṣṇava ascetics, *Cīyars*, who founded *maṭhas*. Mutually advantageous ties between sectarian leaders and the Vijayanagara kings and dignitaries accelerated this process: “The Telugu warriors linked themselves to the temple as a source of honor through the patronage of sectarian leaders and the reallocation of land and cash to these sectarian figures. At the same time they associated these sectarian figures with their own kingship by investing them with royal honors. This increased the local authority of these sect leaders at the same time that it made Vijayanagara rule locally honorable.”¹⁵ Till the fourteenth century

Śrīvaiṣṇavism had remained a minority religion is a predominantly Śaiva environment. The rise of Vijayanagara and royal patronage meant for it the possibility of much greater power and influence in the Tamil country.

The Śrīvaiṣṇava leaders who took advantage of this political momentum and gained influence in the Vijayanagara polity early on appear to have all eventually come to be associated with the *Teṅkalai* teacher–pupil lineage. The example of the temple of Śrīraṅgam — with the rise to power of the Śrīraṅganārāyaṇa Cīyar Ātīṇam (c. fourteenth century) and the Kantāṭai and Uttamanampi families (both of later *Teṅkalai* affiliation) — is all evidence of this. But perhaps the chief figure associated with *Teṅkalai* expansion in Śrīraṅgam and elsewhere was Maṇavāḷamāmuni (traditional dates: 1370–1445), an ascetic and the direct disciple of Piḷḷai Lokācārya. Of Maṇavāḷamāmuni, Appadurai says:

Manavāḷa Māmuni’s activities involved a judicious combination of five kinds of strategies: (1) the enhancement of the Prabandham as an authoritative doctrinal source; (2) the elaboration of the importance of radical submission to the ācārya; (3) the creation of subsectarian networks organized around “discipleship,” which spanned most of Tamil country; (4) the use of royal patronage, on a disaggregated local basis, to provide both material resources and royal honors for sectarian leaders in specific localities; and (5) the specific linkage of subsectarian affiliations to temple control. The interdependent and synthetic use of the fivefold strategy by Manavāḷa Māmuni specifically ensured *Teṅkalai* control over a number of temples in South India.¹⁶

In contrast to Appadurai who stresses Maṇavāḷamāmuni the strategist, Mumme in her biographical sketch of him tends to point out that it was his personal popularity, based upon his charismatic discourses on the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*, which caused the spread of *Teṅkalai* Śrīvaiṣṇavism.¹⁷ Nevertheless, even while the personal discipleship of certain ācāryapuruṣa families to Maṇavāḷamāmuni contributed to the widespread popularity of his lineage, we must still conceive of sectarian identity among even the Śrīvaiṣṇava elite — the divisions between *Vaṭakalai* and *Teṅkalai* — as extremely fluid and unselfconscious in this early period.¹⁸

Historical evidence from other major Vaiṣṇavite temples prior to the sixteenth century also provides evidence for the growing influence of Maṇavāḷamāmuni’s disciples or those affiliated with his lineage in temple affairs. The patronage of Vijayanagara kings was vital to this influence. Thus the Varadarājasvāmī temple in Kāñcīpuram in this period was managed by a series of religious figures — Cīyars of the Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷa *maṭha* and Kantāṭai Rāmānuja Ayyaṅkār (patronized by the Vijayanagara king Śāluva Narasimha) — whose allegiance was to Maṇavāḷamāmuni’s lineage.¹⁹ In Tirumala, after the mid-fifteenth century in the Venkateśvara temple the influence of the same Rāmānuja Ayyaṅkār — described

as a foreigner (*deśāntari*) and a non-brahmin (*Cāttāta*) Śrīvaiṣṇava — was far-reaching. Appointed as the *kartā* of feeding houses, *Rāmānujakūṭams*, for non-brahmin Śrīvaiṣṇavas, and put in charge of managing the royal endowments to the temple by Sāluva Narasimha, Rāmānuja Ayyaṅkār was able to strengthen the influence of his own non-brahmin constituency's role within the temple, with his patron's approval.²⁰ Kantāṭai Rāmānuja Ayyaṅkār was clearly inclined towards what came to be Teṅkalaism: a fascinating inscription in Tirumala from 1468 refers to his decision to implement the celebration of the birth stars of all the *Ālvārs* within the temple.²¹ Hence, a series of new festivals were introduced which increased the prestige of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* and those sectarian leaders identified with it even while marginalizing *Vaṭakalai*-inclined sectarian leaders. This seems to have been the case with the *Cīyars* of the *Van* Śāṭakōpaṇ *maṭha*. This *maṭha* probably came into existence sometime in the mid-fourteenth century in Tirumala. By the mid-fifteenth century, though, the *Cīyars* of this *maṭha* had moved to Ahobilam in the Kurnool district of current Andhra Pradesh, probably in order to evade the increasing prestige of *Teṅkalai* Śrīvaiṣṇavism in Tirumala. The Ahobilam *Cīyars* maintained extensive contacts with Vijayanagara throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries even while successively propagating Śrīvaiṣṇavism in the Telugu country.²²

The third phase — between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries — was the period of the counter-initiative on the part of *Vaṭakalai* leaders, who now also began to institutionally link themselves to Vijayanagara kings. Prominent in this effort were the *Cīyars* of the Ahobila *maṭha*; the *ācāryapuruṣas* called Tātācāryas and finally, the Brahmatantra Parakālatantra *maṭha*. The Tātācāryas had been closely associated with the court of the Vijayanagara monarchs of the Araviḍu dynasty and had come to settle in Kāñcīpuram sometime in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The head of the family Eṭṭūr Kumāra Tirumalai Tātācārya rapidly acquired influence over the Varadarājasvāmī temple and became the *Śrīkāryadurantara* or person in charge of the temple by 1582.²³ He seems to have subsequently also acquired say over the running of Vaiṣṇava temples in Śrīperumputūr and Tirunīrmalai.²⁴ The influence of the Tātācāryas was at its peak during the late sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth centuries but waned with the disintegration of Vijayanagara in mid-seventeenth century and the decisive defeat of the Vijayanagara armies by the Deccani sultanates. It is at this juncture that the Tātācāryas moved to seek the protection of the one dynasty in South India which was explicitly Vaiṣṇavite: that of the Wodeyārs of Mysore.²⁵ Their progression paralleled that of the *Cīyars* of the Brahmatantra Parakālatantra *maṭha*, also originally located in Kāñci.

The leaders of the last-mentioned institution moved from Kāñcīpuram to Mysore the mid-seventeenth century and became the initiatory gurus of the Mysore kings.²⁶

The movement on the part of prominent *Vaṭakalai* leaders to reclaim or make new claims to rights in the Śrīvaiṣṇava temples appears to have begun in this period, in the latter half of the seventeenth century and intensified in the subsequent century. For it is after the seventeenth century that the term “Northern School” (*Vaṭakalai*)²⁷ increasingly came to be used of those Śrīvaiṣṇavas who

claimed allegiance to Vedānta Deśika's line of disciples even as "Southern School" (*Teṅkalai*) came to mean Piḷḷai Lōkācārya's line. The decline of Vijayanagara after the mid-sixteenth century and the rise of the Nāyaka kingdoms of Madurai and Tanjavur, it has been suggested, marked a profound conceptual and institutional shift in South India.²⁸ The Nāyakas of Tanjāvur, including their most famous ruler Ragunātha Nāyaka (1612–1634) were Vaiṣṇavite in their inclinations, having as the family deity Rājagopālasvāmī of Mannārkuṭi. The Nāyakas drew upon a new set of Telugu castes to form the backbone of their states, left-handed *śūdra* (in the traditional South Indian sense of all other than the brahmins) castes, skilled in trade, called *balijas*.²⁹ With the power of this new elite also came a self-conscious pride in being a *śūdra* and hence, in a deliberate inversion of the *varṇa* hierarchy laid out in the *Puruṣasūkta*, pride in the descent from the feet rather than the head of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa.³⁰ We might conjecture that *Teṅkalai* Śrīvaiṣṇavism — with its traditional devotion to Nammālvār the *śūdra ālvār* and the emphasis on how a lowly birth itself, conducive as it is to a natural humility, is an advantage on the path to salvation — would have been theologically the better suited Śrīvaiṣṇava school to take advantage of these new ideological formations. Nevertheless, right until the demise of the Nāyaka kingdoms in the mid-eighteenth century, the relationship between the two branches of Śrīvaiṣṇavism appear to have been characterized by some measure of mutual accommodation when it came to rights within the temples. An example of such a balancing act would be the one achieved for a hundred years or so in the Varadarājasvāmī temple in Kāñcīpuram. There, once the threat from the Mughal armies of Aurangzeb had receded in the early eighteenth century, the Tātācāryas returned to their native lands from Mysore to find that much of the power in the daily running of the temple had passed into the hands of the Āttāṇ Cīyar family, of *Teṅkalai* persuasion. Reinstated into the position of the family which would receive first honors in the temple, the Tātācāryas appear to have come to some uneasy compromise with the Āttāṇ Cīyar family by which each continued to exercise authority over certain spheres of the temple. Such compromises came to be less and less feasible with the emergence and consolidation of British power in South India.³¹

The evolving nature of the complex interaction between temples and the British, later to be followed by the state of Tamil Nadu after Indian independence, has been looked at in detail by Chandra Mudaliar (1976) and Franklin Presler (1987). Reflecting on the British policies in the nineteenth century, Presler sees a vacillating approach to temple control, combining features of both state expansion and non-intervention.³² Nevertheless, his main contention is that, in the long run and cumulatively, the colonial state did eventually penetrate Hindu religious institutions and not just temples but also *maṭhas*. Even at a decisive historical juncture when a policy of withdrawal from interference was proposed (as it was under pressure from Christian groups in England in 1842), the local government in the Madras Presidency subverted the policy through "a mixture of resistance, reluctant accommodation and deception."³³ In pre-British days and even up to the

period of the Nāyakas the relationship between the state and the temples had been mutually supportive and reinforcing: a conferring of symbolic honors by the temples was reciprocated by gifts and donations on the part of rulers. This real and substantive relationship of exchange was now being corroded. Appadurai goes on to give a convincing analysis as to why this was so, with a focus on the Pārthasārathisvāmī temple in Triplicane, Madras. His main argument is that the intimate and subtle relationship which existed between kingly authority, sectarian leaders and temple management in the pre-colonial period altered irrevocably with the advent of the British. The changes were four-fold: First, the exchange of honors between the king and the deity as a basis of political authority had ceased to exist and hence, no systematic transactions took place between the British, on the one hand, and sectarian leaders and traditional organizations, on the other. Second, in contrast to kings who had held themselves aloof from the day-to-day running of the temple yet interfered decisively to resolve local disputes the British involved themselves increasingly in the former while attempting “religious neutrality” and showing a marked reluctance to get involved in “native disputes”. Third, the separation of the judicial and administrative arms of the colonial state created ambiguities in resolving conflicts, which did not exist in pre-colonial times. Finally, there was the context-bound nature of Hindu royal orders in pre-colonial times which differed markedly from the generalizing tendencies of British law which also set precedents. The result of these four aspects was, as Appadurai sums up, “the transformation of previously social categories into actual social organizations, of previously ritually constructed privileges into bureaucratically defined ones, and of a relatively fluid system of alliances into a relatively rigid and antagonistic set of interest groups”.³⁴ Such a transformation implied that each sectarian group felt that it had no other means to safeguard its own rights within a temple than through ceaseless litigation. The less the actual power available to either the *Teṅkalais* or the *Vaṭakalais* in temple management — and the history of the temples in the nineteenth and twentieth century is a history of the systematic erosion of the power of such groups traditionally associated with them — the greater was the passion felt about the symbolic value of honors and rights.

Hence, the sectarian rivalry resulted in bitter disputes, between the two schools, over the administrative and financial control of the great Vaiṣṇava temples of South India; law suits were filed under the British Raj which have seen uneasy settlements or are ongoing even today and all the temples prominently display caste-marks which indicate whether they are under *Vaṭakalai* or *Teṅkalai* control.³⁵ The evidence from the theological literature of the tradition, to which we shall next turn, corroborates that the sectarian dispute came to be fixed — and henceforth understood — in fixed categories only at this very late period.

1.2 The theological dispute

An overview of Śrīvaiṣṇava theological works shows that it is at a very late date that the theological differences between the two schools of Śrīvaiṣṇavism had

come to be listed and formalized as *The Eighteen Differences* (*aṣṭādaśabheda*). Between the period of Piḷḷai Lokācārya/Vedānta Deśika and the twentieth century, there are a mere handful of texts which have these eighteen points as their subject-matter. These include, most importantly, the *Aṣṭādaśabhedanirṇaya*/*Aṣṭādaśabhedavicāra* (*Vaṭakalai*) (which I call *Aṣṭādaśabhedanirṇaya I* because of the existence of a second text with an identical name), the *Aṣṭādaśabhedasaṃvāda* (*Teṅkalai*) and another incomplete *Aṣṭādaśabhedanirṇaya II* (a conciliatory text).³⁶

The evidence thus far shows that all these texts display a high degree of intertextuality: the *Aṣṭādaśabhedanirṇaya I* is found in the most number of manuscripts and is frequently cited in the *Aṣṭādaśabhedasaṃvāda*, showing that the latter post-dates it. The third text, the *Aṣṭādaśabhedanirṇaya II*, is incomplete dealing only with eight of the eighteen differences. The dating of *Aṣṭādaśabhedanirṇaya I* relies heavily on the colophon giving details of the author. With the exception of one single manuscript, all others attribute the text to one Vātsya Śrīraṅganātha, son of Vātsya Śrīnivāsa, the name indicating a *Vaṭakalai* lineage. Siauue (1978) comes to the conclusion that Vātsya Śrīnivāsa was the author of the *Rāmānujasiddhāntasaṃgraha*, a text composed during the pontificate of the 26th *maṭhādīpati* of the Ahobila *maṭha* Śrīraṅganāthayati, whose pontificate was from 21-11-1811 to 20-12-1828. Her conclusion, therefore, is that the *Aṣṭādaśabhedanirṇaya I* must have been composed between the 1830s and the 1850s and the other texts in response to it in and around the same period.³⁷ The theological literature about the dispute, therefore, strengthens the historical evidence: it shows that it was only as late as the nineteenth century, the period when formal litigation in British courts began, that both the *Vaṭakalais* and the *Teṅkalais* needed to profile themselves as distinct separate sects, with irreconcilable theological differences. The formalization of hitherto fluid theological opinions in turn would have further helped consolidate sectarian identity.

In his 1910 article for *The Royal Asiatic Society* A. Govindacarya provided a comprehensive list of these eighteen differences which, when examined carefully, can be reduced to two major issues and a few other minor ones. One major issue — on which there are four differences — is about how to define God's nature and qualities. Broadly speaking, the *Vaṭakalais* conceived of God as a loving but just parent: he cared immensely about the individual soul but required, in turn, that the soul attend to his wishes and be good. The *Teṅkalais* adopted a more radical position: God, here, is seen as the parent who unconditionally loves its weak and imperfect child. The two branches, or schools as I shall refer to them, also had different views on how God's graciousness (*prasāda*), his parental love (*vātsalya*), and his mercifulness (*dayā*) should be defined. The *Vaṭakalais* held the view that God's graciousness was not unconditional but had to be earned by the soul; that his parental love implied that he was blind to the soul's defects (*doṣādarśitvam*) and that his mercifulness was such as to be sympathetic (*para-duḥkha-nirācīkṛṣā*). The *Teṅkalais* adopted a much more radical position on all these definitions. God's graciousness was freely given and not fathomable; his nature was such as to not just ignore but positively relish the defects of the

soul (*doṣabhogyatvam*); his mercifulness went beyond sympathy to empathy with the soul's suffering (*paraduḥkhaḍuḥkhitvam*).

The second major issue — on which there are a further six differences — relates to the concept called *prapatti*. The word *prapatti* is derived from *pra+pad*, meaning “to take refuge with/in” (van Buitenen 1974) and is used to refer to a soteriological path in Śrīvaiṣṇavism. A person does *prapatti* when he/she surrenders oneself at the feet of God in order to obtain liberation from the cycle of transmigration and attain *mokṣa* (defined as being part of Viṣṇu's retinue in his paradise of *Vaikuṇṭha*). Hence, *prapatti* is synonymous with self-surrender. The term already has this meaning in the writings of Rāmānuja prior to the origination of the theological dispute, that is, in the 11th century. The *Vaṭakalais* held the view that *prapatti* was but one of several paths to God, meant primarily for one incapable of following other paths. Further, *prapatti* was akin to a ritual with auxiliary rites which lead upto it and that it, in turn, engenders God's graciousness. As far as the *Teṅkalais* were concerned, *prapatti* was the only path to liberation and hence meant for everybody. It was not a ritual — rather, it was the resignation of all self-effort towards attaining liberation. Hence to do *prapatti* was to do nothing, for any effort was an impediment to the working of God's grace. These respective stances on what the individual soul should do or not do for his/her own salvation and correspondingly, what God does, were rather pithily summed up in the maxims about cats, monkeys and their young (*markaṭamār-jārakiśoranyāya*). The *Vaṭakalais* were described as adhering to the position that God saves the soul like the monkey lifts its young: the young monkey has to hold on to its mother, that is, make some meagre effort for its own protection. The *Teṅkalais* were described as adhering to the position that God saves the soul like the cat lifts its kitten by the scruff of its neck: the kitten does nothing for its own protection and God acts entirely on his own in bestowing salvation.

The Monkey School versus The Cat School — or the dispute about the nature of God's Grace and the soul's agency — was how the Śrīvaiṣṇava theological divide came to be understood and discussed by the early 20th century. This, though the eighteen differences encompassed a range of other issues, the most important of these relating to the status of the Goddess.³⁸ In order to understand why there emerged a tradition of interpretation of the theological divide as an *ur*-dispute predominantly about cats and monkeys we first have to turn to modern historiographical approaches to Śrīvaiṣṇavism.

1.3 “Grace”, “Works” and the Śrīvaiṣṇava dispute

The main trends in the interpretation of the Śrīvaiṣṇava theological dispute emerged in the first decades of the twentieth century, but these trends had their antecedents in Orientalist discourse of the nineteenth century. The a priori assumptions of nineteenth century Orientalist discourse on Indian religions and *bhakti* ideology in particular and the impact this discourse had on the native perception of indigenous traditions has been reviewed extensively by other scholars and, hence, is not considered in detail here.³⁹ What is briefly considered are

those aspects of this discourse which directly influenced scholarship on Śrīvaiṣṇavism and the dispute. German dominated Orientalist historiography — whether the phenomena under consideration was Roman religion⁴⁰ or Indian religions — was anchored by a teleological vision of religious development with Judaeo-Christian monotheism as the culmination of such a process. It followed from this that all other forms of religious movements — polytheistic or monistic — were eventually doomed to be “reformed” or purged by monotheism — the issue was simply a matter of when. In the context of the history of Indian religions, the Orientalists saw the triumph of monotheism in the medieval Vaiṣṇavite religious movements which were seen as reforming and triumphing over the monistic religious views of the philosopher Śaṅkara which had, till their emergence, dominated Indian theology in the medieval period. One of these medieval Vaiṣṇavite religious movements was what was referred to as the school of Rāmānuja.

A central figure in this historiography was George Grierson who, as Dalmia (1997) has pointed out, formulated “a theory of bhakti as the overarching principle which encompassed the most diverse streams” and further posited “a bhakti movement in medieval India, unitary in character, which carried the message of love to all corners of the subcontinent and to see it all as the gift of Christianity.”⁴¹ A salient feature of Grierson’s views on *bhakti* for the understanding of subsequent scholarship on Śrīvaiṣṇavism was formulated in his influential article on the “Bhakti-mārga” for the 1910 *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. Here, Grierson said that Rāmānuja and Madhva had inaugurated the modern “Bhakti-mārga”.⁴²

“This modern Bhakti-mārga is a religion: It has doctrines, such as monotheism, grace, creation, salvation, works, immortality of the soul, and ‘four churches of the reformation’, that is Rāmānuja, Mādhva, Viṣṇusvāmin, and Nimbāditya. It also has ritual features such as the mantra, sectarian marks, and the authority of the guru (which Monier-Williams believed analogous to baptism, initiation, and communion).”⁴³ It is these views of Grierson and other Orientalists on the school of Rāmānuja which formed the backdrop to Rudolf Otto’s 1917 and 1930s observations on the Śrīvaiṣṇava dispute.

In his 1917 book on Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, Otto briefly alluded to the fact that the school of Rāmānuja had experienced a “splitting up of the Church” (*Kirchentrennung*) similar to that which the Christian Church had undergone. The *Vaṭakalais* were compared to the Roman Catholics with a “Pelagian” emphasis on the ability of man to attain salvation through his own natural efforts, while the *Teṅkalais* with their perceived stress on the primacy of God’s grace was seen to be Lutheran. The Śrīvaiṣṇava theological dispute was a “Grace” versus “Works” dispute, similar to the one which led to the Protestant Reformation.⁴⁴

Approximately a dozen years later, in 1930, Otto expanded on these views in his comparative study of the doctrine of Grace in Christianity and Indian religions. Here, Otto said that Rāmānuja’s school was, in terms of its structure and institutions, very much like the Lutheran Church. It was organized like a

Christian denomination, a tight-knit and closed religious community with its own rites and rituals, place of worship, theology and even hymn-book.⁴⁵ Rāmānuja himself could be called a reformer like Luther, in this case one who attacked monistic theology and reiterated in its stead the belief in a personal God and a doctrine of salvation based upon such a belief. With this “Bhakti-religion” there arose, after Rāmānuja, a dispute regarding the doctrine of Grace which seemed to duplicate the old split between the Roman Catholics and the Protestants.

Thus, Otto was first postulating that Śrīvaiṣṇavism was a reform movement like Protestantism and further that a split later took place within this Protestantism (similar perhaps to Calvinism) which replicated the original split which had given rise to Protestantism itself.

Otto’s writings were to awaken an abiding interest in the theology of Rāmānuja among Christian theologians and the writings of Kumarappa (1934), Kulandran (1964), Plott (1974), etc. are a testament to this sustained interest. His writings also inaugurated an interpretation of the dispute as, in essence, one about the problem of “Grace” versus “Works” in which the *Teṅkalais* were the reformists among the Protestants and, hence by implication, the true heirs to the mantle of Rāmānuja.

These views, in turn, were nourished by a stream of thought arising in the wake of modern Tamil historiography, which emphasized that the theological dispute was one between the Sanskritic Northern school and the Tamil Southern School.

1.4 Sanskritic Śrīvaiṣṇavism versus Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇavism

In a 1915 article of V. Rangachari on Rāmānuja’s successors for the *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, we have the first comprehensive theory which linked the *Teṅkalais* exclusively with Tamil and the *Vaṭakalais* exclusively with Sanskrit. Rangachari put forward the theory that the origins of the dispute were to be laid at the door of a geographic dispersion, which had resulted in certain teachers of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community being domiciled at Śrīraṅgam and others at Kāñcīpuram. This dispersion had led to the Śrīraṅgam teachers concentrating on the study of the Tamil works of the Śrīvaiṣṇava canon while the Kāñcīpuram teachers wrote commentaries on the Sanskrit part of the canon. Thus, the geographical dispersion was considered to lead to the validation, by each group of teachers, of one part of the textual canon of the community at the expense of the other (Sanskrit or Tamil). This, in turn, led to the formation of different schools of thought with the successors of these teachers owing doctrinal allegiance to their own teacher-pupil lineage (*guruparamparā*) at the expense of the other. Thus, in Rangachari’s view, one could speak of a Kāñcīpuram-centred, Sanskritic Śrīvaiṣṇavism which later became the *Vaṭakalais* and a Śrīraṅgam-centered, mainly Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇavism which later became the *Teṅkalais*.

The highly specific sense in which Rangachari meant “Tamil” and “Sanskrit” — meaning specialization in certain canonical texts of the religious tradition — was overlaid by other definitions of “Tamil” and “Sanskrit” by those scholars

who examined the socio-historical and cultural aspects of the dispute in the 1970s, definitions which were profoundly influenced by developments in Tamil historiography after the mid-nineteenth century. The mid-19th to early 20th centuries had seen the emergence of numerous works of Tamil literary history dealing with the culture of the ancient Tamils. These were produced by scholars with entirely different training — philologists, historians but also enthusiastic amateur scholars — with perspectives which one can only broadly and with caution characterize as “traditionalist” or “modern”, keeping in mind the complex interaction between the two. But most of these studies sounded one, common theme: The ancient Tamil past (identified with the pre-Christian *Caṅkam* Age) conceptualized as uncontaminated by the advent of the “Aryans”, Sanskrit and the caste system tended to be uniformly valorized. The main polemical thread which ran through this historiography was the dichotomy of Tamil and Sanskrit, the former associated with concepts such as “anti-caste” and “non-Brahmin” and the latter with “caste-ridden” and “Brahmin”. Śaivism, in this historiography came to be seen as the authentic religion of the Tamils and the vehicle of its revelation was the Tamil language.⁴⁶

It is this modern Tamil historical imagination combined with the the Orientalist view of the *Teṅkalais* as the reformers among the Protestants as well as the need to assert the “Tamilness” of Vaiṣṇavism which permeates the 1970’s socio-historical and cultural studies of the Śrīvaiṣṇava dispute.

Thus scholars in the 1970s (Gnanambal 1971; Jagadeesan 1977) have coincided in seeing the Sanskrit–Tamil divide as also one between conservatives and populists. In this interpretation, the *Teṅkalai* school is seen as the radical movement of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, one intent on levelling caste inequalities among the devotees of Viṣṇu. This radical impetus to challenge the caste-system on the part of the *Teṅkalai* teachers is traced to their devotion to the *āḷvārs* (some of whom were clearly not Brahmins) and their fealty to Rāmānuja (whose temple reforms as well as personal activities according to the traditional hagiographies are seen as evidence of a revolutionary spirit). In contrast to this, the *Vaṭakalai* School is seen as a brahminical backlash, one privileging a Sanskritic world view with an emphasis on caste and ritual duty as prescribed in the *Dharmaśāstras*. The previous section has suggested that certain doctrines of the *Teṅkalai* school undoubtedly appealed to a wider spectrum of the Tamil populace, accounting for their early consolidation of power in the temples. But this is not quite the same as suggesting that the *Teṅkalai* school was as radical in its rejection of caste as, for instance, early Vīraśaivism. Theologically, the evidence for an explicitly *radical* rejection of caste, or in traditional terms, *varṇāśramadharmā*, is scant in the writings of the Southern School teachers at least till the 14th century.⁴⁷ Socio-historically, the evidence for such a stance either then or later is yet to be gathered. Until more of the relevant work is done and the facts in their fullness emerge we shall remain in the dark regarding the actual social policies of the *Teṅkalai* school towards non-Brahmin castes who became or wished to become Śrīvaiṣṇavas in the medieval period.

The historiographical approaches to the Śrīvaiṣṇava dispute outlined here were characteristically modernist: grand meta-narratives with clear-cut story-lines. This was classic nineteenth century historiography and (particularly in the case of Tamil historiography) it uses history, as Michael Bentley says, “as a vehicle for locating groups and people [in this case the Tamils] and giving them a past that suits their present or encourages their sense of the future.”⁴⁸ There is no doubt that the contrast between Sanskritic Śrīvaiṣṇavism and Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇavism which emerged through this historiography is no phantom concoction of Orientalists and comparative theologians but was grounded on and enmeshed with an undoubtedly emic perception of dispute as relating in some way to a polarization of Tamil and Sanskrit by at the latest the nineteenth century. Thus, the *Aṣṭādaśabhedanirṇaya*, our nineteenth century text on the dispute, states at the very beginning that it is dealing with the views of the “*dramiḍācāryas*” and then with that of the “*saṃskṛtācāryas*.”⁴⁹

Finally, the simile of the cats who are Tamil and the monkeys who are Sanskrit, eventually privileged by these approaches, has remained, both because of its simplicity and clarity, extremely popular and encapsulates the general understanding of the dispute. There is every reason to believe that this simile is of relatively recent origin, coming to be coined around the same time as the *aṣṭādaśabhedā* texts. The earliest mention of the simile appears to have been in the Tamil text *Paḷaṇṭai Viḷakkam* of Tirumaliḥai Aṇṇā Ayyaṅkār, a text not earlier than the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ Soon after this period the simile becomes ubiquitous particularly in comparative works on Hinduism and Christianity as well as in any general account of the later period of Śrīvaiṣṇavism.⁵¹

Yet, the fact is, that these conceptual schemata are of little or no use in understanding the theological writings of the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas* on the dispute in its early phases — i.e. prior to the fourteenth century. Moreover, it is when we apply these schemata unreflectively to the early medieval phases of the dispute that we tend to stray into a certain kind of “hard essentialism”⁵² which brings us no further in unraveling the historical threads of its composition. In other words, the existent paradigms about the dispute, while appropriate to later centuries, tyrannize the medieval evidence. The tacit acknowledgement of this fact is no doubt why scholars working on the theology of the dispute tend not to explicitly reflect on the historiographical approaches to it and yet are not wholly immune to these late meta-narratives when they venture to make some general observations on the dispute.

1.5 The interaction of Tamil and Sanskrit

The observations of Rangachari about the Tamil and Sanskrit textual specializations, while being true to a great extent of the corpus of works of the *Teṅkalai* and *Vaṭakalai* schools respectively, do not do justice to one crucial point, which is that the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, whether they wrote predominantly in Tamil or in

Sanskrit demonstrated clearly in their works their erudition in both these languages. This erudition of the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas* in both Tamil and Sanskrit, was nothing other than a measure of that “religious cosmopolitanism” which characterized late medieval Tamil society and was itself a product of an intensive interaction between the two languages in the previous centuries. Thus, there is a direct lineage between medieval Śrīvaiṣṇava religious literature in its indebtedness to both languages and the poetry of the earlier *bhakti* movements, of which Ramanujan (1999:232) remarked that they “used whatever they found at hand and changed whatever they used — Vedic and Upaniṣadic notions; mythologies; Buddhism; Jainism; conventions of Tamil and Sanskrit poetry; early Tamil conceptions of love, service, women, and kings; folk religion and folksong; the play of contrasts between Sanskrit and the mother-tongue.”⁵³

Further, this intensive interaction between Tamil and Sanskrit from the 6th century onwards, cannot be reduced to a uni-directional movement of the “Sanskritization” of Tamil. Rather we are speaking of a bi-directional, complex process of interaction between languages over centuries and the emergence of an extensive corpus of religious literature — Buddhist, Jaina, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava — which arose as a result of this interaction, a process the study of which might well benefit from the development of broader theoretical parameters.⁵⁴

The Śrīvaiṣṇava literature in the post-Rāmānuja period particularly showed evidence of this interaction. Thus, in analysing the *stotra* literature in Śrīvaiṣṇavism immediately after Rāmānuja, Nancy Ann Nayar speaks of these compositions as products of an “intricate and highly complex ... interactive process involving the synthesis of the Tamil and Sanskrit streams” and stresses the “bi-directionality” of this enterprise.⁵⁵ And in his study of the poetry of a late medieval Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācārya* like Vedānta Deśika, Hopkins refers to the manner in which this poetry represents a “complex literary and cultural synthesis”. Borrowing upon Pollock’s conceptions of the “vernacular millenium”⁵⁶ and the “Sanskrit cosmopolis”⁵⁷ Hopkins characterizes Vedānta Deśika as one who:

represents a late religious flowering of the Sanskrit cosmopolis, and, at the same time, as a South Indian brahman embracing both Tamil and, in one notable instance, Māhārāṣṭrī Prākṛit, he affirms the values of the cosmopolitan vernacular. In this comprehensiveness Deśika the Kāñcī brahman-artist joins a significant cohort of cosmopolitan writers that spans the Jains in northern and southern India to Buddhist poets in Śrī Laṅkā who flourished during and after his lifetime.⁵⁸

The linguistic blurring of Tamil and Sanskrit in Śrīvaiṣṇavism acquired new dimensions and came to be even more concretely exemplified, as it were, in the language that the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas* evolved to compose some of their theological texts from the mid-twelfth century onwards. This language is *maṇipravāḷa*. In strictly linguistic terms *maṇipravāḷa* is a dialect of Tamil since the word-order and endings are almost entirely Tamil while the lexica varies, in individual

works, from a preponderance of Sanskrit to a quarter Sanskrit.⁵⁹ The language thus fully reflects new composite texts, commentaries and hagiographies, which emerged in and after this period, texts which served as vehicles for new ideas generated out of the renewed alchemy of the Sanskrit and Tamil streams of Śrīvaiṣṇavism.

Further, if such texts form the basis for both the proto-*Vaṭakalai* and proto-*Tenkalai* views — and this book suggests that they do — then the theological dispute, at least in its origins cannot be characterized as “Sanskrit” versus “Tamil”. In other words, the renewed synthesis of Tamil and Sanskrit which took place in this phase of Śrīvaiṣṇava textual history must also lead to a much more historically differentiated view of the schismatic dispute, a view which would do away with existent post-nineteenth century definitions and lead, instead, to a stage by stage analysis of its evolution, keeping in mind, at each stage, the difference between its textual and socio-historical dimensions.

The emphasis in this monograph is on the textual, theological dimension of one aspect of the dispute prior to the fourteenth century. This necessitates that one concentrates on Śrīvaiṣṇavism as a “textual community” with a lineage of texts which are considered normative and have canonical status within the tradition.⁶⁰ The study of the schismatic dispute from this perspective becomes a study no more or less than a history of its interpretation within and through such texts. It is just such a history of interpretation which is being attempted here, not for the entire theological dispute, but more modestly, for a single issue within it, for the concept of *prapatti*. The delimitation of such an approach has been succinctly formulated by Holdrege: “the most we can hope to arrive at is a history of interpretations of textual representations, not an interpretation of historical verities... we can map the epistemological shifts in the discursive framework that dominates each textual stratum, but we cannot thereby definitively determine the actual sociohistorical conditions that generated these complexes and epistemological shifts.”⁶¹

1.6 The texts

In the period of Rāmānuja and his immediate successors the Śrīvaiṣṇava teachers produced vast quantities of literature in Sanskrit, *maṇipravāla* and Tamil.⁶² Of this, literature which might be classified as *prapatti*-literature, literature whose main aim is to present a situation in which *prapatti* takes place or to define and discuss it, falls into two broad categories: praise-poems, *stotras*, and commentaries on the Tamil devotional poetry, the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*. Between these two categories of texts I have chosen to analyse the commentaries, among whose main task is to explicate and define the theological conceptions of *prapatti* present in the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*.

The focus on the commentaries is for two reasons. The commentaries present us with the canonical development of doctrine in Śrīvaiṣṇavism after Rāmānuja

in a highly linear fashion. Here, I speak particularly of the five classical commentaries on the *Tiruvāymoli* which enclose, expand and build upon each other. Thus, laid side-by-side, they are a map, as it were, of the historical development of Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrine. The focus on them is, self-evidently, a look at the core and not the peripheries of Śrīvaiṣṇava literature post-Rāmānuja. Hence, one is not looking at certain “subaltern” theological spaces which feed into Śrīvaiṣṇavism and are, for that very reason, neglected and underestimated.⁶³ This lacuna too is being kept in mind, as one which would eventually have to be remedied through expanding the boundaries of the literary study of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, even while one is undertaking an investigation here not undertaken before: to look at the development of *prapatti* doctrines in the classical commentaries. The focus on the commentaries instead of the *stotras* is also because of the kind of spaces which this literature opens up for the discussion on *prapatti* within the tradition. Prior to the commentaries, *prapatti* as a theological concept, is linked to a significant moment of personal devotion and self-surrender to a deity in a temple, whether in the *stotra* literature or in the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*. The commentaries, in contrast, give *prapatti* a plot, they show how it can begin, why it is difficult and the bliss it can lead to, and through incorporating tales of piety, proverbs and hagiographical elements they locate *prapatti* within the lives of the teachers of the tradition and hence within the lives of lay Śrīvaiṣṇavas. They, in effect, turn *prapatti* into a soteriological path to salvation. In doing so, they pave the way for the later *rahasya*-literature of Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Vedānta Deśika, in which the theological divide on *prapatti* becomes explicit.

The commentaries on the Tamil devotional poetry, the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*, currently available to us, are three to four for the immediate post-Rāmānuja period. After the mid-13th century they grow exponentially, including the twenty-four commentaries on all the texts of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* written by Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai.⁶⁴ Several commentaries were lost and others have been recently discovered which are not cited in earlier sources and about whose authorship there remains disagreement. Thus, altogether, the issue of how many commentaries were produced by the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas* remains open-ended at this stage of research. The most recent attempt to sort out the situation is that of Vēṅkaṭakīruṣṇaṇ (2003).

Vēṅkaṭakīruṣṇaṇ takes two texts as his source texts for the authenticity of the commentaries: the first is Maṇavāḷamāmuṇi’s *Upadeśaratnamālai*, the second his disciple Piḷḷai Lokam Cīyār’s commentary to it. The relevant verses of the *Upadeśaratnamālai* which speak of the commentaries on the most important text of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*, the *Tiruvāymoli* of Nammālvār (henceforth, *TVM*) are verses 39–45. The forty-sixth verse states that only Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai has written commentaries to all of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*. The forty-seventh verse refers to the commentaries on texts of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*, apart from the *TVM*, to which other *ācāryas* have written commentaries. In his Introduction (*munnurai*) Vēṅkaṭakīruṣṇaṇ, speaks of the existence of several commentaries, some published, others unpublished, which are not referred to in the *Upadeśaratnamālai*. Hence, there remains some

question regarding the authorship of these. On the other hand, there are also commentaries mentioned in the *Upadeśaratnamālai* which remain lost, already by the time the commentary to it was written by Piḷḷai Lōkam Cīyar. These two categories of commentaries include the following:

- Several commentaries are attributed to Nañcīyar by Maṇavāḷamāmuni. Of these already by the time of Piḷḷai Lokam Cīyar only two existed. Recently a *Tirupallīyerucci vyākhyāna* attributed to Nañcīyar has been published.
- There exist three commentaries attributed to Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷapperumāl Nāyaṇār. Of these, two were already well known: on *Tiruppāvai* and *Kaṇṇinuṇṇiciruttāmpu*. A third commentary on *Amalanātipirāṇ* currently in existence is also attributed to Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷapperumāl Nāyaṇār though it is not mentioned in the above texts.
- Three commentaries are currently attributed to Nampiḷḷai: *Īṭu*, *Tiruvirutta vyākhyāna* and *Kaṇṇinuṇṇiciruttāmpu vyākhyāna*. In addition, there has been an old Telugu publication of a *Periyatirumaṭal vyākhyāna* though others attribute it to Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷapperumāl Nāyaṇār. None of these are attributed to Nampiḷḷai by Maṇavāḷamāmuni.
- A commentary on the *Periyālvār Tirumoli* attributed to Tiruvāymoḷi Piḷḷai has been published. The above mentioned was the teacher of Maṇavāḷamāmuni. Yet this commentary finds no mention in the *Upadeśaratnamālai*.
- Another disciple of Tiruvāymoḷi Piḷḷai and a contemporary of Maṇavāḷamāmuni called ĀyJananyācārya Svāmi wrote the *Tiruppāvai Īrāyirappaṭi* and the *Nālāyirappaṭi*. These too are not mentioned by Maṇavāḷamāmuni.
- Several commentaries mentioned in the *Periya Tirumuṭi Aṭaivu* are currently not available.⁶⁵

Vēṅkaṭakiruṣṇaṇ provides us with a final, tentative list of the entire range of verses on the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* which have been commented upon either as part of complete or incomplete commentaries:

First thousand

- 1 *Tirupallāṇṭu* 12 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai.
- 2 *Periyālvār Tirumoli* 461 verses Maṇavāḷamāmuni (420 verses), Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai (41 verses).
- 3 *Tiruppāvai* 30 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai, Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷapperumāl Nāyaṇār, Āy Jananyācārya Svāmi (2 commentaries)
- 4 *Nācciyār Tirumoli* 143 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai
- 5 *Perumāl Tirumoli* 105 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai
- 6 *Tiruccantaviruttam* 120 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai
- 7 *Tirupallīyerucci* 10 verses Nañcīyar, Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai
- 8 *Amalanātipirāṇ* 10 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai, Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷapperumāl Nāyaṇār, Vedānta Deśika.

- 9 *Kaṇṇinunṇiruttāmpu* 11 verses Nañcīyar, Nampiḷḷai, Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai, Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷapperumāl Nāyaṇār

Second thousand

- 10 *Periya Tirumoli* 1084 verses. Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai
 11 *Tirukku untāṇṭakam* 20 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai
 12 *Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam* 30 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai

Third thousand

- 13 *Mutal Tiruvantāti* 100 verses. Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai
 14 *Iraṇṭām Tiruvantāti* 100 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai
 15 *Mūṇrām Tiruvantāti* 100 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai
 16 *Nāṇmukaṇ Tiruvantāti* 96 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai
 17 *Tiruviruttam* 100 verses Nampiḷḷai, Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai, Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷapperumāl Nāyaṇār.
 18 *Tiruvāciriyam* 7 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai
 19 *Periya Tiruvantāti* 87 verses Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai
 20 *Tiruveḷukūrṇirukkai* 1 verse Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai (two commentaries)
 21 *Ciṇṇiya Tirumataḷ* 1 verse Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai, Nampiḷḷai or Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷapperumāl Nāyaṇār.

Fourth thousand

- 22 *TVM* 1102 verses Piḷḷāṇ, Nañcīyar, Nampiḷḷai (Vaṭakkuttiruvīti Piḷḷai), Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai, Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷa Cīyar.

In total, we have what amounts to approximately 40 commentaries excluding the various Sanskrit summaries of the *Divyaprabandham*, such as Vedānta Deśika's *Draṁḍopaniṣadtātparyaratnāvalī*, *Draṁḍopaniṣadsāra* and short commentaries such as that of Tirukkoṇṇeri Dāsyai etc.

Thus, we have an oceanic (just the *Īṭu Muppattāyirappaṭi* is twice as long as the *Mahābhārata*) corpus of literature which would eventually have to be looked at in its entirety to do justice to *prapatti* doctrinal development in the post-Rāmānuja period. This book chooses to focus on a mere fraction of this corpus: the commentaries which, by and large, precede both Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Vedānta Deśika and hence, the systematic state of the theological dispute, which concern themselves with *prapatti*. These are the five classical commentaries on the *Tiruvāymoḷi*, the last book of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*, by the poet known as Nammālvār. The significance of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* for the post-Rāmānuja tradition is indicated by the fact that the maximum number of commentaries were written on it. These commentaries are the *Ārāyirappaṭi*, the *Onpatināyirappaṭi*, the *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi*, the

Īṭu Muppattāyirappaṭi and the *Pannīrāyirappaṭi* commentaries. Out of all these commentaries, the core premises of the book have emerged through the examination of the first two commentaries, the *Ā āyirappaṭi* and the *Onpatināyirappaṭi*. This examination, in turn, inevitably led one to notice that both commentators drew significantly from Rāmānuja's own meagre writings on the issue of *prapatti*. Particularly significant seemed to be sections of his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Gītābhāṣya*, and the triad of short poems called the *Gadyatraya*, with regard to which the issue of his authorship is disputed. In other words, the conceptual apparatus of the *prapatti* discourse in the commentaries cannot be accessed without looking at these two texts. Hence, the study of *prapatti* in the commentaries begins with a backward glance at Rāmānuja.

These texts can be listed as follows, on the basis of grouping them within successive stages of *prapatti* doctrinal development:

Stage one

- 1 *Gītābhāṣya* and *Gadyatraya* (Rāmānuja: c. 1013–1137)
- 2 *Ārāyirappaṭi* commentary (Tirukkuruṭai Piran Pillān: c. 1060)

Stage two

- 1 *Onpatināyirappaṭi* commentary (Nañciyar: c. 1113–1208)

Stage three

- 1 *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* commentary (Periyavāccān Pillai: c. 1230)
- 2 *Īṭu Muppattāyirappaṭi* commentary (Nampiḷlai: c. 1230 and Vaṭakku Tiruviti Pillai: c. 1250)

Stage four

- 1 *Pannīrāyirappaṭi* commentary (Vāṭikesari Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷa Cīyar: c. 1300)

With Stage Three we have already reached the period of Pillai Lōkacārya and Vedānta Deśika and hence the clearly articulated *Tenkalai* and *Vaṭakalai* theological positions. Thus, Chapter 7 on the *Pannīrāyirappaṭi* commentary should be seen as dealing with the mature phase of *prapatti* doctrinal development.

The textual analysis of each of these texts — which forms Chapters 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the book (with Chapter 3 serving as a general introduction to the commentarial literature) — is based upon those text passages where *prapatti* is explicitly defined and forms the chief topic of discussion. As far as Rāmānuja is concerned, selected portions of the *Gītābhāṣya* and the *Gadyatraya*, as seen in the next chapter, are of great significance. As far as the commentaries are concerned,

the crucial text sections are the commentarial passages on the verse *TVM VI.10.10*, where all the commentators assume that the poet Nammālvār is doing *prapatti* to the idol form of Viṣṇu at the sacred center of Vēṅkaṭam/Tirumala. Thus, this verse becomes the single most important textual section in the poem where the majority of the commentaries put forward their definitions of *prapatti*. The study, therefore, keeps this text section as the focal point, supplementing it with commentarial material from other parts of the text when this was considered necessary to arrive at a fuller understanding of the concepts under consideration. This was particularly the case when it came to the first two stages of *prapatti* doctrinal development.

The last three decades has witnessed a substantial growth in the study of the Śrīvaiṣṇava commentaries. Valuable studies on the Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṇipravāla* literature (Venkatachari 1978; Hardy 1979, 1983, 1995) have been supplemented by an examination of writings of the schismatic period (Mumme 1985, 1987, 1988, 1992) and by studies which concern themselves directly with the primary materials of this thesis (Araṅkarācaṇ 1986; Carman and Narayanan 1989; Ṇānacuntaram 1989; Varadarājan 1989; P.T. Pūma 1994, Clooney 1996, 1998 and Vēṅkaṭakiruṣṇaṇ 2003). The book builds upon all this existent scholarship, but particular mention must be made of the impact of Clooney's work on the structures of meaning embedded in the *maṇipravāla* commentaries and that of Hardy's and Mumme's on the nature and theological dimensions of the schismatic dispute in Śrīvaiṣṇavism. The debt to Clooney's work lies in understanding that *maṇipravāla* commentaries artfully combine biographical anecdotes and dramatic narratives with theology to produce a new kind of commentary. The value of Hardy's work lies in his suggestion, elaborated in various articles, that the poet-saints (*ālvārs*) of the Tamil tradition of Śrīvaiṣṇavism have functioned as "powerful symbols," and as catalysts of socio-religious tension, which manifested itself in the priority given by the *ācāryas* to either the Tamil or the Sanskrit textual heritage of the tradition. The book is also indebted to Mumme's text-sensitive approach and for her comprehensive look at the fully fledged doctrinal dispute in the writings of Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Vedānta Deśika. "The Srirangam ācāryas" she says, "involved themselves in giving oral discourses and writing commentaries on the Nālāyira Divya Prabandham to inspire the piety and devotion of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community as a whole. Meanwhile, the Kanchi ācāryas specialized in the interpretation of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta and śāstra in order to defend Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrine and practice in philosophical debates with rival schools. The different purposes and audiences of these two enterprises made for distinctive tendencies in doctrinal emphasis, use of sources, and method of exposition."⁶⁶ Thus, eventually, Mumme comes to the conclusion that doctrinal differences between the two schools of Śrīvaiṣṇavism arise not out of outright disagreement but due to subtle differentiation in "interpretive strategies." This insight, as well as the need to stringently focus on how these strategies are deployed, also guides the study of the materials of a earlier and previous phase of the dispute, which I undertake, and is validated by it. Thus, this book builds upon

all this existent scholarship to ask questions about the development of a very specific dispute within the broader divide: that regarding *prapatti* or the path of salvation.

The study is based upon both diachronic and synchronic analysis. It begins with unearthing what are seen as certain core notions of *prapatti* in the writings of Rāmānuja. There follows a synchronic analysis of *prapatti* in the five major commentaries on the *Tiruvāymoli*. There is simultaneously an integration of the diachronic perspective when the notions of *prapatti* (particularly that of the first two commentaries) are viewed in relation to Rāmānuja and, in the final analysis, when the commentaries are seen as successive strata of a history of interpretation of *prapatti* over approximately three centuries. This book, therefore, is a textual study with a historical emphasis: it examines the history of interpretation of a theological concept in religious texts over a period of approximately two centuries, attempting, thus, to account for an important component of religious change.

The material being presented here argues that *prapatti* ideas in the early part of this period, in the writings of the teacher Rāmānuja, evolved in the context of exegesis on the *Bhagavadgītā* and in praise-poems (*stotra*) written in Sanskrit. Further, that these core ideas of *prapatti* reveal a soteriological concept which is defined in a heterogeneous way, its definition varying according to the status of its practitioner. The study also argues that these core ideas re-emerge in the Tamil commentaries of the teachers who came after Rāmānuja and are further theologically moulded by the emergence of and experimentation with this new literary genre. Thus, the first commentary of Tirukkurukaip Pirāṇ Piḷḷāṇ and the second commentary of Nañciyār differ in the sort of *prapatti* they emphasize because Nañciyār's commentary innovates on the commentarial genre including in itself elements of hagiography. The difference in emphasis between Piḷḷāṇ and Nañciyār on *prapatti* thus generated, which remains in a pre-systematic stage, is therefore seen as one crucial factor in the emergence of two different schools of interpretation of the concept by the mid-thirteenth century. Thus, it is suggested that the original heterogeneous understanding of *prapatti* in Rāmānuja is a major contributory cause to a larger theological dispute which arises among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas after the mid-thirteenth century and the eventual division of the community into two sub-sects.

This book, hence, is a textual study which attempts to lay aside, temporarily, existent conceptions of the development of Vaiṣṇavite sectarian identity in the Tamil country in the medieval period to look afresh at the "thought-world"⁶⁷ of the medieval, commentarial texts of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community. By doing so it shows that medieval sectarian formation in its theological dimension is a fluid and ambivalent enterprise, where conflict and differentiation are presaged on "sharing," whether of a common canon, languages (Tamil and Sanskrit), a common saint, a common corpus of rituals or of the arena of the temple itself.

THE CONCEPTUAL PARAMETERS

Rāmānuja and *Prapatti*¹

2.1 Introduction

There is general scholarly consensus that the formation and consolidation of Śrīvaiṣṇava theology falls into two phases with some clear disjunctures between them. The first phase being that of the first three teachers Nāthamuni (traditional dates: *ca.* CE ninth century), Yāmuna (traditional dates: CE 918–1038) and Rāmānuja (traditional dates: CE 1017–1137) and the second phase that of the post-Rāmānuja *ācāryas* culminating with Vedānta Deśika (traditional dates: CE 1268–1369). An important locus of this disjuncture has been identified as the break between the writings of Rāmānuja and that of his successors on *prapatti*. Van Buitenen’s comments on this perceived doctrinal divide between Rāmānuja and his successors in this regard are characteristic:

This progress of the aspirant to God by way of karma-, jñāna-, and bhakti-yoga, which are not separate roads but successive stages of the same way culminating in the attainment of God, is for Rāmānuja the fundamental teaching of the Gītā. But we miss in this brief exposition of Rāmānuja’s views that mystic doctrine which has grown so important in later Viśiṣṭādvaita, which has indeed divided the Vaiṣṇavas into two schools which exist today, the doctrine of *prapatti*. The doctrine of *prapatti* as a second, and indeed a preferable, way to the attainment of God beside bhakti is completely absent in Rāmānuja’s Gītābhāṣya.²

The traditional Śrīvaiṣṇava view, in contrast, is that there is no ideological break between Rāmānuja and the later *ācāryas* on *prapatti*. This is in keeping with the overall traditional perspective that there exists an unbroken line of *prapatti*-literature within the Śrīvaiṣṇava canon starting with sections of certain *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Pāñcarātrāgamas*, moving on to the devotional works of the *ācāryas* beginning with that of Yāmuna and Rāmānuja and culminating in the commentaries and *rahasya*-literature of the post-Rāmānuja period. Nevertheless, even while holding this view, the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas* after Rāmānuja seemed to have felt the need to take into account his exclusive emphasis

on *bhaktiyoga* as the means to salvation and his corresponding silence on *prapatti* in the *Śrībhāṣya*, since this text is considered his magnum opus, consolidating the theological foundations of Śrīvaiṣṇavism. They tended to account for this silence by saying that though Rāmānuja taught the path of *bhaktiyoga* in his major writings like the *Śrībhāṣya* and the other Vedāntic treatises, he all along practiced the secret, soteriological path of *prapatti*. One explanation advanced for the silence is that Rāmānuja did not explicitly reveal this secret means to salvation in his Vedāntic works because these texts were written for twice-born males (*dvija*) who were, in any case, qualified for *bhaktiyoga*.³ The second explanation is that the Vedāntic works are exoteric works meant for the consumption of non-Śrīvaiṣṇavas and that the doctrine of *prapatti* is an esoteric one meant only for members of the community. Hence, it is only in his devotional and poetic works and in practice among his community of disciples that Rāmānuja taught *prapatti*.⁴

The common ground between the traditional view and modern scholarship is to be found in the consensus that Rāmānuja may well be referring to *prapatti* in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Gītābhāṣya*. Scholars have particularly tended to focus on verse 18.66 of the *Bhagavadgītā* for which Rāmānuja gives two interpretations.⁵ The significance of this verse in the post-Rāmānuja period (where it is the subject of lengthy commentaries) has led scholars to examine the *Gītābhāṣya* on it as well as on other verses where Rāmānuja appears to be dealing with *prapatti*. More controversial as far as Rāmānuja's writings on *prapatti* are concerned are the three prose-poems collectively called the *Gadyatraya*, which seem to undeniably contain *prapatti* themes. These poems are attributed to Rāmānuja by tradition but this is questioned by recent scholarship. Thus, most research on the issue of Rāmānuja and *prapatti* has focused on these two texts: the *Gītābhāṣya* and the *Gadyatraya*. These very texts are also the focus of this chapter which deals, successively, with the seventh chapter of Rāmānuja's *Gītābhāṣya*, then his interpretation of *Bhagavadgītā* 18.66 and, finally, the *Gadyatraya*.

This chapter aims at showing that a soteriology based upon the concept of *prapatti* is clearly expounded in these texts and, hence, in the writings of Rāmānuja himself. It further suggests that this soteriology based upon *prapatti* is not systematized nor placed in a clear relationship (hierarchical or otherwise) to the scheme of the three *yogas* of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Gītābhāṣya*. Therefore, it differs from the "classical" *prapatti* doctrines which are evident in the thirteenth century Śrīvaiṣṇava texts of Piḷḷai Lokācārya (traditional dates: CE 1264–1327) and Vedānta Deśika (traditional dates: CE 1268–1369). Thus, while the chapter disputes the view expressed by scholars such as Van Buitenen (about the absolute cleavage between the soteriological doctrines of Rāmānuja and his successors), it also takes exception to the traditional view of an unaltered lineage of *prapatti* doctrines in Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Rather, what is being postulated is a historical movement from earlier to later stages of *prapatti* doctrinal development, a diachronic change effected in the realm of Śrīvaiṣṇava theology primarily through "the hermeneutical enterprise."⁶

The next section demonstrates that Rāmānuja deals extensively with *prapatti* in the seventh chapter of his *Bhagavadgītā* commentary and, further, that his use of the word *prapatti* in that chapter is differentiated: *prapatti* broadly has two meanings, in order to accommodate the aspirations and abilities of two different types of devotees, both of whom seek to reach God. Section 2.3 suggests that this differentiated meaning of *prapatti* might also account for the two interpretations which Rāmānuja offers for *Bhagavadgītā* 18.66, the *Caramaśloka*. Section 2.4 goes on to show that Rāmānuja's views on *prapatti* in the sections of the *Gītābhāṣya* analysed above do not encompass the entirety of his *prapatti* ideology. In other words, the chapter also addresses the contentious issue of Rāmānuja's authorship of the *Gadyatraya*. In analysing the prose-poems I come to the conclusion, in Section 2.5, that a common authorship of the *Gītābhāṣya* and the *Gadyatraya* is not unlikely, in the light of the terminological and doctrinal similarities between the two texts on *prapatti*. A look at the previous research on Rāmānuja's conception of *prapatti* in the *Gītābhāṣya*, with which the next section begins, contextualizes the starting point of this investigation.

2.2 *Prapatti* in *Gītābhāṣya*⁷

There exists, thus far, no comprehensive study of Rāmānuja's views on *prapatti* in the *Gītābhāṣya*. The existent scholarship on the issue may be characterized as follows: some scholars (Otto 1930; Kumarappa 1934) have advanced general theories on the soteriology of the *Gītābhāṣya*, based upon a comparison of it with other works of Rāmānuja.⁷ Others (van Buitenen 1956) have undertaken an analysis of the meaning and contextual use of the word *prapatti* and its synonyms in the *Gītābhāṣya*. Still others (Lester 1965; Carman 1974; Nayar 1988) have taken a close look at selected verses of the *Gītābhāṣya* for Ramanuja's *prapatti* doctrines. Each of these approaches have yielded different results, leading to the great divergence of opinion on the subject.

Among these approaches the most useful has been that of Van Buitenen which is characterized by the kind of careful attention to the contextual use of the words *prapatti* and *śaraṇāgati* in Rāmānuja that is also being attempted in this chapter. Van Buitenen (1956) showed that the word *prapatti* had various meanings in the *Gītābhāṣya*, depending on the context. One general meaning was simply that of taking refuge. More specifically, it was mainly used to refer to a step prior to *bhaktiyoga* even while Rāmānuja seemed to imply, in other contexts of the chapter, that it is equivalent to *bhaktiyoga*. Van Buitenen concluded that the former meaning of *prapatti* — as a step prior to *bhaktiyoga* — was the predominant one in the *Gītābhāṣya*.⁸ These observations, though brief, focused on the contextually differentiated meaning of the word leading one to ask why Rāmānuja would offer these multiple meanings at all. This question forms the starting point of my investigation on Rāmānuja and *prapatti*.⁹

The enquiry into this question is facilitated by looking, in greater detail than previous scholarship, at the seventh chapter of the *Gītābhāṣya*. This is a chapter which both Yāmuna, in his short poem on the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Gītārthasaṃgraha*, and Rāmānuja, in his introduction to the chapter, speak of as dealing with *śaraṇāgati/prapatti*. In his study of the *Gītābhāṣya* it was again Van Buitenen who first drew attention to Ramanuja's faithful modelling of the structure of his work on that of the *Gītārthasaṃgraha* and his fidelity to both Yāmuna's terminology and ideas.¹⁰ Of particular interest, for our purpose, is Yāmuna's division of the eighteen chapters of the *Bhagavadgītā* into three sections of six chapters each (*ṣaṭkas*) in verses 2–4. This is then followed by a description of the contents of each chapter in verses 5–22 of the *Gītārthasaṃgraha*. Here, the contents of Chapter 7 are listed in verse 11 as: "The seventh [chapter] speaks of the exact nature [of God] (*svayāthātmyam*), its concealment by *prakṛti* (*prakṛtyāśya tirodhiḥ*), refuge-seeking (*śaraṇāgatiḥ*), the divisions of devotees (*bhakta-bhedah*), and the excellence of the awakened person (*prabuddhasya śraiṣṭhyam*)."¹¹ Thus we have, in Yāmuna's own words, the admission that this chapter deals with the topic of *śaraṇāgati*. When we turn to Rāmānuja's introduction to this chapter we find that he echoes Yāmuna. "There, the seventh [chapter] refers to the exact [essential] nature of the Supreme Person who is thus worthy of worship, its concealment by *prakṛti*, the refuge-seeking in the Blessed One in order to avert [*prakṛti*], the different types of devotees and the excellence of the man of wisdom."¹² It is noteworthy that where Yāmuna in the *Gītārthasaṃgraha* used the word *śaraṇāgati*, Rāmānuja uses the word *prapatti*, making the two words synonymous. Later on, in the commentary on Chapter 7, vv. 24 – 26, Rāmānuja introduces the word *samāśrayaṇa*, also meaning to seek refuge, but with a human form of the deity. That is, Kṛṣṇa, in speaking of the corporeal incarnation he has taken, says that the purpose of doing so was in order for his devotees to take refuge with him.¹³ Thus, we have three different words, related but not quite synonymous, for "taking refuge" in this chapter of the *Gītābhāṣya*: *prapatti* and *śaraṇāgati* used interchangeably for taking refuge and the term *samāśrayaṇa* restricted particularly for the accessible manifestation, like a human descent of the God. Following his introductory statement that one of the topics of this chapter is *prapatti*, Rāmānuja talks about the knowledge (*jñāna*) pertaining to the essential nature of God (*madviśaya*) and discriminating knowledge (*vijñāna*), the first topic he has listed, in the commentary on the first three verses. He has Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva state that once such knowledge is known, there is nothing further that remains to be known with regard to him.¹⁴ This knowledge is then revealed, firstly, in the commentary on verses 7.4–5, to be about two sorts of *prakṛti*. There is the lower *prakṛti* (*aparāprakṛti*) which is eight-fold, consisting of the five elements and *mahat*, *buddhi* and *ahamkāra* (7.4).¹⁵ There is, in addition, a higher *prakṛti* (*parāprakṛti*), which Rāmānuja explains, is the object of enjoyment of sentient beings (*cetanabhogyabhūtā*), endowed with life (*jīvaabhūtā*), in the form of the sentient (*cetanarūpā*), which sustains the entire insentient universe (7.5).¹⁶

A further seven verses (7.6–12) show that Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva is the source and origin of both kinds of *prakṛti* and stands above them as the most supreme. Then we come to verse 7.13, where Kṛṣṇa begins to explain why his supreme nature remains unrecognized in the world. He first states: “This entire world is deluded by these three states (*bhāva*) [composed of] the strands (*guṇa*). It does not recognize me as the Supreme, Unchangeable [Being] above them.”¹⁷ The commentary on this verse indicates that the delusion is due to the three categories of things (*padārtha*) composed of the qualities, which are inferior (*nihīnatara*), perish in a moment (*kṣaṇadharma*) and are the bodies (*deha*), senses (*indriya*) and objects of enjoyment (*bhogyā*) which result from past actions.¹⁸

The next verse, and the commentary on it, shows us that the delusion and the souls’ enjoyment of inferior things themselves arise from a deeper cause: from the *māyā* composed of the strands (*guṇa*), hiding Kṛṣṇa’s true nature. In 7.14 Kṛṣṇa states: “For divine is this, composed of the strands, my *māyā*, difficult to transcend. Those who seek refuge with me alone, they cross over this *māyā*.”¹⁹ Commenting on the first line Rāmānuja points out that this *māyā* is composed of the three strands of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* and is divine because it has been created by the playful deity (deva) [Kṛṣṇa].²⁰ Then, significantly, he quotes *Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 4.10 further down (“Know, then, this *māyā* to be *prakṛti* and the Possessor of *māyā* to be the Great Lord”),²¹ to define this *māyā* as *prakṛti*. Thus, we come to see that the ultimate reason for ignorance of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva’s true nature is *guṇamayīmāyā* alias *prakṛti*.²²

It is important to understand that Rāmānuja in the *Gītābhāṣya* (as the *Bhagavadgītā* itself) makes a distinction between several meanings of *prakṛti*. In one sense, *prakṛti* refers to the “characteristic nature” (*svabhāva*) of an individual. It is in this sense in which Rāmānuja uses the word in *Gītābhāṣya* 3.33 and 4.6 — in the commentary on the latter verse, *prakṛti* refers to Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva’s *svabhāva* which he uses as the basis for manifesting. Understood in this sense as *svabhāva*, *prakṛti* is the characteristic property of the individual unique to him which defines him.²³ The conceptions of *prakṛti*, though, which are important for the soteriological scheme of the *Gītābhāṣya* are two. Firstly, we have the two-fold *prakṛti* mentioned above, in *Gītābhāṣya* 7.4–5 and then reiterated in *Gītābhāṣya* 14.3. Of these two the lower *prakṛti*, also called “the great brahman,”²⁴ is the one which is synonymous with *guṇamayīmāyā* as the fourteenth chapter of the *Gītābhāṣya* shows. There, in the commentary on verse 14.3, Rāmānuja states that the three *guṇas* of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are attached to the essential nature of *prakṛti* and are attributes of its characteristic nature.²⁵ The *guṇas* bind the embodied self (*dehin*), to a body divine or human,²⁶ and are thus responsible for its continued re-birth. The second meaning of *prakṛti*, connected to this notion of it as gross matter, emerges in *Gītābhāṣya* 3.33. Here, Rāmānuja distinguishes between *prakṛti*, on the one hand, and the essential nature of the self (*ātmavarūpa*), on the other. The scriptures establish that the latter must always be contemplated. Yet, even one who knows this acts among worldly objects, because of his *prakṛti*, which is synonymous for old predispositions (*prācīnavāsanā*).²⁷

As far as the *Gītābhāṣya* is concerned, the combination of *prakṛti* as gross matter composed of the *guṇas* as well as old predispositions which generate further *karma* imply that *prakṛti* contributes to continued re-birth and a bondage in transmigration for the self. It is the manner in which one can overcome this situation, i. e. overcome *prakṛti* in both these senses and, hence, rebirth itself, which Rāmānuja addresses in the second half of the commentary on *Gītābhāṣya* 7.14 to which we return.

He [Kṛṣṇa] talks of the means which will free one from *māyā*. Those who approach me alone for refuge, whose intention is true, who is supremely compassionate and the refuge of the entire world, impervious to distinctions, they cross over this my *māyā*, composed of the strands. The meaning is that, casting off [that] *māyā* they will worship me alone.²⁸

Here, it is clearly stated that the *māyā* can only be crossed through taking refuge (*śaraṇa*) with Kṛṣṇa, which is then described as a means (*upāya*) to this end. When we understand Rāmānuja's comment in the introduction to the chapter that *prakṛti* (concealing the nature of god) is averted by *prapatti*²⁹ in conjunction with the commentary on 7.14, it follows that it is *guṇamayīmāyā* (= *prakṛti*) which is averted by *prapatti*. Finally, that, in the event of refuge-seeking, the characteristics of Kṛṣṇa which come to the fore are those of his intentionality (*saṃkalpa*), his compassion (*kāruṇya*) and his role as the refuge of the entire world (*aśeṣalokaśaraṇya*).

Next, we learn that the ability of humans to take refuge with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva is directly related to the effect of *māyā* upon them as well as their state of being. The first broad divide is between the evil-doers (*duṣkṛtinaḥ*) and those who do good (*sukṛtinaḥ*). The former, who do not take refuge, are fools (*mūḍhāḥ*), the lowest of men (*narādhamāḥ*), their wisdom robbed by *māyā* (*māyāpahṛtajñānāḥ*) and demonic (*āsurambhāvam āśritāḥ*) (7.15).³⁰ Verse 7.16, and the commentary on it, show that those who do good (*sukṛtinaḥ*), in contrast, do take refuge³¹ even while being graded into four in terms of the extent of their meritorious actions.³²

Rāmānuja defines the four types of those who do good as follows: their common characteristic is that all of them seek refuge with Kṛṣṇa and worship him. But they have different reasons for doing so. The needy one (*ārta*) is devoid of foundations (*pratiṣṭhāhīna*) and is dispossessed of his sovereignty (*bhraṣṭaisvarya*).³³ He desires to obtain these again. The seeker of material gain (*arthārthin*) is one who is without sovereignty and therefore desires it. Rāmānuja states that these two are only superficially different from each other. The one who wants knowledge (*jijñāsu*) desires to obtain that essential nature of the self which is separated from *prakṛti*. Since knowledge alone is his essential nature, he is called "one who wants knowledge". The man of wisdom (*jñānī*) occupies the highest place, since it is he who knows that the essential nature of the self has as its sole essence subordination to Kṛṣṇa alone. Not stopping with reaching

the solitary self, separated from *prakṛti* but, desiring the Blessed One, he considers him to be the ultimate goal.³⁴ Rāmānuja considers 7.17 and 18 to deal with the particular excellence of this man of wisdom, as the best of these four types of those who do good (*sukṛtinaḥ*). In the commentary on 7.18, Rāmānuja says that the *jñānī*'s excellence lies in the inability to live unsupported by Kṛṣṇa, whom he regards as his ultimate goal, thus engendering an identical dependence in Kṛṣṇa as well.³⁵

Next, we come to 7.19: "At the end of several lifetimes the man of wisdom resorts to me thinking, 'Vāsudeva is everything.' Such a great soul is exceedingly hard to find."³⁶ In the commentary it is stated: "This seeking of refuge in me, preceded by the knowledge of the exact nature of the self having as its sole essence the state of subordination to me, is not the fruit of a small number of innumerable, auspicious births. But at the end of that, that is the completion of several births, several virtuous births, one becomes possessed of the knowledge, 'I am one whose sole essence lies in being subordinate to Vāsudeva and my essential nature, condition and activities are under his control. He is supreme due to his innumerable, auspicious qualities.' Then he takes refuge with me — shows devotion to me — [thinking] 'Vāsudeva alone is the supreme goal and the means to it. And He alone is all that which remains to be wished for.' That high-minded one — that great person — is exceedingly hard to find — is extremely rare in the world."³⁷

The commentary on this verse suggests that even while all those who do good deeds seek refuge with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, the *jñānī*'s act of doing so is different from that of the others. His act of taking refuge (*prapadana*) comes after innumerable virtuous births. After these births he has realized that:

- 1 he is a subordinate (*śeṣa*) of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and entirely dependent on Him;
- 2 that Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva is the highest God because of his innumerable, auspicious qualities; and finally,
- 3 that Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva alone is both the goal (*prāpya*) and the means to it (*prāpaka*). Thus, knowing the truth about himself, about God and the way to salvation and its goal, the *jñānī* seeks refuge.

The commentary on the next two verses, 7.20–21, proceeds to explain why the *jñānī* is so rare, by setting up a contrast between his refuge-seeking with Kṛṣṇa and the protection others seek from other gods (*devatāḥ*). These others are the people of the world who are controlled by their *prakṛti* and resort to other gods (v. 20)³⁸ without realizing that these gods are nothing but bodies of Kṛṣṇa (v. 21).³⁹ Then, in the commentary on 7.23, Rāmānuja describes the rewards due to such people of the world, in contrast to that which his devotees obtain. "In the case of those of limited intelligence, whose intellect is slight, who worship only those such as Indra, the fruit of such worship is limited and also finite ... Besides, my devotees, knowing that those very actions are in the form of [acts of] my worship, abandoning attachment to limited fruits, with the sole purpose of pleasing

me, attain me. And they do not return again.”⁴⁰ At the end of this commentary Rāmānuja quotes *Bhagavadgītā*, 8.16 to justify this view: “For it will be said, ‘But, after attaining me, O Kaunteya, there is no rebirth.’”⁴¹

Here, in the commentary, Rāmānuja makes it clear that only those who are devotees — *bhaktas* — who abandon attachment to limited fruits and concentrate solely on pleasing Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva through their acts of worship have no rebirth. The question therefore arises as to who might be defined as such a *bhakta*. Even while Rāmānuja’s commentary on 7.16 describes four types of those who do good (*sukṛtinaḥ*), it becomes apparent that among them only the *jñānī* fits the description, in 7.23, of such a *bhakta*. For the others had sought refuge with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva in order to obtain sovereignty or the solitary self. It was the *jñānī* alone who abandoned the desire for petty fruits and sought Kṛṣṇa himself as his goal. In order to verify if Rāmānuja implies only the *jñānī*, when he speaks of the *bhakta* who has no rebirth, we first need to move further down the chapter to the commentaries on verses 7.27–28, where the fate of the different categories of humans is again discussed.

In the commentary on 7.27 Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva tells Arjuna that all beings, at creation, even at the very moment of birth, get into delusion (*sammoha*). This delusion is described in terms of the pair of opposites of like (*icchā*) and dislike (*dveṣa*) which are like heat and cold. As a result of this delusion, their nature is such that they do not feel happiness or sorrow at the union with or separation from Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. In contrast to these beings, the *jñānī*’s nature is to feel happiness and sorrow solely on account of such union and separation. Kṛṣṇa adds that no one, [meaning very few], is born with such a nature.⁴² Moving on from this comment contrasting the other beings with the *jñānī*, Rāmānuja expands in the commentary on 7.28 on all those who have done meritorious deeds (*pūṇyakarmaṇaḥ*). The verse 7.28 is as follows: “But those of meritorious deeds, whose sins⁴³ have come to an end they worship me steadfast in their vows, freed from the delusion of the pair [of opposites].”⁴⁴ On this Rāmānuja comments: “But there are those whose sins which are the cause of like and dislike, the pair of opposites consisting of the strands, which are an obstacle to the state of turning towards me and which have been existing since eternity, come to an end — are destroyed — through the accumulation of superior merit earned through several births. They, in accordance with the gradation of their good deeds mentioned previously, taking refuge with me, are freed from that delusion made up of the qualities. Steadfast in their vows, resolute in their intention, they worship me alone in order to be released from old age and death, and to obtain both great sovereignty and me.”⁴⁵

The commentary on 7.28 makes it clear that all four categories of beings (described previously in *Gītābhāṣya* 7.16) are rid of their sins (*pāpa*) and their delusion (*moha*) due to the accumulation of good deeds in previous births. Then, they seek refuge with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva for varied reasons and obtain what they each desire. This still does not imply, though, that all of them escape the cycle of rebirth by thus taking refuge. It is only in the commentary on verse 15 of the next

chapter (i.e. 8.15) that Rāmānuja finally clarifies who really escapes rebirth. He states that those who aspire to sovereignty will return to the transmigratory world while only those who wish to contemplate the solitary self, the *jijñāsu/kaivalyārthī*, and the man of wisdom, the *jñānī*, have no rebirth. In particular the men of wisdom, because they alone have obtained knowledge of the essential nature of Kṛṣṇa, after obtaining which there is no rebirth.⁴⁶

This detailed analysis of what Rāmānuja says about *prapatti* in *Gītābhāṣya* 7 reveals the following:

- 1 He uses the words *prapatti* and *śaraṇāgati* interchangeably, to mean to take refuge with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, while the word *samāśrayaṇa* appears to be specially used of the protection sought from an accessible form of the deity, such as his corporeal manifestation.
- 2 The teachings about *prapatti* are embedded in a chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* where Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva's divine nature and its relation to *prakṛti* are revealed for the first time. Further, it is also the first chapter where a detailed categorization of the different types of devotees, their different natures, goals and ultimate destinations are discussed.
- 3 The role of *prapatti* within the scheme of the *Gītābhāṣya* is stated at the beginning of the chapter by Rāmānuja. Where Yāmuna, in the *Gītārthasaṃgraha*, listed *śaraṇāgati* as one of the topics of the chapter⁴⁷, Rāmānuja's phrasing is significantly both similar and different. He sticks to Yāmuna's definition of content while connecting the individual topics to each other, unlike in the *Gītārthasaṃgraha*. Thus, he says: "There, the seventh [chapter] refers to the exact [essential] nature of the Supreme Person who is thus worthy of worship, its concealment by *prakṛti*, the refuge-seeking in the Blessed One in order to avert [*prakṛti*] ..." ⁴⁸ *Prapatti*, therefore, averts *prakṛti* which conceals the nature of the Supreme Person. Further, the commentary on 7.14 has shown us that this *prakṛti* is synonymous with *guṇamayīmāyā*. Therefore, it is this *guṇamayīmāyā* which *prapatti* averts. Secondly, after *prapatti*, the nature of the Supreme Person, God, is revealed. Now, according to what Yāmuna says in the third verse of the *Gītārthasaṃgraha*, the attainment of the essential nature of God is reached through the practice of *bhaktiyoga*.⁴⁹ Considering Rāmānuja's overall fidelity in the commentary to Yāmuna's ideas, we may conjecture that *prapatti*, in that it removes the first obstacle to seeing the nature of God, is an intermediate step leading to this *bhaktiyoga*. And this is confirmed by the commentary on 7.14 where Rāmānuja says: "The meaning is that, casting off [that] *māyā*, they [the *bhaktas*] will worship me alone."⁵⁰ Here, as we have previously seen, *māyā* stands as a synonym for the lower *prakṛti*, while the form *upa+as* in Rāmānuja tends to be synonymous with *bhakti/bhaktiyoga*.⁵¹ Therefore, *upāsana/bhakti* begins only after the casting off of *māyā*, which presupposes *prapatti*. The conclusive proof for this interpretation of *prapatti* as a step towards *bhaktiyoga* in the *Gītābhāṣya* lies in the beginning of the

commentary on the very next verse, 7.15, where Rāmānuja says: “[In answer to the question], ‘Why does not everyone do *prapatti* to the Blessed One, which brings about worship (*upāsana*) towards Him?’, — He [Kṛṣṇa] says here ...”⁵² In other words, a predominant definition of *prapatti* in *Gītābhāṣya* 7 is that it is, as van Buitenen rightly stated, a penultimate step to *bhaktiyoga*.

- 4 Next, let us consider the *Gītābhāṣya*’s categorization of those who do *prapatti* and what they achieve by doing it. The first level of distinction, which both the text and the commentary establish, is between those who don’t do *prapatti* at all, the evil-doers (*duṣkṛtinaḥ*) and those who do good (*sukṛtinaḥ*), who do *prapatti* (7.15). Just above the evil-doers in the hierarchy would be those who seek refuge with other gods, such as Indra. These people receive finite, unspecified rewards. They do so because, even though they have sought the protection of false gods, they have actually taken refuge without knowing it in Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva as well, whose body these other gods are (7.20–21). Higher than both these categories are those who do good (*sukṛtinaḥ*), later also called those who do meritorious deeds (7.28). These beings consciously seek refuge with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. Among them, *prapatti* is done for various reasons: to obtain or regain material wealth and non-material powers, to obtain knowledge of the solitary self or to obtain God (7.14). Once they do *prapatti*, they are also freed from their delusion (*moha*) consisting of the strands (*guṇamaya*). It is worth noting, here, that perhaps Rāmānuja intends some kind of correspondence to be drawn between the *guṇamayīmāyā* of 7.14 and the *guṇamayamoha* of 7.28. Further, the commentary on 7.28 shows that these different types of people have all come to do *prapatti* because their sins have already been destroyed in previous lives. In the next section (3) on *Gītābhāṣya* 18.66, though, we shall discover that sins are destroyed by Kṛṣṇa himself as result of the *bhakta*’s *prapatti*. What we seem to have, then, is a shift in the commentarial viewpoint by the time we reach the eighteenth chapter, on how the devotee’s sins come to be destroyed. But, in this chapter, the destruction of *pāpa* precedes *prapatti* which is then followed by the destruction of the person’s confusion, *moha*. Finally, though each of these persons gets what he desires through *prapatti*, it is only the *jijñāsu* and the *jñānī* who can be called the ideal *bhaktas*. For it is they alone who don’t have rebirth (8.15), having come to know either one’s own or God’s essential nature. In other words, the *Gītābhāṣya* also suggests that the intentionality behind taking refuge affects its final outcome: only those who do it wishing for knowledge, whether of the solitary self or of God’s real nature, transcend transmigration. ***Prapatti*, then, is an act which has different consequences depending on the type of person and his intentionality in undertaking it.** And nowhere does this differentiated definition become more apparent than when we come to consider the specific *prapatti* of the *jñānī*.
- 5 The definition of the *jñānī*’s *prapatti* is given in *Gītābhāṣya* 7.19. It differs from that of other beings, first, in that its goal is God rather than any other

material or spiritual benefit. Second, it presupposes three kinds of knowledge: (i) that of one's own nature as a subordinate (*śeṣa*), (ii) that of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva's real nature and (iii) that He alone is both the means (*prāpaka*) and the object (*prāpya*) of salvation. In other words, the description of the sort of knowledge which the *jñānī* is expected to arrive at before he seeks *prapatti* seems to include the knowledge of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and his innumerable, auspicious qualities which sounds similar to the stage arrived at through the practice of *bhaktiyoga*. It therefore becomes clear that the *jñānī*'s *prapatti* is not so much a simple seeking of refuge for other ends or even a penultimate step to *bhaktiyoga*, as it is another name for *bhaktiyoga*. And, in fact, in the commentary on 7.19, Rāmānuja affirms that this *prapatti* is *bhaktiyoga* by glossing the words “*maṃ prapadye*” with “*mam upāste*”, thus equating the two.

In conclusion, it can be firmly established that not only does Rāmānuja deal with *prapatti* as a soteriological concept in the *Gītābhāṣya* but that he proposes a differentiated meaning of *prapatti*, depending on the type of person undertaking it, in *Gītābhāṣya* 7. Among those who do *prapatti* for soteriological purposes, as opposed to those who do it for material gains, we can distinguish two categories: the *jijñāsu*, on the one hand, and those who wish to reach Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva himself, on the other. Among the latter, again, there are two sub-divisions: those who do *prapatti* as a penultimate step to *bhaktiyoga* and the *jñānī*. In the case of the last mentioned, *prapatti* is *bhaktiyoga*. Finally, the *Gītābhāṣya* also establishes a link between *prapatti* doctrines and the issue of *pāpa*, sin. Thus far we have seen that a purification from sin takes place prior to *prapatti*. It will be seen, in the next section on *Bhagavadgītā* 18.66 that the relation between *prapatti* and sin remains a central and problematic issue in *prapatti* soteriology.

2.3 The *Caramaśloka*: *Gītābhāṣya* on *Bhagavadgītā* 18.66

Patricia Mumme (1988), in her study of the Śrīvaiṣṇava theological dispute over *prapatti*, has traced the development of a genre of works classified as “texts relating to esoteric matters” (*rahasyagrantha*) in the post-Rāmānuja period. These texts contain interpretations of three mantras, the *Tirumantra*, *Dvaya* and *Caramaśloka*, which were considered as encoding *prapatti* doctrine as well as used in the act of doing *prapatti*. The thirteenth century saw the full flowering of *rahasya*-literature: the three *mantras*, together with the three basic ontological categories (*tattvas*) of Viśiṣṭādvaita became the subject of lengthy treatises, written by *ācāryas* like Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai, Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Vedānta Deśika.⁵³ Nevertheless, the *mantras* had become the vehicles of theological interpretation on *prapatti* even in Rāmānuja's time or shortly thereafter. This is substantiated by two poems: the *Ñāṇasāram* of Aruḷālap Perumāḷ Emperumāṇār (a younger contemporary of Rāmānuja) as well as a short poem of eight verses, called the

Aṣṭaśloki, written by Parāśara Bhaṭṭar (son of one of Rāmānuja's disciples), both of which are early works dealing with one or the other of the three *mantras*.⁵⁴ Further, as the next section shows, already in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* there is allusion to the *Dvaya mantra*'s centrality to the action of *prapatti*. Considering all these facts, in Rāmānuja's interpretation of *Bhagavadgītā* 18.66 might well lie the reasons for its later theological importance. It is for this reason that the commentary on the verse deserves our full scrutiny.⁵⁵

In the verses leading up to the *Caramaśloka* we first find the reference to refuge-seeking in 18.62. After urging Arjuna to do his duty and fight (18.59) Kṛṣṇa says that Īśvara dwells in the heart of all beings and adds: "Take refuge with him alone, with your entire being, Bhārata. Through his graciousness you will attain the highest peace as a state which is eternal."⁵⁶ Rāmānuja begins the commentary on this verse by stating: "He [Kṛṣṇa] talks about the reason for the cessation of this *māyā* ..."⁵⁷ In other words, Rāmānuja is yet again returning to a topic we are familiar with from the previous section: the means to cross over *māyā* alias *prakṛti*. He then continues: "Because it is thus [that he is bound up with *māyā*], then, therefore, seek refuge with all your being — Seek refuge with [him] with your entire self — Follow Him alone with your entire self. He who rules over all, who out of parental love for one who has taken refuge with him has become your charioteer and who commands you [saying], 'Act in this manner'."⁵⁸ Here, Rāmānuja glosses *śaraṇam gaccha* with "to follow, to serve" (*anuvartasva*). This interpretation is consistent with the commentary on 7.14 and 7.20–28 where it had been stated that one has to take refuge with Kṛṣṇa to cross *prakṛti* and that some among those who do so are never reborn again. This avoidance of rebirth is affirmed in *Gītābhāṣya* 18.62 by the further statement that those who act in this manner reach that eternal state and gaze forever upon Viṣṇu's Supreme Abode.⁵⁹ The commentary on the next two verses (18.63–64) states that the entire teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā* relating to salvation comprises of the doctrine of the three *yogas* (18.63), of which the most secret (*guhyatama*) is the doctrine of *bhaktiyoga* (18.64).

Then we come to verse 18.65: "Place your mind on me. Be my devotee. Worship me. Prostrate before me. You will come to me, I promise you truly [for] you are dear to me."⁶⁰ Here, the commentator begins by remarking: "The [practice] to be known as *vedana*, *dhyāna* and *upāsana* etc., which is enjoined in the Vedāntic, [texts] such as ... which is equivalent to seeing, a perennial remembrance and inexpressibly dear [to me] is, in this case, enjoined [in the words], 'Place your mind on me.'"⁶¹ Thus, according to the *Gītābhāṣya*, after telling Arjuna that he needs to take refuge with him in order to cross *māyā* a few verses earlier, Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva now tells him that he is enjoined to do *vedana* etc. which is synonymous with *bhaktiyoga*. Finally, at the conclusion of the commentary on verse 18.65 Arjuna is told: "Proceeding thus, you will attain me alone. I assure you that this is true. I give you my promise. This is not merely to entice [you], for you are dear to me. For it has already been stated, 'For I am inexpressibly dear to the man of wisdom and he too is dear to me.'"⁶² Having instructed Arjuna thus

Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva now pronounces the *Caramaśloka*, the first interpretation of which begins as follows: “Even while doing all *dharma*s in the form of *karmayoga*, *jñānayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*, which are the means to the highest good, which are done through worship of me, with great love, according to one’s qualification, renounce them in the manner taught, by the renunciation of fruits, actions and agency, contemplating me alone as the agent, the object of worship, the goal and the means to it. It has been confirmed emphatically, in the beginning of the chapter, that this alone is the scripturally ordained renunciation of all *dharma*s as in [the following passage]...”⁶³ In referring to the renunciation of fruits, actions and agency Rāmānuja proceeds to cite verse 4, 9 and 11 of the same chapter. The commentary on these verses is, therefore, explanatory in this regard.

In the commentary on 18.4 it is said: “Renunciation with regard to fruit is to think, ‘Fruits such as heaven etc. the result of action, are not for me.’ Renunciation with regard to the sphere of action is the renunciation of possessiveness about actions of the kind, ‘this action is mine in that it is the means for securing my fruit.’ Renunciation with regard to the sphere of agency is the giving up of one’s agency through contemplating all agency [as resting] in the Lord of all.”⁶⁴ In the commentary on 18.9, Rāmānuja comments that renunciation which can be called *sāttvika* comes about when all actions enjoined by the scriptures for one’s caste and station in life, such as the daily and special rituals as well as the great sacrifices, are done as propitiations to Kṛṣṇa and as an end in themselves. This is achieved through giving up attachment and possessiveness with regard to actions and fruits.⁶⁵

The commentary on 18.11 extends to that on 18.12 and summarizes how the person who desires salvation (*mumukṣu*) acts and yet renounces action at the same time. First, in *Gītābhāṣya* 18.11, an opponent’s view, most probably that of a *Mīmāṃsaka*, is put forward: “Surely, the *agnihotra*, [and other such rituals such as] the great sacrifices are enjoined by the scriptures because they are connected with fruits such as heaven. For even in the case of daily and special rituals [as the following text shows] the injunction [is given] only because of their connection with fruits. Therefore, in performing actions which are understood as having the nature of [being] the means to such and such fruits, connection with fruits in the form of that which is agreeable and disagreeable is unavoidable even for one who doesn’t desire fruits, like [in the case of] sowing seeds etc. Therefore, one who desires salvation should not perform actions, since they produce fruits which are opposed to salvation.”⁶⁶

In response to this view that the person who desires salvation should in actuality renounce all action the commentator states, in *Gītābhāṣya* 18.12, that for the one who has renounced agency etc. there are no fruits which are inimical to salvation.⁶⁷ He then proceeds to describe the correct manner of renunciation: “Now he [Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva] talked of how one can be without agency by ascribing agency to the Blessed One, the Supreme Person, the Inner Controller. The renunciation of possessiveness even with regard to fruits and actions comes about only through this. For it is the Supreme Person who undertakes actions through his own individual self

and his own senses, bodies and vital breaths, for the sake of his own sport. Therefore fruits, such as even appeasing one's hunger etc. which accrue to the individual self, and all the actions which are the means thereof, are the Supreme Person's alone."⁶⁸

Having provided this wealth of interpretation for the meaning and manner of renunciation, Rāmānuja concludes his first interpretation of the *Caramaśloka*.

"I will liberate you from all sins" means, "I will liberate you who act in this way from all sins which are an obstacle to attaining me, [those in] the form of doing what should not be done and not doing that which should be done, which are eternal and piled up through beginningless time."⁶⁹

The *Caramaśloka* is framed in a context where the person addressed is a devotee who seeks salvation — a *mumukṣu*. Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva first talks to Arjuna about the general fate of such a person who seeks refuge, stating that he has no rebirth (*Gītābhāṣya* 18.62). He then advises Arjuna to start *bhaktiyoga* (*Gītābhāṣya* 18.65). The first interpretation of the *Caramaśloka* to emerge out of this general context subsumes the following ideas:

- 1 Rāmānuja is clear that there is a certain kind of renunciation of the three *yogas* by the one who desires salvation (18.66). This involves, not an actual end to the practice of the *yogas* but a renunciation of fruits, action and agency with regard to them (*ibid.*).
- 2 The renunciation of fruits applies to petty and limited rewards such as heaven, which automatically accrue to ritual action and which are rejected by the salvation-seeker. The renunciation of actions is to renounce the thought that they are one's own actions, done in order to secure a particular fruit. The renunciation of agency entails assigning it to God, the Supreme Person (18.4). Thus, the salvation-seeker does not assert the autonomy of his agency in any way, but sees all actions as performed by God through him. Further, Rāmānuja shows that it is the renunciation of agency which is crucial: it is through this that the remaining renunciations of fruit and actions also come about (18.12).
- 3 The type of devotee described in this first interpretation of the *Caramaśloka*, therefore, is a *mumukṣu* who is already doing *karmayoga*, *jñānayoga* and *bhaktiyoga* while renouncing them by contemplating (*anusaṃdhāna*) Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva alone as the agent (*karṭṛ*), the object of worship (*arādhya*), the goal (*prāpya*) and the means to it (*upāya*) (18.66). It is a devotee whose "refuge-seeking" (*śaraṇa*) is of this specific type that Kṛṣṇa, in this first interpretation of the *Caramaśloka*, promises to liberate from his sins. When we compare this description of the devotee with the descriptions of the various categories of refuge-seekers in *Gītābhāṣya* 7 the similarity with the description of the *jñānī* in 7.19 becomes apparent. It is only the *prapatti* of the *jñānī* which involves

contemplating Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva as both the goal of salvation and the means to it. **Thus, in this first interpretation of the *Caramaśloka* it is highly likely that Rāmānuja is framing it as an address by Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva to the *jñānī*, whose *prapatti* is the equivalent of *bhaktiyoga*.**

- 4 This conjecture is strengthened when we further consider the definition of the *pāpa* which Kṛṣṇa promises to release this devotee from and compare it to the definition of the *pāpa* of all refuge-seekers offered in *Gītābhāṣya* 7.28. Here in the first interpretation of 18.66, *pāpa* is described simply as doing that which should not be done (*akṛtyakaraṇa*) and not doing what should be done (*kṛtyākaraṇa*). In contrast to this, the *pāpa* of *Gītābhāṣya* 7.28 was described as the cause of like and dislike which is the pair of opposites consisting of the strands (*guṇamayadvandvaicchādvēṣahetubhūta*), an obstacle to turning towards me [Kṛṣṇa] (*madaunmukhyavirodhi*) and proceeding since beginningless time (*anādikālapravṛtta*). In other words, the *pāpa* of 7.28 is far more heinous than the *pāpa* described in the first interpretation of 18.66. The latter is rather the residual sins of the highest category of devotee, the *jñānī*, and far less grave than that of those who have not yet commenced *bhaktiyoga*.

Hence, we see that Rāmānuja's first interpretation of the *Caramaśloka* deals with Kṛṣṇa's promise to the highest category of devotee, the *jñānī*, who is already practising the three types of *yogas*, and is now told to do the kind of *prapatti* which is the equivalent of *bhaktiyoga*. Kṛṣṇa, in return, promises to free him from any residual sins which might constitute a final obstacle to his attainment. **Correspondingly, the second interpretation of the *śloka* seems to relate to the *prapatti* of the other type of *bhakta* — whom I shall call the non-*jñānī* — who is yet to commence *bhaktiyoga* and is unable to do so because of his sinfulness, his lack of purity.** In the second interpretation Rāmānuja states:

Arjuna was dejected, seeing that *bhaktiyoga* can be practised successfully [only] by a person who is free from all sins and to whom the Blessed One is inexpressibly dear, seeing further that the sins which are inimical to starting *bhaktiyoga* are infinite and the *dharma*s which are in the form of expiation [for them], to be done in a limited time, do not help in overcoming them [and] that he was therefore unworthy of starting *bhaktiyoga*. Then, the Blessed One said, "Abandoning all *dharma*s, take refuge in me alone", thus driving away his sorrow. "There are sins, hoarded up from beginningless time, of various types, endless, [which are] obstacles to [your] undertaking *bhaktiyoga*. There are expiatory rites for each of these [actions] such as *kṛcchra*, *cāndrāyaṇa*, [and others, including] *agniśtoma* etc. various, eternal, which are difficult to do for one such as you who has little time. [Therefore], renouncing all [these] *dharma*s, in order to succeed in beginning *bhaktiyoga*, take refuge in me alone. I, who am supremely compassionate, the Refuge of the entire world impervious to distinctions, the Ocean of Compassion for those who seek me. I will free you from all

those sins which have been spoken of, which are obstacles to beginning that *bhakti* towards the essential nature. Do not grieve”.⁷⁰

In this second interpretation of the *Caramaśloka* we are given to understand that Arjuna himself is convinced that he is an impure, ordinary *bhakta*: a non-*jñānī* unable to start *bhaktiyoga* because of his sins. And it is for such a *bhakta* that Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva provides a solution here. He tells Arjuna that his *pāpa* are “hoarded up from beginningless time” (*anādikālasamcita*), a description which matches that of them in the commentary on 7.28. But, the manner in which they are destroyed here is different from what happens to them in the commentary on 7.28. In the latter, they came to an end prior to the person taking refuge, due to an accumulation of good deeds in previous lives. Then, as a result of their destruction, the person took refuge with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and was freed from *guṇamayamoha*. This, then, rendered him pure enough to start *bhaktiyoga*. But, here in the second interpretation of 18.66, what is being proposed is entirely different. The ordinary *bhakta* who is too sinful to undertake *bhaktiyoga* is told that taking refuge/*prapatti* functions as a substitute for all expiation (*prāyaścitta*). Simply by taking refuge, his sins will be destroyed by Kṛṣṇa, permitting him to start *bhaktiyoga*. The vocabulary of *prapatti*, in this interpretation, also differs completely from the previous one, where the emphasis was on renunciation and the contemplation of one’s non-agency. Here, it corresponds rather to a simple surrender to Kṛṣṇa. Also the qualities of Kṛṣṇa which are cited in this interpretation are the same as those mentioned in the commentary on 7.14 which is about the refuge-seeking of ordinary devotees: these are his supreme compassion (*paramakāruṇya*) and his role as the refuge of the entire world (*aśeṣalokaśaraṇya*). The implication of this second interpretation of 18.66 is rather radical: the *bhakta* who is unable to undertake the three *yogas* can, through *prapatti*, arrive at that same state of purity which the *jñānī* has reached only through the previous, arduous practice of *karmayoga*, *jñānayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*. Though Rāmānuja makes it clear that even this *prapatti* is only done for the sake of starting *bhaktiyoga*, its efficacy as a shortcut to getting rid of one’s sins necessarily calls into question the soteriological need for the three-*yoga* scheme at all.

This analysis of the seventh chapter and the concluding portions of the eighteenth of the *Gītābhāṣya* clearly show that Rāmānuja is talking about “taking refuge”, *śaraṇāgati/samāśrayaṇa/prapatti*, as a device to attain various goals such as sovereignty or salvation. For those who resort to it for salvational purposes it also ensures that they are not reborn again. The predominant function of *prapatti* appears to be as a tool to purify the devotee from the effects of *guṇamayīmāyā/prakṛti*, enabling him to commence *bhaktiyoga*. This function of *prapatti* is expanded upon in the second interpretation of *Bhagavadgita* 18.66 to include an expiatory aspect by which the devotee is also released from all his sins. Thus, for the ordinary *bhakta*, the non-*jñānī* who wishes to do *bhaktiyoga*, *prapatti* purifies him immediately, serves as a substitute for all expiation and makes irrelevant the arduous practice implied in the three-*yoga* scheme. In such cases, *prapatti* is described as a simple

act of taking refuge which has great effective force. In contrast to this, the *prapatti* of the *jñānī* is both exceptional and an exception. It is a knowledge (*jñāna*) of his own real nature as a subordinate (*śeṣa*) as well as a contemplation, *anusaṁdhāna*, of this knowledge which includes the attitude that God alone is both the means (*prāpaka*) and goal (*prāpya*) to salvation. **This *prapatti* of the *jñānī* I call, for heuristic purposes, *jñāna-prapatti*. That of the other *bhakta*, the one who wishes to start *bhaktiyoga*, I term for now the first configuration of *prapatti*.** In conclusion, it can be established that in the *Gītābhāṣya*'s definitions of *prapatti* we have the tentative delineation of a soteriological concept which, unlike the three-*yogas*, is flexible, which is defined, not in absolute terms, but in terms of who is practising it. The next section, which is an analysis of the *Gadyatraya*, shows how this differentiated concept undergoes even further modification.

2.4 The *Gadyatraya*⁷¹

The controversy regarding Rāmānuja's authorship of the *Gadyatraya* arose from the same sort of scholarly scepticism which had prompted a careful appraisal of his *prapatti* views in the *Gītābhāṣya*.⁷² Most scholars who examined the *Gadyatraya* agreed that the first poem, the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*, seems to deal with *śaraṇāgati/prapatti*. Therefore, if one accepted that Rāmānuja wrote it one would, perforce, have to give some credence to the traditional view that Rāmānuja had written about and perhaps even acknowledged *prapatti* to be a means to salvation. A rejection of his authorship, on the other hand, would imply that the *Gadyatraya* is a text attributed to Rāmānuja by later Śrīvaiṣṇavas but not really his authentic work, a not uncommon occurrence in Indian textual traditions.⁷³

The debate regarding authorship hinged on two issues. Firstly, the language of the *Gadyatraya* seemed, to some scholars, to be different from that of Rāmānuja's in his major works. This view was addressed and rejected by both van Buitenen (1956) and Carman (1974). They were both of the opinion that the language of the *Gadyatraya* bore a strong resemblance to that of the *Gītābhāṣya* and that the former was, therefore, undoubtedly the authentic work of Rāmānuja.⁷⁴

The second point of debate had to do with a perceived ideological difference between the *prapatti* of the *Gītābhāṣya* and that of the *Gadyatraya*, with the latter seen as far too "sectarian" a work to have been authored by Rāmānuja. It is on these grounds that Rāmānuja's authorship of the *Gadyatraya* was rejected by Agnihothram Ramanuja Thathachariar and Robert C. Lester.⁷⁵ This argument about Rāmānuja's sectarianism or lack of it needs to be re-evaluated by going into issues of genre and audience. A comparison of, for instance, the *Śrībhāṣya* and the *Gītābhāṣya* can only be undertaken while keeping in mind that the former is a Vedantic work which locates itself within the context of other pan-Indian philosophical systems. The text is not required to deal with issues relating to the practical life of the religious community or that of devotion to a personal deity, and a *prapatti* discussion requires exactly such a context.⁷⁶ This is why a commentary

on the *Bhagavadgītā* presented a more suitable opportunity for bringing up some ideas about *prapatti*, in as much as one of the main topics of the text is that of personal devotion to Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva.

But perhaps the ideal genre for the expression of devotion to a specific form of the deity is the stotra. Thus, to consider another pertinent example, we have Yāmuna dealing with *prapatti*, not in those sections of the *Siddhitraya* available to us, but in the *Stotraratna*, which is a devotional poem modelled on verses of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*. Seen from this perspective of the usage of different genres for different audiences and purposes, the criteria for judging the authenticity of a writer's conceptual terminology must be relativized and broadened. Therefore, just like Yāmuna wrote the *Stotraratna* in which he deals with *prapatti* themes, it is not implausible that Rāmānuja wrote the *Gadyatraya*.⁷⁷

The following sections (4–5) demonstrate that the three *Gadyas*, and in particular the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*, are not merely “exercises in bhakti” as van Buitenen understands them but *prapatti* texts. Such an interpretation of them is further strengthened by the resemblances, not addressed in this chapter, between the *Gadyatraya* and the writings of Rāmānuja's immediate successors, particularly the *Ārāyirappaṭi* commentary of Piḷḷāṇ. The doctrinal and linguistic similarities between these two texts on *prapatti* are such as to lead us inexorably to the conclusion that the author of the *Gadyatraya* and the author of the *Ārāyirappaṭi* drew upon a common reservoir of terminology and views on *prapatti*. Further, the *prapatti* concepts in the *Gadyatraya* and the *Ārāyirappaṭi* both represent an early rather than an advanced stage of *prapatti* doctrinal development. There is, therefore, a great deal to be said in favor of the view that an *ācārya* close to Rāmānuja's time, or Rāmānuja himself wrote the *Gadyatraya*.

The three *Gadyas* are the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*, *Śrīraṅgagadya* and *Vaiḥṇṭhagadya*, respectively. The first, the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*, is a poem in which the poet takes refuge, *śaraṇāgati*, with the Goddess, Śrī, and then at the feet of Nārāyaṇa. He does so in order to be rid of his sins and to achieve the goal of reaching Nārāyaṇa and doing eternal service (*nityakainkarya*) to him. The second poem, the *Śrīraṅgagadya*, is much shorter and expresses the wish or prayer of the poet to attain the state of being an eternal servant of Lord Raṅganātha the main deity at the temple in Śrīraṅgam, and to be granted the awareness which will make this possible. The third, the *Vaiḥṇṭhagadya*, states that, after taking refuge at the feet of Nārāyaṇa the devotee should continuously meditate upon a vision of Nārāyaṇa and Śrī in Vaiḥṇṭha. There follows a detailed description of Vaiḥṇṭha, with the poet approaching the divine couple after uttering words which echo portions of the *Dvaya mantra*. The poet then seeks permission to serve Nārāyaṇa while uttering the *Tirumantra*. This is followed by a vision of this request granted and of the eternal bliss which the poet experiences, thereafter, in doing service.

The three *Gadyas* may be interpreted, when seen as a unit, as reflections on three successive phases of *prapatti*. Thus, the first *gadya* deals with the initial request for refuge which is then promised to the devotee. The second deals with

the ideal state of mind and practice of the one who has already sought refuge. It repeats, with a significant difference of vocabulary and in a more compressed form, the themes of the first *gadya*. The third might be interpreted as the culmination of *prapatti*, a vision of Vaiṣṇava, that foreshadows and actualizes the promises Nārāyaṇa makes to the devotee in the first *gadya*. Further, the first two *Gadyas* deal with the terminology of the *prapatti* act while the third integrates the Nārāyaṇa *mantras* into the *prapatti* scheme. In the following two sub-sections (4.1–2) I deal at length with the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* and briefly with the remaining two *Gadyas*.

2.4.1 The Śaraṇāgatigadya

The setting for *prapatti* in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* (ŚG) is, implicitly, the temple. In fact, the post-Rāmānuja *ācāryas* in their commentaries on it have framed the text within Rāmānuja's biography, interpreting it as a real conversation between the poet and the deity (*vīgraha*) at the Śrīraṅgam temple, Raṅganātha. The Śrīraṅgam framework for the text is also supported by an explicit reference to the poet's sojourn at that place at the very end of the poem.⁷⁸

The poem is conceived of as a dialogue between the poet, on the one hand, and the divine couple, on the other. It is divided into two parts. In the first, the poet takes refuge with the Goddess Śrī and then requests *śaraṇāgati*. The components of *śaraṇāgati* are described. He receives the Goddess' reassurance that he will receive it and then, he proceeds to take refuge at the feet of Nārāyaṇa, after extolling his wondrous qualities. The second part has the poet making a full confession of his inadequacies and asking for forgiveness. In return, he is told that, in spite of being fully aware of his faults, Nārāyaṇa will grant him all he desires, particularly since he has "uttered the *Dvaya*".

The importance of the Goddess as a mediator between the individual soul and God crystallizes predominantly in the post-Rāmānuja *prapatti* literature where the word *puruṣakāra* is used of her as a mediator. Even while this word is not used in ŚG, it is the Goddess who is first invoked and whom the poet turns to for refuge before he turns to Nārāyaṇa.⁷⁹ The epithets used of her accentuate her prosperity and purity (*nityānapāyinī*; *niravadhyā*), stress her role as the consort of Nārāyaṇa (*bhagavannārāyaṇābhīmata ... asaṃkhyeyakalyāṇaguṇagaṇā; devadevadivya mahiṣī*), and her motherhood (*akhilajaganmātā; asmanmātā*). The poet takes refuge with her, but not at her feet. He describes himself as one who has no other refuge (*ananyasāraṇa*). Then, he proceeds to take refuge at the feet of Nārāyaṇa. Unlike the case of the epithets used of the Goddess, those which describe Nārāyaṇa in the third verse concretize his divine form and stress his qualities of being a refuge to his devotees (*anālocitaviśeṣāśeṣalokaśaraṇa; āpatsakha*), and his compassion (*apārakāruṇya ... mahodadhi; āśritavātsalyajaladhi; praṇatārtihara*). In between these two verses and before receiving a reassurance from the Goddess, the components of *śaraṇāgati* are described.

Śaraṇāgati is the preliminary step which one has to take in the process which begins with devotion towards the Supreme (*parabhakti*), then by knowledge of

the Supreme (*parajñāna*) followed by the Highest Devotion (*paramabhakti*) exclusively to the feet of Nārāyaṇa alone. These three result in that incessant (*anavarata*), eternal (*nitya*), focused (*ananyaprayojana*) etc. love (*priya*) towards the divine feet, which comes from the experience of the Blessed One (*bhagavadanubhava*). As a result of this love, there arises a desire (*apekṣā*) for eternal service (*nityakainkarya*), which is described as appropriate in all situations (*aśeṣāvasthacita*) and in the form of taking delight solely in total subordination (*aśeṣaśeṣataikaratirūpa*). Out of desire (*apekṣā*) for this service, the poet makes the request for *śaraṇāgati*.⁸⁰ It has to be understood that when the poet is making this request for *śaraṇāgati*, the implication is that he has not yet achieved these subsequent stages of devotion and knowledge towards the feet of Nārāyaṇa, that is, he has not yet experienced the Blessed One. It is only *śaraṇāgati* which will make this entire process possible.

The second part of the *ŚG* begins with the words, “Now, the *Dvayam*” (*atra dvayam*). In this section the poet is requesting Nārāyaṇa for protection. After the poet has done this, Nārāyaṇa says that he will fulfill his wishes because the poet is one who has uttered the *Dvaya* (*dvayavaktā*), that is, he is one who has probably said the *Dvaya mantra*.⁸¹ The section begins with a quote of four verses out of which only the last two can be reliably identified as *Bhagavadgītā* 11.43–44. The very first verse is modelled on *Bhagavadgītā* 18.66.⁸² The remaining verses form a *stuti* section, where Nārāyaṇa is praised as father, mother and teacher, as the source of all existence whom the poet salutes and whose graciousness he requests. Following this, the poet asks forbearance (*kṣama*) for all his transgressions (*apacāra*), for his state of wrongful knowledge (*viparītajñāna*) pertaining to the self (*ātmā*) and the world (*jagat*) and, finally, that he may be saved from the *māyā* which is composed of the strands (*guṇamayīmāyā*). The forgiveness for the transgressions and the wrongful knowledge does not merely relate to those he has committed in the past and present, but those which are likely to be done in the future (*kariṣyamāṇa*). Then, the *guṇamayīmāyā* is described as divine (*daivī*), as a continuous stream of karma which is eternal (*anādikarmapravāhpravṛttā*), obscuring the essential nature of the Blessed One (*bhagavadsvarūpatirodhānakarī*), generating wrongful knowledge (*viparītajñānanajanantī*) and an attitude of enjoyment towards its own sensory objects (*svaviṣayāyās ca bhogyabuddher janantī*). Finally, it exists through a subtle form of the body and the sense-organs (*dehendriyatvena sukṣmarūpeṇāvastithā*). The poet says that his declaration that he is a servant (*dāsa*) who has sought refuge should impel God to rescue him from this *māyā*.⁸³

Next, verses 17–19 of Chapter 7 of the *Bhagavadgītā* are quoted. The poet requests that he may become the *jñānī* who is described in these three verses.⁸⁴ Connected to this is his knowledge that he has not even achieved the first of the three states (*sthānatraya*) of *parabhakti*, *parajñāna* and *paramabhakti*. Quoting three lines from the *Bhagavadgītā* which are taken to refer to *parabhakti*, the poet requests that his nature (*svabhava*) may come to comprise of all three states.⁸⁵ These three lines from the *Bhagavadgītā* are from 8.22, 11.54 and 18.54 respectively and relate to seeing a certain form of Kṛṣṇa, through *bhakti*. When we come to

Nārāyaṇa's reply to the poet, we shall see that once the *sthānatraya* is set into process the poet is given a vision of Nārāyaṇa's essential nature (*svarūpa*), as well as his cosmic form (*rūpa*), qualities (*guṇa*) and glories (*vibhūti*).⁸⁶ Earlier, when the components of *śaraṇāgati* were listed the *sthānatraya* was said to lead directly to the experience of God (*bhagavadanubhava*). Therefore, it is perhaps accurate to assume that the first experience of God arising from the *sthānatraya* is this actual vision of his nature and form. The poet's list of requests concludes with a repetition of the components of the process, mentioned earlier, beginning with *śaraṇāgati*, which will lead him to the final goal of service.

In the next part of the dialogue, Nārāyaṇa begins by recollecting all that which stands in the way of the poet achieving his proximity. Firstly, the poet has no means (*upāya*) to reach him. He is burdened with the sins (*pāpa*) which are oppositional (*virodhi*). Then, he has committed a series of transgressions (*apacāra*) against both God as well as his devotees which are traced backwards to their ultimate base in *prakṛti* as well as the latent predispositions (*vāsanā*), through a chain of *Sāṃkhya* categories. Both the *prakṛti* and the *vāsanā* impede the entire process of approaching Nārāyaṇa.⁸⁷

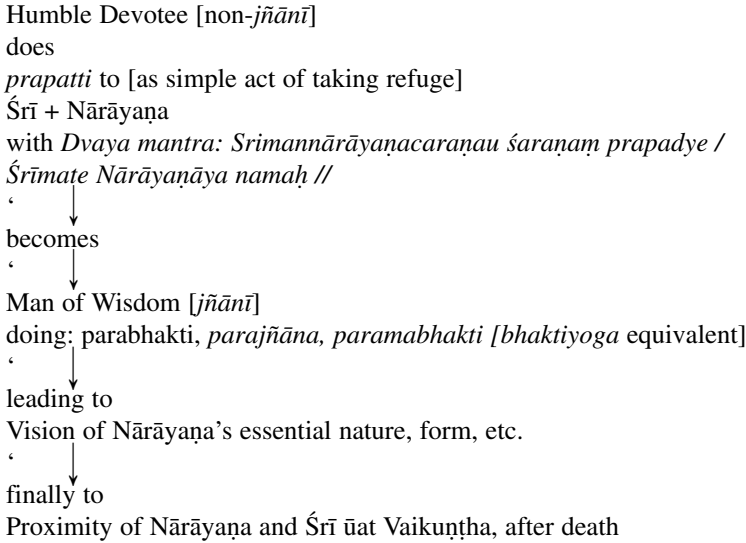
After describing this, Nārāyaṇa then proceeds to tell the poet that, inspite of this situation, he will be rescued from all this since he has said the *Dvaya*. On saying the *mantra* his obstacles (*vighna*), which include all the sins and transgressions will be destroyed. He will also obtain the *sthānatraya* of *parabhakti*, *parajñāna* and *paramabhakti*. Then he will have directly manifested to him (*sākṣātkṛta*) Nārāyaṇa's essential nature (*svarūpa*) and his entire qualities and glories.⁸⁸ With this, will come the experience of the Blessed One followed by that complete and eternal love (*priya*), which is the penultimate stage to the eternal service which is also granted. It is important to note that even though God grants the poet all this because he has said the *Dvaya*, the poet does not reach the final goal entirely through his own effort. Rather, it is made clear that it is God's compassion (*dayā*) and graciousness (*prasāda*) which inform the process at every turn. The phrase "through my compassion alone" (*kevalam madīyayaiva dayayā*) is used in connection with the destruction of all obstacles. Then, "obtained through my graciousness" (*matprasādabaddha*) is said of the *sthānatraya*. Finally, "through my graciousness alone" (*matprasādā eva*) is used of the vision of God which the poet receives. The use of the emphatic *eva* seems to stress that the initiative is God's alone.

In the final section of the *gadya* the poet is told that he should stay in Śrīraṅgam till his death, freed completely from even a trace of sorrow, constantly reciting and meditating upon the meaning of the *Dvaya*.⁸⁹ At the time of death he will be completely enlightened, again through Nārāyaṇa's graciousness alone. Then, gazing upon God, and casting aside his *prakṛti* forever, he will attain the eternal service he desires. The *gadya* ends on the note of confidence that the poet need never doubt that this will come about.⁹⁰

The *ŚG* illustrates the *prapatti* of the ordinary *bhakta*, the poet, and this *prapatti* is placed in the ritual context of the temple. The humble devotee does *prapatti* to a form of Nārāyaṇa and his consort in the temple — in this case the deities of

the Śrīraṅgam temple, Raṅganātha and Ranganāyakī. The *prapatti* is also further ritualized through the inclusion of the act of saying the *Dvaya mantra*, which is a Nārāyaṇa *mantra*. The Goddess, Śrī-Lakṣmī, as the consort of Nārāyaṇa also becomes a part of this *prapatti*, since she has to be propitiated before him, in the poem. The humble devotee, who might be categorized as the non-*jñānī* (in as much as he explicitly seeks to become one within the poem), is freed from all his sins and the constraints of *prakṛti* and moves into the stage of the man of wisdom — the *jñānī* — through this ritual. Further, this figure of the *jñānī* himself is now de-linked from the context of *bhaktiyoga*. The *jñānī* now does a *bhaktiyoga* equivalent, the *sthānatraya* of ever-intensifying *bhakti*, which leads to the same results as the practice of *bhaktiyoga*: the manifestation of God's essential nature (*svarūpa*), form (*rūpa*) and glories (*vibhūti*). The final result of this *prapatti* is the guarantee from Nārāyaṇa himself that the *bhakta* will never be reborn but reach Nārāyaṇa and Śrī in Vaiṣṇava. The absolute destruction of *prakṛti* as well as the goal of service (*kainkarya*) becomes possible only after this ultimate death. Finally, this entire process, it is clearly said, is directed and made possible only because of the compassion (*dayā*) and graciousness (*prasāda*) of Nārāyaṇa.

This process of *śaraṇāgati/prapatti* in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* is best illustrated as follows:



2.4.2 The Śrīraṅgagadya and Vaiṣṇavagadya

The *Śrīraṅgagadya* (ŚrG) is an extremely short poem consisting of seven verses which repeat the motifs of the previous poem. Thus, the poet yet again seeks the goal of service, takes refuge and continues to pray that his wishes be granted.

The poem ends with a verse of salutations to Nārāyaṇa. Of particular interest is the vocabulary of the second verse, where the poet speaks of all his faults and then takes refuge. The verse begins by describing the two stages to the goal of service: the first, contemplation (*anusaṃdhāna*) of the characteristic nature of the self as eternally controlled by God and having as its sole essence subordination to him, and the second, an experience (*anubhava*) of the entire range of God's auspicious qualities, such as his being the lord (*svāmī*).⁹¹ Following this it is emphatically declared, that the means to the attainment of this experience (*anubhava*) leading to the goal (*kainkarya*) is *bhakti*.⁹² *Bhakti*, in turn, is brought about by proper knowledge (*saṃyagjñāna*), derived from correct action (*saṃcīnakriyā*) which is aided (*anuguna*) by the entire group of good qualities of the self starting with a belief in transcendent realities (*sāttvikatāstikyādisamastātmaguna*). The poet says that being devoid of all this he takes refuge at the feet of Nārāyaṇa.⁹³

The poem concludes with the poet continuing to entreat Nārāyaṇa to bring about the purification of his mind and the final goal, even while he knows that through seeking refuge at the divine feet, through faith (*viśvāsa*), through his requests alone (*arthitvamātra*), and, finally, through being supported solely by his verbal expression of surrender (*etaduccāraṇamātrāvalambana*) his entreaties will be answered.⁹⁴

In this *gadya*, we have a situation similar to that of the *ŚG* in that there is an ordinary *bhakta* who wishes to attain the final goal of service. In order to do so he takes refuge with Nārāyaṇa. But here, the two stages which would ideally lead to service are described in terms which are very similar to the *jñāna-prapatti* of the *Gītābhāṣya*. Thus, the first stage is described as the contemplation (*anusaṃdhāna*) of the self as having as its sole essence subordination (*nityadāśyaikarasātmā*), where the word *dāśa* is used instead of *śeṣa*. The second stage is to experience the real nature of God, which characterizes the practice of *bhaktiyoga*. The terminology pertaining to the stages of *bhakti* in this *gadya* — of *kriyā* and then *jñāna* — also goes back to the *Gītābhāṣya*, where the stages of *karma* and *jñāna* lead to *bhakti*. Thus, in the second verse of the *ŚrG*, there is a consistent attempt to describe the path which a *jñānī* takes to salvation, practising the *prapatti* which is equivalent to *bhaktiyoga*. Nevertheless, the poet states that he himself cannot do this and chooses to simply take refuge, relying on his simple expression of surrender and its adjuncts such as faith to take him to the ultimate goal.

The *Vaikuṇṭhagadya* (*VG*) begins with a dedication to Yāmuna which states: "Having plunged into the noble Yāmuna's ocean of nectar, to the best of my intelligence, I have brought up the gem called *bhaktiyoga*, and am displaying it".⁹⁵ Following this is the declaration that the person who wishes to obtain the lotus feet of Nārāyaṇa proceeds on the assumption that there is no other means (*sādhana*) to it but *prapatti*.⁹⁶

Next, it is said that such a person should take refuge with all his being at the feet of Nārāyaṇa.⁹⁷ Then, having done so, for the continued sustenance of oneself,

he should recollect (*anusmaret*) an image of Nārāyaṇa seated together with Śrī in Vaiṣṇava. There follows a long description of this vision of Vaiṣṇava where the divine couple are seated together with their entire heavenly retinue. The devotee visualizes himself, within this vision, as seeing Nārāyaṇa by means of *dhyānāyoga* (= *bhaktiyoga*) and contemplating the real nature of both God and himself.⁹⁸ At some point within this vision, the devotee desires the vision of Nārāyaṇa as well as even greater proximity to him and seeking a way to bridge the gap, he approaches the divine couple saying a sentence which is equivalent to the second half of the *Dvaya mantra*.⁹⁹ This will bring him even closer to Nārāyaṇa and then, on being allowed to come even nearer he should offer himself to God, expressing the desire to be taken up by God in order to serve Him, while saying the *Tirumantra*.¹⁰⁰ The devotee's wish will then be granted and the *gadya* ends with him seated with Nārāyaṇa's life-sustaining glance bestowed upon him and the latter's feet upon his head, all his limbs immersed in an ocean of bliss.¹⁰¹

Both the ŚrG and the VG integrate *bhaktiyoga* terminology into a *prapatti* context, thereby showing the influence of the *Gītābhāṣya*. In the VG, in fact, *prapatti* is followed by a recollection which includes a vision of the devotee practising *dhyānāyoga*, another name for *bhaktiyoga*. Further, the *prapatti* of the VG is clearly linked to the two Nārāyaṇa *mantras* (the *Dvaya* and the *Tirumantra*).

This last fact brings us to the most important difference between the *prapatti* of the *Gītābhāṣya* and that of the *Gadyas*: the object of *prapatti* in the former is predominantly Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva while in the latter it is Nārāyaṇa. Further, the foregrounding of Nārāyaṇa in the *Gadyatrāya* also comes with the foregrounding of the Goddess, leading to the sort of conceptual divergence in *prapatti* which caused Thathachariar and Lester to reject Ramanuja's authorship of it. These conceptual divergences between the *Gītābhāṣya* and the *Gadyatrāya*, as well as the possible similarities, are analysed in the following section.

2.5 Comparison of the *Gītābhāṣya* and the *Gadyatrāya* on *prapatti*

2.5.1 The differences

a) Nārāyaṇa/Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva

The coming together of the Bhāgavata and the Nārāyaṇa cults has been envisaged by scholars as a process comprising of approximately three stages: first, the identification of Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa, followed by the identification of Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and, finally, the identification of Kṛṣṇa and Viṣṇu as late as perhaps CE 400. This, though, is a historical development which far precedes the phase of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, which is the object of this study.¹⁰² By the CE 10th century, at the time of Yāmuna, this identification was taken for granted. Thus, in the very first verse of his poem on the meaning of the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Gītārthasaṃgraha*, Yāmuna makes it clear that the *Bhagavadgītā* is about Nārāyaṇa.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, after this initial identification of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and Nārāyaṇa, the *Gītārthasaṃgraha* also stresses that the object of attainment is the Blessed One, Kṛṣṇa, and that *bhaktiyoga* is the means of reaching him. *Śaraṇāgati*, as we have previously seen, is then mentioned by Yāmuna as one of the topics of the seventh chapter, but as part of the step towards *bhaktiyoga*. In contrast to this, in his devotional poem, the *Stotraratna*, Yāmuna speaks of taking refuge and *śaraṇāgati* as the only way to attain the deity.¹⁰⁴ And, here, the deity is predominantly Nārāyaṇa.¹⁰⁵ Thus, even prior to Rāmānuja, we have in Yāmuna's writings evidence for a close link between *prapatti* doctrines and the worship of Nārāyaṇa. Even while it is not the intention here to go into a detailed analysis of the *Stotraratna*, just a few salient points will show that its overall theme and several of its motifs anticipate that of the *Gadyas*.

The main theme is that of the poet, Yāmuna, seeking *śaraṇāgati* with Nārāyaṇa and longing for the day when he will become His eternal servant (*nityakiṅkara*).¹⁰⁶ The poem begins with a series of homage verses (1–9), followed by eleven verses which list Nārāyaṇa's qualities and his relationship to the world and establish his supremacy (10–20). This section concludes with a verse of salutation (21). In the next important section of ten verses, the poet formally does *prapatti* to God, praising his compassion and his lotus-like feet (22–31). The central verse here is verse 22, which contains the formal declaration of surrender.¹⁰⁷ The next section of the poem, thirteen verses in all (vv. 32–45), describes in detail the cosmic form of Nārāyaṇa, its beauty, and how he is seated together with Śrī and the other attendants at Vaikuṇṭha. This description is extremely similar to the two long descriptions of Nārāyaṇa's cosmic form as well as the vision he presents together with the divine beings in Vaikuṇṭha in the *Śaraṇāgati-gadya* and the *Vaikuṇṭha-gadya*. Following this description, in v. 46 of the *Stotraratna*, the poet longs for the day when he might become an eternal servant (like Garuḍa, Ananta and Viṣvaksena described previously). The last section of the poem, verses. 46–64, returns to the theme of *śaraṇāgati* with the poet asking forgiveness for his wrongs (vv. 52–57) and concludes with his belief in Nārāyaṇa's generosity and compassion (vv. 63–64).

Thus, while *śaraṇāgati/prapatti* is mentioned both in the *Gītārthasaṃgraha* and the *Stotraratna*, it is only in the context of Nārāyaṇa worship, in the latter, that *prapatti* is prioritised above *bhaktiyoga*.¹⁰⁸ This is clearly also the case when we compare the *Gītābhāṣya* and the *Gadyatraya*. This being the case, it is well worth considering if the concepts of *śaraṇāgati/prapatti* in the *Stotraratna* and later the *Gadyatraya* derive some of their elements from the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*, the ritual texts of the Nārāyaṇa cult and of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition.¹⁰⁹ Such indebtedness on the part of Yāmuna and later Rāmānuja to the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* would also account for the other conceptual differences between the *Gītābhāṣya*'s *prapatti* and that of the *Gadyatraya*, such as the importance of the Goddess (though, in this case, the purāṇic understanding of the Goddess must also be taken into consideration)¹¹⁰ and the two Nārāyaṇa *mantras* — the *Dvaya* and the *Tirumantra* — in the *prapatti* process of the latter. The omission of both the Goddess and the two *mantras* from those

sections of the *Gītābhāṣya* which deal with *prapatti* may then perhaps be explained in terms of the omission of Nārāyaṇa himself in that context, as the explicit object of temple worship.¹¹¹ But much work remains to be done on the early *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* and, in particular, their theology to enable us to speak more convincingly of the links between *prapatti* doctrines and these texts.¹¹²

Even while allowing for the influence of the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* to account for some of the conceptual differences between the *prapatti* of the two texts, there is one last terminological difference between the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* and the *Gītābhāṣya* which needs to be considered. This, which I turn to next, is the concept of the *sthānatraya* of the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*.

b) *The sthānatraya of the Śaraṇāgatigadya*

In the *gadya*, we found that the *sthānatraya* was a three-stage process linked with the *jñānī*. Thus, when the poet requests that he should become a *jñānī* (quoting the relevant verses from Chapter 7 of the *Bhagavadgītā*), he follows this up by asking for the *sthānatraya*. Further, we find that when Nārāyaṇa grants the poet's request for this state it is followed by a direct manifestation of His essential nature (*svarūpa*), his form (*rūpa*), his qualities (*guṇa*) and glories (*vibhūti*). In other words, after the *sthānatraya* is set into process, the poet comes to "see" the essential nature, qualities and universe of God. All this evidence seems to point to the conclusion that the *sthānatraya* is another way of describing the *bhaktiyoga* of the *Gītābhāṣya*. It then becomes necessary to ask why Rāmānuja employs a different terminology from that of the *Gītābhāṣya*, in this instance. A retrospective answer might be found in the post-Rāmānuja commentarial *prapatti* literature, particularly from the *Onpatināyirappaṭi* commentary of the *ācārya* Nāñciyar onwards, where the *sthānatraya* is identified with the sort of *bhakti* which is associated with Nammālvār, the low-caste seer, as opposed to *bhaktiyoga* which is for twice-born males.¹¹³ In other words, Rāmānuja's usage of *parabhakti*, *parajñāna* and *paramabhakti* in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* can be seen retrospectively, from the perspective of the writings of his immediate successors, as being the earliest attempt at providing an alternative model of *bhakti* no longer linked to the three-*yoga* scheme and restricted to the males of the highest *varṇas* alone, as in the *Gītābhāṣya*. In conclusion, the *sthānatraya* is seen in the post-Rāmānuja literature as the *bhaktiyoga/jñāna-prapatti* of a man of wisdom who is not twice-born. It remains an unanswerable question whether the author of the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* intended the *sthānatraya* to have this meaning or not. Yet, it can still be plausibly argued that the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* is a text which can be most meaningfully read (if one is to make sense of it at all as theological doctrine), as a Sanskrit rendering of the soteriology of the *Tiruvāymoli* of Nammālvār, as the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas* understood it.

The conceptual and terminological differences between the two texts apart, it will be seen in the next sub-section that there still remains a great deal of common ground between the *Gītābhāṣya* and the *Gadyatraya*.

2.5.2 The similarities

- 1 In *Gītābhāṣya* 7 Rāmānuja used various related but not quite synonymous words for “taking refuge” which include *bhagavat prapatti* (v. 1), *śaraṇam pra+pad* (v. 14), *śaraṇam upa+gam* (v. 15), *samāśrayaṇa* (vv. 24–26) and *śaraṇam anu+pra+pad* (v. 28). In the *Gadyas*, the favored expressions are *śaraṇam pra+pad* and *śaraṇam anu+vraj*.
- 2 In the *Gītābhāṣya*’s introduction to Chapter 7 and on 7.14, *prakṛti* is described as that which obscures (*tirodhānakarī*) the essential nature of God and as a *māyā* consisting of the *guṇas* (*guṇamayīmāyā*). Identical words are used of *prakṛti* in the *ŚG*.
- 3 Sins, *pāpa*, in *Gītābhāṣya* 7.28 are described variously as “existent since eternity” (*anādikalāpavṛtta*) and as an “obstacle to turning towards me [Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva]” (*madaunmukhyavirodhi*). Later in *Gītābhāṣya* 18.66 they are spoken of as “doing that which should not be done” (*akṛtyakaraṇa*) and “not doing that which should be done” (*krtyākaraṇa*). In the *ŚG* we have two different terms for wrong-doing: sins (*pāpa*) and transgressions (*apacāra*), both of which are described in exactly the same terms as the *pāpa* of the *Gītābhāṣya*.
- 4 In the *Gītābhāṣya* we saw that the non-*jñānī* had to be rid of the hindrance of both *prakṛti* and *pāpa* in order to start *bhaktiyoga*. In the *ŚG* the same process is described: the poet asks to be saved, first, from these before he can reach the state of the *jñānī*. Further, Nārāyaṇa promises that because he has said the *Dvaya*, he will be rid of these obstacles.
- 5 In *Gītābhāṣya* 18.66 it was said that it is Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva who finally steps in to remove the *pāpa* of all devotees, thus ensuring that there is no residual hindrance to starting *bhaktiyoga*. In the *ŚG* the emphasis is on Nārāyaṇa’s compassion (*dayā*) and graciousness (*prasāda*) as the main effective force in the purificatory process.
- 6 The *Gītābhāṣya* also showed that *prapatti* guaranteed that the *bhakta* whose desire was for salvation could never be reborn. This is also stated in the *ŚG*. The poet is told that there is nothing further for him to do after *prapatti* but to stay in the vicinity of the temple meditating on the meaning of the *Dvaya*. He is assured that, after death, he will reside eternally in the vicinity of the divine couple, Śrī and Nārāyaṇa. This vision is also actually fulfilled in the *VG*.
- 7 In *Gītābhāṣya* 7.16, 7.19 we saw that the *jñānī* approached God through defined stages. He was the only category of devotee who understood that his self had as its sole essence the quality of subordination to God. The *prapatti* of the *jñānī*, then, was in the form of a contemplation (*anusaṃdhāna*) which was synonymous for *bhaktiyoga*. Further, the practice of *bhaktiyoga* remained the only means to experience the essential nature of God. In the *ŚrG* the same pattern is described. Thus, it is said that the final goal of *kainkarya* is attainable through two stages. The first, through a knowledge of

the self, which should be contemplated as subordinate to God (the word *anusaṁdhāna* is also used here), and the second, through an experience of God which is only possible through *bhakti*. In the *VG* we again have what might be called an attempt to identify this *prapatti* of the *jñānī* as co-terminous with *bhaktiyoga*. Thus, while the invocatory verse states that the *gadya* is about *bhaktiyoga*, in the *gadya* itself it is clearly stated that it is *prapatti* which is spoken of within the poem.

Thus, both in terms of *prapatti* vocabulary as well as concepts, the similarities between the *Gītābhāṣya*'s views on *prapatti* and that of the *Gadyatraya* are far too numerous and striking to be overlooked.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter suggests that the *prapatti* ideas in the early pre-schismatic phase of Śrīvaiṣṇavism, in the writings of Yāmuna and Rāmānuja, evolved in the context of exegesis on the *Bhagavadgītā*, on the one hand, and in the *stotra* literature, on the other. The exegesis on the *Bhagavadgītā* prioritized Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and laid down that the highest path to salvation was *bhaktiyoga*. Rāmānuja's commentary in Chapter 7 of the *Gītābhāṣya* suggested that this *bhaktiyoga*, when practised by a man of wisdom (*jñānī*) could also be called *prapatti*. This form of *prapatti*, I had heuristically termed *jñāna-prapatti*. Simultaneously, Rāmānuja also alluded in the same sections of his commentary to another configuration of *prapatti*: this was the self-surrender of a non-*jñānī* who sought refuge to be rid of hindrances, such as sins (*pāpa*) and gross matter (*prakṛti*), to starting *bhaktiyoga*.

The *stotra* literature, starting from Yāmuna, prioritized the worship of Nārāyaṇa, or a form of Nārāyaṇa, in the context of the temple. Thus, *prapatti* in this context also appears to be interwoven with certain elements taken from the *Pāñcarātra āgamas*, the ritual texts of the Nārāyaṇa cult. These included a specific role for the Goddess as a mediator with whom one first seeks refuge before surrendering to Nārāyaṇa, as well as the use of Nārāyaṇa *mantras* in the act of surrender itself. Utilizing this context, the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* introduces the figure of the poet/devotee who integrates in himself the two different sorts of *bhaktas* present in the *Gītābhāṣya*. He is someone who begins as a non-*jñānī* and does *prapatti* in order, primarily, to be rid of his *pāpa* and, secondarily, the obscuring nature of *prakṛti*. This paves the way for him to achieve the status of a *jñānī*. This *prapatti* of the non-*jñānī* is now transformed into a ritual which is done through saying the *Dvaya mantra*, a Nārāyaṇa *mantra* which goes: "I take refuge at the feet of Śrīman Nārāyaṇa. Salutations to him". **This new version of *prapatti* in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*, placed in the temple context and linked to the Nārāyaṇa *mantras*, I now call *mantra-prapatti*.**

Once the poet becomes a *jñānī*, he practises an ever-increasing form of meditative devotion to Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa which is described as comprising of three stages: the *sthānatraya* of *parabhakti*, *parajñāna* and *paramabhakti*. Together,

these three stages come to substitute for the *bhaktiyoga* of the *Gītābhāṣya*. The *jñānī* of the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* continues to be bound to his earthly body, and hence to *prakṛti* but, after *mantra-prapatti*, the body has ceased to be an obstacle to the final goal of union with Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṇṭha, after death.

Thus, Rāmānuja's own writings laid down the conceptual basis for a soteriology of *prapatti* in Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Surrendering to God was seen as the paramount path to salvation. It was, on the one hand, just another word for *bhaktiyoga*, as it was practised by the greatest and most virtuous of devotees. On the other hand, it was also recognized that Śrīvaiṣṇavism had to offer a soteriology which also took into account those who were incapable (through birth or otherwise) of arduous Vedic study and who were mired in sin. These people, Rāmānuja suggests, can also do *prapatti*: they can with simple devotion fall at the feet of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, saying one of his *mantras* and seeking the intervention of the Goddess as a mediator. Those who sincerely do this could even become equivalent to the man of wisdom. In other words, there were two types of *prapatti*, the one qualitatively different from the other. The simpler one could also be seen as the stepping-stone to the higher one. In the commentaries on the *Tiruvāymoli*, written after Rāmānuja, the commentators were united in recognizing that Nammālvār, the author of the poem, had done *prapatti* not *bhaktiyoga*. The issue on which they diverged was on which *prapatti* he had done. The deeper issue which they were addressing, implicit in this divergence, was the issue of whether saints are born or made.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMENTARIES

In this chapter I begin by exploring, briefly, the *stotra* literature which arose immediately in the aftermath of Rāmānuja and prior to the commentaries. Examining some of the *prapatti* motifs generated in this literature enables us to see the continuities between Rāmānuja and the commentators as well as the fact that these *stotras* drew upon the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* for their inspiration. In doing so, they were anticipating the heightened focus on the Tamil textual tradition of Śrīvaiṣṇavism by the commentaries. We then turn our attention to the context in which the first commentaries, the *Āṟāyirappaṭi* and the *Onṭaṭṭāyirappaṭi* arose. This is the period generally labelled the “middle period” of Cōla rule in the Tamil region, a period when Cōla power was at its zenith with a corresponding efflorescence in temple-building and literary production. Both Piḷḷāṇ (c. 1060) and Nañciyar (c. 1113–1208), for the greater part of his life, lived under the relatively stable rule of “one of the longest-lived imperial lineages of South Asia”. This enabled them to attempt to extend Śrīvaiṣṇavism—to begin to draw the Tamil devotional poetry into the philosophical edifice of the tradition which had hitherto been in Sanskrit. In doing this, they were competing with the Śaivites who had the advantage of following a religion which was the favored religion of the Cōlas. The historical milieu also enables us to contextualize the commentaries: the language which was created to compose them and the stylistic features they incorporated to make accessible theological doctrine. In examining these features we come to see that the primary intention of the commentaries was to give theology and, therefore, *prapatti* a biographical turn, embedding *prapatti* doctrine within the *TVM* as lived, first-hand religious experience.

3.1 *Prapatti* in the poetry of the post-Rāmānuja period

Yāmuna’s *Stotraratna* and Rāmānuja’s *Gadyatraya* were the paradigms for a corpus of Sanskrit poetry which came to be composed by Rāmānuja’s disciples, the *ācāryas* Kūrattālvāṇ and his son Parāśara Bhaṭṭar. Studies of these poems¹ have shown that their key motifs are derived not only from the poetry of Yāmuna and Rāmānuja but also the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*.² They tended to be a dense mixture of purely poetical and lyrical verses on the beauty of God (inspired

by the conventions of Sanskrit court poetry) juxtaposed with theological sections relating to the authority of the *Vedas* and the *Smṛti*, the nature of the relationship between God and the World as well as soteriology. Some of their main motifs may be summed up as follows:

- Praise of the various forms of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, starting with his Supreme (and transcendent) form (*paramaṃ rūpam*) and moving on to the progressively more accessible forms such as the four-fold emanations (*vyūha*) and the incarnations (*vibhava*), of which the most frequently alluded to are Rāma and Kṛṣṇa.³ The form of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, though, of paramount importance in this poetry is the deity (*arca*) in the temple to which several of the poems are dedicated.⁴
- Establishing the supremacy of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa above other gods such as Śiva⁵
- Dwelling upon the beauty of the divine form⁶
- Refuting the epistemology and “atheism” of other schools of thought such as that of the Cārvākas, Buddhists and Jains.⁷

Among these main motifs must also be included the theme of “taking refuge”.

The words most frequently used in the stotras for this act are *āśraya/samāśraya* and *śaraṇam pra+pad* and for the person who has taken refuge, *āśrita/samāśrita*, *śaraṇam yāta* and *saṃśrita*. The word *prapatti* occurs once in Bhaṭṭar’s *Śrīraṅgarājastava pūrvaśatakam*, v. 17, where the poet refers to his family as one of royal lineage (*rājakula*) whose strength of *prapatti* (*prapatti-bala*) enabled them to cross over the *māyā* of Viṣṇu.⁸

The manner in which the theme of refuge is dealt with in the *Atimānuṣastava* can be considered typical of this *stotra* literature. The poem begins, as do several of the other *stotras*, with formulaic lines of surrender to God.⁹ Later in the poem, the poet alludes to a mythological incident relating to Rāma, which is illustrative of his compassion, and expresses the hope that this same compassion might be also extended to a great sinner like him:

With supreme compassion
You pardoned the crow
who was engaged in bowing down [before You]
even though it had sinned.
For that reason alone
I consider it appropriate
[for You] to comfort a person like me
even though I am a great sinner.¹⁰

In verse 50 he returns to the theme of taking refuge and asks when he and other wretched souls like him may do so:

When again [shall] we sinful and wretched ones
who were not born in Bṛndāvana
among the multitudes of

moving and non-moving creatures
such as insects and *dūrvā* grass
take refuge in Your foot?¹¹

Then in verse 59, he affirms that he has finally resorted to this act:

Even today I do not refrain from
the three-fold fault.
Sinful, I have fallen down
into the deepest, boundless darkness.
One such as I
having no other resort
am an [empty] vessel
fit for your compassion.
I take refuge at your feet.¹²

In verse 61 the poet says:

Even though I am very sinful
I have taken the name
“a seeker of refuge”
Therefore, it is not proper for You
O Lord
to ignore me.
When Your knowledge, creative power,
and compassion,
exist [in boundless measure]
my sin does not deserve to prevail
here [in this world]!¹³

Thus, we see that the poem anchors the soteriology of *prapatti*, along the lines of the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*, in a discourse which reflects simultaneously on God’s compassion and the poet’s sinfulness.

Most importantly the *stotras*, by and large, foreground the temple milieu and the deity to be found in it; they praise the beauty and prosperity of the sacred temple town with motifs derived from the poetry of the *Ālvārs*. Thus, even while belonging to the genre of the Sanskrit *stotra*, the poetic compositions of Rāmānuja’s disciples must be viewed as innovations on this genre, embedding consciously the Tamil within the Sanskrit. By doing so, they created a new kind of praise-poem, one which tried to present what Nayar (1994:2) has called “an integrated and unified theological vision” derived from the diverse scriptural traditions of the community. In the same period, a contemporary of Kūrattālvān’s, Aruḷālap Perumāḷ Emperumāṇār, composed a remarkable Tamil poem, the *Ñānasāram*, which dealt even more directly with *śaraṇāgati* or *prapatti*.¹⁴

The *Ñānasāram* is a poem of great simplicity and beauty of diction in the *venṇpā* metre, which traditionally consists of four lines. The poem has 40 verses and is one of the first works composed entirely in Tamil by one of the Śrīvaiṣṇava

ācāryas.¹⁵ The theme of the poem is *śaraṇāgati* and the poet makes it clear that not only is *śaraṇāgati* the only real means to salvation (v. 28) but also that its greatness is revealed as the inner meaning of the four *Vedas* and the *Dharmaśāstras*. Thus, in verse 31 he says:

The true meaning embedded in all the four *Vedas*
and what is said in that unblemished, foremost book of Manu's
is that the feet of one's God attained through flawless *śaraṇāgati*
are indeed the refuge.¹⁶

The poet tells us that if one were to take this to heart and seek refuge in an utterly spontaneous way, then one attains salvation (v. 1):

That fall
devoid of attachment
abandoning the prison of this embodied flesh
like a fruit which naturally ripened falls
with thoughts full of desire to taste the honey-feet
of the Lotus-Lady's Lord
that itself is the liberation He grants.¹⁷

This final goal of liberation consists of reaching *Vaikuṇṭha* and doing service there (v. 26):

Those firm in the conviction that
the incomparable feet of the Lotus-Lady's Lord
are theirs through the grace of a faultless guru
will ascend to *Vaikuṇṭha*, shining with radiance,
with the ability to do service.¹⁸

The 11th verse is a direct echo of *Bhagavadgītā* 9.26 —that even a minute offering from those who worship the feet of Kṛṣṇa will be regarded by him as the equivalent of obtaining the Meru mountain, glittering with gold:

Māl with his form like a dark cloud, adorned with the fragrant basil
accepts from his dear ones
who serve nothing other than his golden feet
offerings of love however small, as if they were the Meru mountain
glittering with gold.¹⁹

In verse 16 the poet states that he is simply a shining spirit (*ilakum uyir*),²⁰ rather than any category of being divine or human, moving or immovable, who is subordinate to the feet of Nārāyaṇa:

I am neither god nor human
neither moving nor immovable being.
I am a shining spirit, bound to the feet

of Nāraṇaṇ, husband of the Lady seated on the flower
without blemish, intelligence embodied.²¹

The concept, familiar to us from Rāmānuja's *Gītābhāṣya*, that one is not reborn after reaching Kṛṣṇa's feet is brought up in verse 22:

Those who firmly know
that they are possessions and that the owner, the life-breath,
came and rose in Vaṭamaturai
and have reached his feet –
Can they have the prolonged sorrow
that comes from being born again?²²

Finally, significant for the theological doctrines linking *prapatti* and sinfulness are the verses 23–24. Here, the poet coaxes his own heart not to waver in its faith in God, fearing that it has sinned. Once one has fallen at the feet of Kṛṣṇa there can be no further suffering (*tuyar*), for he tends to ignore the faults (*pilai*) of his devotees.

Thus, we see that in this poem of Aruḷālap Perumāḷ Emperumāṇār too, the ideas about taking refuge in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* are strikingly repeated. Taken in conjunction with the *stotra* literature in Sanskrit all this poetry of Rāmānuja's disciples can be seen as making a concerted attempt to propagate a soteriology of *prapatti* rather than *bhaktiyoga*. Further, the poetry created bridges between Tamil and Sankritic textual traditions of the community, between the Sanskrit theological texts and the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*. A new dimension to this ongoing effort became visible in a genre of works to emerge after Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, in which the *prapatti* doctrines were further systematized. These were the commentaries on the last book of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*, the *Tiruvāymoli* (*TVM*) of the poet-saint Nammālvār.

3.2 The milieu of the commentaries

The Śrīvaiṣṇava commentaries emerged in a Tamil literary milieu in which an older tradition of commentarial writing already existed. The first comprehensive commentary in Tamil literature appears to be on the grammatical treatise *Iraiyaṇār Akkapporuḷ* called *Kaḷaviyal*, by Nakkīrar. The work as a whole can be tentatively dated to the 8th century.²³ A few commentaries on grammatical works like the *Tolkāppiyam*, the *Yāpperuṅkalam* and the *Viṛacōḷiyam* were written prior to the twelfth century, and there was also a codification of the rules and categories pertaining to commentarial writing.²⁴ However, it was the 12–14th centuries that saw a proliferation of this comparatively new genre of writing. Commentaries emerged on post-*Caṅkam* works such as the *Cilappatikāram* and *Tirukkural*, with the commentators predominantly being Jains and Śaivites. Thus, as Cutler (1992:551) points out:

Starting in the eighth century, and especially during the twelfth to fourteenth centuries, the writing of commentaries became an important

enterprise in Tamil intellectual life. Commentators such as Ḥampūraṇār (eleventh century), Pēraciriyar (thirteenth century), and Naccinārkkiniyār (fourteenth century), using the *sūtras* of the *Tolkāppiyam* as a foundation, developed a sophisticated theoretical discourse in the field of Tamil language and literature.

The *Ārāyirappaṭi* commentary of Piḷḷāṇ marked a new kind of commentary in this period in that it appears to be the earliest commentary on a specifically sectarian work.

Thus, it seems that it was the Śrīvaiṣṇavas who first found it necessary to develop this new genre of religious literature as they began to concentrate on the Tamil strand of their scriptural traditions. The main reasons for why they did so can be better understood when one examines the period of the rise of this commentarial literature, the historical situation and the impact of Cōḷa rule on religious developments in the Tamil country, as a whole.

3.2.1 Religion and the Cōḷas

The first Śrīvaiṣṇava commentary on the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* was written in the eleventh century; the commentator Tirukkurukaippirāṇ Piḷḷāṇ was a senior disciple of Rāmānuja. This is also the period characterized by historians as the so-called “middle periods or second and third sub-periods” of Cōḷa rule, extending from the reign of Rājarāja I to that of Rājādhirāja II, which witnessed the zenith of Cōḷa power.²⁵ The expansion of the Cōḷas begins particularly with the reign of Rājarāja I, at the turn of the first millenium, when Cōḷa aspirations to power started to find expression in a spurt of temple-building activity. The temples were huge construction projects, endowed with land for the upkeep of the shrine and the permanent, extensive retinue of ritual staff employed to serve in them. They received donations from powerful local bodies and families influential in the region, from the king, members of his family and of his administration and they were regulated by an extensive system of taxation. Referring to the Rājarājeśvaram temple of Rājarāja I, which was exemplary in this respect, Pechilis Prentiss (1999:116) remarks: “The capital temple was the largest and most complex representative of a model of relations that would be institutionalized in all the other temples in the kingdom. The capital city and its temple constituted, above all, a center ... The purpose of having a center was that other temples built by the Cōḷas in their kingdom, while maintaining an autonomy of honor and redistribution within their own circumscribed areas, all participated in the centralized imperial formation emanating from the capital city.” This new and wholly indigenous mode of economic development and political networking under the middle Cōḷas has been described as “the complete unfolding of a temple economy”²⁶ and as the means by which the Cōḷa kings sought to enhance their status as patrons of religion and as devotees of God. Thus, the emergence of new kinds of religious literature in this period — both in Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism— must be seen in connection with and as an outcome of the expansion of this temple

economy, whose early phase is already evident in the devotional poetry of the Śaivite *nāyaṇmārs* and the Vaiṣṇavite *ālvārs*, in the Pallava and early Cōla periods.

It is the emergence of new genres of literature on the Śaivite side which serves to illuminate the Vaiṣṇava situation. While the Cōlas tended, by and large, to be even-handed patrons of religions,²⁷ they were, nevertheless, bound in a special relationship to Śaivism by legend. The legendary ancestor of the Cōlas was considered to be the king Kōcceṇkaṇaṇ who had been born only after his childless parents had prayed at the Śaivite Cidambaram temple for an heir. The tale of this legendary ancestry “begins with the recognition of the fact that religious experience and kingly power are separate, but asserts that, in certain circumstances, the two are joined due to a fortuitous event in the history of the lineage. The Kōcceṇkaṇaṇ story gave form and legitimacy to the Cōla family tradition in which the ruler was seen as the chief devotee of Śivaṇ.”²⁸ Hence, the Cōla patronage of Śaivism was particularly evident in the large-scale building activities of Śaiva temples which they undertook as well as their encouragement of a systematization of the Śaivite *bhakti* movement of the *nāyaṇmārs*. This systematization has been explored by Pechilis Prentiss in her 1999 book on Tamil Śaiva *bhakti*. The first step was the integration of the life and works of the *nāyaṇmārs* with the temple cult. The singing of their devotional songs in the temples had already come to be institutionalized in the early Cōla period.²⁹ The middle period saw the focus shift to their life-stories, and both the inscriptional evidence and the evidence from art history point to the tentative beginnings of a *bhakti* hagiographical tradition. This hagiographical tradition was at first an oral one; stories were circulated about the lives of the *nāyaṇmārs*, which were depicted in murals in temples such as Rājarājeśvaram, and their bronze images were increasingly donated by patrons to the temples. In terms of non-oral literature, this development can be traced from the basic list of the devotees in Cuntarar’s *Tiruttoṇṭarttokai* (c. eighth century) to the more extensive *Tiruttoṇṭar tiruvantāti* of Nampi Āṇṭār Nampi (c. late eleventh century), finally culminating in the great hagiographical work, the *Periya Purāṇam* of Cēkkiḷār sometime in the twelfth century. Or, as Pechilis Prentiss (1999:109) puts it, from the latter part of the eleventh century, the Śaivite *nāyaṇmārs* become “collectively identified as a specific category of religion person, [a saint] and certain aspects of their lives were deemed most representative of *bhakti*.”³⁰ The *Periya Purāṇam* consolidated this development, canonizing as it did these devotees and “contextualizing the lives of the *nāyaṇmār* within imperial temple culture.” At the same time the text articulated an egalitarian vision of Śaiva *bhakti*, one which permitted devotees from a wide spectrum of caste backgrounds to be placed on the same footing through their common devotion to the god and to serve as exemplars to the larger community of living devotees.

It has further been suggested that a parallel but somewhat later development took place in the realm of Śaiva theology and philosophy, one which facilitated the integration of Śaiva *bhakti* with the school of Sanskritic or Classical Śaiva *Siddhānta*, a development which gave rise to the Tamil Śaiva *Siddhānta*, from the

mid-twelfth century.³¹ However the contours of this development are problematic for two interrelated reasons: first, there is a paucity of scholarship on the Classical *Śaiva Siddhānta* and this, in turn, makes it difficult to establish the distinctions between it and the Tamil *Śaiva Siddhānta*. Dominic Goodall's remarks on the disappearance of the Classical *Śaiva Siddhānta* on the pan-Indian level and its possible relevance to the Tamil *Śaiva Siddhānta* are worth noting in this regard.³²

Thus, it can be concluded that the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as far as Śaivism was concerned, saw the development and culmination of an extensive hagiographical and, perhaps more speculatively, even a theological literature which integrated Śaiva *bhakti* into the cult of the temple.

Developments in the Vaiṣṇava side of this period must also be traced back to the emergence of Vaiṣṇavite *bhakti* in the seventh century CE. A particularly important figure among the Vaiṣṇavite poet-saints of that period, the *ālvārs*, was Caṭakōpaṇ, later called Nammālvār. Sometime around the ninth century CE, the poems of the *ālvārs* were compiled into one corpus, the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* and all or aspects of it were also proclaimed to be the "Tamil Veda." The incorporation of these songs into temple ritual paralleled the Śaiva process, chronologically.³³ Regarding the historical figure of Nammālvār himself, very little is known, but one fact accepted early on was: that he belonged to the *śūdra varṇa*. When his most important text, the *Tiruvāymoli*, was declared already in the 9th century by the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācārya* Nāthamuni to be the Tamil *Veda*, the Śrīvaiṣṇavas had to contend with the fact that what they had decided to call the highest sacred scripture was revealed to someone belonging to the fourth *varṇa*, a *śūdra* (who normally does not have access to the highest revelation) and in a language which was not Sanskrit. Thus, there arose the need to legitimize both the author and his texts and it was this imperative which gave rise eventually to two different textual traditions and genres of literature after the eleventh century. The hagiographical tradition concerned itself, as on the Śaiva side, with the figures of Nammālvār and the other *ālvārs*. The first work of this genre, not oral but written, was the *Dīvyasūricaritam* of Garuḍavāhana Paṇḍita, attributable to perhaps the twelfth century CE. This hagiographical tradition and its legitimation of Nammālvār as a *sannyāsin*, *yogin* and Vedic *ṛṣi* has been insightfully explored by Hardy (1979).³⁴ But, contrary to developments in Śaivism (where the hagiographical literature preceded the emergence of the commentaries of the Tamil *Śaiva Siddhānta*), the Vaiṣṇava hagiographical literature was perhaps marginally preceded by the commentarial literature, by the *Ārayirappaṭi* commentary of Piḷḷāṇ. Even more interestingly, around the twelfth century, both genres — that of hagiography and commentary — begin to converge to some extent in the *Onpatināyirappaṭi* commentary of Nañciyār and then significantly so in the commentaries which follow in Nañciyār's lineage.

3.3 The commentaries

The commentaries examined in this book for their *prapatti* conceptions are the five canonical commentaries on the *TVM*. These five commentaries, collectively,

are seen as a unit by the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, constituting a sacred corpus of interpretation on the *TVM*, sometimes called “Those whose subject matter is the Blessed One” (*bhagavadviṣayam*).³⁵ The commentaries were each named after the number of units of *paṭi* they comprised of, where a *paṭi* is the Tamil term for a unit of 32 syllables. Thus, we have the *Ārāyirappaṭi* (6000-*paṭi* commentary), the *Onpatināyirappaṭi* (9000-*paṭi* commentary), the *Pannīrāyirappaṭi* (12000-*paṭi* commentary), the *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* (24000-*paṭi* commentary) and the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* (the *Īṭu* 36000-*paṭi* commentary). Parallels were drawn, in the later hagiographical literature, between the length of the commentaries and that of other seminal Sanskritic texts of Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Hence, the *Ārāyirappaṭi* was identified in its length with the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, the *Onpatināyirappaṭi* with the *Śrībhāṣya*, the *Pannīrāyirappaṭi* with the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* with the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* with the *Śrutaprakāśikā*, the commentary on the *Śrībhāṣya*, respectively.

The commentaries, in terms of successive stages of *prapatti* doctrinal development can be grouped as follows:

Stage I: *Ārāyirappaṭi* commentary of Tirukkurukaippirāṇ Piḷḷāṇ (traditional dates: c. 1060 onwards)

Stage II: *Onpatināyirappaṭi* commentary of Nañcīyar (traditional dates: c. 1113–1208)

Stage III: *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* commentary of Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai (traditional dates: c. 1250), *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* commentary of Naṇṇiḷḷai (traditional dates: c. 1230) and Vaṭakkut Tiruvīṭip Piḷḷai (traditional dates: c. 1250)

Stage IV: *Pannīrāyirappaṭi* commentary of Vātikēsari Alakiya Maṇavāḷa Cīyar (traditional dates: c. 1370)

The traditional dating for several of the *ācāryas*/commentators is problematic in that it is calculated on the basis of the traditional dating for Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja’s dates, in turn, appear to hinge upon biographical/hagiographical evidence, that is, the identity and period of the Cōḷa king who was anti-Vaiṣṇavite and allegedly persecuted him. If this king is assumed to be Kullōtuṅga Cōḷa I (1070–1122 CE), then the traditional dates attributed to Rāmānuja, 1017–1137, would be acceptable. If the persecuting king is identified with Kullōtuṅga Cōḷa II (1133–1150), as some scholars more convincingly suggest, then Rāmānuja’s dates and that of some of the other *ācāryas* have to be revised and post-dated by a period of between 30 to 50 years.³⁶

Literary, epigraphic or other evidence for the dates of the other *ācāryas* is meagre but, nevertheless, useful. Nañcīyar is quoted as having had theological discussions with a contemporary Pāṇḍya (king?), Sundara Pāṇḍya Tēvar in the thirteenth century commentary, the *Periyatirumolī vyākhyāna*.³⁷ This could well be Māvarman Sundara Pāṇḍya (c. 1216).³⁸ The famous Pāṇḍya king Jatāvarman Sundara Pāṇḍya who ascended the Pāṇḍya throne only in 1251 and his reign is

connected with Nañciyar's disciple Naṃpiḷḷai. The latter is mentioned in the records of the Śrīraṅgam temple as having lived in 1253 when this king had the shrine at Śrīraṅgam covered with gold.³⁹ On the whole, though, the final words on determining the dates of Rāmānuja (as that of the other *ācāryas*) was summarized very early by Nilakanta Sastri (1975:296): "But it must be recognized that ... it is perhaps impossible to reconcile all the data furnished by legend on any single hypothesis."

Regardless of the dating problem, it is clear that there is a difference in output of commentarial literature between the periods I have characterized as Stage I, on the one hand, and Stages II and III, on the other. While for Stage I, that is prior to the mid-twelfth century, we have the solitary commentary of Piḷḷān, the period commencing with Nañciyar saw a rapid increase in this literature. Nañciyar himself is credited by the tradition with at least five commentaries on various texts of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*, though only two of these are available at present.⁴⁰ His lineage of disciples was prolific. While the most extensive commentary on the *TVM*, the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi*, was written down by Vaṭakkut Tiruvītip Piḷḷai a disciple of Naṃpiḷḷai, another disciple, Periyavāccān Piḷḷai, single-handedly trebled the commentarial corpus by the thirteenth century.⁴¹ He wrote commentaries on each of the books of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* and it is he, as Venkatachari (1978:2) remarks, who "exemplifies the mature tradition of the commentaries In his commentarial method, he sets a standard for later commentaries in Maṇipravāḷa, and so a study of his *vyākhyānas* is mandatory for a knowledge of their development."

3.3.1 Śrīvaiṣṇava maṇipravāḷa

The Vaiṣṇavas in the Tamil country of the middle Cōḷa period, we have seen, had religious concerns which were not that different from that of the Śaivas. Both sectarian traditions were preoccupied with the task of systematizing a popular devotional movement, of constructing a hagiographical and philosophical edifice for it. The emergence of the Śrīvaiṣṇava commentaries in this period was a direct result of the strategies of legitimation involved in this enterprise. The particularity of the Vaiṣṇavas lay in the fact that they were consciously concerned with popularizing in Tamil without in any way compromising on the Sanskrit heritage. This concern revealed itself most visibly in the linguistic medium that they employed to write their commentaries and some of the hagiographical literature: the "situational language" later to be called *maṇipravāḷa*.

Kōpālakiruṣṇamācāriyār (1914:488) pointed out that the terms of this compound are already found in classical Tamil (*Caṅkam*) poetry, in the *Akanānūru*, in the following phrase "coral interwoven with pearl" (*maṇi miṭai pavaḷam*). Jagadeesan (1989:75) speaking of the commentary on this phrase adds: "*Maṇimiṭai Pavaḷam*, according to the commentator, however, means a style of poetry in which the vocabulary is too tough for the ideas which are simple and hence derives its name from the disparity between expression and idea." In other words, the term *maṇipravāḷa* referred early on in Tamil literature to a dissonance

between vocabulary and thought, between form and content. The first use of the term *maṇipravāḷa* as a compound, though, appears to have been in the epilogue of a Jaina work, the *Jayadhavala* which is a commentary on the *Ṣaṭkhaṇḍāgama* of Jinasena (datable to around the ninth century CE), though in this context the term does not appear to refer to a hybrid language.⁴²

The first citable evidence for the use of the term to refer to an admixture of languages, more specifically Sanskrit with another language, stems from around the eleventh century. Thus, Abhinavagupta commenting on the 32nd chapter of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, v. 389, says that *maṇipravāḷa* is the “southern” tradition, which has Sanskrit interspersed with the regional language (*deśabhāṣā*).⁴³ In the same period we also have a reference to *maṇipravāḷa* specifically as a mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit, in the grammatical work *Vīracolīyam*. Here, Tamil poetry which contains Sanskrit in it is called *maṇipravāḷa* and the *Alaṅkāra Paṭalam* of the work attempts to deal with the linguistic features of *maṇipravāḷa*.⁴⁴

The first literary work with what might be called passages of Tamil *maṇipravāḷa* as opposed to other kinds of *maṇipravāḷa* precedes these definitions by two centuries.⁴⁵ This was the *Pārataveṇpā* of Peruntēvaṇār, a Tamil rendering of the *Mahābhārata*, which can be reliably dated to the ninth century.⁴⁶ In this Vaiṣṇavite work, the poetry was in classical Tamil (= *centamiḷ*) while the prose sections were in *maṇipravāḷa* or a heavily Sanskritized Tamil.⁴⁷ Several Jaina works originating in the Tamil country around this period and after also came to be written in *maṇipravāḷa*. These included the *Śrīpurāṇam* as well as other minor Jaina works such as *Jayakumārāṅkatai*, *Oṭṭāyaṇamāhāraṅkatai*, *Pārikṣeṇakumārāṅkatai* and *Satyaghoṣaṅkatai* among others.⁴⁸ In any event, it is clear both from the literary as well as inscriptional evidence⁴⁹ that between the tenth and sixteenth centuries predominantly the Jains and the Vaiṣṇavites, and to a lesser extent the Śaivites,⁵⁰ in the Tamil country utilized a hybrid form of Tamil and Sanskrit to compose some of their religious literature.

There exists, till now, no comparative study of the emergence and development of the Tamil *maṇipravāḷa* of these different religious literatures. Nevertheless, Kōpālakīruṣṇamācāriyār (1914:495) first put forward the theory that the *maṇipravāḷa* used by the Vaiṣṇavites (i.e., Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṇipravāḷa*) differed markedly from that, for instance, of the Śaivites. He saw the main distinction in the level of Tamilization — while Śaivite *maṇipravāḷa* tended to Tamilize Sanskrit words, Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṇipravāḷa* did not. His rudimentary observations have been built upon, by Nāṇacuntaram (1989) whose analysis of Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṇipravāḷa* in his painstaking monograph on the commentaries remains the only work of this kind we have at present.

Nāṇacuntaram’s monograph, with the detailed linguistic analysis in the fourth chapter, shows that Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṇipravāḷa* is full of colloquiums common to oral literature as well as peculiar grammatical forms and rare vocabulary, not otherwise found in medieval Tamil and but unique to these texts. On the basis of this linguistic study, he has come to the conclusion that this *maṇipravāḷa* is a distinct dialect peculiar to the Śrīvaiṣṇava community, which stands apart both

from the *maṇipravāḷa* of earlier works such as the *Pārataveṇpā* and of later works such as the *Śrīpurāṇam*.⁵¹ Nevertheless, he is careful to question the view that the peculiarities of Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṇipravāḷa* stem from an inadequate mastery of Tamil on the part of the commentators. Rather, the commentaries indicate that the commentators were well-schooled in classical Tamil literature. Further, there was always the possibility of recourse to an already existent extensive Tamil philosophical vocabulary for Sanskrit terms if they had chosen to avail of it.⁵² The fact that the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas* did not do so is significant. Thus, like Kōpālakirūṣṇamācāriyār (1914) and Celvakēcavarāya Mutaliyār (1945) before him, Nāṇacuntaram comes to the conclusion that Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṇipravāḷa* reflects accurately the conscious commitment of the religious community and its leaders to both Tamil and Sanskrit and the determination to transmit as accurately as possible their own specific doctrinal views developed in a predominantly Sanskrit conceptual world into Tamil— an accuracy that they probably felt would have been sacrificed if they had only used Tamil.⁵³ The fact that they used a hybrid language, not easily accessible to outsiders, to carry out this task stemmed perhaps from the awareness that they were dealing with sacred literature and the sacred matters of their community: hence, a need for a certain amount of esotericism or secrecy. The remarks of Barz (1994:43–4) on the languages of *bhakti* literature are also worth considering in this regard:

The members of a spiritually egalitarian *bhakti* sect would perceive no hypocrisy or contradiction in preserving the philosophical heart of their teachings in Sanskrit, so that it would be safe from misinterpretation and misuse at the hands of the uneducated and ignorant. A spoken language would, to be sure, be made use of, but only for the expression of less abstract ideas beneficial to those at the beginning stages of the acquisition of understanding. Even when Sanskrit was eschewed ... and only vernacular language was acceptable, strange and paradoxical phraseology called *sandhābhāṣa* ‘hidden speech’ could be employed to keep subtle, easily misunderstood doctrines away from the unqualified.

At the same time, it is reasonable to assume that this language was not entirely removed from the Tamil brahmanical dialect of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community itself. For, as Jagadeesan (1989:70) remarks: “It is noteworthy that Brahmins as a community speak a kind of language in many respects different from that spoken by other communities ... The Śrī Vaiṣṇavas being in many respects a departure from the Smārta group as also from the Śaivite ones ... have developed a vocabulary inalienably associated with them.”

It is the commitment to and, indeed, the equality of Tamil and Sanskrit which is reflected in the following verse about Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṇipravāḷa* as the ideal linguistic means to speak about the Tamil as well as the Sanskrit *Vedas*:

To praise the nature of this fine language of pearl and coral
combining words from the South and the North,

O heart, resort to the feet of our comely Master, the Lord of Śrī,
extolling the ancient *Vedas* of both languages.⁵⁴

3.3.2 *The hagiographical elements in the commentaries*

The Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition assumes that, while the *Ārāyirappaṭi* is the first written commentary, it had been preceded by an already well-established oral commentarial tradition, a characteristic of the medieval commentarial tradition in general.⁵⁵ Evidence for an oral tradition of interpretation of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* corpus stems from a later period than the *Ārāyirappaṭi* itself and, hence, cannot be regarded as conclusive. Nevertheless, such evidence once collated, is extensive particularly when one takes into account the oral features of Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṇipravāla*. In the thirteenth century commentaries, such as the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* and Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai's commentaries to *Tiruviruttam*, *Periyālvār Tirumoli* and *Tiruppāvai*, interpretations of individual verses attributed to Yāmuna as well as to Rāmānuja and his contemporaries are given.⁵⁶ These same commentaries also allude to an oral commentarial tradition which precedes the written one in other ways. Two examples should suffice: in the commentary on verses 19–20 of the *Ciriya Tirumaṭal*, the public discourses given by Rāmānuja on the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*, aimed at giving pleasure to a wide audience, is contrasted with those discourses given by other *ācāryas* to small groups. This comparison presupposes that Rāmānuja and other *ācāryas* had fostered an oral tradition of interpretation prior to the first commentary of Piḷḷāṇ. Secondly, this method of oral transmission is referred to within the community as *ōrāṇ/ōrāṇ valī* and mentioned as such in several instances in the textual sources. Thus, both the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* and the hagiographical literature refers to this method as the one by which the *darśana* was passed down the Śrīvaiṣṇava lineage from the *ālvārs* to the *ācāryas*.⁵⁷ Thus, the first written commentaries on the *TVM*, have been seen as emerging from such an oral tradition and still retaining the stylistic features of orality.

This indebtedness of the written commentarial tradition to the oral one, in turn, had two important hermeneutical implications. First, the view emerged and prevailed that there was not one single definitive commentary on the whole text or on individual verses of the *TVM*. This view is pithily enshrined in the hagiographical tale of why the one person with the authority to compose the definitive commentary chose not to write one. Thus, when Rāmānuja was asked by his disciple Piḷḷāṇ to write a commentary on the *TVM*, he is said to have replied that, if he were to do so then those of limited understanding would assume that his commentary encapsulates the entire meaning of the text. But the meaning of the songs of the *ālvārs* flows forth according to the intellectual capacity and devotion of each individual and should not be restricted to his commentary. Thus, Rāmānuja turns down the request and advises his disciple Piḷḷāṇ to write the first commentary.⁵⁸ The tacit acceptance of divergent, concurrent interpretations which this tale, regardless of its historical verity, intends to convey, may be one

method of coming to terms with the unstructured nature of the *TVM* as a text. Since the text lacks any overarching framework or even an internal structuring of some sort it became the commentators' task to rectify these lacunae and to generate explicit patterns of meaning. The diachronic perspective of the remaining chapters on the commentaries shows that they do this with increasing degrees of sophistication and systematization.⁵⁹

Second, the Śrīvaiṣṇava commentaries incorporate innumerable similes of a socio-historical nature as well as anecdotes relating to the life-histories of various *ācāryas*. The exegetical function served by these similes and anecdotes has not been sufficiently explored and even overlooked in the research on the commentaries, with the exception of some important observations regarding the anecdotes in Clooney's 1992 work.⁶⁰ And, like Clooney, I would argue that both the anecdotes and the similes are present in the commentaries not by accident but by design, and that they are seminal to our understanding of how the commentaries function as exegesis on the *TVM*.

At first glance, these similes and anecdotes, again stemming from an oral tradition, seem to serve the function of explicating theological doctrine in easily understandable terms to the lay audience. This certainly is how Venkatachari (1978:48) understands their function: "The most striking characteristic of this Maṇipravāḷa literature is the technique of using similes, metaphors, illustrations... The responsibility the Ācāryas felt to instruct the community, leads them to use these methods to clarify abstruse philosophical points or just to illustrate the relevance of the religious concepts..." Similes covering a wide range of topics ostensibly serve these purposes: they include those on the life-style and behavior of kings, royal princelings, rich donors and patrons and the poor. Women, either widows or courtesans, sectarian hostility between the Śaivites and the Vaiṣṇavites and natural calamities such as floods and famine find their mention as do folk medicinal remedies.⁶¹ A sample of such similes from the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* and the *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* on the nature of kingly existence is fascinating for they give us a picture of royal residences peopled with hunchbacks and dwarfs as attendants (*Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* I.8.1),⁶² of the royal fortress surrounded by a protective forest in which wild beasts were raised and fed (*Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* IV.8.7),⁶³ and of flower gardens which the kings had created for enjoying with their consorts in various parts of the kingdom (*Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* I.1.3).⁶⁴ From his residence the king ventured out to see to the finances of the state before returning (*Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* II.6.2),⁶⁵ and when he decided to inspect his kingdom he tended to be accompanied secretly by bodyguards (*Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* II.10.8).⁶⁶ When people came for an audience with the king they dressed decorously, wearing an upper garment and a turban and carrying a stick and paid obeisance (*Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* II.2.10).⁶⁷

Of great interest are the short anecdotes which refer to those Śrīvaiṣṇavas, frequently but not exclusively non-brahmins, identifiable by the appellation of *Tāsar* (< *Dāsa*), who were part of the scholarly community. Thus there is

reference to Āccān Tiruvāliṇāṭu Tāsar who was Parāśara Bhaṭṭar's disciple and brought him excellent betel nuts as presents (*Ītu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* X.2.2), Tirumālīcai Tāsar who used to recite the *TVM* together with Nañciyar (*Tiruviruttam vyākhyāna* 99) and Nampi Tiruvaraṅka Nārāyaṇa Tāsar and Parāṅkuṣa Tāsar, both of whom studied the *TVM* with Nampiḷai (*Ītu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* IX.9.1 and I.4.8). In certain episodes the piety and devotion of these disciples is highlighted. Thus, such was Parāṅkuca Tāsar's devotion to Rāmānuja that he had to be dissuaded from committing suicide on Rāmānuja's death by another disciple Anantāl vāṇ (*Nācciyār Tirumoli vyākhyāna* XII. 5), while the virtuous Nampi Yērutiruvuṭaiyār Tāsar's death is seized as a moment for Parāśara Bhaṭṭar to speak of the essential qualities of all Śrīvaiṣṇavas (*Ītu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* I.4.5).

In examining the extent to which these similes and anecdotes give us authentic socio-historical information about life under the later Cōḷas, we are confronted with a problem not dissimilar to that involved in the evaluation of epigraphical evidence. As Orr (2000:26–30) and Talbot (2001:11–16) have both pointed out, epigraphical evidence is a kind of special information. It is necessarily fragmentary and not to be read as an objective record of events. Nevertheless, it does document a certain kind of social reality, particular to a certain place at a certain time. It is useful, for instance, to see such evidence as having a “ritual” aspect and, hence, that its aim is to “present a particular understanding of relations among persons and institutions.”⁶⁸ It is my suggestion that the similes in the Śrīvaiṣṇava commentaries are most usefully understood as having a similar purpose, which is equally, if not more, important than the ostensibly didactic one: they should be seen as revealing to us the relationship between the sectarian community and the *ācāryas*, on the one hand, with royal personages, patrons, lay people, non-brahmin disciples and temples, on the other, while at the same time giving us clues as to the formers' motives, perceptions and values. Because they cover such a wide range of topics and give us glimpses into a strata of society (beyond kings and brahmins), which is usually not referred to or visible in theological texts, these similes and anecdotes also succeed in creating a certain social reality within the commentary: they mirror a microcosm which should be understood as the Śrīvaiṣṇava social view of their world.⁶⁹ Further, their inclusion in a commentary on a sacred text alters both the genre of the commentary itself as well as how we are expected to perceive the sacred text it interprets. The microcosm becomes part of the commentary and through it the *TVM* encompasses, as it were, this world of kings, temples and laymen, it becomes a book of life. And the oral anecdotes relating to the life-histories of the *ācāryas* extends the range of the text even further as reflecting social life and lived experience.

A consistent exegetical approach of the *ācāryas* in their theological explications was to present the *TVM* as an account of Nammāl vār's personal experience, his spiritual quest. The anecdotes on their life-histories reinforce this exegetical approach: by portraying Nammāl vār's quest as the life-quest also of the *ācāryas* themselves, the stories about the latter paradigmatically illustrate that such a

spiritual quest could be that much better understood the more one has “internalized” it and “experienced” it for oneself. The manner in which the anecdotes reinforce this lesson is varied. In some of them, individual episodes in the *TVM* are interpreted by the *ācāryas* as biographical events which can be understood with examples from their own biography. Thus, in one anecdote Nañcīyar attempts to explain a decade of the *TVM* through narrating a story from his own biography. In *TVM V.9* the *ālvār* laments, in his female persona, of being unable to go to Tiruvallavā even while he longs to do so and hears the festivities taking place there from a distance. Nañcīyar compares the *ālvār*’s distress to his own, speaking of a time when he had left Śrīraṅgam for Mēlnāṭu (present day Karnataka) and was prevented by a river in spite of returning to the former in time for an important festival day.⁷⁰

Several other anecdotes reveal that the *ācāryas* live and breathe, as it were, the *TVM* and other texts of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*, seeking throughout their lives to understand the meaning. An anecdote incorporated into the interpretation of *Ītu Muppattārāyirappaṭi VII.2.9*, relating to Bhaṭṭar and his disciple Nañcīyar illustrates this point. Bhaṭṭar once requested Nañcīyar to recite certain verses of the *TVM* to him while he was eating. When Nañcīyar recited this particular verse Bhaṭṭar suddenly understood its meaning and, waving his hands, he exclaimed “Śrī Raṅganātha” and embraced Nañcīyar. Bhaṭṭar, it was said, was so overcome with emotion that Nañcīyar feared for his life.⁷¹ This internalization of the poetry, the unwavering faith in its truth and the constant meditation on its meaning lasts, as far as the *ācāryas* as concerned, right till their death. The anecdotes about Piḷḷān’s and Nañcīyar’s last days describe this. On hearing that Piḷḷān was nearing death and in great pain, Nañcīyar went to visit him. He found him constantly repeating the last line of *TVM VI.9.9* where Nammālvār asks God when he will come to claim him. Hearing this, Nañcīyar wept. At this Piḷḷān gently rebuked him pointing out that the happiness that one gets in the other world can hardly be inferior to what one experiences here.⁷² Nañcīyar’s last days are similar. As he lies in pain he is visited by a person called Perri who expresses the wish to fulfill any requests he might have. Nañcīyar confesses that he would like to hear the decade *Periyatirumoli III.6* and to circumambulate and prostrate before the deity when the temple is open. Then, by divine providence, the *Arayar* of the temple arrives and recites the decade for Nañcīyar.⁷³

In some other anecdotes the *ācāryas* stress that one of the ways of understanding the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* is to see it as an ethical document which teaches the Śrīvaiṣṇava community how to be exemplary, how to be good Vaiṣṇavas. Thus, for example, while a Vaiṣṇava should avoid worldly sovereignty and wealth (*aiśvarya*), it is worthwhile wresting it from others if it can be put to good use and given to other Vaiṣṇavas.⁷⁴ In another important example, Nañcīyar explains that the real test of one’s “Vaiṣṇava-ness” (*vaiṣṇavatva*) lies in examining one’s conscience to see how one reacts to the injustice committed by others. If one is shocked by them one is a Vaiṣṇava, i.e., one has a relationship with God; if not, one does not.⁷⁵

Even while the *ācāryas* lead these paradigmatic lives in most anecdotes, others reveal their human frailty, which itself becomes a sign of their virtue, their humility. One way in which this is shown is the anecdotes where they make a clear distinction between themselves and those such as Rāmānuja who had preceded them, who had attained a superiority they lack. Thus, their lives and that of their disciples, intent on feeding themselves, is contrasted to that of Rāmānuja who had lived long in splendour, preserving the Vaiṣṇava faith on earth.⁷⁶ This humility is most poignantly brought out in an anecdote about Bhaṭṭar, who while explaining *TVM VII.2* to others stops and clenching his hair in despair exclaims that, lacking as he does either the experience of the situation of Nammālvār or his emotional greatness, he is not capable of comprehending the verse or interpreting it for others.⁷⁷ Thus these *ācāryas* can only struggle to emulate the previous *ālvārs* and *ācāryas* while remaining constantly aware that they are bound to fall short of the latter's spiritual perfection.

Indira Peterson (1994:197–98) in her article on the construction of Śaiva sainthood in the medieval Tamil hagiographical literature has said:

These ... “histories” of individual saints are at the same time archetypal narratives about human devotion and divine grace, and constructions of archetypal saintly personae, the ideal devotees of Śiva. The intersection of the particular and the paradigmatic aspects of the ideal persona in hagiography allows ... [an] imaging of the ideal community ... it is the hagiographer's agenda to show how devotion to Śiva binds these diverse individuals together into a true community.

The similes and anecdotes in the Śrīvaiṣṇava commentaries are hagiographical in precisely this sense for they, too, contribute to creating an image of the ideal Vaiṣṇava community with the *ālvārs* and the *ācāryas* at its apex. At the same time, though, by being embedded in and subordinated to the genre of the commentary, these hagiographical elements both change the genre of the commentary and decisively influence the interpretation of the text. Through them, at one level, the *TVM* becomes the lived, first-hand religious experience whose understanding, by others, is demonstrated to be a process. This process, in turn, can only be achieved through an “internalization” of the experience aided by a tradition of interpretation. At another level, it is through their contribution to this process of understanding this that the *ācāryas* become “models”. Their greatness lies in their subjective enactment of the *TVM*, through the example of their lives, which then opens up the text to other devotees. Therefore, “memories of the *ācāryas* present the community with imaginative moral access to *Tiruvāymoli*. They represent perfect transparency to the text, for they appropriated it and lived according to it, totally surrendered to its pull on them. Disciples who revere and admire their teachers could then be drawn into the same dynamic of imitation ...”⁷⁸

At a third level, the fact that this grasp and understanding for the *ācāryas* is always contingent, that they are always shown to be striving for it rather than

having fully achieved it, in turn, creates a pyramid-like structure of knowledge and perfection. At one end of the spectrum there is Nammālvār who is both the author and the true knower of the religious experience the text describes. From him, in descending order of perfection are the other *ācāryas* ending with the ones reflected in the anecdotes. Paradoxically, though, it is the contemporary *ācāryas*' knowledge of this pyramid of descending lineage, reflected in their humility, which makes them approximate to Nammālvār himself and to serve as role models for the community. Finally, this pyramid of perfectability also contributes to the elevation and abstraction of Nammālvār, he is set aside from the realm of human imperfection which the rest of the community, in varying degrees, inhabits.

These exegetical levels, brought about by the intertwining of the hagiographical with the commentarial only start to come to the fore with Stage II, with the *Onpatināyirappaṭi* commentary of Nañciyar and reach their apotheosis, as the examples have shown, with the *Irupattumālāyirappaṭi* and the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi*. This, in fact, is what demarcates Stage II from Stage I: the emergence of these exegetical levels in and after the *Ārāyirappaṭi* commentary makes for a theological divide between the two stages and is complemented by the divergence in interpretation which I had earlier alluded to. Both these factors contribute to and account for the *prapatti* doctrinal development from Stage I to Stage II. It is this development and the theological divide which is analyzed and explored in the subsequent chapters.

SURRENDERING TO PURIFICATION

Prapatti in the *Āṛāyirappaṭi* commentary

We enter the *Āṛāyirappaṭi* commentary (henceforth, *Āṛāyiram*) first by looking, in Section 4.1, at how it is structured. Though it is the least systematic of the commentaries, and frequently, there is only a hint of the ordering principle at work, certain devices are employed by Piḷḷāṇ to give the *TVM* a plot. The most significant of these devices is the “dramatic narrative” by which the entire poem is seen as Nammālvār’s spiritual journey from a state of separation from God to a state of actual, physical union with him in the divine land. Within this narrative, approximately at a little more than the half-way point in the poem, the verse VI.10.10 is chosen as the moment when Nammālvār does *prapatti* to Viṣṇu in his form as Vēṅkaṭanātha at Tirumala. This honing in on *TVM VI.10.10* as the locus of self-surrender is undoubtedly the most significant contribution of Piḷḷāṇ to the commentarial tradition. We shall then see how he singles out this verse, endowing it with significance and setting it apart from innumerable other, similar verses in the poem. We shall then further see, that after the *prapatti* of this verse Nammālvār’s spiritual status within the poem is transformed because he has done something to effect his own salvation. In the next section (4.2) the general themes relating to taking refuge and how they are handled prior to the sixth centum by the commentator are discussed. Section 4.3 deals with the terminology of the *Āṛāyiram* on VI.10.10, the similarity between the commentarial vocabulary and that of the *Gadyatraya* as well as the manner in which Piḷḷāṇ differentiates this verse from other similar verses on taking refuge. The soteriological significance of the verse will be discussed in 4.4 while 4.5 examines the *ālvār*’s spiritual status post-*prapattisamāśrayaṇa*. Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa’s role in this soteriological process is looked at in 4.6 and the analysis of the *prapatti* doctrines of the *Āṛāyiram* concludes, in 4.7, with an analysis of the overall interpretation of Nammālvār in the commentary.

4.1 The framework of the *Āṛāyiram*

The *Āṛāyiram* is not just the first written commentary on the *TVM* but it also appears, at first glance, to be highly unstructured and unsystematic when we

compare it with the remaining four commentaries. The contrast particularly with the very next commentary the *Onpatināyirappaṭi*, which offers the reader an introduction (*avatārikai*) with several levels of interpretation of both the author of the text, Nammālvār, and the *TVM*, is striking. It is also the *Onpatināyirappaṭi*'s introduction which was to prove seminal in the history of interpretation of the *TVM*, closely adhered to and built upon by the remaining commentaries. Nevertheless, the importance of the *Āṛāyiram* lies in the fact that it lays down the broad foundations of an interpretive tradition on the *TVM* and it does so through the use of less explicit, structural and clarificatory features than an introduction. It is these features that weave together the divergent topics that form the substance of the commentary and fashion it into a cohesive work.

The first of these features is that the commentary recognizes and reaffirms the pre-existent division of the text into ten units of 100 verses each or ten centums (called *pattu* in the commentary). The acknowledgement of this division is explicit in the introductions to the third and the ninth centums.¹ A further division, also acknowledged by Piḷḷāṇ, is that of each centum into sets of ten verses each or decades (called a *tiruvāymoli* by the commentator) with a eleventh or concluding verse which sums up the content of the decade.² This structural sub-division is put forth in the introductions which the *Āṛāyiram* provides for each decade treating it as a unit as well as the remarks on the eleventh verse which frequently allude to the placement of the decade within the entire poem. Thus, for example, in the introduction to the decade *TVM I.2* Piḷḷāṇ summarizes the import of all ten verses by stating that in them the *ālvār* is teaching others about *bhaktiyoga* as the means to a state of sole enjoyment of God, by foregrounding detachment to things other than him.³ The commentary on the eleventh verse, then, serves to sum up the decade again: "This decade, among the thousand which were to establish the qualities of the Blessed One, experienced him and spoke of him."⁴

In other words, Piḷḷāṇ's attempts, albeit unsystematic, in structuring the *TVM* follows a pattern which is ubiquitous in Tamil commentarial literature. The text which is commented upon tends to be composed of clearly delimited verses and it is the individual verse or set of verses which becomes the focus, the structural linchpin of the commentary. Thus, the commentary functions by providing paraphrases or word-for-word explanations of the verse.⁵ In this context the *Āṛāyiram* is traditionally categorized as a commentary which is broadly interpretive, reflecting upon and explaining the sense of the text (*karuttu kuṛippurai*).

The reference to *bhaktiyoga* in the introduction to *TVM I.2* is also a clue alerting us to the fact that another ordering principle is at work in the text: the commentator is throughout employing a system of knowledge within which the *TVM* can be understood and this is the discourse of Viśiṣṭādvaita. The topics that Rāmānuja considered central to theological enquiry in the *Śrībhāṣya* — the nature of God and that of the individual soul, the path and the goal of salvation, the latter encompassing the final journey to Viṣṇu's paradise — all these are seen by Piḷḷāṇ to also be explicated in the *TVM*. Thus individual decades are interpreted as revealing Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's essential nature which consists of his motiveless

compassion (*Ārāyiram* V.1, V.7, X.8 etc.), his divine qualities, deeds and incarnations (*Ārāyiram* III.10, VI.4, VII.4, VII.5 etc.) and his astonishing glories (*Ārāyiram* VII.8 etc.). Others define the essential nature of the self (*Ārāyiram* VIII.8.3–5) and Nammālvār's feeling of separation from God (*Ārāyiram* III.2, IV.8, VI.7, VIII.1 etc.) as well as his inability to effect his own salvation (*Ārāyiram* V.7, V.8 etc.). Still others, though, affirm his direct experience of God (*Ārāyiram* I.1), his moments of union with him (*Ārāyiram* IV.5, VI.3, VI.4 etc.) and put forward his claim that his poetic gifts as well as the *TVM* itself are a divine work, of which he is the chosen vessel (*Ārāyiram* IV.5, VII.9, X.7). Certain important decades refer to the soteriological path of *bhaktiyoga* (*Ārāyiram* I.2, I.3, X.4) while a great many others talk of refuge-taking (*Ārāyiram* III.3, V.10, VI.10, X.1 etc.). The goal of these paths is service at God's feet (*Ārāyiram* II.9, IV.1, VI.9 etc.). Finally, the last decades of the text (*Ārāyiram* X.9, X.10) are considered to describe the journey to Vaikuṇṭha and the ālvār's union with God which will transport him there.⁶

This interpretation of the last decade of the *TVM* as embodying a triumphant union between God and Nammālvār is the cornerstone of the ultimate framework provided by the *Ārāyiram* for the poem: a framework which Clooney (1996:154–73) has discussed and styled the “dramatic narrative”. According to this dramatic narrative Nammālvār, at the beginning of the tale, is graced with the direct experience of God. Through this experience he is filled with love for him and the longing to serve at his feet. The longing translates into the need for union which, in the remainder of the poem, is temporarily fulfilled or thwarted in an unceasing dialectic of union and separation. Finally, in X.10.10 Piḷḷaṇ says: “[Nammālvār] called out in long-suffering tones, persevering by taking an oath on the Divine Consort and on God such that the latter could not refuse him. Then our Lord graciously appeared as he wished. Seeing him the ālvār said, ‘You pervade all those things such as the psyche (*mahat*) and the organ of egoity (*ahaṃkāra*) etc., pervading too that which is bigger than them, the primordial *prakṛti* (*mūlaprakṛti*). You are the soul of the liberated self which is greater than the latter and of that knowledge as resolve (*saṃkalpajñāna*), which is even greater.⁷ You came and pervaded me — not in your form as the universe but as you yourself — such that all my longing, even greater than your knowledge as resolve, ceased. My heart's desire too has, once and for all, been fulfilled.’”⁸ Thus, in the penultimate verse of the last decade the much desired resolution occurs, where Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa appears (together with Śrī-Lakṣmī) and removing the ālvār from his corporeal body gathers him unto himself. In characteristic commentarial language, which frequently employs hyperbole in order to emphasize a point, Nammālvār's yearnings are more than fulfilled at the end of the poem: Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa not only comes and unites with, even pervades Nammālvār, but he does so as himself, in a form which is familiar to the ālvār. Thus, the *Ārāyiram* understands the entire poem to be a record of Nammālvār's difficult but ultimately triumphant spiritual journey from a state of separation to one of intimate union with the divine.

This spiritual journey is seen to take place within a non-linear, circular poem, where the themes at the very beginning are echoed at the very end and in which the structure also reaffirms this circularity. This structural circularity is apparent in the metrical sequence of the *TVM* called *antāti*, whereby the last words or foot of the last line of each verse is identical with the first words or foot of the next verse and this applies also to the first and last verses of the entire poem so that it closes in upon itself. The dramatic narrative, in contrast, superimposes a linearity on the poem not intrinsic to it even while the poem's innate structure compels the commentator to return to certain major themes again and again. One such major theme is that of taking refuge at the feet of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, where Piḷḷāṇ favours the terms *āśrayaṇa/samāśrayaṇa* rather than *prapatti*.⁹ Even while taking refuge with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa occurs more than once in the *TVM* and the commentary on it, a soteriologically significant moment of refuge-taking singled out by the commentator is *TVM VI.10.10*. Piḷḷāṇ draws attention to this verse by interpreting it with the aid of vocabulary and conceptions strikingly similar to that of the *Gadyatraya*. In doing so, he makes the implicit point that it is at this juncture in the text that Nammālvār does *prapatti* to Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa in his specific form as the deity at Vēṅkaṭam, a viewpoint which is explicitly endorsed by most of the later commentators.

4.2 The path to *samāśrayaṇa*

The exhortation to take refuge comes up repeatedly in the commentary on the first five centums of the *TVM* and four themes relating to it can broadly be discerned:

- 1 Nammālvār exhorts himself as well as others to take refuge with the deity at Vēṅkaṭam: In I.2.10 he begins by saying, “take refuge at those feet whose characteristic nature is to unfailingly protect those who take refuge with him.”¹⁰ More specifically, the feet referred to are those of the deity at Vēṅkaṭam, as the commentary on certain verses of the decade III.3 shows. Thus in III.3.1 Piḷḷāṇ has the *ālvār* addressing himself and others like him whose sole enjoyment is God: “Come to enjoy the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam. To enjoy him is to serve at his feet with total subordination in all places, at all times and in every appropriate way.”¹¹ In the very next verse in a classic instance of hyperbole the *ālvār* points out that even those who have attained salvation, the *nityasiddhas* in Vaikuṇṭha who are able to serve there, prefer to come to Vēṅkaṭam to worship: “[One might ask...] — Is it not the ultimate goal of everyone to serve our Lord in the divine land? [We reply:] — Even the *nityasiddhas* of the divine land, captivated by the qualities of the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam, come and do service at his feet.”¹² Thus, the commentary on several important decades in the first few centums focus on the deity at Vēṅkaṭam as the object of *samāśrayaṇa*.¹³

- 2 Nammālvār explains why one must take refuge: The significant commentarial sections here are on IV.1.9–10. Here, Piḷḷāṇ proves that taking refuge is the superior means to liberation, since it alone guarantees the best form of salvation. The commentary draws explicitly on *Gītābhāṣya* 7 and three of the four types of devotees described there. Beginning with IV.1.9 Piḷḷāṇ says:

[You might wonder:] Since terrestrial sovereignty (*aihika aiśvarya*) is petty and impermanent, should one grasp powers such as the heavenly world etc. as the object of attainment? [We reply:] — Some, desiring powers such as the heavens, abandon attachment to terrestrial things, conquer the sense organs and forsake their bodies which are hindrances to attaining the heavenly world. Despite this, unless they have taken refuge with our Lord, even powers such as heaven will remain unattainable. [Further such rewards], even if obtained through taking refuge, are impermanent. Hence, abandon this sovereignty, petty as it is and impermanent, the contemptible cause of a lot of sorrow and evil. Grasp, instead, those divine feet which are even greater than Garuḍa as your ultimate goal. For, [the ālvār says], they never let down those who resort to them, at any time or in any situation.¹⁴

The *Ārāyiram* on the very next verse proceeds to talk about a higher goal of attainment than sovereignty — this is the goal already referred to as that of the person desiring knowledge (*jijñāsu*) in *Gītābhāṣya* 7¹⁵, the state of *kaivalya*¹⁶ which consists of the state of being able to “gaze upon the self” (*ātmāvalokana*) separated from *prakṛti*. Here again, as Rāmānuja did, Piḷḷāṇ sets aside this as a petty goal and stresses the goal of service to God (*bhagavatkaṇkara*).

[You might ask:] — What if one chooses *kaivalya*, with its deficiencies of impermanence etc. as one’s goal? [We reply:] — A person may be established in *jñānayoga* having first attained detachment with regard to worldly things. Yet, unless he takes refuge with our Lord, the *karman* which is an obstacle to self-perception will not depart. Self-perception is born through taking refuge with the Blessed One. Even if it is there, the salvation which is characterized by genuine self-manifestation is not attained unless one has, in the final stages of one’s life, rid oneself of obstacles by contemplating the Blessed One. The important salvation is only that of service to the Blessed One. One has to take refuge with the Blessed One both because it is a means to *kaivalya* and because service to the Blessed One is the highest salvation. Since this is so [says the ālvār], abandon *kaivalya* which offers scant happiness and take up service to God itself as the supreme object of attainment.¹⁷

The discourse about taking refuge in these two verses of the commentary can only be understood against the backdrop of the *Gītābhāṣya* 7 on *prapatti*. As Rāmānuja did there, Piḷḷān emphasizes here that taking refuge is a necessary step for each category of devotee, whether the person desires worldly power or is superior, whether he is a *kaivalyārthin/jiñāsū*. Neither of these goals can be attained prior to taking refuge. Further, even if one were to want them, these goals are either impermanent (*asthira*) or offer only petty happiness (*atyalpasukha*). The goal which is the highest salvation (*paramamokṣa*) is service to God. And this too is achievable only through aiming for it and taking refuge. In saying this Piḷḷān also establishes *samāśrayaṇa* (his omission of the concept of *bhaktiyoga* in this context should be noted) as the means to the highest form of salvation.

- 3 Nammālvār explains how one should take refuge: The commentary on two verses particularly focus on this issue. In the *Ārāyiram* on I.3.8 Piḷḷān says:

When we worship the excellent feet of the Auspicious One, as those who have no other goal, all our cruel deeds which are an unceasing obstacle to us, accumulated since time immemorial and obstructive to His experience, will die at the moment of worship. Then, one lacks nothing. We can obtain the desired experience of our Lord. [You might ask:] There are those in the terminal stage of life who do not have the time or the strength to do *bhaktiyoga*, attainable only through exertion. Do they lose everything? [We reply:] Merely clasping one's hands in obeisance, saying something about Him or remembering Him at that terminal stage is better than *bhaktiyoga*.¹⁸

The commentary on this verse is significant for the following reasons. First, in it Pillan for the first time uses the phrase “no other goal” (*ananyaprayojana*) of those seeking God's feet, which is later used of the *ālvār* in the commentary on VI.10.10. The commentary on both these verses taken in conjunction shows that to regard oneself as without any other goal is a prerequisite for *samāśrayaṇa*; it is the stance which one has to necessarily adopt before taking refuge.¹⁹ Secondly, Pillan makes a significant statement about *bhaktiyoga* here, indicating that it is seen as a path which requires effort and time. He points out that those who are unable to do this should not despair. Rather, in the final moments of their lives, even a simple act of devotion, it is declared, would be as good if not better than *bhaktiyoga*. This commentarial viewpoint, that *bhaktiyoga* might be too arduous to do, is repeated later in the *Ārāyiram* on III.2.8, IV.7.9, V.7.0 etc. along with the view that the *ālvār* himself does not do any of the three *yogas* and, in particular, not *bhaktiyoga* because he does not have the time or the strength to do it. The implication of this commentarial

view is that the act of taking refuge in VI.10.10 is an effective substitute for *bhaktiyoga*.²⁰

An equally significant verse is III.3.6, of yet another decade on the deity at Vēṅkaṭam. The commentary on this verse, while short, is of great significance because it reveals what should be said to this deity, who is the object of refuge:

[You might ask:] How can one obtain this object of attainment? [We reply:] As soon as one says this word *Namaḥ* to the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam, which qualifies one for everything and is extremely easy to say, the sins which are an obstacle to that service and those yet to be done will all be burnt. Afterwards one can do all that which one wishes to do.²¹

Here Piḷḷāṇ shows us that the means to the ultimate goal of service is accomplished by saying the word *Namaḥ*. The context in which this word is significant theologically is the context of the two Nārāyaṇa *mantras*, as we had seen in the previous chapter. In other words, the commentator is suggesting that reciting either/both the *Tirumantra* and the *Dvaya* is necessarily a part of the act of *samāśrayaṇa* towards the deity at Vēṅkaṭam.²²

- 4 Nammālvār concludes that taking refuge at the deity's feet is a means (*upāya*) to salvation: This is brought out in the commentary on the decade, VI.10, in the verses leading up to VI.10.10. Introducing the decade, Piḷḷāṇ says of Nammālvār's situation:

Though he called out, inviting him until he could even be heard in the divine land, [Nammālvār] did not see God. Then, realizing that there was no other means of seeing him except to take refuge at his feet, he did so at the feet of the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam, the refuge of the entire world, speaking of His qualities such as compassion and parental love etc., as his support, with the Goddess as mediator.²³

In the commentary on the first nine verses, Nammālvār wishes to quickly see God and pleads with him to make this possible. Thus, in VI.10.1: "Since you are the person with compassion, parental love and other unlimited, great, infinite auspicious qualities ... and since I am, through my lineage, your subordinate, you must graciously unite me with your feet."²⁴ In verses VI.10.2–5 the commentator first shows us that there are certain obstacles which stand in the way and, further, that Nammālvār expects God himself to remove these obstacles for him. Hence, in VI.10.2: "... [God might ask:] 'How can you obtain union with me until the sinful obstacles cease to be?', [Nammālvār replies:], 'Just as you destroyed with your discus the demons opposing the gods who had resorted to you, you must destroy my obstacles'"²⁵ And, in the commentary on the very next verse: "... [God might ask:] — 'Is this to be done motivelessly?',

[Nammālvār replies:] — ‘Even as the untiring mortals wait to unite with you, solely due to your compassion you came, in your divine form, limitlessly beautiful, like a dark cloud, wondrous, and entering, filling my heart, became sweet to me. Similarly now, through your compassion my Lord ... unite me with your feet.’”²⁶ In the commentary on VI.10.4 it is mooted that perhaps God should create an extraordinary means to help him forward: “... create especially for me alone a means which is extraordinary, to unite with your feet and through it, graciously uniting with me, rid your servant of all his sorrows.”²⁷

The *Āṛāyiram* on verses VI.10.7—8 stresses that Nammālvār, for his part, has not performed any means to attain the feet of God and, further, this makes him no different from the divine beings like Śiva, Brahmā or Indra who too have not earned their proximity and yet obtain it out of desiring it. Thus, in VI.10.8:

... [God might point out:] ‘How can you obtain what you desire when you lack the means to get it?’ [Nammālvār replies:] ‘Even the intelligent gods like Śakra, the Four-faced One and Indra, who come with their retinue, get to see you do they not, expressing their desire by saying that, even though they lack the means, they find it unendurable not to see you?’”²⁸

This dialogue between Nammālvār and God in the first nine verses culminates in the *samāśrayaṇa* act of VI.10.10.

The commentary here describes a process in the introduction which is then described retrospectively in the commentary on the ten verses of the decade. In the introduction Piḷḷāṇ began by describing what Nammālvār did at the very end of the decade: he realized that there was one *upāya* to seeing God and this was to take refuge with the deity at Vēṅkaṭam with the Goddess as the mediator. The commentary on the subsequent verses leads up to this act and shows how the *ālvār* comes by this realization. The body of the interpretation is in the form of a dialectical dialogue between God and the *ālvār* where the latter first pleads with the former to bring about the union. God points out to him that his sins constitute an obstacle. The *ālvār* counters that it is God who must rid him of these and that he must fashion an extraordinary means to do so, since he is devoid of any means. Nevertheless, after stating all this, the *ālvār* does take a small initiative to bring about the desired result. He realizes that while God’s compassion is there to support and help him these aids will only be his, as they were to the gods, after he has taken refuge. He acknowledges, as the introduction to the decade shows, that *samāśrayaṇa* is an *upāya* and hence takes refuge in VI.10.10.

These themes relating to *samāśrayaṇa* are part of the sub-plot, as it were, to the main plot of the dramatic narrative of the commentary. Through a repetition of them in the centums preceding the sixth centum, the commentary gradually focuses the attention of the reader on that important moment in the middle of the *TVM*, on *TVM VI.10.10*, which effects a soteriological change in Nammālvār’s status.

4.3 The special configuration of *āśrayaṇa/samāśrayaṇa* in TVM VI.10.10

4.3.1 The vocabulary of *Pillāṇ* and *Rāmānuja*

The verse VI.10.10 occurs approximately two-thirds of the way down the text:

*You on whose chest the lady seated on the flower resides, saying,
I cannot move away even for a second,
You of incomparable Fame! You with the three worlds! My ruler!
Lord of Vēṅkaṭam, desired by the incomparable immortals and groups of sages!
I, your servant, without any refuge, sat at your feet and entered.*²⁹

The commentary is as follows:

[Nammālṽār] says, “You are the great ocean of unbounded compassion, the master due to your qualities. You, stand, graciously, on the attractive, Sacred Hill, which is to be desired even by the incomparable, eternal beings who have as their sole enjoyment their attendance upon you and their experience of your qualities in the divine land. Considering you the Refuge of the entire world impervious to distinctions, I, with no other refuge and without any other goal, with the Senior Goddess as mediator, took refuge at your feet. Right now, I, your servant, having become a person whose obstacles have been vanquished, should obtain the right at all times to all [manner of] service at your feet.”³⁰

The commentary, as we have seen, is extremely concise and a careful reading of it shows that it consolidates all the themes and concepts related to “taking refuge” in the previous centums of the *Ārāyiram*. It begins by stressing the attractiveness of Viṣṇu at Vēṅkaṭam as the object of refuge, his unbounded compassion (*apāraḥkārūṇya*) and his accessibility to the devotees as the refuge of the entire world. The *ālṽār* then describes himself as one who has no other refuge (*ananyaśaraṇa*) and no other goal (*ananyaprayojana*). The act of taking refuge which follows upon this declaration, is the focal point of the commentary. Though *Pillāṇ* uses the phrase *śaraṇam pukuntēn* in the commentary on this particular verse, *āśrayaṇa/samāśrayaṇa* together with their past participle forms *āśrita/samāśrita* tend to be the terms usually favoured by him for seeking refuge. This act of taking refuge is described in very specific terms: the *ālṽār*, deeming himself to be without refuge and without any other goal grasps the Goddess as his mediator (*puruṣakāra*)³¹ and then surrenders at the feet of the “Lord of Vēṅkaṭam” (*tiruvēṅkaṭattān*). It is clear that this surrender takes place with the deity at Vēṅkaṭam.³² The *Nālāyirativiyapirapantam* is replete with verses on the form of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa in specific temples such as that of Raṅganātha at Śrīraṅgam, Aḷakar at Tirumāliruṇicōlai and Tiruvēṅkaṭattān at Vēṅkaṭam. In contrast to this, *Viśiṣṭādvaita* literature till and including Rāmānuja reflects rather rarely on the importance of the deity in the temple for salvation. As Oberhammer (1999) has pointed out the term for the deity in the

temple in later Śrīvaiṣṇava literature, *arcāvatāra*, does not appear in the earlier writings, such as in Rāmānuja's works,³³ though we do have the word *mūrti* for the form of the deity which is to be worshipped both in the *TVM* (*TVM* V.2.8, for example)³⁴ as well as some *Pāñcarātra* literature.³⁵ All this changes with the *stotra* and the commentarial literature after Rāmānuja and it is the particular act of taking refuge with the deity at Vēṅkaṭam which is singled out by Piḷḷāṇ through the use of a special vocabulary, which is not granted to other verses of taking refuge in the commentary.³⁶

The singularity of this vocabulary, in that it is almost definitely intended to be formulaic, is established when it is compared to the vocabulary of the *Gadyatraya* on *prapatti*:

Piḷḷāṇ on *TVM* VI.10.10

Gadyatraya: *Śaraṇāgati* (ŚG), *Śrīraṅga* (ŚrG), *Vaikuṇṭha* (VG)

Epithets for God

apārakāruṇyamahodadhi

apārakāruṇyasauśīlya vātsalyamahodadhi

— v. 5, ŚG

— v. 7, ŚrG

asmat-svāmī

asmat-svāmī

— v. 5, ŚG

— v. 1, ŚrG

anālocitaviśeṣāśeṣalokaśaraṇya

anālocitaviśeṣāśeṣalokaśaraṇya

— v. 5, ŚG

— v. 7, ŚrG

Epithets for the Nityasūris

tvaṭparicaryaikabhogaṇityasiddhapurusa

bhagavatparicaryaikabhogair nityasiddhaiḥ

— v. 1, VG

— v. 3, VG

Epithets for the āḷvār

ananyaśaraṇa

ananyaśaraṇa

— vv. 1, 5 ŚG

ananyaprayojana

ananyaprayojana

— vv. 2, 16, 17, 20 ŚG

This list shows that the vocabulary of *TVM* VI.10.10 in Piḷḷāṇ resembles, to a great extent, the vocabulary of the *Gadyatraya*. Further, other scholars have also pointed out that the influence of the vocabulary of the *Gadyatraya* on the *Ārāyiram* is not restricted to the commentary on this verse alone, but is fairly pervasive.³⁷ The linguistic evidence, therefore, seems to indicate that the author of both the *Ārāyiram* and the *Gadyatraya* drew upon a common reservoir of terminology, especially when it came to the act of taking refuge. This similarity of vocabulary is further strengthened by a closer comparison between the act of *śaraṇāgati* in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* and the *samāśrayaṇa* of Piḷḷāṇ.

In the first part of the ŚG, the author takes refuge with the Goddess, in the first verse. Then, in the second verse, he requests that refuge (*śaraṇāgati*) is always

made available to him. In the fifth and final verse of this section of the poem, he takes refuge with Nārāyaṇa. The act of taking refuge, in the first and last verses, employs this formula: “[I], who have no other refuge (*ananyaśaraṇa*) take refuge (*śaraṇam prapadye*) with that Refuge for those without refuge (*aśaraṇyaśaraṇya*)”.³⁸ Nevertheless, in the verse where the poet/devotee takes refuge with the Goddess the following words, present in the verse addressed to Nārāyaṇa, are omitted. These are, “at your lotus feet” (*tvatpadāravindayugalam*). Thus, in the ŚG, the devotee first takes refuge with the Goddess, but not at her feet, before taking refuge at the feet of the Nārāyaṇa. In both cases, he declares that he is “without any other refuge” (*ananyaśaraṇa*). This process exactly parallels the process in the *Ārāyiram* on TVM VI.10.10.

The phrase “without any other goal” (*ananyaprayojana*) recurred four times in the ŚG. There it was, invariably, part of a group of adjectives which describe and terminate in the “experience of the Blessed One” (*bhagavadanubhava*). Thus, it was embedded in the following sort of sentence in the ŚG:

Because of the desire (*apekṣā*) for the attainment (*prāpti*) of eternal service (*nityakainkarya*) which is the highest good (*paramārthika*) brought about (*kṛta*) by the exclusive (*ekāntika*) and extreme (*ātyantika*) devotion towards the Supreme (*parabhakti*), knowledge of the Supreme (*parajñāna*) and the highest devotion (*paramabhakti*) towards the lotus feet of the Blessed One, which is born (*janita*) of complete (*paripūrṇa*), incessant (*anavātara*), eternal (*nitya*), supremely pure (*viśadatama*), focused [without any other goal] (*ananyaprayojana*), unlimited (*anavadhika*), excellent (*atiśaya*) love (*priya*), which is the experience of the Blessed One, the service which is the result (*kārita*) of love (*prīti*), unlimited and excellent, suitable in all conditions (*sarvāvasthacita*) and whose form (*rūpa*) is that of pleasure (*rati*) taken only in the state of total subordination (*aśeṣaśeṣatā*) ... [because of this desire for eternal service] may refuge (*śaraṇāgati*) be granted to me.

In the other three places in the ŚG where this compound occurs, it is embedded in an identical sentence.³⁹ In short, the context indicates that the desire for service (*kainkarya*) is stated to arise from the experience of God (*bhagavadanubhava*), an experience which is synonymous with a love which includes having no other goal (*ananyaprayojana*). From this desire the act of surrender follows. It is not difficult to see the obvious parallels between this sequence and the *Ārāyiram* on VI.10.10, where the *ālvār* takes refuge considering himself *ananyaprayojana* and then requests the right to service.

4.3.2 The uniqueness of TVM VI.10.10

The singularity of the *Ārāyiram*’s vocabulary on VI.10.10 becomes even more evident when we compare it with commentarial passages on other verses in the text.

One example which serves to illustrate this, for example, is *TVM I.5.5*, which bears a striking similarity thematically to VI.10.10. The verse I.5.5 reads:

*Mātavā, you bear on your chest the doe-eyed woman,
Kōvintā, with your playful arrow, you shattered the hunch,
Light of the skies, Gem-coloured One, Slayer of Matu, graciously let
this Sinner attain your honey-exuding divine feet.*⁴⁰

The verse refers to Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa in his incarnation as Kṛṣṇa. The very first line speaks of the Goddess seated on his chest, thus echoing the first line of VI.10.10. Lines 2–3 refer to Kṛṣṇa’s glory as the light of the heavens and his exploits as the redeemer of the hunch-backed woman Tṛvakra and the slayer of the demon Madhu. This praise of Kṛṣṇa anticipates and parallels lines 2–3 of VI.10.10, which convey similar sentiments with respect to the deity at Vēṅkaṭam, referring to, “Lord of Vēṅkaṭam, desired by the incomparable immortals and groups of sages”. The thematic difference between the two verses lies in the final lines of each verse: I.5.5 has “Graciously let this sinner attain your divine feet exuding honey” while VI.10.10 refers to “I, your servant, without any refuge, sat at your feet and entered”.

The last line aside, the overwhelming parallels between the two verses might lead us to conjecture that Piḷḷāṇ might expound some of his views on taking refuge in I.5.5, using vocabulary similar to that found in his interpretation of VI.10.10. In fact what is said in the commentary on I.5.5 is the following:

God, knowing the *ālvār* to be bewitched by his accessibility, thinks, “If I were now to go and unite with him he will move away as he did previously, considering himself unworthy of this intimacy. So he himself should come and unite with me”. Thus, He stays aloof, thinking, “Should he get flustered then I will unite with him”, even as the *ālvār* for his part desires God. If one asks how he does so, then his words demonstrate this: “You have the divine name Mādhava because your sole enjoyment lies in receiving the glances of Lakṣmī and in your union with her. Born graciously as one among the human race in order to protect those who seek your protection, taking possession of them by ignoring the imperfections on their part as one whose nature is to remove their defects, you are the protector of beings belonging to the animal order. Possessing the abundant, entire worlds and the divine land due to your splendour, having a pure, delightful divine form, you have the characteristic nature of destroying the obstacles of those who resort to you. Graciously enable this sinner to reach your divine feet which exude honey.”⁴¹

The main thrust of this passage is the mutual desire on the part of God and the *ālvār* to unite (*saṁśleṣa*) with each other even while they are at cross-purposes as to how to go about it. There is a reference to the Goddess in the first line of the

verse almost identical to that in VI.10.10, but here, soteriological mediation receives no mention. Instead, Kṛṣṇa's accessibility to beings seeking his protection is stressed just as that of Vēṅkaṭattāṇ in VI.10.10 and, even while the word *āśrita* occurs twice in the commentary on I.5.5, the thrust of the passage is not about Nammālvār seeking refuge.

In other passages, even where Nammālvār does take refuge, the important, formulaic compounds and terminology present in VI.10.10 are absent. Illustrative of this is the commentarial introduction to the decade V.10, a passage in which the *ālvār* is said to take refuge with Kṛṣṇa. The decades V.7 – V.10 are treated by Piḷḷāṇ as a unit. In these four decades, the commentator has the *ālvār* moving from one place to another (the temples of Cīrīvaramaṅkalam, Tirukkuṭantai and Tiruvallavāḷ) trying to unite (*saṁśleṣikka*) with the respective deity. Failing everywhere, he finally seeks refuge with Kṛṣṇa in V.10, as the commentarial introduction shows:

The *ālvār* became dejected because he was unable to unite with our Lord at Cīrīvaramaṅkalanakar, Tirukkuṭantai and Tiruvallavāḷ as he wished to. He says, "I did not get to see our Lord born as the son of Vasudeva in Mathura, nor how he grew up as the apple of everyone's eye, nor how he carried out divine activities beyond gods and men, stealing the mind and sight of beings. Nor did I see his wondrous deeds as the fish, the tortoise etc. Now, I am very weak, longing to contemplate these activities." [The *ālvār*] concludes by taking refuge with our Lord, asking him to make possible this contemplation by ridding him of his weakness.⁴²

Here we have an instance in the commentary where the *ālvār* takes refuge. Yet, this act is for the specific purpose of contemplating the mythological activities of Kṛṣṇa. The commentator here is faithful to the poetry in his interpretation, in that the ten verses of the decade speak of the various activities of Kṛṣṇa. Yet, he departs from the main meaning of the decade, which is replete with the refrain, "When shall I reach you"⁴³ to say that the *ālvār* is taking refuge. The reason for this deviation from the poetry appears to be the special accessibility of the Kṛṣṇa incarnation in the *Nālāyirativiyapirapantam*. In the commentary on several earlier verses, such as on I.1.2 and I.3.1 etc. Piḷḷāṇ had repeatedly emphasized this of Viṣṇu's descent as the child Kṛṣṇa.⁴⁴ Further, the commentary on verses such as VI.9.4 refers to Kṛṣṇa's protectiveness and his destruction of the cart-demon (*śakaṭāsura*). All these mythological tales of Kṛṣṇa's accessibility in the *TVM*, influence Piḷḷāṇ's decision to interpret the decade as one where the *ālvār* takes refuge with Kṛṣṇa. Yet, here in the decade V.10 the *ālvār* is still separated from God and far from the goal of service, despite having taken refuge.⁴⁵

The two examples discussed are typical of just a few of the ways of seeing, taking refuge and gaining union with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa discussed in the commentary. Others include Piḷḷāṇ's interpretation of the union between God and the *ālvār* along Viśiṣṭādvaitic lines, in terms of the body-soul relationship, or in terms

of the Inner Controller (*antaryāmin*) within the heart.⁴⁶ In the context of all these ways of uniting with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, the *samāśrayaṇa* act of VI.10.10 stands apart in being a formulaic act of taking refuge, with the Goddess as the mediator, for a specific soteriological purpose. This soteriological purpose is also revealed at the very end of the commentary on VI.10.10.

Here, Piḷḷāṇ has the *ālvār* say: “Right now, I, your servant, having become one whose obstacles have been vanquished, should obtain the right at all times to all [manner of] service at your divine feet.” The phrase used of the *ālvār* here is *nirastasamastapratibandhakaṇāy*. The Tamil adverbial suffix — *āy* here can be interpreted in different ways, either in the sense of “as” or “having become” and it is used by Piḷḷāṇ in both these ways in the *Ārāyiram* as a whole. It is suggested, for reasons which will become apparent in Sections 4.3–4.5, that “having become one whose obstacles have been vanquished” would be the correct interpretation in the context of VI.10.10.⁴⁷ Understood in this fashion, the commentary would suggest that the immediate effect of the act of taking refuge, its efficacy, lies in the fact that the *ālvār* sees himself freed of certain hindrances to reaching the divine feet. This self-perception of a change in his spiritual status would also explain why he is confidently able, at the end of the commentary, to aspire to the same position as the *nityasiddhas* who serve Viṣṇu eternally in Vaikuṇṭha.⁴⁸

Thus, the commentary would suggest that the difference between the *ālvār*’s situation prior to taking refuge in VI.10.10 and just after it — in other words, the soteriological significance of *samāśrayaṇa* — lies in a perceived removal of certain obstacles or *pratibandhaka* to eternal service at God’s feet. Yet, the *Ārāyiram* on VI.10.10 itself does not explain any further what these obstacles are or why they need to be vanquished. For answers to these queries, we must turn to other verses of the *TVM* and the commentary on them.

4.4 Obstacles (*pratibandhaka*)

The word *pratibandhaka* emerges first in the *Ārāyiram* on I.6.8: “When you worship him, he will rid you of those *viṇai* which are an obstacle (*pratibandhaka*) to his service (*kaiṅkaryā*) and give you that great treasure (*mahāsampat*) in the form of permanent service.”⁴⁹ Here, the *pratibandhaka* are identified as *viṇai*, a Tamil word meaning “deed, action” and, by extension, “*karman*”.⁵⁰ This correspondence between *pratibandhaka* and *viṇai* is reiterated in the *Ārāyiram* on II.6.6, where the compound *tīviṇaikaḷ*⁵¹ is interpreted as “all the obstacles” (*samastapratibandhaka*) by Piḷḷāṇ.⁵²

In the *TVM* itself the word *viṇai* appears innumerable times with the addition of the first person nominal suffix — *ēn* as in *viṇaiyēn* (*TVM*: I.5.6, VII.1.2, VIII.1.2, VIII.2.3 etc.). Further, we have compounds which are ubiquitous such as “wicked-*viṇai*” — *tīviṇai* (*TVM*: II.6.6, II.7.9, II.9.3, II.10.5, III.10.7, V.1.5, IX.7.4, IX.7.5 etc.) and “hard-*viṇai*” — *valviṇai* (*TVM*: I.4.2, I.5.9, I.7.2, II.10.9, III.2.2, III.5.2, IV.2.1, V.4.1 etc.). Less frequent are compounded forms such as “done-*viṇai*” — *ceyviṇai* (*TVM*: III.10.7, V.1.5), “surrounding-*viṇai*” — *cūlviṇai*

(TVM IV.2.2), “wicked-*vinai*” — *kōḷvinai* (TVM IV.2.3), “cruel-*vinai*” — *koṭuvinaḥ* (TVM III.2.9), “complete-*vinai*” — *muḷuvinaḥ* (TVM I.4.2) and “the *vinai* which is *māyā*” — *māyavinaḥ* (TVM VI.4.1). In the majority of these cases the word *vinai* refers to powerful and wicked actions or deeds.

This meaning is further confirmed by the decades V.4 and VIII.1 in which the words *valvinai* or *vinai*, respectively, are equated with the Sanskrit word *pāpa*. In TVM V.4, Nammālvār uses the epithet “I who have done hard deeds” (*valvinaiyēn*) to refer to himself at the end of four alternate verses V.4.1, V.4.3, V.4.5 and V.4.7.⁵³ In TVM V.4.2, though, the epithet “I who am a sinner” (*pāviyēn* from the Sanskrit *pāpī*) virtually substitutes for *valvinaiyēn*.⁵⁴ A further correspondence between *vinaiyēn* and *pāviyēn* can be seen in the decade VIII.1. There, while Nammālvār refers to himself most frequently as *vinaiyēn*,⁵⁵ *pāviyēn* is synonymous for this term in the very first verse.⁵⁶ It is this equivalence established between *vinai* and *pāpa* in the TVM itself which is taken over by Piḷḷān⁵⁷ and which also sanctions the commentator to interpret *pratibandhaka* as *pāpa* in the *Ārāyiram*.

Thus, in the *Ārāyiram* on III.3.6, Piḷḷān says:

[You might ask] — What is the means to obtain that which should be attained? [We say:] “As soon as one says this word *Namaḥ* which qualifies one for everything, and which is extremely easy to say, to the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam, the [current] sins which are obstacles to that service and future ones will all be burnt”.⁵⁸

In the *Ārāyiram* on VII.1.7 it is said: “Just as you, through your compassion destroyed my sins which were obstacles and gave yourself, a limitless object of enjoyment, to me to enjoy ...”⁵⁹ In the commentary on other verses, synonymous words, such as *virodhi* for *pratibandhaka* and *agha* for *pāpa* are used.⁶⁰

The inescapable conclusion, therefore, is that one meaning of the word *pratibandhaka* in the *Ārāyiram* is wicked or evil deeds, *vinai/pāpa*. Nevertheless, a careful reading of the entire commentary shows that this is not the entire meaning. This becomes evident in examining the *Ārāyiram* on III.2.3 and on V.1.6 where the compounds *puṇarvinai* and *valvinai*, respectively, appear. In the first case, *puṇarvinai* is part of a line⁶¹ which is taken to mean, “the connection with *prakṛti*.”⁶² In V.1.6, the *valvinai* of the verse⁶³ is in the *Ārāyiram*, “the obstacles relating to the connection with the body”.⁶⁴ The repeated reference to *prakṛti*, understood as the physical body which is an obstacle to the complete union with God, becomes especially vehement after the sixth century in the commentary. Thus, in the introduction to the decade VII.2 Piḷḷān says: “Due to the misfortune (*vyasana*) of not uniting with the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam and the misfortune of seeing *prakṛti* which is an obstacle to that union ... [the *ālvār*] speaks through another persona (*anyāpadeśa*) in this verse in which he calls out to the great Lord.”⁶⁵ Similarly, in the *Ārāyiram*’s introduction to VII.6, the *ālvār* is deeply distressed at being trapped in the human body, separated from God: “He [the *ālvār*] calls out to the son of the emperor [Rāma], extremely distressed at the contemplation of the

connection with *prakṛti*, [saying], ‘Remove this connection with *prakṛti* and unite me graciously to your divine feet.’”⁶⁶ These two further examples should suffice to show that *pratibandhaka* in the *Ārāyiram* means not just *pāpa* but also *prakṛti*.

In the light of this two-fold commentarial interpretation of the obstacles (*pratibandhaka*) which the *ālvār* faces, the phrase *nirastasamastapratibandhakaṇāy* in the commentary on VI.10.10 almost certainly implies that Nammālvār, after taking refuge, is freed of both these obstacles — *pāpa* and *prakṛti* — to service. The implications and meaning of such a freedom — on which the significance of *samāśrayaṇa* as a soteriological act hinges — becomes clear in the commentary on individual verses and centums following the sixth centum.

4.5 Post-samāśrayaṇa

The introduction to the seventh decade at first appears to put into question the entire significance of the act of taking refuge in VI.10.10.⁶⁷ In it Piḷḷāṇ says:

Though the *ālvār* expressed the desire to be rid of his ties with *prakṛti* and then subordinated after he sought refuge, God, greedy for his body and intending to finish the *tiruvāymoli* only through him, did not remove these ties. The *ālvār* saw himself still trapped in the sense-objects, as before, even though he had turned his sense-organs away from worldly things and focused them upon the Blessed One. He saw that these organs had been this way since eternity, opposed to the experience of God and obstacles to the desired union. Hence, one should reject them as unworthy of the union. Reviling their very sight, greatly afraid, dejected at not seeing God, harassed, the *ālvār* addresses him. Seeing that though God can estrange him from the sense-organs he does not do so the *ālvār* prostrate, clasping the divine feet, says, ‘What do you gain by torturing me through the sense-organs and by preventing me from reaching your feet? O Compassionate One! Take me away from them to your divine feet’. Distressed at not seeing our Lord and on seeing *prakṛti*, the obstacle to the union with Him, he cries out like the lady [Sītā] calling out in the Aśoka grove.⁶⁸

In this passage Nammālvār finds that his express aim of freedom from *prakṛti*, to be achieved after *samāśrayaṇa*, still eludes him. Therefore, when this act of taking refuge proves ineffective, the *ālvār*’s dejection seems almost existential: he realizes that in spite of his efforts at subduing his sense-organs they remain forever obstacles to the union with God. Unable to see a way forward Nammālvār appeals, in the last instance, to God’s compassion and Piḷḷāṇ equates his desperate situation to that of Sītā as she was held captive in Laṅkā, in the Aśoka grove and, utterly helpless, depended solely on Rāma to rescue her.

Yet, the apparent anticlimax of the act of taking refuge in VI.10.10 is also shown to be just that, only an apparent failure. For, here, the commentarial voice

intervenes and informs us that the continuing separation between the *ālvār* and Viṣṇu is part of a larger design of Viṣṇu's which Nammālvār is not and cannot be aware of. It is true that *prakṛti*, as the *ālvār*'s earthly body, remains the ultimate obstacle to union. Yet the commentator is at pains to point out that this is not because of something which Nammālvār has left undone but because of Viṣṇu's greed (*lobha*) for his body and the divine determination to bring the sacred poem to its conclusion. The author must be kept alive till this is done. The reference to God's "greed" for the human body is important: *prakṛti*, thus far from an obstacle to salvation from the human perspective is now desirable from the divine perspective.

The ambivalent status of *prakṛti* in Śrīvaiṣṇava theology must first be understood in order to make sense of why God is greedy for the human body and even loves the human as human. Here, it is useful to turn to Rāmānuja's introduction to the *Gītābhāṣya* on the relationship between God and the material basis of the universe, *prakṛti*, for the passage also illuminates the above commentary of Piḷḷāṇ. Rāmānuja says of God, Nārāyaṇa:

He dwells in the eternal, perfect, imperishable Supreme Abode filled with manifold, wondrous, eternal objects, means and places of enjoyment appropriate to him, infinite in its wonder, manifestation and magnitude. He is the one with the sportive playfulness which engenders the origin, manifestation and dissolution of the universe filled with the manifold, wondrous, eternal multitude of objects and subjects of enjoyment. This Supreme Brahman, Supreme Person, Nārāyaṇa, having created this entire universe from Brahma to the unmoving things, remains in his form; though beyond the reach of the meditation and worship of Brahma etc., and of gods and men, this Great Ocean of limitless compassion, amiability, parental love and nobility, changes his own form into one similar to each of theirs without losing his own characteristic nature, and incarnating in them, he is worshipped by them, bestowing the fruits called *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa* upon them, according to their desire.⁶⁹

Nārāyaṇa, then, creates the universe out of his sense of play and then inhabits it, unfolding himself as the manifested world. *Prakṛti* is this material world which unfolds and also constitutes the individual bodies. Thus, from the soteriological perspective, *prakṛti* is an object of enjoyment (*bhogyā*) for God because through it he enters into the self of the individual being and unites with him.

In interpreting another verse, *TVM X.7.4*, Piḷḷāṇ makes much the same point:

He remained the Lord of the entire universe, despite entering my *prakṛti* and enjoying this self. He doesn't abandon me even momentarily, for he even relishes my *prakṛti*. Seeking a place suitable to unite with me, he searched and, entering the Sacred Hill, he united there as foreseen. Then pleased that the Sacred Hill had generated this prosperity he did not

leave, making it his object of enjoyment just as he did my life and my body. He was pleased, after experiencing my life, my body and the Sacred Hill ...⁷⁰

Prakṛti, here, functions as the gateway for God to unite with the *ālvār*'s very life and soul. The logic of God's descent in a particular locale is also predicated on the premise that it facilitates this kind of intimate union. The divine first seeks out the sacred place where he can manifest himself concretely and then, through this manifestation, he can enter into a concrete relationship with the flesh-and-blood devotee and, hence, the individual being's self through the latter's *prakṛti*. It is God's anticipation of such a union and, moreover, his delight in a recurrent union of this kind, that engenders the greed spoken of in the commentary on VII.1. This is the affirmation of *prakṛti*, from the perspective of the divine, which is also extended to all materiality, the whole material world which is both created and enjoyed by Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa. Thus, it can be said of Śrīvaiṣṇava theology that it does accommodate a viewpoint by which

The cosmos ... is the creative expression of the divine *līlā* ... and the Lord vivifies the *jīva* by sowing the seed of His primal beauty into its inner being. The beauties of nature and the fair forms of human and celestial beings are but partial revelations of the unsurpassed beauty of *Brahman*. Reality is essentially beautiful ...⁷¹

This positive affirmation of materiality in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, in turn, has been seen by some scholars as the result of the tradition's ideological debt to the poetry of the *ālvārs* or, even further, as forming one continuum with an anthropocentrism and exaltation of "life-in-this-world" considered characteristic of Tamil religious thought in general.⁷²

If, in fact, the *ālvār* only remains alive and not yet permanently with God because of God's attachment to his *prakṛti* then the *samāśrayaṇa* act of VI.10.10 had been effective to the extent that the *ālvār*'s quest for salvation is not hindered by anything he has failed to do. He has done the needful to attain salvation, he can do no more. Such an understanding of his situation post-*samāśrayaṇa* is justified by the interpretations which Piḷḷāṇ provides for other verses after the sixth centum. Thus, in VII.1.7 it is explicitly stated that the other significant obstacle to salvation, *pāpa*, is no longer one. In the commentary Nammālvār once again laments about *prakṛti* but adds: "Therefore, **just as you removed the sins which are obstacles** and gave yourself, a limitless object of enjoyment, to me to enjoy, **now**, out of compassion remove this contact with the sense-organs and graciously unite me with your divine feet."⁷³ Later, in the commentary on IX.10.5 the effectiveness of *samāśrayaṇa*, despite residual *prakṛti*, is emphasized:

Thus, for those who find taking refuge with him through *bhaktiyoga* unendurable and grasp His feet themselves as the means, He is the

refuge not just in one way but in every way. Indeed, He finds its unendurable not to immediately unite with them by releasing them from this *prakṛti*, taking them to the divine land and making them into divine *prakṛtis*. [Yet] because this connection with *prakṛti*, a result of their beginningless predispositions, has to be endured, he will graciously give them the divine land at the right time when this *prakṛti* leaves by itself ...⁷⁴

The theological message of this passage underscores why *samāśrayaṇa* is effective. It alone engenders in God a powerful need to grant the soul his salvation. He is only prevented from doing so because he chooses not to interfere in the innate dynamic process of *prakṛti*'s movement and permits the individual to endure and live out his pre-ordained life-span.

At the same time, Nammālvār's distress even after *samāśrayaṇa* and his ignorance of God's true intentions points to the fact that this act of taking refuge appears to have less of a gnostic aspect to it than an affective one, for the *ālvār* is nearer his goal than he ever was before but does not know this. Hence, both his bewilderment and his appeal to Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's compassion points towards that important aspect of salvation which lies outside human control and in the hands of God: an aspect reflected in the *Ārāyiram* in the theology of God's compassion and his unfathomability.

4.6 God's compassion (*kṛpā*)

The theology of God's compassion expounded in the *Ārāyiram* is a complex one. It rests upon the foundations of an emotional relationship, a relationship of commitment, and presupposes the privileges which such a relationship confers on those who have entered into it. Such a relationship, according to the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, can best be understood as one between conjugal partners in which one is strong and the other supposedly weak and dependent. Yet, the so-called weaker partner is able to instrumentalize that very dependency into a source of persuasion and, ultimately, power. Through the candid admission of helplessness, the *Ārāyiram* suggests, it becomes possible for the weak to disarm the strong. The compassion of the stronger is evoked on appeal to the vulnerability of the weaker. In attempting to express the nature of this relationship and make it comprehensible the *Ārāyiram* turns to the structure of the dialogic exchange, for this structure best enables the listener/reader to grasp the complexity of the theology in its emotional immediacy rather than as dry doctrine. The decades V.7 and X.8 are paradigmatic for such an exchange.

In the fifth centum Piḷḷāṇ introduces each decade as a separate unit. The decades V.7–10, as an exception, are considered as a unit by the commentator, since they are seen as the decades where Nammālvār attempts, successively, to take refuge with various forms of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, finally succeeding in V.10

with the Kṛṣṇāvatāra. Among these, the seventh decade deals with the deity at Cīrīvaramaṅkalam.

The introduction to V.7 has Nammālvār speak candidly of how he has not done *karmayoga*, *jñānayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*. He then both cajoles and emotionally blackmails God, in the first verse, to come to his rescue:

I do not have these [three *yogas*] and yet I cannot even briefly tolerate being without a limitless object of enjoyment such as you. Further, since you have graciously entered this town of Cīrīvaramaṅkalam to make me your possession, the disgrace is yours if you don't relish this self which is subordinate to you. You cannot reject me. Therefore you must graciously make me your possession, [says Nammālvār].⁷⁵

The commentary on the rest of the verses is presented in the form of a dialogue between the *ālvār* and God. Thus, in the commentary on the second verse Nammālvār says:

I have not obtained your lotus feet. I don't have the means to do so. Prostrate with desire for the mere sight of you, I can no longer endure a means to salvation. Nevertheless, it is you who should, motivelessly, destroy your servant's obstacles just as you were gracious and destroyed the obstacles of the lady [Sītā] that day in the Aśoka grove.⁷⁶

In the commentary on the third verse God asks: "Why should I motivelessly do what you want?"⁷⁷ To which the *ālvār* is made to reply:

What purpose was served when you graciously made me, who was a non-entity devoid of knowledge of you, an entity possessed of that knowledge and with pleasure only in the service to you? You did not do this for any reason. You did this only due to your unsurpassed nobility, compassion etc. Graciously do what is still lacking, in a similar way.⁷⁸

The commentary on the fourth verse continues: "You protected those who resorted to you only by disregarding your own needs. Therefore, fulfill what I your servant require, in the same way."⁷⁹ Then, there is the exchange in the commentary on V.7.5: "Can you not undertake a means to salvation which will accomplish your desire?"⁸⁰ "I cannot undertake a means to salvation which will enable me to reach your feet". At this juncture God seems to react with both exasperation and reproach, saying: "Is there anything left to do? I have entered Cīrīvaramaṅkalam so that all those, whose sole enjoyment I am, can see me with their eyes and experience [me]"... To this Nammālvār reacts firmly: "I too have seen that but it is not enough for me."⁸¹ Finally, in V.7.6. God reiterates: "What else should I do?"⁸² to which the *ālvār* replies, "You should graciously come so that that I, your servant, may worship you."⁸³

Later, towards the end of the poem, the tenth centum shows that God's unfathomable participation in the salvation of Nammālvār is acknowledged fully by the latter himself. Towards the end of the *TVM*, in the tenth centum, the *ālvār* is considered to be very near to ultimate release. The commentary describes this experience in terms of greater and greater proximity to God: the *ālvār* now sees God within his eyes and feels him enter and mingle within his heart. By the eighth decade (X.8), which is on the deity at Tiruppēr, Nammālvār is near salvation, almost freed from the last ties to *prakṛti*. As the poem draws to a close, the commentator interprets the last decades of the tenth centum as the *ālvār*'s request for a place at Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's feet in the divine land (*tirunāṭu*). Here, again, the mystery of God's agency is the main theme. In the introduction to the decade X.8 the *ālvār* asks: "Why are you so devoted and mingle and interact with me?"⁸⁴ and answers his own question, "Even he [God] who is this devoted, cannot, out of all the reasons he has manufactured, cite a single reason, for his devotion. So, he is attempting to superimpose a reason it seems."⁸⁵ The commentary on the second verse (X.8.2) uses the expression "without cause" in speaking of God's reason for entering the *ālvār*'s heart.⁸⁶ Finally, the commentary on the ninth verse (X.8.9) is a reflection on the inexplicable and baffling nature of this intimacy: "Why has the person who dwells in the town of Tiruppēr *now* made me knowledgeable about him and placed himself within me? What was the reason for not doing this before?" The *ālvār* is forced to conclude that there are no answers to these questions.⁸⁷

The picture of God's compassion and activity in liberating the soul, which emerges from the commentary on these two decades, is a comprehensive one. God begins by bestowing upon the *ālvār* knowledge pertaining to himself and kindling in him the desire only to serve him. This knowledge converted the *ālvār* from a non-entity (*avastu*) to an entity (*vastu*) (V.7.3) making him a substantive person who comes to be included in Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's world of entities, a process encapsulated by the term *viṣayikāra*. Further, the word *viṣayikāra* connotes the active role on the part of God and, correspondingly, a passive one on the part of the devotee: the devotee is, as it were, taken over by God. Since God has already brought this about, without any fathomable motive for doing so, the *ālvār* now tells him that he also expects him to bring about his salvation: that is, unite him with his feet. The *ālvār*'s confidence that God will help him is based upon his awareness of the latter's qualities like his unsurpassed nobility (*niratiśayaudarya*) and his compassion (*kāruṇya*) (V.7.3). These are the very qualities which makes God help his devotees, says the *ālvār*, and not because he gets anything from it; that is, he has no other reason (*hetu*) or purpose (*prayojana*) in doing so (V.7.3-4). The *ālvār* feels that he is vindicated in his confidence that God will rescue him because of his previous manifestations in the past to rescue those beloved to him: for example, his active intervention on behalf of Sītā as Rāma (V.7.2). Finally, when we move to the very end of the commentary, the decade X.8 shows that the *ālvār* remains baffled by God's generosity and unable to account for it, for there remains an ultimate, divine mystery to salvation.

Thus, God's role in salvation is described in terms which makes it, simultaneously, both explicable and inexplicable. Its intelligibility arises from the fact that he is the repository of all the most excellent qualities which are beneficial to the individual soul and the quality most stressed by Piḷḷāṇ in this regard is that of his compassion (*kāruṇya/kṛpā*). We can recollect that in VI.10.10 it is by invoking God as the "great ocean of unbounded compassion" (*apārakāruṇyamahodadhi*) that the *ālvār* took refuge. Yet, such qualities in themselves do not render his specific acts of graciousness, his love for and dependence on one particular devotee, and a sinful one at that, any more intelligible. The term *nirhetuka* used both by Piḷḷāṇ and later commentators in this regard exactly encapsulates this mystery at the heart of the soteriological process and Piḷḷāṇ returns again and again to these issues of God's motiveless actions and his compassion to speak of the divine role in salvation.⁸⁸

Thus we see that, as in Rāmānuja, the two poles of the divine and the human are carefully balanced in Piḷḷāṇ. When seen from the perspective of the sinful devotee, Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's role in salvation is so great that it looks as if the devotee has done nothing. But, at the same time, *samāśrayaṇa*, which aids this process, has to be undertaken by the *ālvār*. The stress on the decisive and ultimately important role of God in saving the soul in Piḷḷāṇ receives further credibility because of repeated assertions within the commentary, in the first person voice of Nammālvār, of his lowliness and impurity. Nevertheless, the depiction of Nammālvār as a sinful person is not the only interpretation of him in the *Ārāyiram*. Rather, there exist two levels of interpretation of his spiritual status, which remain mutually irreconcilable.

4.7 Nammālvār

We had earlier reflected on the historical process of tradition-formation in Śrīvaiṣṇavism and on the emergence of the devotional commentaries.⁸⁹ The commentaries on the *TVM*, as we saw, were but one part of a two-fold enterprise aimed at legitimizing the popular devotional movement of the *ālvārs* and their poetry in the context of temple worship and turning them into orthodox Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrine. The hagiographical literature, which represented one strand of this venture, concerned itself exclusively with the interpretation of the figures of all the *ālvārs*, beginning with Nammālvār. The slightly earlier strand, the commentarial literature, to begin with, concentrated on Nammālvār's most important work, the *TVM*. Nevertheless, in the commentaries on the *TVM* after the *Ārāyiram*, beginning with the *Onpatināyirappaṭi*, there was a convergence of these two genres, of hagiography and commentary in certain respects: the commentators considered what the *ālvār* represented, the meaning of his person, before they proceeded to lay a blueprint for understanding his writings. And even while the *Ārāyiram* does not provide such a formal introduction where the significance of the *ālvār* is discussed, Piḷḷāṇ

does put forward a decisive interpretation of the *ālvār* in his commentary on the very first verse, I.1.1, of the poem:

The *ālvār* experienced in his heart that Supreme Person as he really is, distinguished by the status of having a special, unique, divine form, ornaments, weapons, consorts and retinue, whose sport is the creation, sustenance etc., of this entire universe. Experiencing him thus he speaks of him even as he does so, out of the limitless love arising from that experience. He addresses his own heart as follows, “[God] is opposed to all defects and is a great Ocean of innumerable, auspicious qualities such as bliss etc., which are limitless, multiplied thousand-fold as in statements such as, ‘He who has the thousand-fold bliss of human beings’ [*Taittirīya Upaniṣad II.8.1*]. He who has these auspicious qualities like bliss etc., further revealed himself to me, motivelessly, as he really is, like gold which exudes fragrance, such that I am devoid of even a trace of ignorance regarding him. He [thus] has the greatness to engender in me unsurpassed devotion towards his feet. This one with these auspicious qualities has the greatness to give himself to those innumerable divine persons beginning with Śeṣa, Garuḍa etc., who are characteristically devoid of all defects and possess unwavering knowledge. Therefore live by doing all acts of subordination, appropriate in all conditions, times and places at his flower-like feet which have the characteristic of removing all the sorrows of those who resort to him.”⁹⁰

This introduction tells us that the *ālvār* is someone who has directly experienced God. This experience is one of the Supreme Person as he really is, in his divine form, surrounded by his consorts and retinue and it generates a limitless love in the *ālvār*’s heart. This, in turn, enables him to speak about the experience. In talking about it to himself the *ālvār* ponders the fact that it has come about entirely due to God’s motiveless actions in revealing himself spontaneously, much as gold which naturally exudes fragrance. Through this experience the *ālvār* knows God, all traces of ignorance in him cease to exist. The removal of ignorance generates devotion towards the sacred feet. As a result of the devotion the *ālvār* decides to resort to those feet and do service there always.

The process described here which the *ālvār* has already undergone at the start of the poem — that of experience (*anubhava*) of God followed by love (*prīti*) for him culminating in the desire to serve at his feet — is analogous, both in vocabulary and description, to the stages which *succeed śaraṇāgati* in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*. To recapitulate the description of this process already dealt with in detail in Section 2.4.1: in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*, the stages of *parabhakti*, *parajñana* and *paramabhakti* led to the direct experience (*anubhava*) of God. This experience considered synonymous with limitless love (*anavadhikapriya/prīti*), in turn, generated a desire for service at the divine feet. Further, just as the start as well

as all the subsequent stages of this process in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* came about through the graciousness (*prasāda*) of Nārāyaṇa alone, here Piḷḷāṇ has the *ālvār* say that it is God who has motivelessly (*nirhetuka*) revealed himself to him. What the parallels between the *ālvār* of the *TVM* and the poet of the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* tells us about the spiritual status of the *ālvār*, at the start of the *Ārāyiram*, is highly significant. **For, in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*, the poet who goes through the process described above is one who has become a *jñānī*.** That is, it was established that the experience of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa as well as the access to his divine form, to see him as he really is, was only possible after attaining the status of a *jñānī* and not before. This being the case, it appears reasonable to conjecture that even though Piḷḷāṇ does not state this explicitly in the commentary on I.1.1, implicitly, at the start of the commentary, his description of the *ālvār* is a description of a *jñānī*-like figure, and one who is similar to the *jñānī* of the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*.

Accepting this interpretation, though, also opens up a further question which is fundamental to the enquiry into the *prapatti* doctrines of the *Ārāyiram*: in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*, the poet did *śaraṇāgati*, i.e: the *mantra-prapatti*, in order to become a *jñānī*. But, at the start of the *Ārāyiram* the *ālvār* appears to be already presented as a *jñānī*-like figure. Assuming this to be the case, we can ask how such an interpretation of him is reconcilable with other passages in the commentary, where he speaks of his sense of sinfulness, his feelings of helplessness and his need to take refuge.

This seeming paradox is not so much resolved as kept at abeyance and this is because there are two different levels of interpretations of the *ālvār* in the *Ārāyiram*. The first level is one where the commentarial voice is in the forefront and where the commentator provides us with a definitive interpretation of Nammālvār. At this first level, the *ālvār* is consistently treated by the commentary as the highest type of devotee of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, as a superior guide or model for ordinary mortals. In this interpretation the *TVM* is not an historical document, composed by a specific individual at a specific historical moment but a paradigmatic religious text and the *ālvār* himself is an archetypal religious figure set apart from ordinary mortals. It is this — what I call hagiographically oriented mode of interpretation — not yet systematized but clearly present in Piḷḷāṇ's commentary, which is considerably developed in the later commentaries, as I have pointed out in Section 3.3.1.

This validation of Nammālvār as a superior being is one of the important factors giving the text, the *TVM*, its religious legitimacy. The other equally important factor is the assumption of the commentator that the *TVM* is an autobiographical text where the author Nammālvār is also the 'I' subject within the text. This interpretation of the *TVM* as the personal religious experience of the narrator who is, hence, also the experiencer in the poem gives the *TVM* and the other texts of the *Nālāyirativiyapirapantam* their unique authenticity within the Śrīvaiṣṇava canon of scriptures and makes the *TVM* a document of edification. In this respect what has been said of the veracity of an autobiographical religious work such as

St. Augustine's *Confessions*, of how such a text establishes its own authenticity, can be legitimately extrapolated to this interpretation of the *TVM*:

... the author speaks to God but with the intention of edifying his readers ... God certainly doesn't need to receive the story of Augustine's life, since He is omniscient and sees the events of eternity at a single glance. God receives the narrator's prayer and thanksgiving. He is thanked for the intervention of His Grace in the narrator's destiny ... By so openly making God his interlocutor, Augustine commits himself to absolute veracity ... Here is a content guaranteed by the highest bail. The confession, because of the addressee it presumes, avoids the risk of falsehood run by ordinary narratives. But what is the function of the secondary addressee, the human auditor ... He comes — by his supposed presence — to legitimize the very "discursiveness" of the confession. The confession is not for God, but for the human reader who needs a narrative, a laying out of the events in this enchained succession ... And thereby are reconciled the edifying motivation and the transcendent finality of the confession: words addressed to God will convert or comfort other men.⁹¹

It is in a similar light that the commentator expects the reader to view the *TVM*. Its veracity is unquestionable because its main interlocutor is God, because the text is the account of the dialectical relationship of the union and separation of Nammālvār and God. Yet the narrative is not for God but the human reader, the other Vaiṣṇavas, those who can learn and benefit from the narrator's personal experience. Through this interpretation of the *TVM* as autobiography, the language of the text is also seen by the commentator as a transparent medium, as the expression of the feelings of the subject rather than as a language moulded by a specific literary genre, its conventions and rhetorical effects.⁹²

At this second level of interpretation Nammālvār is revealed as a figure who considers himself unworthy of the greatness which God has conferred upon him,⁹³ as one who is greatly conscious of his own sinfulness,⁹⁴ of his lowliness as one not from a higher caste (*varṇa*)⁹⁵ and as one who despairs at his frequent separations from God.⁹⁶ At this second level, there is no contradiction in the ālvār doing *samāśrayaṇa* in order to reach the final goal of service. That is, the *samāśrayaṇa* of VI.10.10 is done by the ālvār who is an ordinary devotee rather than one who is a *jñānī*-like figure. Within the *Ārāyiram*, through doing *samāśrayaṇa* he comes closer to the goal of service. And the significance of this act, as correct soteriological practise for ordinary mortals to emulate, is validated by the first level of interpretation, which suggests to us that he is a superior being. The first level of interpretation is more implicit but consistently affirmed, even while in much of the body of the commentary the ālvār is also an ordinary, helpless devotee who has to search and find the right means to salvation, which leads him to taking refuge in VI.10.10. Structurally, these two levels of interpretations of Nammālvār can coexist in the *Ārāyiram* with neither being dominant or contradicting the

other because there is no overarching introduction where the *ālvār*'s spiritual status as a *jñānī* is strongly validated. Once such an introduction becomes a part of the commentarial task, as it does from the *Onpatināyirappaṭi* commentary onwards, it dominates and hence undermines the second level of interpretation where the *ālvār* can be viewed also as an ordinary devotee who has to do something, an *upāya*, to effect his own salvation. The importance of the second level of interpretation in the *Ārāyiram* is also the reason why its *prapatti* doctrines are strongly influenced by the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*, that is, both the description of Nammālvār as a *jñānī*-like figure as well as the description of *samāśrayaṇa* undertaken by him is that of the ordinary *bhakta* in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*. In other words, it falls into the category of what I had heuristically termed as the *mantra-prapatti*, undertaken by the ordinary *bhakta*. The importance of this configuration of *prapatti* in the *Ārāyiram* and, in contrast, its relative unimportance to the *prapatti* conceptions of the *Onpatināyirappaṭi*, as we shall see in the next chapter, may well lie at the kernel of the later schismatic dispute regarding *prapatti* between the *Vaṭakalais* and the *Teṅkalais*.

4.8 Summary

Pillāṇ's views on *samāśrayaṇa* in the *Ārāyiram*, it seems evident, have a certain internal coherence and are elaborate enough to be called a doctrine of self-surrender or *prapatti*. In the first commentary on the *TVM*, salvation for Nammālvār lies in reaching Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's feet in Vaiṣṇuṭha and doing service, *kainkarya*, to them. This goal of *kainkarya* comes within reach only when the *ālvār* rids himself of his bad actions (*pāpa*) and the constraints of gross matter (*prakṛti*) and achieves a certain state of purity. That which alleviates these obstacles to salvation is the act of *samāśrayaṇa*. The *ālvār* has to regard this as a means, an *upāya*, to salvation and this *upāya* also involves uttering the *mantra* which has the word *Namaḥ* in it. Then he must take refuge in front of the deity at Vēṅkaṭam, as one without any other goal (*ananyaprayojana*) with the Goddess as the mediator (*puruṣakāra*). The moment he does this, God frees him from his sins. Thus, the *Ārāyiram* carefully balances the relative roles of the individual and the divine in the salvific process. While the *ālvār* does *prapatti* in the *Ārāyiram*, all that which happens to him in the *TVM*, from the initial experience (*anubhava*) of God, to the desire for salvation and the final and real union are seen to be brought about by God's compassion and motiveless actions. Finally, Pillāṇ's conceptualization and terminology of *samāśrayaṇa* is obviously and strongly influenced by that of Rāmānuja as shown in the *Gadyatraya*, particularly the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*. That is, if one were to speak of Pillāṇ's views on *prapatti* in terms of that of Rāmānuja's in the second chapter, then it is reasonable to say that his emphasis appears to be more on the second configuration of *prapatti* as a ritualistic act of purification (*mantra-prapatti*) rather than on the first configuration of it as a mental contemplation (*jñāna-prapatti*). Nevertheless, right till the end of the poem, Nammālvār,

despite his purification through surrender, remains unaware as to why his transformation does not immediately lead to salvation. This lack of awareness also leads him into dejection even though the *Ārāyiram* tells us that he is a man of wisdom. This paradox — of the saint who does not recognize the potency of his own transformation — remains unresolved, for there is no meta-narrative which satisfactorily resolves it in the *Ārāyiram*.

With the next commentary, the *Onpatiṇāyirappaṭi*, the explicit clarifications on the superior spiritual status of the *ālvār* as superior to ordinary mortals and as a *jñānī*, and moreover a figure akin to the *jñānī* of the *Gītābhāṣya* is strengthened through an introductory meta-narrative. This strengthening of the hagiographical elements within the genre of the commentary will also submerge the tensions between the autobiographical voice and the omniscient narrator, in favor of the latter.

EPIC SURRENDER

The *Onpatināyirappaṭi* commentary of Nañciyār

5.1 Introduction

The author of the *Onpatināyirappaṭi* (henceforth, *Onpatināyiram*) according to the hagiographical sources was Nañciyār. We are told that he was a disciple of the *ācārya* Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, which would place his time between the mid-twelfth to mid-thirteenth centuries. His original name had been Madhavācārya and he was a native of Mēlnāṭu (Tamil for the region which is modern day Karnataka). Famed as a scholar of *Advaita-Vedānta* and hence known as “Vedānti”, he had been personally converted by Bhaṭṭar to Śrīvaiṣṇavism.¹ Soon thereafter he abandoned the life of a householder for that of an ascetic and went to Śrīraṅgam to his teacher Bhaṭṭar who welcomed him joyously as “Our Ascetic” — Nañciyār. With Bhaṭṭar’s encouragement Nañciyār wrote the *Onpatināyiram* on the *TVM* and entrusted it to his disciple Nampūr Varadarājar to copy it. It is to this disciple, later called Nampillai, to whom the most extensive commentary on the *TVM*, the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi*, is attributed.² The historical connections between the *Onpatināyiram*’s views on *prapatti* and the later *Teṅkalai* *prapatti* doctrines of Pillai Lōkācārya can be traced via the teacher–pupil lineage of the *Teṅkalai ācāryas*, beginning with Nañciyār. Nañciyār’s commentary was followed by the *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* and the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi*, both written by *ācāryas* who belonged to his direct teacher–pupil lineage, holding his interpretation of the *TVM*, and not that of Pillān’s, as their immediate exegetical authority. Pillai Lōkācārya was the son of the compiler of the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi*. Hence, by the time Pillai Lōkācārya wrote his *rahasya* texts on *prapatti*, he had inherited an unbroken, common tradition of textual interpretation of the *TVM*, starting from the *Onpatināyiram*, and doctrines of *prapatti* based upon this interpretation. This implies that if we are to trace the evolution of the later *Teṅkalai* views on *prapatti*, the *Onpatināyiram* commentary, along with the *stotra* literature of this lineage of *ācāryas*, is central to the investigation. It is being a forerunner in this *Teṅkalai* textual lineage which makes the *Onpatināyiram* the pivotal commentary in the canonical corpus of interpretation.

The period of Nañciyār also marks the beginning of an intensive focus on the entire *Nālāyirativiyapirapantam* as the object of theological interpretation

with a special emphasis on Nammālvār and his works. Tradition has it that Nañciyar himself composed at least five *maṇipravāla* commentaries on various books of the *Nālāyirativiyapirapantam*. Thus, the approximately late-fifteenth century *Periyatirumuṭṭiy aṭaivu* of Kantātai Nāyaṇ attributes the following *maṇipravāla* commentaries to Nañciyar: the *Onpatināyiram* on the *TVM*, the *Īrāyirappaṭi* on the *Tiruppāvai*, commentaries on the *Tiruvantāṭis*, *Amalanātipirāṇ*, *Kaṇṇinuṇṇiruttāmpu* and the *Tiruppallāṇṭu*.³ Yet an earlier Śrīvaiṣṇava commentary of Piḷḷai Lōkam Cīyar on Maṇavālamāmuni's *Upadeśaratnamālai* 47, speaks of only three commentaries: the *Onpatināyiram*, the *Kaṇṇinuṇṇiruttāmpu vyākhyāna* and the *Īrāyirappaṭi* on the *Tiruppāvai*. Only the first two of these commentaries are currently available and it remains to be established if Nañciyar wrote more commentaries at all.⁴ It is significant, then, that both the extant works of Nañciyar, which existed or have been preserved, are commentaries on texts which are directly or indirectly connected to the figure of Nammālvār. For, it is through establishing the significance of the *ālvār* in the hagiographical mode in its introduction that the *Onpatināyiram* deviates most significantly from, even while building upon, the *Ārāyiram* commentary.

In dealing with the *TVM*, Nañciyar incorporated many of Piḷḷai's interpretations even while bringing about structural and stylistic innovations. Structurally, we perceive a greater systematization at work, in the demarcation of the subdivisions which bind the commentary together. Thus, while the *Ārāyiram* had put in place the divisions of the centums (= *pattu*) and the decade (= *tiruvāymolī*), the *Onpatināyiram* goes even further by referring to each verse (= *pāṭṭu*) within the decade. Further, the commentary on many verses is structured into two parts: there is a short, summarizing introduction (*avatārikai*), which is then followed by the meaning of the verse. It is also for this reason that the *Onpatināyiram* is traditionally categorized as an abstract, a summarizing commentary (*polippurai*) on the *TVM*. The *Onpatināyiram* also tends to clearly demarcate each decade by concluding its interpretation of the decade by beginning the introduction to its last verse with the words, "At the end ...", (*nigamattil ...*).⁵ The first decade of the poem seems to have benefited most from this kind of detailed structuring: it is one of the few decades in the *Onpatināyiram* where, in the commentary on the last verse, a summary of the meaning of the entire decade is given. In doing this, the *Onpatināyiram* seems to have set the precedent in focusing on the first decade in such a way as to anticipate the view of the later commentaries that this decade, or even the first verse within it, encapsulates the meaning of the entire poem. The most significant structural innovation is the introduction (*avatārikai*) to the entire *TVM*, offering an interpretation of Nammālvār and then moving on to an interpretation of the text. Despite all this systematization, which contributes to the seemingly greater coherence of the *Onpatināyiram* as compared to the *Ārāyiram*, it must be noted that the *Onpatināyiram* may be the less complete commentary. Thus, Vēṇkaṭakiruṣṇaṇ (1996:83–85) has pointed out that the current standard editions of the *Onpatināyiram* have incomplete sections;⁶ the commentary on individual verses such as those on I.10.7, II.2.1, II.3.8, IX.10.7, appears to either

peter out abruptly or have missing words or phrases. Thus, there is some indication that the standard edition is, in fact, a mildly corrupt edition of the text, which is yet to be revised through the location of better manuscripts.

Stylistically, the most glaring difference between the *Ārāyiram* and the *Onpatināyiram* is in the *maṇipravāḷa* used, where Nañcīyar's *maṇipravāḷa* is more tamilized in comparison to that of Piḷḷaṇ's. A typical example of the difference is the commentary on the *prapatti* verse VI.10.10: where Piḷḷaṇ in his commentary has a proportion of 1 Sanskrit word to 1.3 Tamil words, Nañcīyar uses 1 Sanskrit word for every 4 Tamil words. Thus, we might say that the very language of the *Onpatināyiram* is different from that of the *Ārāyiram*, and less obviously indebted to the śāstric style of Rāmānuja. Further, the *TVM* is opened up and made more accessible to the reader in the *Onpatināyiram* not only due to the language but through the frequent narration of incidents from the *Rāmāyaṇa*. It is important to note that this integration of incidents from the epic into the commentary not only explicates theological doctrine but also shapes and alters it. This will be shown in this chapter with relation to *prapatti*. To put it broadly and succinctly, the *Onpatināyiram* associates Nammālvār's act of *prapatti* in VI.10.10, as well as other situations of taking refuge, with archetypal situations in the *Rāmāyaṇa* where certain characters in the epic take refuge with or seek the protection of Rāma. By doing so the *Onpatināyiram* places the *prapatti* of the ālvār in an epic context, in the context of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*, a theological strategy which is reinforced by the commentary's emphasis in its introduction on Nammālvār's status as a ṛṣi (like Vālmīki) or the *jñānī* of the *Bhagavadgītā*. In doing so, the *Onpatināyiram* privileges the form of *prapatti* which I have termed *jñāna-prapatti* and, correspondingly, shifts the focus away from the *mantra-prapatti*, with its temple context, so central to the *Ārāyiram*. These *prapatti* views of the *Onpatināyiram*, which mark a subtle theological shift from those of the *Ārāyiram*, will be dealt with in the rest of the chapter.

The following Section 5.2 analyzes the introduction (*avatarikai*) of the *Onpatināyiram* and shows how it combines the genres of hagiography and commentary. Section 5.3 examines Nañcīyar's interpretation of *TVM VI.10.10* and shows the subtle differences between the interpretations of the two commentaries (the *Ārāyiram* and the *Onpatināyiram*) on the verses and decades which lead to and include this verse. Section 5.4 extends the above analysis and considers what the state of post-*samāśrayaṇa* means in the *Onpatināyiram*. These two sections together will establish that Nañcīyar does not give importance to *prapatti* as a means or *upāya* to salvation as the *Ārāyiram* does nor show that the ālvār does it. Instead, as the Section 5.5 shows, taking refuge in the *Onpatināyiram* actually corresponds to a *jñāna-prapatti*, to a mental awareness of oneself as a subordinate of God's, for which Nañcīyar favours the word *adhyavasāya* instead of the *anusamdhāna* of Rāmānuja. That Nañcīyar privileges an interpretation of *prapatti*, which relies heavily on the terminology of the *Gītābhāṣya* is further substantiated by the fact that a comprehensive discussion about *prapatti*, in the

Onpatināyiram, takes place in the context of discussing *bhaktiyoga* rather than in the context of *TVM VI.10*, as in Pillān. This too will be shown in this final section. Overall, the *Onpatināyiram*, in re-defining and re-working the themes relating to *prapatti* in this manner, moves a step further than the *Ārāyiram* in giving more weightage to the role of God rather than the actions of the soul, in salvation.

In the *Ārāyiram* an overarching structure had to be construed by the reader in order to understand how the various themes relating to *prapatti* were inter-linked. The *Onpatināyiram*, in contrast, presents itself as a unitary text, whose meaning is laid out in the introduction. The introduction, therefore, provides a blueprint, a framework which serves as the point of entry into the commentary. It is to this point of entry that we now turn.

5.2 The gateway into the text — *avatārikai*

The *Onpatināyiram*'s introduction to the *TVM* begins by exalting Nammalvar, describing the significance of his descent (*avatāra*) and his spiritual status as the greatest of Viṣṇu's devotees. It moves on to reflecting on the nature of the four works ascribed to him: *Tiruviruttam*, *Tiruvāciriyam*, *Periyatiruvantāti* and the *Tiruvāymoli*. It postulates the possible objections to considering these works the highest spiritual authority and then rejects these objections, thereby establishing their greatness. Finally, the import of each of these works is summed up, culminating in the import of the *TVM*.

The outstanding feature of the introduction is that it presents the texts from different perspectives, which are also faithfully reflected in the subsequent commentaries. The first interpretation of the text concentrates on explaining the spiritual status of Nammālvār and the status of his corpus as an authoritative scripture. It firmly anchors the figure of the *ālvār* within the context of the epic world of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. Nammālvār is considered a seer like Vālmīki, an ideal devotee of Viṣṇu like Lakṣmaṇa, Arjuna, Prahlāda, a devotee who even transcends gender in that he is also like the consorts of Viṣṇu or the cowherdesses who adore Kṛṣṇa. Most importantly, he is the *jñānī* of the *Bhagavadgītā* and, by implication, the *Gītabhāṣya*. The corpus of works, in turn, are seen as equivalent to the *Rāmāyaṇa* as well as the *Vedas*. The second interpretation reads the *TVM* as a "*bhakti*-text", where the psychology of "*ālvār-bhakti*" is revealed and explored. There is also a possible integration of this particular *bhakti* ideology with the *sthānatraya* scheme proposed in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*. There is a third interpretation which sees the *TVM* as a facet of the entire corpus of Nammālvār's, which are then seen in their totality as charting the progression from the "experience" (Skt: *anubhava*) and "sight" (Ta: *kāṇ*) of God, to a state which combines both. Finally, a fourth interpretation examines the text within the parameters of the *arthapañcaka* scheme of the theological tradition. We shall now turn to each of these interpretations offered by the *Onpatināyiram* in the following four sub-sections.

5.2.1 Nammālvār's divine descent

It is the *Kaliyuga* when, according to the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, people, deceived by unbelievers, do not worship God⁷ and have no desire (*bhagavadrucī*) for him. "In such a transmigratory world" says the *Onpatināyiram*, "in the manner mentioned in *śloka*s such as, 'Then, the lotus of the entire world',⁸ the *ālvār* graciously came and incarnated in Tirunakari, due to the good fortune of sentient beings, to remove ignorance and darkness in the world and give life to all."⁹ Thus setting the stage for the *ālvār*'s descent, its necessity in a degenerate age, Nañciyar then gives us a comprehensive description of Nammālvār's qualities:

(i) Nammālvār has directly manifested to him, through God's graciousness, the latter's essential nature, form, qualities and wealth; (ii) he is the foremost of the *jñānins*; (iii) he has from birth, like Lakṣmaṇa, God himself as his sole support and cannot endure being separated from Him; (iv) his nature is devoid of all that which is connected with this transmigratory world; (v) his nature abhors any goal other than God; (vi) though he has experienced God since eternity, like Arjuna and Daśaratha, his longing is insatiable and ever-increasing like sea to an extent that, for him, the ontological categories of sentient beings, non-sentient ones and God have all been devoured by it; (vii) he has that radiance, in this condition of his, which cannot be equaled even by that of the divine consorts, Lakṣmaṇa, Bharata and others, or the cowherdesses; (viii) just as Prahlāda is spoken of as a model for all good persons, the *ālvār* is a model, in every way for all; (ix) he has surrendered to God's qualities and entered into a state of subordination thus representing the limit of exclusive devotion to him; (x) he cannot refrain from doing every act of subordination, whatever it may be; and finally (xi) through his mere presence alone, the *ālvār* removes the darkness of ignorance in the form of 'I' and 'Mine' in everyone and engenders knowledge and devotion in them, making them reach the salvation characterized by service to the Blessed One.¹⁰

This elaborate description of Nammālvār is substantiated by fifteen quotations which are from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, with the majority of these from the *Rāmāyaṇa*.¹¹ The very first quotation from the *Rāmāyaṇa* equates Nammālvār explicitly with the sage Vālmīki who composed the *Rāmāyaṇa*. The quoted verse is from the *Bālakāṇḍa*, *Third Canto*, in which Vālmīki is said to have correctly observed (*samprapasyati*), exactly as it is, the laughter, speech, stance and movement of Rāma and his family.¹² Vālmīki's direct observation of the divine activity is compared to the *ālvār*'s access to the essential nature and qualities of God.

The events which lead to Vālmīki's composition of the epic are described in the second and third cantos of the *Bālakāṇḍa*. Just before Vālmīki starts to compose the *Rāmāyaṇa* (which he had heard first from Nārada in the first canto), he receives a visit from Brahma, in the second canto. Brahma advises him to tell the story of Rāma as he had heard it from Nārada. Vālmīki, thus, decides to enquire (*anveṣate*) into the story of Rāma.¹³ In order to do so, "The seer, sipped water [as a purificatory ritual] thoroughly and palms folded, standing on the *kuśa*

grass facing east, entered the state [of *yoga*], as scripturally ordained.”¹⁴ As a subsequent verse shows, it is through this yogic power that Vālmīki comes to “see” (*paśyati*), as it were, the story of Rāma in its entirety. “Then, that righteous soul, who had entered *yoga*, saw all of that [story of Rāma] which had happened there in the past, [as clearly] as a *myrobalan* in the palms.”¹⁵

It is this vision or “seeing” of a divine incarnation which makes Vālmīki a seer — a *ṛṣi* or *muni*. This conception of the seer is, as Gonda (1963) has shown, an ancient one in classical Indian literature, going back to the *Ṛg Veda*. There, the *ṛṣi* is, “the functionary who enters into contact with divinity ... he has an insight into the nature of gods’ greatness ... he may address them ... extol them ... honour or praise them ... and invoke their aid and favour ...” Hence only they were called *ṛṣis*, who “saw” — *ṛṣir darśanāt* — in the native etymology; seers were, “born with such a spiritual power and faculty of vision as to possess omniscience and that through them the sacred texts were revealed to man.”¹⁶ Of related significance appears to be the word *kavi* (also used of Vālmīki), as one in possession of special or supernatural knowledge in the Vedic literature and extended in later periods to refer to one who renders such knowledge into words.¹⁷

The word used of Vālmīki in *Bālakāṇḍa* 3.6 is *paśyati*, he sees. In *Nirukta* 1.20, for the first time another compound, *sākṣāt + kr* is associated with this act of seeing of a seer and comes eventually to mean an unmediated perception of something or someone.¹⁸ It has been suggested that in later literature, such as the *Nirālambanopaniṣad*, the compound *sākṣātkāra*, acquires the additional connotations of *anubhava* and *jñāna*.¹⁹

It is these various conceptions of Vālmīki as the *ṛṣi*, *muni* and *kavi*, as the person with a direct vision or knowledge of God which he then renders into words, which also come together in Nañcīyar’s statement about Nammālvār: that the *ālvār* has directly manifested to him (*sākṣatkr̥ta*), through God’s graciousness, the latter’s essential nature, form, qualities and wealth. This parallel between Vālmīki and Nammālvār is reinforced later again in the *Onpatināyiram*’s introduction where the commentator compares the metrical perfection of the *TVM*, brought about through God’s graciousness, with the *śloka*s of the *Rāmāyaṇa* composed by Vālmīki due to Brahma’s favour.²⁰

The remaining seven quotations from the *Rāmāyaṇa* equate the *ālvār* with the figures of Lakṣmaṇa, Sītā and Daśaratha. The verses selected speak of the devotion these figures bore for Rama and compare this devotion to that of the *ālvār*’s. Here, two examples should suffice. In the *Ayodhyākāṇḍa*, Lakṣmaṇa insists on accompanying Rāma into exile, declaring that he cannot live without him.²¹ Another quotation from the same *Kāṇḍa* describes Daśaratha’s unsated love for Rāma, speaking of his reactions when Rāma visits him to hear the news of his forthcoming coronation.²²

While this form of interpretation and systematic integration of the *Rāmāyaṇa* into Śrīvaiṣṇava commentarial and *rahasya* literature was relatively late²³ — taking place primarily in Stage II of *prapatti* doctrinal development — the epic had been prominent in the imagination of the *ālvār*s and *ācāryas* even prior

to this. On the textual incorporation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in Śrīvaiṣṇava literature, Narayanan (1994) has shown that several of the *ālvārs*, the most prominent of them being Tirumaṅkai *ālvār*, were familiar with the story and composed decades in which the persona of the speaker is taken from the epic. Examining some of these decades, she also makes the interesting point that they narrate events not to be found in the Sanskrit Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* and that, therefore, the *ālvārs* may have had access to another, possibly oral tradition of the epic from which they drew their inspiration.²⁴ Yet, it is in the later writings predominantly of the Teṅkalai *ācāryas* as Mumme (1994) has shown, that isolated incidents from the epic are repeatedly cited, “on the basis of a perceived parallel between the relation of the actors in the narrative and the relation of the theological concepts they wish to illustrate. The allegorical identification is sometimes fully spelled out, and sometimes merely hinted at, so that listeners are encouraged to extend the metaphor, to fill in the blanks and draw the theological conclusions themselves.”²⁵

Thus, the comparison between Nammālvār and those such as Sītā, Lakṣmaṇa, Daśaratha and Śatrughna is made in order to show that the *ālvār* is a fount of exemplary qualities: like these people associated with and dear to Rāma, the *ālvār* has God as his sole support (*dhāraka*). Like Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā he does not desire any other goal except to be near God. Like them, his closeness to God implies that he is free of transmigratory characteristics. Like Daśaratha his utter devotion (*abhiniveśa*) is never sated but continually swells up like the sea.

We now turn to the quotations from the *Bhagavadgītā*. The second of these is from *Bhagavadgītā*, 10.18 where Arjuna tells Kṛṣṇa that he wishes to hear in greater detail about Kṛṣṇa’s *yoga* and his wealth, because he has not yet heard enough of Kṛṣṇa’s words.²⁶ Citing this verse, together with another from *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* 3.29, Nañciyār compares the *ālvār* to both Daśaratha and Arjuna in their permanent longing for God’s proximity. More significant than this *Bhagavadgītā* citation are the ones from the seventh chapter. Nañciyār first quotes *Bhagavadgītā* 7.3. In verse 7.2, after speaking of the two kinds of knowledge — *jñāna* and *viññāna* — which represent the sum totality of knowledge which need to be known,²⁷ in 7.3 Kṛṣṇa says, “Among thousands of men there is one who strives for perfections; among those who do so, there is one who knows who I am.”²⁸ Thus, by quoting this verse, which deals with the rare category of person who “knows” the true face of God, Nañciyār also establishes a link between this person and the *ṛṣi* and *kavi*. That this person is the *jñānī* is confirmed by the next citation from *Bhagavadgītā* 7.18. In this verse, as we had previously seen, Kṛṣṇa calls the *jñānī* his very self.²⁹ Citing this verse Nañciyār calls Nammālvār the foremost among the *jñānīs*.³⁰

To sum up, the interpretation of the *ālvār* in the *Onpatināyiram* is framed within the context of the larger, divine plan for the salvation of the world: thus, the introduction begins by showing that the descent of the *ālvār* is specifically in order to succour mortals by removing ignorance and the ensuing darkness in the world. His descent (*avatāra*), therefore, parallels that of Viṣṇu himself as

Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva and Rāma, in order to save their devotees. The introduction then proceeds to equate the *ālvār* with Vālmīki: they both see divine activity, are direct witnesses to it and are inspired to create their works. Thus, the *ālvār* is a seer, a *ṛṣi*, and the *prabandhas* are like the *Rāmayaṇa*; they are inspired texts produced by the seer through divine intervention. At the same time, in his relationship with God, the *ālvār* is the ideal devotee. He is like Lakṣmaṇa, Daśaratha, Prahlāda and Arjuna: he embodies their qualities of loyalty, utter devotion, and like them sees God as the only goal and the sole support. This view of the *ālvār* as the ideal devotee then leads the *Onpatināyiram* to equate him with the *jñānī* of the *Bhagavadgītā*. The *jñānī* is the highest category of devotee who, alone, knows God as he really is. In other words, the *jñānī*, through this access to this knowledge, combines in himself the qualities of both the seer and the ideal devotee. In the final analysis, the *ālvār* sees, witnesses, and records God's activities, knows His real nature and the purpose of His descent. He is above all a superior being, devoid of transmigratory characteristics (*nirastasāṃsārikasvabhava*).

The interpretation of Nammālvār decisively delinks him from the category of ordinary mortals. Nowhere is this more clearly demonstrated than in the *Onpatināyiram*'s attitude toward the *ālvār*'s *varṇa*, brought up towards the end of the introduction. Here, an imaginary opponent states that, since Nammālvār belongs to the fourth *varṇa*, which is not fit to obtain knowledge (*jñāna*),³¹ the *prabandhas* cannot be considered authoritative religious scripture. The implication is that the *ālvār*, therefore, cannot be a *jñānī*. In reply to this, the commentator does not make any radical social statement, arguing that even a *śūdra* is capable of being a *jñānī*. Rather, the charge that the *ālvār* is a *śūdra* is treated as irrelevant in view of his fundamental superiority to all mortals. Thus, it is said that he has had the good fortune to have been included in God's world of entities continually throughout several lifetimes, that he has the eyes of God eternally upon him, that he is accomplished in [knowing about] the realities (*tattvas*) and what is good for one (*hita*) and in imparting this to others and that he is superior to others born in the fourth *varṇa*, like Vidura and Śabari.³²

This portrait of the *ālvār* is reinforced in the one other authenticated commentary of Nañciyār's, the *Kaṇṇinuṇṇiruttāmpu vyākhyāna*. In that commentary, which interprets the short poem exemplifying Maturakavi *ālvār*'s devotion to Nammālvār, the commentator begins by comparing Maturakavi to Śatrughna, Rāma's brother, in his emulation of all that Nammālvār does and teaches.³³ By this means, the commentator also sets up a comparison, drawn out throughout the commentary between Nammālvār and God. Thus, like God incorporates Nammālvār in his world of entities, the latter motivelessly accepts Maturakavi as his devotee;³⁴ he bestows knowledge and devotion upon the rest of the world and engenders devotion in Maturakavi;³⁵ he rids Maturakavi of his sins just as God rids him of his.³⁶ Thus, in Nañciyār's writings, Nammālvār is repeatedly depicted as the seer, the ideal devotee, the *jñānī* and the *ācārya* who is himself worthy of worship and who functions as the model for all Śrīvaiṣṇavas.

Earlier, in Section 4.7, I had pointed out that there were two levels of interpretation of Nammālvār in the *Āyiram* commentary. There was one which categorized

him as a superior being and a *jñānī*-like figure, which I called the hagiographical mode of interpretation, while a second depicted him as an ordinary devotee in search of a path to God. I had further suggested that these two levels of interpretation coexist in the *Ārāyiram* with neither predominating. In the *Onpatināyiram*, in contrast, there is a dominant level of interpretation provided by the introduction to the whole commentary and that is that of the *ālvār* as an exemplar to all mortals, who embodies a perfection they must strive for.

The dominance of this hagiographical mode of interpretation in Nañciyar, as compared to Piḷḷān, can only be understood in terms of the new consolidation of textual traditions in the Śrīvaiṣṇavism of this period, already alluded to in Section 3.2. There, it was indicated that both Tamil Śaivism and Tamil Vaiṣṇavism, between the eleventh and twelfth centuries, were attempting to integrate their *bhakti* movements — the lives and literature of their poet-saints — into the cult of the temple. This integration, it was further suggested, resulted in the emergence of two new genres of literature in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, the commentaries on the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* and the hagiographies of the *ālvārs* and *ācāryas*, in that order.³⁷ Thus, the period of Nañciyar's writings on Nammālvār and that of the first hagiography coincide. The development of this early hagiographical literature has been traced by Hardy (1979), in his path-breaking article on the Śrīvaiṣṇava interpretation of the figure of Nammālvār. In this article, Hardy has suggested that already in the first written hagiography, the *Divyasūricaritam*, certain key motifs of Nammālvār's life were put into place which become standard in the subsequent hagiographies: that he stemmed from a *sūdra* lineage, and that he became a *sannyāsin* at birth, meditating silently under a tamarind tree and, thus, incorporating in himself features of a *yogin*, a Vedic *ṛṣi* and an *ācārya*.³⁸ Another important motif may have emerged in the oral hagiographical tradition from even earlier, from as early as Yāmuna's time: this was the placing of Nammālvār and all the other *ālvārs* within a pattern of the history of Viṣṇu's grace. Thus, in a verse attributed to a disciple of Yāmuna, Vaṅkīpurattu Ācci, with reference to all the *ālvārs*, it is said: "Ordered by Viṣṇu the store-house of compassion, the eternally liberated companions of His (nityās) descended and were born on earth in many places, like Śrīraṅgam etc., as the sages of splendid qualities."³⁹ It is this prophetic utterance which is also echoed in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* XI.5.38–41, about the birth of devotees of Nārāyaṇa in the Dravidian lands. Thus, it is likely that the coalition of such views about Nammālvār and the other *ālvārs* in this period, detailed in the hagiographical literature, was a pertinent factor in Nañciyar, unlike Piḷḷān, clarifying (without ambiguity) the spiritual status of Nammālvār at the very start of his commentary. A spiritual status which is reinforced by the *Onpatināyiram*'s understanding of his writings as the Tamil *Veda*.

5.2.2 Nammālvār's works as sacred scripture

In a dialogue with an imaginary questioner Nañciyar, in the introduction, establishes the superiority of Nammālvār's corpus, the *prabandhas*, as sacred scripture.

The questioner first asks: “How can these texts be categorized? How did they originate? What is their source? If something is cited as their source how can one know it is so? How does one establish that these are authoritative sources of knowledge? Who created them? Who is qualified to learn them? To enjoy them? Why were they created?” The answers which emerge are: “They are the foremost of those texts which illuminate the ultimate goal. They originated out of the need to speak about the intensive, excessive excitement born of the experience of the qualities of God. We know, through their sound, words and appearance, that they were born as a result of the “divine eye” given [to Nammālvār] through God’s graciousness.⁴⁰ Accepted by all educated people who know the meaning of the *Vedas*, these texts, with Vedic meanings which should be known by those fearful of transmigratory existence, are superior sources of authoritative knowledge. The person who established them is the Consort of Śrī and the ultimate object of attainment. A person who has lost his taste for transmigratory existence and wishes to do all kinds of service at the feet of our Lord is qualified to learn them. Those who seek liberation, those who are liberated, the *nityas* and our Lord who is the Consort of Śrī are those who enjoy them. Finally, these texts were created to teach the nature of that unsurpassed goal of service to God.”⁴¹

Thus, one of the main arguments that Nañciyar puts forward in this dialogue is that the works of Nammālvār are authoritative, *pramāṇa*, for they transmit the meanings of the *Vedas*. On what does this authoritativeness of the *Vedas* hinge, in Śrīvaiṣṇavism? Like all the other classical systems of Indian thought, Śrīvaiṣṇavism has been profoundly influenced by the Mīmāṃsā conception of the *Veda*, as texts of superhuman origin, as eternal, authorless and the ultimate valid source of knowledge regarding *dharma*. Yet, Śrīvaiṣṇavism makes its claim for Vedic authority on a basis which is different from that of *Mīmāṃsā* and which incorporates certain aspects of the *Nyāya* position: while it accepts the superhuman origin of the *Veda*, it rejects the view that the *Veda* is concerned only with *dharma*, which is the object of Vedic injunctions. Rather, it emphasizes that *Veda* is concerned with an enquiry into Brahman, Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, and that this enquiry is the particular focus of the last portion of the *Vedas*, the *Upaniṣads* or *Vedānta* and also of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Thus, when Nañciyar says that Nammālvār’s works convey the meaning of the *Vedas* he means they convey the meaning of the *Vedānta*, or even more specifically, the meaning of all the *Upaniṣads* as it is condensed in the *Brahmasūtras* and the *Bhagavadgītā*.⁴² The focus on the *Brahmasūtras* and the *Bhagavadgītā* as *Vedānta* in Śrīvaiṣṇavism shows that *Mīmāṃsā* definition of the *Veda* did not foreclose its content and the *Veda* remained an open-ended canon with later portions of it constantly supplanting the earlier in actual importance.⁴³

The ahistoricity of the *Veda*, though, as emphasized in *Mīmāṃsā*, had important consequences for all subsequent *darśanas*, as Pollock (1990) has shown: “when the *Veda* was emptied of all historical referential intention other sorts of Sanskrit intellectual practices seeking to validate their truth-claims by their affinity to the *Veda* had perforce to conform to this special model of what counts as knowledge and so to suppress or deny evidence of their own historical evidence ...” Thus, any

religious text or tradition could theoretically lay claim to being the Veda through certain strategies: it only had to “establish for itself a genealogy (*paraṃparā*) reverting to God, or present itself as the outcome of divine revelation directly to the author ...”,⁴⁴ while, in essence, remaining authorless. This is what, for instance, the *Mahābhārata* does. It presents itself to the reader as the fifth *Veda*, as revelation from God transmitted to mankind by Vyāsa, the *ṛṣi*. Most importantly, unlike the four *Vedas*, which can be heard only by twice-born males, the *Mahābhārata* is meant for all *varṇas*.⁴⁵ It is similar claims which Nañciyār makes in the twelfth century for Nammālvār and the Tamil *Veda*.⁴⁶

Nevertheless, continues the commentator, there would be some people who would be hostile to these texts, unused as they are to the company of those established in Vedic traditions and distorted as their intelligence is. They might say: “Since the language [of the texts] is forbidden, since we observe that women and *śūdras* learn them, since they are composed by someone born in the fourth *varṇa*, which in the current *Kali* Age is not fit for knowledge, since they are restricted to the local area and not found in other regions, since they are accepted by those not established in Vedic traditions and since they refer several times to *kāma* as the ultimate goal, which is against both *śruti* and *smṛti* and since they reject *aiśvarya* and *kaivalya* which are mentioned as goals in both *śruti* and *smṛti* these texts are not authoritative sources of sacred knowledge.”⁴⁷

The answer which Nañciyār gives to the objection that the *prabandhas* deal with *kāma* is considered in the next section on the concept of *Ālvār-bhakti*. Here, I show how the *Onpatināyiram* deals with three of the objections through stressing the theme of accessibility, which is central to the Śrīvaiṣṇava understanding of the *prabandhas*. Nañciyār first answers the objection to Tamil as a forbidden language by citing the *Matsya Purāṇa*. He shows that in matters pertaining to God (*bhagavadviṣayam*), the rule about using Sanskrit alone does not apply and that not using Sanskrit in praise of Viṣṇu is even sanctioned.⁴⁸ He then adds that if one were to accept the injunctions and prohibitions (regarding sacred scripture) as limited to their language then one would have to accept the faulty logic that one should study the scriptures of others (i.e. the non-Śrīvaiṣṇavas) which are in Sanskrit.⁴⁹ Then he comes to the main point: Nammālvār has deliberately chosen the *Drāviḍabhāṣa*, Tamil, as the medium of revelation precisely because, out of great compassion (*kṛpā*), he wishes to make accessible the meaning of the *Vedas* to those who could not obtain it before, like women and *śūdras*.⁵⁰

Nammālvār’s greatness in this respect and the accessibility of his works is articulated even more forcefully by Nañciyār in his one other authenticated work, the *Kaṇṇinuṇṇiruttāmpu vyākhyāna*. There, in his commentary on verse 8, Nañciyār says: “The compassion of the *ālvār*, who gave the *tiruvāymoli*, towards the world, is greater than the compassion of the Lord who revealed the secret of the *Vedas*,” and then adds, “Our Lord did something which restored to life those authorized for Vedic study but the *ālvār* made it possible for even those not thus authorized to fulfil their aims ... what our Lord taught was restricted to a local area [but] the *ālvār*’s graciousness is all-pervasive.”⁵¹

It is here therefore, that Nañcīyar really inverts the objection raised by an imaginary opponent: that while the *Vedas* are pan-regional, the language of the *TVM* restricts it to a particular area. No, says the commentator, rather, it is the Sanskrit *Vedas* which are restricted because only few have access to them while the Tamil *Vedas* are accessible to all and liberate everybody.

In conclusion, the *avatārikai* establishes the status of the *prabandhas* as authoritative scripture (*pramaṇa*) in two ways: first, they encapsulate the meaning of the *Vedas* and second, they are of superhuman origin, they are inspired texts bestowed upon the *ālvār* rather than created by him. In defense of the second view, Nañcīyar shows that the *prabandhas* are “revealed texts” like the *Ramāyaṇa*, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. Like Vālmīki and Vyāsa, the *ālvār* receives the texts through divine grace and intervention and “sees” them through yogic power. Like Vyāsa and Arjuna in the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *ālvār* has been given a “divine eye” to see the full scope of the divine nature. The superhuman origin of the *prabandhas*, placing them on par with the *Vedas*, is unequivocally established by the statement that they have been created by the Lord of Śrī himself. At the same time, the *avatārikai* implies that the greatness of the *prabandhas* might even exceed that of the *Vedas*, an argument which Nañcīyar forcefully reiterates in his *Kaṇṇinūṇṇiruttāmpu vyākhyāna*. This is because they, unlike the *Vedas*, are available to all devotees of Viṣṇu. The person qualified for them is anyone who has the desire to do service at the divine feet — man, woman or *śūdra*. Thus, the *avatārikai* shows that the *prabandhas* best exemplify the divine plan for human salvation: just as Viṣṇu makes himself more and more accessible to save his devotees in his incarnations (*avatāra*) and his descent as the deity in the temple, he also arranges for the *ālvār*’s descent (*avatāra*) for the same purpose. The *ālvār*, in turn, is bestowed with the *prabandhas* which he uses to point the way to salvation for others. The *prabandhas* are Viṣṇu’s not the *ālvār*’s but, appropriately, they have come forth in a language which has a wider scope, since they teach a path to salvation available to all.

Next, the *avatārikai* considers the nature of the *ālvār*’s spiritual journey within the text. As the next section will show, Nañcīyar explains the movement between union and separation within the *TVM* which Nammālvār undergoes in terms of a concept which I shall call *Ālvār-bhakti*: a devotional state which incorporates the vicissitudes of separation and union and is entirely compatible with the spiritual status of a *jñānī*.

5.2.3 Ālvār-bhakti

Previously, it was noted that one of the objections to considering the *prabandhas* as authoritative scripture was their subject matter: the imaginary opponent stated that they spoke of erotic love (*kāma*), which could not be the subject matter of revelation. In answer to this charge, Nañcīyar states that this erotic love is nothing but the *bhakti* spoken of in the *Upaniṣads* as *vedana* and *upasanā*.⁵² Responding to this, the imaginary opponent asks: “This *ālvār* has completely

experienced the Blessed One, due to His grace, and is fulfilled. [Then] why is he separated from Him and, suffering due to the separation, call out in pain?"⁵³ By having the imaginary opponent ask this question Nañcīyar directly tackles the paradox at the heart of his interpretation of the figure of Nammalvar: if the *ālvār* is a *ṛṣi*, a *yogin* and a *jñānī*, as he clearly is, how is it possible for him to be in pain and separated from God within the text? In answer to this, Nañcīyar first states that the erotic love of the *prabandhas* is nothing but the *bhakti* spoken of in the *Upaniṣads*, and then clarifies the symptoms of this *bhakti*: "When one experiences each particular quality [of God's], the intense affection (*prītiprakarśa*) which one has for the qualities experienced will create indifference (*vairāgya*) towards petty matters and eagerness (*spṛhā*) [to experience] the other qualities. When at any given time, those qualities are not obtained in their proper order and desire peaks, then, because the desired object is not attained [those like the *ālvār*], due to the memories of the bond with gross matter which is oppositional to the experience of the Blessed One, lose that portion which they have experienced of divinity (*bhagavad-visayam*) and suffer. They are unsurpassed devotees of our Lord with his many qualities, with pleasure and pain solely in the union with and separation from Him. Hence, when the pleasure of experiencing the Blessed One peaks, they think that all other beings too have obtained our Lord and delight like themselves. Not knowing that something such as separation exists, they forget this along with life's journey. Not aware, even as the pain of separation peaks, that the taste of union also exists, believing that other beings, whose attachment is to other things, also suffer like themselves due to the separation from our Lord, they suffer with them. They say that (for the *ālvār*), pleasurable and painful things never cease to exist but occur repetitively. Hence, his is in the eternal state of one who worries".⁵⁴

Thus, *ālvār-bhakti* is the kind of devotion which only the greatest devotees of God experience. They do so because, to begin with, they have had direct experience of God's many facets, his qualities. The *bhakti* is the direct result of an addiction to these qualities; it arises out of the need to experience them ceaselessly. When this experience is temporarily denied, the devotee is recalled to his corporeality and suffers. The separation becomes real, the union is forgotten until it becomes reality again. At the same time, this kind of *bhakti* does not suffer only for himself. Convinced that all beings feel as he does about God he suffers also for the world and is forever undergoing this process of hope and disappointment. We might say that it is for the first time in Nañcīyar's writings rather than in Piḷḷān's that a comprehensive attempt is made to explain the psychology of this kind of emotional *bhakti*, which as Hardy (1983) has shown, has a long history in the pre-*ālvār* Sanskrit *bhakti* literature. The explanation in the *avatārikai* shows that *ālvār-bhakti* has as its invariable concomitant the vicissitudes of union and separation. Moreover, Nañcīyar states that it is only those who are the "utmost *bhaktas*" (*niratiśaya-bhaktimān*) who experience this kind of devotion: the fact that the *ālvār* is a *ṛṣi*, *yogin* and *jñānī* guarantees that his spiritual journey is of this nature. Thus, a state of separation from God, within the text, cannot

be understood as resulting from any real sinfulness on the *ālvār*'s part. Rather, the *TVM* is the record of the spiritual journey of a devotee whose devotion to God manifests itself in this particular form of *bhakti*: the various decades are to be seen as registering the ebb and flow of the emotions which comprise *ālvār-bhakti*.

Towards the end of the *Onpatināyiram* commentary, in his interpretation of *TVM X.10.11*, Nañciyār makes some attempt to link up this *bhakti* with the *sthānatraya* of the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*. Thus, he says: "Let us assume the thousand verses of the *TVM* to be born of the prior intensity of the *bhakti* of the *ālvār* who has [now] attained Him and is free of sorrow with all his obstacles destroyed. These ten verses in the *antāti* form are born of that *paramabhakti* which, unlike before, is due to the inability to continue living without attaining [God]. Those skilled in these ten verses, though born into this transmigratory existence, will be like the tireless mortals."⁵⁵ In other words, Nañciyār is saying that all the previous decades of the *TVM* recorded that sort of *bhakti* which, now, has culminated in *paramabhakti* in the last decade. Such a reading of the *TVM* seems to imply that Nañciyār is referring to certain stages prior to *paramabhakti*, which could well be the stages of *parabhakti* and *parajñāna*, of the *sthānatraya*. The writings of the post-Nañciyār *ācāryas* establish such a correlation between the *sthānatraya* and *ālvār-bhakti*. Of particular interest in this regard is Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai's commentary to the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* in which, according to Clooney (1996:131), "superior devotion [*parabhakti*] is a variety of love in which one has the delight and sorrow due (respectively) to union and separation; superior knowledge is the immediate knowledge [*parajñāna*] which comes with the ripening of that love, and, in terms of the mood that follows union, supreme devotion [*paramabhakti*] is the state in which one is unable to bear separation even for a moment." It is not hard to see the parallels between such a definition of the *sthānatraya* and what Nañciyār said about *paramabhakti* in *TVM X.10.11*. But this connection is neither explicitly stated nor followed up in the *Onpatināyiram*.

The *avatārikai*, after clarifying the nature of the *ālvār*'s *bhakti* moves on to give two interpretations of how the *TVM*, in its entirety, should be understood. The first interpretation, dealt with in the next section, presents the *TVM* as the fourth and final facet of the *ālvār*'s spiritual journey — a journey which is seen to encompass all four of his works.

5.2.4 "Experiencing" and "seeing" God

In this interpretation of the *ālvār*'s progress towards salvation, Nañciyār says:

"Among these, in the first *prabandha*, the *Tiruviruttam*, [the *ālvār*] entreats our Lord to graciously rid him of the ties to transmigratory existence which are oppositional to the experience of Him. In the *Tiruvāciriyam* he rejoices in completely experiencing our Lord, who is the main subject-matter for those who have turned away from transmigratory existence. In the *Periyatiruvantāti*, craving arises out of this experience of our Lord, the object of unsurpassed enjoyment. He speaks

and thinks of Him as a result of this craving and thus sustains himself. In the *Tiruvāymoli*, the *ālvār* concludes by seeing and experiencing our Lord [here there is a long description of Nārāyaṇa's divine form as he is seated in Vaiṣṇuṭha together with Śrī and the divine retinue] who has shown Himself, motivelessly [to him]. [The *ālvār*] ultimately attains God, with his connection to *prakṛti*, which is an obstacle, coming to an end."⁵⁶

The traditional ordering of the texts attributed to Nammālvār in the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* is here legitimized through an explanation that maps them, chronologically, as points in a soteriological process. Thus, the first text is the one in which the *ālvār* begins the journey towards God by turning away from transmigratory existence. In the second *prabandha* he has experienced God. By the third, the experience results in his speaking and thinking of Him. But it is only with the *TVM* that we have the final stage of the spiritual journey, which involves a progression from simply experiencing God to also seeing him. This ultimate stage combines both experience and seeing, and with the actual severance of the connection with the body at the end of the poem, there is also the actual attainment of Nārāyaṇa at Vaiṣṇuṭha. Related to this interpretation of the *TVM* as the culmination of all four *prabandhas* is a statement towards the end of the *avatārikai* which implies that the essence of the fourth *prabandha* — which itself is the essence of all the others — is contained in its very first verse. Thus: "One who has seen the sea turbulent *sees* in it the waves and the pearls etc. separately. Similarly, each decade, starting from the second decade, speaks of different aspects of our Lord who has been *experienced* in His abundance in the very first decade".⁵⁷ Here, Nañciyār speaks of "seeing", "experiencing" God yet again, but here he combines these modes of relating through the skillful use of an analogy. That is, he would have it that the first decade is about the experience of God. But this experience, through the use of the analogy of the person who sees the sea and its waves and gems simultaneously, includes also the "speaking" of Him and the "seeing" which is the culmination of the *TVM*, and which is only possible with the death of the body.⁵⁸ Thus the very first verse reveals the complete meaning of the text, containing within it not merely "experiencing" or "seeing" but both, together.

5.2.5 The five categories of enquiry — Arthapañcaka

There is one other way in which the Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas* came to interpret the *TVM*, which linked it to the *Brahmasūtras* and Vedānta. They came to increasingly see it as dealing with the fundamental categories of Viśiṣṭādvaitic inquiry, aiming to culminate in the goal of *mokṣa*. The number of these categories varied but they eventually came to be systematized into five: the *Arthapañcaka*. It is in Nañciyār's commentary that we first note an explicit tie-up between these categories and the *TVM*.

At the very conclusion of the *avatārikai*, Nañciyār tells us that the text deals with the "Five Categories (*artha*)". The five categories refer to God (*īśvara*), the

soul (*jīva*), the means to salvation (*upāya*), the obstacles to it (*virodhi*) and the final goal (*puruṣārtha*). These tend to be defined in slightly different ways by the different Srivaiṣṇava *ācāryas* and, as a popular way of categorizing the topics of theological discussion, make their appearance at least as early as in the *Stotraratna* of Yāmuna (though they are not called the *arthapañcaka* in the poem and also number more than five).⁵⁹ After Yāmuna, we also have a verse attributed to Vaṅkīpurattu Nampī, a disciple of Ramanuja's, which lists the *arthapañcaka*.⁶⁰

The precedent for Nañciyar to superimpose this scheme on the *TVM* appears to have been the influence of his *ācārya*, Parāśara Bhaṭṭar. There exist two separate verses (Tamil: *taṇiyan*) on the *TVM*, which are attributed to Bhaṭṭar. The first of the verses establishes a continuity between Nammālvār and Rāmānuja, the former for singing the praise of the deity at Śrīraṅgam and the latter for cherishing those songs.⁶¹ The second verse lists the subject matter of the *TVM*: "The sweet music from the lute of the Chieftain of Kurukūr [Nammālvār] sounds the nature of the divine and that of the self, the right means, the obstacle which exists as the *karman* which is pervasive, and the condition which bestows supreme life".⁶²

It is based on this categorization that Nañciyar says the following about the *TVM* at the conclusion of the *avatārikai*:

Some of the verses of these *prabandhas* establish the essential nature of our Lord, who is the object to be attained; some have as their subject the essential nature of the individual self, who is the attainer; some speak of the means of attainment; some speak of the fruit, some of the obstacles to attainment. The remaining verses further explicate these categories. Noteworthy among these is the fruit. The remaining four categories are part of its meaning.⁶³

The structuring of the diffuse text of the *TVM* into an ordered soteriological document is achieved in the *Onpatināyiram* in a manner which was lacking in the *Ārāyiram*. Moreover, such a structuring and systematization is achieved almost entirely through and in the introduction to the commentary. In deciphering and coming to understand the various themes of the *avatārikai*, we have also come to see that it provides us with an indispensable framework for understanding the context in which *prapatti* is discussed, in the *Onpatināyiram*. It establishes that the protagonist who performs *prapatti*, Nammālvār, is a *ṛṣi*, *yogin* and the *jñānin* of the *Bhagavadgītā*. This portrayal of the *ālvār* as a perfect being is the dominant interpretation in the *Onpatināyiram*. The *bhakti* of the *ālvār* accounts for the movement between union and separation in the *TVM*. Separation from God is due, not so much to any sinfulness on the *ālvār*'s part, as due to the very nature of the devotion which the greatest *bhaktas* feel. The spiritual journey of the *ālvār* is described in terms of a movement from the experience of God to one which combines the states of both seeing and experiencing him. The culmination of this spiritual journey, which is said to have commenced in the first of his texts, the *Tiruviruttam*, is described in the *TVM*. The *TVM* is an authoritative scripture, it is *pramāṇa*, encapsulating the real meaning of the *Vedas*. It teaches the devotee the right path to salvation, illuminating him with regard to the nature of the basic theological categories (*artha*) of religion. One of these categories is the means to

salvation, which in Piḷḷāṇ was the act of *samāśrayaṇa* in the middle of the text. In the next two sections we examine the parallels and divergences between Nañcīyar's and Piḷḷāṇ's interpretation of *samāśrayaṇa*, focusing as before on *TVM VI.10.10*.

5.3 *TVM VI.10.10*

The first and broadest difference in interpretation between the *Ārāyiram* and the *Onpatināyiram* relates to the uniqueness of the act of taking refuge in *TVM VI.10.10*. The *Ārāyiram*, as Section 4.2 demonstrated, had dealt with several situations where the *ālvār* appeared to be taking refuge, seeing or uniting with a form of God. All these situations converged in revealing the accessibility of God to his devotee but not all were of soteriological significance for the *ālvār*. The commentary made it clear that it was the special configuration of VI.10.10 — of taking refuge with the deity at Vēṅkaṭam with the Goddess as the mediator — which rid the *ālvār* of obstacles and brought him nearer to his goal. When we turn to the *Onpatināyiram*, we see that Nañcīyar presents the context of VI.10.10 in such a manner as to make it analogous, if not identical with other situations in the text. In doing so, he avoids presenting it as a unique instance of taking refuge.

In the introduction to the decade VI.10 Nañcīyar, like Piḷḷāṇ, also states that the *ālvār* is taking refuge here with the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam with the Senior Goddess as the mediator. Then he immediately follows this up by identifying this situation of the *ālvār* with that of Lakṣmaṇa in the *Rāmāyaṇa* who follows Rama into exile, determined to serve him. Nañcīyar says: “In the text, ‘Grasping his brother’s feet tightly’,⁶⁴ the younger Lord took refuge with our Lord in front of the Goddess. Similarly, [the *ālvār*] with the goal solely of doing service to God, without any other resort due to his longing, takes refuge with the Senior Goddess as the mediator”.⁶⁵

We see that Nañcīyar's wording for what takes place in VI.10, in his introduction to it, is identical in several respects with that of Piḷḷāṇ. Thus, he too uses the words “without any other resort” (*ananyagati*) in referring to the *ālvār*'s state and his other phrase “with the goal solely of doing service [to God]” (*tatkainkariyaikaprayojana*) echoes the *ananyaprayojana* of Piḷḷāṇ. He even adds that the *ālvār* takes refuge with the Goddess as mediator. Yet, with whom does who really take refuge? Nañcīyar makes it clear that even while Nammālvār takes refuge with the deity at Vēṅkaṭam he is, in effect, taking refuge like Lakṣmaṇa, with Rāma. The current situation merely refers back to and is an echo of an archetypal situation in the mythic past.

Such comparisons between Nammālvār's situation and that of characters in the epic had emerged in the *Onpatināyiram* already several decades prior to the sixth centum. This can be seen in Nañcīyar's interpretation of two of the decades in the fifth centum. Yet again the contrasts with Piḷḷāṇ's commentary, subtle as they are, are interesting to consider. We saw that Piḷḷāṇ, in his interpretation of the fifth

centum, considered the decades V.7–10 to form a unit.⁶⁶ In them, the *ālvār* attempted to take refuge with the deities at Cirivaramaṅkalam, (V.7), Tirukuṭantai (V.8) and Tiruvallavāl (V.9) before doing so with the Kṛṣṇāvatāra in Maturai (V.10). In the *Onpatināyiram*, Nañciyar interprets this unit of decades somewhat differently. He sees the *ālvār* as taking refuge in two of the decades, in both V.7 and V.10. Further, both these decades are interpreted along the lines of the commentary on VI.10.

In his introduction to V.7, Nañciyar equates the *ālvār* with Vibhīṣaṇa, brother of Rāvaṇa: The son of the emperor (Rāma) graciously appeared at the seashore as the one consecrated to protect everyone, together with the elders beginning with King Sugrīva and the younger Lord [Lakṣmaṇa]. Then, Śrī Vibhīṣaṇa took refuge with him, as one without any other resort, at the seashore, revealing his own nature through words [such as], “The one called Rāvaṇa, of bad conduct”. Similarly, [the *ālvār*] took refuge in [the deity] Vānamāmalai, who was seated together with his consorts, as all his retinue did service.⁶⁷

The situation of taking refuge here is also equated, as in the commentary on VI.10, with an archetypal situation in the epic where Rāma is sought as protection and the figures of the *ālvār*, God and the Goddess are identified with Vibhīṣaṇa, Rāma and Sītā respectively. In his *avatārikai*, Nañciyar had already shown that Lakṣmaṇa, Vibhīṣaṇa etc. were models of the ideal devotee and that the *ālvār* is similar to them in this respect. Thus, the situations described in both V.7 and VI.10 are typical of those where an ideal devotee seeks refuge with God in one of his incarnate forms. Echoes of these themes are further to be found in Nañciyar’s commentary on V.10.

In it Nañciyar refers to Kṛṣṇa and then, in addition, to Rāma:

“Just like Tiruvaṭi [Hanumān] is attached to the Rāma incarnation [the *ālvār*] is also attached to each and every quality and activity of God. In this he is superior in his affection to Tiruvaṭi. This *ālvār* becomes very weak contemplating the Kṛṣṇa incarnation who ensures the survival of those who resort to him and makes their enemies eat dirt. He becomes so, contemplating the activities of the divine incarnations of our Lord and his creation of the earth. He concludes by taking refuge with our Lord, requesting Him to rid him of his weakness and to make it possible for the *ālvār* to contemplate him.”⁶⁸

These are but two of the many instances in the *Onpatināyiram* where the *ālvār*’s act of seeking refuge is transposed — as is the *samāśrayaṇa* of VI.10.10 — to an epic situation. This is as true of V.7 and V.10 as it is of VI.10. Through this interpretive strategy of his, Nañciyar establishes that the *samāśrayaṇa* is not a unique act but one like several others in the text. By implication, it is not the special configuration of taking refuge with the deity at Veṅkaṭam or one of the other temples which is highlighted, but rather all such acts of seeking God’s protection, best exemplified in the epics, have equal significance or value. The repeated allusion to the epic context of taking refuge by the commentator also has another effect on the conception of *samāśrayaṇa* in the *Onpatināyiram*: it shifts

the focus away from the temple as such and, hence, also the mantric aspect of *prapatti* which remained very important both in Rāmānuja and in Piḷḷāṇ.

The second important divergence in interpretation between the *Ārāyiram* and the *Onpatināyiram* in this regard is in the exact definition of this refuge-taking in VI.10.10. In the *Ārāyiram*, *mantra-prapatti* was considered as something to be done by the devotee for his own salvation: the *ālvār* took refuge in order to be rid of obstacles and this act was called a means — *upāya* — to reach God. In Nañciyar, the same act is not called a means, *upāya*, nor is the *ālvār* seen to make any effort to be released from obstacles. This divergence in interpretation becomes evident when we closely compare the interpretation of the two commentaries and see the salient differences on the verses leading up to and including VI.10.10.⁶⁹

Piḷḷāṇ had begun his introduction to the decade by describing what the *ālvār* does at the very end of the decade: “Then, realizing that there was no other means of seeing him except to take refuge at his feet, he did so at the feet of the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam, the refuge of the entire world, speaking of His qualities such as compassion and parental love etc. as his support, with the Goddess as mediator.” In contrast to this, Nañciyar begins the decade with the epic analogy described above and then an account of the manner in which the *ālvār* takes refuge, without stating that the *ālvār* realizes that there is no other *upāya* for seeing God, except to take refuge.

Further, in the *Ārāyiram* commentary on verse VI.10.2, Piḷḷāṇ has a dialogue between Nammālvār and God, which runs as follows: “... [God might ask:] ‘How can you obtain union with me until the sinful obstacles cease to be?’ [Nammālvār replies:], ‘Just as you destroyed with your discus the demons opposing the gods who had resorted to you, you must destroy my obstacles....’” Thus, in his interpretation of VI.10.2, Piḷḷāṇ showed that the obstacles to reaching God are sins (*pāpa*) and that the *ālvār* expects God to remove them. At the same time, the *ālvār* himself is made to say that God had destroyed the obstacles only after one resorted to him, as the *devas* had previously done. The *ālvār* realizes from this that he also has to do something first before God can act and then takes refuge in VI.10.10. Nañciyar’s commentary on the same verse is, in contrast, noteworthy in its omission of some of what Piḷḷāṇ has said. Firstly, there is no dialogue between the *ālvār* and God in it. Rather Nammālvār makes a simple request: “In the second verse, [the *ālvār*] says that if obstacles exist, it is you who must destroy them yourself and graciously unite me with your feet.”⁷⁰ Therefore, Nañciyar (unlike Piḷḷāṇ) does not describe the obstacles to reaching God as *pāpa*, an omission which is repetitive in the commentary. There are at least five verses in the commentary on which Piḷḷāṇ refers to these obstacles as “sins” — *pāpa* — where we have the following combinations: *pratibandhaka* + *pāpa*, *virodhi* + *pāpa* and *virodhi* + *agha*.⁷¹ On these same verses we find that Nañciyar refers to the obstacles as *pāpa* only in the commentary on a single verse, on III.3.6 where he speaks of the “sins which are limitations of the body” (*dehopādhikamāṇa pāpaṅkaḷ*) and “the former and latter sins” (*uttara-pūrvāghaṅkaḷ*). The *Onpatināyiram*’s reluctance to refer to the obstacles as sins seems in keeping with the overall emphasis in the commentary on

Nammālvār's superiority and perfection. Secondly, the *Onpatināyiram* on VI.10.2 does not say that God removes the obstacles because one resorts to him. Instead, the *ālvār* is made to request that God should destroy the obstacles himself.

Next, in the commentary on VI.10.3, a subtle difference in the vocabulary of the commentators should be noted. Continuing the dialogue between Nammālvār and God, Piḷḷāṇ has the latter ask: 'Is this to be done motivelessly?' and has Nammālvār reply — 'Even as the untiring mortals wait to unite with you, solely due to your compassion you came, in your divine form, limitlessly beautiful, like a dark cloud, wondrous, and entering, filling my heart, became sweet to me. Similarly now, through your compassion my Lord ... unite me with your feet.'" Nañciyār in his commentary on the same verse has God ask, "... should I do all that you ask for when you make no effort?" and has the *ālvār* reply, "... You had previously included me in your world of entities, even when you had superior devotees who relished you. Hence, out of mere compassion, you should further do what I require."⁷² Here, both Piḷḷāṇ and Nañciyār have similar interpretations at this point: God wants the *ālvār* to take a clear-cut position and state explicitly if the former should take the sole initiative. Yet, it is in Nañciyār's commentary that stress is laid on Nammālvār's silence to God's question as to whether he is willing to make an effort — *yatna*. Nañciyār shows that Nammālvār cannot and will not save himself. Instead, he expects God to include him, as he already did so, in His world of entities. The implication is that, through including him in His world of entities, God will rid the *ālvār* of obstacles himself. Thus, in the decade on VI.10 Nañciyār is careful not to call *samāśrayaṇa* an *upāya*, nor to say that Nammālvār is making any effort on his part to reach God. This point of view is reiterated by him in the commentary on VI.10.7–8, where the *ālvār* is described as "one who is without any means [to salvation]" (*nissādhana*).⁷³ Saying all this, Nañciyār leads up the VI.10.10.

"In the tenth verse [the *ālvār*] takes refuge with the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam, with the Senior Goddess as mediator, in order to obtain what he desires immediately. ... [Nammālvār says]: "You have that divine chest where the Senior Goddess, who is an object of limitless enjoyment, permanently resides. She, like one of those who have stood in the heat and then retreated into the shade, says that she cannot endure being separated even for a moment [from that chest]. You, due to your association with the Senior Goddess, are incomparably famous for never abandoning those who resort to you. You reject none. You revealed your qualities to me, who remains ignorant of you, and thus, animating me, you came and stood on the Sacred Hill which even the inhabitants of the divine land desire and made it easy for me to resort to you. ... I, who am without any of the means mentioned in the scriptures, regarding [myself] as having no other goal, grasped your feet themselves as the means". This also means, "Forsaking all other means that I have to reach the ultimate goal, I approached such that there was no gap between my head and your feet, and took refuge".⁷⁴

Here, we see that Nañciyār repeats much of what Piḷḷāṇ says, with some significant alterations. Thus, the *Onpatināyiram* begins by saying that the *ālvār* takes

refuge with the Senior Goddess as the mediator. The epithets for God present in Piḷḷāṇ, which echoed Rāmānuja's terminology, are missing in the *Onpatināyiram*. Instead, Nañciyār speaks at greater length about God's quality of never abandoning those who resort to Him and of the special relationship (*sambandha*) he has with the souls, a relationship which rejects nobody. The Goddess, in addition to being called the mediator, is equated with those souls who cannot endure being separated from God, once they have experienced him. Finally we come to the description of the *ālvār* and his act of taking refuge. The *ālvār* is first described as in the *Ārāyiram*: he is referred to as "one who is without any other goal", *ananyaprayojana*, here as well. The compound "I who have no other refuge" — *ananyaśaraṇa* — is omitted. Instead Nañciyār stresses that the *ālvār* has no *upāya*. Thus, unlike Piḷḷāṇ he adds the lines at the end where the *ālvār* says that he is devoid of any of the means to salvation mentioned in the scriptures. Therefore, even while he takes refuge at the feet, he does so in the knowledge that this act is not a means to reach God but that it is God himself, represented by his feet, who will effect salvation. It is Nañciyār's frequent emphasis of this theological point, in contrast to Piḷḷāṇ, which should be noted.

Finally, the *Ārāyiram* on VI.10.10 concluded by saying that the *ālvār* is immediately free of all his obstacles (*nirastasamastapratibandhaka*) after this act, thus making clear the effective power of this act of *samāśrayaṇa*. The *Onpatināyiram* does not say this deliberately and this omission will be discussed in the next section.

The fifth, highly significant, difference between the *Ārāyiram* and the *Onpatināyiram* is that, unlike Piḷḷāṇ, Nañciyār does not declare that saying the word "*Namaḥ*" as part of a *mantra*, is itself a means to salvation. This becomes apparent when we compare Nañciyār's interpretation of *TVM III.3.6* with that of Piḷḷāṇ's. In his commentary on this verse, Piḷḷāṇ had posed a question about the means to reach the deity at Vēṅkaṭam and had answered it as follows: "[You might ask:] How can one obtain this object of attainment? [We reply:] As soon as one says this word *Namaḥ* to the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam, which qualifies one for everything and is extremely easy to say, the sins which are an obstacle to that service and those yet to be done will all be burnt. Afterwards one can do all that which one wishes to do." Thus, as previously shown, Piḷḷāṇ is suggesting that the recitation of either/both the *Dvaya* and the *Tirumantra* is necessarily a part of this process of taking refuge.

When we now look at Nañciyār's commentary on the same verse, we find a different wording: "You might ask, 'Are the actions which are obstacles a hindrance to subordination?' [We reply:] 'When one consents to subordinate, He himself will destroy them'".⁷⁵ In other words, where Piḷḷāṇ spoke of saying the *Namaḥ*, Nañciyār speaks less assertively of a consent to subordination.

It is clear, from the above examples, that the differences between the two commentaries are subtle rather than glaring. They cannot be otherwise, for the nature of a lineage of commentarial literature is such that any given commentator within it, belonging to the same textual tradition, does not contradict his predecessor.

Rather, it is through such commentarial devices such as subtle variations in terminology, the presence of significant lacunae rather than what is explicitly said, that divergences are established. As Cutler (1992:552) pointed out, in the Indian commentarial tradition the divergences particularly emerge through the differing contextualization of individual verses — a change of context changes the overall theological import of individual verses. It is precisely in this manner that the *Onpatināyiram* differs from the *Ārāyiram*: while Nañciyar does not directly contradict Piḷḷān on *samāśrayaṇa* and while his interpretation even incorporates a great deal of Piḷḷān's commentary, his projection of the act to an epic context, his reluctance to consider it an *upāya* to salvation, his greater emphasis on the helplessness of Nammālvār — all these factors deny the overwhelming soteriological significance to VI.10.10 which Piḷḷān gives it. This becomes all the more obvious when we consider the *ālvār*'s situation post-*samāśrayaṇa*, in the *Onpatināyiram*.

5.4 The effects of *samāśrayaṇa*

Here is Nañciyar's introduction to the seventh centum, first decade:

In the seventh centum, first decade, the *ālvār* is greatly dejected from not obtaining what he desires, despite having taken refuge, out of great longing, with our Lord. [He] sees that though he has conquered his senses, those who are connected with gross matter (who are to be avoided, who are unworthy of the Blessed One), suffer due to the sense-organs which focus elsewhere and are hostile to the experience of the Blessed One. [He sees that] he too remains connected with gross matter and suffers from the same sense-organs. Further God, who commands the qualities such as *sattva* etc., the sense-organs and [their] objects, who is the protector of all, who is capable of and offers the relationship of protection, does not rid him of his sorrow. The *ālvār* thinks, "Binding me to the three qualities in such a way that I cannot break free, and torturing me with the sense-organs which spread like creepers, He watched me, together with the immortals, as His pastime'. He gives a great cry, which is unbearable for those who hear it, saying, 'Can you, who are greatly compassionate and capable of protecting one, watch passively while I suffer like this?'⁷⁶

In Piḷḷān, *samāśrayaṇa* had resulted in the Nammālvār's liberation from obstacles, characterized by Pillan as "bad actions", *pāpa* and, secondarily, as gross matter, *prakṛti*. Once the *ālvār* took refuge he became, "one whose obstacles were destroyed" (*nirastasamastapratibandhaka*). Further, Piḷḷān's introduction to the seventh centum showed that, while the *ālvār* was still trapped in *prakṛti*, it had no effect on him. He was, in actuality, free of it and was only kept alive by God in order to complete the *TVM*. This statement of Piḷḷān constituted a meta-narrative which relativized the *ālvār*'s distress at the beginning of the seventh centum.

In contrast, Nañcīyar now shows us that the *ālvār*'s distress is all too real. Believing that he is still connected with *prakṛti* and that God will not come to rescue him from the sorrow engendered by this connection, Nammālvār gives way to despair and cries out to God. In fact, in the *Onpatināyiram* the beginning of the seventh centum might be considered one of the bleakest moments in Nammālvār's spiritual trajectory. By omitting the meta-narrative of Piḷḷān, Nañcīyar both foregrounds the *ālvār*'s dejection as well as reduces the soteriological significance of *samāśrayaṇa* as an act aimed at salvation.

Yet, Nañcīyar does not totally omit Piḷḷān's meta-narrative from his commentary. Rather, it emerges in an entirely different context, in his introduction to the ninth centum, tenth decade, on the deity at Tirukkaṇṇapuram.

There, Nammālvār is said to receive the promise that he will get all that he desires, at the time of his death (*śarīrāvasanasamaya*). Overwhelmed with joy at this promise he invites others also to worship the deity at Tirukkaṇṇapuram. At this point in the introduction, Nañcīyar clarifies why the *ālvār* has not yet attained salvation and remains trapped in his body (i.e. *prakṛti*) even after taking refuge. This is the moment in the commentary where there is a discourse on why the body must continue to exist in the current life, because of the *karman* which it has generated within this very lifetime, the *prārabdha karman*.

The *Vedāntas* say that *prārabdha karman* ends at the time when one attains the Blessed One. Why then does our Lord graciously impart that it does so only at the time of the termination of the body? There [in the *Vedāntas*], the ending of the *prārabdha karman* was cited as the right time for God to take those who had sought refuge through their own abilities and whose devotions had ripened. Here, such a delay is not required for those [like Nammālvār] who obtain refuge through the graciousness of the Blessed One alone. Hence, it is appropriate to speak here of the termination of the body as the correct time [to attain God]. [You might then ask:] Why do those who are competent not obtain God immediately even though they lay down their burden before him, acknowledging that he alone is the protector? [We reply:] If the *prapanna* were to leave the body soon after doing *prapatti* no one else would implement this knowledge, due to fear of death. Further, [the *ālvār*] has to continue to live in order to propagate this knowledge. Also, our Lord desires his last body and therefore waits patiently until it ends. [You might ask:] If this is the case, then why is this *prapanna* not free of sorrow but suffers from the torments of sickness etc.? [We reply:] God keeps Nammālvār predominantly in sorrow for if he, who is used to transmigratory existence, were freed of it and shown only happiness, he would embrace the latter and cease to desire Him. This too is because of the great graciousness which he [God] shows towards beings. Therefore, the *ālvār* is not endangered by this.⁷⁷

Unlike Piḷḷān, who says nothing about *prārabdha karman* in his introduction to this decade, Nañcīyar goes into great detail on the continuation of the bond with *prakṛti* and the reasons for it. He begins by contrasting the message of the *Vedāntas* and that of the *TVM* on the issue of when liberation is possible. In the former, he says, those whose devotions, *upāsanā*, have ripened are finally ready for liberation and union with God. In their case the ending of the *prārabdha karman* and hence of the body is regarded as the moment when they also attain God. The viewpoint which Nañcīyar speaks of as Vedāntic here is the one put forward by Rāmānuja in treatises such as the *Śrībhāṣya* and exemplifies the classical Viśiṣṭādvaitic position on how the one desirous of salvation attains liberation. Rāmānuja deals at length with this in Sūtras 1–19 of the fourth *adhyāya* of the *Śrībhāṣya*. The salient features of his view are as follows:

- 1 The *karman* of the practitioners of *brahmavidyā* (which Rāmānuja in this context uses as synonymous for *upāsanā/bhaktiyoga*), which is in the form of sins, former and latter (*pūrvottarāgha*), is destroyed, though “former sins” refers to those sins whose effects have not been set into motion in this life (*anārabdhakārya*).
- 2 Since all activity which produces fruits is inimical to salvation, even good deeds (*puṇya*) fall into this category. Hence, these too are destroyed by *brahmavidyā*, except for those good deeds which remain conducive to the growth of such knowledge and devotion itself.
- 3 There remains the issue of what happens to all those sins and good deeds whose effects have already been set into motion — that is, the *ārabdhakārya/prārabdha karman*. Of these, Rāmānuja says that they are destroyed in the current life through the consumption of the fruits they themselves have generated. For the devotee practising *brahmavidyā*, it is only after they have been destroyed is there the attainment of God.

This, in brief, is the view also echoed by Nañcīyar, regarding those who practice *upāsanā* and are thus capable of taking up some means to salvation. The case of the *prapanna* though is radically different. Since it is never he who acts but God, there is theoretically no reason for a delay in salvation in his case. God need not wait till his *prārabdha karman* exhausts itself, but may unite with him, as in the case of Nammālvār, when he chooses. Yet, he does not avail himself of this opportunity and Nañcīyar gives several reasons for why he doesn’t. First, he repeats some of what Piḷḷān said, in his introduction to the seventh centum: the *ālvār* continues to live in order to complete his earthly task (in Nañcīyar it is to spread the knowledge which is *prapatti*) and also to complete the *TVM*. Further, God desires this physical body of the *ālvār*. Nañcīyar, then, proceeds to add other reasons not mentioned in Piḷḷān. If *prapatti* were followed by immediate death it would be too fearsome a soteriological path for ordinary souls. Next, an imaginary questioner asks: if these are the real reasons why the *ālvār* is still kept alive, then

why does he not live in happiness, instead of obvious sorrow? Replying to this, Nañcīyar shows that to keep the *ālvār* in sorrow and sickness is part of God's design to keep him in a state of longing for Him. In stating this, the commentator provides an additional insight into his interpretation of the *ālvār-bhakti* which he had sketched in the *avatārikai*. There, he showed that it was a process which incorporated the vicissitudes of union and separation. Here, he shows that God deliberately chooses not to free the *ālvār* from this state: within the conceptual parameters of *ālvār-bhakti* to be in sorrow and sickness in this world, in this body, is to remember and desire God, to attain complete happiness is to forget him.

In stating this Nañcīyar is stressing a doctrinal position which is perhaps more consistent than that of Piḷḷaṇ's, in whom *prakṛti* is seen as both a hindrance and an aid to salvation. In Nañcīyar it is not necessarily regarded as a major hindrance as the commentary on other verses also shows. Such a positive understanding of *prakṛti* becomes particularly evident when we look at the *Onpatināyiram* commentary on *TVM III.3*. There, in the introduction, Nañcīyar says: "In the third decade, the *ālvār* entreats our Lord to remove the *prakṛti* which is oppositional to experiencing him. [He is told], 'That *prakṛti* is not oppositional to your partaking of me, it is an aid. Is it not because of the desire to subordinate you, together with this *prakṛti*, that I am standing here? ...'"⁷⁸ Here, Nañcīyar is making it evident that the continued corporeal existence of the *ālvār* is, in fact, completely necessary for experiencing God. The importance of affirming the religious experience in the human body, in the *Onpatināyiram*, necessarily devalues the importance of releasing the soul from *prakṛti* in the middle of the text. The bond, it is stressed, is severed at end of the religious cycle of the *TVM*, with the death of the *ālvār*. Therefore, Nañcīyar only says that the *ālvār* is "one whose obstacles have been destroyed" (*nirastasamastapratibandhaka*), at the very end of his commentary, in his interpretation of *TVM X.10.11*.⁷⁹

When we consider the difference between the *Ārāyiram* and the *Onpatināyiram* elucidated in last two sections, taking refuge (*samāśrayaṇa*) in the *Onpatināyiram* bears few of the hall-marks of the act in Piḷḷaṇ. It is not a unique act which happens once in the middle of the text. Even while it is done in front of the deity at Vēṅkaṭam with the Goddess as the mediator, it is relocated to an epic context. It is not called a means to reaching God as in Piḷḷaṇ, nor does it involve effort on the part of Nammālvār. It is not undertaken by an ordinary devotee, a non-*jñānī*, in order to immediately be rid of bad actions, *pāpa*, as well as the constraints of *prakṛti*. In the *Onpatināyiram*'s definitions of *samāśrayaṇa*, thus far, we see that it is any situation where the *ālvār*, as the ideal devotee, seeks the protection of God. It does have the effect of removing the constraints of *prakṛti*, but this effect is not stressed till the very end of the text.

Finally, at the beginning of the introduction to *TVM IX.10*, Nañcīyar had compared the refuge-taking of the *prapanna* in the *TVM* with that of other devotees in the Vedāntic texts. In doing so, he also pointed out the crucial difference between the two: the others had taken refuge through their own abilities (*svasāmarthyā*) and had practised devotion (*upāsana*). In contrast to this, the *ālvār* had

taken refuge entirely due to the graciousness of the Blessed One (*kevalabhagavat-prasada*). In saying this, Nāñcīyar, finally, comes closer to giving a positive definition of what the *ālvār* does in the *TVM*, the nature of his *samāśrayaṇa*. Significantly, such a definition always emerges, as it has here, when he is drawing comparisons between other *bhaktas* who practise other ways to salvation such as *upāsana* (i.e. *bhaktiyoga*), and the *ālvār*, who does *samāśrayaṇa/prapatti*. Thus, his positive definitions of the nature of the *ālvār*'s refuge-taking, as the next section reaffirms, emerge in the epic context with reference to epic figures who undertake *bhaktiyoga*, as in the *Bhagavadgītā*.

5.5 *Jñāna-prapatti*

The *Onpatināyiram* deals with *samāśrayaṇa* or *prapatti* in its commentary on the first centum, second decade (I.2) and on the tenth centum, fourth decade (X.4) of the *TVM*, where *bhaktiyoga* is discussed. The introduction to I.2 states that the *ālvār* teaches *bhaktiyoga* in this section.⁸⁰ On the first verse (I.2.1) Nāñcīyar says: "In the first verse, [the *ālvār*] tells us to offer the self at the feet of our Lord, who is the Principal of all, completely renouncing everything other than the Blessed One"⁸¹ The commentary on the third verse (I.2.3) defines what should be renounced (*tyājya*), drawing upon definitions of renunciation (*parityāga*) offered in the eighteenth chapter of the *Gītābhāṣya*. Here, Nāñcīyar speaks of possessiveness (*ahamkāra/mamakāra*) which has ill-effects, and its renunciation. Hence, one should reflect upon the fact that these are not one's final goal.⁸² The commentary on the fifth verse (I.2.5) warns of the obstacles: "The fifth verse teaches the obstacle to taking refuge in the Blessed One which one must avoid. ... When attachment to worldly matters is severed, then the individual self attains or reaches liberation... If you wish to prevent that goal and attain and remain in the limitless goal of service to the Blessed One, then, when you take refuge consider yourself subordinate only to our Lord and take refuge with him"⁸³

Here, when we look at I.2.3 and I.2.5 together, we see that an implicit contrast is set up between two different kinds of mental determinations (*adhyavasāya*), on the one hand, and an explicit contrast between two different goals (*puruṣārtha*), on the other. While the mental determination to abandon possessiveness is inherent to the practice of *bhaktiyoga*, such detachment, which is worthwhile achieving as the basis of all worldly action, is to be differentiated from the mental determination to consider oneself a subordinate (*śeṣa*) to God. The former can only lead to liberation (*mokṣa*) while the latter leads to the goal of service (*kainkarya*). In other words, the commentator is saying that, at the very least, the correct practice of *bhaktiyoga* must involve a particular kind of refuge-taking and, further, that that latter is characterized by the mental determination to consider oneself a subordinate.

In the commentary on the next three verses, Nāñcīyar reproduces Rāmānuja's views in the seventh chapter of the *Gītābhāṣya*. Thus, he says that the Blessed

One, though he is surrounded by superior beings who have permanently sought refuge with him, needs those lowly creatures who now take refuge with him (I.2.6). So, becoming aware of this relationship one can overcome one's own inadequacy and take refuge (I.2.7). The commentary on the ninth verse (I.2.9) concludes this line of reasoning: "In the ninth verse, taking refuge in this fashion, one's deeds which are obstacles to attaining the Blessed One are destroyed; [The *ālvār*] says that the delay [in attaining God] lasts only till the termination of the body".⁸⁴ Finally, in the commentary on I.2.10 Nañcīyar talks about what one should do after having taken refuge: "He [Nammālvār], after imparting the *Tirumantra* together with its meaning, says that one should continue to take refuge with our Lord through this [*mantra*], until the passing away of the body."⁸⁵

Recapitulating the line of reasoning of Nañcīyar here, we see that he introduces this decade as one about *bhaktiyoga*, yet proceeds to deal exclusively with the correct manner of taking refuge. This is also semantically obvious: while the word *bhaktiyoga* occurs just once in the commentary on this decade (in the introduction) *samāśrayaṇa/āśrayaṇa* occurs eighteen times. The person who wishes to attain liberation is instructed in the step-by-step procedure to it. He or she first renounces (*tyājya*) the possessiveness with regard to worldly things, for this has ill-effects (I.2.3). On perfecting such renunciation, though, there is the very real danger that the soul automatically attains liberation (*mokṣa*) and, therefore, is led unwittingly towards a lesser, seemingly attractive goal. The real and correct goal of any soul should be service to God, *kainkarya*. In order to achieve this, the renunciation of possessiveness should be immediately followed by *samāśrayaṇa* (I.2.5).

This *samāśrayaṇa* is the surrender (*samarpaṇa*) of the self (*ātman*) at the feet of God. It is the mental determination (*adhyavasāya*) that one is a subordinate (*śeṣa*) of God, the Principal (*śeṣin*) (I.2.5). Thus taking refuge, the soul is freed from its remaining *karman*. It appears clear that Nañcīyar is speaking here of *prārabdha karman*. Freed from it, a devotee like the *ālvār* only lives on meditating on the meaning of the *Tirumantra* till his body ceases to function.

Another important section of the *Onpatināyiram* is on *TVM X.4*, a decade which is, ostensibly, about *bhaktiyoga*. Nañcīyar begins the decade by admitting that God's feet can be obtained through *bhaktiyoga*: "In the first verse [the *ālvār*] says that the feet of our Lord, who is owner of both the worlds and easily attained by those who resort to Him, can be obtained through *bhaktiyoga* ... It is certain that the feet of Kṛṣṇa, who is gracious to those who take refuge with him, can be obtained through *bhaktiyoga*".⁸⁶ Then in the fifth verse, Nañcīyar reveals Nammālvār to be an *āśrita*, one who has taken refuge because he has *bhakti*.⁸⁷ The *Onpatināyiram* on the sixth verse (X.4.6) echoes that on I.2.6. God favors those who take refuge right now as much as those who have permanently taken refuge and hence are always in his vicinity. He does so, Nañcīyar says, because, "*bhakti* permanently engenders graciousness."⁸⁸ These two verses, read together, show that a distinction is made between *bhakti* and *bhaktiyoga* which is not further pursued in the commentary. Then, after exhorting his heart to always

experience the Lord of all, who removes all obstacles in the seventh verse,⁸⁹ Nañciyar comes to verse nine: “In the ninth verse, [the *ālvār*] speaks of his own gain. He says that the Lord is usually obtained through *bhaktiyoga* which is to be done through ascetic practice and wisdom through thousands of births. Yet, he has been able to see Him merely through His own graciousness, ...As a result of the latter, the *ālvār* in the first verse [of this decade] explicitly explained how *bhaktiyoga* is connected with attaining Him. In this verse, he contemplates and imparts his own means to salvation, that of *prapatti*, which unites him with his own goal of the divine feet”.⁹⁰ In this crucial section of the commentary on X.4.9, Nañciyar shows that even while the *bhaktimān* and the *prapanna* both take refuge there is a significant distinction between them. The *bhaktimān* does *bhaktiyoga* to obtain the feet of God. This requires thousands of years more of ascetic practice and wisdom. The *prapanna*, in contrast, obtains the same goal through the graciousness of God alone (*kevala[bhagavat]prasada*).

Finally, in the commentary on the tenth verse (X.4.10) Nañciyar concludes this decade by saying that Nammālvār is one who has practised such a *prapatti* — he is a *prapanna*.

In the tenth verse, [Nammālvār] says that it is determined that the Lord of all should be the refuge even of those who pursue other goals, for he grants that which one desires. His divine feet are a good goal also for those with no other goal, those with *bhakti* as well as *prapannas*. Saying this the *ālvār* concludes [the section] on the aforementioned *bhaktiyoga*.⁹¹

The two decades which we have examined in detail here, I.2 and VIII.4, are ostensibly about *bhaktiyoga*, but actually about taking refuge, for which the *Onpatināyiram* uses two terms: *samāśrayaṇa* and *prapatti*. The first of these defines *samāśrayaṇa* in terms which make it clearly equivalent to the *jñana-prapatti* of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Gītābhāṣya*. In Nañciyar, it is the mental determination (*adhyavasāya*) to consider oneself the subordinate (*śeṣa*) of God while taking refuge. *Samāśrayaṇa* here is, in effect, *bhaktiyoga*. The exegesis on the second of the decades, though, moves this argument along lines which is not characteristic of Rāmānuja’s writings but becomes more and more prominent in that of his successors. This is a doctrinal view which no longer emphasizes the equivalence between *bhaktiyoga* and *samāśrayaṇa/prapatti*, but elides the former in favor of the latter. In Nañciyar this is done through the unequivocal statement that the exemplar of Śrīvaiṣṇavas, Nammālvār has done *prapatti* and not *bhaktiyoga*. Yet, even while Nañciyar states this, he does not distance this *prapatti* terminologically from the *bhaktiyoga* of the *Gītābhāṣya*. In other words, we may perceive his exegetical strategy as one which explicitly denies the equivalence of *bhaktiyoga* and *prapatti* even while retaining their semantic equivalence. The one fundamental distinction which he stresses is that, in *prapatti* the graciousness of God places a central role, which it does not in *bhaktiyoga*. *Prapatti*, thus becomes a unique soteriological path in that it is the only one in which God’s graciousness (*bhagavat-prasāda*) is manifested so directly and powerfully. It is the one soteriological path in which God and not the aspirant to salvation acts. This aspect of

prapatti will come to be increasingly emphasized in the later commentaries on the *TVM*, written by Nañcīyar's school of disciples.

5.6 Summary

Nañcīyar's commentary is the most influential one in the *TVM* commentarial tradition both in terms of its structural features and its doctrinal viewpoint. In the *Onpatināyiram*, for the first time in the commentarial tradition, the *TVM* is framed within the story of Nammālvār's special descent, as part of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's design to save the world in the *Kaliyuga*. Here, we are introduced to Nammālvār as the divine seer, poet and man of wisdom whose incarnation in the lowest of *varṇas*, as a *śūdra*, is rendered irrelevant because of his greatness. The commentary draws implicit parallels between Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's accessibility as the deity in the temple and Nammālvār's accessibility in a lowly caste; there are explicit parallels between Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's compassion in giving the world Nammālvār and the latter's compassion in giving the people of the world the essence of the Sanskrit Vedas in the regional language. The introduction sets both the tone and the framework for the rest of the commentary. The meta-narrative takes precedence over the autobiographical voice within the text. In the *Onpatināyiram*, the dominant interpretation of the *ālvār* is that he is a man of wisdom, *jñānī*, and therefore does not really need to be purified of his sins. In keeping with this view, the *Onpatināyiram* reinterprets the various features of *TVM VI.10.10*, shifting it to the epic context to show that this is a situation of taking refuge like several others in the text and not a unique act with particularly unique consequences. Other decades of the *Onpatināyiram* define this *samāśrayaṇa/prapatti* explicitly in such a manner as to show that it is in keeping with the *ālvār*'s status as a *jñānī*: it is *prapatti* as the mental determination (*adhyavasāya*) of oneself as subordinate (*śeṣa*) to God, who is the Principal (*śeṣin*). That is, it is the *prapatti* of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Gītābhāṣya*. In keeping with this view of *prapatti* as a mental state, the *ālvār* is not considered to be actively doing something for his own salvation. It is repeatedly stressed that his self-surrender is not a means, *upāya*, to salvation and that it involves no effort, *yatna*, on the part Nammālvār. Thus, in the final analysis, *samāśrayaṇa/prapatti* is not "something to be done" in the *Onpatināyiram*. All effort to save the soul, then, is seen to rest in the hands of God. One might say that the *Onpatināyiram* is completely clear that a saint is born not made and that even his moments of despair and vacillation are not a mark of human inadequacy and imperfection, but rather render transparent his greatness and the intensity of his love for God.

STILL SURRENDER

The *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* and the *Īṭu* *Muppattārāyirappaṭi* commentaries

6.1 The two commentaries

The *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* and the *Īṭu* commentaries were both produced around the same time in the thirteenth century, the *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* by Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai and the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* by Vaṭakkut Tiruvīti Piḷḷai. These two *ācāryas* were contemporaries and disciples of Nampīḷḷai, the direct disciple of Nañcīyar in the lineage of the *Teṅkalai* teachers. The few historical facts which we have available to us from the hagiographies (particularly the *Teṅkalai Ārāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparāpirapāvam*) indicate that Nampīḷḷai's theological views underpin both these commentaries. In fact, the *Īṭu* is considered a literal recording of Nampīḷḷai's oral discourses by his disciple and is often called Nampīḷḷai's commentary within the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition. Nampīḷḷai had three disciples who wrote commentaries on the *TVM*, and it is instructive to see what happened to each of the commentaries in view of the fact that only two survived. In its section on the life of Nampīḷḷai, the *Ārāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparāpirapāvam* tells us that the first disciple to write a commentary was the grandson of Kūrattālvāṇ, Naṭuvil Tiruvītippiḷḷai Bhaṭṭar. Bhaṭṭar took down every word of Nampīḷḷai's oral discourses at night, after he had heard them during the day. He then produced a commentary as long as the *Mahābhārata* and presented it to Nampīḷḷai, on completion. The latter, mortified that his disciple had written down his words without explicitly seeking his prior permission, destroyed the commentary.¹ Soon after this incident, says the hagiography, Nampīḷḷai asked his favorite disciple Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai to write a commentary on the *TVM*. The latter fulfilled his teacher's wishes and wrote one the length of the *Rāmāyaṇa*.² Another beloved disciple of Nampīḷḷai, Vaṭakku Tiruvīti Piḷḷai, also took down the words of his teacher faithfully without seeking his permission and presented it to him. Nampīḷḷai's reaction this time was different. He found the commentary beautifully written, neither too long nor too short and praised his disciple's work. Yet, because it had been written without his permission he confiscated it.³ The hagiography privileges this last commentary: it concludes with the re-discovery of the *Īṭu* by other disciples of Nampīḷḷai and the securing of its reputation as the greatest of the commentaries on the *Bhagavadviṣayam*.⁴

This hagiographical understanding of the commentaries' common doctrinal parentage is substantiated by their near identical interpretation of *TVM VI.10.10*: the *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* gives a brief summary of those themes which are elaborated upon in the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi*, as we shall see below. For this reason both commentaries are treated as a unit, as far as their *prapatti* doctrines are concerned. The common debt to Nañciyar's commentary is also seen in the framework of the commentaries, particularly in the "Great Introduction" (*māhāpraveśam*, *mutal śriyaḥpati*) of the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi*. The "Great Introduction" of the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* faithfully replicates Nañciyar's "Introduction" in every detail and then elaborates further on it by expanding on the theme of the *arthapañcaka* with which Nañciyar concluded his introduction.

The *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* and the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* are the apotheosis of the systematic elucidation of *TVM VI.10.10*. Both commentaries deal with the issues of God's role in salvation as well as that of the soul's, the definitions of *prapatti* etc. within their interpretation of this single verse. Of the two commentaries, the *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* is the concise one: it briefly states all the themes which are then dealt with at great length by the *Īṭu* on this verse. Together, the two commentaries put forth, for the first time and systematically in the commentarial literature, those doctrinal views on *prapatti* which come to be considered characteristically *Teṅkalai* and are reflected in the writings of Piḷḷai Lōkācārya in the schismatic period.

6.2 Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai on *TVM VI.10.10*

Here, in the *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* (henceforth, *Irupattinālāyiram*) we have, in an extremely concise form, several of the themes relating to *prapatti* which are dealt with in detail in the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi*. In Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai's interpretation, the first line of the verse is about the Goddess as Lakṣmī ("the lady seated on the flower") and Śrī ("the eternally constant one"), the second and third lines about God and the last line about both Nammālvār and *prapatti*. In the first line the Goddess, he tells us, is expressing her inability to be separated from God. Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai reminds us that it is *karman*, the existence in transmigratory existence, which separates one from God. The Goddess, though, is not like ordinary mortals for she is free of any taint of *karman*. Why then would she at all talk of being unable to endure separation from her divine partner? Pondering this peculiarity Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai provides the answer to his own question: "... the words of those who have immersed themselves in the distinguished qualities of the Object [God] are identical with that of those who fear *karman*; there is only a difference in the motivation [for saying them]. The lady fears separation because she gets great pleasure from him."⁵ The *Irupattunālāyiram* states here that the Goddess's situation is like that of all those others who have immersed themselves in the qualities of God. In the commentary it is the Goddess who is saying the sentence "I cannot endure separation from you even for a moment". Yet, as we know, in the verse it is Nammālvār. By transferring the words of the

poet to the Goddess the *Irupattunālāyiram* deliberately conflates the two figures. Implicit parallels in the earlier commentary of Nañciyār, between Nammālvār and epic figures associated with Rāmā and Kṛṣṇa, becomes in the *Irupattunālāyiram* an explicit equation of him with the Goddess.

Next, the commentary lists God's excellences: parental love (*vātsalya*), lordship (*svāmitva*), amiability (*śīla*) and his accessibility (*saṁlabhya*) as the deity at Vēṅkaṭam, whom the devotees can turn to.⁶

In the interpretation of the last line, the *ālvār* declares, as in the *Onpatināyiram*, that he has not undertaken any of the other means to salvation (*upāya*) mentioned in the scriptures. Then, unlike the *Ārāyiram* and the *Onpatināyiram* which used the epithets *ananyaśaraṇa* and *ananyaprayojana* of Nammālvār, the *Irupattunālāyiram* calls him "one who is subordinate to no other worthy person" (*ananyārhaṣeṣa*). The commentator adds that such subordination is to consider oneself as "in a state of having no other resort" (*ananyagatitva*).⁷ The effect of these two new epithets is to accentuate that the *ālvār* is utterly helpless and incapable of doing something towards his own salvation. Nammālvār not only accepts his subordination to God but goes further: he *knows* that the hallmark of his nature (*svārūpajñāna*) essentially is subordination. Thus, he is ripe for *prapatti*.⁸ The *Irupattunālāyiram* concludes its interpretation of the verse with him taking refuge. His *prapatti* is not activity, it is, "without coming and going". In calling it "that mental determination which comes about through the intellectual faculty"⁹ the *Irupattunālāyiram* uses the same terminology as the *Onpatināyiram*.

The *Irupattunālāyiram*, as we saw, structures its interpretation in such a way that the first line of the verse is seen as dealing with the Goddess, the second and third as dealing with God and the last with the *ālvār*; and *prapatti*. This is also the pattern followed in the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi*. The Goddess's relationship with God is spoken of in terms which equate her with the *ālvār*; but it is the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* which goes into this in depth. The four-fold qualities of God mentioned in the *Irupattunālāyiram* are shown by the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* to encode the meaning of the name Nārāyaṇa, and account for how and why he intervenes in the salvific process. The *Irupattunālāyiram* speaks of the *ālvār* as one who is subordinate to no other, *ananyārhaṣeṣa*. Further, that his having "no other resort" (*ananyagati*) and his "knowledge of his own essential nature" (*svārūpajñāna*) are necessary for *prapatti*. In the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* we learn more about why this is so. Finally, the *Irupattunālāyiram* confirms that the *ālvār* does the *jñāna-prapatti*, as in the *Onpatināyiram*. The *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi*, as we shall see, also takes this doctrinal line. The *Irupattunālāyiram*, therefore, succinctly gives an interpretation of *TVM VI.10.10*, which comes to be echoed by the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi*.

6.3 The structure of the *Īṭu* on *TVM VI.10.10*

The following sections, 6.3–6.7, lead us through the interpretations of the *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* (henceforth, *Īṭu*) on the Goddess, God, Nammālvār

and *prapatti*. The conceptions of the Goddess and God, follow in the footsteps of Nañciyar. The Goddess, both as the divine mother and the beloved consort of God is overwhelmingly identified with Sītā, while God is both Rāma and the deity at Vēṅkaṭam. Through emphasizing this identification, the *Īṭu* in particular produces a description of divine compassion which was, hitherto, not obvious. Here, divine compassion is defined in terms of Sītā's tenderness (*daurbalyam*) and Rama's parental love (*vātsalya*). The two concepts combined together stress that God not only tolerates and embraces the transgressor but even relishes his sins. This, in turn, creates a new model of the divine-human relationship: it implies that not only is the soul not required to do something about its own sinfulness but that even to attempt to do so is a form of self-assertion which hinders salvation. Nammālvār, within this new model, is defined through two new epithets: as "one who is in a state of helplessness, or possesses nothing" (*ākiñcanya*) and as "one who has no other resort" (*ananyagati*). These epithets emphasize his inability to do anything to effect his own salvation. There is an increasing emphasis on this subordination (*śeṣatva*) as the essential quality of the self, which defines its very nature. *Prapatti* comes about when one has acknowledged one's subordination. It is the mental determination (*adhyavasāya*) that God alone is both the means and the goal of salvation. It is a mental state (*buddhyārtah*) which might even be called an attribute (*viśeṣaṇa*) of the one qualified (*adhikārin*) for it.

In the previous chapter on the *Onpatināyiram* we had seen that Nañciyar's definitions of *prapatti* as mental determination (*adhyavasāya*), combined with his conception of God's active intervention, had already given more weightage to God's rather than the soul's role in salvation. This chapter concludes that the *Irupattu nālāyiram* and the *Īṭu*, through their stress on the *ālvār*'s *śeṣatva* combined with the newly elaborated views of divine compassion, now radically tilt the balance in favor of God's active intervention and the soul's utter passivity in the salvific process. It is these doctrinal views, further developed, which come to be considered characteristically *Tenkalai*, which are reflected in the writings of Piḷḷai Lokacarya and become the basis of contention for Vedānta Deśika in the schismatic period.

The commentary begins by giving a brief summary of the meaning of the entire verse and, then proceeds to elaborate on the meaning of each line. The overarching framework for the interpretation is the *Dvaya mantra*. In order to understand how this structure is constructed, we need to recollect that the *Dvaya* consists of the following two lines: *Śrīman Nārāyaṇacaraṇau śaraṇam prapadye* and *Śrīmate Nārāyaṇāya namaḥ*. The *Īṭu* begins by equating the first line of the *TVM* verse with the first words of each of the two lines of the *Dvaya*. Further, these words, *Śrīman* and *Śrīmate*, are considered to speak of the Goddess and, as a consequence, about the various issues related to her role in the salvific process. The conception of the Goddess, whether as Śrī, Lakṣmī or Sītā, the *puruṣakāra* concept, the particular relationship which she has to God and the ordinary souls

respectively — these are some of the issues which the commentator will explore in discussing the first line of the verse. The next two lines of the verse are equated with the word *Nārāyaṇa/Nārāyaṇāya*, the second word in the two lines of the *mantra*. The exegesis on them gives the commentator the opportunity to discuss the various qualities of Rāma and the deity at Vēṅkaṭam, which aid the soul's salvation. The last and final line of the verse is considered to refer to the *ālvār*, the qualities required on his part to take refuge and the act of refuge itself. In the context of this discussion the issue of the exact nature of *prapatti* is also brought in: whether it is an *upāya* or not. The *Īṭu* understands this entire discussion about the *ālvār*'s nature and *prapatti* to refer to the word *prapadye* of the *Dvaya mantra*: the first person singular ending of the verb signifying that the *ālvār* makes a declaration about taking refuge. Thus, the verse and the *mantra* are related through a word for word and line for line parallelism: each line of the verse encodes a particular word or set of words from both lines of the *mantra*.¹⁰

The table below illustrates this structure:

TVM VI.10.10	Dvaya Mantra
Line 1: <i>akalak illēṇ iraiyum enṇu</i> <i>alarmēl maṅkai urai mārṇā</i>	<i>Śrīman; Śrimate</i> (Śrī-Lakṣmī/Sītā)
Lines 2–3: <i>nikar il pukaḷāy, ulaka mūṇṇuṭayāy</i> <i>enṇai ālvāṇē</i> <i>nikar il amarar muṇikaṇkaḷ</i> <i>virumpum tiruvēṅkaṭattāṇē</i>	<i>Nārāyaṇa/Nārāyaṇāya</i> (Rāma; Tiruvēṅkaṭamuṭayāṇ)
Line 4: <i>pukal onṇillā aṭiyēṇ</i> <i>uṇ aṭikīḷ amarntu pukuntēṇē</i>	<i>ahaṃ prapadye (namah) (ālvār)</i> <i>caraṇau śaraṇam (prapadye) (prapatti)</i>

Adopting this structural framework, the commentator begins to elucidate each line while, simultaneously, unveiling the hidden meaning of the *Dvaya mantra*. Through adopting this structure, the *Īṭu* restores the *Dvaya mantra* to a place of central significance in the doctrines of *prapatti*. But, this restoration relates the *Dvaya* to *prapatti* in an entirely different way than in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* and the *Ārāyiram*. Now, the verse in which the *ālvār* does *prapatti* is seen as encoding the *Dvaya*: that is, the *mantra* becomes internalized and *is now part of the meaning rather than a part of the action* of *prapatti*. Through doing this, the *Īṭu* preserves the link between the *Dvaya* and *prapatti* but shifts the link to an entirely different level of significance. The thirteenth century Śrīvaiṣṇava preoccupation

with *mantras* should be seen in the light of the influence of the Pāñcarātric traditions of Śrīvaiṣṇavism on *prapatti* soteriology. Andre Padoux says, in speaking about an important aspect of “the mantric phenomenon” in general: “the whispered utterance (*upāṃśu*) of a mantra was always considered higher than the audible one, and highest of all was the silent (*tūṣṇīm*), that is to say the mental (*mānasā*), utterance.” He then adds: “For mantras, the idea that the highest level of speech is pure consciousness is surely one of the reasons for the superiority, in mantric practice, of silence over actual speech, of the unsaid over the said.”¹¹ Seen in this light, the approach of a commentary like the *Īṭu* to the *Dvaya mantra*—which sees the latter more as encoding a religious text to be reflected or meditated upon in its entirety than a sacred utterance to be enacted—is an attitude which is also faithful to a cardinal tenet about the most efficacious use of *mantras* in Indian traditions.

In the course of interpreting *TVM VI.10.10* along these lines, the commentary moves in what might be called three cycles. There is a short summary of the main ideas to begin with, followed by the second cycle where there is a repetition of these same ideas at greater length ending with a detailed account of *prapatti*. Then, the third cycle begins, with a further elaboration on the same points. Thus, there is much room for reiteration and repetition — the entire text producing the impression of being a meticulous recording of oral discourses. Finally, at the culmination of the third cycle, the commentator ends with an eloquent description of the mercifulness of the goddess as Sītā, an account based on a particular interpretation of the verse 113.45 from the *Yuddhakāṇḍa* of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Since, in effect, four topics are discussed and repeated in all three cycles — the Goddess, God, the *ālvār* and the nature of *prapatti* — each of these topics will be dealt with in the subsequent four sections.

6.4 The Goddess

In the *Īṭu* there are two predominant views of the Goddess, both of which primarily identify her with Sītā. The first view holds that the Goddess is the divine mother. The relationship between the *ālvār* and the divine couple, from this perspective, is seen as that between the child and its parents. The Goddess is the mother as the compassionate mediator, the *puruṣakāra*, between the child and the father. The second view accentuates the Goddess as the beloved wife and partner of God. Forever near him and longing for him, standing in a female relationship to him, she is seen as akin to the *ālvār*. These two views of the Goddess in the *Īṭu* are presented through the use of nineteen textual citations from other sources. Twelve of these are from the *Rāmāyaṇa* while four others are from the *Śrīsūkta*, *Lakṣmīśahasranāma Stotra*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, respectively. There are two quotations from the *stotras* of Kūrattālvān, the *Śrīstava* and the *Śrīraṅgarājastava* respectively, and the last quote is from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*.

These textual citations may be clubbed together, thematically, in the following manner:

<i>Textual Citations</i>	<i>Conceptions of the Goddess</i>
1. <i>Rām., Sundarakāṇḍa, 66.10</i> 2. <i>Rām., Sundarakāṇḍa, 40.10</i>	<i>Nityayoga</i> : her eternal union with God
3. <i>Rām., Yuddhakāṇḍa, Canto 13</i> 4. <i>Rām., Sundarakāṇḍa, 38.3.2</i> 5. <i>Rām., Yuddhakāṇḍa, 36.11</i> 6. <i>Rām., Yuddhakāṇḍa, Canto 59</i>	<i>Sannidhi</i> : the presence and proximity of the Goddess is necessary for salvation
7. <i>Rām., Yuddhakāṇḍa, 113.41</i> 8. <i>Rām., Yuddhakāṇḍa, 113.45</i> 9. <i>Rām., Yuddhakāṇḍa, 113.15</i> 10. <i>Rām., Yuddhakāṇḍa, 113.34</i> 11. <i>Rām., Yuddhakāṇḍa, 93.22</i> 12. <i>Rām., Sundarakāṇḍa, 21.19</i>	<i>Daurbalya</i> : the tenderness and compassion of the Goddess
13. <i>Viṣṇu Purāṇa, 1.8.17</i> 14. <i>Śrīsūkta, 9</i> 15. <i>Lakṣmīśahasranāmastotra, 1</i> 16. <i>Śrīstava, 1</i> 17. <i>Śrīraṅgarājastava, Uttaraśataka, 41</i> 18. <i>Taittirīya Saṃhitā, 4.4.12</i>	<i>Īśvarī</i> : the Goddess is the Ruler through her motherhood (<i>mātr̥tva</i>) and love (<i>priya</i>)
19. <i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 8.12.3</i>	The Goddess is beyond transmigratory existence <i>and karman</i>

The two views of the Goddess, as the divine mother and as the consort, dealt with in the next four sub-sections, cut across all four of these themes and evolve through their elaboration.

6.4.1 Nityayoga

The commentary identifies Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa and Śrī-Lakṣmī with Rāma and Sītā, respectively. A citation from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where Rāma tells Hanumān that he cannot live even a moment without Sītā and another one where reciprocal sentiments are expressed by the Goddess are used to establish this connection.¹² Both quotations, together with other descriptions in the commentary, suggest that the eternal union, *nityayoga*, is a bond of mutual dependency and love between the divine couple. The Goddess's power over God is described in terms of the abiding attraction her beauty and youthfulness holds for him. Thus, the *Īṣu* says: "She, who is fragrance itself personified, is so enjoyable and youthful that she can make him say, 'I will not live even for a moment without her, the dark-eyed one'".¹³ In fact: "... she is, due to her beauty and her youth, something which even he has to aim for ...".¹⁴ Still later: "She has the beauty and youth which one

appreciates all the time. For she is fragrance personified, like a flower from which all inessentials such as filaments and the pollen have been removed".¹⁵ The significance of the Goddess, here, is that she is seen as a married woman and her elevated, religious status comes from the legitimacy which marriage confers upon her. The fact that the relationship between Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa and Śrī-Lakṣmī is a conjugal one implies that the Goddess, as consort and woman, is subordinate to the man. Marglin has discussed this subordination within marriage of the Goddess in term of the iconography Nārāyaṇa and Lakṣmī: "The hierarchical relationship is represented iconographically in such images as that of Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu as he sleeps on the serpent Ananta on the cosmic waters. In these images, Lakṣmī is invariably represented massaging his legs, a most wifely occupation. Her size is markedly smaller than that of her Lord, a visual relation that expresses her subordination."¹⁶ The more popular representation in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, consistently alluded to in the *ālvars* and seen on the main deity at Tirumala where the Goddess Śrī resides on the chest of the deity, is as the breast-jewel of Vēṅkaṭanātha. Here too the iconographical imagery indicates the subordination as well as the inseparability of the Goddess from God.¹⁷

For her part, the Goddess reciprocates her spouse's dependence on her proximity but, unlike him, she fears a potential separation and says so: "You on whose chest the lady seated on the flower resides, saying, 'I cannot move away even for a second'". The *Īṭu*, like the *Irupattunālāyiram*, also addresses the theological paradox of why she should fear separation when she permanently resides in the region of his heart and enjoys his constant presence: "After experiencing his chest even a flower given away is like a thorn. The lady, after enjoying his chest does not think of the flower, just as the daughter of Janaka, once she married our Lord, ceased to think of Mithilā. Similarly, the liberated one does not think of transmigratory existence as in the text, 'They do not remember that body which is an appendage'. Those whose knowledge is not contracted have undiminished knowledge as long as they do not come into contact with transmigratory existence; they only have unsurpassed enjoyment. She, too, does not see [what happens to the flower] because of the greatness of her enjoyment."¹⁸ In this enigmatic passage there is a reference to different kinds of flowers. In the context of the temple daily flower garlands and offerings are placed for worship near and on the idol. These are removed after they lose their freshness and, hence, inevitably come to be separated from the divine presence. The Goddess, too, is seated on a flower and she resides permanently on God's chest. Yet, because of her presence on it this particular flower will never be thrown away, perhaps it even remains eternally fresh. This in itself should reassure the Goddess that she will never be separated from God. Nevertheless, ironically, such is her immersion in her own experience of his nearness that she is even unaware of the fate of this flower or any other daily flower offering which he receives. This is why the *Īṭu*, like the *Irupattunālāyiram*, says that the fear of separation is not based upon a bondage to *karman*, but because of her closeness to him. In other words, because she is dependent on him (*viṣayādhina*), due to this very dependency she fears separation

just like all those who have a constant experience (*nityānubhava*) of God.¹⁹ This theological viewpoint is reiterated in other parts of the commentary, once with the help of an apt analogy. “Is not *karman* the cause of separation? [You might ask]: Why does she, who is without any contact with *karman*, say, ‘I cannot move away’. [We reply:] Just like *karman*, she is reflecting on how extraordinary he is. [You might ask:] Surely, his extraordinariness remains at the level of being a source of enjoyment? [We reply:] A person who obtains an expensive diamond constantly worries about retaining it. So too, the lady inappropriately fears and doubts, thinking about what would happen to her away from his chest”.²⁰

The *Ītu* had said, at the very beginning of the commentary, that the *ālvār* is speaking about his own essential nature in this verse.²¹ This implies that the *ālvār* imaginatively puts himself in the situation of the Goddess when he says that she cannot bear separation and, thus, speaks about himself at the same time. For the commentator, this permits a parallelism to be drawn between the *ālvār* and the Goddess in their relationship to God: they both experience the same mixture of union and longing in relation to Him. Further such similarities between the Goddess and the *ālvār* are explored in Section 6.4.4.

Thus far, the *nityayoga* concept is the conjugal relationship between the divine couple. The same *nityayoga*, though, can also explained in terms of a mother–father relationship and it is this relationship, triadic in that it includes the child, which is of paramount importance for the salvation of the soul. The *Ītu* says of this relationship: “Where a father and a mother are concerned, the mother’s relationship with children is not the same as the father’s. She is there not only to ignore the child’s faults but also to hide them from the father”.²² Here, *nityayoga* refers to the eternal presence of the mother beside the father, urging him to leniency on behalf of the soul, the child. This conception, in turn, has a very important implication for the person who seeks refuge: it implies that one need not wait for a particular time in order to do so, a time when one is in a state of greater virtue. Thus, in the second cycle of the commentary, it is said: “This union [of the divine pair] spoken of is a successful one. It serves its purpose in preventing one’s retreat [from taking refuge] after one has thought about God’s sovereignty and one’s own transmigratory nature. One should not quail at His omniscience and one’s own sinfulness. For, He has no opportunity to take a decision at the time when the soul sins, since she is together with Him”.²³

The efficacy of the Goddess’s presence beside God in terms of a parental relationship is that of the mother standing beside the father. The mother, if she is present, will always seek to hide the child’s faults from the father and intervene on the child’s behalf asking the father to forgive him at the appropriate time.²⁴ Therefore, as long as she remains beside the father the child is safe from punishment. This efficacy, based on the idea of the proximity of the female, divine presence to that of the male, is further underscored through the concept of *sannidhi*, her mere physical presence. The potency of the Goddess’s proximity, her *sannidhi*, as the necessary factor in the soul’s salvation is illustrated, in the next sub-section, by a story which is narrated twice in the *Ītu*.

6.4.2 Sannidhi

The story is said to have been narrated by Parāśara Bhaṭṭar to his disciple Nañcīyar, when he instructed the latter in the fundamental meaning of the *Dvaya mantra*. The incident mentioned is taken from the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Sundarakāṇḍa*, 38, and is narrated in a dialogue between Sītā and Hanumān, while she lies in captivity in Rāvaṇa's grove. It is later repeated by Hanumān to Rāma in canto 67. The incident takes place in Citrakūṭa. The crow Jayanta, the son of Indra, pecks Sītā's breast while she sleeps beside Rāma and injures her. Rāma wakes up and enraged, unleashes the weapon of Brahma (*brahmāstra*) on the crow. The crow flees but is unable to find refuge in all the three worlds. Forsaken by its father and others it returns and falls at Rāma's feet. It is forgiven by the compassionate Rāma, though deprived of one eye since the weapon, once unleashed, cannot be entirely deflected. In the *Sundarakāṇḍa*, Sītā narrates this story to Hanumān, telling him that she expects Rāma to punish Rāvaṇa even more severely than the crow.

As narrated by Bhaṭṭar in the first two cycles of the commentary, this story takes on an entirely different meaning. The *ācārya* narrates the story in order to answer a specific question of his disciple, Nañcīyar, regarding the meaning of the *Dvaya*. Nañcīyar had asked: "If this individual soul is subordinate and if he [God] is the Principal, then what is achieved by the connection with the Goddess?"²⁵ Nañcīyar, here, is referring to the fact that God and the soul have a fundamental and unmediated relationship with each other. There is no third person in this ontological relationship. If this is the case, he wants to know, why should a third person be required to effect the salvation of the soul. Why is the Goddess required as the mediator, *puruṣakāra* at all? To this Bhaṭṭar replies: "Listen to how it is! Even though Rāvaṇa and the crow had the same connection and acted similarly, Rāvaṇa did not obtain one thing due to the curse. Unlike this, because of her proximity, the crow escaped with his head intact when he mistakenly laid eyes on the mother. Rāvaṇa, though, had his head cut off because he kidnapped her. Both of them were destitute and lead astray. Still [Rāvaṇa] was unsuccessful because the Goddess was not near [God]".²⁶

In this condensed and cryptic reply Bhaṭṭar is pointing out that both Rāvaṇa and the crow have transgressed against the Goddess, the one by kidnapping her and the other by physically hurting her. The crow's transgression is, in a sense, more severe than Rāvaṇa's because the latter never physically touched Sītā, even if he might have wanted to. The reference to the curse in the story which Bhaṭṭar narrates recalls an incident from the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, 13, where Mahāpārśva advises Rāvaṇa to violate Sita. Rāvaṇa refuses to do so and reveals a past secret. He had ravished a woman called Puñjalikā, in the past, on her way to the abode of Brahma. Enraged at Rāvaṇa's act, Brahma cursed him saying that his head would shatter into a thousand pieces if he ever laid hands unlawfully on another woman. This is the reason why Rāvaṇa never touched Sītā even after abducting her, implies Bhaṭṭar. He further adds that both the crow and Rāvaṇa are wrong-doers, in need of compassion. Despite this, the crow escapes with his life

while Rāvaṇa is beheaded. The reason for this is that *at the time of the crow's transgression the divine couple were together, the Goddess proximate to God*, while at the time of Rāvaṇa's transgression they were physically separated. This story is narrated in order to link the Goddess's physical presence, her *sannidhi* beside God, directly to the *Dvaya mantra*, where the very first word refers to Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa as the "Lord of Śrī", linked always with her. *Sannidhi*, in this context is not the mere proximity of the Goddess alone but derives its efficacy from the proximity of the divine couple to each other. This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the story is narrated in the context of exegesis on the phrase *urai mārpā*, referring to the chest of God on which the Goddess resides. Bhaṭṭar shows that one can only obtain God's attention and seek refuge with him successfully by invoking the presence of the Goddess. In reply to Nañcīyar's view that surely the existence of the relationship (*sambandha*) of Principal and subordinate (*śeṣaśeṣin*) between God and the soul should be enough to save the latter, Bhaṭṭar points out that it, in itself, is inadequate without the proximity of the *puruṣakāra*.

Bhaṭṭar's story though has theological implications that go far beyond merely pointing out the utter necessity of the presence of the Goddess as a mediatory figure in salvation. It also illustrates, in effect, that it is not the severity of the transgression or the actual actions and intentions of the culprit which elicit divine compassion. The crow had transgressed more severely than Rāvaṇa by physically touching the Goddess. But this is not the determining factor in God's intervention: rather, he intervenes purely due to the physical presence of the Goddess beside him. This point is brought out even more clearly in the second cycle of the commentary where the story is repeated. "Though the crow and Rāvaṇa transgressed in a similar fashion against the Goddess, the crow escaped with his head due to her proximity; even though Rāvaṇa had not transgressed to such an extent he was beheaded because her proximity [to God] was not there. This is the difference between her proximity and the lack of it."²⁷

The image of the parental relationship described through the concept of *nityayoga*, earlier, had provided one rationale for the efficacy of the Goddess's presence when the soul seeks its salvation. But here, the story narrated by Bhaṭṭar provides another rationale which, when considered carefully, tends towards a ritualistic and mechanistic interpretation of the need for the *puruṣakāra*. It seems to imply that the mere presence of the Goddess beside God is indispensable for the latter's intervention in the salvific process. Secondly, the ritualistic import of taking refuge in the Goddess's presence, preserved in the meaning of the story, is underscored by the manner in which the story discards issues of the severity of transgressions, of relative degrees of sinfulness, as well as the good or bad intentions behind the actions of an individual, when it comes to salvation. Thus, continuing its interpretation of the story, the *Ītu* adds,

"He took refuge with him alone" and "I shall not bow down" are both of no use. Why? [Because] when the crow was fleeing he inwardly thought

the same [as Rāvaṇa]. If this were not so, the crow would not have tried to go home [as in the text], “He reached his abode”. He fell down being unable to act any more. Even though this was the same situation where Rāvaṇa was concerned, it did not have any effect due to her non-proximity.²⁸

Two of the citations within this commentarial piece refer to the circumstances which the crow and Ravaṇa find themselves in, after the transgression.²⁹ The crow admits defeat and returns to seek refuge at Rāma’s feet after he is forsaken by others. But he only does this, according to Bhaṭṭar, because he realizes the futility of fleeing, not because he is truly repentant. His lack of real repentance is the same as Rāvaṇa’s, only the latter is explicit about it. Thus, Rāvaṇa openly says that he will not bow down to Rāma, to Mālyāvān who advises him to desist from fighting and make peace before war commences. In other words, the attitude of both the transgressors is ultimately the same. Nevertheless, the commentary shows that the crow is rescued and Rāvaṇa defeated and beheaded for only one reason: in the one instance the crow came and took refuge when Sītā, entirely by chance, was present beside Rāma, while in the other instance this did not happen.

The moral of the story appears to be that *it is not what you think but what you do*, even unwittingly, in combination with the Goddess’s proximity, which ensures salvation. For, neither the crow nor Rāvaṇa had really repented or planned on the Goddess’s proximity, or could cause the latter to come about, at the time they transgressed. Yet, one of them escaped with his life because she happened to be inadvertently present beside God at the time of his crime. What such a view does is to lay emphasis, on the one hand, in certain mechanistic acts of virtue, while stressing the essential random nature of the salvific process, from the point of view of the individual. This tendency to stress the randomness and, therefore, the unfathomable nature of the salvific process, becomes more pronounced in the writings of the *ācāryas* who come after Vaṭakku Tiruvīti Piḷḷai and Periyavaccāṇi Piḷḷai, where it is given greater doctrinal foundation.³⁰ But it is already laid in place unsystematically, as we seen here, in the *Īṭu*.

Nevertheless, even while the story narrated by Bhaṭṭar hints at the ritualistic importance of the presence of the Goddess, the predominant rationale provided in the commentary for the efficacy of the Goddess in the salvific process is her tenderness (*daurbalyam*), which brings out her compassion. It is to this concept that we shall next turn.

6.4.3 Daurbalyam

The nature of the Goddess’s tenderness is brought out in the extensive exegesis, at the very end of the commentary on *TVM VI.10.10*, where *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, 113.45 is discussed. In this verse Sītā speaks to Hanumān when he visits her after the war, bearing the news that Rāvaṇa has been killed by Rāma. Now, Hanumān

expresses the wish to punish the female demons, Rāvaṇa's servants, who had guarded Sītā in captivity and tormented her. She, for her part, refuses to let him do so and says: "O monkey, towards sinners or the virtuous, even to those worthy of slaughter, the noble person should show compassion. There is none who does not err".³¹

In the first cycle of the commentary, where a short summary of the meaning of this verse is given, the *Īṭu* shows that this verse is illustrative of the Goddess's "weakness or tenderness" (*daurbalyam*), her inability to bear the pain of others:

She who says, "There is none who does not err", with regard even to those who are only remotely connected with her, will not forsake a person who seeks an opportune moment for her to direct him. She who even says, "Form an expedient friendship with Rāma",³² to the one [Rāvaṇa] who does not listen to her words, will not forsake a person who looks at her and listens to her words. For she has said, "I forgive the servants of Rāvaṇa, weak as I am in these matters".³³ After all, when Tiruvaṭi [Hanumān] said that she should hand over the female demons to him she replied, "I am a feeble person who cannot bear to see another's destitution". When Rāvaṇa was punished, when the Lord stood victorious there, when Tiruvaṭi came and stood before her she was no longer in a state of feebleness as such. This state of feebleness, though: it is the inability to see another's pain.³⁴

Thus here, in the first cycle, the commentary speaks of the nature of Sītā as the tender-hearted woman who wishes only to alleviate suffering and pain. The protective instincts of the Goddess are always present even if the person who has transgressed does not wish to listen to her words, like Rāvaṇa. Further, her compassion is awakened at the mere sight of misfortune: when a transgressor has been brought down in the world. Thus, when she is asked permission by Hanumān to punish the female demons she refuses to let him do so. This is not because the demons have repented of their deeds. Rather, the Goddess's *daurbalyam* is not so much the weakness of one who cannot punish, as the tenderness which results in the inability to bear the pain of others. Due to her tenderness she extends herself to someone in a state of misfortune who requires her protection. But, it is in the final section of the commentary, where *Yuddhakāṇḍa* 113.45 is again discussed at great length, that the Goddess's compassion is shown to extend even beyond overlooking former transgressions: here, the *Īṭu* makes the radical proposal that divine compassion especially favors the transgressor rather than the person of virtue.

The commentator begins by saying that this *śloka* amounts to a "bestowal of fearlessness" (*abhaya-pradhāna*) provided by the Goddess to the individual soul. He repeats that it is spoken when Hanumān comes to the Aśoka grove, where Sītā awaits news of the outcome of the battle. On hearing that Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa have won, she is speechless with joy. She wishes to reward the monkey for this

news and he takes advantage of her intention by asking permission to punish the female demons. Hanumān says: “I myself shall do all the divine activities which the Lord’s arrows did. In punishing those who have transgressed against the Blessed One and his devotees, I wish to be the one who punishes them”. Here, the narrative presents Hanumān’s desire to punish the female demons in terms of the justice which Rāma himself had chosen to mete out towards those who had transgressed against him and his devotees. Just as Rāma had unleashed his arrows against Rāvaṇa for abducting the Goddess, the monkey-servant merely wishes to emulate divine justice. Sītā replies: “The female demons are sinners according to you and virtuous according to me. Surely, this is the issue as in [the text], ‘Even if he might have faults’³⁵ *It is only the dirty who require a bath; is it not because they are sinners that we should respond to them? Do the virtuous require your help? Their own good deeds will aid them.* We should be the means only for those who do not have the means [to help themselves].”³⁶

Hanumān then replies: “Are you to grasp and throw away the scriptures regarding *dharma* which tell us to punish those who have transgressed and leave those who haven’t?” To this the Goddess retorts: “Should you grasp and throw away the special scripture which tells you to protect one who has sought refuge with you? Even though Vibhīṣaṇa who had come in search of refuge had transgressed, our Lord said, “I shall not abandon”. Should those words spoken at the seashore dissipate like the sound of the sea?”³⁷ Later still, the Goddess reinforces the need to show compassion towards the demons by saying:

Who is there in transmigratory existence who does not err? Can the Ocean dance after the waves have ceased to exist? Is not our Lord himself, who is considered incomparable, also guilty of faults? Am I not also capable of wrong? Are you not, too? You might ask: In what way is our Lord guilty of faults? [I reply:] He went to the forest. The younger Lord [Lakṣmaṇa] followed him like one who climbed the *maṭal*.³⁸ I, too, joined him with great expectations of enjoying his company in solitude. But, he lived apart from me for ten months. Not only did he not come, even one arrow of his did not disturb this place. Since he is capable of being separated from me for so long, is he not at fault? I, too, am at fault for speaking about this, contrary to my need of him. Now, you are considering punishing those servants who did what their master told them to do. Should I not, first, totally punish you for attempting to do what our Lord has taught you, before these people are punished for doing what Rāvaṇa told them to do? Therefore, you are the guilty one! I thought that when our Lord became angry about some matter I tended to be there to placate him in every way. When I also had to emulate him [in being angry], I thought you were still there [to act otherwise]. But even if you should be [harsh] like this can there be a sanctuary left for those who transgress?³⁹

The theological viewpoints expressed by the commentator in this exchange permit of a variety of interpretations. The Goddess argues, on the one hand, for compassion, protection, to be extended towards the person who seeks refuge with the divine couple. She gives the specific example of Vibhīṣaṇa who seeks out Rāma, inspite of having previously harmed him. She reminds Hanumān of Rāma's promise of protection to someone who seeks his help and takes it as the precept for her own conduct towards the female demons. The Goddess tells Hanumān that the *Dharmaśāstras*, which teach a punitive and retributive justice should be set aside in favor of the *viśeṣa śāstra* taught in the *Rāmayaṇa* by Rāma himself: that of extending compassion to the one who transgresses.⁴⁰ It is being argued here that the seeking of refuge by the one who transgresses merits compassion. But even while saying this the commentator, again through the words of the Goddess, also shows that the prior moral status of one who, thus, seeks refuge, is a matter of relevance. The Goddess tells Hanumān that one should first consider if the female demons are sinful or virtuous and then realize that, the greater their transgression, the more they merit divine compassion. For, she says, it is the dirty who require a bath; it is not the virtuous who require help, in as much as their virtue is its own reward. The *Īṭu* is saying that the divine, in this case the Goddess, seeks to alleviate the plight of the transgressor far more than that of the person of virtue precisely because the former is less worthy of help. The commentator underscores this point forcefully by having the Goddess speak of herself and God in human terms. In their descent as humans, as Rāma and Sītā, they too have committed faults. Keeping this in mind, the Goddess says that divine compassion should extend itself all the more towards transgressors.

This doctrinal viewpoint— that divine compassion favors the sinner rather than the person of virtue — is characteristically Teṅkalai. The *Īṭu* supplements this understanding of the Goddess's compassion with the conception of God's parental love (*vātsalya*). What we have, in the *Īṭu*'s conception of the Goddess's *daurbalyam* seen in conjunction with one of the meanings of the story narrated by Bhaṭṭar, is the clear articulation of a theological viewpoint which sets aside, by and large, as unimportant, the issues of the intentions behind an individual's actions, of merit and deserved reward, in the light of divine mercifulness. In fact, the theological viewpoint expressed here might be characterized as the opposite of retributive divine justice: the Goddess extending herself to those least worthy of her favors.

6.4.4 Īśvarī

We have seen thus far, that the *Īṭu* on *TVM VI.10.10* overwhelmingly identifies the figure of the Goddess with Sītā. But, in the third cycle, the commentator highlights other śāstric and purāṇic sources which speak of the Goddess as the Ruler (*īśvarī/svaminī*) and the Controller (*niyāmikā*) of both sentient beings as well as God himself. The citations which underscore this view include those

from *stotras* which speak of the Goddess as Śrī and Lakṣmī rather than as Sītā.⁴¹

The commentary begins by assenting that the Goddess is, indeed, the real ruler behind God. "He is the ruler of gross matter and the individual souls. It is said that she rules him. Therefore, it is said that she is the controlling force of all".⁴² But, in the very next sentence, the *Ītu* restricts the main attribute of the Goddess as the ruler and controller to that of motherhood, *mātr̥tva*. Thus: "What is the manner in which the Goddess controls? She controls the three types of sentient beings through her motherhood; she controls the Lord through the bonds of love. Motherhood is concomitant with her essential nature".⁴³ The Goddess's role in the activity of creation is defined, yet again, in terms of her womanhood; she persuades God to create through her ability to affect his moods, through her affection for him and his reciprocal love for her. Citing Kūrattālvān's *Śrīstava* the *Ītu* says: "The Goddess is also the controller when the Lord undertakes such activities as creation etc. The text says, 'Seeing her face he, won over by her facial expressions, effects this entire play'.⁴⁴ So too, he, affected by her frowning glances, creates everything. What does this mean? [You might ask:] Does he not create out of compassion, as in the text, 'The one with the compassionate heart unites one with the sense organs and the body'? ⁴⁵ [We reply]: When this doesn't work, due to her glances he gains strength and through her entreaties compassion is awakened in him and he creates".⁴⁶

The commentator has, thus far, defined the Goddess's rulership and controllership in terms of her motherhood. Her participation in the activity of creation is seen in terms of her ability to persuade God to create: her powers as an attractive woman. He now adds that even those texts which speak of Śrī and Lakṣmī as the Ruler who is the consort of Viṣṇu are, in fact, referring to her subordination to him. This subordination is defined as her essential nature and a state which is unchanged even while she rules and controls. "When she controls, as in the texts, 'She is the ruler of this universe, the consort of Viṣṇu'⁴⁷ and, 'The Auspicious One of Viṣṇu and constant',⁴⁸ she controls without changing her essential nature. You might ask how? [We reply:] Just as lustre is subordinate to the Lustrous Person and gives excellence to him, just as perfume is subordinate to the flower and makes it valuable, just as the Lord does not lose his own independence in becoming dependent, she too confers excellence upon him by being subordinate to no other object of worth".⁴⁹

In the course of dealing with the śāstric and purāṇic citations about the Goddess as Śrī and Lakṣmī, the *Ītu* had gradually interpreted her controllership to be, first, motherhood and wifely affection and then, eventually, as a subordination to God. Now, in speaking of this subordination, the term the commentary uses to describe the essential nature (*svarūpa*) of the Goddess is the very epithet used of the *ālvār* as well: "one who is subordinate to no other worthy person [except God]" (*ananyārhaśeṣa*).

We have already seen, in the definition of *nityayoga* as a conjugal relationship, that the Goddess's attachment to God and the fear of separation from him which

accompanied it was equated with the sort of fear which an extraordinary soul like Nammālvār experiences. Here, in the conception of the Goddess as Īśvarī, while speaking of the Goddess's essential nature, the commentator once again equates her, implicitly, with the *ālvār*. Hence, the *Īṭu*, in speaking of the Goddess's ontological status in relation to God appears to be placing her on par with the soul, like the *ālvār*, rather than with God. But the commentator does not say this outright. Rather, as seen previously, it is yet again in the writings of Piḷḷai Lōkācārya and Maṇavālamāmuṇi that the full implications of such ideas are explored.⁵⁰

In his 2002 study, Oberhammer has traced some important elements in the development of the Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrinal position on Śrī/Lakṣmī in the Sanskrit writings of Vedānta Deśika's predecessors. Oberhammer suggests that the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition was, at least from the time of Yāmuna, confronted with the problem of reconciling two different textual traditions on the Goddess. On the one hand, there was the purāṇic depiction of the Goddess (here, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is the central text) where she is depicted as the beloved consort of Viṣṇu, the Mother and Ruler of the world and, hence, the perfect counterpart of Viṣṇu himself as the Father and Ruler.⁵¹ It is this conception of the Goddess, according to Oberhammer, which finds expression in the *stotra* literature on her, beginning with Yāmuna's *Catuśślokī*. But, with the establishment of *Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta* the relationship between the divine pair became problematized when the necessity arose to explain it scholastically. The problem was clear-cut: on the one hand, the Goddess could not be considered a category of divine being like God and separate from him for that would violate the conception of the oneness of God himself, central to *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. On the other hand, to place her among the category of the eternally liberated souls, the *nityas*, would be to place her hierarchically below God and violate the purāṇic conception of her equality. By the time of Vedānta Deśika's predecessor, Naṭātūr Ammaḷ, the problem was resolved through placing the Goddess on par with God in every way, as far as the relationship to the world of sentient and non-sentient beings is concerned and yet as subordinate (*śeṣa*) to him.⁵² This subordination, though was not to be understood as one of hierarchical inferiority but one actually of mutual dependence. The *Pañcarātra Āgamas*, in particular the *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā* and the *Lakṣmī Tantra* appear to have functioned as the scriptural sources for describing this unique relationship. In contrast to this, as the *Īṭu* shows us, the teacher-pupil lineage of the *Teṅkalai* school appear to have been most influenced by the epic conception of Sītā to nuance the relationship between the divine pair in such a way as to place the Goddess hierarchically below God and nearer to the individual soul.

When we gather together the various strands of the conception of the Goddess in the *Īṭu*, the following picture emerges. The *Īṭu* sees the Goddess primarily as Sītā and, as such, a figure who typifies both the ideal spouse as well as the ideal mother. The view of the Goddess as the beloved consort and

partner is elaborated within the themes of *nityayoga* as well as *īśvarī*. In describing her as the beloved consort, the *Ītu* shows us that it is speaking, not just of the Goddess but also of the *ālvār*. Both the *ālvār* and the Goddess are the devotees of God, are subordinate to none other than him and, thus, occupy the same position in relation to him. The second view of the Goddess, as the divine mother, is dealt with in all four of the themes. Here, she stands apart from the *ālvār* and together with God, as the parent who intervenes and extends her compassion in the salvific process. In the earlier commentaries, the Goddess was referred to simply as the *puruṣakāra*: she was the mediator who stood between the *ālvār* and God, acting as bridge between them. Here, in the *Ītu*, the two views of the Goddess fusing in the figure of Sītā show her as both divine and human: both as the divine parent as well as similar to the *ālvār* himself. Partaking as she does of the qualities which adhere to both these levels, she is shown to be the mediator in the truest sense: the *puruṣakāra* between the divine and human levels.

Second, it is important to note that the *Ītu*'s conception of the Goddess's compassion, her *daurbalyam*, is a significant new doctrinal viewpoint not present in the early commentaries. It relates divine compassion to human sinfulness in a manner which creates a new model of the divine-human relationship with regard to *prapatti* soteriology. In the *Ārāyiram*, the *ālvār* needs to do *prapatti* before God intervenes to destroy his obstacles which are sins, *pāpa*. In the *Irupattunālāyiram*, the issue of the *ālvār*'s sinfulness is not stressed and rather his perfection is emphasized. Here, in the *Ītu*, the Goddess's *daurbalyam* is such that it embraces the sinful and the helpless rather than the person of virtue. The implication of this view is that not only is it not necessary for the soul to purify itself but that any attempt to do so is a form of self-assertion which hinders divine compassion. This paradigm of divine compassion in the *Ītu*, therefore, (unlike the *Irupattunālāyiram*) confronts directly the issue of individual sinfulness while, at the same time, providing an alternative view, from that of the *Ārāyiram*, of how it can be neutralized in the salvific process. The paradigm replaces *prapatti* as a means, *upāya*, to salvation with the compassion of the *puruṣakāra*.

6.5 God

The second and third lines of *TVM VI.10.10*, as we saw earlier, were considered to refer to the word Nārāyaṇa, which is also the second word of both lines of the *Dvaya mantra*. In discussing the meaning of this word the commentator, as with the conception of the Goddess, deals with certain themes. These are put forward in a summarized form, in the first cycle. Then, they are dealt with at greater length in the second cycle, with a brief mention of the importance of the idol form (*vigraha*) as the object of refuge. Finally, the third cycle repeats the same themes with a special emphasis on God's quality of accessibility (*saulabhya*).

The manner in which the verse is interpreted, in terms of these themes, is given below:

<i>TVM VI.10.10</i>	<i>Dvaya Mantra: Nārāyaṇa</i>
Line 2–1: <i>nikar il pikaḷāy</i>	<i>Vātsalya</i> (parental love): the foremost of the four-fold qualities
Line 2–2: <i>ulaka mūṇṛuṭayāy</i>	<i>Svāmītva</i> (lordship): the relationship of Principal and subordinate (<i>śeṣa-ṣeṣṭ</i>)
Line 2–3: <i>enṇai ālvānē</i>	<i>Sauśīlya</i> (amiability)
Line 3: <i>nikar il amarar muṇikaṇaṅkaḷ virumpum tiruvēṅkaṭattāṇē</i>	<i>Saulabhya</i> (accessibility): the last of the four-fold qualities containing the rest within it.

The order of these qualities is the same as in the *Irupattunālāyiram*. Each of these themes are dealt with in the next four sub-sections.

6.5.1 Vātsalya

The *Ītū* begins the third cycle of the commentary by showing that the word *Nārāyaṇa* encodes four qualities, with parental love as the foremost among them. The commentator says, of line 2-1 and speaking of the word *Nārāyaṇa*: “Here, the meaning of the word *Nārāyaṇa* is stated. The meaning of this is as follows. Our teachers refer to, ‘Yoke of the two worlds’ and, ‘Cause of the Universe’ as in the text, ‘The *tattvas* arose from Nara’⁵³ to illustrate the meaning of the word. Further, they also talk of the four-fold qualities such as accessibility which are necessary for taking refuge. This [*ālvār*] gives us the correct sequence of these qualities. [If you were to ask:] When speaking of these qualities why should “parental love” be foremost? [We reply:] The individual soul having transgressed, it first requires the mediator as the person who can tolerate these transgressions and then, as the next immediate imperative, a quality [of God’s] which can relish these transgressions. [If you ask:] Does this line refer to his parental love, the answer is yes. In the *gadyas* it is mentioned together with the other qualities in, ‘[Great Ocean of] unbounded compassion, amiability and parental love’, and also especially on its own as in, ‘Ocean of parental love to those who resort to you’.⁵⁴

Previously, where the Goddess's compassion was discussed through the use of the *śloka* from the *Yuddhakāṇḍa*, we saw the Goddess arguing that it is the transgressors who needed to be helped rather than the person of virtue. Here, in interpreting the concept of *vātsalya*, the *Ītu* shows that in addition to the Goddess's forbearance his parental love enables God, not just to tolerate but even relish (the verb *bhuj* is used) the transgressions. This *Tenkalai* doctrinal view — that

God not merely tolerates but even relishes the sins of the soul — is also further developed in the texts which come after the *Ītu*.⁵⁵

Just as the merciful Goddess was identified with Sītā, the *Ītu* identifies this compassionate God with Rāma. Citing *Periyālvār Tirumoli IV.9.2* in the second cycle, the commentator says that even if the Goddess were to act contrary to her own nature and complain about the faults of the devotees, Rāma would reproach her and defend them. Thus, he would repudiate her complaints, saying: “My devotees did not do that” and, “whatever they did, they did the right thing”.⁵⁶ The commentator then shows that Rāma’s quality of parental love is even greater than that of the Goddess. Those attributes of the Goddess which make her great, her motherhood and compassionate nature, could be considered as beholden to God since she is subordinate to him. But, in contrast, he is beholden for his greatness to no one, it is his essential nature: “When we are talking about the reason for her nobility we can point to him; we cannot point to anything when we talk of his nobility. This is his essential nature”.⁵⁷ Thus, the combination of Sītā’s tenderness, her *daurbalyam*, and this parental love (*vātsalya*) of Rāma’s are the divine qualities which offer protection to even the greatest transgressor.

Next, the *Ītu* speaks of the mutual dependency between God and the soul in terms of his quality of lordship (*svāmitva*): the second of the four-fold qualities encoded in the word Nārāyaṇa.

6.5.2 Svāmitva

God’s lordship (*svāmitva*), in the *Ītu*’s interpretation, is mentioned in line 2-2 of the verse. This line, where the *ālvār* says, “You who have the three worlds” is interpreted as referring to the inseparable relationship between God and the sentient being, expressed in the Principal–subordinate (*śeṣa–śeṣī*) relationship (*sambandha*). Speaking of this line in the third cycle, the commentator says: “The relationship which is the basis for the parental love mentioned above is stated”.⁵⁸ The *Ītu* adds: “Even if he [God] attempts to let go, saying, ‘I am not [there for you]’, this relationship is such that one can bend him by [threatening] to wear ochre garments.⁵⁹ Now, even if He incidentally takes leave, attempting to wash his hands off the matter and go away [the soul] has the right to fetter His legs and achieve its objectives”.⁶⁰

Where *vātsalya* was described, the *Ītu* spoke of it in terms of God extending the quality of parental love to the soul and even relishing its sins, as part of his innate greatness. Here, in the definition of *svāmitva* we have an inevitability brought into the interpretation of God’s responsibility towards the soul. The ontological relation of Principal and subordinate creates a mutual dependency between God and the soul. This means that God can be coerced into helping the soul because he is chained to it. The commentator states that this relationship is fundamental, it exists even in that state where God is without qualities (*nirguṇa*).⁶¹ The quality of *vātsalya* flows from this relationship and, thus, is said to arise out of this more fundamental quality of *svāmitva*.

6.5.3 Sauśīlya

Despite the enduring bond between God and the soul, theologically, another quality of the former is required to bring this mutually dependent relationship to fruition. This is the quality of amiability, *sauśīlya*, for it is due to his amiability that God bestirs himself and reaches out to the soul, in order to rescue it: “[Amiability is] the equivalent of putting a price on this relationship. This rulership consists of bringing one to the point of reaching salvation and bestowing all that which is required in the intervening period”.⁶² In the third cycle of the commentary, the commentator shows that *sauśīlya* drives God to engage himself in every phase of the *ālvār*’s salvation. More specifically, *sauśīlya* is not just amiability but that gracious condescension which a person of intrinsic superiority bestows upon an inferior:

He [the *ālvār*] is not different from others in that he too, like them, regards the gain or loss of worldly things as real gain or loss. Yet, he speaks of how [God], after making him realise that certain means to salvation such as *karma[-yoga]* and others are contrary to one’s essential nature, gave him the senior Goddess as the mediator and Himself as both the means and the goal. [You could ask:] “How can this be called amiability?” [We reply:] There is the text, “Good conduct is the intimate contact established by the wise person with the stupid”. In this fashion, says the *ālvār*, [God], disregarding his own greatness and the *ālvār*’s pettiness, mingled with him as in the same waters.⁶³

This *sauśīlya*, though it is primarily the result of God’s agency can be evoked, as it were, by the *ālvār*. To do so, he need only point out the special nature of his own subordination and demand that God respond to it: “This is to put a price on subordination. The *ālvār* denies that his subordination is the same as that of others. Rather, he asks [God] if He can abandon him after having bestowed upon him ‘wisdom and love, without ignorance’”.⁶⁴ The last two commentarial pieces show that the *ālvār* is not only a subordinate, *śeṣa*, like all other souls. He has also been given the wisdom and love which sets him apart from other souls and makes him that particular soul whose subordination should be rewarded. Further, this wisdom and love has been bestowed upon the *ālvār*, due to God’s amiability, from the very beginning of the *TVM* (as the *ālvār* is made to state by quoting *TVM I.1.1*). Thus, *sauśīlya* is described in the *Īṭu* as that quality of God’s which is present from the very beginning of the *ālvār*’s soteriological journey, to aid him. In describing it thus the *Īṭu* seems to be describing, for the first time, a quality which is similar to the *viṣayīkāra* of the *Āṭāyiram* and *Onpatināyiram* commentaries. Like *viṣayīkāra*, it is *sauśīlya* which brings the soul to the point of salvation, influencing each stage of the *ālvār*’s spiritual quest along the way.

6.5.4 Saulabhya

Finally, we come to the quality of accessibility, *saulabhya*, said to be revealed in line 3 of *TVM VI.10.10*. This is considered the last of the four qualities which define the word Nārāyaṇa. In the second cycle, the *Ītu* says:

... the conclusive meaning of that word, Nārāyaṇa is accessibility. The word encompasses the following meanings: the combination [of parental love], the state of being the Principal [*svāmitva*], the special glances [of amiability] and accessibility. The word Nārāyaṇa etc. means that he resides as the inner self in order to reward this soul with all he desires. The Lord of Vēṅkaṭam has accessibility because he is always present there. [You might ask:] How does this accessibility become a means [to be grasped]? [We reply:], “Me alone”.⁶⁵ Is not [God’s] role as a charioteer shown [in the *Bhagavadgītā*]? Here, [in this verse] it is not even that; there, the accessibility did not exist before or after that event [in the battlefield]; here, this is the place of His eternal presence. There, He said, “Attaching your mind to me, O Pārtha”,⁶⁶ laying down a precondition; here, even that is not said.⁶⁷

Here, the commentator defines *saulabhya* as that permanent presence (*sadāsannidhi*) which the deity, in his form as the idol in the temple, offers to the devotee. In this definition of *saulabhya* we have the direct parallel with the conception of the Goddess’s *sannidhi*, but with a crucial difference. The Goddess’s *sannidhi* referred to her presence beside and proximity to God, her salvific power being effectively linked to being near him. Here, the eternal presence of the deity is an independent accessibility which God provides to the devotee. Further, the accessibility of this form is equivalent to that of Nārāyaṇa’s, as the one dwelling within the heart (*antarātman*). In addition, it is even greater than that of the incarnation like Kṛṣṇa, since the latter is limited to a particular period of time and event, and expects certain conditions to be fulfilled by the devotee. The accessibility of the deity, in contrast to the incarnate form, is unconditional in every sense. So important is it for the soul’s salvation that, like in Rāmānuja’s own writings, the *Ītu* comes to it as the last defining term. Qualities such as parental love (*vātsalya*) and amiability (*sauśīlya*) are, in fact, only possible because of the more fundamental accessibility (*saulabhya*) of God.

This comparison between the different forms of God, with an affirmation of the superiority of the *arca/vigraha* as the most accessible of them, is repeated in a lengthy passage in the second cycle.

Accessibility, unlike the other [qualities], is a unique necessity for taking refuge. [God’s] supreme form is too remote for the sentient being to take refuge, in whom a predilection for Him has been awakened. The emanations are also like that because they are meant for Brahmā etc. The incarnations are

for those fortunate ones of bygone times and not for more contemporary people. Hence, they too are remote in time. There is one place at which everyone should take refuge which is devoid of these defects, as in the text, “The sky dwellers with their leader”.⁶⁸ The place where He is found with divine beings and those such as Brahmā beside him, with human beings who are nearby, and, without differentiating, [with] those of very low birth such as the forest tribes and monkeys. This place is his divine feet. Since he is, characteristically, not capable of forsaking anyone, since he possesses the eight-fold qualities like knowledge, power etc. necessary for the fulfilment of desires, the Lord of Vēṅkaṭam, who is complete in all qualities, is the Object of refuge.⁶⁹

Later the commentator adds, “Accessibility is the dependency upon those who worship him, irrespective of how superior or inferior they are”.⁷⁰

In the third cycle the *Ītu* speaks further about the accessibility of the *vigraha*.

The words “ the two feet” (*caraṇau*) [of the *Dvaya*] refers to [God’s] idol form. It is only this form which is auspicious to resort to, creating in one an inclination towards itself, preceded by a distaste towards other objects, increasing this desire, turning aside the obstacles to attainment, being a reciprocally relating figure to which one can do daily service when one goes to a special place and which is something that can be gazed at forever.⁷¹

Among all the *guṇas* discussed so far the quality of accessibility is given the highest priority by the commentator because it provides the devotee with the *vigraha*: the concrete object of worship and refuge-seeking. The mutual dependency between God and the devotee existent at the ontological level, which is explained through the concept of *svāmitva*, is reflected in the empirical world within the context of the temple. Here, in the act of worship, the *vigraha*’s dependency (*parādhinatva*) on the worshippers and theirs upon him is to be seen. It is only in his idol form that God becomes a reciprocally relating figure (*pratisambandhī*), where the devotee is concerned. Further, the accessibility of the idol form lies in its permanent presence, not circumscribed by a definite historical period, unlike the incarnations. Its excellence also lies in it being available to all manner of devotees instead of just the high-born or the person of virtue. This view of the accessibility of the *vigraha* form is reflected in the only usage, in the commentary on this verse, of the word *samāśrayaṇa*: a term used, both by Rāmānuja and Piḷḷāṇ, as previously seen, to speak of taking refuge with the accessible form of the deity.

Thus we see that, through its description of God’s four-fold qualities, the *Ītu* provides a far more detailed and differentiated picture of his involvement in the

salvific process than the early commentaries. It begins by showing that these qualities are encoded in the word “Nārāyaṇa”,⁷² though in describing them the commentator tends to stress the importance of Rāma and the *vigraha* at Vēṅkaṭam.⁷³ The four-fold qualities are shown to be parental love (*vātsalya*), lordship (*svāmitva*), amiability (*sauśīlya*) and accessibility (*saulabhya*). *Vātsalya* is defined through an interpretation of God as Rāma, the father who not only tolerates but even relishes the transgressions of the devotee. The quality of *svāmitva* refers to the more basic, ontological level of the relationship between the soul and God. This indelible bond implies that God is compelled to save the soul just as the soul is tied in its subordination to him. The quality of *sauśīlya* brings to fruition this ontological relationship. It is in defining *sauśīlya* that the *Ītu* approximates to the concept of *viṣayīkāra*: because *sauśīlya* God engages himself in the soul’s salvific process at every stage and leads it to the point of liberation. Finally, with the concept of *saulabhya* we come to the importance of the *vigraha* as the most worthy object of worship. The *Ītu* says that though God is always accessible, this accessibility only becomes really available to the devotees through the deity in the temple.

In looking at the description of these qualities from another perspective — from what they convey to us about the interaction between the divine and the human — we see that some of them describe a reciprocal transaction while the others a non-reciprocal one. Further, these two sorts of interaction appear to balance each other. In the description of *vātsalya* and *sauśīlya*, the *Ītu* is speaking of a non-reciprocal interaction. Through these qualities God is extending himself to save the soul, without any impetus on its part towards virtue. Such a relationship is, further, supplemented by the conception of the Goddess as the divine mother and her *daurbalyam*. Nevertheless, such a non-reciprocal relationship, where the giving is all God’s, is balanced by two other sorts of interaction between him and the soul. The first, at the ontological level, is explained by the quality of *svāmitva*, and the second, at the ritual level, in the context of the temple, is explained by *saulabhya*. At these two levels, the relationship is one of mutual dependency and reciprocity: God and the soul are indelibly bonded as the Principal and subordinate, as the deity in the temple and the worshipper. The commentator shows that the one who chooses the correct soteriological path of *prapatti*, such as Nammālvār, is aware of and takes into account all these three levels: he worships and praises the *vigraha*, acknowledges his ontological position as subordinate and, due to the latter, permits God’s compassion to work unhindered by doing nothing.

6.6 Nammālvār

The epithets used to describe the *ālvār* in the *Ītu* emerge in the exegesis on the phrase “I, who am without any refuge” (*pukal onṛillā aṭiyēṇ*) of the last line of *TVM VI.10.10* and fall into two categories: those which emphasize his helplessness and those which stress that he is a person qualified (*adhikārī*) for *prapatti* due to a certain kind of knowledge (*pratipatti/jñāna*) of his essential nature

(*svarūpa*). Thus, in the first cycle, the *Īṭu* introduces this theme by stating: “... helplessness and [knowledge of] one’s essential nature can only be accessories to *prapatti*”.⁷⁴

The second cycle expands on this theme:

Earlier, by “I, your subordinate”⁷⁵ and “I of the dreadful deeds”⁷⁶ the *ālvār* expressed his subordination and helplessness thoroughly. Here, he conveys that destitution and [knowledge of the] essential nature are accessories to *prapatti*. It is necessary that he stress this. You might ask why. [We reply to this:] Just as being the means is [God’s] essential nature, this mental perception is essential for the soul. If a soul lacked this [perception] there would be the defective state of the liberation of all.⁷⁷

Here, the commentator first mentioned the *ālvār*’s “state of subordination” (*śeṣatva*) and helplessness (*ākiñcanya*) and said that the *ālvār* speaks of both these in the verses leading up to VI.10.10. In VI.10.10, the *Īṭu* adds, he talks of his destitution (*veṟumai*) and essential nature (*svarūpa*). The Tamil word “*veṟumai*” is very similar in meaning to *ākiñcanya*, both having connotations of poverty and helplessness. Due to the parallelism between these two words it is reasonable to conclude that the words “*śeṣatva*” and “*svarūpa*” are related and that, therefore, that mental perception (*pratipatti*) which should be part of the *ālvār*’s essential nature (*svarūpa*) is the knowledge of one’s subordination. This parallelism is confirmed in the third cycle of the commentary: “By “I take refuge”, the essential nature of the qualified person, which is expressed through the first person [*prapadye* of the *Dvaya mantra*] is stated. Not having any other resort and being subordinate to no other worthy person, which is an illumination of the essential nature, are mentioned”.⁷⁸ Finally, in the second cycle of the commentary, the *Īṭu* stipulates one more quality as necessary for the one who does *prapatti*: this is the desire for the final goal (*prāpyaruci*), which is God.⁷⁹

In the previous commentaries, the *Āṭṭāyiram* and the *Onpatināyiram*, the epithets *ananyāśaraṇa* and *ananyaprayojana* conveyed that the *ālvār* was exclusively a devotee of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, who owed loyalty to him alone. In the *Irupattunālāyiram* and the *Īṭu*, the emphasis is on other epithets. These epithets — *ākiñcanya*, *veṟumai* and *ananyagatitva* — are not so much about the exclusivity of devotion to one God as about the *ālvār*’s inability to do anything for his own salvation. Further, in the *Irupattunālāyiram* and the *Īṭu*, it is repeatedly stated that one of the qualifications for *prapatti* is the knowledge of one’s essential nature (*svarūpa*) as subordinate (*śeṣa*) and that this subordination is an illumination of one’s essential nature. In the second cycle the *Īṭu* says that it is only because the *ālvār* knows this that he, unlike other souls, is singled out for salvation. The commentator links knowledge of *śeṣatva* with *svarūpajñāna* thereby making this quality of subordination the very fundamental, essential quality of the soul. The *Īṭu* itself does not go into the further doctrinal implications of this view though these definitions of the *ālvār*’s nature strengthen the grounds

for defining *prapatti* as a passive rather than an active means of salvation. But, such an emphasis on *śeṣatva* as the quality which defines the soul above all others becomes characteristic of the later *Teṅkalai* literature and enables Piḷḷai Lōkacārya to reject its agency and capacity for independent action.⁸⁰

6.7 *Prapatti*

The *Īṭu* interprets the last phrase of the verse, “I sat at your feet and entered” (*un aṭi kīl amarntu pukuntēṇē*) as dealing with *prapatti*. In the first cycle, the commentator defines *prapatti* briefly, showing it to be a means of salvation which does not involve doing anything. In the second cycle, there is a more comprehensive definition of it while, at the same time, it is differentiated from the three *yogas* of the *Bhagavadgītā*. In the third cycle, some of the main points mentioned in the first are repeated. I shall begin with the second cycle, showing how the *Īṭu* elevates *prapatti* to a separate category from the other *upāyas* to salvation, before examining the definitions of it in all three cycles.

In the second cycle the *Īṭu*, defining the three *yogas*, says: “*Karmayoga* is thus: When one performs those duties which are appropriate for one’s caste and station in life, preceded by knowledge of the inner self as it is, devoid of attachment to the fruit, sacrificing the thought of agency and possessiveness and with the thought of worshipping the Blessed One, there is the dissolution of the sins which are obstacles, the mind is pure, and there is illumination with regard to one’s essential nature. Then there arise those predilections towards the knowledge of God and it will converge in that loftiness, through devotion to the Supreme, knowledge of the Supreme and Highest Devotion. *Jñānayoga* is thus: In subduing the senses and making one’s essential nature the object of enquiry, there arises knowledge of the Blessed One and love towards the subject matter of that knowledge, followed by devotion to the Supreme, knowledge of the Supreme and the Highest Devotion, which culminates in loftiness. *Bhaktiyoga*, in contrast, brings both duty and knowledge into the matters which pertain to the Blessed One, and as in the text, ‘Fill your mind with me, be my devotee, sacrifice to me and prostrate to me’,⁸¹ through devotion towards the Supreme, knowledge of the Supreme and the Highest Devotion, culminates in loftiness”.⁸²

Unlike the previous commentaries which only hinted at such a model, in this description of the three *yogas*, the *Īṭu* proposes a new soteriological model which fully integrates the terminology of the *Bhagavadgītā* with that of the *Śaraṇāgati-gadya*. Here the three *yogas*, each of them, culminate in the *sthānatraya* of *parabhakti*, *parajñāna* and *paramabhakti*. Further, we are told that each of the *yogas*, when practiced correctly, build upon each other and lead to the dissolution of sins as well as illumination regarding one’s essential nature. Nevertheless, says the *Īṭu* after defining them, they should not be done because, “they are to be accomplished, they are diverse, impossible to do and not in accordance with one’s essential nature”.⁸³

Here, the three *yogas* are described as “to be accomplished” (*sādhya*) and “not in accordance with [one’s] essential nature” (*svarūpānanurūpa*). The reason for

this becomes clear when we recollect, from the previous section, that knowing one's *svarūpa* was to know that one was a subordinate (*śeṣa*). Here, the *Ītu* is saying that since the three *yogas* involve doing something, they go against the nature of the soul as a *śeṣa*. The correct means to salvation, by implication, would be that which would be in accordance with one's *śeṣatva*. Recognizing this, Nammālvār behaves differently from other souls. Referring to his strategy for salvation, the *Ītu* says, "There are other individuals who grasp this very means [God] and [aim] at other goals, and those who grasp other means and aim at [God] alone as the goal. Unlike this, the *ālvār* has the greatness of determining that [God] alone is both the goal and the means to it".⁸⁴

The main difference between the *ālvār* and other souls is that the latter presuppose a separation between the means (*sādhana/upāya*) and instruments (*prāpaka*) of attaining something, on the one hand, and the final goal (*prāpya/prayojana*), on the other. Thus, the practitioner of the three *yogas* expects a linear progression, undertakes a particular *yoga* in order to reach the desired goal, which is God. Unlike him, the *ālvār* is unique in that he proceeds on the assumption that the twin categories of means and goal are conflated within the figure of God himself, who undertakes all that is necessary for the salvific process. ***This assumption of the ālvār's is prapatti.*** All other means of salvation, like the three *yogas*, operate on the basis that something has to be done (*sādhya*) by the self and, moreover, they are difficult to do. The mistake on the part of the salvation-seeker who undertakes them lies in not acknowledging that the soul as the *śeṣa* cannot do anything to save itself. Nammālvār, instead, concludes that, "Since all the means to salvation which are said to be difficult to perform are contaminated by the sense of possessiveness, they are to be abandoned".⁸⁵ *Prapatti*, in contrast, is defined by the commentator as, "the act of taking refuge which is unique, accomplished, easy to perform and appropriate. This is because it does not have anything greater than it, as in the text, 'Therefore, they say that this depositing is different from ascetic practice'".⁸⁶

Thus, *prapatti* is the mental determination (*adhyavasāya*) that God is both the means and the goal to himself. In the second cycle, the commentator is anxious to show that this *adhyavasāya* should not be understood as some kind of action. Thus, in discussing the words "I seated and entered" of the last line of the verse, the commentary stresses that these verbal forms should not be understood as actions but rather as correct perception which dissolves a false one: "I entered [means] — After all one bridges only that great a distance as one has created; there is no defect in the previous category [of union with God]. There only existed his [the *ālvār*'s] false perception. One only prays that that state vanishes".⁸⁷ And, later, in the third cycle the *Ītu* shows us that taking refuge is knowledge and that entering into refuge refers to the mental state of doing so rather than the action which refers to it: "The [*ālvār*] knows that [God], is not separate, [that He is] his Inner Controller. [He knows that] that he is [God's] subordinate, just like his own body [is subordinate to him]. By "I entered" he does not mean a sort of coming and going; knowing that [God] is the cause of the

entire universe, that his form is to be the self of and protector of all, this refers to that resolute knowledge⁸⁸ that He alone is the means to salvation. This is like in the saying, ‘Words [which refer to] action [refer to] mental states [prior to them]’.⁸⁹

It is in the very first cycle of the commentary, though, that the *Īṭu* gives its clearest definition of *prapatti* as a quality innate to a person rather than a “doing” by him or her: “Since this mental determination does not result in the thought of a means, since the remembrance of help is innate, since the grasping [of the means] is linked to consciousness — all these are characteristics of the one who is qualified”.⁹⁰

The definitions of *prapatti* in the *Īṭu*, as we have seen, emerge in the exegesis of the last phrase of *TVM VI.10.10*, which is also considered to encode the “*prapadye*” of the *Dvaya mantra*. *Prapatti* is the resolute knowledge (*adhyavasāyajñāna*) that God is both the means and the goal of salvation. When one has this resolute knowledge, the soul’s false perception (*vipratipatti*) of being separated from God vanishes. It is not an action but akin to a mental category (*buddhyartah*) which precedes action (*gatyartah*). In the light of this definition *prapatti* can be seen, not as activity, but as mere consciousness. Regarding it as such, the *Īṭu* calls it an attribute (*viśeṣaṇa*) of the person qualified (*adhikārin*). The use of this term *viśeṣaṇa* reminds us, once again, of a property of the self, as in the case of *śeṣatva*. Finally, it is important to note that where the *Onpatināyiram* commentary spoke of *prapatti* as the mental determination (*adhyavasāya*) of oneself as a subordinate, the *Īṭu* appears to be making a scholastic distinction between *svarūpajñāna* (which was stated as a prerequisite for the one who undertakes *prapatti*) and the *adhyavasāyajñāna*, which is *prapatti* itself. In other words, it makes a distinction between knowing oneself to be subordinate, which is *svarūpajñāna*, and determining that God is both the means and the goal of salvation, which is *adhyavasāya-jñāna* and arises from the former. It is the latter which is *prapatti*.

6.8 Summary

When we began with Rāmānuja, we saw that the links between the *Dvaya mantra* and *śaraṇāgati* doctrines first made their appearance in the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*, where we had a configuration of *prapatti* as a ritualistic act undertaken by the devotee, through uttering the *Dvaya*, to achieve the aim of being freed from the obstacles to a union with God. This configuration of *prapatti* as a ritualistic act connected to a *mantra* was faithfully reproduced in Piḷḷān. But already, in the *Onpatināyiram*, there is no mention of utilizing the *Dvaya mantra* as part of a *prapatti* ritual. Instead another kind of *prapatti* also mentioned in Rāmānuja is privileged: *prapatti* as a contemplation, with Nañcīyar calling it *adhyavasāya* instead of the *anusamdhāna* of Rāmānuja. When we place the exegesis of the *Īṭu* on *TVM VI.10.10* in this historical context, we see that there is an interesting development: here, the *Dvaya mantra* is once again of great significance and the entire verse is seen as encoding the *mantra*. But rather than *prapatti* being

regarded as undertaken with the help of the *Dvaya*, the *mantra* is internalized: that is, it becomes part of the meaning rather than the action of *prapatti*. Through creating this shift the *Teṅkalai ācāryas* preserve the important link between the Nārāyaṇa *mantras* and *prapatti* while moving the link to an entirely different level of significance.

Next, we see how overwhelmingly the *Īṭu* relies upon the *Rāmāyaṇa* for its interpretation of the nature of God and his role in the salvific process. Even more than in the *Onpatināyiram*, which extensively utilized this mode of interpretation, it is a particular understanding of the *Rāmāyaṇa* which dictates the *Īṭu*'s picture of the Goddess and God. They tend to be seen as the devoted, conjugal pair Rāma and Sītā and also the parents of the soul, who is the erring child. Thus their compassion is understood largely in terms of Sītā's tenderness (*daurbalyam*) and Rāma's parental love (*vātsalya*), both of which combine to produce a picture of the irrational and protective love which a parent feels for the child no matter how much it misbehaves. Such an understanding of divine compassion is a new commentarial development which was not explicitly present in either the *Āṛāyiram*'s understanding of God's motiveless compassion or that of the *Onpatināyiram*'s. Nevertheless, this conception of divine compassion as unilateral in the *Īṭu*, of fundamental importance for the soul's salvation, is balanced out by other levels of interaction between the soul and God, where there is a reciprocal relationship. This reciprocity is particularly evident at the ritual level where the deity in the temple is both dependent upon and propitiated by the offerings of the devotees. The conception of Nammālvār incorporates all the views present in the early commentaries and then reorders them into the two sets of epithets which stress helplessness, *ākiñcanya* and *ananyagati*, on the one hand, and subordination, *śeṣatva*, on the other. This concept of *śeṣatva* becomes particularly important in *Teṅkalai Śrīvaiṣṇavism* and is considered the fundamental property of the self, its *svarūpa*. Knowledge of this essential nature is considered a necessity for salvation and *prapatti* is seen as the best of all possible means to salvation since it is based upon this knowledge. The *Irupattunālāyiram* and the *Īṭu* establish a distinction between knowledge of the *svarūpa* and *prapatti*, the latter seen as the mental determination (*adhyavasāya*) that God is both the means and the goal of salvation. In their definitions of *prapatti* both commentaries adhere to the exegetical line first laid down by Nañcīyar in the *Onpatināyiram*. *Prapatti* is seen almost solely as a mental act and as mere consciousness. Thus, the commentaries conclusively establish that Nammālvār does nothing for his own salvation. In doing so, they foreground divine compassion as the primary force behind the soul's liberation. Nammālvār in this interpretation is the saint who moves beyond both self-purification and epic surrender – he is born, as it were, as a soul which is fully transparent to its own ontological nature, perfectly aware at the moment of his incarnation that he needs to do nothing but just be. His very act of stillness is the path to salvation for other mortals.

SURRENDER STRUCTURED

The *Pannīrāyirappaṭi* commentary

The *Pannīrāyirappaṭi* was the last of the major commentaries written before the close of the fourteenth century on the *Tiruvāymoli*. It is the work of Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷa Cīyar, who belongs to the same teacher–pupil lineage as the *ācāryas* of the last three commentaries. Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷa Cīyar (henceforth, Cīyar) studied the *prabandhas* under the tutelage of the son of Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai (the writer of the *Irupattu nālāyiram*). Cīyar appears to have lived and worked in a period which straddled the times of Vedānta Deśika (who was, perhaps, a senior contemporary) and that of Maṇavāḷamāmuni (who was younger than him).¹ We may, therefore, assume that the *Pannīrāyirappaṭi* (henceforth, *Pannīrāyiram*) follows on the heels of the writings of both Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Vedānta Deśika on *prapatti*. Thus, in examining the *Pannīrāyiram* and in seeking to understand it, it is necessary to keep in mind the writings of Vedānta Deśika and Piḷḷai Lokācārya on *prapatti*. This becomes apparent, in Section 7.2, in the analysis of the introduction (*avatārikai*) of the commentary, where some of the terminology which is employed by Cīyar can only be understood on the basis of a familiarity with the writings of these *ācāryas* on *prapatti*. In other words, unlike the commentaries examined thus far, the *Pannīrāyiram* presupposes the systematic clarification of different approaches to *prapatti* ideology which evolved in the writings of the two *acaryas*, which hardened, in subsequent centuries, into the *Teṅkalai* and *Vaṭakalai* theological positions respectively.

The historical separation of the *Pannīrāyiram* from the commentaries of the other *ācāryas* of Nañciyār's lineage is indicated by the style of the commentary, which marks a return to the sort of *maṇipravāḷa* characteristic of Piḷḷai rather than Nañciyār. As we shall see below, the *Pannīrāyiram*'s *maṇipravāḷa* is much more Sanskritized than the last three commentaries we have looked at. This Sanskritized style, in turn, is employed in the service of an erudition which makes the *Pannīrāyiram* a consciously learned commentary which makes extensive use, not just of the Sanskrit texts cited in the previous commentaries, but also classical Tamil sources on poetics.² The commentary is, in addition, the most thorough attempt at a glossary on the original text which exists in the commentarial tradition.

In keeping with its erudite commentarial style, unlike the *Onpatināyiram* or its successor commentaries, which frequently provided parables from the *Rāmāyaṇa*

or the lives of the *ācāryas* to leaven the theological material with anecdotes which modified the nature of the commentary itself, the *Paññirāyiram* tends to eschew such devices and concentrates exclusively on bringing out the literal and theological meaning of the text. One recognizes that it aims deliberately to be a *śāstric* commentary. Thus, one marked difference between the *Paññirāyiram*, and the previous *Teṅkalai* commentaries, is in its scant use of the *Rāmāyaṇa* to interpret the *TVM*. Further, the *prapatti* vocabulary of the *Paññirāyiram* is inclusivistic, incorporating the vocabulary of the *Ārāyiram* and even the *Gadyas*. Nevertheless, as the subsequent sections will show, in terms of its *prapatti* conceptions the *Paññirāyiram* is part of the continuum of commentaries that come from the Nañciyar line. Finally, the *Paññirāyiram* is also characteristic of this age of scholasticism, in terms of its detailed categorization, evolving into further and further sub-categories, of the meaning of the *TVM*. We shall see how this is so in the analysis of the framework to the entire commentary, the *avatarikai*, as well as in the commentarial introductions to some of the centums.

This chapter looks in detail, not at the *prapatti* ideology of the *Paññirāyiram* as such, (since there are no real doctrinal differences in this respect from the ideas already present in the *Irupattunālāyiram* and the *Īṭu*) but rather at the context of this ideology, that is, the framework which is built around the text and particularly the sixth centum by the commentator. One is therefore looking at the general framework to the entire text, the main *avatarikai* and, subsequently analysing the introductions to the fifth, sixth and seventh centums and to some of the decades within these centums. In doing so, there has been an attempt to analyse the structure of meaning within which the act of taking refuge in *TVM VI.10.10* is embedded.

The *Paññirāyiram*, as I had mentioned, occupies a separate slot from the commentaries examined thus far. There is the ending of one period of *Teṅkalai* commentarial scholarship with the generation of Vaṭakku Tiruvīṭi Piḷḷai (*Īṭu*) and Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai (*Irupattunālāyiram*) and a second, commencing after Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Vedānta Deśika, with Cīyar's commentary. Stemming as it does from the latter part of the schismatic period, the *Paññirāyiram* should be seen as an afterword to the schismatic dispute rather than as a commentary which can shed light on its origins. The next section is an excursus on *prapatti* in the writings of Vedānta Deśika and Piḷḷai Lokācārya in order to enable us to contextualize the *prapatti* doctrines of the *Paññirāyiram*.

7.1 *Vaṭakalai* and *Teṅkalai Prapatti* in Vedānta Deśika and Piḷḷai Lokācārya³

Vedānta Deśika's and Piḷḷai Lokācārya's differing definitions of *prapatti* have some common ground. This common ground lies in their terminology with regard to the nature of the relationship between God and the soul. They both call it one between the Principal (*śeṣī*) and the Subordinate (*śeṣa*), a view which is the cornerstone of Śrīvaiṣṇava theology since Rāmānuja. Further, they both describe

this relationship as one between a mother and an infant.⁴ Thus, it is God's intention to nurture and protect the soul. Further, both schools of thought agree that God repeatedly extends himself to the soul and seeks it out, in order to secure its salvation. The differences in their writings emerge when they begin to consider to what extent God's desire to liberate the soul and his compassion, which is the basis of this desire, is entirely unmotivated. On this point, Deśika is clear that even though God is duty-bound to protect the soul, this protection cannot occur without some effort on the part of the individual. For, it is the effort of an individual which singles him or her out for salvation. Without such effort God's special attention to one individual and not the other can only be seen as both cruel and capricious.⁵ In the light of this understanding of God's and the soul's respective roles in salvation, Deśika shows that there has to be some initial gesture of virtue on the part of the soul before the salvific process can be activated. This initial gesture is *prapatti*.

Deśika, in a famous definition in the *Rahasyatrayasāra* calls *prapatti* a "special awareness/perception" (*mativiśeṣa*):

When one is incapable of obtaining a desired object oneself or by some other means, then laying down the burden with an entreaty, they say, is to do *prapatti*. One regards it as some form of a special thought such as, "You should accomplish this objective (for me) without relying, henceforth, on my effort".⁶

At first glance, Deśika's definition appears eerily like that of the Teṅkalai *ācāryas* which we have seen thus far. *Prapatti*, in this definition is also only perception, the realization that as a mere subordinate one is not capable of achieving one's own salvation. But even while Deśika accepts that *prapatti* is cognition he simultaneously treats it as a ritual with accessories (*aṅga*). This view of *prapatti* as a ritual, with ritual components, appears to stem from the importance the *Ṣaṭkalai ācāryas* beginning with Naṭātūr Ammāl (Vedānta Deśika's predecessor) give to the pāñcarātric texts, the *Lakṣmī Tantra* and *Ahīrbudhnya Saṃhitā*. Basing his arguments on identical verses from the seventeenth chapter of the *Lakṣmī Tantra* and the thirty-seventh chapter of the *Ahīrbudhnya Saṃhitā*, Deśika reiterates that *prapatti* is a sacrificial act, a *yāga*, the surrender of the self to Nārāyaṇa, to be compared to the offering of an oblation to the deity in the sacrificial fire.⁷ Finally, in order to emphasize that *prapatti* is so little effort that it almost amounts to no effort, Deśika calls it a "mere gesture" (*vyāja*) to secure God's favor.⁸

Deśika's recourse to the concept of a "mere gesture" or *vyāja* has been seen as an attempt to arrive at some compromise between his and the Teṅkalai views on whether *prapatti* involved effort or not, views which were already beginning to seem irreconcilable by this period.⁹ A terminological dichotomy which is used by Deśika to speak about *prapatti*, a dichotomy which first makes its appearance in the *Īṇu* and used throughout the *Paṇṇīrāyiram*, is that of "the means which already

exists” (*siddhopāya*) and “the means to be accomplished” (*sādhypāya*). The first word refers to God, the second to the means to salvation, one of which is *prapatti*. In Deśika’s writings *prapatti* is the *sādhypāya* which is a mere gesture, *vyāja*, permitting the *siddhopāya*, God, to initiate the process towards salvation. In salvation, according to Deśika, “When the *sādhypāya* flows with high, ever-mounting waves and increases the flood of compassion of the Principal (*śeṣī*), who is the *siddhopāya*, He breaks through the stream of play (*līlāpravāha*) (and reaches out to the soul)”.¹⁰

When we turn to Piḷḷai Lokācārya, we find that he interprets the Principal-subordinate relationship (*śeṣaśeṣbhāva*) between God and the soul in an entirely different way from Vedānta Deśika. He claims that this relationship is outside the realm of reward and punishment and of conditionality (*aupādhika*). It is eternal (*nitya*).¹¹ Due to this relationship and his parental love, God always reaches out to the soul himself. In this context, all that the soul has to do is to abandon all self-effort at salvation and wait for this spontaneous gift from God. In other words, the abandonment of self-effort itself is the only precondition for salvation.¹² *Prapatti* is “knowledge of the self” (*ātmajñāna*) as the subordinate of God and an “assent to protection” (*rakṣyatvānumati*).¹³ But, in case the last definition be misunderstood as relating to some action on the part of the soul, Piḷḷai Lokācārya makes it clear that such an assent is merely a property of sentience and not to be regarded as different from the nature of the self.¹⁴

Finally, in Sūtras 214–216 of another of his works, the *Mumukṣupaṭi*, Piḷḷai Lokācārya also uses the terminology of *siddhopāya* and *sādhypāya* like Vedānta Deśika, with a significant difference. For Piḷḷai Lokācārya, God is the *siddhopāya* while all other means to salvation, **with the exception of *prapatti***, are *sādhypāyas*. *Prapatti* alone is correct soteriological practice since it is not a *sādhypāya* but rather an aspect of the soul’s nature and a mere assent to protection.¹⁵ In his commentary on the *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam*, Maṇavāḷamūni elaborates on this further by calling *prapatti* “the choosing of the *siddhopāya*” (*siddhopāyavaraṇa*) to distinguish from other means to salvation. It is these finely tuned definitions which had emerged by the end of the fourteenth century which we have to keep in mind in examining the *Pannīrāyiram*.

The next section, 7.2, dealing as it does with the main introduction, provides a basis for comparison between the introductions of the *Onpatināyiram* and the *Pannīrāyiram*, respectively. This enables us to span the distance traveled by the commentarial tradition in the intervening period. The *Pannīrāyiram*’s introduction will show that the commentary represents the apotheosis of the attempt which began with the *Onpatināyiram*, to give an overarching meaning to the entire *TVM* as the progression of a religious experience which terminates with Nammālvār’s salvation. In doing so, we must remember that the *Onpatināyiram* had briefly mentioned that the five theological categories, the *arthapañcaka*, were revealed by the text. The introduction (*avatārikai*) of the *Pannīrāyiram* takes up this theme: it concentrates on exploring the meaning of the *TVM* almost exclusively in terms of the *arthapañcaka*, showing how they come to be revealed

in the individual centums. Thus, the entire text is seen as one in which the *ālvār* first comes to understand the real nature of the divine as well as the individual self, which are the first two *arthas*, then chooses the right path to salvation which is the third *artha*, is rid of his obstacles, the fourth *artha* and finally reaches his goal, which is the fifth *artha*. The next and penultimate section, 7.3, shows how the *ālvār*'s refuge-taking in *TVM VI.10.10* is embedded in the structure of meaning sketched in the previous section, in the *avatārikai*. Thus, the *ālvār* takes refuge, does *śaraṇāgati*, in the sixth centum after he comes to understand the essential nature of God and himself in the first five centums. The *śaraṇāgati* is described, as in the previous *Teṅkalai* commentaries, as a mental determination, *vyavasāya*. At the same time, Cīyar also introduces a new terminology to describe this *śaraṇāgati/prapatti*, which had become, as we saw, really prominent only in the *prapatti* literature in the writings of Piḷḷai Lōkācārya, Maṇavālamāmuni and Vedānta Deśika. In this new terminology, *prapatti* comes to be described as “a choosing of the means [to salvation] which already exists” (*siddhopāyavarāṇa*), which is God himself. This new terminology distinguishes *prapatti* from all other means to salvation, which involve doing something else to attain God and which are therefore *sādhya*, rather than leaving it to God to save the soul. After this act of taking refuge the *ālvār* is seen to be at a mid-way point in his soteriological journey, now awaiting God himself to rid him of the obstacles to attaining him.

Thus, in the the *Paṇṇīrāyiram*, the soteriological journey of Nammālvār within the text is seen as one where he first comes to understand the essential nature of both God and himself, then realizes that he needs to choose God himself as the only means to salvation and, in choosing him, does *prapatti*. Through such a *prapatti* he is rid of his obstacles and attains the goal of service at the divine feet by the end of the *TVM*. The chapter also shows that, by the end of the fourteenth century, the *Teṅkalai* commentarial tradition on the *TVM* comes to interpret the text, as a whole, as the spiritual journey of the highest category of devotee in the *Bhagavadgītā* and *Gītābhāṣya*.

7.2 Introductory themes

The introduction, *avatārikai*, of the *Paṇṇīrāyiram* contains several of the interpretations of the *TVM* which were already present in the *avatarikai* of the *Onṇṇīrāyiram*. Thus, it begins with a brief mention of the special status of the *ālvār* as the foremost of the *ācāryas* (*prathamācārya*) who had taught the four *prabandhas*. These texts are works produced in God's heart, composed in Tamil and available to all. They have been revealed through the medium of the *ālvār* by God, out of his compassion for the entire world, in order to ensure its survival.¹⁶ Then, as in the *Onṇṇīrāyiram*, there is a second interpretation which describes all four of the *prabandhas* as facets of the single journey of the *ālvār* towards his final goal: the journey is described mainly in terms of the birth of a distaste for transmigratory existence in the first *prabandha* to a mandatory mental evocation

(*anubhāvyā*) of God's qualities in the second to the birth of devotion (*abhiniveśa*) in the third culminating, in the *TVM*, with a real and complete experience of God, which is in keeping with this devotion.¹⁷

The dominant scheme of interpretation, though, which occupies a major portion of the rest of the *avatarikai*, is the *arthapañcaka* scheme, which was mentioned only briefly at the very end of the *Onpatināyiram*'s introduction. Here, Cīyar begins by saying that the entire *TVM* establishes [the meaning of] a certain "great sentence", *mahavākya*.¹⁸ This sentence is as follows: "The Lord of Sri, when approached as the sentient being's means [of salvation], will himself bring about the destruction of that which is displeasing and the accomplishment of that which is pleasing".¹⁹

This statement is, in fact, another way of stating the meaning of the *Dvaya mantra*, as it comes to be understood by now in the *rahasya*-literature of *Teṅkalai Śrīvaiṣṇavism*. Thus, Mumme (1988:274) has shown that in Piḷḷai Lōkācārya's works the *Dvaya* is explained as follows: the first part of it is construed as referring to the Lord of Śrī as the means (*upāya*) of salvation. The soul seeks refuge with him on this basis. The second part is construed as referring to him as the goal (*upeya*) of salvation. The soul on this basis requests him to rid it of the obstacles to reaching his feet. This is undoubtedly also the general meaning of the *mahavākya* referred to by Cīyar.

In stating that the *TVM* establishes the meaning of this sentence, the *Pamṇīrāyiram* is also saying that the entire *TVM* encodes the meaning of the *Dvaya*. Such an interpretation had not been there in the *Onpatināyiram* but had emerged in the *Īṭu*'s "great introduction" (*mahāpraveśam*) to the *TVM*. There, Vaṭakku Tiruvīti Piḷḷai states that Nammālvār is expounding the *Dvaya* in the entire *TVM*. This view is endorsed both by Piḷḷai Lōkācārya, in his *Sārasaṃgraha* and Vedānta Deśika in the *Draṃiḍopaniṣadsāra*. Thus, by the time the *Pamṇīrāyiram* is written the Śrīvaiṣṇava theological position is that, not just *TVM VI.10.10* but the entire text encodes the meaning of the *Dvaya*.

Next, Cīyar shows that the *mahavākya*, in establishing the meaning of this sentence in the *TVM* is also establishing the *arthapañcaka* defined in the same way as in the *Onpatināyiram*. He says:

Since this text is full of the essence of all the sacred scriptures, the five categories whose purport is all the *Vedas* and *śāstras*, are contained within the great utterance of this text. By *Śrīpatih*, the essential nature of that Brahman who is the object of attainment; by *cetanasya*, the essential nature of the individual self ; by *hetutvena*, the essential nature of the means; by *aniṣṭahānim*, the cessation of the obstacles to salvation and by *iṣṭasya prāptim*, the attainment of that fruit which is the goal — are all indicated, as the five categories.²⁰

Subsequently, the commentary groups the centums of the *TVM* into three units in terms of their meaning: the first four centums form one unit, the fifth and sixth

centums the second unit and the last four centums the third. Through this grouping, the *Paṇṇīrāyiram* gives the first broad classification for understanding the meaning of the centums of the *TVM*, in relation to each other. Thus, Cīyar states:

In this text, the first four centums establish, as it is, the nature of the highest and lowest selves. The last four centums establish that which is in the form of something to be accomplished, which is preceded by the cessation of that which is displeasing and the attainment of that which is pleasing. In the middle two centums there is the choosing of the non-destructive means to salvation (*nirapāyopāya*) [where the choosing is in the] form of accomplishing that which is already existent (*siddhasādh-yarūpa*). It is considered that the choosing of the means which already exists (*siddhopayavaraṇa*) is the very thing which accomplishes it [the goal] (*sādhyā*).²¹

Seen in tabular form this first broad classification of the *TVM* in Cīyar looks like this:

1–4 Centums of the *TVM*

the nature of the highest and lowest selves = *parāvarātmayāthātmyam*

5–6 Centums of the *TVM*

the choosing of the non-destructive means = *nirapāyopāyavaraṇam*

or

to accomplish that which already exists = *siddhsādh-yarūpam*

7–10 Centums of the *TVM*

the form of that which is to be accomplished = *sādh-yarūpam*

In this classification, Cīyar uses the terms *siddha* and *sādhyā*, which occur repeatedly in the commentary. In the context of the commentarial literature, these terms enter soteriological discussion, for the first time, in the *Īṭu*. The *Īṭu*, if we recollect, had come up with a distinction between the three *yogas*, on the one hand, and *prapatti*, on the other, which hinged around the word *sādhyā*. Hence, the three *yogas* were considered inappropriate means to salvation because they were “something to be done” (*sādhyā*). *Prapatti*, in contrast, was the right means to salvation since it was the determined knowledge (*adhyavasāya*) that God alone was both the means and the goal of salvation.²² In the light of this definition of *prapatti*, the *Īṭu* also calls God “the means which already exists” (*siddhopāya*), in its introduction.²³ Thus, in the *Īṭu* the three *yogas* are *sādhyā* while God is *siddha*. In the writings of Piḷḷai Lokācārya, as we saw, this dichotomy of *siddha* and *sādhyā* is explored in great detail and interpreted in the same way as in the *Īṭu*. But, in addition, Piḷḷai Lōkācārya, and Maṇavāḷamāmuṇi commenting on him,

now define *prapatti* as “that which is in the form of a choosing of the *siddhopāya*”, (*siddhopāyavarāṇarūpa*), that is, a choosing of God.²⁴ Thus, by this stage of *prapatti* doctrinal development in the 13th and 14th centuries, the *Teṅkalai ācāryas* no longer call *prapatti adhyavasāya* alone but reinforce this definition by speaking of it as a non-activity in the light of God’s compassion: as a choosing of God rather than as an independent means to salvation. It is this doctrinal development which is reflected in Cīyar’s classifications in the *avatārikai*. In describing the meaning of the fifth and sixth centums, Cīyar says that they refer to “the choosing of the non-destructive means [to salvation]” (*nirapāyopāyavarāṇa*). This “non-destructive means”, as the next section will show, is synonymous with God, the *siddhopāya*. In Cīyar’s classification, the fifth and sixth centums relate to the choosing of the *siddhopāya*, a choosing which is *prapatti*. Cīyar’s first classification, therefore, interprets the *TVM* as revealing the essential nature of both God and the soul in its first four centums, moving on to show how the *ālvār* does *prapatti* in the fifth and sixth centums and concludes his spiritual journey, in the last two centums by attaining that which should be attained (*sādhya*). However, that which is *sādhya*, here, is not *prapatti* but the final goal of service at God’s feet.

Next, Cīyar explains this same structure in greater detail, through a grouping of the centums, now, into units of two each. He says:

There, in the first four centums which establish that which is in the form of the already existent (*siddharūpa*), the first two centums establish the essential nature of the Supreme (*parasvarūpa*), who is the Object of attainment (*prāpya*). The third and fourth centums establish the essential nature of the individual self (*pratyagātmā*) who is the attainer (*prāptā*). The fifth and sixth centums establish the grasping (*svīkara*) of the means which is the goal (*prāptyupāya*). The seventh and eight centums establish the cessation of obstacles to the goal (*prāptivirodhinivṛtti*). The ninth and tenth centums establish the attainment of the fruit of the goal (*prāptiphalasiddhi*).²⁵

This is the second set of sub-categories into which the *TVM* is divided which looks like this:

1–2 Centums of the *TVM*: essential nature of the Supreme (*parasvarūpa*) (*prāpya*)

3–4 Centums of the *TVM*: essential nature of the individual self (*pratyagātmā*) (*prāptā*)

5–6 Centums of the *TVM*: means which is the goal (*prāptyupāya*)

7–8 Centums of the *TVM*: cessation of the obstacles to the goal (*prāptivirodhinivṛtti*)

9–10 Centums of the *TVM*: attainment of the fruit of the goal (*prāptiphalasiddhi*)

Finally, the *Paṇṇīrāyiram*'s *avatārikai* concludes with a third set of classifications, where the meaning of each centum is separately considered:

There, the first centum speaks of the protectorship (*rakṣyatva*) of the Principal who is Supreme. The second speaks of his state of being the object of enjoyment (*bhogyatva*). The third, of the self's exclusive experience of God (*tadekānubhava*), and its subordination to the Blessed One alone (*bhagavadekaśeṣa*). The fourth speaks of the self's love for Him alone (*tadekapriya*). The fifth, speaks of the nature of the means (*upāyaveśa*) which is non-destructive. In the sixth, the way in which it is chosen (*tadvaraṇaprakāra*) is spoken of. The seventh speaks of the kind of obstacles which are displeasing (*aniṣṭavirodhiprakāra*). In the eighth, the manner of their cessation (*tannivṛttiprakāra*) is spoken of. The ninth speaks of the kind of fruit (*phalaprakāra*) and the tenth the way in which it is obtained (*tadavāptiprakāra*). Thus, through the separation of these categories, respectively, of the *arthapañcaka*, the meaning of the sentences of the ten centums of this *prabandha* was given.²⁶

This is the third and most detailed categorization of the poem by Cīyar:

TVM 1	The protectorship (<i>rakṣyatva</i>) of God
TVM 2	His state of being the object of enjoyment (<i>bhogyatva</i>)
TVM 3	The soul's exclusive experience of God (<i>tadekānubhava</i>) and its subordination to Him alone (<i>tadekaśeṣa</i>)
TVM 4	The soul's love of Him alone (<i>tadekapriya</i>)
TVM 5	The nature of the means to salvation (<i>upāyaveśa</i>)
TVM 6	The manner in which it is chosen (<i>tadvaraṇaprakāra</i>)
TVM 7	The kind of obstacles which are displeasing (<i>aniṣṭavirodhiprakāra</i>)
TVM 8	The manner of their cessation (<i>tannivṛttiprakāra</i>)
TVM 9	The nature of the fruit (<i>phalaprakāra</i>)
TVM 10	The manner in which it is obtained (<i>tadavāptiprakāra</i>)

Through the second and third classifications, Cīyar provides a highly organized and linear structure of meaning for the *ālvar*'s spiritual journey within the text. The *ālvar* comes to know the essential nature of both God and himself in the first four centums. This he does, by experiencing God's qualities in the first two centums and by seeing himself as the subordinate who loves God in the third and fourth centums. In the next two centums he chooses the right means to salvation.

This he does through realizing, in the fifth, that God alone can bring about His own attainment and chooses him as the means in the sixth. In the seventh centum the obstacles to the goal are identified and in the eight they are eliminated. In the ninth centum the final goal is defined and obtained in the tenth.

The commentarial tradition on the *TVM*, beginning with the *Onpatināyiram*, had started to give an overarching meaning to the text through the *arthapañcaka*. By the time of the later commentaries, particularly the *Īṭu*, the *arthapañcaka* are shown to be revealed, consecutively, in the successive centums of the *TVM*. This is established in the *Īṭu*'s "great introduction" (*mahāpraveśa*). It is this sytematization which is reflected in a succinct form in the *Pannīrāyiram*. When scrutinized carefully, this overall structure of meaning which the *Pannīrāyiram* produces for the *TVM* through the *arthapañcaka* corresponds finally to the stages which the *jñānī* goes through, before and including *prapatti*, in the *Gītābhāṣya*: the stages consist of realizing that God is both the goal (*prāpya*) and the means (*prāpaka*) to it, and then taking refuge. The three stages prior to refuge-taking described here in the *Pannīrāyiram* culminate in the same: coming to know the essential nature of oneself, of God, and finally, to realize that God himself is both the means and the goal. Thus, the brief sketch which Rāmānuja gave of the journey of the highest category of devotee in the *Gītābhāṣya* comes to be used as a blueprint, particularly by the *Teṅkalai* commentators on the *TVM*, to structure the theology of the text on Viśiṣṭādvaitic lines. With the *Pannīrāyiram* we arrive at the culmination of this on-going process, begun in the *Onpatināyiram*.

The contrast between the clear-cut structure of the *Pannīrāyiram* and the structure of the early commentaries could not be more marked, serving to illustrate the doctrinal development which had taken place in the intervening period. The *Ārāyiram* had dealt with each centum and even each decade as individual units. In doing so, it had permitted the unevenness of the *ālvār*'s spiritual journey within the text — the vicissitudes of union and separation — to be reflected in the commentary as well. With the *Onpatināyiram*, we have the first attempt to structure the meaning of the entire text through the overarching introduction. Yet, even in the latter, this overall structure is not correlated at every stage with the individual centums. It is only with the last commentaries, particularly the *Īṭu* and, now, the *Pannīrāyiram*, that we have a full integration of the structure proposed in their introductions with the meaning of the individual centums and decades. At the same time this increasingly refined sub-classification preserves the interpretations of the previous commentaries carefully. For instance, here the fifth centum remains the one which is about the means to salvation and the sixth is the focal point, when this means is chosen. Tentative generalizing statements in previous commentaries though, become incorporated into a cohesive structure in the *Pannīrāyiram* which smoothes away any unresolved ambiguities. It is within such a tightly organized structure that the *Pannīrāyiram* locates the meaning of *TVM VI.10.10*. The next section examines how it does this.

7.3 Embedding TVM VI.10.10

The meaning of TVM VI.10.10 in the *Paṇṇīrāyiram* unfolds in the examination of the introductions (*praveśa*) of the fifth, sixth and the seventh centums as well as in the introduction to some of the decades within these centums. By the fifth centum Nammālvār has come to understand that God's quality of compassion is that aspect of his essential nature which is most necessary for the soul's salvation. He is then shown, in V.7, that God himself is the only means to reach him. The refuge-taking in the sixth centum takes place after this realization. The commentator shows, in the seventh centum, that this act in TVM VI.10.10 is only a mid-way point in the ālvār's soteriological journey: after this act he becomes fully aware of the range of obstacles which still prevent him from reaching God. But as a result of *prapatti* the ālvār also knows that God himself will rid him of these obstacles which are seen, as in the *Onṇṇāyiram*, as the body and sense-organs, i. e. the association with *prakṛti*.

The fifth centum begins with the following passage:

Next, in the fifth and sixth centums – he [Nammālvār] teaches how the sentient being is to succeed in grasping the means which already exists, [which is] the Lord. Here, the fifth centum establishes, verily, the essential nature of the means which already exists. [You might ask:] How? [We reply that Nammālvār] wishes to teach others that what is important is only service to the Blessed One. This is because of [his] exclusive love for [God] mentioned in the previous centum. Thus, he contemplates the devotion that has arisen in him towards that Object [God] and ascertains that the reason for this is God's ability to be the means [to salvation]. [Then, speaking of all of God's excellent qualities which make him the means to salvation] the ālvār primarily teaches us about the exact nature of He who is the non-destructive means.²⁷

The *avatārikai* had said that the fifth centum forms a pair along with the sixth in dealing with the topic of “ grasping the means [to salvation]” (*upāyasvīkāra*). Then, it continued that the fifth, in particular, talks of the actual nature of this means (*upāyaveśa*). Here, in the introduction to the fifth centum, after reiterating these issues again, first put forward in the main *avatārikai*, we are shown that the centum as a whole is considered to establish the essential nature of God, as the *siddhopāya*.

Then Cīyar continues:

Here, in the first decade — the Lord's overwhelming compassion (*kṛpāpāraśya*) is established. [It is shown] that the compassion of the Lord who is easily available to all, (*sarvasulabha*) is constant (*avyabhicarita*) even towards those who are inclined towards extreme covetousness. Due to his overwhelming compassion, he holds on to even insincere utterances (*ahṛdayokti*) and embraces [such souls]

with longing. He removes the suffering (*khinnatā*) of those who resort to him and enables them to experience him. He brings about the cessation of those defects which are an obstacle to the experience, since the corporeal bodies which are defective are subject to his injunction; even while conjoining [the soul] with *prakṛti*, which is a defect, he gives it the experience of the deity (*vigraha*) in such a way that the defect is unnoticed; ignoring the fact that the one who enjoys Him is considered lowly (*nikarṣya*), He engenders his love and then embracing him, experiences him; He [God] relishes [the soul] in experiencing him, being a friend to the latter in all ways (*sarvavidhabandhu*); There is narrated, in addition to this relationship, the form (*ākara*) in which he causes [the soul] to experience him, characterized by his extraordinary form and marks (*asādhāraṇarūpa cinnaviśiṣṭa*). Contemplating all this as well as [God's] various incarnations, brought about by totally changing that form, for the sake of those who take refuge with him, [the *ālvār*] experiences the overwhelming compassion of the Lord who is the means to salvation.²⁸

In this commentarial piece, the *Pañṇīrāyiram* establishes that in speaking of God's essential nature the first and foremost quality described in the first decade of the centum is compassion (*kṛpā*). With its tendency to refer back to the vocabulary of the early commentaries, the *Pañṇīrāyiram* uses the word *kṛpā*, to speak of God's compassion, instead of the *vātsalya* favored by the later commentaries. But, in describing this compassion, the commentator refers to those very traits which had been defined in the *Īṭu* as part of *vātsalya*. He shows that God is eager to reach out under any pretext towards the soul, even when it is unworthy of his regard and insincere in its utterances. It is admitted that he eventually removes the obstacles, such as *prakṛti*, even while it is accepted, as in the *Onpatināyiram*, that the *prakṛti* enables the enjoyment of God as the deity in the temple. The *Pañṇīrāyiram* also states that God ignores the lowliness of the soul and instead embraces and relishes it, despite its defects. Finally the accessibility of his various incarnations is also recollected in the context of this discussion about his compassion. Through understanding that compassion is that quality of God's which is most essential for his own salvation, Nammālvār now tries to see how he may reach him.

After this, the commentarial introductions to the next five decades, V.2–6, deal with other themes relating to the *siddhopāya*. Thus, for instance, V.2 reveals his extraordinary greatness (*niratiśayamāhātmya*) in creating other devotees (*bhāgavatas*) who can set an example to ordinary souls on earth. In the commentary on the next four decades, V.3–6, the *ālvār*, taking on the persona of a woman, wonders how he may obtain the *siddhopāya*. Then, we come to the introduction to V.7. Here, the commentator says:

Since the role-playing (*anukāra*) of the previous decade did not result in the goal, in the seventh decade — with extreme longing (*ārthi*), ...

[the *ālvār* thinks], ‘The reason why [God], who is the means for attaining himself, did not show his face is because he thought that my mental state, whose object is role-playing (*anukārārtha-bhāvanā*), is [concerned with] *bhaktiyoga* (*upasanā*)’. Conjecturing that [God] delays, thinking, ‘I shall come [to the *ālvār*] at the final stage [of *bhaktiyoga*]’, [Nammālvār] decides, ‘I shall request what I wish for by putting forward my helplessness (*ākiñcanya*) and then he will turn towards me’. [Then contemplating all of God’s qualities which are conducive to taking refuge] he says, ‘You, thus distinguished, favoured me, who am helpless in doing all the other *upāyas* which are the cause of attaining you and who longs for you, by giving me your feet themselves as the means. What recompense can I offer for this?’ Thus, he conveys the special gladness which has arisen in him, his distress lessened, to the deity, Vāṇamāmalai, who has graciously shown himself, seated, at Cirivaramāṅkai.²⁹

Here, the *Paṇṇīrāyiram* creates a structure of meaning by which, for the first time since the beginning of the *TVM*, Nammālvār understands salvation to lie in the divine feet of the *siddhopāya* himself. This decade was considered significant, both in the *Ārāyiram* and the *Onpatināyiram*, where it was illustrative of God’s motiveless compassion. Both the early commentators interpreted this decade as a dialogue between God and the *ālvār*, where the latter firmly states that he expects God himself to rid him of his obstacles and achieve the goal of salvation for him. But it is here, in the *Paṇṇīrāyiram*, that the decade is shown to logically tie up with and precede the refuge-seeking of the sixth centum. Before taking refuge at the divine feet, the *ālvār* is informed that it has to be sought. This is conveyed to him by the *siddhopāya* himself in this decade, for the first time in the text. The commentary shows that after the distress of not reaching God in the last four decades, the *ālvār* unambiguously signals to him his helplessness (*ākiñcanya*) and is rewarded for this by the knowledge of the means to salvation. Understanding the nature of God as well as himself in the first four centums, realizing that God as the *siddhopāya* is the very embodiment of compassion at the beginning of the fifth and now shown that it is necessary to seek his feet as the means to salvation, the *ālvār* moves to do so in the sixth centum. Thus, the overall meaning of the fifth centum, together with the particular meaning of V.7, set the stage for the *ālvār*’s *prapatti* in VI.10.

The commentarial introduction to the sixth centum says:

The previous [fifth] centum establishes the Lord’s state of being the means (*upāyabhāva*) together with its modes (*saprakāra*). Next, [in the sixth centum, the *ālvār*] teaches how one should grasp (*svīkārāprakāra*) the essential nature (*svarūpa*) of this means. [Thus, he shows] the way in which the means is grasped through *ācāryas* who are mediators (*ghaṭaka*); [shows] that it is necessary that the one who is qualified for the act and does the grasping turn towards the Blessed One; shows that

there can be no doubt in the capacity of our Lord, who is capable of accomplishing that which is impossible (*aghaṭitaḥaṭanāsamartha*), to bestow the fruit; shows that because [God's] activities are hypnotic (*ākarsakaceṣṭita*), refuge-seeking is easy to do; shows that, for those who desire (*āsatti*) his proximity, detachment towards those who are intent on other [Gods] is essential; shows that one's independence (*svasvātantrya*) should cease [thorough the knowledge] that all that which pertains to one and oneself functions according to His rule; that the supports etc. are there to facilitate attaining Him; that the one who is urgent (*tvarita*) in his attachment to the Supreme should show great respect (*atyantādhāra*) towards the mediators; and that the attachment to the Object of attainment is an attribute of the one qualified (*adhikārivišeṣaṇa*). [Showing all this, the *ālvār*] teaching refuge-seeking, together with its modes, towards the Object of Refuge who is the Protector of All, also teaches one how to grasp that means which is self-accomplished (*svatassiddha*), culminating in its performance (*svānuṣṭhānaparyanta*)."³⁰

This commentary at the beginning of the sixth centum shows that, in it, the *ālvār* takes hold of the *siddhopāya* as the means to salvation. This act of doing so is called *śaraṇāgati*, a term which Cīyar prefers to use instead of *prapatti*. The commentator proceeds to list the most important prerequisites for *śaraṇāgati*. First, it is done through the *ācāryas*, who are the mediators. This is repeated twice in the commentary, with Cīyar saying that great respect should be shown towards, the mediators, the *ghaṭaka*, if one wishes to quickly attain God. In stating this, Cīyar draws attention to a doctrinal characteristic of post-Piḷḷai Lokācārya *Teṅkalai Śrīvaiṣṇavism* which emphasizes regard for the *ācārya* (*ācāryābhimāna*) as an extremely important prerequisite for salvation.³¹ Second, the refuge-taking has to be preceded by the devotee turning towards the Blessed One and cultivating detachment towards those who worship other Gods. Third, one abandons one's independence and acknowledges the fact that God alone causes everything, including the goal, to come about. In this manner Nammālvār does *śaraṇāgati* which is defined as a taking hold of the essential nature of God himself (*upāyasvarūpasvīkāra*).

After describing the prerequisites for taking refuge at the beginning of the sixth centum, the *Paṇṇīrāyiram* leads us to VI.10.10. Cīyar's commentary on VI.10.10 is extremely concise. First, he gives the simple meaning of the verse and then shows how it encodes the *Dvaya*. Thus, we have two short cycles within the commentary. There is a conscious return to the vocabulary of the early commentaries: thus Nammālvār is called "one who has no other refuge" (*ananyaśaraṇa*) and "no other goal" (*ananyaprayojana*), in addition to the epithets of *ākīñcanya* and *ananyagatitva* found in the later commentaries. Further, Cīyar does not lay emphasis on the *Rāmāyaṇa* in connection with this verse as the later commentaries do and prefers to see the context of *prapatti*, as in the *Ārāyiram*, as one where the *ālvār* takes refuge with Nārāyaṇa, with the Goddess, Lakṣmī as the mediator.³²

But, regardless of this inclusivistic vocabulary, the interpretation of *prapatti* in the *Pam̐rāyiram* is in line with that of the *Teṅkalai* commentaries beginning with the *Onpatināyiram*. Thus, the conception of the Goddess is similar to that of the *Īṭu*, as the consort who is eternally united with God while longing for him. God is defined through his four-fold qualities, which are encoded in the word “Nārāyaṇa”, as in the *Irupattunālāyiram* and the *Īṭu*.³³ The important line for the interpretation of *prapatti* is, as we saw in the *Īṭu*’s exegesis, the last line of the verse. The *Pam̐rāyiram* goes into the meaning of this line in the context of the second cycle, where the *Dvaya* is discussed. Here, Cīyar begins by saying that the qualities of helplessness (*ākīñcanya*) and having no other resort (*ananyagatitva*) are, as in the *Irupattunālāyiram* and the *Īṭu*, the attributes (*viśeṣaṇa*) of the person qualified for *śaraṇāgati*.³⁴ Therefore, the last line of the verse refers to the essential nature of the *ālvār*, which consists of realizing that he is helpless, as described in the epithets above. The *ālvār*’s acknowledgement of his helplessness is called “the thought which culminates in perfect perception” (*sambuddhyantayojanā*), where this perception may be considered similar to the *svarūpajñāna* of oneself as a *śeṣa*, spoken of in the *Irupattunālāyiram* and the *Īṭu*. This perception of oneself as helpless is subtly differentiated, as in the above-mentioned commentaries, from the resolve to take refuge, which is the resolve to consider God as both the means and the goal of salvation. For this resolve Cīyar uses the word *vyavasāya* instead of *adhyavasāya*.³⁵ This resolve is *śaraṇāgati*.

Śaraṇāgati is described as an action (*kriyā*) and this is reiterated further down in the cycle where it is said that *śaraṇāgati* refers to movement (*gati*) as the word itself indicates.³⁶ But even though it is considered an action, it is clear that in Cīyar’s line of interpretation, as in the *Irupattunālāyiram* and the *Īṭu*, it is a choosing of the primary means of salvation (*upāyavarāṇa*) and, in that specific sense, it cannot be considered as an independent means to salvation, an act of doing something, like the others. The *Pam̐rāyiram* calls this a “complete refuge-taking” (*pūrṇaśaraṇāgati*), for which the presence of the Goddess beside God (as the mediator) and the completeness of God’s qualities present in the word Nārāyaṇa are necessary for its success.³⁷ By saying this, the commentary is also saying that it is the *Dvaya mantra*, in which God’s four-fold qualities are encoded, preceded by the invocation of the Goddess, which makes the *śaraṇāgati* a complete one.

Thus, by the end of the sixth centum, Nammālvār is shown to have taken hold of the *siddhopāya* himself as the right means to salvation. Now, the introduction to the seventh centum demonstrates how this is in no way, the final step on the soteriological path for the *ālvār*. Rather, in the framework of the *Pam̐rāyiram*, the act of taking refuge precipitates in the *ālvār* the realization of all that intervenes between him and the final goal:

In the last two [fifth and sixth] centums [Nammālvār] taught the examination of the essential nature of the means and the manner of grasping it. In the seventh and eighth centums he teaches the essential nature of the

obstacles which have to be brought to an end by the means of salvation, and the manner in which they are averted. Here, the [seventh] centum, which concentrates on the essential nature of the obstacles, teaches that the body, sense-organs etc. which are to be averted, function according to the rule of the Lord who is their remover. Moreover, when this cessation does not come about, the devotion towards God, the goal, leads to further longing. This longing comes to an end when one attains the place where the Lord, who is longed for, lives. The obstacles which cause the longing might be averted only by that Omnipotence which protects the world and does victorious, noble deeds. Further, everyone is of the opinion that there is no one else, apart from the Protector, who can avert the obstacles. Thus, one should cling to the feet of the Creator of all and call out, thus averting the obstacles. Nevertheless, though one has had a vision of the form, the longing born out of not attaining [God] is caused by the obstacles and it is only he, with his manifold worlds and powers, who can bring to an end the manifold obstacles. Despite this, there is joy [in the fact] that though [the *ālvār*'s nature] is characterized by obstacles, [God] feels an extraordinary affection for him due to his verbal service and rids him of the obstacles. In other words, when the longing for the goal increases, He who is the means of salvation will remove the obstacles. In this fashion, the *ālvār* investigates and teaches the essential nature of the obstacles.³⁸

In this introduction it is stated that the *ālvār*'s longing, *ārthi*, which increases in proportion to his distance from God, only grows greater after the *śaraṇāgati* of the sixth centum. This longing can only come to an end when the obstacles come to an end and the *ālvār* unites with God, in his abode. The obstacles are described as the body (*śarīra*) and the sense-organs (*indriya*). Since they still continue to exist, the sixth centum has only permitted the *ālvār* to have a vision of God's form (Ta: *uru veḷippāṭu*), an experience which is insufficient because it is a product of the body and the sense-organs. Nevertheless, the *ālvār* is given the hope that his verbal service (*vācīkakainkarya*), the *TVM* itself, will please God to such an extent that he will remove these final impediments, something which only he can do. But here, at the beginning of the seventh centum, even after the act of VI.10.10, the *ālvār* is left lamenting the distance which still exists between him and God.

7.4 Summary

The attempt to provide a structure of meaning for the entire *TVM* began with Nañciyār's commentary, the *Onpatiṇāyiram*. The issues which had deeply engaged Nañciyār were those regarding the status of Nammālvār as a sage who is not twice-born and the status of the *prabandhas* themselves as Tamil texts dealing with erotic love, *kāma*. By the time we come to the *Pannīrāyiram*, we see that

the commentator no longer perceives the need to justify the status of either Nammālvār nor that of the *prabandhas* as sacred texts. Both of these are taken for granted. The analysis of the *Pam̐rāyiram* shows that, in the schismatic period, the *TVM* comes to be seen as a text which primarily charts the spiritual journey of Nammālvār in terms of the *arthapañcaka*. This scheme is also coupled with the *Dvaya mantra*. Thus, the *Dvaya mantra* is not only expressive of the *prapatti* act as in Rāmānuja and Piḷḷan, or encoded in *TVM VI.10.10* alone as in the later commentaries, but a *mantra* which contains all the *arthapañcaka* categories within it and, therefore, the entire meaning of the *TVM*. In the *Pam̐rāyiram*, this idea is worked out through the creation of further and further sub-categories, characteristic of an age of scholasticism. Cīyar brings in the vocabulary of *siddha* and *sādhyā* into the description of the *arthapañcaka* and the terms *siddhopāya* and *sādhyopaya* which were popularized in the writings of Piḷḷai Lōkācārya, Maṇāvāḷamāmuṇi and Vedānta Deśika. All this terminology and the categories are employed in the service of a structured, linear meaning to the text, where Nammālvār is seen to move, from understanding that which is *siddha* (his own nature and that of God's) to choosing the *siddhopāya*, which is God himself, to finally attaining him and doing service, *kaiṅkarya*, at his feet. This choosing of the *siddhopāya*, the resolve to do so, is *prapatti* or *śaraṇāgati*. Apart from this new terminology, the definitions of *śaraṇāgati/prapatti* presented in the *Pam̐rāyiram* are in conformity with those of the *Irupattunālāyiram* and the *Īṭu*. In other words, by the fourteenth century, it is the configuration of *prapatti* as a mental awareness or knowledge, a *jñāna-prapatti*, interpreted even further as a sort of “non-doing” which is a choosing of God, which comes to dominate the *Teṅkalai* commentarial tradition on the *Tiruvāymoli*.

CONCLUSION

There are no fundamental differences in meaning among the lineages of disciples of Rāmānuja. There are only differences of interpretation.

—Vedānta Deśika (c. 1268–1369)¹

That the hostility between the Saiva and the Vaishnava and the Vadagalai and the Tengalai is well known ... and it is not difficult to see that the introduction of any Headman other than the Tengalai will give rise to frequent false persuasion and disorder in the assemblies of voters above mentioned.

—Counteraffidavit of V. Raghavachariar, September 2, 1889²

In the fourteenth century, the Śrīvaiṣṇava theologian Vedānta Deśika could emphatically declare that there were no disunity in doctrine among the successors of the great Śrīvaiṣṇava teacher Rāmānuja. Yet, differences there apparently were, for the statement can even be seen as prophylactic: to prevent the widening of fissures already visible. Hence, his far from sanguine admission that there were indeed differences of interpretation and an extraordinary caveat (from the point of view of brahmanical scholasticism of which he himself was a master) that that is all they were: hermeneutical differences! In contrast to this viewpoint, a good five-hundred years later, it seemed self-evident to a *Tenkalai* petitioner before the British courts that there was long-standing hostility between the *Vaṭakalais* and the *Tenkalais*, one which might even be compared to an even more long-standing rivalry between the Śaivites and the Vaiṣṇavites in Tamil Nadu. The two statements taken together illustrate how the march of time changed, altered and hardened the dispute; in this book the focus has been on the past time of the dispute and its unsystematic beginnings in theology. The focus, within the theology, was on discourses about self-surrender, *prapatti*, to God and how this should be understood and defined.

We saw that important clues to the interpretation of *prapatti* were already to be found in Rāmānuja's writings and that his works give us the conceptual parameters

for the discourse in later writings. The analysis of Rāmānuja's writings showed that, in his time, *prapatti* doctrines evolved in the context of the exegesis on the *Bhagavadgītā*, on the one hand and, on the other hand, in praise-poems, the genre of *stotra* literature. In his exegesis on the *Bhagavadgītā*, Rāmānuja seems to describe two sorts of *prapatti*. The first was done by the *jñānī*, the most superior of all devotees. It was described in terms of a contemplative awareness (*anusamdhāna*) of oneself as a subordinate (*śeṣa*) of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. The second sort of *prapatti*, done by all the other ordinary devotees, was a simple act of taking refuge in order to be rid of certain obstacles (such as sin, *pāpa*, and gross matter, *prakṛti*) to starting *bhaktiyoga*. Thus an early link was established between *prapatti* and sinfulness, where *prapatti* was seen as an act which purified one of sins. The actual purification was done by God himself.

The *stotras* prioritized the worship of Nārāyaṇa and his consort Śrī-Lakṣmī but situated this worship in the temple, where the focus of devotion was the idol form of the God. Certain conceptions of refuge-taking also emerge in this temple context and here, *prapatti*, appears to acquire certain new purāṇic or pāñcarātric elements, such as a specific role for the Goddess, Śrī-Lakṣmī, as a mediator (*puruṣakāra*) between God and the soul, as well as an association with *mantras* of God in his form as Nārāyaṇa, the *Tirumantra* and the *Dvaya*. This purāṇic and pāñcarātric influence on *prapatti* doctrines still remains to be explored and remains one of the major lacunae in tracing the origins of the *prapatti* conceptions of this early period. Utilizing this new context, the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*, a *stotra* attributed to Rāmānuja, introduces the figure of the poet who does *prapatti*, who is a composite figure of both the *jñānī* and an ordinary devotee: he is a person who, through doing *prapatti*, becomes a *jñānī*. This *prapatti* is now linked to saying the *Dvaya mantra*. Thus, it was suggested that, already in Rāmānuja's writings, there had emerged two different conceptions of *prapatti*, depending on the sort of devotee undertaking it. The first is a contemplative awareness, the second a ritualistic act of purification, involving the use of a *Nārāyaṇa mantra*.

After Ramanuja, his disciples began the task of building a doctrinal superstructure to the Tamil devotional poetry of the *ālvārs* which was becoming so central to worship in temples and whose popular cult sought to rival that of the Śaivite poet-saints in the Tamil country. This corpus of poetry was collectively called the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam*. The *ācāryas* first focused on the text which tradition had come to place at the pinnacle of the corpus of poetry: the *Tiruvāymoli* of Nammālvār. The first commentator, Tirukurukaip Pirāṇ Piḷḷān, had been instructed by Rāmānuja himself to write a commentary to this text. He appears to have done so in a period, the late 11th century, where there already existed a lively, oral tradition of exegesis on the text but no fixed views as to its overall significance apart from the fact that it was the Tamil Veda. In this context, Piḷḷān produced a commentary which emulated Rāmānuja both in style and vocabulary and owed important doctrinal conceptions on *prapatti* to the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*. Piḷḷān saw the entire text as one in which Nammālvār records his own spiritual journey to salvation, which consists of reaching Viṣṇu's feet

in Vaikuṇṭha. This final goal, also called service (*kainkarya*), only becomes possible after the *ālvār* has been purified. The commentator chose to locate this important moment of purification mid-way in the text, in his interpretation of the verse *Tiruvāymoli* VI.10.10, where he has the *ālvār* take refuge with Viṣṇu as Vēṅkaṭanātha, saying a *Nārāyaṇa* mantra. This act of taking refuge, called *samāśrayaṇa* (a term practically synonymous with *prapatti*), is also called a means (*upāya*) to reaching Viṣṇu's feet. In keeping with this interpretation of *prapatti*, from a certain perspective, Nammālvār in Piḷḷāṇ's commentary was also a humble and sinful devotee who, purified through taking refuge, achieves salvation at the end of the poem, even while he remained, from the point of view of the commentarial voice, the exemplar for all other mortals and a man of wisdom.

The next commentary, the *Onpatināyiram*, came to be written around the mid-12th century by Nañciyār, a period which also saw the rise of a new genre of Śrīvaiṣṇava literature, the hagiographies. The earliest of the hagiographies, probably the *Divyasūricaritam*, puts forward certain interpretations of the figure of Nammālvār (about whom no credible historical information existed, only a long-standing convention that he was a *śūdra*) which attempts to link him with religious exemplars from the Sanskrit textual traditions: he is seen as a *sannyāsī*, a *yogī* or a Vedic *ṛṣi*. In this period, where the interpretation of the figure of Nammālvār comes to be consolidated in writing and in the hagiographical mode, Nañciyār produces a commentary with an introduction which combines the genres of hagiography and commentary and frames the *Tiruvāymoli* within the story of the *ālvār*'s special descent on earth as a part of Viṣṇu's design to save the world. The *ālvār* is the *jñānī* of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Since the dominant interpretation of Nammālvār is that of a superior being, Nañciyār does not stress that he needs to be purified of his sins. Rather, Nañciyār calls Nammālvār's *prapatti* a mental determination, *adhyavasāya*, of oneself as a subordinate (*śeṣa*), reminding us of the term *anusamdhāna* used by Rāmānuja. Thus, by the mid-12th century, primarily due to the rise of the hagiographical literature, two different interpretations of the sort of *prapatti* which Nammālvār does, emerge in the commentarial literature, with Piḷḷāṇ's views differing in implicit yet significant ways from that of Nañciyār. In the one case, *prapatti* is definitely something to be done in order to induce God to rid one of one's sins. In the case of the *Onpatināyiram*, the issue of the *ālvār*'s sinfulness is understated and, instead, his exemplary status is emphasized. This book suggests that this ideological break between the Piḷḷāṇ and Nañciyār on the status of Nammālvār and the nature of his *prapatti* anticipates one ultimate theological difference between *Vaṭakalai* School and the *Teṅkalai* School. In the commentarial literature which immediately followed Nañciyār, the conceptions of God's compassion are further developed, leading to a new model of the relation between divine compassion and human sinfulness; a model which, in effect, obviates any doctrinal grounds for "doing" *prapatti*.

The 13th century was the golden age of the commentarial literature with the disciples of Nampiḷḷai, Nañciyār's disciple, producing commentaries on all

books of the *Tiviyappirapantam*. The commentaries on the *Tiruvāymoli* now accentuate a differentiated picture of divine compassion, substantiated through the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Divine compassion, it is repeatedly emphasized, is similar to the love of a parent for his progeny, a generosity which forgives even the greatest sin. The Goddess here is Sītā the loving and tender-hearted mother who protects the soul, the erring child, even from her own husband and placates Rāma to the point where he not merely tolerates but even relishes the sins of the transgressor who seeks refuge with him. Thus, the commentarial literature of this period directly addresses the issue of how an ordinary and sinful devotee can be purified of his or her sins. Through its new elaboration of the conception of divine compassion, it shows that human sinfulness is no barrier and is an incentive for divine graciousness, providing one takes refuge in the right way. This right way is to acknowledge that one is fundamentally a subordinate, a *śeṣa*, that one can do nothing for one's own liberation, and to mentally resolve that God himself is the means and the goal: it is, in its main features, *prapatti* as awareness which is taught here. It is this new soteriological model which comes to be seen as characteristically *Teṅkalai* in the period of Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Vedānta Deśika. Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Maṇavāḷamamuṇi, in addition, also call *prapatti* the "choosing of the means which already exists" (*siddhopayavaraṇa*), and state that such a choice is not an independent action on the part of the soul for its own salvation. This new terminology comes to be reflected in the final commentary analysed, the *Paṇṇīrāyiram*, by which time *Vaṭakalai*-ism and *Teṅkalai*-ism had come into existence as distinct schools of thought, theologically if not as social sects.

Most of the texts of this study have been commentaries which are later attributed, with justification, to the *Teṅkalai* school of Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Further, what has been analyzed is a small body of texts which deal with *prapatti* in a distinct, contextually determined way. Such an analysis, evidently, does not and cannot include parallel development of *prapatti* doctrines, with differing emphases, in the other textual traditions of Śrīvaiṣṇavism such as the *Pāñcarātra āgamas*, the Purāṇic literature or the ritual literature. Even less, does it exclude the possibility that such parallel developments also reflect and are significant for understanding the doctrinal differences on *prapatti* in the writings of Piḷḷai Lokācārya and Vedānta Deśika in the schismatic period. Rather, it remains my conviction that it is through further such detailed analyses of each of the distinct textual traditions of Śrīvaiṣṇavism and their diachronic inter-textuality that a more complete picture will eventually emerge than has hitherto been available to us, enabling us to reconstruct the eventual *Teṅkalai* and *Vaṭakalai* doctrinal positions. It has been the intention of this book to contribute towards such a reconstruction by showing that the *maṇipravāḷa* commentarial literature immediately after Rāmānuja, and drawing heavily upon his own works, provides us with important insights into the theological positions of both schools of the schismatic period.

The examination of the theology of *prapatti* within and through these commentarial texts alone necessarily abstracts the texts from their location in history, not least because the commentaries themselves are commenting on a text which

purports to be outside historical time, as the Tamil Veda. Thus, the commentaries must deny their own historicity and do so by focusing on certain perennial themes rather than on the shadow play of history. Dealing with Nammālvār in the commentaries becomes, among other things, an attempt to deal with the possible contingency of sainthood. The commentaries implicitly raise and seek to answer questions such as whether a saint is born or made and, if he is made, when and how does the saint become a saint? The answers they provide determine, in turn, the path and the nature of the transformation from human sainthood to a place in the company of the immortal saints, the eternally, perfect devotees.

In furtherance of this ahistorical vision, as others who have worked on commentaries have pointed out, the commentaries innovate on each other even while denying their own creativity.³ Each commentary builds upon the next even while enfolding it. Thus, layers of the tradition are nested within each other and we do not, we are not meant to experience contradiction even while we might sense its existence.

One characteristic way in which contradiction between the commentary and the commented text is erased is through the working out of multiple levels of meaning⁴ which can be generated by, for instance, the use of allegory and personification where a character within the text is equated with an abstract, moral idea. Some of the *maṇipravāḷa* commentaries, particularly the later ones of Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai, do this and, for this reason, they have sometimes been regarded as unconvincing and abstruse interpretations of the text.⁵ Leaving aside the intrinsic problems posed by such an approach to allegorical commentaries, one must note that the early commentaries are not allegorical and that the devices they adopt to generate multiple levels of meaning are different. The very first commentaries either plunge into an unmediated reading of the text which presupposes that one is trained in Viśiṣṭādvaitic categories (as Piḷḷāṇ does) or they provide a framing story of cosmic salvation which gives meaning to the whole without necessarily giving meaning to each part (as Naṇṇiṇṇar does). The later early commentaries interject their own ahistoricity and provide levels of meaning through anecdotes about the lives of the teachers of the commentator which give us a vivid glimpse into an idealized contemporary, religious life. These anecdotes also draw our attention to the relation between theology and the material historical circumstances in which it is generated and lead us to ask more general questions about the circumstances in which these new kind of discourses about *prapatti* and God's compassion could possibly have arisen.

The importance of the temple and the deity within the temple in *prapatti* discourse, even while it draws upon the literature of the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* itself, also parallels the expansion of the Cōḷa temple economy, dealt with at length elsewhere in the book. The first two commentaries of Piḷḷāṇ and Naṇṇiṇṇar came into existence in the middle period of Cōḷa rule (between CE 985–1179) when Cōḷa power was at its zenith.⁶ This period saw the expansion of sacred, urban centres such as the Śaivite Cidambaram or the Vaiṣṇavite Śrīraṅgam and Kāñcīpuram.⁷ Seen from the perspective of the growing wealth and agrarian importance of such centres

right through the second half of the Cōla period, it is not surprising that the *ācāryas* of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community articulate a soteriology in the post-Rāmānuja period which links the temple devotion of the *Nālāyirativiyap pirapantam* with the existent three-yogas scheme of the *Bhagavadgītā*.

Moreover, the temple in the later Cōla period ceased to be the exclusive locus of the male deity. It has been pointed out by historians of the Cōla period that the twelfth century saw the rise in the importance of the Goddess to whom independent shrines were built within the main Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava temple complex thus integrating the local and non-brahmanical worship of the village goddess within the dominant cult of male deity.⁸

The Goddess, integrated into the main, male shrine in both cases, is the female consort rather than an independent and unfettered female power. This is the intercessionary Goddess, the Goddess as the wife of Śiva or Viṣṇu, one part of the Divine couple, the mother of the parent pair. It is she who, in this period, also becomes the mediator in Śrīvaiṣṇavism, the *puruṣakāra* for *prapatti*.

In contrast to the historical circumstances in which Piḷḷāṇ and Nañcīyar composed their works, the later commentators Naṃpiḷḷai, Vaṭakku Tiruvīṭṭi Piḷḷai, Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai and Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷa Cīyar lived in a period which marked the beginning of prolonged political uncertainty, starting from the mid-thirteenth century when what was once a unitary Cōla kingdom had disintegrated and was being challenged by growing regional powers. These included a new Pāṇḍya power within the Cōla heartland of the Kaveri delta, the Kakatiyas in the Telugu region with their seat at Warangal and the Hoysalas in Karnataka. The period of these commentators, therefore was one of political uncertainty and transition, straddling as it did the relative stability of the Cōla period on the one hand, and the turmoil of the Muslim incursions on the other, leading to the eventual establishment both of the Deccani sultanates and Vijayanagara. The Vaiṣṇavite sacred centres were also witnesses to the fluctuating fortunes of the regional powers: Kāñcīpuram, for instance, changed hands from Cōla to Kakatiya to Pāṇḍya rule all within the space of a century.⁹ It was not just the old political order which was changing but also the agrarian settlements of the Cōla period. Regardless of how one characterizes the Cōla state — whether as “bureaucratic and centralised” or “segmentary” — it is generally accepted that the thirteenth century saw the decline of old institutions and the emergence of new ones and changes in the old agrarian order.¹⁰ The evidence, taken as a whole, seems to speak for a society in motion with new groupings of non-brahmin, warrior communities becoming significant regional powers. The political ideology of these groups, such as that of the Kakatiyas, included a certain pride in *śūdra* origins among the ruling elite as well as a hierarchical relationship between the kingship and military chiefs which was based upon the acknowledgement of personal loyalty and complete subordination.¹¹ This reconceptualization of *śūdra* kingship as well as the institutional changes within the heartland of the Tamil country itself in the post-Cōla period can be seen as conducive to an accentuation, in and through the

CONCLUSION

commentarial literature, on a *śūdra* devotee of Viṣṇu, Nammālvār and a soteriology of *prapatti* which emphasizes his importance.

Such reflections on possible connections between theology and history are not meant to posit a crude one-to-one relationship between the two or to trivialize theology's own seeming imperviousness to the historical context of its production. To do the latter, would be to be dismissive of an entire tradition of inter-textuality which underpins and makes understandable the development of doctrine — where texts talk to other texts as much as to their own material circumstances. To do the former is no longer possible in the context of post-modernism and the historiographical alertness it has generated. Just as theology is relativized by historical context, the substantiality of historical facts, against which a mimetic and fluctuating theology could formerly be measured, has itself been relativized by the deconstruction of entrenched historiography. Such a deconstruction of the narrative about the *Vaṭakalai–Teṅkalai* dispute, in turn, allows for submerged discontinuities and ironies to become evident: we now see, with an altered gaze, the insistent irony in the *Teṅkalai* so-called “Tamil” school of Śrīvaiṣṇavism enhancing the significance of Nammālvār and *prapatti* through firmly anchoring him within the Vedic, epic and Sanskrit tradition. Finally, as a further result of this altered gaze, evident throughout this book, the images of the dispute — of the *Vaṭakalais* and *Teṅkalais* — generated through such historiography also gradually begin to morph. Neither exclusively “Tamil Cats” nor “Sanskrit Monkeys” they transform into certain fabled, hybrid creatures, like those which gambol on the borders of manuscripts of medieval scholasticism.

NOTES

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1 S.V.V. was the acronym of S.V. Vijayaraghavachariar. The article was reprinted in *Soap Bubbles and More Soap Bubbles* (1988:1–8).
- 2 The terminology of “sect”, “sub-sect”, “sectarian”, and “schismatic” employed here requires explanation. Scholars of Indian religion such as Michaels (1998:349) have tended to acknowledge that the definition of “sect” needs to be modified in the Indian context, where the absence of a centralised authority rules out the defining characteristic of “heresy”. Some such as McLeod (1978) have even suggested that the word “sect” historically loaded as it is with pejorative connotations, be abandoned in favour of an indigenous term such as *panth*. At the same time, there has been some consensus on how an Indian sect may be described, a starting point being the famous definition of Dumont’s (1970). Śrīvaiṣṇavism, in the context of this monograph is being called a sect in a modified Dumontian sense: as a religious community with some renunciate leaders, which recruited families into the movement and maintained, at least within some groupings of it and during certain historical periods, sectarian endogamy.
- 3 The use of the term Śrīvaiṣṇava to refer to the community of worshippers of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa together with his consort Śrī-Lakṣmī may stem from perhaps the tenth century. Hence, Narayanan (1992:150) states: “... the first occurrence of the word “Srivaishnava” itself, as far as I have been able to trace the term, occurs in an inscription in the Tiru Venkatam temple in India, in the year 966. That year, a woman called Samavai endowed some money for the celebration of some festivals and for the consecration of the icon of Manavala perumal... a silver replica of the diety. A record of her endowment is inscribed in stone and it concludes with the phrase “*Srivaishnava raksai*” (By the protection of the Srivaishnavas).”
- 4 S.V.V. (1988:1).
- 5 Ibid:7.
- 6 Ibid:8.
- 7 On diaspora Śrīvaiṣṇava communities and the construction of temples in the United States see Narayanan (1992:147–176).
- 8 Vertovec (2000:12).
- 9 cf. Narayanan (1992:164): “It is my impression that many Hindus in this country accept the “symbolic” meaning as their heritage, and this generic neo-advaitin package seems to be entirely acceptable to them.”
- 10 Appadurai (1983:17).
- 11 For Vedānta Deśika’s and Piḷḷai Lōkācārya’s theological views, see my 1988 monograph as well as Mumme (1985, 1987 and 1988).
- 12 Stein [1989]2005: 1–12.

- 13 cf. Raman (1975:76). Referring to the growth of Śrīvaiṣṇavism after the fifteenth century Raman says: "This period, it is worthy to note, was specially conducive to the growth of Vaishnavism because of the ardent enthusiasm and patronage of the Vijayanagar kings, who were devoted Vaishnavites. Though helpful and sympathetic to all other religions, they developed special affinity to Vaishnavism and extended their patronage to the Vaishnava-*āchāryas* and institutions on a large scale." Raman traces the ascendance of the Varadarājasvāmī temple in Kāñcīpuram into the major Vaiṣṇavite temple of the city to this period.
- 14 Nilakanta Sastri [1963]1992; Stein (2005:102–05).
- 15 Appadurai (1983: 88); Also Stein (2005:102–03): "The leader of a sectarian centre, *mathadipati*, was among the most powerful men of the Vijayanagara age ... The *mathadipati* toured the areas where his followers lived, and his progress was conducted in the manner of a king, on elephants, with the royal paraphernalia of umbrellas and drummers, and with large retinues. And like the Vijayanagara rayas, these heads sent their agents to where their followers lived to advise them in matters spiritual and secular, to collect funds for the order, sometimes to initiate new members, to arbitrate disputes among them, and to preach the doctrines of the sect. Among the most successful of such itinerant propagandists were those attached to the Srīvaiṣṇava *matha* at Tirupathi and at Ahobalam and the *karyakarta* and *mudrakarta* attached to the Virasaiva *matha* at Srisailam."
- 16 Appadurai (1983:90).
- 17 Mumme (1988:19): "Given Maṇavālamāmuni's historical position, it is understandable how he came to be considered the founder of the Tenkalai sect, even if that was not his intention. He revived, reinterpreted, and popularized the teachings of the former Srīrangam acaryas after that tradition had been dispersed during the Muslim occupation and criticized by Vedānta Deśika. But he accomplished this task not by openly challenging other doctrines but by eloquently expounding the message of the Ālvārs and the Srīrangam acaryas for the entire Śrīvaiṣṇava community. In so doing he inspired the devotion and loyalty of many prominent Śrīvaiṣṇava families, who passed on their respect for him to subsequent generations. Even if that loyalty eventually resulted in rivalry with the followers of Vedānta Deśika, the Tenkalai tradition admits that Maṇavālamāmuni had no part in the conflict. His mild-mannered nature, his inability to bear any kind of dispute or discord, and his insistence that the utmost respect is to be given to all Śrīvaiṣṇavas — these characteristics are well-remembered by the tradition and evident in his writings."
- 18 A classic example of this fluidity would be the Prativādi Bhayaṅkaram family of Kāñci. As Raman (1975:91) points out: "Prativādi Bhayaṅkaram Aṇṇan figures equally prominently in the history of both the schools. He was a disciple of both Naina Varadāchārya [Vedānta Deśika's son] and Maṇavāla Mahāmuniṅgal. He has written poem in praise of the latter as well as Vedānta Deśika. This amply proves that even in his period the differences between the two schools had not hardened. But after his contact with Maṇavāla Mahāmuni at Srīrangam P.B. Aṇṇan joined the Prabandhic school. P.B. Annan's descendants are also known to have belonged to the Tenkalai school and many of them are still living in Kāñchi and Tirupathi."
- 19 Raman (1975:61–89).
- 20 see Virāghavacharya (1979:389–419) and Appadurai (1983:94–96).
- 21 Virāghavacharya (1979:412).
- 22 Virāghavacharya (1979:457) and Appadurai (1983:98).
- 23 Raman (1975:82–83).
- 24 Ibid:84.
- 25 Raman (1975:84).
- 26 cf. Appadurai (1983:100): "... the rulers of Mysore had publicly displayed their commitment to Śrī Vaisnavism from early in the seventeenth century. They did this by taking the rights of initiation from the *svāmīs* of the Parakāla Maṭam, by using the

varāha muttirai (boar seal) in their documents, and by the building and endowment of Vaisnava temples. The foundation of this relationship of mutual benefaction between this *maṭam* and the Mysore royal court was probably laid during the reign of Periya Parakāla Svāmi (AD 1677–1738). This enterprising leader, who was probably responsible for the beginnings of the pan-regional Vaṭakalai movement for temple control, seems to have had the support of his royal patrons for his scheme.”

- 27 According to the *Madras Tamil Lexicon* the Tamil word *kalai* means, in this context, “part” (Tamil *amcam* < Sanskrit *amśam*) as well as “scripture” (Tamil *cāttiram* < Sanskrit *sāstra*). The terms *Vaṭakalai* and *Teṅkalai* have been in use for a long time, much prior to the use of these terms to denote the two sub-sects of Śrīvaiṣṇavas. In an earlier context, during the period of the *Divyaprabandham Nāṭāyintiviyaṭṭi a pantam* itself and later the terms meant “Northern” and “Southern” languages, meaning Sanskrit and Tamil with *kalai* in addition also meaning *sāstra*. Hence, for instance, one of the laudatory, *tanīyaṇ* verses to the Kampan’s *Rāmayaṇa* uses the terms exactly in this sense to refer to Sanskrit and Tamil in speaking of the four languages of South India: Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Kannada.

Kōpālakiruṣṇamācāriyār (1964:11):

Kāppu 14:

vaṭakalai teṅkalai vaṭuku kannāṭam

iṭamuḷa pāṭaiyātonrināyīnum

tiṭamuḷa rakukulatti rāmaṇ taṅkatai

āṭaivutaṇ kētpavar amaraṇ āvarē.

- 28 Cf. Sathianathier (1956); Rao *et al.* (1992).

- 29 1992 Ibid:75.

- 30 Rao *et al.* (1992:74–75): “These mobile and aggressive Śūdra traders present us with an ideology which colours the inner life of the Nāyaka courts. For one thing, it is now good to be a Śūdra: Nāyaka-period court poets constantly praise the Śūdra origins of their kings ... Like the Gaṅgā, the Śūdras emerge from the feet of god, as the Veda itself proclaims in the famous Puruṣa hymn (RV 10.90). The Nāyakas thus claim Gaṅgā as a sister, and their genealogies never hesitate to appropriate her prestigious qualities for themselves....”

- 31 Raman (1975:86).

- 32 Presler (1987:7): “British policy thus vacillated between two basic strategies. One implied expansion: assert the state’s sovereignty and spread the administrative net over all religious institutions. Local officials could keep tabs on trouble spots, and state financial and political interests could be protected. The second strategy implied separation and noninterference: religion was too explosive. State interests were best ensured by severing all connections and by refusing to pass laws which could in any way offend religious sensibilities.”

- 33 Ibid:16.

- 34 Appadurai (1983:165).

- 35 Cf. Appadurai (1983:100–101): “Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and to some extent in the twentieth century, attempts were made by individuals and groups of the Sanskrit school to penetrate temples controlled by the Tamil school or to extend their rights in temples where they shared control with members of the Prabandhic school. In every such case, the introduction of the “Rāmānuja Dayāpātra” invocatory verse was the first stage in these battles for temple control....”

- 36 Though Das Gupta (1961:85–93) had already, in his *History of Indian Philosophy*, pointed out the existence of *Aṣṭādaśabhedanirṇaya I* and summarized it briefly, he appears to have been wrong with regard both to its authorship and its orientation. He attributes it to one Ranganāthāchārya, disciple of Saumya-jāmātmuni and, hence, declares it to be *Teṅkalai* in orientation, which is completely belied by the text’s contents. Most of the work with regard to these texts dealing exclusively with the sectarian differences has been done by Siauue (1978).

- 37 Siauue (1978:4).
- 38 The difference between the two traditions on the nature and power of the Goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī has been summed up by Govindacarya (1910:1104) as follows. The *Ṣṛīkalais* see Śrī as being essentially pervasive (*svarūpa-vyāpti*) just like Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa as well as having the power to grant liberation to the soul. In contrast, the *Teṅkalais* tend to see Śrī as a superior kind of *jīva*. She only has corporeal pervasion (*viṅraha-vyāpti*) and she cannot grant salvation.
- 39 The main aspects of this nineteenth century discourse have been summed by Sharma (1987). She traces the emergence of the Orientalist understanding of “bhakti” as a religion in the writings of H.H. Wilson in 1846, its subsequent identification with Vaiṣṇavism in the writings of Albrecht Weber and Monier-Williams, with the latter also seeing it as a monotheism. Building upon these views George Grierson, she adds, constructed a historical account of Vaiṣṇavism calling it the ancient religion of India, tracing its antecedents to the religion of the *Bhāgavatas* and the *Mahābhārata*, identifying the medieval Hindi *bhakti* poets with this ancient *bhakti* religion and speaking of its four main Vedāntic schools as that of Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Mādhva and Vallabha.
- 40 See North (1997) on Orientalist approaches to Roman religion.
- 41 Dalmia (1997:401).
- 42 Grierson (1910:543): “With the appearance of these two great reformers commences the third stage in the development of the Bhāgavata religion — the modern *Bhakti-mārga*.”
- 43 Pechilis Prentiss (1999:15).
- 44 Otto (1917:6).
- 45 Otto (1930:11).
- 46 On this modern Tamil historiography see Sivathamby (1986), Geetha (1998), Ramaswamy (1997), Müller (2000) and Trautman (2000), among others. Thus Ramaswamy (1997:34) remarks: “These [*Caṅkam*] poems not only deepened the antiquity of Tamil literature, but quite as crucially, within a few years of their being made public, they came to be valorized as the repositories of an ideal and perfect Tamil society, prior to its colonization by either the British or, more enduringly, by the Brahmanical Aryans from the North.” On its continuing persistence Pechilis Prentiss (1999:8) says: “In the field of Tamil cultural studies, including those that deal with religion, it is certainly possible to come across modern works of scholarship that more or less explicitly participate in the polarized discussion of Tamil and Sanskrit, in an effort to distinguish a pre-existing Tamil heritage from Aryan lineage.”
- 47 We have some radical statements about the equality of all Vaiṣṇavas, regardless of their *varṇa*, in the works of teachers assigned to the Teṅkalai lineage such as Aruḷālap Perumāl Emperumāṇār (a contemporary of Rāmānuja) and Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷapperumāl Nāyaṇār (Piḷḷai Lōkācārya’s brother). On Aruḷālap Perumāl Emperumāṇār’s *Ṇānasāram* see Section 3.1. On the thirteenth century *Ācaryahṛdayam* of Aḷakiya Maṇavāḷapperumāl Nāyaṇār see Damodaran (1976) Hardy (1995) and Hanumanthan (1979).
- 48 Bentley (1997:495).
- 49 *Aṣṭādaśabhedanirṇaya*, v.3:
dramidācāryadrṣṭārthaṃ pūrvam vakṣye yathāmatil
saṃskṛtācāryadrṣṭārthaṃ paścāt sadbhīr niyojitam ||.
- 50 Personal communication of Professor M.A. Venkatakrishnan (January 2005).
- 51 See, for instance, the comparative works on Hinduism and Christianity of Otto (1930), Kulandran (1964), Plott (1974) as well as Brockington (1992) which all present the dispute in these terms as well as general surveys of Hinduism such as the *Blackwell Companion to Hinduism* (2003:249): “The *Ṣṛīkalai*, according to which the soul is required to make an effort to be saved by Viṣṇu, is often described as the school of the

monkey's baby, which clings to its mother. By contrast, the Tenkalai, according to which God alone chooses whom he wants to save, believes that the soul should abandon all effort. It is known as the school of the kitten, for the kitten lets its mother carry it around in her mouth."

- 52 Cf. Pennington (2005:172–73) on "essentialism" and his attempt to differentiate between a "Soft" and "Hard" version of it: "essentialism in and of itself in neither the gravest of descriptive sins nor the loyal servant of hegemony. To paraphrase Talal Asad, some things really are constitutive and essential to a social formation, but they are nonetheless potential targets of subversion and the certain future victims of historical change. The rush to condemn all essentializing discourses also threatens the historian's responsibility to name a social phenomenon's constitutive and characteristic elements." Pennington (173–174) therefore, distinguishes between two kinds of essentialism as a useful methodology: a "hard essentialism" that determines a social formation, such as a religion or culture, to be the passive product of an inherent principle that generates that formation's beliefs, practices and identities. "Hard essentialism posits timeless core essences that travel through history taking on and shedding accretions such that their external forms are ultimately identical and impervious to substantial transformation or innovation. This is a fundamentally ahistorical method, and one that the study of religion has largely outgrown..." In contrast, "There is a less egregious form of essentialism... "soft essentialism", which makes the simple claim that a social formation — religion as such, a religion, a gender, and so forth — possess key identifying properties and characteristics."
- 53 On the indebtedness of *bhakti* poetry to classical Tamil poetry see, in addition, Kailasapathy (1968), Hardy (1983), Cutler (1987), Subbaiah (1991) among others.
- 54 Here I have in mind a reconceptualization of the way in which languages interact with each other, of the issue of the translatability of languages and of the problem of linguistic mediation in general, a reconceptualization of the sort proposed by Liu (1992) with the category of "translinguistic practice."
- 55 Nayar (1992:3–6).
- 56 Pollock (1998).
- 57 Pollock (1996).
- 58 Hopkins (2002:10–11).
- 59 Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṇipravāla* can best be defined perhaps as a situational, literary dialect constructed by scholars for the specific purpose of writing commentaries, whose genuine and natural language was Tamil but whose religious language was Sanskrit. The parallelisms with the sort of situation which gave rise to Judaeo–Arabic literature in the 9th century are striking. Unfortunately, the sort of detailed linguistic study done by Joshua Blau (1981) among others for Judaeo–Arabic is yet to be undertaken for Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṇipravāla* even while its linguistic oddities seem to indicate that it is a unique and separate dialect of Tamil *maṇipravāla* in general. See Chapter 3.3.1 below for more details.
- 60 Here, I have in mind the sort of definition of "textual communities" proposed by Holdrege (1996:21ff) when speaking of brahmanical religious traditions.
- 61 Holdrege (1996:22).
- 62 For a fairly comprehensive list of post-Rāmānuja Śrīvaiṣṇava literature see Jagadeesan (1977) and Raghavan (1979). See also Venkatachari (1978) for a survey specifically of the *maṇipravāla* literature in this period.
- 63 An example of this neglect would be the only recently identified, very brief commentary on the *Tiruvāymoḷi* of a woman Tirukkōṇēri Dāsyai, composed possibly around the thirteenth and fourteenth century. For an analysis of this work see Narayanan (2002).
- 64 On the commentarial literature see Chapter 3.3.
- 65 Vēṅkaṭakirusaṇa (2003:17–19).
- 66 Mumme (1988:259).

- 67 Cf. Philippe Buc (2001:2–3) on the study of medieval, theological and ritual literature about how the “mastery of the thought-world that informs the documents is an absolutely necessary precondition to any speculation about social agents’ mentalities and practices.”

2 THE CONCEPTUAL PARAMETERS

- 1 A version of this chapter has been published in the *ZDMG* 154,1, 2004, pp. 85–129.
- 2 Van Buitenen (1956:24).
- 3 This explanation is given by Maṇavālamāmuni in his introduction to *Mumukṣupaṭi*, *Sūtra* 185, p. 58.
- 4 See Rāmānujam’s translation of Periyavāccāṇ Pillai’s introduction to the *Śaraṇāgati-gadya*: “Lest those disciples of his who had an implicit faith in what he declared as the means think that this (bhakti being the sure means) was his ultimate view and decide that bhaktiyoga was the sole means to *mokṣa*, he reveals the view dear to his *ācāryas*, the one in which he had utmost faith as the sole means to salvation here in the *gadyas*. This view is that *prapatti* (*nyāsa*) is the surest and unfailingly independent means to salvation. ... The question arises as to why Śrībhāṣyakāra did not vanquish the *kudṛṣṭis* by establishing that *prapatti* is the means established in the *śrutis* (vedas). Feeling that, just as it would be inappropriate for a *brāhmaṇa* to initiate a *caṇḍāla* into the vedas, it would be equally so to reveal the true spirit of the *śrutis* to those (kudṛṣṭis) who stand far removed from it, he vanquishes them using the language quite familiar to them ie. the *śāstras* and reveals his cherished conclusion and true purport, a closely guarded secret, ... to the faithful through the *Gadyas*.” (1994:19–20).
- 5 In this verse Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna to abandon all *dharma*s and take refuge with him, as a reward for which he promises to liberate Arjuna from all his bad actions: *sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja, ahaṃ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*. This verse comes to be called the *Caramaśloka* in post-Rāmānuja Śrīvaiṣṇavism and becomes the object of lengthy exegesis in the *rahasya*-literature: “*carama*” meaning both the “final verse” as well as the verse which teaches *prapatti* as the “last” and the best of the four means of salvation taught by the *Bhagavadgītā*. The other three means of salvation being *karmayoga*, *jñānayoga* and *bhaktiyoga*.
- 6 Olivelle’s 1993 study of the changing definitions of the *āśrama* system, for example, is paradigmatic for showing how doctrinal development and change in the brahmanical tradition is primarily effected through hermeneutics, i.e. through the writing of commentaries.
- 7 Otto (1930) had suggested that the later schismatic dispute in Śrīvaiṣṇavism had arisen because of the problematic nature of the doctrine of grace (*Problematik der Gnadenlehre*) in Rāmānuja’s theology, one which pits man’s free will (and effort based upon it) against the notion of the sufficiency of God’s grace alone for salvation (11; 35). These problems were located in the *Bhagavadgītā* and Rāmānuja’s interpretation of it (36). While both the *Bhagavadgītā* and Rāmānuja on it seemed mainly to stress the need for human action based upon one’s *svadharma*, pleasing to God and advocated by him, the last verses of the text seemed to emphasize not action but complete surrender (*Hingabe*) to God’s grace (37). Otto concluded that as a result of this ambiguity there arose, after Rāmānuja, a dispute regarding “Grace” versus “Works” among his followers (37). In Kumarappa (1934), who in exploring Rāmānuja’s soteriology compared his Śrībhāṣya with his *Gītābhāṣya*, the ambiguity on the doctrine of Grace lies not within the *Bhagavadgītā* itself but between the two texts. He suggested that the Śrībhāṣya seemed to lay an equal emphasis on the necessity of both human effort and God’s grace for salvation even while certain sections of the *Gītābhāṣya* appeared to contradict this, stressing a religion of devotion which demanded nothing less than surrender (*prapatti*) on the part of the soul to God’s grace. This contradiction within Rāmānuja’s writings,

- Kumarappa concluded, led to the later division into the two schools of Śrīvaiṣṇavism (1934:306–310).
- 8 Since *bhaktiyoga* in any case demanded human effort, there was no contradiction to be seen in Rāmānuja's writings between the issues of human effort and God's grace in salvation. Further, since *prapatti* in Rāmānuja referred primarily to a step towards *bhaktiyoga* and not to an independent means to salvation Van Buitenen saw, as I have stated above, a clear disjuncture between Rāmānuja's conception of the means to salvation and that of the later schools of Śrīvaiṣṇavism. (1956:24-26).
 - 9 Van Buitenen's study of the meaning of *prapatti* in the *Gītābhāṣya* was later affirmed by that of Lester (1955-56:268–9) who, in addition, cites passages from the *Vedārthasaṃgraha* to show that Rāmānuja generally used the word *śaraṇāgati* or *prapatti* to mean a step towards the practice of *bhaktiyoga* and not as an independent means of salvation. In the most recent work on the issue Nayar (1988:119) takes the position that while "there is no clear and explicit doctrine of *prapatti*" in the *Gītābhāṣya*, one could still argue that Rāmānuja "created the scope for such a doctrine by his interpretation of certain key passages". This she (1988:119–28) proceeds to demonstrate through a detailed analysis of *Gītābhāṣya* 9.26-34, showing that Rāmānuja's views on *prapatti* here seem to strongly correspond to that of later schools of Śrīvaiṣṇavism. She concludes: "The analysis of his [Rāmānuja's] commentary on IX: 26–34 indicates that he presents many of the ideas central to the concept of *prapatti* (he preserves, in fact, the whole "mood" of *prapatti*) without making any explicit reference to the doctrine." (129)
 - 10 Van Buitenen (1956:9–12). Also Narasimhacharya (1998) who points out that, according to tradition, Yāmuna himself derived his Viśiṣṭādvaitic interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā* from Śrīrāmamiśra. He adds: "This [Yāmuna's] work influenced the later writers of this school of whom Rāmānuja is the foremost. Rāmānuja's commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* was inspired and guided by this work of Yāmuna, which is quoted as an authority." (1998:84)
 - 11 *Gītārthasaṃgraha*, v. II:
svayāthātmyaṃ prakṛtyāśya tirodhiḥ śaraṇāgatiḥ /
bhaktabhedāḥ prabuddhasya śraiṣṭhyaṃ saptama ucyate //
 - 12 All *Gītābhāṣya* quotations are from Aṇṇaṅkarācārya (1940).
Gītābhāṣya, p. 205: *tatra saptame tavadupāśyabhūtaparamapurūṣavarūpayāthātmyaṃ prakṛtyā tat tirodhānam tannivṛtaye bhagavadprapattir upāsakavidhabhedo jñāninaś śraiṣṭhyaṃ cocyate.*
 - 13 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.24, p. 224: *itare tu sarvasamāśrayaṇīyatvāya mama manuṣyādiṣv avatāram apy akiñcitkaram kurvanti ...;* 7.25, p. 225: *... mām sarvasamāśrayaṇīyatvāya manuṣyatvasamsthānamāsthitam nābhijānāti;* 7.26, p. 225: *... mām evaṃvidhaṃ vāsudevaṃ sarvasamāśrayaṇīyatvāyāvatīrṇaṃ viditvā mām eva samāśrayan na kaścid upalabhyata ity arthaḥ.*
 - 14 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.2, p. 208: *yajjñānam jñātvā mayi punar anyajjñātavyaṃ nāvaśiṣyate.*
 - 15 See Jacobsen (1999:70–1) on the different meanings of *prakṛti* in the *Bhagavadgītā*. He adds: "E. H. Johnsen has interpreted the lower and higher *prakṛti* by relating BhG 7.4-5 to such verses as Mbh 12.294.27 where *avyakta* is referred to as the highest *prakṛti* (*parā prakṛti*). ... The use of *prakṛti* in the sense of the eight material productive principles, and contrasted with the sixteen *vikāra*-s, the 'products,' is known in *ŚveUp* (1.4-5) as well as in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Buddhacarita*, and *Caraka Saṃhitā*."
 - 16 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.5, p. 210: *iyaṃ mamāparāprakṛtir itas tv anyām — ito 'cetanāyāś cetanabhogya-bhūṭyāḥ prakṛter visajāṭīyākārāṃ jīvabhūtaṃ parām — tasyā bhokṛtvena pradhānabhūtaṃ cetana rūpāṃ madyāṃ prakṛtiṃ viddhi yayedam acetanaṃ kṛtsnam jagad dhāryate.*
 - 17 *Bhagavadgītā*, 7.13:
tribhir guṇamayair bhāvair ebhiḥ sarvam idaṃ jagat /
mohitaṃ nābhijānāti mām ebhyaḥ param avyayaṃ //

- 18 *Gūṭābhāṣya*, 7.13, p. 124: *tair eva tribhiraṅgaṁmayair nihīnataraiḥ kṣaṇadhvaṁsibhiḥ pūrva-karmāṅugādehendriyabhogyatvenāvasthitaiḥ padārthair mohitam*
- 19 *Bhagavadgītā*, 7.14:
daivī hy eṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā /
mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te ||.
- 20 *Bhagavadgītā*, 7.14:
daivī hy eṣā guṇamayī mama māyā duratyayā /
mām eva ye prapadyante māyām etāṁ taranti te ||.
- 21 Ibid: *eṣā guṇamayī pāramārthikī bhagavanmāyaiva — māyām tu prakṛtiṁ vidyān māyinaṁ tu maheśvaram ityādiṣv abhidhīyate.*
- 22 That *guṇamayīmāyā* is synonymous with *prakṛti* in Rāmānuja's theology is also established in the *Śrībhāṣya*, as for example in *Śrībhāṣya* 1.1.1: *mama māyā duratyayā ityatrāpi guṇamayīti vacanāt saiva triṅgūṇātmikā prakṛtir ucyata iti na śrūtibhir sadasadanirvacanīyājñānapratipādanam.*
- 23 In Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy the *svarūpa*-*svabhāva* pair of concepts is one way of expressing the substance-attribute relationship. One of the most concise and clear definitions of this pair of concepts is presented by Vedānta Deśika in his chapter on the ontological categories (*tattvas*) in the *Rahasyatrayasāra*. There Deśika says: “*Svarūpa* refers to the substrate (*dharmin*) who has been established (*nirūpita*) by those attributes (*dharma*) which are unique (*svāsādharaṇa*) to him ... when the authoritative sources of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) reveal an entity (*vastu*) they show the *svarūpa* of each of these entities, together with the attributes which establish the *svarūpa* (*svarūpanirūpakadharmā*), the special distinctions of the *svarūpa* which is established (*nirūpitasvarūpaviśeṣaṇa*) and their activities (*vyāpāra*). There they [the *pramāṇas*] show the *svarūpa* only as distinguished (*viśiṣṭa*) by the attributes which establish it. When that *svarūpa* is spoken of, it cannot be referred to without [reference] to its particular attributes. If one were to leave them out, it would be equivalent [to speaking of] the horns of a hare.” Deśika goes on to state that the attributes which are unique to the substrate, the *svādhāraṇa dharmas*, are its *svabhāva*. (*Rahasyatrayasāra*, Ch. 5, pp.140–41).
- Carman (1974:88–97) deals extensively with the *svarūpa*–*svabhāva* distinction in Rāmānuja.
- In this book the terms *svarūpa* and *svabhāva* are glossed as “essential nature” and “characteristic nature” respectively.
- 24 *Gūṭābhāṣya*, 14.3, p. 385: *krtsnasya jagato yonibhūtaṁ mama mahadbrahma yat tasmin garbhaṁ dadhāmy aham; bhūmir āpo 'nalo vāyuḥ khaṁ mano buddhir eva ca / ahamkāra itīyaṁ me bhinnā prakṛtir aṣṭadhā || apareyam.*
- 25 *Gūṭābhāṣya*, 14.5, p. 387: *sattvarajastamāṁsi trayo guṇāḥ prakṛteḥ svarūpānubandhinaḥ svabhāva viśeṣāḥ*
- 26 Ibid: *sattvarajastamāṁsi trayo guṇāḥ ... mahadādiśūdbhūtāmahadādiviśeṣāntairārabdhadeva-manuṣyādidehasaṁbandhinaṁ dehinam avyayam ... nibadhyanti*
- 27 *Gūṭābhāṣya*, 3.33, p. 119: *prakṛtivistamādiśamātmāmasvarūpaṁ tad eva sarvadā 'nusaṁdheyam iti ca śāstrāṇi pratipādayantīti jñānavān api svasyāḥ prakṛteḥ prācinavāsanāyās sadṛśaṁ prakṛtaviśeṣeṣv eva ceṣṭate*
- 28 *Gūṭābhāṣya*, 7.14, p. 216: *māyāvimocanōpāyam āha. mām eva satyasamkalpaṁ, paramakāruṇikamanālocitaviśeṣāśeṣalokaśaraṇaṁ ye śaraṇaṁ prapadyante, ta etāṁ — madīyāṁ guṇamayāṁ nnāyāṁ taranti — māyāṁ utsrjya mām evopāsata ity arthaḥ.*
- 29 *Gūṭābhāṣya*, p. 205: *tatra saptame tāvadupāśyabhūtaparamapurūṣa—[svarūpa]—yāthāmyaṁ, prakṛtyā tattirodhānaṁ, tannivṛttaye bhagavadprapattīḥ*
- 30 *Bhagavadgītā*, 7.15:
na mām duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ /
māyāpahratajñānā āsurambhāvam āśritāḥ ||.

- 31 *Bhagavadgītā*, 7.16:
caturvidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukrīno, 'rjuna /
ārto, jijñāsur, arthārthī jñānī ca Bharata 'rṣabha //.
- 32 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.16, p. 218: *sukrīnah — puṇyakarmaṇo — mām śaraṇam upagamyā mām eva bhajante. te ca sukrātātāratamyena caturvidhāḥ ...*
- 33 The word *aśvarya* has connotations not only of material wealth, in the context of Śrīvaiṣṇava discourse, but also of power and lordship. All these connotations are implicit in the translation of the word as “sovereignty” in this study.
- 34 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.16, p. 218: *sukrīnah — puṇyakarmaṇo — mām śaraṇam upagamyā mām eva bhajante. te ca sukrātātāratamyena caturvidhāḥ, ... ārtāḥ — pratiṣṭhāhīnāḥ, bhraṣṭhaiśvaryaḥ punas tatprāpti kāmāḥ. arthārthī — aprāptaiśvaryatayā aśvaryakāmāḥ. taylor mukhabheda mātram ... jijñāsuḥ — prakṛtivyuktātmasvarūpāvaptīcchur jñānam evāśya svarūpam iti jijñāsur ity uktam. jñānī ca — ... bhagavaccheṣataikarasātmās-varūpavit prakṛtivyuktakevalātmany aparyavasyan bhagavantaṁ prepsuḥ bhagavan-tam eva paramaprāpyaṁ manvānāḥ.*
- 35 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.18, p. 219: *... yasmād ayaṁ mayā vinātma dhāraṇāsaṁbhāvanayā mām evānuttamaṁ-prāpyaṁ āsthitaḥ; atas tena vinā māmāpy ātmadhāraṇaṁ na sambhavati. tato mamātmā hi saḥ.*
- 36 *Bhagavadgītā*, 7.19:
bahūnām janmanām ante jñānavān mām prapadyate /
Vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti, sa mahātmā sudurlabhaḥ //.
- 37 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.19, p. 220: *na alpaśaṁkhyāśaṁkhyātānām puṇyajanmanām phalam idaṁ yan mac-cheṣataikarasātmayāthātmyajñānapūrvakaṁ matprapadanam. api tu bahūnām janmanām puṇyajanmanām ante — avasāne, vāsudevaśeṣataikaraso 'haṁ, tadāyattasvarūpasthitipravṛttiḥ ca, sa cāśaṁ khyeyaiḥ kalyāṇaguṇagaṇaiḥ paratara iti jñānavān bhūtvā, vāsudeva eva mama paramaprāpyaṁ prāpakaṁ ca, anyad api yan manorathavarti sa eva mama tatsarvam iti — mām prapadyate — mām upāste; sa mahātmā — mahāmanāḥ - sudurlabhaḥ — durlabhataro loke.*
- 38 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.20, p. 221: *sarva eva hi laukikāḥ puruṣāḥ svayā prakṛtyā — [pāpa] vāsanaḥ guṇamaya bhāvaviśayaḥ niyatāḥ ... madvyatiriktāḥ kevalendrādi devatāḥ ... prapadyante — tā evāśṛityārcaयante.*
- 39 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.21, p. 222: *tā api devatā madīyās tanavaḥ*
- 40 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.23, p. 223: *teṣāṁ alpamedhasām — alpabuddhīnām indrādīmā-trayājīnām tadārādhanaḥphalam alpam, antavac ca bhavati...madbhaktā api teṣāṁ eva karmaṇām madārādhanaḥrūpatām jñātvā paricchinnaḥphalaśaṅgaṁ tyaktvā matprīṇanaikaprayojanā mām prāpnuvanti; na ca punar nivartante.*
- 41 Ibid: *mām upetya tu Kaunteya punarjanma na vidyate iti hi vakṣyate.*
- 42 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.27, p. 226: *icchādveṣābhyām samutthitena śītoṣṇādidvandvākhyena mohena sarva-bhūāni sarge — janmakāla eva — saṁmoham yānti ... na matsa-ṁśleṣaviyogasukhaduḥkhasvabhāvāni. jñānī tu matsaṁśleṣaviyogaikasukhaduḥkhasv-abhāvo na tatsvabhāvaṁ kimapi bhūtaṁ jāyate iti.*
- 43 Throughout this study, the terms *pāpa* and *puṇya* have been translated as “sin” and “merit”, respectively. Even while the Judaeo-Christian connotations of “sin” have been kept in mind, the use of this word to describe the bad deeds of the suppliant devotee, who is aware of an element of personal responsibility for his own unworthiness in Tamil *bhakti* does not seem inappropriate. Cf. Hardy (1983:450–52).
- 44 *Bhagavadgītā*, 7.28:
yeṣāṁ tv antagataṁ pāpaṁ janānām puṇyakarmaṇām /
te dvandvamohanirmuktā bhajante mām dṛḍhavrataḥ //.
- 45 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.28, p. 226: *yeṣāṁ tv anekaajanmārjitenotkrṣṭapūnyasaṁcayena guṇamaya-dvandvecchādveṣahetubhūtaṁ madaunmukhyavirodhi cānādikālaprav-ṛttaṁ pāpaṁ antagataṁ — kṣīṇam; te pūrvoktena sukrātātāratamyena mām śaraṇam*

- anuprapadya guṇamayān mohād vinirmuktā jarāmarāṇamokṣāya, mahate caiś-varyāya, matprāptaye ca dṛḍhavrata — dṛḍhasaṃkalpā mām eva bhajante.
- 46 *Gītābhāṣya*, 8.15, p. 240: **ataḥ param adhyāyaśeṣeṇa jñāninaḥ kaivalyārthinaś cāpunarāvṛttim aiśvaryārthinaḥ punarāvṛttim cāha** — mām prāpya nikhiladuḥkhālayam aśāsvatamasthiramjanma na prāpnuvanti. yata ete mahātmāno — mahāmanaso, yathāvasthītamatsvarūpajñānā atyarthamatpriyatvena mayā vinātmad-hāraṇamalabhamānā mayyāsaktamanaso madāśrayā mām upāśya parama saṃsiddhirūpaṃ mām prāptāḥ.
- 47 *Gītārthasaṃgraha*, v. 11:
svayāthātmyaṃ prakṛtyāśya tirodhiḥ śaraṇāgatiḥ /
bhaktabhedaḥ prabuddhasya śraiṣṭhyaṃ saptama ucyate //.
- 48 *Gītābhāṣya*, p. 205: tatra saptame tāvad upāśyabhūtaparamapuruṣa—[svarūpa]—yāthātmyaṃ prakṛtyā tattirodhānaṃ **tannivṛttaye bhagavadprapattiḥ**
- 49 *Gītārthasaṃgraha*, v. 3:
madhyame bhagavattattvayāthātmavāptisiddhaye /
jñānakarmābhinirvartyo bhaktiyogaḥ prakīrtitaḥ //.
- 50 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.14, p. 216: ... māyām utsṛjya **mām evopāsata** ity arthaḥ.
- 51 See, for example, the introduction to this chapter of the *Gītābhāṣya*:
Gītābhāṣya, p. 205: idānīm madhyamena śatkena
parabrahmabhūtaparamapuruṣasvarūpaṃ **tad upāsanaṃ ca bhaktiśabdavācyaṃ ucyate** ... smṛtisantānam evopāsanaśabdavācyaṃ iti hi niścīyate. tad eva hi bhaktir iti ucyate.
- 52 *Gītābhāṣya*, 7.15, p. 217: kim iti **bhagavadupāsanaṃ pādīnīm bhagavadprapattiṃ** sarve na kurvata ity atrāha
- 53 The *Tirumantra*, also called the “eight-syllabled” (*aṣṭākṣara*) is *Om namo nārāyaṇāya*. The *Dvaya* is *Śrīmannārāyaṇacaraṇau śaraṇaṃ prapadye / Śrīmate nārāyaṇāya namaḥ* // See Mumme (1988: 73–141; 1992: 69–85) for a comprehensive discussion of the importance of the three *mantras* and particularly the *Caramaśloka* in 13th century *rahasya*-literature.
- 54 On the *Nānasāram* see 3.1. Bhaṭṭar’s dates are c. C E 1062–1114. See Nayar (1994:306–10) for a translation of the *Aṣṭaśloki*.
- 55 The existence of two interpretations for the *Caramaśloka* in the *Gītābhāṣya* appears to have baffled scholars thus far, causing them to account for this in mutually contradictory ways. Van Buitenen (1956:28) suggested that perhaps the second interpretation given by Rāmānuja elevated the importance of *prapatti* above *bhaktiyoga* but that, for this very reason, it might be a later interpolation. Lester (1965–66:273) was of the opinion that both the interpretations mean the same: they advocate the practice of *prapatti* as a step towards *bhaktiyoga*. Carman (1974:216), in contrast to van Buitenen, suggested that it was the first interpretation which lay at the heart of the later Śrīvaiṣṇava view of *prapatti* as an independent means to salvation. Yet, he qualified: “This is certainly a long way from the later understanding of *prapatti* as a particular cultic act by means of which one’s salvation is assured.” (1974:217)
- 56 *Bhagavadgītā*, 18.62:
tam eva śaraṇaṃ gaccha sarvabhāvena Bhārata /
tatprasādāt parāṃ śāntiṃ sthānaṃ prāpsyasi śāśvataṃ //.
- 57 *Gītābhāṣya* 18.62, p. 488: etan māyānivṛttihetur āha
- 58 *Gītābhāṣya*, 18.62, p. 488: yasmād evaṃ tasmāt eva sarvasya praśāstāram āśritavāt-salyena tvat-sārathye ’vasthitam itthaṃ kurv iti ca śāsitāraṃ sarvabhāvena — sarvāt-manā śaraṇaṃ gaccha — sarvātmanānuvartasva
- 59 *Ibid*: ... sarvakarmabandhopaśamaṃ śāśvataṃ ca sthānaṃ prāpsyasi. yad abhidhīyate śrutiśatais — tad viṣṇoḥ paramaṃ padaṃ sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ

- 60 *Bhagavadgītā* 18.65:
manmanā bhava madbhakto madyāgī māṃ namaskuru /
mām evaiśyasi satyaṃ te pratijāne priyo 'si me //.
- 61 *Gītābhāṣya*, 18.65, p. 490–91: *vedānteṣu ... ityādiṣu vihitam vedanadhyānopāsanādīśabdavācyaṃ darśanasamānākāraṃ smṛtisantānam atyarthapriyam iha manmanā bhaveti vidhīyate.*
- 62 *ibid*: *evam vartamāno mām evaiśyasi, etat satyaṃ te pratijāne — tava pratijñam karomi; nopaccan-danamātram. yatas tvaṃ priyo 'si me. priyo hi jñānino 'tyartham ahaṃ sa ca mama priya iti pūrvam evoktam.*
- 63 *Gītābhāṣya*, 18.66, p. 492: *karmayogajñānayogabhaktiyogarūpān sarvān dharmān paramanīḥśreyasasāadhanabhūtān madārāadhanatvena atimātraprītyā yathādhikāraṃ kurvāna evoktarītyā phalakarmakartṛtvādi parityāgena parityajya mām ekam eva kartāram ārādhyam prāpyam upāyam cānusaṃdhatsva. eṣaiva sarvadharmāṇaṃ śāstrīyaḥ parityāga iti ... adhyāyāḍau sudṛḍham upapāditam.*
- 64 *Gītābhāṣya*, 18.4, p. 451: *karmajanyaṃ svargādikaṃ phalaṃ mama na syād iti phalatyāgaḥ. madīyaphalasāadhanatayā madīyam idaṃ karmeti karmaṇi mamatāyāḥ parityāgaḥ karmaviśayastyāgaḥ. sarveśvare kartṛtvānusaṃdhānenātmanāḥ kartṛtātyāgaḥ kartṛtvaśayastyāgaḥ.*
- 65 *Gītābhāṣya*, 18.9, p. 444: *nityanaimittikamahāyajñādivarṇāśramavihitaṃ karma madārāadhanarūpatayā kāryaṃ — svayaṃ prayojanam iti matvā saṅgaṃ karmaṇi mamatāṃ phalaṃ ca tyaktvā yatkriyate, sa tyāgas sāttviko mataḥ*
- 66 *Gītābhāṣya*, 18.11, p. 456: *nanu karmāṇy agnihotra ... mahāyajñādīni ca svargādiphalaśaṃbandhitayā śāstrair vidhīyante; nityanaimittikānām api ... phalaśaṃbandhitayāiva hi codanā. atas tattat phalaśādhanaśvabhāvatayāvagatānām karmaṇām anuṣṭhāne bijāvāpādīnām ivānabhisamhita phalaśyāpiṣṭāniṣṭarūpaphalaśaṃbandho 'varjanīyaḥ; ato mokṣavirodhiphalatvena mumukṣuṇā na karmānuṣṭheyam*
- 67 *Gītābhāṣya*, 18.12, p. 456: *na tu kartṛtvādiparityāginām kvacid api mokṣavirodhiphalaṃ bhavati*
- 68 *Gītābhāṣya*, 18.12, p. 457: *idānīm bhagavati puruṣottame 'ntaryāmini kartṛtvānusaṃdhānenātmany akartṛtvānusaṃdhānaprakāram āha, tata eva phalakarmaṇor api mamatāparityāgo bhavatīti. paramapuruṣo hi svakīyena jīvātmanā svakīyaiśca karaṇakalebara—[sic]—prāṇaiḥ svalīlāprayojanāya karmaṇy ārabhate; ato jīvāmagataṃ kṣunnivṛttyādikam api phalaṃ, tatsāadhanabhūtaṃ ca karma paramapuruṣasyaiva.*
- 69 *Gītābhāṣya*, 18.66, p. 492: *ahaṃ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣāyīṣyāmi - evam vartamānam ivām matprāptivirodhibyō nādikatasamcitānanmtākrtyakarma - krtyakaraṇarūpebhyas sarvebhyā pāpebhyo mokṣāyīṣyāmi.*
- 70 *Gītābhāṣya*, 18.66, p. 492: *athavā, sarvapāpavinirmuktātyarthabhagavatpriyapuruṣanirvartyatvād bhaktiyogasya tadārambhavirodhipāpānāmanantyāt tatprāyaścittarūpair dharmaīḥ parimitakālakṛtais teṣāṃ dustaratayātmāno bhaktiyogārambhānarhatām ālocya śocato 'rjunasya śokam apānudaṇ śrībhagavān uvāca — sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekam śaraṇaṃ vrajeti — bhaktiyogārambha virodhyanādikālasamcitānānāvīdhānatapāpānuṣṭhānā tattatprāyaścittarūpān kṛcchracāndrāyaṇa- ... agniṣṭomādīkān nānāvīdhān anantāṃ tvayā parimitakālavartinā durānuṣṭhānān sarvadharmān pari tyajya bhaktiyogārambhasiddhaye mām ekam paramakāruṇikam anālocitaviśeṣaśeṣalokaśaraṇyam āśrītāvāsalyajaladhīm śaraṇaṃ prapadyasva. ahaṃ tvā sarvapāpebhyo — yathodita-svarūpabhakty ārambhavirodhibhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpebhyo mokṣāyīṣyāmi mā śucaḥ.*
- 71 All *Gadyatraya* quotations are from Aṇṇaṅkarācārya (1949).
- 72 This scholarly scepticism must also be relativized by taking into account the fact that Yāmuna's authorship of the *Stotraratna* or *Kūrrattālvān*'s of the *Pañcastava*, for example, is not disputed. For detailed studies of the *stotras* of Rāmānuja's immediate successors see Nayar (1992, 1994).

- 73 A typical example would be the case of Śaṅkara, where Indological scholarship has narrowed down his supposed oeuvre from the thirty-four texts attributed to him by tradition to around eight. On this, see Potter (1981:115–119).
- 74 Van Buitenen (1956:32–33) is alone in seeing the *Gadyatraya* as dealing, not with *prapatti*, but rather as “... exercises in bhakti as taught by Rāmānuja, an endless and repetitious pondering over and re-memorizing of God’s infinite perfections.” Carman (1974:217–223), on the other hand, took a closer look at all three *Gadyas* and showed that some ideas of *śaraṇāgati* in them are found in Rāmānuja’s major works like the *Vedārthasaṃgraha*, pointing out the importance of the *śeṣa/dāsa* concept in the latter as well as its use of the term *kiṅkara*, which can be abstracted to the *kaiṅkarya* of the *Gadyatraya*. He concludes that the concepts of *prapatti* in the *Gadyatraya* differ from that of the later schools and are much closer to that present in Rāmānuja’s undisputed works and Yāmuna’s *Stotratna*, thus making it highly likely that the *Gadyatraya* is an original work of Rāmānuja’s.
- 75 For Thathachariar’s views we have no independent corroboration except the reference to them in Carman’s book (1974:298–300), based on oral conversations which took place between Carman, Thathachariar and Lester in 1961. Thathachariar allegedly argued that in as much as the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* deals with a “sectarian” version of *prapatti*, involving the worship of a *viṅraha* at Śrīraṅgam, the intervention of the Goddess as a mediator (*puruṣakāra*) and speaks of *śaraṇāgati* as an independent means to salvation, it deviates considerably from the *prapatti* ideas present in the *Gūṭabhāṣya*. Therefore, neither this work nor the remaining *Gadyas* could have been authored by Rāmānuja, whose leanings were not sectarian but Vedic. Views similar to these are absorbed and incorporated by Lester in his article on *prapatti* (1965–66: 266–82).
- 76 This argument has also been made by Carman (1974:233–235).
- 77 On the similarities between the *Stotratna* and the *Gadyatraya* see Section 2.5.1.
- 78 re. Rāmānujam (1994:21–2) on Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai’s framework for the poem: “This is how this (composition) came into being: On a particularly auspicious day (*Panguni Uttaram* day) while Lord Raṅganātha came out with His consorts (for the festival), and sat in Court, *Emperumāṇār* (Śrī Rāmānuja) came and worshipped at the feet of the Lord. On this occasion ... fear of *saṃsāra* (cycle of birth, ignorance etc.) crossed his mind and he fell at the holy feet and conveyed his total surrender seeking the Lord’s protection.”
- 79 The concept of seeking refuge with Śrī is already found in Yāmuna’s *Catuśślokī*, a poem of four verses addressed to the Goddess. In it, in verse 2, the poet declares that he is both a *dāsa* and a *prapanna* of Śrī. *Catuśślokī*, v.2c–d: *tām tvām dāsa iti prapanna iti ca stoṣyāmy aham nirbhayaḥ lokaikēśvari lokanāthadayite dānte dayāṃ te vidan ||*.
- 80 *G*, p. 11: *pāramārthikabhagavaccaranāravindayugalaikāntikātyantikaparabhakti-parajñānaparama-bhaktikṛtaparipūrṇānavaratānityaviśadatamānanyaprayojanānavadhikātiśayapriyabhagavadanubhavajanitānavadhikātiśayaprītikāritāśeṣāvasthoca itāśeṣaśeṣataikaratirūpanityakaiṅka-ryaprāpty apekṣayā pāramārthikī bhagavaccaranāravindaśaraṇāgatir yathāvasthithāviratāstu me.*
- 81 In traditional interpretations of the *gadya*, it is explicitly stated that the poem expounds the importance of the *Dvaya mantra* in the context of *prapatti*. See again Rāmānujam (1994:77) on Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai’s commentary on the ŚG: “Earlier He said *dvayavaktā* — chanting the text of the *dvayam* ...”
- 82 ŚG, p. 12:
pitaraṃ mātaraṃ dhārān putrān bandhūn sakhūn gurūn |
ratnāni dhanadhānyāni kṣetrāṇi ca grhāṇi ca |
sarvadharmāmś ca saṃtyajya sarvakāmāmś ca sākṣarān |
lokavikrāntacaraṇau śaraṇaṃ te ’vrajaṃ vibho ||

83 ŚG, p. 12-13:

madīyānādikarmapravāhapravṛttāṃ bhagavatsvarūpatirodhānakarīm viparīta-jñānananīm svaviśayāyāś ca bhogyabuddher jananīm dehendriyatvena sūkṣmarūpeṇa cāvasthitāṃ daivīm guṇamayīmāmāyāṃ dāsabhūtaṃ śaraṇāgato 'smi tavāsmi dāsa iti vaktāraṃ mām tāraya.

84 ŚG, p. 13: ... *iti ślokatrayoditajñāninaṃ mām kuruṣva.*

85 ŚG, ibid:

*puruṣas sa paraḥ pārtha bhaktyā labhyas tv ananyayā /
bhaktyā tv ananyayā śakyah madbhaktiṃ labhate parām //
iti sthānatrayodita parabhaktiyuktaṃ mām kuruṣva.
parabhaktiparajñānaparamabhaktyekasvabhāvaṃ mām kuruṣva.*

86 On vibhūti see Carman (1974:140–44). Carman (140) points out that: “The word itself has a considerable variety of associations. Its etymological meaning as an adjective is taken to mean “penetrating” or “pervading.” In the *Rg Veda* it is used to mean “abundant” or “plentiful” and also “mighty” or “powerful.” ... In Śrī Vaiṣṇavism the word means the manifestation of Divine power and rule. In some of the *Pāñcārātra Āgamas* the thought is elaborated that there are two vibhūtis: the manifestation of God in this world is the *līlāvibhūti* (the realm of His sport) or *ekapādavibhūti* (the realm of one quarter of His glory); and His transcendent manifestation is the *nityavibhūti* (the eternal realm), also called the *tripādvibhūti* (the realm of three quarters of His glory).” Also see Narasimhacharya (1998:27).

For a study of the historical development of the concept of *nityavibhūti* into Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa's transcendent world in Śrīvaiṣṇava theology starting from Rāmānuja see Oberhammer (2000).

87 ŚG, p. 13: *evam̐bhūtamatkainkaryaprāptyupāyatayāvakraḥptasamastavastuvihīno 'pi anantatadvirodhi pāpākrānto 'pi, anantamadapacārayukto 'pi, anantamadiyāpācārayukto 'pi, ... etatkāryakāraṇabhūtānādiviparītāhaṃkāravimūḍhātmāsvabhāvo 'pi, etadubhayakāryakāraṇa bhūtānādiviparītavāsanāsambandho 'pi, etadanugūṇa-prakṛtviśeṣasambandho 'pi, etanmūlādhyātmikādhībhautikādhi daivikasukhaduḥkhataddhetutaditaropekṣaṇīyaviśayānubhāvajñānasaṃkocārūpamaccaraṇāravinda yugalaikāntikātyantikaparabhaktiparajñānaparamabhaktivighnapratihato 'pi*

88 ŚG, Ibid: ... *yena kenāpi prakāreṇa dvayavaktā tvam kevalaṃ madīyayaiva dayayā niḥśeṣavinaṣṭasahetukamaccaraṇāravindayugalaikāntikātyantikaparabhaktiparajñānaparamabhaktivighnomatprasādālabdhamaccaraṇāravindayugalaikāntikātyantikaparabhaktiparajñānaparamabhaktir matprasādād eva sākṣātkṛtayathāvasth itamatsvarūpapaṇavibhūtililopakaraṇavistāraḥ*

89 ŚG, Ibid: *ādhyātmikādhībhautikādhīdaivikaduḥkhaviḥnagandharahitas tvam dvayamarthānusaṃdhānena saha sadaivaṃ vaktā yāvacccharitrapātaṃ atraiva śrīraṅge sukhāṃ āssva.*

cf. Rāmānujam (1994:77) on Periyavāccāṇ Pīḷai's commentary to this: “Earlier He said *dvayavaktā* — chanting the *dvayam*; now he says *dvayam arthānusaṃdhānena saha* — the text is not enough to beget his grace; the meditation on its meaning is needed to pass time purposefully.”

90 ŚG, pp. 13–14: *śarīrapātasamayē tu kevalaṃ madīyayaiva dayayā atiprabuddho mām eva avalokayann apracyutapūrvasaṃskāramanoratho jīrṇaṃ iva vastraṃ sukhēmaṃ prakṛtiṃ sthūlasūkṣmarūpāṃ viśṛjya tadānīm eva matprasādālabdhamaccaraṇāravindayugalaikāntikātyantikaparabhaktipara jñānaparamabhaktikṛta ... nityakīṅkaro bhaviṣyasi. mā te bhūd atra saṃśayaḥ.*

91 ŚG, p. 14: *svātmanityanīyāmyanīyadāśyaikarasātmāsvabhāvānusaṃdhānapūrvakabhagavadanavadhikātiśayāsvāmyādyakhilaguṇagaṇānubhava*

92 Ibid: *bhagavadanubhāvajanita ... nityakāinkaryaprāptyupāyabhūtabhakti*

93 ŚG, pp. 14–15: ... *tadupāyasamāyagjñānatadupāyasamīcīnakriyādanugūṇasāttvikatāstikyādisama- stāmaguṇavihīnaḥ ... śrīmannārāyaṇa tava caraṇāravindayugalaṃ śaraṇaṃ ahaṃ prapadye.*

- 94 ŚrG, p. 15: *evam avasthitasāpy arthitvāmātreṇa paramakāruṇiko bhagavān ... nityadāsyam dāsyatīti viśvāsapūrvakam bhagavantaṃ nityakiṅkaratām prārthaye. ... evaṃbhūtataṭṭvayāthātmīyāvabodha tadicchārahitasāpy etaduccāraṇamātrāvalambanocyamānārthaparamārthanīṣṭam me manas tvam evādyaiḥ kāraya.*
- 95 VG, p. 15: *yāmunāryasudhāmbodhim avagāhya yathāmati / ādāya bhaktiyogākhyam ratnam saṃdarśayāmy aham //*
- 96 Ibid: *bhagavantaṃ nārāyaṇaṃ svāmitvena suhṛttvena gurutvena ca parigrhya ... tatpādāmbujadvaya paricaryaikamanorathas tatprāptaye ca **tatpādāmbujadvayaprapatter anyan na me kalpakoṭi-sahasreṇāpi sādhanam astiti manvānah** ...* Carman (1974:220) has suggested that this apparent contradiction between the *maṅgalaśloka*'s emphasis on *bhaktiyoga* and the avowed declaration in the first verse of the *gadya* that *prapatti* is the means to reach Nārāyaṇa, has been a source of embarrassment for the post-Rāmānuja commentators, since the verse implies that *bhaktiyoga* and *prapatti* are synonymous. But, he is mistaken in this embarrassment, as Vedānta Deśika's commentary on this verse shows. For, Vedānta Deśika in his 13th century commentary on this *gadya* defines *bhaktiyoga* just as one might expect: as a contemplation of the Blessed One and therefore as synonymous with what I have called *jñāna-prapatti*. Thus, Deśika says that the word *bhaktiyoga* in this context should be understood as, "... referring to the contemplation of the Blessed One, which is an end in itself." *Vaiṣṇavagadyabhāṣyam*, p. 192: ... ***bhaktiyogaśabdah svayamprayojanabhaḥ avadanusaṃdhānaparah***. *anyathā tatprāptaye ca tatpādāmbujadvayaprapatter anyan na me ... sādhanam astiti manvāna iti vakṣyamāṇavirodhāt.*
- 97 VG, p. 15: *tasyaiva bhagavato nārāyaṇasya ... śrīmaccaraṇāravindayugalam ananyātmasaṅgīvanena tadgatasarvabhāvena śaraṇam anuvrajat.*
- 98 VG, pp. 15–17: *tataś ca pratyaham ātmojjīvanāyaivam anusmaret ... śrīyā sahāśīnam ... bhagavantaṃ nārāyaṇaṃ dhyanayogena drṣṭvā tato bhagavato nityanīyāmyam ātmano nityadāsyam ca yathāvasthītam anusaṃdhāya*
- 99 VG, p. 17: ... *kadāhaṃ bhagavantaṃ nārāyaṇaṃ ... sāksātkaṛavāṇi cakṣuṣā. kadāhaṃ bhagavat-pādāmbujadvayaṃ śirasā dhārayiṣyāmi. ... kadā ... tatpādau paricariṣyāmi. ... iti ... bhagavantam upetya ... **samastaparivārāya śrīmate nārāyaṇāya nama iti praṇāmya***
- 100 Ibid: ... *bhagavatpariṣadganānāyakaair dvārapālaiḥ kṛpāyā snehagarbhayā drṣṭvāvalokitāḥ samyag-abhivandītais tais tair evānumato bhagavantam upetya **śrīmatā mūlamantreṇa** [bhagavan] mām ekāntikātyantikaparicaryākaraṇāya parigrhṇīṣveti yācamānaḥ praṇāmyātmānaṃ bhagavate nivedayet.*
- 101 Ibid: *tato bhagavatā svayam evātmasaṅgīvanenāvalokya ... ātmīyaṃ śrīmatpādāravindayugalaṃ śirasikṛtaṃ dhyātvā amṛtasāgarāntarnimagnasarvāvayavaḥ sukham āsīta.*
- 102 On the historical development of the connection between and the amalgamation of the Bhāgavata and Nārāyaṇa cults see Grierson (1909), Bhandarkar (1913), Dasgupta (1922), Jacobi (1924), Jaiswal (1967), and, more recently, Malinar (1997), Oberlies (1997) and Grünendahl (1997).
- 103 *Gītārthasaṃgraha*, v. 1: *svadharmajñānavairāgyaḥ sādhyabhaktyekagocaraḥ / nārāyaṇaḥ parambrahma gītāśāstre samīritaḥ //*
- 104 See *Stotraratna* vv. 22, 48 etc.
- 105 It appears, in addition, that Yāmuna wrote a major theological treatise which focuses on Nārāyaṇa as the Supreme Deity. Narasimhacharya (1998:15–17) quotes relevant portions from Vedānta Deśika's writings which cite a lost work of Yāmuna's, the *Mahāpuruṣanirṇaya/Puruṣanirṇaya*. On the basis of Vedānta Deśika's citations from this work Narasimhacharya concludes: "It appears from these statements that the *Puruṣanirṇaya* establishes the supremacy of Nārāyaṇa on the

- strength of various authoritative texts (mainly the Upaniṣads) reinforced by reasonings.” (16)
- 106 *Stotraratna*, v. 46:
kadāham aikāntikanityakiṅkaraḥ /
praharṣayiṣyāmi sanāthajīvitaḥ //.
- 107 *Stotraratna*, v. 22:
na dharmaniṣṭho 'smi na ca ātmavedī na ca bhaktimāms tava caraṇāravinde /
ākiñcanyo 'nanyagatiś śaraṇya tvatpādamūlaṃ śaraṇaṃ prapadye //.
- 108 Vide Narasimhacharya (1998:69): “... though couched in the form of a literary and devotional hymn, the *Stotraratna* brings out all the cardinal doctrines and philosophical ideas of Viśiṣṭādvaita, especially regarding *prapatti* or Surrender. It is these expressions and ideas of this pre-Rāmānuja writer that came to be stated clearly and elaborately in the works of later writers like Rāmānuja ...”
 In a footnote to this observation Narasimhacharya adds: “The *Vaikuṇṭhagadya* of Rāmānuja is mainly based on and inspired by this work of Yāmuna and a close comparison of these two works would reveal this fact.”
- 109 On the role of Yāmuna in integrating the Vedāntic and Pāñcarātric traditions see Van Buitenen (1971), Neevel (1977) and Mesquita (1980; 1990).
- 110 On this see Chapter 6 on the *Ītu* 36000 commentary.
- 111 Thus, having examined some *Pāñcarātra* texts on their descriptions of the role of the Goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī as well as the writings of Yāmuna and Rāmānuja on her, Kumar (1997:156) states: “For both Yāmuna and Rāmānuja, *śaraṇāgati* to the Lord is incomplete without their *śaraṇāgati* to the divine consort. ... Whatever status is accorded to the divine consort, all the teachers see her role in the context of ritual. ... Outside the ritual context her presence is veiled.”
- 112 Studies on the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* include those of Schrader (1916), Gupta (1972; 1983; 1989), Matsubara (1994), Smith (1972; 1978) and Varadachari (1982). Recently, in her study of the *Jayākhyā Samhitā* Rastelli (1999:23) has pointed out that we cannot speak of a unified *Pāñcarātra* theology, since there are considerable differences between the teachings of individual *āgamas*.
- 113 See Section 5.2.2 on this.

3 AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMENTARIES

- 1 They are the poems of Kūrattālvāṇ (Kureśa) called collectively the *Pañcastava* and of Parāśara Bhaṭṭar. Kūrattālvāṇ's poems are *Śrīvaikuṇṭhastava*, *Atimānuṣastava*, *Sundarabāhustava*, *Varadarājastava* and *Śrīstava*. Bhaṭṭar's are *Śrīraṅgarājastave pūrvaśatakam*, *Śrīraṅgarājastave uttaraśatakam*, *Śrīguṇaratnakośa*, *Śrīraṅganāthastotra* and *Aṣṭaśloki*. This *stotra* poetry has been studied briefly by Narayanan (1987) and extensively by Nancy Ann Nayar (1992).
- 2 Narayanan (1987), for example, establishes the similarities between the *Stotraratna*, the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* and Kūrattālvāṇ's *Śrīvaikuṇṭhastava*. Nayar (1994:7) affirms the indebtedness of the imagery as well as structure of the *Sundarabāhustava* to various decades from the *Nā tāyirativiyap-pirapantam* on the form of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa at Vanagiri (Tamil: Tirumāliruñcōlai).
- 3 The *para* form is extolled in *Śrīvaikuṇṭhastava*, vs. 66–83; *Atimānuṣastava*, vs. 7–8; *Sundarabāhustava*, vs. 69–83 and *Śrīraṅgarājastave uttaraśatakam*, vs. 36–40 among others. The *vyūha* form in *Śrīraṅgarājastave uttaraśatakam*, vs. 39–40; *Atimānuṣastava*, v. 6 and *Varadarājastava*, vs. 15–16. The *vibhava* forms of particularly Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in *Atimānuṣastava*, vs. 17–58 and *Sundarabāhustava*, vs. 84–116.
- 4 Four of the *stotras* are dedicated to specific deities in temples. Thus, Kūrattālvāṇ's *Atimānuṣastava* and Bhaṭṭar's long two-part poem *Śrīraṅgarājastava* reflect upon the greatness of the deity at Śrīraṅgam, the *Sundarabāhustava* is about the deity at Vanagiri and the *Varadarājastava* about Varadarāja-perumāḷ at the temple in Kāñcī.

- 5 *Śrīvaikunṭhastava*, vs. 19–38.
 6 *Sundarabāhustava*, vs. 39–68; *Varadarājastava*, vs. 21–61.
 7 *Śrīraṅgarājastave uttaraśatakam*, vs. 1–16.
 8 *Śrīraṅgarājastava pūrvaśatakam*, v. 17:

kintu prapattibalatārīta viṣṇumāyāmadvaṁśyarājakuladurlalitam kilaivam /
śrīraṅgarājakamalāpadalālītatvaṁ yadvāparādhyati mama stutisahāse'smin //

*What makes me offend You
 [by composing] this rash hymn of praise?
 Is it pride because of [my birth in] a royal lineage
 Whose strength of surrender to the Lord]
 enabled [our] entire family
 to cross over Viṣṇu-māyā,
 or ist it because [as a baby] I was fondled at the feet
 of Raṅgarāja and Kamalān*

(translated by Nayar 1994:176–7).

- 9 *Atimānuṣastava*, v. 4d:

śrīraṅginaś caraṇyor yugam āśrayāmaḥ //
We take refuge at the feet of the One who delights in Śrī.

- 10 *Atimānuṣastava*, v. 33:

yattvaṁ kṛtāgasam api praṇatiprasaktaṁ taṁ vāyasaṁ paramayā dayayā 'kṣmiṣṭhāḥ /
tenaiva mādṛśajanasya mahāgasō 'pi yuktaṁ samāśvasanam ity upadhārayāmi //

Nayar (1994:68–9) in this translation mistakenly identifies this crow incident with the encounter between Rāma and Jaṭāyu. But the crow refers to Jayanta, the son of Indra and the incident concerned is narrated for the first time in *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Sundarakāṇḍa* 38 and then in 67. For an analysis of this incident, see Chapter 6, on the *Ītu* commentary.

- 11 *Atimānuṣastava*, v. 50:

vṛndāvane sthiracarātmakakīṭadūrvāparyantajantunicaye bata ye tadānīm /
naivāblabhāmi janīm hatakāsta ete pāpāḥ padaṁ tava kadā punar āśrayāmaḥ //
 (translated by Nayar 1994:74).

- 12 *Atimānuṣastava*, v. 59:

adyāpi nāsmi uparatas trividhāpacārāt pāpaḥ pare nipatito 'smi tamasyapāre /
etādṛśo 'ham agatir bhavato dayayāḥ pātraṁ tvadīyacaraṇau śaraṇaṁ prapadye //
 (translated by Nayar 1994:76–7).

- 13 *Atimānuṣastava*, v. 61:

pāpīyaso 'pi śaraṇāgataśabdabhāyo nopekṣaṇaṁ mama tavocitam tśvarasya /
tvajijñānaśaktikaruṇāsu satīṣu neha pāpaṁ parākramitum arhati māmakīnam //
 (translated by Nayar 1994:77).

- 14 Not much is known about Aruḷālap Perumāl Emperumāṇār except the information we glean from the 13th–14th century hagiography, the *Ārāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparā-pirapāvam* (1975: 203–22). From this study we learn that he was originally an advaitic ascetic named Yajñamūrti, a learned brahmin converted by Rāmānuja to Śrīvaiṣṇavism. He became a devout disciple and spent the last years of his life in close proximity to Rāmānuja and composed the two works *Nānasāram* and *Prameyasāram*. This information about his ascetic status in the hagiography is confirmed by the single

laudatory verse, the *taniyaṇ*, which is assigned to him in the tradition, which speaks of him as belonging to *caturthāśrama*:

*rāmānuja sacchiśyaṇ vedaśāstrārthasaṃpadam /
caturthāśramasaṃpannam devarājamuniṃ bhaje //*

On the conversion of Aruḷālap Perumāḷ Emperumāṇār, see Raman (forthcoming, 2006).

- 15 The *Irāmānuca Nūrrantāti*, a hagiographical poem on Rāmānuja composed by another of his disciples Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṇār is the other early Tamil work.

- 16 *Ñānasāram* v. 31:

*vētam orunāṅkin utpotinta meypporuḷum
kōtil maṇumutal nūl kūruvatum tītil
caraṇākati tanta taṇṇiraivaṇ tāḷē
araṇākum eṇrumatu.*

- 17 *Ñānasāram* v. 1:

*ūṇavutar cīrai nītt oṅkamalaik kēḷvaṇ aṭit
tēṇukarum ācaimiku cintaiyarāt tāṇē
paḷuttāl viḷum kaṇippōl parraru viḷum
viḷukkāṭē tāṇ aruḷum viṭu.*

- 18 *Ñānasāram* v. 26

*tappil kuruvuruḷāl tāmaraiyāl nāyakanraṇ
oppilaṭikaḷ namakkuḷattu vaippaṇru
tēṇṇiriruppārkaḷ tēcupoli vaikuntat
tēṇṇiriruppār paṇikaṭkēyntu.*

- 19 *Ñānasāram* v. 11

*taṇ poṇṇaṭiy anri marrōṇril tāḷvu ceyyā
anpar ukantiṭṭat aṇuviṇiṇum poṇpīraḷum
mēruvāyk koḷḷum viraiyār tuḷāyalaṅkal
mārimāk koṇṭal nikarmāl.*

- 20 Compare this use of *ilaku* with that in *TVM VIII.8.1*:

*kaṅkaḷ civantu periyavāy vāyum civantu kaṇintu uḷḷē
veṇpal ilaku cuṭar ilaku ilaku makara kuṇṭalattin
koṇṭal vaṇṇaṇ cuṭar muṭiyaṇ nāṅku tōḷaṇ
oṇcari katai vāḷ āḷiyāṇ oruvaṇ kuṇicārṇkaṇ aṭiyēṇ uḷḷāṇē.*

- 21 *Ñānasāram* v. 16:

*tēvar maṇicar tiriyakuttāvaramām
yāvaiyum allaṇ ilakumuyir pūviṇmicaiy
āraṇaṅkiṇ kēḷvaṇ amalaṇ arivēvaṭivām
nāraṇaṇ tāṭkēy aṭimai nāṇ.*

- 22 *Ñānasāram* v. 22:

*uṭaimai nāṇēṇrum uṭaiyāṇ uyirai
vaṭamaturai vant utittāṇ eṇrum tiṭamāka
arintavaṇraṇ tāḷil aṭaintavarkkum uṇṭō
pīrantupaṭu nīṭuyaram piṇ.*

- 23 Zvelebil (1973:254), Aruṇācalam (1973:523) and Buck and Paramasivam (1997).

- 24 Thus Zvelebil (ibid:248–251) points to a four-fold classification of commentaries according to the purpose they serve, a classification which had existed at its very emergence as a genre.
- 25 Karashima's (1984:xiv) periodization of the Cholas is as follows:
 Period 1: from Vijayalaya to Uttama (AD 846–985)
 Period 2: from Rajaraja I to Adirajendra (AD 985–1070)
 Period 3: from Kullotunga I to Rajadhiraja II (AD 1070–1179)
 Period 4: from Kullotunga III to Rajendra III (AD 1179–1279)
 Leslie Orr (2000:21) speaks of Periods 2 and 3 as the second and third subperiods of the dynasty.
- 26 Heitzman (2000:13–14) who adds: "It is not surprising to note that subsequent developments led to the growth of even larger and more complex royal cult centers, such as that at Khajuraho in north-central India, the elaboration of expansive mercantile cult centers, such as at Mount Abu in Rajasthan, and the growth of temples' architectural assemblages to the size of small cities, as at Srirangam in Tamil Nadu."
- 27 Thus, Nilakanta Sastri (1955: 643): "Not only did the kings as a rule tolerate religions and sects other than their own, but they often patronized all persuasions in equal measure. A progressive king like Rājārāja even made it a point to give clear expression to his general attitude to religion by including , in the decoration of the great Śiva Temple in Tanjore, themes from Vaiṣṇavism and even Buddhism. His sister Kundavai built three temples, one to Viṣṇu, another to Śiva and a third to Jina, all in the same place...." This broad-based and tolerant religious culture under the Cōlas has also been noted by Leslie Orr (2000:25): "There was a sharing [between Śaivites, Vaiṣṇavites, Buddhists and Jains] not only of patterns of worship and conceptions of the character of the object of worship — ... but also donative activity was carried out in the same ways regardless of the sectarian identity of the institution that was receiving the donation."
- 28 Younger (1995:130).
- 29 Cf. Nilakanta Sastri (1995:638): "From the reign of Parantaka I [onwards] there is a regular series of endowments recorded in epigraphs of the Cōla and Toṇḍai countries for the recitation of these hymns in temples ... The history of Vaiṣṇava hymnology in the period was quite similar."
- 30 Pechilis Prentiss (1999:117). Also Younger (1995:217): "What the *Periya Purāṇa* reveals is a Śaiva tradition that has been able to take its earlier strands of "yogic," "mystical," and "peasant" faith and reformulate them in a context that has as its central focus the ritual activity of the court and the temple."
- 31 On the dating of the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta corpus see Dhavamony (1971). While the works of this school are traditionally considered to date from the mid-twelfth century onwards the first major text is the mid-thirteenth century *Civaṇṇapōtam* of Meykaṇṭār.
- 32 Goodall (1998:iv) in his critical edition of Bhaṭṭa Rāmakaṇṭha's *Kiraṇavṛtti* states: "Furthermore there is no tradition of teaching reaching to modern times that has transmitted and expounded the doctrines of the classical Śaiva Siddhānta formulated by Rāmakaṇṭha II. The Tamil-speaking South is the only area of India in which the Śaiva Siddhānta still thrives, and here Rāmakaṇṭha II's influence appears gradually to have waned. South Indian thinkers fell under two powerful theological influences that have fundamentally altered the character of Śaiva Siddhānta: that of devotionism and that of Vedāntic Advaita. ... Six centuries after Rāmakaṇṭha II one thinker, Śaīlavāṭṭinivāsi-Jñānaprakāśaguru of Sri Lanka attempted to reinstate much of the old Saiddhāntika philosophy of the Kashmirians; but he had to battle hard to present this as consistent with a body of more recently acknowledged scriptures that had since arisen to justify the new theology, and he came to be savagely attacked"

- 33 See K.V. Raman (1975; 1981). Raman points out: "Though there is evidence to show that the Ālvār's *Prabandhams* were recited in a few Vishnu temples like Srirangam earlier than Rāmānuja's time, it is agreed that he was largely responsible to make their recital an essential feature on all festival occasions." (1975:89)
- 34 The dating and study of the Śrīvaiṣṇava hagiographical literature remains in its infancy with the exception of some seminal articles by Friedhelm Hardy, but chronologically at least, the hagiographical literature appears to emerge with the *Divyasūricaritam* in the twelfth century, followed by the *Āṛāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparāpirapāvam* and the *Mūvāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparāpirapāvam* approximately in the fourteenth century, as also the *Upadeśaratnamālai*. These texts, in turn, form the basis for the decisive hagiographical work, the *Prapannāmṛta* of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. For the controversy regarding the dating of the *Divyasūricaritam*, see Jagadeesan (1977:76–81).
- 35 Jagadeesan (1977:21): "There is a controversy regarding this term *Bhagavat Viṣayam*. Some hold that it relates to the Four Thousand Prabandhas; some others that it deals with the commentaries on the whole corpus; still others that it refers only to the commentaries on the Tiruvāymoli"
- 36 For a comprehensive discussion on the dates of Rāmānuja, see Jagadeesan (1977). Carman (1974) and T.N. Subramaniam (quoted in Raman 1975:89) have argued for a variation of between 30 to 60 years later than the traditional dating.
- 37 *Periyatirumoli vyākhyāna 10.4.1: paramapadattiluḷḷa svabhāvikaguṇaṅkaḷum avatariṭtu āṛjitaguṇaṅkaḷum kūṭināl cakravartyōṭu upamānam māmaṭṭamāy nirkumittanai enru ittai cīyar arulicceyya paramapuruṣanukku ōṛiṭṭatē pīrantu oruṅṇam tētavēṇumō enṛār cuntarapāṇṭiya tēvar.*
- 38 On Nañciyar and Maravarman Sundara Pandya, see Nānacuntaram (1989:256).
- 39 Cf. Raman (1975: 90): "The *kōil-oḷugu* records that Nampīlāi was alive about Śāka 1175 i.e., AD 1253 when the Pāṇḍyan king Jaṭavarman Sundara covered the central shrine of Srīrangam with gold." Also see Nilakanta Sastri (1966:215): "Having thus become master of his territory, forces and treasure, Sundara ... left for Chidambaram where he worshipped Naṭarāja before proceeding to Śrīrangam. '... and in that temple which he roofed with gold he sat upon a splendid throne with his queen, wearing a golden crown and emulating the morning sun rising on the top of the mountain.'"
- 40 On Nañciyar's work Section see 5.1.
- 41 Apart from the canonical commentaries on the *Nāḷāyirativiyappirapantam* there were probably other commentaries written in Tamil by devout Vaiṣṇavas which have not been preserved by the tradition. Thus in the *Ītu III.9.2* we have mention of a Tamil commentary on the *TVM* written by an official (*adhikārin*) called Karikāla Cōla Prammarāyaṇ, who brought it to Nañciyar for his approval.
- 42 Ezuthachan (1972:113); K. K. A. Venkatachari (1978:167), Jagadeesan (1989:75).
- 43 *divyānām tu devaṇṇpāṇām pramāṇair vyākaraṇādi lakṣaṇair upetaṁ saṁskṛtaṁ gānaṁ śuddham.*
[anyat] trivargaprasiddhaṁ padamādhye saṁskṛtaṁ madhye deśabhāṣādi yuktam tad eva kāryam,
daḁṣiṇapathe maṇipravāla iti prasiddhaṁ kāśmīre śaṭākulam iti.
 (quoted in Ezhuthachan 1972:114).
- 44 Ezhuthachan (1972:113); K. K. A. Venkatachari (1978:4), Jagadeesan (1989:75).
- 45 On the development of *maṇipravāla* in Malayalam and Kannada, see K. K. A. Venkatachari (1978:167–71).
- 46 In this work, Peruntēvaṇār extensively praises the Pallava king Nandivarman III, who reigned in the ninth century, as a patron of literature and the hero of the battle of Teḷḷāru. On the dating of the *Pāratavenpā*, see Mu. Aruṇācalaṁ's *Tamiḷ illakiya varalāru onpatām nūrrāṇṭu* (1971:52). Also Nānacuntaram (1989:236).

- 47 On the style of the *Pārataveṇpā*, see Zvelebil (1975:526). Kōpālakirūṣṇamācāriyār (1914:490) gives an example of this prose:

ivvakaip pēciya aśarīriyākiya ādityabhagavānum antardānañ ceyta pinpu kannāṇuṭaiya tyāgaśaktiyei mahānubhāvaṇ kaṇṭu devajātikaḷum āścaryapaṭṭup puṣpavarṣam poḷintār.

- 48 Kōpālakirūṣṇamācāriyār (1914:494). On the Jaina Tamil literature see Charavarti (1974).

- 49 On the *maṇipravāḷa* inscription of Cempiyan Mātēvi attributed to the third year of the reign of Rājārāja I, see Nānacuntaram (1989:235–36); on the Kañcīpuram inscription of Brahmatantra Svatantra Jiyar of 1360 CE, see Jagadeesan (1989:75) and on a very early Pallava copper plate inscription in Tamil Grantha, see Ālvāppillai Vēluppiḷai (2002:173).

- 50 Kōpālakirūṣṇamācāriyār (1914:495) cites only two Śaivite *maṇipravāḷa* texts. These are the commentaries on the *Civaññācittiyār* of Aruṇanti Civācāriyār. The first was the sixteenth century commentary of Civākrayōki, the second, the seventeenth century one of Nānaprakācar. On these two authors and their works see Devasenapathi (1974:9–12).

- 51 Nānacuntaram (1989:237).

- 52 The fact that much of this vocabulary had been developed previously by the Tamil Buddhists, Jains and Śaivites may have had something to do with this. Vaiyapuri Pillai's (1968) and Cutler's (1992) articles on Parimēlaḷakar's classical Tamil commentary on the *Tirukkuraḷ* give examples of the sophistication of the medieval Tamil theological vocabulary which had been derived from a Sanskritic one. On the Buddhist Tamil of even earlier literature such as the *Maṇimēkalai*, see reference in the next chapter. Mu. Aruṇācalam (1973:534) provides one such example from the twelfth century commentary of the Jaina author Aṭiyārkkunallār on the *Cilappatikāram*. Referring to the eight limbs of yoga, the commentator uses pure Tamil terms for four of them, calling *prāṇayāma vaḷinilai*, *pratyāhara tokainilai*, *dhāraṇa porainilai* and *dhyaṇa niṇaital*.

- 53 Nānacuntaram (1989:243–45).

- 54 Kōpālakirūṣṇamācāriyār (1914:485) cites this unfortunately unidentified verse:

*tenmoliyūm āriyamum cērnta maṇipavaḷa
menmoliyinraṇmaiy iyparkut — tonmaiy
irumoliyiñāraṇamum ēttumilil emmān
rurumakaḷkōṇrāḷai neñcē cēr.*

A similar verse wonderfully illustrating the nature of *maṇipravāḷa*, also unidentified, is to be found in Aruṇācalam (1973:778) in his *Tamiḷ ilakkiya varalāru panniraṇṭām nūrraṇṭu* and is as follows:

*muttuḷaḷalum iha narpavaḷaṇkaḷalum
ottuk kalanta tamiḷāl abhisamskṛtena
ettikilum bhavaduhārāla devabaddhā
buddhikum madkṛtriyam kṛutināṇi vibhūṣā.*

- 55 Thus Cutler (1992:549) points out that medieval commentaries, whether in Sanskrit or in Tamil, tend to “have their origins in oral discourses before audiences of students and disciples.”

- 56 For a detailed list as well as account of these oral interpretations see Nānacuntaram (1989:14–66).

- 57 *Ītu Muppatārāyirappaṭi*. VI.10.4: *nāthamuni toṭaṅki ivvaḷavum vara naṇ ācāryarkaḷ paramarahasyamāka upadeṣittu ōrāṇvaḷiyāyk koṇṭu pōnta ittai, ittiñ cīrmaṇ ariyāta unakku mahāpāpiyeṇ ittai veḷiyiṭuvatē.*

The *Ārāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparāpirapāvam* (1975:204) has Rāmānuja refer to his school of Vedānta in this manner: "ālvār toṭaṅki ālavantār aḷavāka ittaṇai kālam **ōrāṇ valliyā vanta itdarśanam** ...

Also the *Upadeśaratnamālai*, Maṇavālamāmuni's fourteenth century hagiographical poem, speaks of the *ōrāṇ valī* which was Rāmānuja's method of instruction in verse 37:

*ōrāṇvalliyā upatecittār munṇōr ērār etirācar innarāl pārulakil /
ācaiṇuṭaiyōrkk ellām āriyarkāl kūrum enru /
pēci varumparuttār piṇ ll.*

- 58 *Ārāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparāpirapāvam* 1975:359. Narayanan (1994:104) has the following to say about this anecdote: "Rāmānuja made sure that the line of commentaries on these hymns which were meant to be 'experienced' and enjoyed by all would keep growing. Rāmānuja's comments were considered authoritative and would have been held to be the final word on the topic, and it seems probable that the teacher wanted to encourage a chain of commentaries, rather than establish one set of 'correct' interpretations. ... the commentaries on the *Tiruvāymoḷi* preserve a diversity of opinions." Nāṇacuntaram (1989:69) quotes a different oral tradition as to how the first commentary came to be written. According to this tale Rāmānuja is reflecting silently on the meaning of a particular verse of the *TVM* one evening when Piḷḷāṇ walks in and serendipitously guesses what he is meditating about. Rāmānuja, pleased, embraces him and says that, while he has longed for sometime to compose a commentary on the *TVM*, the time for him to do so has passed. He now entrusts the task to Piḷḷāṇ, since the event reveals that their two hearts are identical.
- 59 What Cutler (1992:552) says about the classical commentaries on the *Tirukkural* could also be applied to the *TVM* commentaries: "because [the text] is largely devoid of the kind of contextual cues that play a major role in the verbal communication of meaning, commentators take it upon themselves to supply such cues. This is an essential aspect of the commentarial enterprise, and when *Tirukkural*'s commentators offer conflicting interpretations for a verse, the source of disagreement often can be traced to the different ways in which they contextualise the verse."
- 60 See Clooney (1992:227–42).
- 61 Most of these similes are listed in Nāṇacuntaram (1989:321–35). This section of the chapter is much indebted to his painstaking work of collation and the more recent work of Veṅkaṭakiruṣṇaṇ (2003).
- 62 *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* I.8.1: *antaḥpurattiḷ kūṇarkuraḷarāy varttikumāppōlē*
- 63 *Īṭu* IV.8.7: *kāvarkāṭṭil tuṣṭamirukaṇkaḷukku ūṭṭiyittu vaḷarkkumāppōlē*
- 64 *Īṭu* I.1.3: *rājakaḷukku nāṭeṇkuṇ cella niṛkacceyṭē mahiṣikaḷum taṇkaḷumākac cila pūṇṭoṭṭaṇkaḷaik kuṭinīr vārttu ākkuvataḷipattāy līlārasam anupavikkumāppōlē*
- 65 *Īṭu* II.6.2: *rājākkaḷ antaḥpurattir pukuvatu nāṭukanakkarra piṇpirē*
- 66 *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* II.10.8: *rājākkaḷ nakaracōṭanaikku uruppaṭṭāl antaraṇkar mukam tōrāmāl tiriṇumāppōlē*
- 67 *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi* II.2.10: *rājaparikaramāṇavarkaḷ caṭṭayum pirampum mayirkaṭṭumāyk koṇṭu taṇṭam tarattōṭē sevikkumāppōlē*
- 68 Burton Stein (1980:352) quoted in Orr (2000:28).
- 69 It is a similar point which Talbot (2001:11) makes regarding the value of inscriptions: "And the range of social groups represented in inscriptions is considerably more diverse than in the case of elite literary compositions —merchants, landed peasants, herders, and warrior chiefs, along with their wives, daughters, mothers, and sisters —figure among the donors whose beneficence inscriptions record, rather than just kings and brahmins."
- 70 *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi* V.9.0: *itutāṇ nāṇ anupavittēṇ enru cīyar aruḷicceyṇār. paṭṭar tiruvaṭikaḷaiy āsrayittup piṇporukāl mēlnāṭṭukk eluntaruḷi miṇṇu periyatvaraiyōṭē*

tirunālukkutavavēṇum enruvara tirukkarampanturaiyaḷavilē vantuvārē acintitamāka āru perukkikiṭṭakka irāttirunālēḷunntaruḷi inkunṭāṇa saṃpramaṇkaḷam ellām cevippaṭuvatu vankupukurapperātōḷitāyḱ koṇṭu pōranōvupaṭṭōm enru aruḷicceyyvār.

- 71 *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi VII.2.9: perumālukku viṇṇappaṇceyyumavai kēṭkaikkāka nañcīyaraiy aḷaittaruḷit tām amutuṇceyyā nirkacceyē ittiruvāymoḷi iyalaik kēṭṭaruḷānirka ippāṭṭaḷavilē vantavārē ... attaik kēṭṭuk kaiyaiyutari sṛiraṇkanāta enru aṇaiyilē cāyutaruḷiṇār paṭṭar. appōtu tirumēṇiyilē piraṇta vikrutiyaik kaṇṭu ivarkku pakavatprāptiy aṇittākirātō enru aṇciyiruntēn enru cīyar aruḷicceyyar.*
- 72 *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi VI.9.9: piḷḷāṇuṭaiya antimataśaiyilē nañcīyar nōvariyap-pukkirukka kūvikoḷḷakāḷam iṇṇuṇ kurukātō enru palakāḷcolla ittaikkēṭṭu cīyar ala cīyarē nūr kiṭantaḷukiratēnn? ankuppōyp perappukukira pēru itilum taṇṇitu enru tōrriyiruntātō enru paṇittān.*
- 73 *Periyatirumoḷi vyākhyāna.III.6.0: nañcīyaruṭaiya nōvilē perri ariyappukuntu inkūtaikku vēṇṭiy irukkiratēn enru kēṭka tūviriya malarlakkip pāṭṭuk kēṭkavum perumāl eluntaruḷap piṇṇum muṇṇum curram vantu tiruvaṭit tōḷavum vēṇṭiyirāṇiṇrēn enrarulicceytaruḷiṇār. appōtē varamtarum perumāl arayaraiy aḷaittuviṭṭup pāṭṭukkēṭṭaruḷā nirka*
- 74 *Periyatirumoḷi vyākhyāna I.4.10: tirumaṇkai ālvār avataritta piṇpu, tyājamāna aiśvaryaṃ paramapurūṣārtattattukkūḷḷe pukkup pōyirrukkāṇum. tśvaraṇākavumām nityasūrikaḷākavumām rājavākavumām parittu pākavataceśamākkalāmākil enrāmivarirupatu.*
- 75 *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi I.2.0: oruvanukku vaiṣṇavatvam uṇṭu illai enṇuṇiṭam taṇakkē teriyumkāṇ enru cīyarpalakāḷum aruḷicceyyar. piraranarttam kaṇṭāl ayyō enriruntāṇākil namakku pakavatsaṃpantam uṇṭu enrirukka aṭṭukkum. ittaṇaiyum paṭṭiṭuvānukku enriruntāṇākil namakku pakavatsaṃpantamilla enrirukka aṭṭukkum enru.*
- 76 *Irupattunālāyirappaṭi IV.3.11: pūmiyilē emperumāṇār eluntaruḷiyirunta kāḷam kuraivarra sṛivaiṣṇasṛiyōṭē iruntu nammaippōlē vāypukucōrraip pariōṭātē enru cīyar uruttōrum aruḷicceyyvār.*
- 77 *Īṭu Muppattārāyirappaṭi VII.2.0: paṭṭar ittiruvāmoḷiy aruḷicceyyum pōtellām ālvārku ṭṭukira tacaiyariyātē avaruṭaiya bhāvaviruttiyuminrikkēy irukkira nām eṇcollukirōm enru tirumuṭiyilē kaiyai vaittukkoṇṭiruppar.*
- 78 Clooney (1992:241).

4 SURRENDERING TO PURIFICATION.

- 1 *Ārāyiram III.1.10: mūṇṇāṃ paṭṭil mutal tiruvāymoḷiyil ... aḷakarūṭaiya aparicchēdya-maṇa saundaryādikaḷai aṇubhavittu viṣmitarākirār.*
Ārāyiram IX.1.10: onpaṭām paṭṭil mutarṭtiruvāymoḷiyil ... nirupādhikabandhuvāṇa emperumāṇaiyē parruṇkōḷ enkirār.
- 2 The poem, in fact, consists of 1,102 verses since TVM II.7 has two extra verses, in order to enumerate the twelve names of Viṣṇu.
- 3 *Ārāyiram I.2.0: ... inta ātmākkaḷaik kuṇṭittu bhagavadekabhogatvopāyamāṇa bhaktiyo-gattai bhagavad vyatiriktaviśayaivairāgyapūrvakamāka upadeśikkirār.*
- 4 *Ārāyiram I.2.11: bhagavadguṇapratipādakamāyirunta invāyirattilum ittiruvāymoḷi emperumāṇai unarntu collirru.*
- 5 On this commentarial tactic see Cutler (1992:560): “When one takes a broad view not only of traditional Tamil literature, but also of other traditional Indian literatures, one finds that texts created through a process of binding independent verses make up a major portion of the literary canon ... In the area of belles lettres probably the best example of the application of this strategy at a primary level is the mahākāvya, a literary form in which plot functions as a unifying contextual framework for verses that, in terms of prevailing poetic theory, are aesthetically self-sufficient.”

- 6 Narayanan (1989:60) underscores the existence of such a thematic ordering within the commentary by stating that there are hints in it, particularly in the introductions to certain decades of the tenth centum, of “the tripartite division present in many Śrīvaiṣṇava (and other Vedāntic) philosophical works: tattva (reality, here ontology), hita (ways or means, here soteriology) and puruṣārtha (goal of human life, here eschatology, or conception of final salvation).”
- 7 According to classical Viśiṣṭādvaita, beginning with the *Śrībhāṣya*, the entire process of creation is set into motion by the resolve (*saṃkalpa*) of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa which disrupts the equilibrium of the qualities (*guṇa*) in unmanifested (*avyakta*) *prakṛti*. Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa controls the evolution of *prakṛti* from one stage to another, giving rise to the twenty-three ontological categories beginning with *mahat*. On this process of impure creation see *Śrībhāṣya* I.1.1, II.3.14; *Rahasyatrayasāra* 5 (*tattvatrayacinta-nādhikāraḥ*); *Tattvatraya* 2 (*acitprakaraṇam*) and other Viśiṣṭādvaitic texts.
- 8 *Ārāyiram* X.10.10: *ippaṭi emperumānukkum maṟuttaruḷavoṇṇātatorupaṭi pirāṭṭi tiruvāṇaiyaiyum taṇ tiruvāṇaiyaiyumiṭṭu nirbandhittuk koṇṭu ārtasvarattālē kūppiṭumaḷavil, tām manorathittapaṭiye emperumānum eḷuntaruḷa, avanaik kaṇṭu mahatahaṃkāradikaḷ ellāvārriyum vyāpittu avarriṟkāṭṭilum peritāna mūlaprakṛtikkum attaiyum vyāpittu atilum peritana muktātmāvukkum, atilum peritāna unṇuṭaiya saṃkalpajñānatukkum ātmāvāyirunta nī, anta saṃkalpajñānatiṟkāṭṭilum peritāyirunta enṇuṭaiya viṭāyellantīrum paṭi, anta jagadākāraṇāṇapaṭiyanṇiye nīyāṇapaṭiye vantu cūḷntāy; enṇuṭaiya manoratham orupaṭiye muṭintatu enkiṟār.*
- 9 See, for e.g. I.1.4, IV.1.10, V.2.7, V.8.9, VI.8.3 for the use of *samāśrayaṇa* and I.1.1, I.2.7, IV.1.4, V.2.8, VI.3.8, VI.9.5, IX.10.5, X.2.5 etc. for *āśrayaṇa/āśrita* in the commentary. The same terminology is also predominant in the *Onpatināyirappaṭi*.
- 10 *Ārāyiram* I.2.10: *avanuṭaiya āśritarai orukālum kaiviṭṭāṭē rakṣikkum svabhāvamāṇa tiruvaṭikaḷai āśrayi enkiṟār.*
- 11 *Ārāyiram* III.3.1: *tiruvēṇkaṭamuṭaiyānai bhujiṅkavāruṅkaḷ; avanai bhujiṅkkaiyāvatu — avan tiruvaṭikaḷilē sarvadeśasarvakālasarvāvasthocitasarvaśeṣavṛttiyaikum paṇukai enkiṟār.*
- 12 *Ārāyiram* III.3.2: *tirunāṭṭiṟ ceṇṇu emperumānukku aṭimai ceyvatanṛō ellārkkum paramapṛāpyam enṇil; tirunāṭṭilulḷa nityasiddhapuruṣarkaḷum tiruvēṇkaṭamuṭaiyāṇ guṇaṅkaḷilē akappaṭṭu avan tiruvaṭikaḷilēyanṛō vantu aṭimai ceykiṟatu*
- 13 Vēṇkaṭam is the temple most often mentioned by the *ālvārs*, with almost 200 verses in the entire *Nālāyirativiyapirapantam* on it. As far as Nammālvār’s corpus is concerned, there are eight verses in the *Tiruviruttam* (vs. 8, 10, 15, 31, 50, 60, 67, 81) and eleven in the *TVM* (I.8.3, II.6.9-10, II.7.11, III.5.8, III.9.1, IV.6.11, VIII.2.1, IX.3.8, X.5.6, X.7.8) which speak of the deity in this temple. Further, three entire decades of the *TVM* (III.3, VI.6 and VI.10) are also dedicated to Vēṇkaṭam. Hardy (1983:257–61) has suggested that Vēṇkaṭam and Kāñci were the pilgrimage centres of the early *ālvārs* and that with Nammālvār the locus of the poetry shifts to southernmost Tamilnadu, the Pāṇḍya country, and southern Kerala. Therefore, the reference to Vēṇkaṭam in Nammālvār is seen as mimetic and “can best be explained by assuming that he knew of it only indirectly, presumably through the *Antātis* of the Early *ālvārs*, and that he sang its praise because it had been hallowed by them.” For literary references to Vēṇkaṭam in the pre-*ālvār* Tamil literature see Irākavaiyaṅkāṟ (1964) and Jagadeesan (1977).
- 14 *Ārāyiram* IV.1.9: *ippaṭi aihikamāṇa aiśvaryaṃ alpamumāy asthiramumāy iruntatākil svagādyaiśvaryattai pṛāpyamākaḷ paṇṇinālō enṇil, svagādyaiśvaryaṇāṇaiyālē aihikaviṣayaśaṅghaparityāga pūrvakamāka indriyaṅkaḷai jayittu svagapṛāptivirodhiśārīrattaip parityajittavarkaḷukkum emperumānai āśrayiṭōḷilil anta svagādyaiśvaryaṃ siddhiyātu; tadāśrayaṇattālē siddhittālum asthiram; ātalāl, ipaṭi alpāsthīratvabahuḷaduḥkhatvānarthahetutvādyanekadoṣadūṣitamāṇa inta aiśvaryattai*

viṭṭu, periyatiruvaiṭiyaik kāṭṭilum svāśritarai oru nāḷum oru daśaiyilum kaiviṭāta emperumān tiruvaiṭikaḷaiyē paramaprāpyamākap paṟruṅkaḷ enkiṟār.

15 See Chapter 2.2.

16 cf. Srinivasachari (1970:349–50): “The *kevala* is a contemplative who devotes himself to yogic introversion by withdrawing his mind from its outgoing tendencies... It is the goal of the *kevala* to intuit his self by abandoning the false and fleeting ideas of ‘I’ and ‘mine’, regain his essential and eternal nature and thus attain freedom from birth and death and the ills of *samsāra*. The state of *Kaivalya* thus attained may be called the flight of ‘the alone into the Alone’ in which the *ātman* enjoys inner quiet and is self-satisfied.... the godless state of Sāṃkhyan *kaivalya* and *nirvāṇa*.” It is generally assumed that the Śrīvaiṣṇava critique of *kaivalya* is a critique of the *Sāṃkhya* and *Yoga* concept of liberation. But it could, in view of the sectarian rivalry between the Vaiṣṇavas, Śaivas, Jains and Buddhists in the Cōla period in the Tamil country, also be an implicit critique of Jaina concepts of liberation, where *kaivalya* is linked to the state of arhatship. On sectarian rivalry in the Cōla period see Nilakanta Sastri (1955:634 ff), Zvelebil (1973:195–97) and J. R. Marr (1992), and the essays of Peterson, Orr and others in the 1998 *Open Boundaries* edited by John Cort.

17 *Āṟāyiram IV.1.10: asthiratvādidośasambhinnaṁnā kaivalyattai prāpyamāka paṟṟinālō ennil — prākṛtaviśayavairāgyapūrvakamāka jñānayoganiṣṭhanānavanūkkum emperumānai āśrayittālallatu ātmāvalokanavirodhikarmam pōkātu; bhagavacchamāśrayanattālē ātmāvalokanam piṟappatu; piṟantālum antimadaśayilē bhagavadanusamdhānam paṇni pratibandhakattai pōkkātolīyil pinṇai ātmayāthāmyāvīrbhāvalakṣaṇamokṣam siddhiyātu; mukhyamāna mokṣamākiratum anta bhagavatkaikānkaryamē; ippaṭi kaivalyopāyatayā bhagavacchamāśrayaṇam paṇnavēṇṭukaiyālum bhagavatkaikānkaryantānē pa-ramamokṣamākaikyālum anta bhagavatkaikānkaryamokṣayā atyalpasukhamāna kaivalyattai viṭṭu bhagavatkaikānkaryattaiyē paramaprāpyamākap paṟruṅkaḷ enkiṟār.*

18 *Āṟāyiram I.3.8: ippaṭi ananyaprayojanarāk koṇṭu nam tiruvuṭai aṭikaḷ tam nalaṅkaḷal vaṇaṅkavē iṭaiviṭātē niṇṟu namakku bādhakamāy anādikālasamcitamāy bhagavadanubhavavirodhiyāna nammuṭaiya koṭuvinaiyellām vaṇaṅkina appōṭē mālum. inī oruṇālum oru kuṟaiyillai. nām apekṣittappaṭi em perumānai anubhavikkap peralām. ippaṭi cirakālāṅkūta balavat sādhyamāna bhaktiyogattai sādhiikkaikkuk kālāmum balamum inṟiyē antimadaśāpannarānār ilantu pōmittanaiyō ennil anta antimadaśayilēyākilum oru aṇjalimātramātal oru ukṛtimātramātal oru smṛtimātramātal avan tiṟattilē ceyya anta bhaktiyogattilum nanṟu enkiṟār.*

19 Another instance in the *Āṟāyiram* where this compound is used is in the commentary on IX.10.3, where Nammālvār advises others to do service at the feet of the deity at Tirukaṇṇapuram, as those who are *ananyaprayojana*:

Āṟāyiram IX.10.3: sarvalokeśvaraṇāy ayarvaṟum amararkaḷ adhipatiyāy iruntuvaṭtu sarvasamāśrayaṇiyanākaikkākat tirukaṇṇapurattilē eḷuntaruḷiyirunta avanukku ananyaprayojanarāyk koṇṭu aṭimaic ceyyūṅkōḷ enkiṟār.

20 Narayanan (1989:111–14) has underscored the difference between the concepts of *bhaktiyoga* (seen as derived from the *Bhagavadgītā*) and *bhakti* (derived from the *stotra* literature and referring to even simple acts of devotion such as chanting the divine name) and suggested that Piḷḷān conflates these two concepts in his commentary. Yet, much of the *Āṟāyiram* speaks for the view that Piḷḷān establishes a clear distinction between these two concepts with the ālvār clearly being unable to do *bhaktiyoga*.

21 *Āṟāyiram III.3.6: inta prāpyattaip perukaikku upāyam ētennil; sarvādhikāramāy atyanta sukaramāy irunta vēṅkaṭatuṟaivārku namaḥ enkiṟa iccollai collavē anta kainkaryapratibandhakamāna pāpaṅkaḷum kariṣyamāna pāpaṅkaḷum ellām niśṣeṣamāka dagdhamāyppōm; pinṇait tantām ukantapaṭiyellām ceyyapperalām enkiṟār.*

- 22 There are other contexts where Piḷḷā brings out the importance of the *tirumantra*. The decade X.5. for instance, is seen as explicating the importance of reciting the *mantra* as a sure means of reaching the feet of God.
- 23 *Ārāyiram VI.10:* *ippaṭi tirunāṭṭilē kēṭkumpaṭi kūpiṭṭalaittum avanaik kāṇap per āmaiyaḷē inik kāṇkaikku upāyam ivan tiruvaṭikaḷai śaraṇam pukukai pōkki maṇṇṇum illai enru pārttu avanūṭaiya kārūnyavāt salyādiguṇaṇkaḷaip paṛṛācāka collik koṇṭu pirāṭṭi puruṣakāramāka sarvalokaśaraṇyaṇāna tiruvēṇkaṭamūṭaiyān tiruvaṭikaḷai śaraṇam pukukirār.*
- 24 *Ārāyiram VI.10.1:* ... *kārūnyavātsalyāḍyanavadhikāṭiśayaśaṃkhyeyakalyāṇag-uṇaṇkaiaiyālum ... nān unakku kuṭiyaṭiyēṇkaiaiyālum un tiruvaṭikaḷilē ennai cērttaruḷavēṇum enkirār.*
- 25 *Ārāyiram VI.10.2:* ... *pratibandhakaṇkaḷāna pāpaṇkaḷ pōṇāl anrō enṇōṭu saṃśleśikkap peralāvatu enṇil samāśritarāna devarkaḷukku virodhikaḷāna asuravarkaḷait tiruvāḷ iyaik koṇṭu nirasittār pōlē enpakkaḷ uḷḷa pratibandhakattaiyūm pōkki*
- 26 *Ārāyiram VI.10.3:* ... *nirhetukamācak ceyyak kaṭavatō enṇil unṇōṭu saṃśleśikaikku ayarvaṇu amararkaḷ ularāy irukkac ceytē kevalakṛpaiyāḷē niratiśayaramaṇiyaṇilameghasadvīśācaryabhūtaḍivyaṇrūpa viśiṣṭaṇāyṅ koṇṭu enṇēṇcu niraṇap pukuntu enakku in iyaiaṇṇārp pōlē inṇam un kṛpaiyāḷē ... un tiruvaṭikaḷilē pirāṇē enṇaic cērttaruḷavēṇum enkirār.*
- 27 *Ārāyiram VI.10.4:* ... *tiruvaṭikaḷ cēkaikku enakkenṇavē apūrvamāy iruppatōr upāyattai parikalpittu avupāyattalē enṇaic cērttaruḷi aṭiyēṇūṭaiya samastaduḥkhattaiyūm pōkkīy aruḷavēṇum enkirār.*
- 28 *Ārāyiram VI.10.8:* ... *upāyaśūnyarāy iruntu vaittu ācappaṭṭāl kiṭaikkuṇṇō enṇil ar iṇūṭaiyarāṇa śakracatu mukhaindrāḍidevarkaḷum kūṭa sapariḡrahamāka vanu nāṇkaḷ upāyaśūnyarākilum unṇaik kāṇātōḷiyil dharikkamāṭṭōm enṇācip paṭṭanrō unṇaik kāṇap perukirātu.*
- 29 *TVM VI.10.10:*
akalakillēn iraiyūm enru alarmēlmaṇkaiaiy uṇaimārpā
nikaril pukaḷāy ulakammūṇṇūṭaiyay enṇaiyaḷyāṇē
nikarilamarar muṇikkaṇaṇkaḷ virumpum tiruvēṇkaṭattanē
pukalonrillā aṭiyēṇ unṇaṭikil amarntu pukuntēṇ.
- 30 *Ārāyiram VI.10.10:* *apārakārūnyamahōdadhiyāy, unṇūṭaiya guṇaṇkaḷalē asmats-vāmiyūmāy tirunāṭṭilē tvatparicaryaṭkabhogarāyūm nirupamarāyirunta nityasiddha-puruṣarkaḷuṇkūṭa sprhaṇiyamāna tirumalaiyilē anālocitaviśeṣāśeṣalokaśaraṇyaṇāyṅ koṇṭu, ninṇaruḷuvatuṇceyṭa unṇtiruvaṭikaḷai, ananya śaraṇaṇāna aṭiyēṇ ananyaprayo-janaṇāyṅ koṇṭu, periyapirāṭṭiyār puruṣakāramāka śaraṇam pukuntēṇ; ippōtē niras-tasamastapratibandhakaṇāy unṇtiruvaṭikaḷilē sarvakālamum sarvakaiṇkaryamum aṭiyēṇ paṇṇapperavēṇum enkirār.*
- 31 The word *puruṣakāra* has a long lineage in epic literature, such as the *Mahābhārata* where it is contrasted with *daiva*, meaning fate/destiny or divinity. *Puruṣakāra*, in this context, stands for the opposite, that is “human effort” (cf. Kane:1973 and Long:1983). A clear definition of *daiva* and *puruṣakāra* as contrastive terms is also given in the *Caraka-Saṃhitā III.3.30* where it is said: “*Daiva* is to be known as self-inflicted, it is that action of a previous body; By *puruṣakāra*, though, is meant that which is done here [in this life].” [*daivam ātmakṛtaṃ vidyāt karma yat paurvadaiḥikam, smṛtaḥ puruṣkārastu kriyate yadiḥāparam.*] Definitions of *daiva* and *puruṣakāra* as divine action/fate and human agency are also present in the didactic literature such as in the *Hitopadeśa* as for example in the following verses in *Hitopadeśa*, *Prastāvikā*, vs. 31–33:
udyoginaṃ puruṣasiṃham upaiti lakṣmīr daivena deyam iti kāpuruṣā vadanti /
daivam nihatyā kuru pauruṣam ātmaśaktyā yatne kṛte yadi na sidhyati ko ’tra doṣaḥ //

*yathā hyekena cakrena na rathasya gatiḥ bhavet /
evaṃ puruṣakāreṇa vinā daivam na sidhyati //*
tathā ca /

*pūrvajanmakṛtaṃ karma taddaivam iti kathyate /
tasmāt puruṣakāreṇa yatnaṃ kuryād atandritaḥ //*

Puruṣakāra, used in a technical sense to mean “mediator” of the Goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī, does not appear in the writings of Rāmānuja. It has been suggested that it first makes its appearance in a single verse of Parāśara Bhaṭṭar’s on the *Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam* but comes into frequent usage only with the *Āṇḍiyiram* (cf. Pratap Kumar 1997:73–74, 82–83). In contrast to this view (first articulated by Carman 1974 and Narayanan 1987) it has been suggested by Narasimhachary (1998:218, 229) that the Goddess is already called *puruṣakāra* in *Pāñcarātra Saṃhitās* such as the *Viṣvaksena Saṃhitā*.

- 32 For specific reference to the temple — *kōyil* — in the *TVM*, see VIII.6.4–5 on *Tirukkiṭṭāṇam*, IX.2.1 on *Tiruppiḷṅkuṭi* and X.1.5 on *Tirumōkūr*.

- 33 Oberhammer (1999:159): “Zwar ist in diesem Zusammenhang noch nicht vom späteren Viśiṣṭādvaita-Theologem von der “Herabkunft” Viṣṇus in Form des Kultbildes (*arcāvatāra*) die Rede. Dieses scheint selbst Rāmānuja nicht bekannt gewesen zu sein oder von ihm jedenfalls nicht vertreten worden zu sein.”

- 34 *TVM* V.2.8a–b:

*irukkum iraiyiruttuṇṇa evvulakukkun taṃmūrti
niruttināṇ teyvaṅkaḷaka atteyvanāyakaṇ taṇē.*

- 35 Oberhammer quotes the *Parama Saṃhitā*, which recommends that God is to be worshipped only “with a form” (*mūrtimān*) and never formless (*amūrti*).

Thus, Oberhammer (1999:154) on *Parama Saṃhitā* 3, 4–5: “[doch] will ich Dir aus dem Wunsch, [dir] Gutes [zu erweisen] sagen, welche Verehrung des Gottes der Götter derartig ist. Höre! Gestalthaft ist er zu verehren. Die Verehrung eines Gestaltlosen gibt es nicht. Seine Gestalten zum Zwecke des Rituals sind Ursache [seiner] Gnadenerweise für alle.”

The text reads: *yādrśaṃ devadevasya pūjanam tadvidhaṃ śruṇu //* 4 *// mūrtiman eva pūjyo ’sav amūrter na tu pūjanam / karyarthaṃ mūrtayas tasya lokanugraha-hetavaḥ //* 5 *//* (Oberhammer 1999:155).

- 36 The theme of an *ālvār* “taking refuge” with the deity of a particular temple is a recurrent one not just in the commentaries on the *TVM*. Thus, for example, the commentary on the *Periyatirumoli* (*Periyatirumoli vyākhyāna*) interprets at least two instances in the text as ones where Tirumaṅkai ālvār takes refuge with the deity. These are *Periyatirumoli* I.6.9 and IV.6 on the deities at Naimicāraṇyam and Tirunāṅkūr respectively.

- 37 Thus Nāṇacuntaram (1989:127) cites the following verses where the vocabulary of the *Āṇḍiyiram* is identical with that of the *Gadyatraya*. These verses are: I.1.1, VIII.1.1, VIII.3.9, VIII.5.7 and IX.3.7. Narayanan (1989:147) too remarks on Piḷḷān’s debt to Rāmānuja: “The characteristic Sanskrit phrases of Rāmānuja are so frequent in Piḷḷān’s comments that they seem at many points to overwhelm the Tamil framework of the sentences. Not only are many Tamil words in the poem glossed over with Sanskrit but at times the sentences are filled with long Sanskrit compounds very close to Rāmānuja’s phraseology.”

- 38 *ŚG*, v.5: *aśaraṇyasaraṇya ananyaśaraṇas tvatpādāravindayugalaṃ śaraṇam ahaṃ prapadye //*

- 39 *ŚG*, v.2: *pāramārthikabhagavaccaraṇāravindayugalaikāntikātyantika parabhakti-parajñānaparamabhaktikṛtaparipūrṇānavaratānityaviśadatamaananyaprayojanānavadhikātiśayapriyabhagavadanubhavaajanitānavadhikātiśayaprītikāritāśeṣāvasthoci tāśeṣaśeṣatākaratirūpanityakainkāryaprāptyapekṣayā pāramārthikī bhagavad-caraṇāravindaśaraṇagatiḥ yathāvasthitā aviratāstu me.*

40 TVM I.5.5:

*māṇēy nōkki maṭavālai mārivil koṇṭāy mātavā
kūṇē citaiyav uṇṭaiyil nīrattil teṇṭāy kōvintā
vāṇār cōti manivaṇṇā matucūtā niyarulāy un
tēṇē malarum tiruppātam cērumāru vinaiyēṇē.*

- 41 *Āṛāyiram I.5.5: ippaṭi emperumanuṭaiya sauṣīlyattālē ālvār vaṣīkṭarāyirukkac ceytē
piṇpum tāṇē ceṇru saṃślēṣikkil ivar paṇṭupōlē tammuṭaiya anarhatānusaṃdhānattālē
akaluvār; ivartāmē nammōtē saṃślēṣikkavēṇum eṇru ēravāṅkiyirukka ivarum avaṇai
apekṣikkirār. eṇṇāṇē eṇṇil lakṣmīkaṭākṣatatsaṃślēṣaikabhogaṇākaiyalē mādhavaṇ
eṇṇum tirunāmattaiyutaiyaṇāyiruntuvaittu āsṛitaparitraṇārthamāka manuṣyasa-
jatiyaṇāy vantu pīraṇtaruḷi āsṛitar pakkaluḷḷa avadyam pāratē avarkaḷai viṣayikarittu
piṇṇai tadgatadoṣaṅkaḷaip pōkkum svabhāvaṇāy, tiryagyonigatamāna jantukkaḷukkum
rakṣakanāy, svatejjasinālē āpūritamāna nikhilabhuvanaṅkaḷaiyum tirunāṭṭaiyum
utaiyayāy nirmalamāy ramaṇīyamāna divyarūpattai uṭaiyaiyāy āsṛitavīrodhinirasanasv-
abhāvaṇāy iruntavaṇē. un tēṇē malarum tiruppādtattai vinaiyēṇ cērumāru arulāy eṅkirār.*
- 42 *Āṛāyiram V.10.0: ippaṭi cirivaramaṅkalanakar tirukkuṇṭantait tiruvallavalkaḷil empe-
rumāṇoṭu yathāmanoratham saṃślēṣikka perāmaiyaḷē avasannarāna ālvār empe-
rumāṇ sṛīmathuraiyilē vantu vasudevar tirumakaṇāyp pīraṇtaruḷina paṭiyaiyum
sakalamānujanayanaviṣayaṭāṅgatanāy k koṇṭu vaḷarntaruḷina paṭiyaiyum aṣesajana-
manonayanahāriyāy atidaivātimānuṣamāna divyaceṣṭitaṅkaḷaip paṇṇiṇa paṭiyaiyum
maṇṇum matsyakūrmādirūpeṇāvatīrṇaṇāy cceytaruḷina divyaceṣṭitaṅkaḷaiyum kāṇap
perrillēṇ; inī avarrai anusaṃdhikka vēṇum eṇru pukku mikavum śīthilānāka ninrēṇ;
anta śāithilyattaip pōkki anusaṃdhikka vallēṇām paṭi paṇṇiyaruḷavēṇum eṇru empe-
rumāṇai śaraṇamāka paṇṇi muṭikkirār.*

43 For example:

V.10.1d: *unnai eṇrukol cērvativē*

V.10.2d: *unnai eṇru talaip peyvaṇavē*

V.10.9d: *koṭiya valvinaiyēṇ unnai eṇrukol kūṭuvatē.*

44 On this see Narayanan (1989:86–89).

- 45 *Āṛāyiram V.10.1: ...He [the ālvār] calls out to our Lord, ‘When shall I reach you
whose beauty is unfathomable.’*

*Āṛāyiram V.10.1: ... aparicchedyamāna āḷakaiyutaiya unṇaik kiṭṭuvatēṇrōv eṇru empe-
rumāṇaik kurittuk kūppiṭukirār.*

*Āṛāyiram V.10.2: He says, ‘You should grace me and make it possible for me to expe-
rience you.’*

Āṛāyiram V.10.2: ... unnai anubhavikka vallēṇāmpaṭi paṇṇi arulavēṇum eṅkirār.

- 46 These interpretations of Pillān are gone into by Narayanan (1989:159–79).

- 47 Another commentarial passage at the very end of the text where this exact phrase
appears again also reinforces such a reading. In the commentary on X.2.5 the *ālvār*,
addressing other devotees, says: “You too, thus, saying the virtuous divine name,
having become those whose obstacles have been vanquished, reaching
Tiruvānantapuram, should do service to our Lord with all your sensory instruments,
external and internal.”

*Āṛāyiram X.2.5: nīṅkaḷum aṇṇāṇē puṇyarūpamāna tirunāmattaic colli niras-
tasamasta pratibandakarāyt tiruvānantapurattilē pōypukku bāhyāntassarvakara-
ṇaṅkaḷāḷum emperumānukku aṭimaic ceyyūṅkōḷ.*

- 48 The *nityasiddhas* are also called the *nityasūris* in Śrīvaiṣṇavism. The *sūris* are referred
to already in the *R̥g-Veda* as, for example, in *R̥g-Veda I.22.20: tad viṣṇoḥ paramam
padam sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ*. In the Vedic literature, the *sūri* is a *hotṛ*, a priest. Gonda
(1963:29) points out that the *sūris* are patrons of poets and institutors of sacrifices,
possessing a praeternormal or spiritual vision (cf. *paśyanti* in above quote) which
enables them always to see the highest place of Viṣṇu. In Śrīvaiṣṇavism they are seen

as part of the divine society surrounding Viṣṇu in Vaikuṇṭha and include Ananta the serpent and Garuḍa the divine bird. They are eternally outside the transmigratory cycle and possessed of unlimited knowledge — as the following succinct definition of them in the 17th century text *Yatīndramataḍṭīpikā* shows:

Yatīndramataḍṭīpikā, jīvanirūpaṇāvātārah: nityā nāma kadācid api bhagavadabhimataviruddhācaraṇābhāvena jñānaśaṅkocaprasaṅgarahitā ananta-garuḍaḍṣivaksenādayaḥ. tēṣāṃ adhikāraḍṣiṣā īśvarasya nityecchaiva anāditvena vyavasthitāḥ. eṣāṃ avatāras tu bhagavadavatāravat svēcchaya.

- 49 *Ārāyiram* I.3.8: ... *avaṇaittoḷavē svaviṣayakainkaryapratibandhakamāna unkaḷ vīṇakalaip pōkki nitya-siddhamāna antak kainkaryarūpamahāsampattai unkaḷukkut tantaruḷum*
- 50 The word *vinai* as referring to the Sanskrit *karman* had already become part of the theological vocabulary of early Tamil literature. Thus, for example, in the 7th century Buddhist Tamil text *Maṇimēkalai* the compound *vinaiṇiḷai* means “karmic causality. On this see Schalk (1995:20).
- 51 TVM.II.6.6b: *muṇṇait tīvīṇaikaḷ* muḷuvērarintanaṇ yān.
- 52 *Ārāyiram* II.6.6: *ippaṭi unṇai sarvakaraṇaṇkaḷālum anubhavittu enṇuṭaiya samastapratibandhakaṇkaḷaiyum pōkkinēn*
- 53 TVM.V.4.1d: *ārelē valvīṇaiyēṇ* āvikāppāriṇiyē
V.4.3d: *māyum vakaiyariyēṇ valvīṇaiyēṇ peṇṇirantē*
V.4.5d: *perenṇai māyātāl valvīṇaiyēṇ pinnirē*
V.4.7d: *tippāla valvīṇaiyēṇ teyvaṇkāl enceykēṇō*.
- 54 TVM.V.4.2d: *pāviyēṇ* neṇcamē nīyum pāṇkallayē.
- 55 TVM.VIII.1.2a: *kāṇumāraruḷāy enṇenṇē kalaṇkik kaṇṇanīralamara vīṇaiyēṇ*
VIII.1.4b: *ukantamarnta ceykai unṇaiyāi arivonṇum caṇkippan vīṇaiyēṇ*
VIII.1.7b: *ciṇanta niṇtanmai atuvituvutuveṇṇu arivonṇum caṇkippan vīṇaiyēṇ*.
- 56 TVM.VIII.1.1c: *pāviyēṇraṇnai aṭukinra kamalakaṇṇatu ṛpavaḷavāy maṇiyē*.
- 57 cf. *Ārāyiram* I.4.2, I.7.2, IV.4.3, V.4.3, V.6.9 among others where *vinai* is called *pāpa*.
- 58 *Ārāyiram* III.3.6: *inta prāpyattai perukkaikku upāyam ēteṇṇil sarvādhikāramay atyan-tasukaramāy irunta vēṇkataturaiṇārku namaḥ eṇkiṇa iccollai collavē, antak kainkaryapratibandhakamaṇṇa pāpaṇkaḷum kariṣyamāṇa pāpaṇkaḷum ellām niṣṣeṣamāka daghdamāy ppōm; pinṇai ttantām ukantapaṭiyellām ceyyap perālām eṇkiṇār*.
- 59 *Ārāyiram* VII.1.7: *nī enṇuṭaiya pratibandhakamāṇa pāpattaip pōkki, niravadhikabh-ogyabhūtanāna unṇai eṇakku bhujiṇkat tantaruḷaṇārṇpōlē*
- 60 *Ārāyiram* VI.3.8: *taṇ tiruvaṭikaḷai prāpikkaikku virodhiyāṇa samastapāpaṇkaḷaiyum pōkki āśritarait taṇ tiruvaṭikaḷiṇ nilalilē vaittaruḷum svabhāvaṇāy* ...
Ārāyiram VI.9.4: ... *unṇaik kāṇkaikku virodhiyāṇa eṇpakkaliluḷḷa pāpaṇkaḷai niṣṣeṣamāka nīyē nirasittaruḷi* ...
Ārāyiram IX.10.9: *ippaṭi avaṇ tiruvaṭikaḷaiy āśrayikkavē bhagavadanubhavavirodhiyāṇa uttara-pūrvāghaṇkaḷ ellām pōm*
- 61 TVM.III.2.3c: *pollāvākkaiyēṇ puṇarvinai* arukkal arā.
- 62 *Ārāyiram* III.2.3: *unṇālallatu arukka muṭiyātirukkiṇa inta prakṛtisambandhattai nīyē aruttu nāṇ unṇaic cēruvatoru viraku pārttaruḷāy*
- 63 TVM.V.1.6a: *puṇamarak kaṭṭik koṇṭu iru valvīṇaiyār kumaikkum*.
- 64 *Ārāyiram* V.1.6: *tammuṭaiya inta dehasaṁbandhapratibandhakam pōyirratēṇṇu tōṛṇ umpaṭi tamakku emperumaṇ tanṇaiy uḷḷapaṭiyē kaṭṭiyaruḷa*
- 65 *Ārāyiram* VII.2.0: ... *tiruvēṇkaṭamuṭaiyāṇōṭu saṁśleṣikka perāta vyasanattālum tatsaṁśleṣapratibandhakapraṇṭīdarśanaṇaitavyasanattālum* ... *tām periyaperumālai nōkkik kūppiṭukirā pācurattai anyāpadeṣattālē pēcukirār*.
- 66 *Ārāyiram* VIII.6.0: ... *tammuṭaiya prakṛtisambandhānusamdhānattālē* atyantam avasannarāy *prakṛtisambandhattaip* pōkkiyarūḷi unṭiruvaṭikaḷilē *ennaic* cērttaruḷa-vēṇum *enṇu* cakravarttit tirumakaṇai nōkkik kūppiṭukirār.

- 67 As Narayanan (1989:119) remarks, “It remains true, however, that the very verse that Piḷḷān sees as a climax of Nammālvār’s spiritual journey is turned by the commentator’s own interpretation into an apparent anticlimax.”
- 68 *Āṟāyiram VII.1: ippaṭi emperumāṇay saraṇam pukku ennuṭaiya prakṛtisambandhattai pōkki ennai aṭimai koḷḷa vēṇṭum enru apeṣikkacceyṭēyum avanukku tammūṭaiya tiruvuṭampil uḷḷa lobhattālum, ivaraik koṇṭe tiruvāymoliyai muṭikkat tiruvuḷḷamākaiyālum ipprakṛtisambandhattait tavirttaruḷāmaiyaḷē, paṇṭup pōlē indriyaṅkaḷ naṭuvē tām irukkīrapaṭiyaik kaṇṭu, ivar tammūṭaiya karaṇaṅkaḷ prākṛta viṣayavimukhamāy bhagavadpravaṇamāy irukkac ceṭṭēyum viṣaya-pravaṇakaraṇasajāṭṭiyamākaiyālum iṇṇavumvara anādikālamellām viṣayapraṇamāy bhagavadanubhavavirodhīyākaiyālum, ippōṭum abhimatasamśleṣa-pratibandhakamākaiyālum, heyamākaiyālē bhagavadsamśleṣānarhamākaiyālum ivarṇiṇuṭaiya darśanamātrattālē viṣayaṅkaḷilē ākruṣyamānaraip pōlē aṭimātrabhītarāy, emperumāṇaik kāṇap peṇṇā vyasanattālē pīḍyamānarumāy koṇṭu emperumāṇai nōkki ikkaraṇasannidhānattait tavirpittu aruḷavallaiyāy iruntu-vaittu tavirraṇuḷāmaiyaḷē nī ivarraiṇiṭṭu ennai himsittu uṇ tiruvaṭikaḷiṇ cērāṭapaṭi paṇṇukiṇa itṭal unakku enna prayojanam uṇṭu. paramakāruṇikaṇē ivarṇiṇiṇum uṇ tiruvaṭikaḷilē ennai vāṅkiy aruḷāy enru tiruvaṭikaḷaip pūntuk koṇṭu kiṭantu emperumāṇaik kāṇapperāta vyasanattālum tadsamśleṣapratibandhakaprakṛtidarśana-janitavyasanattālumāka aśokavanikaiyil pirāṭṭi kūppiṭṭārp pōlē kūppiṭṭukīṇ.*
- 69 *Gūṭabhāṣya, introd: svocitavidhavicitrānantabhogyabhogopakaraṇabhogasthā-nasaṃrddhānant- āścaryānantamahāvibhavanāntaparimāṇanīyaniravadyākṣaraparamavyomanilayaḥ / vividhavicitrānantabhogyabhokṛtvargaparipūrṇākhilajagadudaya-vibhavalayalīlaḥ / paraṃ brahma puruṣottamo nārāyaṇo brahmādisthāvarāntam akhilaṃ jagat sṛṣṭvā svena rūpeṇāvasthitaḥ / brahmādidēva- manuṣyāṇaṃ dhyānārādhanāgocaro apy apārakaruṇyasauśīlyaudāryavātsalyamahodadhiḥ svayam eva rūpaṃ tattatsajāṭṭiyasamsthānam svasvabhāvam ajahad eva kurvan teṣu teṣvavafṛyāvafṛya taistair ārādhitāḥ / tattatiṣṭānurūpaṃ dharmārthakāmamokṣākhyam phalaṃ prayacchan*
- 70 *Āṟāyiram X.7.4: emuṭaiya prakṛtiyullē pukuntu ivvātmāvai bhujittaruḷukaiyumanriyē sarvajagadīśvaraṇāy iruntān; ennuṭaiya prakṛtitanmāyūnkuṭat taṇakku bhogyamākoṇṭu oru kṣaṇamum kaiṇiṭṭukīṇ; ippaṭi ennuṭiḷḷa samśleṣam paṇṇuṭaiyān deśamēṭo enru tēṭik koṇṭu tirumalaiyilē vantu pukuntu tāṇ karuṭinapaṭiyē aṅkē samśleṣittu pṛitāṇāy inta samruddhiyellām vīḷaivittatu tirumalaiyirē enru koṇṭu tirumalaiyaiyum ennuṇṇirum uṭalum pōlē taṇakku bhogyamākaḷ koṇṭu kaiṇiṭṭukīṇ; ennuṇṇiraiyum uṭalaiyum tirumalaiyaiyum anubhavittu pṛitāṇāṇ*
- 71 Srinivasachari (1970:197).
- 72 Thus Hardy (370): “Abstracting further, a religious humanism or anthropocentricity has appeared as characteristic of Southern civilization. It is only because the man of flesh and blood remained aware of himself as such and retained this self-awareness as something naturally given, unquestionable, and positive, that the emotional religion entails the pain of separation ... the here always remains essential: to be born (on earth) and become the servant of the Cowherd has indeed the splendour of the real world.” Also Subbiah (1991:74): “the importance of the classical Tamil poems lies in the fact that they offer us an unusual glimpse into the operation of the ideal of affirming life in this world as a valid means of experience in a specific historical setting that preceded the debates between renunciation and devotion.”
- 73 *Āṟāyiram VII.1.7: ātalāl umuṭaiya kṛpaiyālē nī ennuṭaiya pratibandhakamāna pāpataip pōkki niravadhi kabhogyabhūtanāna unnai enakku bhujikka tantaruḷinārpōlē inṇamum uṇ kṛpaiyālē nīyē intak karaṇa-sambandhattai pōkki untiruvaṭikaḷilē vāṅkiyarūḷavēṇṭum enkiṇ.*
- 74 *Āṟāyiram IX.10.5: ippaṭi bhaktiyogattālē avanai āśrayikka kṣamaranriyē taṇ tiruvaṭikaḷaiyē upāyamākap parrinārkku orupaṭiyālanriyē ellāppaṭiyālum rakṣakaṇāy*

appōtē avarkaḷai ipprakṛtiyai vīṭuvittu tirunāṭṭilē koṇṭupōyṭ divyaparakṛtikalākki avarkaḷōṭē saṃśleṣittāllalatu dharikkamāṭṭatirukkac ceytē avarkaḷukku ipprakṛtisambandham anādivāsanaīyālē sahyamāy irukkaiyālē kṛptakālattilē ipprakṛti tāṇē vīṭṭāl tirunāṭṭaik koṭuttarūḷi

- 75 Ārāyiram V.7.1: enakku ivaiyonṛum allaiyēyākilum niravadhikabhogyabhūtanāyirunta unṇai vīṭṭu orupaṭiṭyālum nāṇ dharikkamāṭṭāmaiṭyālum aṭiyēnai viṣayīkarikkaikkāka nī cirivaramaṇkalanakarilē vantu pukuntaruḷukaīyālum unakku aṭimaiyāna ivvātmāvai nī pōkitil ilavu unṇatākaiyālum aṭiyēnaip pokattaruḷavoṇṇātu; ātalāl aṭiyēnai viṣayīkarittaruḷavēṇum enkirār.
- 76 Ārāyiram V.7.2: untiruvaṭimalarkalaip perrēnallēn perukaikkīṭāna upāyam uṭaiyēnallēn unṇaik kānum avāvil vīṭṭu nāṇ inīnēl oru upāyam anuṣṭhikka kṣamanallēn. ākilum aśokavanikaiyil pirāṭṭiyuṭaiya pratibandhakattaiyūm anṛu pōkkināp pōlē aṭiyēnuṭaiya pratibandhakattaiyūm nīyē nirhetukamākap pōkki tamiyēnukku aruḷāy enkirār.
- 77 Ārāyiram V.7.3: ippaṭi nirhetukamāka ummuṭaiya apekṣittattai ceytāl prayojanam en
- 78 Ārāyiram V.7.3: ... tvadviṣayaṭṭānārahitatayāvastubhūtanāna emmai tvadviṣayaṭṭānavatayā vastuvāy tvatkainkariyākaratīyūmāyirukkumpaṭi paṇṇiyaruḷīṛru enpakkaḷ enṇap prayojanaṇkoḷḷukaikkāka; oru prayojanāpeṣaiyāl ceytaruḷināyallaiyirē unṇuṭaiya niratiṣayaudāryakāruṇyādikaḷālē ceytaruḷināy attanaīyirē inṇam kuṛaiyūm appaṭiyē ceytaruḷāyenkirār.
- 79 Ārāyiram V.7.4: ippaṭi svaprayojana nirapekṣamākavaṇṇō āśritasaṃrakṣaṇam paṇṇiyaruḷīṛru; ānapinṇu aṭiyēnuṭaiya apekṣittattaiyūm appaṭiyē ceytaruḷāy enkirār.
- 80 Ārāyiram V.7.5: ummuṭaiya apekṣitamperukaikku uṭalānavupāyattai nīr ceyyalākātō?....
- 81 Ibid: un tiruvaṭikaikkīṭṭukaikk iṭāyiruppatōr upāyam emmār ceyyamūṭiyātu. inittān ceyyavēṇṭuvatonṛuṇṭō? madekabhogyarāyiruppārkelḷārkum kaṇṇālē kaṇṭu anubhaviḷkālām paṭi cirivaramaṇkala-nagarilē pukuntiruntōmirē ... atu nāṇuḷ kaṇṭēn enakku atu amaiyātenkirār.
- 82 Ārāyiram V.7.6: marṛum umakku ceyyavēṇṭuvatu en?
- 83 Ibid: aṭiyēn toḷa vantarūlavēṇum.
- 84 Ārāyiram X.8: ippaṭi abhiniviṣṭhanāy koṇṭu enṇōṭu kalantu parimārukaikku hetuven?
- 85 Ārāyiram X.8: anṇanē abhiniviṣṭhanāy irunta avanālum parikṛptamāna hetukkaḷil oru hetuvum en pakkalilē uṇṭākac collavoṇṇātu; inī en pakkal adhyāropittuc collap pārkkilum.
- 86 Ārāyiram X.8.2: ... akāraṇamāka inṛu vantu inipperrēn enṛu neṇcu niraiyap pukuntān
- 87 Ārāyiram X.8.9: tiruppērnagarān inṛennai svaviṣayaṭṭānavānākki tanṇai enṇuḷḷē vaikaikku hetuven? itarku munpu ippaṭi ceyyātolikaikku hetuven?
- 88 Narayanan (1987:126) suggests that the compound nirhetukakṛpā, used by later commentators, is not found in Piḷḷān. While this is the case, Piḷḷān does use the term nirhetuka to refer to God's agency as, for example on the verse I.1.1. On this see the next Section 4.7.
- 89 cf. chapter 3.2.3.
- 90 Ārāyiram I.1.1: aprākṛtasvāsādharaṇadiviyarūpabhūṣaṇāyudhamahiṣiparijanasthānaviṣṭhanāy nikhila-jagadudaya vibhavadilīlanāy irunta paramapuruṣaṇāy uḷḷapaṭiyē ālvār tām tammuṭaiya tiruvuḷḷattālē anubhavitṭu avanubhavaṇitāmāna niravadhikapṛṭiṭiyālē avanai anubhavitṭappaṭiyē pēcukirār. aṣeṣa-doṣapratyanīkamāy te ye śatam ityanukramatīnālē niratiṣayadaśāśiraskamāka abhyasyamānamāy irunta ānandādyasamkhyeyakalyāṇaṣaṇamahodadhiyāy inta ānandādikalyāṇaṣaṇaḷkaḷaiyūṭaiyanāna tān mēḷe pommūṇāy nāṇināp pōlē nirhetukamāka enakku tan tirattil aṭṭānagandham illātorupaṭi tanṇai uḷḷapaṭi arivittu tan tiruvaṭikaḷilē niravadhikabhaktiyaiy uṇṭākkina immahāguṇattaiy uṭaiyanāy inta kalyāṇaṣaṇa kaḷaiyūṭaiyanāna tanṇai svabhāvata eva

*nirastasamastadośarāy askhalitajñānarāy iruntuḷḷa šeṣaśeṣāśanavainateyaprabh-
rtyasamkhyeyadiv yapuruṣarkaḷukkuk koṭuttut koṇṭirukkiṛa paramaudāryattai uṭaiyaṇāy
irunta emperumāṇṭaiya āśritajanasaṁstaduḷḷhāp nodanasvabhāvamāna tiruvaṭi
malarkaḷilē sarvadeśasarvakālasarvāvasthocitasarvaśeṣavṛttiyaiyum paṇṇi ujjīvi enru
tamm uṭaiya tiruvuḷḷattaik kuṛittu aruḷic ceykiṛār.*

- 91 Starobinski (1971:77–78). Also see Ramanujan (1999:250) where he states of Nammālvār’s poetry: “It is almost paradoxical that Nammālvār, a poet who puts so much of himself into his poems, should draw heavily upon the *akam* tradition [of Caṅkam poetry], because in classical *akam* poetry the poet is completely concealed from his audience by the veils of internal narratives and an elaborate repertoire of conventional situations and images. Śrīvaiṣṇava commentators, however, attempted to neutralise the distance separating poet from poem in this genre by identifying Nammālvār with the female character–narrators especially with the heroine to whom they gave the name Parāṅkuśa Nāyaki.”
- 92 Thus as Cutler (1987:7) points out, at a certain level, for the native exegete, “All too often the saints’ poems are seen as *no more than* reflections of their human emotional basis. A saint is not supposed to exercise a studied skill in the manipulation of poetic forms. To the contrary, a bhakti poet is entitled to saintly status only if he or she composes without premeditation. To paraphrase the words of devotee—critics, ‘poems should well up and pour out of the poet’s heart like tears.’
- 93 TVM VII.9, X.10, for example.
- 94 TVM V.4, VI.10 and VIII.10 etc.
- 95 TVM V.9, VI.10 etc.
- 96 TVM V.8, VII.2 etc.

5 EPIC SURRENDER

- 1 The *Tiruvirutta vyākhyāna*, verse 99 of Periyavāccān Piḷḷai states that Vedānti was brought to Bhāṭṭar by Tirumāḷicai Tāsar and thus differs from the account of how the meeting between Bhāṭṭar and Nañciyar first took place according to the traditional hagiographical sources. The latter, beginning with the *Āṛāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparāpirapāvam* (1975:336–45) state that it is Bhāṭṭar who goes in search of Vedānti in order to convert him.
- 2 For this standard account of Nañciyar’s life, see the *Āṛāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparāpirapāvam* (1975: 336–71).
- 3 *Periyatirumuṭi aṭaiyu* (1975:590): *ivar ceytaruḷiya granthaṅkaḷ tiruvāymoliḷḷu vyākhyānam onpatināyiram, tiruppāvaikkum vyākhyānam īṛāyirappaṭi, tiruvantātikaḷukkum, kaṇṇinuṇṇiruttāmpukkum, tiruppallāṇṇukkum urai, rahasyatrayavivaraṇamāka nūreṭṭu, śaraṇāgatgadyavyākhyānam, tiruvāymoli nūruvvyākhyānam ceykaīyālē nañciyar śatābhisekham paṇṇinār enru prasiddhamirē.*
- 4 For a detailed description and investigation into the issue of Nañciyar’s allegedly lost oeuvre, which is said to include certain Sanskrit works, see Veṅkaṭakuruṣṇaṇ (1996:51–80). On the general problem of the discrepancies among the various Śrīvaiṣṇava bibliographies regarding the works of the post-Rāmānuja *ācāryas* see my 2000 preface to the “*Tattvaviveka* of Piḷḷai Lokācārya”.
- 5 Here are some examples:
Onpatināyiram I.4.11: niḡamattil ittiruvāymoli karrār tirunāṭṭil muktaprāpyamāṇa niraṭiśaya sampattai peruvār eṅkiṛār.
Onpatināyiram IX.1.11: niḡamattil, ittiruvāymoli karrār emperumāṇai niraṇtaramāka bhujiḷḷkap peruvār eṅkiṛār.
- 6 These would include the 1930s Kuruṣṇasvāmi Ayyaṅkār edition and the 1970s Prativāṭi Payaṅkaram Aṇṇaṅkārācāriyār edition, which I have used.

- 7 *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, VI.1.40:
kalau jagatpatiṃ viṣṇuṃ sarvasraṣṭāraṃ īśvaram /
nārcayanti maitreya pāṣaṇḍopahatā janāḥ ||.
- 8 *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, V.3.2:
tato 'khilajagatpadma bodhāyācyutabhānunā /
devakīpūrvasaṃdhyāyāṃ āvirbhūtaṃ mahātmanā ||.
- 9 *Oṃpatināyiram* avatārikai: ... ippatiṃyirukkira samsārattilē tato 'khilajagatpadma ityādi ślokatir collukirapaṭiye jagattil aṇṇānāndhakāramellām nīnki lōkamellām vāḷumpatiyākac cetanar paṇṇiṇa bhāgyattālē ālvār tirunakarilē vantu tiruvavatāram paṇṇiyarūḷi
- 10 *Oṃpatināyiram* avatārikai: ... bhagavatprasādattālē sāṅsātkrtamāna bhagavadsvārūparūpaṇavibhūṭikaḷaiy uṭaiyarāy ... jñānikaḷukkum agreśararāy (sic) ... ilaiyaperumāippōlē janmaprabhṛti emperumāṇaiyē dhārakādikaḷāka uṭaiyarāy, aṇaṇaipiriyil dhariyāta tanmaiyaarumāy ... nīrastanikhilasāmsārikasva bhāvarumāy ... bhagavadvyatiriktapurūṣārthaprastāvattālē veruvum svabhāvarumāy ... arjunadaśara- thādikaḷaiippōlē kālatattvamuḷḷatanaṇaiyum emperumāṇai anubhavittālum tṛpti pīravātē mēṇmēḷaṇak kaṭalpōlē perukukira tammuṭaiya abhiniveśattālē kabaḷi[kavalī]kṛtacitacitīśvaratattvatrayattaiyum uṭaiyaarumāy, pīrāṭṭimār pakkaḷātāl, anta lakṣmaṇabharatādi pakkaḷātāl sṛgōpimār pakkaḷātāl tammuṭaiya ippatiḷkku sarvathāsāmyam kāṇavoṇṇātapaṭiyāna prabhāvattaiyuṭaiyarāy ... sṛīprahlād- ālvānai sādhuḷakḷukkellām upamānabhūmiyākac conṇāppōlē ellārukkum tammuṭaiya ōrō vakaiyilē upamānabhūmiyumāy ... bhagavadguṇaṇakḷukku tōrru aṭimaikoḷḷuvatu pukuvatum ceytu ... bhagavad aikāntyasīmāiyumāy ... eppērppaṭṭa aṭimaṇiyum ceytāllatu dhariyātapaṭiyaiyuṭaiyaarumāy, tammuṭaiya sannidhimātrattālē ellārūṭaiya ahaṃkāramakārarupamāna avidyākhyatamassaip pōkki jñāna bhaktikaḷaip pīrappittu avarkaḷai bhagavatkaṇkaryalakṣaṇamokṣattukku nilavarākkum svabhāvattaiy uṭaiyarāyk
- 11 The citations, in order of appearance, are as follows:
Rāmāyaṇa: *Bālakāṇḍa* 3.4, 18.27; *Ayodhyākāṇḍa* 53.31, 31.5, 3.29, 58.31, 31.25 and *Kiṣkindhākāṇḍa* 4.12. *Bhagavadgītā*: 7.3, 10.18 and 7.18 and *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*: 6.1.40, 5.3.2 and 1.15.15. There is a single citation from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11.2.29.
- 12 *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bālakāṇḍa* 3.4:
hasitaṃ bhāṣitaṃ caiva gatirāvacca ceṣṭitaṃ /
tatsarvaṃ dharmavīryeṇa yathāvat samprapaśyati ||.
- 13 *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bālakāṇḍa* 3.1:
śrutvā vastu samagraṃ tad dharmārthasaṃhitaṃ hitam /
vyaktam anveṣate bhūyo yad vṛttaṃ tasya dhīmataḥ ||.
- 14 *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bālakāṇḍa* 3.2:
upasṛgyodakam saṃyak munih sthitvā kṛtāñjaliḥ /
prācīnāgreṣu dharbeṣu dharmenānveṣate gatim ||.
- 15 *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bālakāṇḍa* 3.6:
tataḥ paśyati dharmātmā tat sarvaṃ yogamāsthitaḥ /
purā yat tatra nirvṛttaṃ pānāvāmalakam tathā ||.
- 16 Gonda (1963:40–42). cf. also Huberman (1994:18): “Nārada is described here as ‘the most excellent knower of speech’ (*vāgvidāṃ varam*). This epithet associates him with the power of Vedic speech (*Vāc*) and links the episode of Vālmīki’s poetic empowerment with the lineage of Vedic seer–poets and their inspired visions. Nārada, furthermore, is known as the messenger of the gods. His appearance immediately indicates an authorized means of transmission which will validate whatever is to come. Vālmīki will not produce poetry from his own inspiration or personal, creative power, but will be empowered”
- 17 Hence Gonda (1963:51): “As Bhaṭṭa Tanta says ... one may have the vision (*darśanam*) and only be a seer (*ṛṣiḥ*), but one becomes a poet (*kaviḥ*) only when one renders that vision into a beautiful language (*varṇanā*).”

- 18 Discussing *Nirukta* 1.20 — *sākṣātkṛta dharmāṇa ṛṣayo* — Wezler (2001:226) remarks: “The passage of the *Nirukta* seems to be the first occurrence in a literary work of a compound formed from *sākṣāt* and the root *kṛ*” and adds that this compound came to be understood by post-Yāska intellectuals to mean “to see [something] with one’s own eyes”, and “to denote the direct and complete perception of an object.”
- 19 Ibid: footnote 57.
- 20 *Onpatināyiram avatārikai*: ... *śokavegattāle pīranta mā niṣāda ityādi ślokaṁānatu macchandād eva eṅkira ślokattiṇ paṭiyē brahmāviṇ prasādatattālē sarvalakṣaṇo-petamānāp pōlē bhagavatprasādam aṭiyāka pīranta ipprabandhaṅkaḷukku ivarril kūṭatatillai*.
cf. Narayanan (1993:97) who quotes the thirteenth century Teṅkalai text *Ācāryahrdayam* of Ālakiya Maṇavāḷapperumāl Nāyaṇār who states of Nammālvār, “Since he sees, he is called a *ṛṣi*, since he possesses the disposition of thinking silently (*manana*), he is called a *muni* (“the quiet one”); a *kavi* (a poet) is one who has insight into the books (*nūl*).”
- 21 *Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa* 53.31:
na ca sītā tvayā hīnā na cāham api rāghava /
muhūrtam api jīvāvo jalān matsyāvivodhhrītau //
Neither Sītā nor I, O Rāghava, can survive for even a short while without you, anymore than fish removed from water.
- 22 *Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa* 3.29:
na tatarpa samāyāntaṁ paśyamāno narādhipaḥ /
avatāryaṁ sumantrastu rāghavaṁ syandanottamāt //
The Ruler of Men was not sated, watching Rāghava approach him, helped down by Sumantra from the chariot.
- 23 As Narayanan (1994) has pointed out, the most influential figure in this kind of *Rāmāyaṇa* exegesis was the *ācārya* Periyavāccāṇ Piḷḷai. He wrote two independent short works on the importance of the epic: the *Pācurappaṭi Rāmāyaṇam*, which was a work which narrated the whole *Rāmāyaṇa* story out of phrases and lines used by the *ālvārs*, and, in addition, a *maṇipravāla* short commentary on important verses of the *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, apart from copious citations from the latter in his remaining commentaries.
- 24 Narayanan (1994). There is some evidence to believe that there existed old, Tamil versions of a *Rāmāyaṇa* prior to Kampan’s. re. Vēṅkaṭacāmi (1967:90–92) who speaks of an old, no longer existing Tamil *Rāmāyaṇa* in the *Akavarṇā* metre, a few verses of which are cited in Nacciṇākkiṇiyār’s commentary on *Tolkāppiyam*, *Poruḷatikāram*.
- 25 Mumme (1994:211).
- 26 *Bhagavadgītā*, 10:18:
vistareṇātmano yogaṁ vibhūtiṁ ca janārdana /
bhūyaḥ kathaya tṛptir hi śṛṇvato nāsti me ’mṛtam //
- 27 *Bhagavadgītā* 7.2:
jñānaṁ te ’haṁ savijñānam idaṁ vaksyāmy aśeṣataḥ /
yajjñātvā neha bhūyo ’nyajjñātavyam avaśiṣyate //
- 28 *Bhagavadgītā* 7.3:
manuṣyāṇāṁ sahasreṣu kaścīd yatati siddhaye /
yatatam api siddhānāṁ kaścīn māṁ vetti tattvataḥ //
- 29 *Bhagavadgītā* 7.18:
udārāḥ sarva evaite jñānī tv ātmaiva me matam //
- 30 *Onpatināyiram avatārikai*: ... *emperumāṇ aruḷic ceyta jñānikalukku agreśararāy*
- 31 *Onpatināyiram avatārikai*. ... *ikkaliyugattil jñānattukku aṭavillāta cathurthavarṇattilē pīraṇṭārōruvarālē nirmītaṅkaḷākaiyālum ...*
The idea of Nammālvār belonging to the fourth *varṇa* is present already in the earliest hagiographical work, the *Divyasūricaritam*. Thus, Hardy (1979:40) states: “It is

remarkable how clearly hagiography spells out that the Ālvār Caṭakōṣan was a *śūdra*. It could be argued that certain themes in the legend are intended to weaken the impact of that fact: by stating that the newly born baby did not drink his mother's milk, that he then never married and never took on a profession, is implied that he avoided the three crucial areas of caste identity (and caste pollution): sharing food, marriage and profession."

- 32 *Onpatināyiram avatārikai*. ... *aneka janmaṅkaḷ emperumāṇ tānē toṭarntu viṣayikarikaikkīṭāṇa bhāgyattaiy uṭaiyarāy, nirantarabhagavatkaṭākṣapātramumāy, tattvahitaṅkaḷil nipuṇarāy avarriṇuṭaiya upadeṣattilum pravṛttarāy, viduraśabaryādikaḷil vilakṣaṇarāṇa ālvār*
- 33 *Kaṇṇinuṇṇiruttāmpu vyākhyāna. avatārikai: bhāṣyakārar anaghaḥ nityaśatrughnaḥ enravittukku prameyamāka corakāṭṭilē srīśatrughnālvāṇ perumālukku nallaṇāṇapaṭḷ avanaḷ allatu ariyāta srībharatālvāṇaiy allatu ariyātaṭaiyāṇāṇ enru aruḷicceyṭar... ippaḷḷ ivanaippōlē iruppāroruvar sṛīmaturakavikaḷ.*
- 34 *Kaṇṇinuṇṇiruttāmpu vyākhyāna.5: inru ālvāruṭaiya nirhetuka viṣayikārattālē catu-ranāṇēṇ enkirār. itukku munpuṇṭāṇa anātmaguṇaṅkaḷai anusamdhitu ālvāruṭaiya nirhetuka viṣayikārattālē kṛtakṛtyaṇāṇēṇ enkirār*
- 35 *Kaṇṇinuṇṇiruttāmpu vyākhyāna.3: ālvāroruvarukkumirē tṣavarāṇ mayarvaramati-nalam aruḷirru. ivar jagatukkāka mayarvara matinalam aruḷinārirē ... ibid. 5: ... ālvār nirhetuka kaṭākṣattālē tampakkalilē bhaktiyaiy uṇṭākinapaṭi.*
- 36 *Kaṇṇinuṇṇiruttāmpu vyākhyāna.7: ... ennuṭaiya sakalapratibandhakaṅkaḷaiyum pōkkina ālvāruṭaiya nirhetuka viṣayikārattai suprasiddhamākkuvēṇ enkirār.*
- 37 cf. Narayanan (1993:98): "The hagiographies describing his [Nammālvār's] life were written after the acceptance of the Tiruvāymoli as the Veda, the beginning of the commentarial tradition on the poem, and its inclusion in home and temple liturgies."
- 38 Hardy (1979:40–41).
- 39 Translated by Hardy (1979:42).
- 40 Here again the commentator connects the ālvār's experience to the *Bhagavadgītā*, where Kṛṣṇa gives Arjuna the "divine eye" in order to see his universal form. cf. *Bhagavadgītā* 11.18:
divyaṃ dadāmi te caśuḥ paśya me yogam aiśvaram ।.
- 41 *Onpatināyiram avatārikai*. ... *ivai eṇṇa kōṭiyilē āṭaikkappaṭṭa prabandhaṅkaḷ? ivai pirāntapaṭi eṇṇāṇē? ivarrukku mūlam eṇ? onrai mūlamākaḷ conṇāl atu mūlamenrariyum paṭi eṇṇāṇē? ivai pramāṇam enrariyatettālē? ivarrukku pratipāḍyaṇ yār? ivai etukkākaḷ paṇṇappaṭṭāṇa? ... ivai puruṣārtha prakāśakamāṇa prabandhaṅkaḷil pradhānamāṇa prabandhaṅkaḷ; bhagavadguṇānu-bhavaṇjanitaharṣaprakarsabalātkāram colluvikkap pirāntāṇa; bhagavadprasādalahamāṇa divyacakṣūrmūlamākaḷ pirāntāṇa eṇṇum iṭaṇ svaravacanavyaktikaḷālē ariyalām; vedārthavittukalāṇa sarvaśiṣṭajanākaḷum pariḡrahikkaiyālum śaṃsārattil udvegam pirāntāruḷukku jñātavyamāṇa vedārthaṅkaḷai ipprabandhaṅkaḷilē kāṅkaiyālum ivai utkrāntamāṇa pramāṇaṅkaḷ enrariyalām; ellārukkum paramaprāpyabhūtaṇāṇa śriyaḥpati ipprabandhaṅkaḷukku pratipāḍyaṇ śaṃsārattil ruciyaṛru emperumāṇ tiruvaṭikaḷilē empēppaṭṭa aṭimaikaḷum ceyyavēṇum enrirukkumavan ivaikarkadhikāri; mumukṣūkaḷum muktaram nityarum śriyaḥpatiyāṇa emperumāṇtāṇum ivarrukku bhoktākaḷ; bhagavatkaṇkāryamākīra niratiśaya puruṣārtham innapaṭiyirukkumenru arivikkaikkākaḷ pirānta prabandhaṅkaḷ ivai*
- 42 For a concise summary of the Śrīvaiṣṇava position on *Vedānta*, see Carman and Narayanan (1989:34–42). That the *Bhagavadgītā* is seen as encapsulating the meaning of the *Vedas*, in the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, is articulated by Naṇṇiyar in his *Kaṇṇinuṇṇiruttāmpu vyākhyāna*, verse 8, where he states: "He [God] revealed motivelessly the great secret of the meaning of the *Vedas*, as the teacher of the *Gītapaniṣad* so that those who desire him may be liberated."

- 43 Thus as Renou (1965) says: “In reality every new part of the Veda has served to supplant the preceding ones; just as the formulae replace the hymns, the Śrautasūtras take the place of the Brahmaṇas, as the Upaniṣads cover all the rest, in order, finally, to substitute it”
- 44 Pollock (1990:332).
- 45 On the *Mahābhārata* as the fifth *Veda* see Fitzgerald (1985) and Sullivan (1990). On Vyāsa as ṛṣi, as one ordained by Nārāyaṇa to divide the *Vedas* in every *manvantara*, and on his “divine eye” by which he sees certain events in the story cf. Sullivan (1990:1–31). To call important literary works in Tamil the “Veda” was not restricted to the religious writings alone: thus, didactic texts such as the *Tirukkural* and the *Nālaḍiyār* came to be called the Tamilveda and the *Vēlālarveda* respectively. On this see Chakravarti (1974:29, 40–41).
- 46 cf. Cutler (1987:8): “It does not seem unreasonable to suggest that the canonization of the saints’ poems during the tenth/eleventh centuries represents a self-conscious attempt to create a Tamil Veda in more than superficial sense. Certainly by the thirteenth century the term *drāviḍaveda* was in common use among sectarian writers. ... And, of course, the saints’ poems, like Vedic hymns, are employed in ritual.” Also cf. Carman and Narayanan (1989:260–1, footnote 14) on the earliest references to the Tamil *Veda* in the laudatory verses — *taṇiyan* — of the *ācāryas*. On these *taṇiyan* verses see Section 5.2.5 below. Also for the categorization of the four works of Nammālvār as the four *Vedas* with the *TVM* being equated with the *Sāmaveda*. The earliest reference to this appears to be in the Teṅkalai hagiographical work, *Ārāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparāpīrapāvam*.
- 47 *Onṭatināyiram avatārikai: niṣiddhabhāṣaiyāyirukkaiaiyālum, ipprabandhaṅkaḷai strīśūdrādikāḷum abhyasikkak kāṅkaiaiyālum, ikkalikālattilē jñānatukku aṭaivillāta caturthavarṇattilē pīrantāroruvarālē nirmitaṅkaḷ ākaiaiyālum, deśāntaraṅkaḷilīnirikkē prādeśikaṅkaḷākaiaiyālum, avaidikar grahikkaiaiyālum śrūtismṛti viruddhamāṇa kāmāpuruṣārthataip palakāl pēcukaiyālum śrūtismṛtikaḷ puruṣārthataiyā colla paṭukira aiśvaryaikai-valyaṅkaḷaik kārkaṭaik koḷḷukaiyālum ipprabandhaṅkaḷ pramāṇamākamāṭṭā*
- 48 This is an unidentified citation from the *Matsya Purāṇa*:
harikīrtiṃ vinaivānyad brāhmaṇena narottama /
bhāṣāgāṇaṃ na gātavyaṃ tasmāt pāpaṃ tvayā kṛtam //
 cf. Hardy (1979:48–49): “He [Nañciyar] refers to an episode in the *Matsya Purāṇa* as evidence: The brahmin Kaiśika etc. who had been singing songs in the vernacular in praise of Viṣṇu were banned by the king from his realm. Yama then reprimands the king, saying: ‘King! a brahmin must not sing in the vernacular, except, when he praises Viṣṇu; therefore you have committed *pāpa* (in banning those brahmins)’”.
- 49 *avatārikai: ... inṇaṇarikkē bhāṣāmātrādvadhiyāka vidhiniṣedhaṅkaḷai aṅgikarikkil saṃskṛta bhāṣaiyāna bāhyaśāstrābhyāsaṅkaḷ paṇṇa prasaṅgikkaiaiyālum*
- 50 *Onṭatināyiram avatārikai: ... ālvār tammuṭaiya kṛpātiṣayattālē vedattil anad-hikārikaḷāṇa strīśūdrādikāḷum ilavātapaṭi vedārthattai drāviḍabhāṣaiyilē aruḷic ceykaiyālum*
- 51 *Kaṇṇinunciruttāmpu vyākhyāna, v. 8: vedarahasyattai vēḷiyitta sarveśvaran kṛpāiyaikkāṭṭil tiruvāymoliyai aruḷicceyta ālvāruṭaiya kṛpai jagatukku mikkateṅkiṛār... vedādhikārikaḷukku ujjiṇvānāmpaṭi emperumāṇ ceytatu, anad-hikārikaḷum kṛtārtharām paṭiyirē ālvār aruḷicceytatu ... emperumāṇ aruḷinatu prādeśikaṃ, ālvāraruḷ sāvratṛkaṃ*
- 52 *Onṭatināyiram avatārikai. vedanam enrum upāsanam enrumupaniṣattat taṇṇil collapaṭukira bhaktiyai ivaril kāmamākac collukaiyālum*
- 53 Ibid: *bhagavadprasādattālē paripūrṇamāka avaṇai anubhavittu pūrṇarāy irunta ālvārukku emperumāṇaip pirikaiyum pirivālē nōvupaṭṭuk kūppiṭukaiyum kūṭiṇapaṭi eṇṇaṇē*

- 54 *Onpatināyiram avatārikai. ... ōrōr guṇattai anubhavittāl anubhūtaguṇaṅkaḷil unṭāna prītiprakaśam kṣudra- viṣayaṅkaḷil vairāgyattaip pirapittu guṇāntaraṅkaḷilē sprhayaip pirapikkum. aḡguṇaṅkaḷil kramaprāpti parrātē yātorupōtu ācai mikkutu appōtu ācaip paṭṭa poruḷ kiṭṭayāmaiyaḷum bhagavadanubhava virodhiyāna prakṛtisambandhasmaraṇāḍīkaḷumāka bhagavadviṣayattil anubhavittāmaṣṣattaiyum ilantu nōvupaṭā nīrpār. bahuguṇaṅāna emperumān pakkaliḷē niratiśayabhaktimāṅkaḷāy tatsaṁśle ṣa viśeṣaikasukhaduḡkharāy avanaṁaiy alladhariyāṭapaṭiyāy bhagavadanubhavasukhamē mikkapōtu itara padārthaṅkaḷumellām tammaippōḷē emperumāṅaiṭ perru sukhikiraṇavāka ninaittum viśeṣavyasanam mikkāl saṁśleṣarasam unṭenrum ariyātē anyaparamāna itarapadārthaṅkaḷumellām tammaippōḷē emperumāṅaiṭ pirintu nōvupaṭukiraṇavākak koṇṭu avarrukkumākat tām nōvupaṭānīrpār. ivarukku priyāpriyaṅkaḷ orukāḷum muṭiyātē paryāyeṇa unṭāyirukkaiyālē cintayantiyūṭaiya paṭi nityamāy cellum enru colluvar.*
- 55 *Onpatināyiram X.10.11: ... avanaṁaiṭ perru nīrduḡkharāy nīrastasamastapratibandhakarāna ālvāruṭaiya bhakti- balātkārapūrvakamākap pīranta āyiran tiruvāymoḷiyilum vaittuk koṇṭu kīḷ conṇavaippōḷ anrikkē perrālallatu dharikkamuṭiyāṭapaṭiyāna paramabhaktiyālē pīranta antāṭiyāna iitiruvāymoḷiyil vallār saṁsārattilē pīrantuvaittē ayarvaru amarakaḷōṭoppar enkirār.*
- 56 *Onpatināyiram avatārikai. ivarril prathamaprabandhamāna tiruviruttatil tvadanubhava virodhiyāna saṁsārabandhattai aruttut tantaruḷavēṇṭum enru emperumāṅai arthikkirār. Tiruvācīriyattil nīrvṛtasāṁsārarkku viṣayaṁāna emperumāṅaiṭ paripūrṇamāka anubhavittu prītarākirār. Periyatiruvantāṭiyil nīratiśaya-bhogyāṅāna emperumāṅai anubhavikkaiyālē tadanuguṇamāka tṛṣṇai pīrantu tṛṣṇānuguṇamāka avanaṁaiṭ pēciyum ninaittum dharikirār. Tiruvāymoḷiyil ... paripūrṇaṅāna emperumāṅai tannaṁai nīrhetukamākak kāṭṭiyaruḷak kaṇṭu anubhavittut tammūṭaiya prakṛtisambandhamākirā pratibandhakamum aru emperumāṅaiṭ perru muṭṭikirār.*
- 57 *Onpatināyiram avatārikai. kaṭalait tiraḷak kaṇṭān oruvaṅ aṭil tiraikaḷaiyum marum ankuṇṭāna ratnāḍīkaḷaiyum taṇiṭ taniyē kāṇumāppōḷē mutal tiruvāymoḷiyil tiraḷa anubhavikkap paṭṭa emperumāṅūṭaiya ōrōr vakaikaḷilē ōrōtiruvāymoḷiyāy collukiraṭu iraṇṭām tiruvāymoḷi toṭaṅki mēḷellām.*
- 58 Hence, as Clooney (1996:132) points out: “The ācāryas shared Rāmānuja’s view of the problem of vision, that is to say, direct experience of God. Humans innately desire to see God, but cannot achieve vision in this life. Perception is not sufficient, inference is not a viable substitute for direct experience, and even the all-important Upaniṣads offer only a textually-mediated knowledge which approaches perception, something like vision. This position stands in the background of their reading of Tiruvāymoḷi as they interpret the apparently disparate claims made by the ālvār — his desperate separations and deep moments of unity—according to the principle that vision can be approached but not gained in this life: the ālvār wants to see, he sees, he doesn’t see. God has been tangible and visible in the poet’s life, God is nowhere to be found, now.”
- 59 In verse 4 of the *Stotratatna*, Yāmuna pays homage to Parāśara, the mythical composer of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, and then lists the subject matter of the *purāṇa* in terms of the categories of the *arthapañcaka*, though he does not use this word. The verse reads: “Salutations to Parāśara, the most excellent of sages, who composed the gem among *purāṇas*, perceiving correctly that which is sentient (*cit*), the non-sentient (*acit*), the Ruler (*iśvara*), their characteristic nature (*tatsvabhāva*), enjoyment and liberation (*bhagopavarga*), the means to these (*tadupāya*) and the highest state (*gatir udāraḥ*).” *Stotratatna*, v.4:
tattvena yaccidacīdīśvara tatsvabhāva /
bhagopavarga tadupāya gatirudāraḥ /
saṁdarśayan nīramīṁṭa purāṇaratnam /
tasmai namo munivarāya parāśarāya //
- 60 *prāpyasya brahmaṇo rūpaṁ prāptuṣca pratyagātmanaḥ /*

*prāptiyupāyaṃ phalaṃ prāpteḥ tathā prāptivirodhiṣca /
vadanti sakalāvedāḥ setihihāsa purāṇakāḥ /
munayaṣca mahātmāno vedavedārtha vedināḥ //*

All the Vedas, together with the Itihāsas and the Purāṇas, the great souls, those who know the Vedas and their meanings, speak of Brahman's form, he who is the object of attainment, the individual self who is the attainer, the means to attainment, the fruit of attainment and the obstacles to it.

- 61 *vāṇrikaḷuñcōlai maṭṭilaraṅkar vaṇṇpukaḷmēl.*
- 62 *mikkav iraiṇilayum meyyām uyirnilayum takka neriyun taṭaiyākit
tokiyalum ūlvinaiyum vālvinaiyum ōtum kurukayarkōṇ yālin icai vētattiyal.*
- 63 *Onpatināyiram avatārikai: ipprabandhaṅkaḷil sūktikaḷ prāpyanāna emperumāṇuṭaiya
svarūpapratipādakaṅ kaḷāy irukkum cila; prāptāvāna pratyagāmtasvarūpaviṣayamāy
irukkum cila; prāptiyupāyattaic collā nirkum cila; phalattaic collā nirkum cila; prāptivirod-
hikaḷaic collā nirkum cila; avaśiṣṭhamāṇavai ivvarthaṅkaḷukku upapādakaṅkaḷāy
irukkum. ivarril uddeśyam phalam. tadarthamāka marruḷḷa nālu arthamum collukiratu.*
- 64 The quote refers to Rāmāyaṇa, Ayodhyākāṇḍa 31.2, describing Lakṣmaṇa's actions on hearing of Rāma's resolve to go into exile:
*sa bhrātuṣcaraṇau gāḍaṃ nipīḍya raghunandanah /
sītām uvācātīyaśaṃ rāghavaṃ ca mahāvratam //*
Tightly grasping his brother's feet, the Delight of the Raghus [Lakṣmaṇa] addressed the beautiful Sītā and his brother of the great vow.
- 65 *Onpatināyiram VI.10: sa bhrātuṣcaraṇau gāḍam ennum paṭiyālē ilayaperumāl pirāṭṭi
mukhamāka perumālai śaraṇam pukkāp pōlē tatkaikṇaryaikaprāyojanarāy tammūṭaiya
ārṇamaiyālē ananyagatikarāy periyapirāṭṭiyārai puruṣakāramākak koṇṭu śaraṇam
pukukirār.*
- 66 The detailed analysis of the verses quoted here from the *Ārāyiram* as well as the original *maṇipravāla* text to them can be found in Section 4.2.
- 67 *Onpatināyiram V.7: kataṅkaraiyilē sṛisugrīvamahārājar toṭakkamāna mutalikaḷōṭum
ilayaperumālōṭum sarva rakṣaṇadīkṣitaṅkay koṇṭu iruntaruḷḷina cakravartitirumakaṇai
rāvaṇo nāma durvṛttaḥ enru totaṅki tannūṭaiya svarūpattai arivittu
ananyaprayojananāṅkay koṇṭu srīvibhīṣaṇālvān śaraṇam pukkāppōlē tannūṭaiyār ellām
sevaip paṇṇa pirāṭṭimārōḷē vīrriruntaruḷḷina vānamāmalaiyaic śaraṇam pukukirār.*
- 68 *Onpatināyiram VII.10: tiruvaṭi rāmāvatārattil saktanāy irukkumāppōlē
bhagavadguṇaceṣṭitādikaḷ ellāvarrilum taṇit taniyē saktarākaiyālē snehattil
tiruvaṭiyirkkāṭṭil vilakṣaṇarāṇa alvār āśritar vāḷum paṭiyum avarkaḷukku virodhikaḷ
maṇṇuṇṇum paṭiyumāṇa kṛṣṇāvatārattaiyum marrum emperumāṇuṭaiya divya-
āvatāraceṣṭitaṅkaḷaiyum jagatsṛṣṭyādikaḷaiyum anusamdikkav enru pukku mikavum
śithilarāy anta śaithilyattaip pōkkiy aruḷi dharittu niṇru devarārai anusam-
dhikkavallēṇam paṭi paṇṇiy aruḷavēṇum enru emperumāṇai śaraṇamāka parri
muṭikirār.*
- 69 Piḷḷāṇ's interpretation of this decade, as of the individuals verses repeated here, is already given in detail in Section 4.2.
- 70 *Onpatināyiram VI.10.2: irraṇṭām pāṭṭil, pratibandhakaṅkaḷ unṇṭemil avarrai nīyē
pōkki ennai uṇ tiruvaṭikaḷilē cērttaruḷavēṇum enkirār.*
- 71 *Ārāyiram III.3.6, VII.1.7, VI.3.8, VI.9.4 and IX.10.9.*
- 72 *Onpatināyiram VI.10.3: nīr oru yatnam paṇṇātirukka nīr collirrellām ceyya muṭiyumō
ennil uṇakku vilakṣaṇarāṇa bhoktākkaḷ uṇṭāy irukka munṇam ennai viṣayākarittār pōlē
kevalakṛpāiyālē mēlum eṇ apekṣitam ceyyavēṇum enkirār.*
- 73 *Onpatināyiram VI.10.7: ēlam pāṭṭil nān nissādhanaṅāy irukkac ceytē unnuṭaiya
bhogyataiyaiy anusamdhattu unṇaiyoliya oru kṣaṇamātramum dharikka māṭṭukirillēṇ
enkirār.*
*Onpatināyiram VI.10.8: unnuṭaiya tiruvaṭikaḷaik kāṅkaikkīṭāka sādhanānuṣṭhānam
paṇṇāṭēy iruntu dharikka māṭṭukirillēṇ*

- 74 *Onpatināyiram VI.10.10*: pattām pāṭṭil, tammuṭaiya apekṣitam iṇṇenap perukaikkāka periyā pirāṭṭiyārai puruṣakāramākak koṇṭu tiruvēṇkaṭamuṭaiyānai saraṇam pukukirār. akalakillēn enru toṭaṅki — veyililē ninru nilalilē otuṅkinār collumāppōlē kṣaṇamātra-mum viśeṣikka kṣamaiyallēn enru niraṭiṣayabhogyaiyānai periyapirāṭṭiyār niran-tar-avāsam paṇṇukira tirumārvai uṭaiyaiyāy pirāṭṭiyōṭṭai palakkattālē āsritaraik kaiyāṭa oppilāta guṇaprathayaṭṭi uṭaiyaiyāy ellārōṭum avarjanīyamāna sambandha-taiyum uṭaiyaiyāy unmai ariyāṭēy irukkira enaku guṇaṅkaṭaiyā arivittu attālē emmai naṭattuvatuṇ ceytu tiruṇāṭṭil uḷḷavarum virumpum tirumalaiyilē enaku āsrayikaikku eḷiyātampaṭi vantu ninraruḷinavanē. pukal enru toṭaṅki — śāstraṅkaḷil collukira upāyam onrum illāta nān ananya- prajoyananāyk koṇṭu uṇ tiruvaṭikaḷē upāyamākap parrinēn. puruṣārthasādhana-māka eṇ talayil uḷḷavarraiyeḷlām tavirntu eṇ talaikkum tiruvaṭikaḷukkum naṭuvu viḷakkuvāy teriyāṭapaṭi cerintu pukuntēn enrumām.
- 75 *Onpatināyiram III.3.6*: pratibandhakakarmaṅkaḷ aṭimaikku viḡhnattai paṇṇavō ennil aṭimai ceyvōm enru icayavē tāṇē naśikkum eṅkirār.
- 76 *Onpatināyiram 7.0*: ēlām pāṭṭil mutal tiruvaymoliyil ippaṭi periyavārthiyōṭēkūta empe-rumānaic saraṇam pukkaviṭattilum tammuṭaiya apekṣitam perāṭē mikavum avasan-narāṇa ālvār tām jitendriyarāiruntārēyākilum prakṛtisambandharāṇavarkaḷ heyataiyālē bhagavadanarhamāy viṣayāntara-pravaṇamāy bhagavadanubhavavirod-hiyāy uḷḷa indriyaṅkaḷālē nalive paṭukira paṭiyaik kaṇṭu tāṇum prakṛtisamband-harākaṭiyālē tādrśamāna indriyaṅkaḷālē nalive paṭukirārākavum satvādiḡguṇaṅkaḷum indriyaṅkaḷum viṣayaṅkaḷum tāṇiṭṭavalakkāy ellārkkum rakṣaṇamāy rakṣikaikkūṭāna sāmārthiyattaiy uṭaiyaṇumāy rakṣikaikkum uravuṭaiyaṇāy iruntu vai-t-tut tammuṭaiya duḡkhhattaiṭ pōkkātoḷintavārē guṇatrayattālē pērkkavoṇṇāṭapaṭi kaṭṭi indriyaṅkaḷākira paṭaraiy iṭṭuk kuttuvittu ayaṇvarum amararkaḷum tāṇum iṭuvē pōṭupōkkākap pārttirā ninrān enrum buddhi paṇṇi paramadayāḷuvāy rakṣikaikku śaktaṇumāyirukkira nī nōvu paṭak kaṇṭirukkalāmō enru kēṭṭārkkum dharikkavoṇṇāṭapaṭi peruṅkūppīṭāka kūppīṭukirār.
- 77 *Onpatināyiram IX.10.0*: vedāntaṅkaḷil prārabdhakarmattinūṭaiya muṭivu bhagavatprāp-tikālamākac collā niṛka iṣārīrāvasānattaik kālamāka emperumān aruḷic ceyyakkūṭiṇa paṭi eṇṇaṇey ennil svasāmārthiyattālē āsrayikkumavarkaḷukku taṅkaḷuṭaiya upāsaṅkaḷ murrināl koṇṭu pōkaikkāka prārabdhakarmāva sānattaik kālamāka colirru aṅku; iṅku kevalabhagavatprāsāḍattālē perumavarkaḷukku akkāla viḷampam vēṇṭāmaiyaḷē śarīrāvasānam kālamākac collukaik kūṭum. aṇṇaṇēy ākil ivadhikārikaḷ em-perumānē rakṣaṇa ennum arivu pirantu avan pakkalilē taṅkaḷ bhārattaṭiṭ pokaṭṭav anantarattilē avanaṭiṭ perrātoḷikīrat eṇ ennil avanaṭi [sic] prapannaṇāṇavann prap-attyanantarattilē iṣārīrattai viṭil maraṇabhayattālē aṅci iṇṇānatukku āḷ kiṭaiyātenrum jñānapravarthanārthamāka iṇṇa irukka vēṇṭukaiyāḷum caramadehattai emperumān tāṇ virumpukaiyāḷum śarīrāvasānattaḷavum irukkap porukkirār; aṇṇaṇēy ākil prapannaṇāṇa iṇṇa nirduḡkhaṇāy irātē vyādhyāḍipīḍaikaḷālē nalive paṭuvān eṇ ennil samsārattilē palakivanta iṇṇukku iṅkē nirduḡkhamāka sukhāṅkaḷaik kāṭṭil ivarraṭiṭ parrit tannaṭi ācaṭiṭ paṭāṭēy oḷiyum enru pārttu duḡkhottaramāka vaikkirār. atuvum ivarkaḷ pakkal uṇṭāna anugrahāṭiṣayamāna piṇpu iṇṇiṭattil oru saṅkaṭam illai.
- 78 *Onpatināyiram III.3.0*: mūnār tiruvāmoliyil unnai anubhavikaikku virodhiyāna prakṛtiyai pōkkavēṇum enru emperumāṇai ālvār arthikka umakku apprakṛti namōṭṭaiṭ parimāratukku virodhiyalla anukūlam ipprakṛtiyōṭēkūta ummai aṭimai koḷkaiyilūḷa abhiniveṣattālēy aṇrō iṅku nirkiratu....
- 79 *Onpatināyiram X.10.11*: emperumāṇai kāṇavēṇum enru kūppīṭu, avanaṭi perru nirduḡkharāy **nirastasamastapratibandhakarāṇa** ālvār....
- 80 *Onpatināyiram I.2.0*: ... avanaṭi bhajiyuṅkōḷ enru **bhaktiyogottai aruḷic ceykirār**.
- 81 *Onpatināyiram I.2.1*: mutar pāṭṭil bhagavatvyatiriktamāna sarvaviṣayaṅkaḷaiyum araviṭtu sarvaśeṣiyāna emperumān tiruvaṭikaḷilē ātmavai samarpīyuṅkōḷ eṅkirār.
- 82 *Onpatināyiram I.2.3*: mūnār pāṭṭil tyājyattaic curuṅka upadeśikkirār. anarthakaramāna ahamkāramamakāra nkaḷai collukiratu. ... ivai apuruṣārtham enru adhyavasikkai

- 83 *Onpatināyiram* I.2.5: *añcām pāṭṭil bhagavatsamāśrayaṇatukku antarāyaparihārattai aruḷic ceykirār* ... *prākṛtaviśayasāṅgham aruñkāṭṭil ātmā mokṣattai urratu kaiyurratu* ... *antap puruṣārhattattai tavirtu niraṭiśaya puruṣārthamāṇa bhagavatkañkaryattai perru nilai nirka vēṇṭiyiruntāyākil āśrayikkum pōtu unmai emperumāṇukkē ṣeṣamāka adhyavasittu svāmīyāṇavaṇai āśrayippatu*.
- 84 *Onpatināyiram* I.2.9: *onpatām pāṭṭil ippaṭi āśrayikka bhagavatprāptivirodhipratibandhakamāṇa karmañkaḷ ellām naṣikkum śarīraparyavasānamātramē iṇaṇukku viḷampam eñkirār*.
- 85 *Onpatināyiram* I.2.10: *pattām pāṭṭil sārthamākat tirumantrattai aruḷic ceytu itālē yāvatsarīrapātām emperumāṇai āśrayiñkōḷ eñkirār*.
- 86 *Onpatināyiram* X.4.1: *mutar pāṭṭil ubhayavibhūtiyuktanāy iruntu vaittu āśritasulabhanāṇa emperumāṇutaiya tiruvaṭikaḷ bhaktiyogalabhyam eñkirār* ... *āśritabhavyaṇāṇa kṛṣṇaṇutaiya tiruvaṭikaḷ bhaktiyogattukku prāpyam ennum iṭam niścayam*.
- 87 *Onpatināyiram* X.4.5: ... *kaiyilē tiruvāliyaiyuṭaiya sarveśvaraṇ ... anāśritarkku guṇaṇkaḷāl koṇṭāṭappaṭāṇ. avarkaḷukku meyceyvāraippōlē poyceyyavallavan, āśritasaṁśleṣaika bhogyāṇāṇavan āśritarāṇa namakku naccappaṭum*.
- 88 *Onpatināyiram* X.4.6: *ārām pāṭṭil inru pukuntu āśrayippāraiṇum guṇadoṣap pārātē nityāśritaraip pōlē viṣayikarikkum svabhāvaṇāṇa sarveśvaraṇ tiruvaṭikaḷaip paṇiyapperrēn eñkirār. bhakti nālṭōrum aruḷceyyum*
- 89 *Onpatināyiram* X.4.7: *ēlām pāṭṭil, sarveśvaraṇai neñcē, nālṭōrum anubhavi, avan tāṇē pratibandhakaṇkaḷaiyellām nikki aṭimai koḷḷum eñkirār*.
- 90 *Onpatināyiram* X.4.9: *onpatām pāṭṭil janmāntarasahasrakṛtatapoṇṇānādisādhyamāna bhaktiyogattālē labhyamāna emperumāṇai nāṇ kevalam avan prasāḍattālē kāṇap perrēn enru svalabdhattai pēcukirār ... avan prasāḍattālē mutar pāṭṭil bhaktiyogam svasādhyatōḷē samdhitta paṭiyai sāksātkarittarūḷic ceytār. ippāṭṭil tammūtutaiya upāyamaṇa prapatti taṇakku sādhyamāna tiruvaṭikaḷōṭē samdhittamayai anusamdhittarūḷic ceykirār*.
- 91 *Onpatināyiram* X.4.10: *pattām pāṭṭil prayojanāntarapararkkuñkūta samāśrayaṇṭiyanṇāy avarkaḷutaiya abhilaṣitapraḍaṇāṇa sarveśvaraṇ tiruvaṭikaḷ ananyaprayojanarāṇa bhaktimāṇaḷukkum prapannarkkum nalla apāśrayam ennum iṭam niścitam enru koṇṭu prasthutamāṇa bhaktiyogattai nigamikkirār*.

6 STILL SURRENDER

- 1 *Ārāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparāpirapāvam* (1975:389–90).
- 2 *Ārāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparāpirapāvam* (1975:390–91): *anantaram piḷḷai tamakku priyaśiṣyārāyt tam pakkalilē akhilārthaṇkaḷaiyūm a aka akākak karirirukkum periyavāccāṇ piḷḷai tiruvāymo ikku oru vyākhyāṇam paṇnum enru niyamittaruḷa periyavāccāṇ piḷḷaiyūm śrīrāmāyaṇasaṁkhyaiyilē ōroru vyākhyāṇaṇ ceytaruḷiṇār*.
- 3 *Ārāyirappaṭi Kuruparamparāpirapāvam* (1975:391): *pinṇaiyūm ... uḷḷē vaittaruḷiṇār*.
- 4 Irañkarājan (1986:44–7) examines the meaning of the word *īṭu*, bestowed uniquely upon this commentary. He gives us four traditional etymologies:

1. As a verbal noun from “*iṭutal*” meaning “to place, to make”;
2. As synonymous with “*oppu*” meaning “appropriate, matching” and, hence, as a fit commentary to the *TVM*;
3. From “*īṭupaṭutal*” meaning to become engaged, involved in and hence to immerse itself in the poem. These last two meanings are also given by Piḷḷai Lokam Ciyar in his commentary to verse 44 of the *Upadeśaratnamālai*;
4. The word *īṭu* is also interpreted as Sanskrit *kavaca*, meaning bodily armour and used in this sense within the commentary itself on *TVM* VII.5.9 and IX.9.2. In this sense it is also argued that the commentary functions as a protective armour for the *TVM* and, in some sense, in the Tenkalai tradition after Maṇavāḷamāmuni, it becomes the definitive commentary on the *TVM* which cannot be superseded.

- 5 *Irupattinālāyiram VI.10.10: bhagavadviśeṣahetu karmamāyirukka tatsparśa-muminrikkē nityānapāyinīyāṇa ivaḷ iraiyum akala kṣamaiyallēn enpān en ... karmatukku aṇciṇār vārttaiyēyāyirru viṣayavailakṣaṇattālē avagāhittār vārttaiyum, hetubhedamēyullatu. avan viṣayattil bhogyatātīṣayattālē viśeṣattai atīsaṅkittu collukirāl.*
- 6 Ibid: *oppillāta vātsalyattaiyuṭaiyaṇāy trividhātmavargattukkum svāmiyāy vimukha-nāṇavemai iṇṇalavupukura nīruttina śīlaguṇattaiyuṭaiyaṇāy ... tirumalaiyilē varttikkiṇa saulabhyattaiy uṭaiyavanē.*
- 7 The epithet *ananyagati* appears, to my knowledge, for the first time in *śaraṇāgati/prapatti* discourse in Yāmuna's *Stotraratna*, v. 22:
*na dharmaniṣṭho 'smi na cātmavedī /
na bhaktimāms tava caraṇāravinde /
ākiṇṇcanyo 'nanyagatis śaraṇa /
tvatpādamūlaṃ śaraṇaṃ prapadye /.*
- 8 Ibid: *ananyārhaṣeṣabhūtanāṇa nān itāl — ananyagatitvamum svarūpajñānamum prapattikku parikaram enkiratu.*
- 9 Ibid: *pukuntēnē — pōkku varavunṭāy anru. buddhigatiyāy adhyavasāyattaic collukiratu.*
- 10 *Īṭu VI.10.10: ippāṭṭu tanṇai dvayattir padaṇkaḷōṭu okkayōcittut talaikkaṭavatu.*
- 11 Padoux (1989:297–8).
- 12 *Rām., Sundarakāṇḍa, 66.10:*
*kṣaṇaṃ vīra na jīveyaṃ vinā tām asitekṣaṇām /
O Hero, I will not live for a moment without her, the dark-eyed one.*
Ibid: 40.10:
*māsād ūrdhvaṃ na jīviṣye tvayā hīnā nṛpātmaja /
I shall not survive a further month without you, O Prince.*
- 13 *Īṭu VI.10.10: avan tanṇai na jīveyaṃ kṣaṇaṃ api enna paṇṇavalla bhogyataiyaiyum paruvattaiyum uṭaiyavaḷ parimalaṃ tān oru vaṭivu koṇṭār pōlēy irukkai.*
- 14 Ibid: *taṇ vaṭiva akālum paruvattālum avan taṇakuṇṭkūta uddeṣyamāy irukkivaḷ*
- 15 Ibid: *pūvil ṛjīsamāṇa dhātum cuṇṇamuṇ ka inta parimalamē vaṭivāṇārpōlēy iruntuḷḷa saukumāryamum nityānubhāvayamāna paruvamum uṭaiyavaḷ.*
- 16 Marglin (1984:298).
- 17 On conception of the Goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī as the “lady seated on the flower” (*alarmēl maṅkai*) and the breast-jewel of Viṣṇu in the *Tiviyappirapantam* see Padmanabhan (2002). On the elaboration of these conceptions in the writings of Vedānta Deśika, see Narayanan (1984).
- 18 Ibid: *avan mārviṇ cuvaṭarinta pinpu piṇantakamāṇa pūvum neruṇ ci muḷḷōpādhiyāyirru. śrījanakarājan tirumakaḷ perumāḷaik kaipiṭitta pinpu śrīmithilaiyai nīṇaiyāṭap pōlavum muktan nopajanaṃ smaranti taṃ śarīram enru saṃsārattai nīṇaiyāṭap pōlavum avan mārviḷ bhogyataiy aṇṇa pinpu pūvai nīṇaittilaḷ. asaṃkucitajñānarāy irukkac ceytē saṃsārattaik kāṇātaviṭam jñānak kuraiyanrē bhogyatīṣayam iṇē ivaḷum bhogyataiyāl iṇē kāṇāto ikiratu.*
- 19 Ibid: *nityānubhavam paṇṇuvārkellām pācuram ituvē. nāṭṭāruṭaiya akalak illēn anru ivaḷuṭaiya akalak illēn, atu karmādhīnamāka varuvatu itu viṣayādhīnamāka viḷaivatu.*
- 20 Ibid: *viśeṣattukkaṭi karmam anrōṇ karmasparśam inrikkēyirukka ivaḷ akalak illēn emap pōmōṇ enṇil, karmattopādhi avanuṭaiya vailakṣaṇyam aṭiyācak collukirār. vailakṣaṇyam bhogyamām attanai anrōṇ en na, wmaḥārghamāy iruppatoru ratnattai labhittāl itu namakkut toṇkumō enru tuṇukutt tuṇukkenṇum avanaiṇ pōlē avan mārviḷēy iruntu akalir ceyvatu enn enru asthānabhayaśaṅkhai paṇṇukirāl.*
- 21 Ibid: *itil tammuṭaiya svarūpattaic colli śaraṇaṃ pukukirār.*
- 22 Ibid: *inīl tān mātāvum pītāvum āṇāl pītāvaip pōl anrīṇē prajaikaḷ viṣayattil mātā irukkum paṭi, ivan ceyta kurai tān kāṇak kaṇṇiṭṭirukkaiaṇrikkē pītāvin pakkalilum maraṇittuk kāṭṭuvāl oruttiyirē.*

- 23 Ibid: *nityayogam collukiratu. ituvum inñanē phalikka kaññōm ittañai. iccērtikku pray-ojanam avanūṭaiya svātantryataiyātal tanṇuṭaiya sāmśāritvattaiyātal anusamdhittuk kaivāṅka vēñṭātaṭaiyāy irukkai. avan sarvajñatvattaiyum tanṇuṭaiya sāparādhavat-taiyum anusamdhittu aṅca vēñṭātaṭaiyāy irukkai. atākīratu ivanūṭaiya aparādhakālam pārttiruntu pratipatti paṇṇukkaikku avanukku avasaram illai, ivaḷ kūṭa irukkaiyālē.*
- 24 This identical analogy also appears in other parts of the *Īṭu* as in the commentary on *Īṭu* I.3.8.
- 25 *Īṭu* VI.10.10: *ivvātmavastu šeṣamākil avan šeṣiyākil inku pirāṭṭi sambandhattāl ceyki-ratenn.*
- 26 Ibid: *atu irukki apaṭi kēṭir. rāvaṇanukkum kākātukkum sambandhamum anuṣṭhānam ottirukka inī rāvaṇan sāpattālē kiṭṭamāṭṭāṭeyiruppatonruṇṭirē, anñan anrikkē jananiṭpakkal aparādhattil kaitoṭṭanāy irukkat talai koṇṭu tappinān irē, avaḷ sannidhiyūñākaliyālē. avaḷ kaṭakkavirukkaiyālē rāvaṇan talaiyaruppuṇṭān. pōkkarṇatuc ceyal māṇṭu ninra nilai yavanukkum okkum irē, inñanē irukka ceytēyum kāryamāy irratillaiy irē avanukkup pirāṭṭi sannidhiyillāmaiṭyālē.*
- 27 Ibid: *pirāṭṭi pakkal aparādhām kākātukkum rāvaṇanukkum ottirukkac ceytēyum ivaḷ sannidhiyālē talai perratu kākam, attanai aparādhām in riyilēyirukka rāvaṇan talai-yaruppuṇṭān irē, ivaḷ sannidhiyillāmaiṭyālē.*
- 28 *tam eva śaraṇaṃ gataḥ enṛatuvum na nameyam enṛatuvum iraṇṭum aprayojakam. atēn enṇil kākātukkum pōkīrapōtu akavāyil niṇaiyu atuvē irē. anñanānrākil svakam ālayam jagāma enru pōkap pārāṇē. ceyal māṭciyālē vi unta ittañaiy irē. itu rāvaṇanukkum uñṭāyirukkac ceytē kāryam āyirṇillaiyirē ivaḷ sannidhiyālē.*
- 29 The first is from *Rāmāyaṇa, Sundarakāṇḍa*, 38.32, and is the narration of the crow's plight after his transgression, even as he is being pursued by the *brahmāstra*:
sa pitrā ca parityaktaḥ sarvaiśca paramarṣibhiḥ /
trīṇlokān samparikramya tam eva śaraṇaṃ gataḥ /7
He, deserted by his father and the great sages, circled the three worlds and took refuge with him [Rāma] alone.
 The second is from *Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddhakāṇḍa*, 36.11 and refers to Rāvaṇa's words to Mālyāvan who asks him to desist from the battle with Rāma just before it is about to commence:
dvidhā bhajyeyam apy evaṃ na nameyam tu kasyacit /
eṣa me sahajo doṣaḥ svabhāvo duratikramaḥ /7
I would rather break into two rather than bend thus to anyone. This is my inherent failure. One's nature is hard to overcome.
- 30 Piḷḷai Lokācārya, and Maṇavāḷamamuni in his commentaries on the former's works, come up with the concept of "unintentional good deeds" (*yādrccikasukṛtakarman*) in order to give legitimacy to the doctrine of random and undeserved salvation. In their writings this concept is well illustrated by a story from the *Viṣṇudharma Purāṇa*. There, the Queen Lalithā, favourite wife of the king of Vāraṇasī, is asked to account for her favoured position. Being blessed with insight into her former lives, she explains that in her last birth as a female rat, she had lived in a Viṣṇu temple. There, she had accidentally rekindled a dying lamp with her breath and had now, for this unintentional act of devotion, been blessed with an illustrious birth [cf. *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇa, Sūtra* 386 where this story is narrated]. The story makes it clear that the good acts not morally opted for by the individual are as decisive, if not more so, to his salvation as those consciously done. It reinforces the view, in Piḷḷai Lokācārya's writings, that the logic of salvation cannot be understood by the individual or influenced intentionally by him, but lies entirely in God's hands. See Wendy Doniger (1993) for a similar doctrinal standpoint in the *Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta*. Also Slavoj Žižek (2001:11) on the idea of "religious predestination": "Although the religious idea of predestination seems to be the very exemplar of the delusive "short circuit", it simultaneously intimates a

foreboding of radical contingency: if God has decided in advance who will be saved and who will be damned, then my salvation or perdition do not depend on my determinate qualities and acts but on the place in which — *independently of my qualities, that is to say: totally by chance as far as I am concerned* — I find myself within the network of God's plan."

- 31 *Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddhakāṇḍa, 113.45.*

*pāpānām vā śubhānām vā vadhārhāṇām plavaṅgama /
kāryaṁ karuṇam āryeṇa na kaścin nāparādhyati //*

- 32 *Rāmāyaṇa, Sundarakāṇḍa, 21.19.* The words spoken by Sītā to Rāvaṇa when he attempts to coax her to go with him to Laṅkā:

*mitram aupayikaṁ kartuṁ rāmaḥ sthānaṁ parīpsatā /
vadhām cānicchatā ghoram tvayāsau puruṣarśabhah //*

You should form an expedient friendship with Rāma, that bull among men, out of the desire to preserve your fortress and to avoid a terrible destruction.

- 33 *Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddhakāṇḍa, 113.41:*

dāsīnām rāvaṇasyāhaṁ marṣayāmīha durbalāḥ /

- 34 *Īṭu VI.10.10: toṭṭarai toṭṭu na kaścin nāparādhyati enna kaṭava ivaḷ nammaiṇoru kāryattilē ēvuvatu kāṇ enru avasaraṇapratīkṣaṇāy irukkum avanaip perrāl viṭāl irē. taṇ vārtaiḥ kēḷātārkkūṇkūṭa mitram aupayikaṁ kartum enna kaṭavaḷ ivaḷ taṇ mukham pārttu vārttai kēḷkum avanaip perrāl viṭāl irē. dāsīnām rāvaṇasyāhaṁ marṣayāmīha durbalāḥ enrāl irē. tiruvaṭi rākṣasīkaḷai eṇ kaiyilē kāṭṭi tara vēnum enna pīraṇ kanku ivu kāṇ māṭṭāta durbalaik kāṇ enrāl irē. rāvaṇaṇ paṭṭānākil perumāl vijayattōṭē nīrrārākil tiruvaṭi vantu munṇē nīnrānākil vēṇṇoru daurbalyam illaiyirē. inī daurbalyamāvatu pīraṇ nōvu kāṇamāṭṭāmaiṇirē.*

- 35 *Rāmāyaṇa, Yuddhakāṇḍa, 18.3.* The words spoken by Rāma when Vibhīṣaṇa comes to seek his protection:

*mitrabhāvena samprāptaṁ na tyajeyaṁ kathaṁcana /
doṣo yadyapi tasya syāt satām etad agraḥhitam //*

I shall abandon none who approaches me as a friend. Even if he might have faults, this is not reproached by good people.

- 36 *ivarkaḷ nī nīnaittirukkirapaṭiyē pāpikaḷākavum nān nīnaittirukkirapaṭiyē śubhaikaḷākavumām. atu tāṇēy anrō uddeśyam. doṣo yadyapi tasya syāt enrāppōlē. a ukkuṭaiyavaṇ anrō nām mukhaṇkoṭukka vēṇṇuvatuṇ śubhaikaḷākil uṇ vāl vēnumōṇ avarkaḷ punyaṇkaḷē avarkaḷukku k kaikkoṭukkumē. kaimmutal illārkanrō nām kaimmutalāka vēṇṇuvatu enrāl.*

- 37 *daṇḍyarai daṇḍikkum allātārat taviravum collukira dharmasāstram devarai tōrri ki ittuppokaṭak kaṭavatōṇ enna āreṇumāka śaraṇāgatarai rakṣikkakkaṭavatenkīra viśeṣasāstram unnai tōr rippokaṭak kaṭavatō enkiṇāl. śaraṇam enrum vanta śrīvibhīṣaṇā vāṇ doṣavāṇēyākilum na tyjeyam enru perumāl kaṭārkaṇaiyir conna vārttai kaṭalōcaiyākak kaṭavatō enkiṇāl.*

- 38 On the practice of the thwarted lover climbing and “riding the maṭal” (the horse made of palmyra leaves) as a motif in classical Tamil Caṅkam poetry, see Hardy (1983:337) and, more comprehensively, Takahashi (1995).

- 39 *Īṭu VI.10.10: saṁsārattil kurrām illātār yārṇ tirai nīkkik kaṭalāṭap pōmōṇ naṇkuti-raiyāka bhavittirukkirap perumāl tāṇ kurravāḷar allārōṇ nān kurravāṭṭiyallēṇōṇ nī tāṇ kurravāḷaṇ allaiyōṇ perumāl kurravāḷarāṇapaṭiyehṇanē ennil tām kāṭērap pōntār, avar piṇṇē maṭal ūrūvāraip pōlē ilaiya perumālum pōntār, tammōṭē ekāntabhogam paṇṇakkaṭavatāka ilai akalap paṭutuk koṇṭu nānum pōntēṇ, ennaip pirintu pattu māṣam iruntār; tām varāviṭṭāl tammātōr ampu icaṇkamāṭṭāmaiṇillai irē iṇvaḷi; itaṇai nāl pirintirukka vallavarāṇa pōṭē perumāl pakkalilēyanrō kurrām pāraṇanṭryattukku anuṇṇamāka pēcātīrātē atu taṇṇaic conna eṇ pakkalil anrō kurrām. inī nāyakan conna kāryam ceyta aṭiyārait daṇḍikkap pārttvanru perumāl aruḷic ceyta kāryam ceyyap pōnta unnai murpaṭa daṇḍittuk koṇṭanrō rāvaṇaṇ conna kāryaṇ ceyta*

ivarkaḷait daṇḍippattu ākaiyāl nīyallavō kurravāḷan. ellāp paṭiyālum perumāḷ oru viṣayattai muṇintayanru āra viṭukaikku nān unṭu; nānum avar va i pōka vēṇṭi iruntavanraikku nīyuntū enṛiruntēn; nīyum inṇaṇṇēyāna aparādhañ ceytārkkup pukavāyil unṭōn enṅirāl.

- 40 The Teṅkalai ācāryas' views that there is a special *dharma* of compassion taught particularly in the *Rāmāyaṇa* which is different from that taught traditionally in the *dharmaśāstras* is also illustrated in Nañciyar's *Tiruppāvai vyākhyāna* on *Tiruppāvai*, v. 2 where the question arises as to why Daśaratha, though he is the father of God, lands only in heaven (and not in Vaikuṇṭha) after his death. Here the answer, given by Bhaṭṭar to Nañciyar is that Daśaratha followed the false *dharma* of "truth" (*satya*) and sent his son into exile. It is for this that he is punished with the lesser salvation of heaven.
- 41 The main quotations are:
Śrīsūkta, v. 9:
īśvarīm sarvabhūtānām
 and
Lakṣmīsahasranāmastotra, v. 1:
pumpradhāneśvareśvarīm.
- 42 *Ītu VI.10.10: pradhānapuruṣarkaḷukku īśvaran avan; avanukku ivaḷ īśvariyeṇru collukaiyālē. sarvarkum nīyāmkaiyeṇnum iṭaṇ collirru.*
- 43 Ibid: *nīyamikkum prakāram en enṇil trividhacetanaraiyūm māṭṭvaprakāramāka nīyamikkum. īśvaranai prañayitvanibandhanamāka nīyamikkum. māṭṭvām svarūpānubandhi.*
- 44 *Śrīstava*, v.1:
yasyāvīkṣya mukhaṃ tadiṅgitaparādhīno vidhatte 'khilam kṛḍeyam.
- 45 *Śrīraṅgarājastava*, Uttaraśataka, v.1:
acidviśeṣitān prayalasīmani saṃsarataḥ karaṇakalebarair ghaṭayitum dhayamāna-manāḥ
- 46 *Ītu VI.10.10: īśvaran sṛṣṭyādikaḷaip paṇṇum iṭattilum ivaḷ nīyāmkai. yasyāvīkṣya mukhaṃ tadiṅgitaparādhīno vidhatt 'khilam enru aval kaṭākṣamaṭiyāka bhrūkuṭipathanāyḱ koṇṭu sṛṣṭyādikaḷaip paṇṇum. atu enṇ karaṇakalebarair ghaṭayitum dayamānamanāḥ enru tan dayaiyaṭiyākavanrō sṛṣṭippatu enṇil, avarrin cellāmaiyaḷē aval kaṭākṣam aṭiyākat tan sattaṭiyuṇṭāy aval prerikka dayai piṛantu attaiyaṭiyākavirē avan sṛṣṭippatu.*
- 47 *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, VI.4.12.
- 48 *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, I.8.17.
- 49 *Ītu VI.10.10: nīyamikkum iṭattil asyeṣānā jagato viṣṇupatnī enrum viṣṇoḥ śrīr anapāyini enrum collukiṛa paṭiyē tan svarūpaṇ kulayāmēyirē nīyamipattu. enṇaṇē enṇil prabhai prabhāvānukku šeṣamāy ninrē attalaikku niraṇ koṭukkumā pōlavum īśvaran svātantryaṇ kulaiyātē paratantranāmāp pōlēyumirē ivaḷum attalaikku ananyārhašeṣamāyḱ koṇṭē niraṇ koṭukkum paṭi.*
- 50 Thus, Mumme (1994) has the following to say about the conception of the Goddess in the writings of Pillai Lōkācārya and Maṇavāḷamamuṇi: "The Teṅkalai authors appeal to several *Rāmāyaṇa* passages in which Sītā's behavior can be held up as a model for the soul's passive dependence on the Lord for its salvation." She further adds that the Teṅkalai school views Śrī as a *jīva* while the Vaṭakalais see her as an equal partner of God's, who is the joint object of salvation. (1994:205–15)
- 51 The pre-history of Śrī-Lakṣmī prior to her integration in Śrīvaiṣṇava theology has been summed up by Pratap Kumar (1997:19–20) on the basis of the state of research to date: "In summary, the conception of Śrī-Lakṣmī in the Vedic materials is seen in relation to prosperity, well-being, and beauty, and in the epic materials Śrī appears as a minor goddess. She is characterized as inconstant." She represents auspiciousness, prosperity, royalty, and beauty. She becomes associated with Viṣṇu only much later, during the

Gupta period. Although Viṣṇu becomes her regulating principle her freedom is not curtailed or diminished. The Vedic and the epic materials do not make reference to her involvement in the process of creation, maintenance, and dissolution. Although she becomes associated with Viṣṇu, the idea of their inseparability and one-ness does not appear in the Vedic and epic materials. ... It may be noted that perhaps the transition of Śrī-Lakṣmī from the inconstant one to the inseparable one can only be understood in the light of the avatāra concept that becomes associated with Viṣṇu and is developed substantially in the Pāñcarātra and the Purāṇas.”

For a detailed analysis of the conceptions of the Goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī in the *Tiviyappirapantam*, see Padmanabhan (2002).

- 52 Oberhammer (2002:130–1): “Damit war der traditionelle Glaube an die Göttin als Göttin gewahrt, war die Göttin im Gegenüber zur Welt ein göttliches Wesen wie ihr Gatte. Insofern als in diesem Verständnis die Göttin als eigenständiges Seiendes gesehen wurde und gesehen werden mußte, war es notwendig, ihr ontologisches Verhältnis zu ihrem Gatten so zu bestimmen, daß der grundsätzliche Monotheismus der Schule erhalten blieb. Dies wurde erreicht, indem man auch dieses Verhältnis im Sinne des theologischen Strukturprinzips der Schule als *śeṣaśeṣībhāvaḥ* bestimmte und die Göttin so ontologisch, wenn auch gleichen Wesens mit Gott, als ‘Rest’ zu ihm definierte. ... Festgehalten zu werden, verdient jedoch, daß Rāmānuja den Begriff des *śeṣaḥ* in seiner ‘Körper’-Definition verwendet, um das geistige und ungeistige Seiende als Körper des Brahma (= Paramātmā) zu bestimmen, die Göttin hingegen nicht als ‘Körper’ Gottes bestimmt wird, sodaß dieser Begriff in seiner Anwendung auf die Göttin eine vom Begriff des ‘Körpers’ unabhängige Bedeutung erlangt zu haben scheint.”
- 53 *Mahābhārata*, *Ānuśāsanaparvan*, 178.7.
- 54 *Īṭu* VI.10.10: *nārāyaṇaśabdhartham collukiratu. itukkup poruḷ ubhayavibhūtiyogamum narāt jātāni tattvāni eṅkiṛa paṭiyē jagatkāraṇatvamum arthamākaḥ collā nīrkac ceytē, nam ācāryarkaḥ āśrayanattukku ekāntamaṇa saulabhyādi guṇaṅkaḥ nālaiyum collip pōrūvārkaḥ. aḡguṇaṅkaḷukku kramam aruḷic ceykiṛār ivar. aḡguṇaṅkaḥ collukiraviṭṭil vātsalyam munṇāka colluvāṇ ēṇ enṇil sāparādhaṇākaiyālē ivaparādham porukaikku urupṇākap puruṣakāram vēṭṭināl anantaram ivaparādham bhogamāva-toru guṇam munṇāka vēṇṇukaiyālē. nīkar il pukaḷāy enṇa vātsalyattaik kāṭṭumōṇ enṇil itukkup poruḷ gadyattilē apārakāruṇya-sauṣṭīyavātsalya enṇu guṇaṅkaḷōḷu okkaveṭuttu āśritavātsalyajaladhe enṇu iḡguṇattai viśeṣikkaiyālē collukiratu.*
- 55 Mumme (1988) deals with the developed doctrines of *doṣabhogyatva*, in the context of God’s relation with the soul, in the writings of Piḷḷai Lōkācārya and Maṇavāḷamāmuṇi. Thus, for example, Piḷḷai Lōkācārya uses the analogy of a mother cow and her calf illustrating this relationship in *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇa, Sūtra 15*, where he says: “This is like the cow who won’t graze on fouled ground, yet who lovingly delights in [licking off] the slime of her own calf which has fallen from her loins. There is no virtue equal to this.” (1988:193)
- 56 *Īṭu* 3600.VI.10.10: *Periyālvār Tirumoli IV.9.2:*
en aṭiyār atu ceyyār
ceytār ēḷ naṇru ceytār.
- 57 *Īṭu* VI.10.10: *ivaḷuṭaiya utkarṣattukku aṭi collum pōtu avaṇaip parric collalām, avaṇuṭaiya utkarṣattukku onṇu tēṭic collalāvattilai. ituvē arthasavarūpam irukkum paṭi.*
- 58 Ibid: *kīḷ conṇa vātsalyattukku aṭiyāṇa kuṭarṇuṭukkai collukiratu.*
- 59 The commentator quotes a Tamil proverb which says that a wife can always coerce her husband into doing what she wants by threatening to set forth with a begging bowl, thereby lowering his dignity.
- 60 *Īṭu* VI.10.10: *avaṇ allē enṇu kai viṭum anṇum ceṅkar cirai kaṭṭi vāḷaikkalām paṭiyirē issambandham iruppatu. inī avaṇ tāṇ kadācitkamāka praṇāmam paṇṇip pinpu*

kaikkariyap pōkap pārttālum kālilē vilaṅkait taittuk kāriyaṅ kolḷalām paṭiyāna urimai collukiratu.

- 61 Ibid: *tān nirguṇaṇ enṇilum* viṭavoṇṇāta prāpti collukiratu.
- 62 Ibid: prāptiyai krayaṅ celuttik koṭukkum paṭi. mokṣattu aḷavum cella naṭatti koṭup pōntu naṭuvuvuḷḷa apekṣitapradanākaiyirē āḷukaiyāvatu.
- 63 Ibid: tāmum avarkaḷilē anyatamarirē. viṣayāntaraṅkaḷiṇuṭaiya lābhālābhamē pēṇilavākavirukkiravarkaḷilē anyatamarāy irukkira tammai karmādyupāyaṅkaḷ svarūpavirodhi enṇariyūn taṇaiyūm vara nirutti pirāṭṭi puruṣakāramākat tānē upāyamum tānē prāpyamum enṇum paṭi paṇṇina upakāratṭai collukirār. itu sauṣṭilyamāna paṭiyēṇṇaṇē enṇil ṣilam hi nāma mahato mandaiḥ saha nīrantrena samśleṣaḥ enṇira paṭiyē taṇ mēṇmaiyaṇum en cūmaṇmaiyaṇum pārātē oru nīrākak kalantān enṇirār.
- 64 Ibid: aṭimai taṇnai krayaṅ celutti koṭukkum paṭi. ṣeṣatvasāmānyattai par ri collukirārakil avḷavavirē umakkum enṇavoṇṇāta paṭi enṇai mayarvara matinalam aruḷi ivḷavum vara niruttip pokaṭap pōmō enṇirār.
- 65 The reference is to *Bhagavadgītā* 18.66.
- 66 *Bhagavadgītā* 7.1.
- 67 *Ītu* VI.10.10: atukku muṭinta poruḷ saulabhyam enṇak kaṭavatirē, guṇayogamum ṣeṣitvamum viṣeṣakaṭākṣamum saulabhyamum ivai ittaṇaiyūm uṇṭirē ippadattukku. ivanukku sakalāpekṣita-phalapradaṇākaiḥkaka antarātmatayāsthiti paṇṇum enṇirirē nārāyaṇaśabdadhādir collukiratu. anta sau labhyam inku sadāsannidhi paṇṇukaiyālē tiruvēṅkaṭamuṭaiyāṇ pakkalilē kiṭakkum irē. inta saulabhyam upāyamākira paṭi eṇṇaṇē enṇil mām ekam enṇiraviṭṭil sāratyaveṣattai irē kāṭṭukiratu. inṇamum avḷavavānṇirēyīnku atukku munṇum illai piṇṇum illai irē anta saulabhyam tān; nityasannidhi paṇṇukiraviṭṭam irē iviṭṭam. aṅkut tāṇum mayy āsaktamanāḥ pārtha enṇu oru tēvaiyṭṭirē collirū atuvum illaiyirē inku.
- 68 TVM 3.3.2.
- 69 *Ītu* VI.10.10: allātavaip pōl anṇiriyirē āśrayaṇatukku ekāntamāyirupattu saulabhyam. paratvam cetananukku ruci pirāṇta pōṭēy āśrayikkavoṇṇātapāṭi deśaviprakrṣṭa-māyirukkum. vyūhamum brahmādikaḷukkum attaṇaiyākaḷiyālē tatprāyam. avatāraṅkaḷ bhāgyādhikarāy akkālatṭil utaviṇārka ko iyap **pirpāṭarkku** utavāmaiyaḷē kālaviṭṭamāyirukkum. akkuraikaḷ inṇiriyilē ellāk kālattilum ellārkkum vantu āśrayikkum paṭi vāṇavar vāṇavarkōṇṇōṭum enṇirapaṭiyē nityasūrikaḷōṭu ivvarukkuḷḷa brahmādikaḷōṭu ivvarukkuḷḷa manuṣyarkaḷōṭu kānamum vānarumāy kōṇṭu atyanta-heyaṇmākkalāṇārōṭu vāci ara sarvasamāśrayaṇīyasthalaṇ tiruvēṅkaṭamuṭaiyāṇ tiruvaṭikaḷē. aḷaṭṭasvabhāvanākaiyālē abhimatasiddhikku uṭalāna jñānaśakti-guṇāṣṭakaṇḷaiyumuṭaiyaṇākaiyālē sarvaguṇaṅkaḷālum paripūrṇanāna tiruvēṅkaṭamuṭaiyāṇ śaraṇyaṇ.
- 70 Ibid: saulabhyamāvatu uyarntār tā nṭārōṭu vāciyāra sarvasulabhamāna arcaka-parādḥinatvam.
- 71 Ibid: caraṇau enṇira padattil vighratvattai collukiratu. śubhāśrayamumāy viṣayāntaraṅkaḷil arucipūrvakamākat taṇ pakalilē ruciyaṇum uṇṭākki pirāṇta ruciyaṇum vaḷarttu prāptivirodhiyaṇum tavirttu oru deśaviṣayattilē pōṇāl nityakainkāryapratī-sambandhiyūmāy sadāpaśyantikku viṣayamumāvatu vighraṇmākaḷiyālē.
- 72 The four-fold qualities are one form of categorization of God's nature in Śrīvaiṣṇava literature, the other being the six-fold one (*ṣaḍguṇa*). These latter are knowledge (*jñāna*), strength (*bala*), sovereignty (*aiśvarya*), immutability (*vīrya*), creative power (*śakti*) and splendour (*tejas*). Carman (1974:77–80) has shown that even though Rāmānuja himself does not use the terms supremacy (*paratva*) and accessibility (*saulabhya*) in the same way in which the later *ācāryas* do, his descriptions of the divine nature implicitly invite this dichotomy. Rāmānuja tends to list the four-fold qualities in the context of describing God's involvement with the devotees (as, for

instance, in the introduction to the *Gūṭābhāṣya*) and the *ṣaḍguṇas* in the context of speaking of his supreme, inaccessible nature.

- 73 In the post-*Ītu Tenkalai* writings, the term *arcāvatāra* comes into popular usage, instead of *vīgraha*. Reflecting similar views as that of the *Ītu* on the accessibility of this form of God, Piḷḷai Lōkācārya says in *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam*, *Sūtra* 39: “The form of the Inner Controller (*antaryāmīva*) is like the waters deep in the earth; the form which is Supreme (*paratva*) is like the ocean surrounding the earth; the emanations (*vyūha*) are like the milky ocean; the incarnations (*vibhava*) are like the seasonal rivers; but the idol forms (*arcāvatāra*) are like the still pools in such rivers.”

74 *Ītu* VI.10.10: ... *ākīñcanyamum svarūpamum prapattikku parikaramiṛē*.

75 TVM VI.10.9, 10.10 etc.

76 TVM VI.10.4.

- 77 *Ītu* VI.10.10: *kālē aṭiyēn enṛum aruvinaiyēn enṛum tammuṭaiya śeṣatvattaiyūm ākīñcanyattaiyūm uruva collikkoṭup pōṇṭār. inṇit tam verumaiyūm svarūpamum iraṇṭum prapattikku parikaramiṛē. attai inkēyūm prayogikkirār. atu tannaic collavēnumiṛē. ēn ennīl avanukku upāyabhāvam svarūpamāṇavōpāti ivanukku ippratipatti svarūpamākaiyālē ivanukku illātavanru sarvamuktīprasāṅgamumāmē*.

In a rewarding e-mail discussion on how to translate this passage Patricia Mumme had suggested to me that *pratipatti* would be better translated as “statement or utterance” and, hence, that the passage, in fact, is more *Vaṭakalai* than in the manner I have interpreted it. She went on to add: “Granted, that makes this passage seem a bit off the Tenkalai party line, but the Tenkalai acaryas themselves vacillate on whether (and why) an utterance or expression of prapatti is needed. There are several places in Manavalamamuni’s commentaries where he says something similar — that the utterance or expression or some sort of gesture of prapatti on the part of the soul — though not as an upaya — is sufficient to get around the sarvamuktīprasāṅga. However, in Acarya Hrdayam and other places the idea is put forth that the Lord himself may fabricate or inspire that utterance (showing that it’s not an upaya performed by the soul) and that it is His sovereign right to do so.” (personal communication, 22 November 2004).

I have though, after careful consideration, chosen to retain my translation of *pratipatti* as “mental perception” because I see it as referring to the knowledge of the *svarūpa* mentioned earlier in the passage and because such a translation also makes better sense in the light of the other commentarial passages which follow upon this theme. Nevertheless, I think an the important issue raised by Patricia Mumme must not be overlooked — that there can inherent contradictions in *Tenkalai* as much as *Vaṭakalai* theological doctrine of the kind she refers. Contradictions which remain unresolved even within a system which strives for overall coherence.

- 78 Ibid: *prapadye enṅiraviṭattil uttamaṇāl vanta adhikārisvarūpattai collukiratu. ananyagatitvamum svarūpaprakāśakamāṇa ananyārhaśeṣatvamum collukiratu*.

79 Ibid: *adhikārisvarūpamāvatu ananyagatitvamum prāpyaruciyaṁ svarūpaprakāśamum enṅira ivaiyirē*.

- 80 Thus, in the *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam*, *Sūtras* 73–77 Piḷḷai Lōkācārya says: “Knowledge (*jñānam*) and bliss (*ānandam*) being essential (*taṭastha*) to the self, servitude (*dāsyam*) defines it. This indeed is not imposed [upon the soul] from outside. Independence (*svātantryam*) and subordination to another (*anyaśeṣatvam*) are foreign [to the soul]. Independence is an obstacle to subordination, subordination to another is an obstacle to the subordination to Him. When the bonds of the egoity (*ahaṁkāra*) are broken the indelible name of the soul is ‘servant’.”

81 *Bhagavadgītā* 9.34.

- 82 *Ītu* VI.10.10: *karmayogamāvatu ātmayāthātmyajñānapūrvakamāka svavarṇāśramocitamāy vihitamāṇa karmattai phalābhisamḍhirahitamākavum karṭṛtvatyāgat-taiyūm saṅghatyāgattaiyūm paṇṇi bhagavad-samārādhana buddhyā paṇṇavē virodhiyāṇa pāpam kṣayittu manasu nirmalamāy svarūpaprakāśamumuṇṭāy*

bhagavadjñānapremaṅkaḷum piṇantu atu parabhaktiparajñānaparamabhaktiyāyp pēr rōṭē cantipikkum. jñānayogamāvatu indriyaṅkaḷai niyamittuk koṇṭu svarūpattai viṣayamākki bhagavadjñānam piṇantu tadviṣayapremam piṇantu mēl parabhaktiparajñānaparamabhaktikaḷum piṇantu pēr rōṭē cantipikkum. aṅṇāṇarikkē ikkarma-jñānaṅkaḷ iraṇṭaiyūm bhagavadviṣayatillēyākki manmanā bhava madbhakta madyāji mām eva namaskuru eṅkīra paṭiyē parabhaktiparajñānaparamabhaktikaḷāyp pēr rōṭē talak kaṭṭumatu bhaktiyogamāvatu.

- 83 Ibid: *avai sādhyamūy palavumūy duśśakamūy svarūpatukku ananurūpamāy irukkum.*
- 84 Ibid: *ivvupāyam taṇ naip parigrahittu prayojanāntaratatāik koḷḷuvārum sādhanāntaratatāip parigrahittu ivāṇaiyē prayojanamāka paṇuvārumūy iruppavarkaḷ purampuḷḷār. aṅṇāṇeyarikkē ivāṇayē prāpyamum prāpakamūmāka adhyavasittirukkīra ērram uṇṭu ivarkku.*
- 85 Ibid: *appaṭi conṇa duśśakamāṇa sarvopāyaṅkaḷum ahaṁkārasparśamūṇṭākaiyālē tyājyamāka collirū.*

Further, already in the final section of its “Great Introduction” the *Ītu* had clarified that the nature of the *upāya* to salvation which Nammā vār had adopted was *prapatti* and not *bhaktiyoga*:

Ītu mahāpraveśam, mutal śriyaḥpati: invirodhi nivrttikum puruṣārtha siddhikkum upāyamēten nūl traivarnikādhikāramāṇa bhaktiyum akiṇṇanādhikāramāṇa prapattiyu-men ru iraṇṭirē vedāntasiddhamāṇa upāyam. itil prapattiyē upāyamen ru tamakku siddhāntamen rūm ākāraṇtōṇ ra upāyaveśattai aruḷicceykirār.

- 86 Ibid: *orāy siddhamāy suśakamāy prāptamāy taṇakkavvarukonirikkē tasmānnyāsam eṣāṁ tapasām atiriktam āhuḥ eṅkīra prapadanattaic collukiratu*
- 87 Ibid: *pukuntēṇē — pōṇa ellaiyālavum irē pukuruvatum; munpum arthattil i avil-laiyirē. ivāṇuṭaiya vipratpattiyēyirēyullatu. atu pōm ittaṇaiyirē vēṇṭuvatu.*
- 88 Here I take the compound *adhyavasāya-jñāna* as a *karmadhāraya* rather than a *tatpuruṣa* because it appears to be more in keeping with the general sense in which the lineage of *Teṅkalai ācāryas* have consistently used the term *adhyavasāya* to mean a particular kind of knowledge.
- 89 Ibid: *pukuntēṇē — prthakstithiyādi illāta paṭi śarīratvat śeṣamāṇa tamakku antaryāmiyāy niṅkīra paṭiyai aṇṭirukkīra ivar; pukuntēṇē eṅkīravatu oru pōkku varattu uṇṭāy aṇ ru avāṇuṭaiya sarvaja-gatkāraṇatvattaiyūm sarvātmabhāvattaiyūm sarvaraḥsatvattaiyūm aṇṭu avāṇēy upāyam eṅkīra adhyavasāyājñānttai collukiratu. gatyārthāḥ buddhyārthāḥ eṅkīra paṭiyē.*
- 90 Ibid: *ivvadhyavasāyamum upāyabhāvattil anvaiyāmaiyaḷum caitanyaprayuk-tamākiyaḷum ivaiyellām adhikāri viśeṣaṇamākirirē.*

7 SURRENDER STRUCTURED

- 1 Varatarācaṇ (1989:16) has shown that Cīyar quotes some of Vedānta Deśika’s writings in his other works and, also that he is warmly praised by Maṇavāḷamāmuṇi for the *Pannirāyiram* commentary in the latter’s *Upadeśaratnamālai*.
- 2 Varatarācaṇ (1989:178–80) shows that Cīyar’s commentary quotes texts such as the *Tolkāppiyam*, *Yāpperuṅkalam*, *Vīracōliyam*, *Kākaipāṭiṇiyam*, *Iraṇṇār Kaḷaviyaḷ*, *Purapporuḷvenpāmālai* etc. to name a few of its sources, for clarifying and explaining the meaning of the verses of the *Tiruvāymoḷi*.
- 3 The textual output of Vedānta Deśika was prodigious (on this see Singh 1958) while Piḷḷai Lokācārya is credited with having authored 18 texts (see Govindacarya 1910). Among the *prapatti* texts of theirs, those which are considered seminal are Deśika’s magnum opus, the *Rahasyatrayasāra* and Piḷḷai Lokācārya’s *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam* and *Mumukṣupaṭi*. This broad overview of their *prapatti* doctrines, which have been well-researched by other scholars (see Govindacarya 1910 and Mumme 1987, 1988 and

- 1992) is based upon original research which formed part of my M.Phil monograph (1988) which is supplemented, where necessary, by other sources mentioned above.
- 4 *Rahasyatrayasāra* 3 and *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam*, *Sūtras* 381–385.
 - 5 *Rahasyatrayasāra* 23.
 - 6 *Rahasyatrayasāra* 12: *abhīṣṭe dussāddhe svata itarato vā kvacana tad bharāṇyāsaṃ yāñcānvitaṃ abhivadanti prapadanam / itaḥ paścād asmadyatatanirapekṣeṇa bhavatā samarthyo 'sāv artha tv iti mativīṣeṣaṃ tad viduḥ //*.
 - 7 *Rahasyatrayasāra* 24.
 - 8 *Rahasyatrayasāra* 11.
 - 9 Cf. Srinivasachari (1970:397).
 - 10 *Rahasyatrayasāra* 23.
 - 11 *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam* *Sūtras* 154–6.
 - 12 *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam* *Sūtras* 68, 69 and 71.
 - 13 *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam* *Sūtras* 61–63.
 - 14 *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam* *Sūtra* 64.
 - 15 *Mumukṣupaṭṭi*, *Sūtras* 214–16.
 - 16 *Paṇṇīrāyiram* *avatārikai*: *sakalajanojjīvanārthamāka sarveśvaraṇ taṇ parama-kāruṇikatvattālē svahṛdayattilē pravartippikka sarvādhikāriyogamāṇa dramīḍa-bhāṣāsaṃdarbhattālē prathamācāryarāṇa nammālvār aruḷic ceyta ... prabandhaṅkaḷ*.
 - 17 Ibid: *tiruvirattilē saṃsārabandhanivṛttiyay apekṣittu tiruvācīriyattilē nivṛttasaṃ-sārarkku anu-bhāvyamāṇa saundaryādikaḷai anubhavittu tiruvantātiyilē anubhava-janitamāṇa abhiniveśātiśayattaip pēci tiruvāymoḷiyilē abhiniveśānurūpamākapa pūṇamāṇa bhagavadviśayattai anubhavittu ivar kṛtārtharākīrār*.
 - 18 Ibid: *itil caramamāṇa tiruvāymoḷiyākīra divyaprabandham ... anuyāiyiāṇa mahāvāky-attaip pratipādikkiratu*.
 - 19 Unknown citation:
sriyaḥ patiś cetanasyāsya hetutvena samāśritaḥ / aṇiṣṭahānim iṣṭasyaprāptiśca kurute svayam //.
 - 20 *Paṇṇīrāyiram*. *avatārikai*: *ipprabandham sarvaśāstopabhrmhaṇam paṇṇukīratākaiyālē sakalavedaśāstratātparyamāṇa arthapañcakamum ipprabandhattinuṭaiya mahāvākyat-tilē antarbhūtam. śrīpatihē enru prāpyamāṇa brahmattinuṭaiya svarūpamum cetanasya enru pratyagātmasvarūpamum hetutvena enru upāyasvarūpamum aṇiṣṭahānim enru prāptivirodhinivṛttiyum iṣṭasya prāptim enru prāptiphalāvāptiyumāṇa arthapañcaka-mum sūcitamākiratu*.
 - 21 Ibid: *ipprabandhattil mutaliṭu nālupattilē siddharūpamāṇa parāvarātmayathātmyat-tai pratipādikkiratu. muṭiviṭu nālupattilē sādhyarūpamāṇa aṇiṣṭanivṛtīpūrvā-kaiṣṭaprāptiyai pratipādikkiratu. naṭuvu iraṇṭu pattālē siddhasādhyarūpamāṇa nirapāyopāyavarāṇattaip pratipādikkiratu. siddhamāṇa upāyattinuṭaiya varaṇam sādhyam enru karuttu*.
 - 22 See 6.7 above.
 - 23 *Īṇu mahāpraveśam: avaṇ taṇṭa upāyattai ... svīkarittār ārām pattil. ēlām pattil ippattil ippaṭi siddhopāyasvīkāram paṇṇi irukkac ceytēyum ...*
 - 24 In his commentary on *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam*, *Sūtras* 55–9, Maṇavāḷamāmuṇi states that *prapatti* is not a *sādhyopāya* but stands apart from these by reason of its four-fold attributes. These are as follows: it is in the form of choosing the *siddhopāya* (*siddho-pāyavarāṇarūpa*); it is to be accomplished by non-activity (*nivṛttisādhyarūpa*); it is an attribute of the qualified person (*adhikārivīṣeṣaṇa*) and it is not different from one's essential nature (*svarūpānatirekin*).
 - 25 *Paṇṇīrāyiram*. *avatārikai*: *atil siddharūpamāṇa parāvarayāthātmyapratpādakamāṇa mutal nālu pattil mutal pattilum iraṇṭām pattilum prāpyamāṇa parasvarūpattai pratipādikkiratu. mūnṛām pattum nālām pattum prāptāvāṇa pratyagātmasvarūpattai pratipādikkiratu. aṇcām pattum ārām pattum prāptyupāyasvīkāratattai pratpādikkiratu*.

ēlām pattum eṭṭām pattum prāptivirodhinivṛttiyaḥ pratpādikkiratu. onpatām pattum pattām pattum prāptiphalasiddhiyaḥ pratipādikkiratu.

- 26 Ibid: *atil mutar pattu paraṇāna śeṣiyiṇuṭaiya rakṣyatvattaiyum iraṇṭām pattu bhogyatvattaiyum collukiratu. mūnṛām pattu bhagavadekaśeṣabhūtanāna ātmāvinuṭaiya tadekānubhavattaiyum nālām pattu tadekapriyatvattaiyum collukiratu. aṇcām pattu nirapāyamāna upāyaveṣattaiyum ārrām pattu tadvaraṇattaiyum collukiratu. yeḷām pattu aṇṭamāna virodhiprakāratattaiyum eṭṭām pattu tannivṛttiprakāratattaiyum collukiratu. onpatām pattu phalaparakāratattaiyum pattām pattu tadavāptiprakāratattaiyum collukiratu. āka ivarthapañcakatiṇuṭaiya avāntarārthabhedattālē ipprabandhattil pattu pattukkum vākyārtham collirāyirru.*
- 27 Pannīrāyiram V.1.0: *aṇcām pattālum ārām pattālum siddhopāyamāna īśvaraṇ viṣayattilē cetanaṇukku sādhyamāna upāyasvīkāratattai aruḷic ceykirār. antil inta aṇcām pattil siddhamāna upāyasvarūpa-ttiṇuṭaiya yāthātmyattai nirūpikkiratu. eṇṇāṇēyennil kīl conna tadekapriyatvattālē bhagavadkaiṇkaryamē uddeśyam enru pīrarkku upadeśikkum paṭi tamakku avviṣayattil pīranta prāvanyattai anusamdhittu itukkaṭi avaṇuṭaiya upāyabhāvam enru niṣkaṣittu ... nirapāyopāyabhūtanuṭaiya yāthātmyattai niṣkarṣittu aruḷic ceykirār.*
- 28 Ibid: *atil mutal tiruvāmolīyil upāyabhūtanāna īśvaraṇuṭaiya kṛpāpāravaṣyattai pratipādippatāka. ghrdhrimānukūlyavāṇkaḷ pakkalilum sarvasulabhanāna īśvaraṇuṭaiya kṛpai avyabharitai eṇṇum iṭattaiyum, anta kṛpāpāravaṣyattālē aḥṛdyoktiyē parrācāka avan abhiniviṣṭāṇāy mēl vīlum paṭiyaiyum, āsritaruṭaiya khinnataiyaiyum pōkkit tannaḥ anubhaviṇṭaiyum paṭiyaiyum, anubhavapratibandhaka doṣanivartakattaiyum, doṣarūpaśarīrādikaḷ nivartakanukku vidheyam eṇṇum iṭattaiyum, doṣarūpa-prakṛtiyōṭē kūṭa irukkac ceytēyum anta doṣam neṇṇir paṭātapaṭi vilakṣaṇavigrahattai anubhaviṇṭaiyum paṭiyaiyum, bhoktāvin nīkarṣyam pīrātē premattai janipittut tānum mēl vīluntu anubhaviṇṭaiyum eṇṇum iṭattaiyum, anubhaviṇṭaiyum aḷavil sarvavidhabandhuvāy bhuṇiṇṭaiyum paṭiyaiyum, ipbandhattōṭē aṣā dhāraṇākāracinnaviṣṭāṇāy anubhaviṇṭaiyum ākāratattaiyum, anta ākāratattai aḷiyamāriyum āsritārthamāka anekāvatāraṇkaḷai paṇṇum paṭiyaiyum anusamdhittu ippaṭi upāyabhūtanāna īśvaraṇuṭaiya kṛpāpāravaṣyattai anubhaviṇṭaiyum.*
- 29 Pannīrāyiram V.7.0: *ēlām tiruvāmolīyil kīl tiruvāmolīyil anukāram prāptiyōṭu talak kaṭṭamāṭṭamāyālē ārthiyē aṭiṣayittu ... tannaḥ labhikaikkut tāṇē upāyamāna iṇaṇ mukhaṇ kāṭṭāṭōḷintatu nammuṭaiya anukārāthamaṇa bhāvanaiyai upāsanamāka nīnaittu atinuṭaiya caramadaṣaiyilē varukīrōm enru vilambhitānāka aṭiṣaṇkaḷai paṇṇi nam ākiṇcanyattai munniṭṭuk koṇṭu apekṣikka avan ābhimukhyam paṇṇum enru aruṭiyiṭṭu ... evam viṣiṣṭāṇā nī unmai prāpikaikkū hetuvāna upāyāntaraṇkaḷil ākiṇcāṇāy ārthanāna eṇakku uṇ tiruvaṭikaḷē upayamāka upakaritta itarku enna pratyupakāram paṇṇuvē enru alamarum paṭi tamakku pīranta āśvāsāṭiṣayattai cirivaramaṇkaḷiyilē āsanamāka eḷuntaruḷiyirukkīra vāṇamāmalayai nōkki viṇṇappam ceykirār.*
- 30 Pannīrāyiram VI.1.0: *ārām pattil kīl pattilē īśvaraṇuṭaiya upāyabhāvattai saprakāramāka nirūpittu anantaram ivupāyasvarūpattiṇuṭaiya svīkāraprakāratattaiaruḷic ceyvatāka. upāyasvīkāram ghaṭakarāna ācāryakaḷ mukhamāka siddhikkum prakāratattaiyum; svīkartāvāna adhikāriyinuṭaiya bhagavadābhimukhyam svīkāratukku apekṣitam eṇṇum iṭattaiyum; aghaṭitaḡhaṭaṇāśamarthaṇāna īśvaraṇ viṣayattil phalapradatvaśaktiyil saṃśayamillai eṇṇum iṭattaiyum; ākāśaka-ceṣṭiṇākaḷiyālē āśrayaṇam sukaram eṇṇum iṭattaiyum; tadāśattiyai ācāipattārkkū anyaparar pakkal vairāghyam apekṣitam eṇṇum iṭattaiyum; ātmātmyapadārtham ellām avan iṭa valakkām paṭiyāna svasvāntryanivṛttiṇuṭaiyum; dhārakādikaḷellām tāṇēyāna prāpyaviṣayattil tvarāyogattaiyum; tivaritanuṭaiya parāśaktiyil ghaṭakarāṇār viṣayattil atyantādhārattaiyum paripūrṇamāna prāpyaprāvanyam adhikārikkū viṣeṣaṇam eṇṇum iṭattaiyum; sarvarakṣaṇāna śaraṇaṇ pakkal saprakāśaraṇāḡatiyaiyum aruḷic ceytu svatassiddhamāna vupāyaviṣayattil svīkāratattai svānuṣṭhānaparyantamāka aruḷic ceykirār.*

- 31 See, for example, Sūtra 427 of *Śrīvacanabhūṣaṇam*. Commenting on this and other *sūtras* Maṇavāla māmuni elevates the regard for the *ācārya* to be yet another means to salvation, which is different from and equivalent to *prapatti*. With time, in Mumme's (1988:225–55) words, this *Teṅkalai* emphasis on *ācāryābhimāna* gains prominence until it becomes the sole means of salvation. In contrast, from the *Vaṭakalai* perspective, the relationship to the *ācārya* alone does not guarantee salvation without undertaking *prapatti*, i.e. *bharaṇyāsa*, with its accessories, *aṅgas*.
- 32 *Paṇṇūrāyiram* VI.10.10: *anantaram, āśrayaṇīyataikku ekāntamāna puruṣakārayogattaiyum guṇayogattaiyum uṭaiyaiyāy irukkira unṭiruvaiṭikalai ananyagatiyāyk koṇṭu āśrayittēn enru sakramamāka śaraṇāgatiyaip paṇṇukirār.*
- 33 *Paṇṇūrāyiram* VI.10.10: *nārāyaṇasabdāthattai conṇa śrutikramattālē vātsalyādi guṇacatuṣṭhayakramat taiyum....*
- 34 *Paṇṇūrāyiram* VI.10.10: *adhikārivišeṣaṇamāna ākiṇṇcanyānanyagatiṭvattaiyum ... kriyāpadattil uttamanālē ākiṣṭamāna adhikārisvarūpattaiyum ...*
- 35 *Paṇṇūrāyiram* VI.10.10: *kriyāpadattil upasargārthamāy upāyopeyaviṣayamāna vyavasāyattaiyum ...*
- 36 Ibid: *pukuntēn enru kriyārūpamāna āśrayaṇattaiyum ... pukuntēn enṭira gativacanam prāptikkum sucakamākavarākaiyālum*
- 37 Ibid: *itu pūrṇaśaraṇāgatiyākaiyālē āśrayaṇārthamāna lakṣmīsambandhamum guṇayogamum prāpyānvitamāyirukkaiyālum*
- 38 *Paṇṇūrāyiram* VIII.1.0: *kīl irāṇṭu pattilē upāyasvarūpaśodhanattaiyum tatsvīkārattaiyum aruḷic ceytu mēl ēlām pattālum eṭṭām pattālum upāyanivartyamaṇa virodhisvarūpattaiyum tannivṛttiprakārattaiyum aruḷic ceykīrār. atil virodhisvarūpaparamāna ippattālē nivartyamaṇa virodhiyāyulla śarīrendriyādikaḷ nivartakaṇāna īsvaraṇ iṭṭa valakkennum iṭṭattaiyum; virodhinivṛtti piravāta pōtu prāpyagataprāvaṇyam ārthi-janakam ennum iṭṭattaiyum; ārthiṣamippatu abhiniviṣṭaṇāna īsvaraṇuṭaiya deśaprāptiyālēyennum attaiyum; ārthihetuvāna virodhiyānatu jagadrakṣaṇahetuvāna vijayāpādana ṅkalaiyuṭaiya sarvasaktikkē nivartanīyam ennum attaiyum; raksakaṇāna avānaiyoliya vēru nivartakar illai ennum iṭam sarvasammatam ennum paṭiyaiyum; sarvaśraṣṭāvāna avānuṭaiya kālai kaṭṭik kūpiṭṭu virodhiyaik kaḷituk koḷḷavēnum ennum attaiyum; uru velippātāna anubhavam naṭakkac ceytēyum alā bhajanitaiyāna ārthi virodhikāryam ennum attaiyum; vicitravirodhinivartanattil vicitravibhūti viṣiṣṭaṇāna vicitraśaktiyuktanē vēnum ennum attaiyum; virodhiviṣiṣṭaveṣattilē vācīkakaṇkāryaṇ koṇṭa prītyatiśayattālē virodhiyai vihasamākinna harṣattaiyum; prāpyavisayattil prāvānyam atiśayittāl pratibandhakam upāyabhūtaṇ pōkkum ennum attaiyum aruḷic ceytu virodhiyinuṭaiya svarūpattai śodhittaruḷukirār.*

8 CONCLUSION

- 1 *Śrībhāṣyakārauḍaiya śiṣyasampradāyaṅkaḷil orriḷum arthavirodham illai. vākyayo-janābhedaṁē uḷḷatu.* From *Sampradāyapariśuddhi*. Quoted in Srinivasachari (1970:540).
- 2 Filed in the context of legal disputes between the *Vaṭakalais* and *Teṅkalais* in the Pārthasārathisvāmī Temple, Triplicane, Madras. Quoted in Appadurai (1981:188).
- 3 Hence, Lopez (1996:240–41) says in his analysis of the commentaries on the Buddhist *Bhagavatī-prajñāpāramitāhṛdayasūtra*, “The *Heart Sūtra* commentators, therefore, are not concerned to say anything new; innovation is one of the great sins of Buddhist letters. Instead, they are concerned to reveal its hidden meaning... it must be demonstrable that the *Heart Sūtra* contains everything, even those doctrines that, from our perspective, may have developed after the composition of the *sūtra*.”
- 4 Ibid (241): “The articulation of what, to an untrained ear, seems absent in the *sūtra*, must be heard in the *sūtra*’s own voice, what is invisible to the untrained eye must be

discerned in the *sūtra*'s own letters. The commentator's task, therefore, is the discovery, the identification, the elaboration, even the manufacture, of allusion."

- 5 Thus Hardy (1983:244): "Most of the commentators are no longer familiar with the conventions of *caṅkam* poetry, a deficiency which has given rise to a great many pseudo-problems and which ultimately is responsible for the abstruse allegorical interpretation which became fashionable from the thirteenth century onward."
- 6 Nilakanta Sastri (1955), Stein (1994[1980]; and Karashima (1984), Champakalakshmi (1996) and Heitzman (1997).
- 7 With the evolution of Cōla society these centres became the hubs of commercial activity — they benefited from the production in the rural hinterlands and themselves invested actively in the agrarian economy. Centres such as Cidambaram enjoyed the status of a *ṭaṇiyūr* — an administrative unit of the Cōla empire which enjoyed an independent revenue relationship and paid dues directly to the king without regional, administrative intermediaries. cf. Champakalakshmi (1996:378–381; 2001:59–84); Hall (2001:85–116).
- 8 This development is reflected, for instance, in the expansion which the Cidambaram shrine underwent in this period with a new, additional temple constructed to Śivakāmasundarī the consort of Śiva-Naṭarāja. Her worship then appears to supersede an older Kālī worship within the temple. Younger (1995:98–104) places the construction of Goddess shrine in Cidambaram in the period between 1070–1225 and attributes it to the building activities of one Nāralōkavīraṇ, a general in the army of Kullōtunga I (ca. ce 1070–1120).
He further adds:
Prior to the placement of goddess temples within larger temple complexes, it would seem that most rural areas had small goddess temples served by local priests ... By bringing these two worship traditions of goddess worship and Śivaṇ worship together in such a clear way, Nāralōkavīraṇ had also brought into one social and cultural community the laborers and landholders who had probably migrated into the region from different areas and were inclined initially to continue with their separate cultures. Having seen the possibilities of the policy adopted here, the Cōlas pushed it actively elsewhere, and during the next century many of the major temple complexes of the region were rebuilt with goddess temples and Śivaṇ temples side by side (102).
- 9 Nilakanta Sastri (1955:435–36); Raman (1975).
- 10 On these opposing views see Karashima (1984) and Stein (1980[1994]) respectively. For a summary of both views, see Hall (2001:1–27). For a critique of Stein's conception of medieval South Indian polity, particularly with regard to the later Cōla period, see Talbot (2001:167–173). Stein (1994:216–53) sees a shift in power from the regional assemblies of non-brahmanical elites, the *nāṭus*, to supralocal assemblies, the *periyānāṭus* as well as the emergence of new towns which superseded the old brahmanical village clusters, the *brahmadeyas*, in religious and political importance. Karashima (1984:I–xxxiii), whose epigraphical work has focused primarily on non-*brahmadeya* villages, argues that the transition from the early to the late Cōla period is marked by a movement from communal landholding to individual landholding — where independent landowners became powerful landlords in their own right.
- 11 Talbot (2001:50–67) as well as Rao *et al.* (1992:35–37).

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