

VEDĀNTA SIDDHĀNTA SAMARASAM

THE ECUMENICAL THEME IN THE
RELIGIOUS POETRY OF TĀYUMĀNAVAR:
VEDĀNTA SIDDHĀNTA SAMARASAM

By

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I intend to investigate the theme of Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam in the writings of Tāyumānavar. Tāyumānavar was a philosopher-poet, mystic and scholar of the Seventeenth century and represents a true landmark in the religious history of Tamil India. One dimension of his religious poetry is his creative response to the contesting creeds of his days, interpreting them in terms of his own intimate religious and mystical experience of God, Siva (śivānubhava). I will use his deeply reflective and philosophical hymns as the main basis for re-constructing an overall picture of his religious vision. Much of my discussion of that vision will be in terms of his understanding and appropriation of the term "advaita". Both the terms "advaita" and "vedānta", which Tāyumānavar often uses, are not to be understood in the first instance as signifying monism or absolutism as developed in the school of scholastic Advaita Vedānta. These terms, in the poet's understanding, refer primarily to the unique and intimate mystical bond among God, man and the world (Pati, Paśu and Pāśa) which he explains in many places is an "inseparable union".

The existing editions of Tāyumānavar's hymns, and the commentaries and works on him produced by the Saiva tradition and other scholars are slanted toward an interpretation of Tāyumānavar as an orthodox advocate of Saiva Siddhanta. In this tradition the problem for scholars has been how to interpret the meaning of samarasam within the framework of Śaiva Siddhānta. Writers like Muttiah Pillai, Nallaswami Pillai, K. Subramanya Pillai, Isaac Tambyah and others have not focused their attention on what appears to be the most significant theme in the whole of Tāyumānavar's writings, namely Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam. My study will underline how Tāyumānavar's work was intended to liberalize the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition. It will attempt to reopen the question of Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam and show that it has a different and deeper meaning than the one suggested by the above writers. My research thus will be an attempt to understand how Tāyumānavar intended Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam to serve as part of an ecumenical and liberal approach towards the religious pluralism of Seventeenth century India.

This study might prove useful in several ways: It can stimulate new interest in the hymns of Tāyumānavar. The investigation hopes to provide new insights into the understanding of Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam in the theological history of Śaiva Siddhānta; it will show how

Tāyumānavar sought to bring about an encounter between two opposed traditions through a re-reading of his own tradition and a re-interpretation of scholastic Advaita in favour of a more religiously defined popular Advaita. Finally, this research will illustrate how a concern which is today identified with concepts such as ecumenism and religious dialogue was also a concern within the "household" of Hinduism as early as the Seventeenth century. If my interpretation of the spirit of samarasam is accepted, Hinduism will be seen as having offered as early as the Seventeenth century a basis for affirming its claim of tolerance in the context of a plurality of religions.

PREFACE

When Pope John Paul II visited India in 1986, a meeting of various religious leaders was held at Rajaji Hall in Madras (February 5th, 1986). At that meeting the Pope earnestly talked about the momentous need for the meeting of religions and for a dialogue between them. He called for an encounter where religions come together in their quest for the Unknown which transcends all comprehension. A true knowledge of the abyss surrounding the One is the goal of such religious encounter. In the soul-stirring religious poetry of Tāyumānavar, the Seventeenth century Indian mystic, poet-saint and philosopher, we can see a similar call for experiential knowledge of the one Reality as the point of convergence of various religious traditions.

To be successful, the meeting of religions and inter-religious dialogue need a definite penetration into the depth of the original source. In other words, religions meet where religions take their foundations. Tāyumānavar's call for religious harmony is authentic as it is an appeal to delve into that original vision of the Sacred Scripture and to dwell with the "seers" of Truth, which alone is the basis for religious encounter. The meeting of religions is

not a mere intellectual endeavour, but in itself it is a religious experience. It is in this broader and deeper experiential perspective that I see the theme of Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam in the religious poetry of Tāyumānavar.

Etymologically the term ecumenism is derived from the Greek word oikos meaning "household" and the term has usually been used to refer to the theological and ecclesiological precepts and doctrines which attempt to recapture the sense of oneness among Christian Churches. Tāyumānavar's perception of the unity of Vedānta and Siddhānta at the point of samarasam is described in this work as "ecumenical" because the state of samarasam provides a basis for intra-religious understanding and mutual acceptance within the "household" of Hinduism, particularly between Śaiva Siddhānta and Advaita Vedānta. The terms ecumenism and ecumenical are therefore used here in a descriptive sense to mean the spirit of openness which potentially also provides for inclusiveness between religions.

The ecumenical theme of Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam is here studied by way of analyzing Tāyumānavar's religious, mystical and philosophical hymns. The first two chapters are introductory. While Chapter One gives a brief biographical account of the poet-saint, Chapter Two examines the political, social and religious situation of Tamil Nadu,

and other possible formative factors, which could possibly have influenced the life and thought of the poet-saint. A general analysis of his hymns is made in Chapter Three. Chapters Four and Five deal with Tāyumānavar's understanding of Vedānta and Siddhānta. The most important point here is that his understanding of both Vedānta and Siddhānta looks to their original meaning as found in the Sacred Scriptures, the Veda, the Upaniṣads, the Śaivāgamas and the Tirumurai (mystical and canonical works of Saiva Tradition). The way in which this understanding of both Vedānta and Siddhānta in the original sense as the personal mystical experience of the "seers" of Truth leads Tāyumānavar to interpret these two well known traditions in terms of unity-experience; this process is discussed in Chapter Six. The bringing together of Vedānta and Siddhānta at the converging point of samarasam has vital significance for today's religious traditions. This idea, together with other observations derived from this research, is spelled out in the concluding section of the work.

This study was made possible through the encouragement and support I have received from my Religious Congregation (Carmelites of Mary Immaculate), Kerala, India, and the Diocese of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and my teachers and friends. I would like to express special thanks to my supervisor Professor Krishna Sivaraman, the distinguished

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ABBREVIATIONS

Ait. Up.	<u>Aitareya Upaniṣad</u>
Bṛh. Up	<u>Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad</u>
Ch. Up.	<u>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</u>
HISI	Historical Inscriptions of South India
KN	<u>Kaivalya Navanītam</u>
Muṇḍ. Up.	<u>Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad</u>
PT	<u>Panniru Tirumurai</u>
SB	<u>Śivajñāna Bōdham</u>
Śvet. Up	<u>Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad</u>
TM	<u>Tirumanṭiram</u>
TP	<u>Tāyumānaswamikal Pāṭal</u>
TPMV	<u>Tāyumānavar Pāṭal Meykaṇṭa</u> <u>Vrttiyurai</u>
TVM	<u>Tiruvācakam</u>
YV	<u>Yoga-Vāśiṣṭha</u>

TRANSLITERATION OF TAMIL

VOWELS	CONSONANTS
அ — a	க — k
ஆ — ā	ச — c
இ — i	ட — ṭ
ஈ — ī	த — t
உ — u	ப — p
ஊ — ū	ற — ṛ
எ — e	ர — r
ஏ — ē	ங — ṅ
ஐ — ai	ஞ — ṇ
ஓ — o	ண — ṅṇ
ஔ — ō	ன — n
ஔ — au	ந — n
	ம — m
	ய — y
	ல — l
	ள — ḷ
	ழ — ḷ
	வ — v
	ஃ — k̄

TRANSLITERATION OF SANSKRIT

VOWELS :

अ	—	a
आ	—	ā
इ	—	i
ई	—	ī
उ	—	u
ऊ	—	ū
ऋ	—	r̄
ॠ	—	r̄̄
ऌ	—	l̄
ॡ	—	l̄̄
ए	—	e
ऐ	—	ai
ओ	—	o
औ	—	au

CONSONANTS :

क	—	k	प	—	p
ख	—	kh	फ	—	ph
ग	—	g	ब	—	b
घ	—	gh	भ	—	bh
ङ	—	ṅ	म	—	m
च	—	c	य	—	y
छ	—	ch	र	—	r
ज	—	j	ल	—	l
झ	—	jh	व	—	v
ञ	—	ñ	श	—	ś
ट	—	ṭ	ष	—	ṣ
ठ	—	ṭh	स	—	s
ड	—	ḍ	ह	—	h
ढ	—	ḍh			
ण	—	ṇ			
त	—	t			
थ	—	th			
द	—	d			
ध	—	dh			
न	—	n			

Anusvāra (¸) — ṁ

Visarga (:) — ḥ

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CHAPTER 1

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF TĀYUMĀNAVAR

1. Date of Tāyumānavar

Tāyumānavar is not very distant from us in time. Nonetheless, a truly satisfactory biography of Tāyumānavar cannot be drawn up because of a negative attitude towards historical data amongst early Indian writers. This negative disposition is projected in the following point of view: "eating the fruit why must one need to know the name of the fruit and the tree".¹

The scanty materials available are found in the introductions to the different editions of the Hymns of Tāyumānavar (Tāyumānaswāmikal Pātalkal). Those materials are traced to the poet's only son and disciple Kanakasapapati, and to other disciples such as Arulayya Pillai and Kotikkaraiñānikal. Although the details of the life of the poet-saint available in the different editions of his hymns are believable in themselves, they cannot be situated in time very well because there are no links with

¹ P. Sri, Samarasa Jñāniyar (Madras: Amuda Nilayam, 1963), p. 37.

reliable historical facts and different editors have arrived at radically different conclusions about the date of Tāyumānavar.²

Prior to the examination of the arguments in the different editions of the hymns of the poet, we shall consider three important sources which shed light on the date of the poet-saint. The first one is related to the genealogy of the Cāramāmunivar matha of Tiruchirappalli.³ It is a generally accepted fact that a maunaguru (The Silent Teacher) was the greatest head of the matha and that Tāyumānavar succeeded the maunaguru in that role. The period of that maunaguru and his successors is recorded in palmyra leaves available in the Library of the Dharmapuram Ādhinam.⁴ Dr. Sourirajan of Sri Venkateswara University saw the leaves a few years ago and according to him the

² The date of the Saint is still an unsolved problem. Isaac Tambyah gives a number of probable periods based on the arguments in the different editions of the hymns of Tāyumānavar and they range from 1659 to 1805 A.D. Cf. Isaac Tambyah, Psalms Of A Śaiva Saint (London: Luzac & Co., 1925) pp. xi. Kamil V. Zvelebil finds fixing Tāyumānavar's date to as a complicated and unsolved problem. According to him the date could be 1704 - 1742, 1706 - 1744 or 1608 - 1664 A.D. See Tamil Literature (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), p. 111.

³ It is also written as Trichnopoly. See, Bishop R. Caldwell, A History of Tinnevely (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1982), p. 36; R. Sathyanatha Aiyar, History of the Nayaks of Madura (Madras: University of Madras, 1980), pp. 1, 17, 37 ff. See also B. S. Baliga, Madras District Gazetteers (Madras: Government of Madras, 1960), p. 1, 21, 30 ff.

⁴ The mauna matha is under the administrative control of the Dharmapuram Ādhinam.

maunaguru was the head of the matha from 1579 to 1644 A.D., and Tāyumānavar succeeded the maunaguru and was in charge from 1644 to 1662 A.D.⁵ I visited the maunaguru matha on December 29, 1985 and discussed with Mahalinga Tambiran, the present head of the matha, the question of the reliability of the tradition that Tāyumānavar was the head of the matha. He said it is a reliable tradition and that there is a recorded document called the etu (palmyra leaves) to prove it, but I was not able to examine that document. However, an article entitled "Tiruchy Malaikōyil" appeared in the Centamilccelvi⁶ which was based on a study of those palmyra leaves. According to this article Maunattambiran was the head of the matha from 1501 to 1566 (Śalivāhana era), which corresponds to 1579 to 1644 A.D. and Tāyumānavar was the head from 1566 to 1584 (1644 - 1662 A.D.). A list of some subsequent heads of the matha is also given.⁷ Thus, two

⁵ P. Sourirajan, A Critical Study of Tāyumānavar (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1978), p. 16.

⁶ S. Anavaratavinayaka Pillai, "Tiruchy Malaikōyil", Centamilccelvi, 12 (1936), No. 2, pp. 82-85; No. 3, pp. 124-126; No. 4, pp. 174-177; No. 5, pp. 221-222; No. 6, pp. 269-271. At the start of the article the writer says that he had copied the palmyra leaves and the text was edited by M. Natesa Mudaliyar.

⁷ The year given is Śalivāhana era. That era began in 78 BCE, so we add 78 to get the Christian era. Maunattambiran (1579 - 1644 A.D.), Tāyumānavar (1644-1662 A.D.), Namacivayatambiran (1662 - 1685 A.D.), Tillainayakatambiran (1685 - 1693 A.D.), Chitambaratambiran (1693 - 1715 A.D.), Arunachalatambiran (1715 - 1753 A.D.), Vaidyalingatambiran (1754 - 1800 A.D.), Chitambaratambiran (1800 - 1824 A.D.), Ambalavanatambiran (1824 - 1826 A.D.).

separate sets of palm leaf manuscripts make Tāyumānavar head of the matha from 1644 to 1662 A.D.

The second source is the Marapiyal⁸ which records the traditions of Śaiva mathas. On November 29, 1985 I visited the Dharmapuram Ādhinam in search of documents and had the opportunity to discuss the teachings of the poet-saint. I was fortunate in being allowed to see the Marapiyal of Śaiva mathas from the Dharmapuram Library Manuscript Records. In this document there is a chapter on Tāyumānavar which gives the date of the samādhi of Tāyumānavar as Śalivāhana era 1584 which corresponds to 1662 A.D. The Marapiyal also refers to the poet's disciple Arulayyar, who is the poet's aunt's son, who started a matha at a place called Annappenpettai and initiated Kanakasapapati (Tāyumānavar's son) into the ascetic life. This source also gives a list of those who succeeded Kanakasapapati such as Aksayalinga Desikar, Ambalavasa Desikar,⁹ Somasundara Desikar, Vaidyalinga Desikar, Sadasiva Desikar and Sapapati Desikar who used to sign documents in the name of Tāyumānapantāra sanniti and who passed away on Tuesday the 22nd of August, 1885.

⁸ Marapiyal is similar to a chronicle which records significant events of the Śaiva mathas. Unfortunately no page numbers are used.

⁹ It is also recorded here that the Saint's hymns were collected from one Arunachalam who was a disciple of Ambalavasadesikar.

The "In Memoriam" lines written by one of his disciples, Kotikkaraiñānikal, engraved on stones found at Ramanataparam, the place of Tāyumānavar's samadhi,¹⁰ is the third document that throws light on the time of Tāyumānavar:

tukaḷaru cāli varuṭamā yirattaiñ
 nu rreṭen pattumūnṟu toṭaru
 mikucupa kirutam varutam taimātam
 veṇmati vāranal vicāka
tāyumānavanār
 civattiṇil kalaṅtanarṟ riṅame.¹¹

According to these lines it was on a Monday in January of the Śalivāhana era following 1583 (that is in 1584 which corresponds to 1662 A.D) that the saint attained Śivam (civattiṇil kalaṅtanarṟ riṅam).

Although all of the above sources agree that the time of Tāyumānavar was the 17th century, and that his samādhi year was 1662 A.D., the various editions of the hymns of Tāyumānavar give confusing accounts of the life of the saint. The earliest edition I have come across is the 1862 edition by Arumukanavilar (Madras) but it does not give any account of the life of the saint. Neither did the 1881 edition from Madras by Sadasiva Pillai give any information

¹⁰ The place of samādhi is known as Lakshmipuram.

¹¹ Tāyumānaswāmikal Pāṭal, Tiruppanantal Edition, 1952, p.16. Poovai Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar edition (1937) also give the same "In Memoriam" (p. 15). However, the date of samadhi is stated slightly differently. It is Śalivāhana era following 1581 according to this edition.

about the life of the poet. In 1891 Sambandha Mudaliyar edited the hymns with commentary and in a brief introduction the editor stated that Ketiliyappa Pillai, the father of Tāyumānavar, lived in Veṭāranyam about 260 years ago and held the post of periyacampiratiyuttiyōkam¹² (Chief Accountant) in Vijayaranga Chokkalinga Nāyakar's palace. The subsequent editions of Vajravelu Pillai (1899), P. N. Cidampara Mudaliyar and Brothers (1937) and B. Ratnanayakakar and Sons (1957) all repeat this point and speak about a Muthu Vijaya Raghunatha Chokkalinga Nayakar at whose time, it is said, Tāyumānavar was in service in the Nāyak's court. There is, however, no Nāyak by that name in the genealogical list of the Nāyaks.¹³

Poovai Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar's Tāyumānavar Pāṭal Meykanta Vrttiurai (Madras, 1916) (hereafter TPMV) is a commendable commentary, but it does not offer any clear information about the life of Tāyumānavar. The author says (p.3) that Tāyumānavar's father Ketiliyappa Pillai was appointed as the accountant of the King during the nāyakship of Vijayarakhunata Chokkalinga (1705 - 1732 A.D.). The period was probably used as the time of birth of Tāyumānavar because of the popular tradition which said that the poet-

¹²Sambandha Mudaliyar, Tāyumānaswāmikal pāṭal (Madras: Vidya Vinodhini Series, 1891), p. 1.

¹³N. Katiraivelpillai too refers to the same King. Cf. "Tāyumānar tattuva vicaram", Jñānapōtini, IV, no. 11 (1901), 402.

saint was born while his father was in the service of the nāyak of Tiruchirappalli. The same author, at the end of the introduction (p. 15), however, quotes the "In Memoriam" written by Kottikarananiyar as referred to above suggesting that the saint's samādhi was in 1659 (1660). The author seems to have been unconcerned that the two dates do not match.

P. Ramanatha Pillai's edition (1966) makes the same kind of mistake. He too points out that it was Vijayarakhunatha Chokkalinga who appointed Kettiliyappa Pillai (p. 35), thus indicating that the birth of Tāyumānavar would be between 1705 - 1732 A.D. On page 36, however, at the end of the introduction, the author says that Tāyumānavar was the head of the matha in 1644 A.D. and was united with Sivam in 1662 A.D. These dates simply do not agree.

Swami Chidbhavananda of Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, Tirupparaitturai, has published (in Tamil) sections of the hymns of Tayumanavar with commentaries. In one of his works in English¹⁴ the author says that Tāyumānavar lived in the 17th century A.D. The same Ramakrishna Tapovanam published another work Tāyumānaswamy pātalkal in 1980. In this edition the time of Tāyumānavar is given as 1704 - 1736,¹⁵

¹⁴Swami Chidbhavananda, The Garland of Parāparam (Tiruchirappalli: Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, 1979), p. 1.

¹⁵This is the time of Vijaya Ranga Chokkanata (1704-1731) and the Queen Meenaksi (1731 - 1736).

placing him in the 18th century.¹⁶ The only reason for fixing the time as the 18th Century is to place the saint during the reign of Vijaya Ranga Chokkanata and the Queen Meenaksi and to relate the saint's life with the incident of the Queen's passionate desire for him which made him leave the palace and becoming an ascetic.

The Tiruppanantal Kasi edition (1952) and the Dharmapuram Ādhinam edition (1965) and the Tāyumānaswamikal Varalārum Noolāraicciyum (1969) by K. Subramaniya Pillai refer to a Muthu Veerappa Nayakar as the ruler at the time of Tāyumānavar. None of these scholars, however, say whether they are speaking of Muthu Veerappa I, II or III.¹⁷ The following argument of Subramaniya Pillai, however, makes it clear that it could only have been Muttuveerappa I. If it was Muttu Krishnappa Nayakar (1602 - 1609) who made

¹⁶ There are other writers who put Tāyumānavar in the 18th century. Ratnavelu Mudaliyar (ed), A Tamil Dictionary of Proper Names (Madras, 1908) says that Tāyumānavar died in 1742 A.D.; E. Waites, The Way of Divine Union, (1915) is of the opinion that the Saint was born between 1705 and 1707 A.D. Also see K. Kuppaswamy Mudaliyar in Centamil, VIII (1904), 474; G. E. Philipps in Madras Christian College Magazine, XXVII (1910), 513; L. D. Barnett in The Heart of India (1908), p. 185; G. McKenzie Cobban in Madras Christian College Magazine II (1884), 2.

¹⁷The following is the period of these three Nāyaks. Muthu Veerappa I (1609 - 1623); Muthu Veerappa II (1659); Muthu Veerappa III (1682 - 1689). Cf. Robert Sewell, Lists of Inscriptions and Sketch of Southern India (Madras: Archaeological Survey of Southern India, Vol. II, 1884). Unless otherwise stated, the dates of Nayaks quoted in this work will be from R. Sewell. Also cf. R. Sathyanatha Aiyar, History of the Nayaks of Madura, op. cit., and B. S. Baliga, Madras District Gazetteers Madurai (1960), pp. 52.

Tāyumānavar's father the chief accountant of the Nāyak's court (p. 20), then the saint's birth could be between 1601 and 1609. The Nāyak who succeeded Muthu Krishnappa was Muthu Veerappa I (1609 - 1623)¹⁸ at whose time Tāyumānavar's father might have passed away and Tāyumānavar might be expected to have taken up and continued his father's profession at the court. This seems quite likely, and it also fits well with independent evidence cited earlier from the maunaguru matha tradition, the Marapiyal account and the "In Memoriam" of Kotikkaraiñānikal.

I have mentioned above the tendency among scholars to bring Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha (1731 - 1736) into the picture and to try to "fit" Tāyumānavar's life into his lifetime. This is done in order to preserve the story of Queen Meenakshi's passion for Tāyumānavar which is supposed to have led to the poet-saint's leaving the court and starting his mendicant life. This story is still very popular and seems to be a "must" for the editors in that almost all editions refer to Meenakshi's affection for the saint. K. Subramaniya Pillai, a well-known scholar in Tamil, tries to keep the story in spite of historical difficulties. He argues¹⁹ that the successor of Muthuveerappa (1608 - 1625 A.D. according to him, but 1602-

¹⁸For Subramania Pillai the period is 1608 - 1625 (p. 20).

¹⁹K. Subramania Pillai, supra., p. 20.

1609 for R. Sewell) is a Queen (name is not given) who ruled from 1625 to 1627 and the Queen was followed by Vijayaranga Chokkanatha (1627 - 1654 for the author; but 1704 - 1731 for R. Sewell). These alterations of history are major and still unsubstantiated. The generally accepted historical record shows no Queen ruling from Tiruchirappalli between 1625 - 1627 and does not have Vijayaranga Chokkanatha ruling the country from 1627 to 1654. After the death of Muthu Veerappa Nayak in 1623, it was his son Tirumala Nayak²⁰ (1623 - 1659) who is generally thought to have ruled the country.

Because of the inconsistencies found in giving historical data in different editions of the hymns I am inclined to follow the maunaguru tradition, the Marapiyal of the Dharmapuram Library Manuscript Records and the engraved "In Memoriam" of Kottikkaraiñānikal. Following these records, as presented above, we can safely fix the time of Tāyumānavar as the 17th century or to be precise from 1602 to 1662 A.D.²¹. Perhaps the popular story of the Queen is a

²⁰N. Kandasamy is of the opinion that Tāyumānavar was the Auditor General - the Chancellor of Exchequer - of the Madurai Kingdom which was ruled by Tirumala Nayak. See, "Tayumanavar-Tamil Statesman-Saint", The Hindu (March 18, 1962). This would imply that Tāyumānavar continued his work even after the death of Muthu Veerappa I.

²¹This time comes very close to that which is given to the saint in the preface of Barnett and G. U. Pope, Catalogue of Tamil Books in the British Museum (London: 1909), p. vi. The period ascribed to the poet there is 1650 A.D.

pious embellishment to show the high moral character of the saint, or it might be the result of a story teller inserting the wrong Queen's name or the wrong saint's name into a story built around the different legendary figures of the region.

2. Early Life and Career

Although the poet-saint of the 17th century belongs to a relatively recent time, we have only a few details of his life. We get some autobiographical facts from his own poems, but most of the life accounts depend on traditions and sthala purāṇas.²² Very few details are found in the scanty reports left by the poet's immediate disciples such as Kotikkaraiñānikal and Arulayyappa Pillai. This variety of reliable and not-so-reliable source materials are mixed together in different proportions by editors and consequently we find rather different life narratives in each edition of the hymns of the saint. Nevertheless from all those sources we are able to sketch a fairly satisfactory outline of the saint's life.

²² The Sthala Purāṇa is a glorified local legend, often written up with a religious bias. It is always in verse. The Mayura Purana has 6519 verses; the Tirunelveli Sthala Purāṇa has 9000 verses. Usually it starts with glorification of the shrine, the deity installed in the temple, the temple tank, the temple tree, the local saints etc. This style of purāṇa holds out a tremendous appeal to the common man.

In Veṭāraṇyam, a sacred place situated on the bank of the Kavery River, lived a community of vellāla²³ families. Tāyumānavar's family belonged to that community. His parents, Ketiliyappa Pillai and Gajavalli, were God-fearing people. His father was employed in the local temple of Veṭāraṇyam which was under the administration of a Śaiva maṭha. Once he provided a befitting royal welcome and all kinds of conveniences for Muthukrisnappa Nayak (1602 - 1609) of Tiruchirappalli who came to Veṭāraṇyam on his route to the sea for a bath and a darśan of the local deity. The Nāyak was pleased with Ketiliyappa and subsequently appointed him as chief accountant of the palace in Tiruchirappalli.

The family, having moved from Veṭāraṇyam to Tiruchirappalli, earnestly prayed to Tāyumānaeśvarar, the presiding deity of Tiruchirappalli, for a second child because their first son had been given in adoption to the childless Sivacidambara Pillai, the brother of Ketiliyappa Pillai. Their prayers were heard and another son was born at Veṭāraṇyam at the mother's house. The boy was named Tāyumānavar because it was thought the child was born by the grace of Tāyumānavar, the deity of Tiruchirappalli. It is

²³The vellālas are cultivators. The cultivation of rice by means of irrigation could have been the special feature of the vellālas. Therefore they occupied the bulk of the land and held high social status. They were rich and held key positions in the civil and military administration. Madras District Gazetteers, op. cit., p. 27.

remarked that on his birthday five planets appeared together indicating the incarnation of a deity. Astrologists prophesied that the child would either be a great monarch or a great mendicant.²⁴ The parents brought up the child with great expectations. They taught him Tamil and Sanskrit, and the hymns the poet later composed and sang are evidence of his thorough mastery of both languages.²⁵ The reference he makes to the four Vedas, and the Āgamas, the Epics and Purānas are proof of his Sanskritic training and early initiation into the sacred literature of the country.²⁶ From his hymns we gather that he also read with rapture the Tamil hymns of Tirumūlar (ca. 6th A.D)²⁷

²⁴N. Katiraivelpillai, supra., p. 403.

²⁵ Tāyumānaswāmikāl Pāṭal, (TP), Tirruppanantal Edition (1952): I. 3; VI.I; VII.10; VIII.5; XXVII.25. Reference to the hymns of Tāyumānavar will be made from this edition.

²⁶ TP., X. 3; XIV. 5; XXVIII. 16-17; XLVI. 28; V. 1; XVIII. 5 & 17.

²⁷ TP., V.1 - 10; XIV. 31. Indian scholars place Tirumūlar after the Saṅgam poets and before the appearance of the Tēvāram Saints (i.e between 4th and 7th A.D). The following Indian scholars have various dates : Murugesā Mudaliar 4th century A.D ; M. Arunachalam 5th A.D ; Narayana Aiyar 6th A.D (Origin and Early History of Saivism in South India, Madras: University of Madras, 1974, p.209); Ramana Sastri 6th A.D (in his introduction to M.V.Visvanatha Pillai's edition of the Tirumanṭiram, Madras: Ripon Press, 1912). Western scholars too do not agree on the time of Tirumūlar. For K. Zvelebil the period is 7th A.D (Tamil Literature, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974, p. 55); for J. Filliozat 7th or 8th A.D. and for J. N. Farquhar 8th A.D (An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967, p. 93)

Tiruñāna Campantar (Skt. Tirujñāna Sambandar) (7th A.D.),²⁸
 Tirunavukkaracu (Appar) (7th A.D.),²⁹ Cuntarar
 (Skt. Sundarar) (9th A.D.),³⁰ and Mānikkavācakar (9th
 A.D.).³¹

From the hymns of Tāyumānavar we also infer that he was well acquainted with the śāstra or philosophical literature as well. In the hymns we see reference to Meykaṅṭār (13th century A.D.), the author of Śivañānapōtam (Skt. Sivajñāna Bōdham) (hereafter SB),³² Aruḷnanṭi Sivacariyar (13th century A.D.), the author of Sivañāna

28 TP., XIV.30; XXXVII.4; XLV.3.1; XLV.13.9.

29 TP., XIV.30; XLV.13.1 & 6; XLV.3.2.

30 TP., XLV.3.3.

31 TP., XI.3; XIV.31; XLV.3.4; XLIII.356; XLVI.11. Sambandar, Appar, Sundarar and Mānikkavācakar are the Founders of Śaiva Religion (samayācāryas). The hymns sung by the great trio (Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar) are collectively called the Tēvāram which constitutes the first Seven Books (Books 1-111, Hymns of Sambandar; Books IV-VI, Hymns of Appar; Book VII, Hymns of Sundarar) of the Śaivite Canonical literature known as the Tirumuṟai, which are twelve in number (Pannīru Tirumuṟai). Mānikkavācakar's Tiruvācakam and Tirukkōvaiyar (Book VIII), the works of Nine poets called Tiruvīsappa and Tirupallantu by Centanar (Book IX), the Tirumantiram by Tirumular (Book X), the works of Eleven poets including Nakkiratevar's Tirumurukarruppaṭai and the Ten works of Nampi Āntār Nampi (Book XI) and the Periya Purāṇam by Cēkkiḷār (12th century A.D.) (Book XII) are the other Books of Tamil Śaivite canon of devotional literature (stōtra).

32 TP; XLV.2.4. Meykaṅṭār (= the one who has seen the Truth) in this exceptionally succinct work gave the first systematic exposition of the tenets of Tamil Śaiva religion. This most coherent manual of Śaiva Siddhānta forms the basic and most closely reasoned religious philosophy of Tamil Saivism and the subsequent doctrinal works of the School were only the elaborations of the philosophic contents of SB.

Cittiyār (Skt. Sivajñāna Siddhiyār) (hereafter SS),³³ Maraijnana Sambanda Desikar, the teacher of Umapati,³⁴ Umapati (14th century A.D.)³⁵, the author of Eight Siddhānta Śāstras.³⁶ These four preceptors who systematized and elaborated Śaiva Siddhānta are highly esteemed and they are the santānācāryas - the Teachers of Śaiva religion.

His esteem for and knowledge of the above-mentioned religious and philosophical literature probably quite naturally created an aptitude in him for religious truth. We can rightly think, therefore, that in time this religious quest made him look for a guru with whom he could discuss religious and philosophical issues and who would further initiate him for an indepth experience of religious truth.

³³ TP., XLV. 2.5. Aruṅanti, according to a popular tradition, was at first the preceptor and then the immediate disciple of Meykaṅṭar. SS is the authoritative metaphysical and epistemological elaboration of the SB. This most comprehensive and systematic work of Saiva Siddhanta in Tamil is presented in two parts: one in the form of refutation of other systems called parapakkam and the second part known as supakkam is a detailed commentary on the SB. A second work of Aruṅanti, the Irupāvirupatu, is both a eulogy of Meykaṅṭar, the author of SB, and an exposition of some of the teachings of Śaiva Siddhānta.

³⁴ TP., XLV.2.6.

³⁵ TP., XLV.2.7.

³⁶ His Eight works, collectively called Siddhānta Aṣṭaka, are profound expositions of his clear grasp of Saiva Siddhānta. The Eight works are the Sivapirakācam, the Tiruvārutpayan, the Caṅkarpa Nirākaranam, the Pōṛṛippakroṭai, the Neṅcuvitututu, the Viṇavenpā, the Koṭikkavi, and the Uṇmai Nerivilakkam. For a brief analysis of these works see M. Dhavamony, Love of God According to Saiva Siddhanta (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 125.

Even though he had this religious background and spiritual craving, the poet-saint took up the duties of chief accountant of the palace after the demise of his father. The Nāyak who was in power at the time of Tāyumānavar was Muthuveerappa Nayakar I (1609 - 1623).³⁷ Regarding the appointment of Tāyumānavar to the same post that his father held, it is said that when he was called for a test to see whether he was as fit as his father, the ruler, on seeing his beauty alone, appointed him as the chief accountant.³⁸ Legend has it that when he came to the palace, his feet became permanently engraved in the sand and the courtiers saw on the foot-prints the padmarekha.³⁹ The king and officers were surprised to see this and enquired for the person who had come to the palace at that particular time. Courtiers said that it was Tāyumānavar. The king called for him and asked him to walk that way again and the officials compared the foot-prints with those engraved in the sand and when it was determined that they were the same,

³⁷ Muthu Krishnappa Nayak passed away while Ketiliyappa Pillai was in service. The successor to Muthu Krishnappa Nayak was his son Muthu Veerappa I and during his reign Ketiliyappa Pillai passed away.

³⁸ P. Sri, Camaraca Jñāniyar, supra., p. 17.

³⁹ This is a peculiar and infrequent kind of line in the palm of the hand (or the foot), in the form of a lotus flower. It is considered a sign of greatness.

the king was delighted to have Tāyumānavar in the palace.⁴⁰ Tāyumānavar fulfilled his duties with care to the complete satisfaction of the king.

3. Meeting the Guru and Quitting the Career

The quest for the knowledge of eternal truth and the passion for its experience made Tāyumānavar reflect on religious and philosophical issues even while carrying on his service in the Nāyak's court. He also used to discuss those problems with other court officials who held titles like pundit, kavirāj⁴¹ etc. His seeking mind was very earnest about knowing Reality⁴² and he had a passionate longing to meet a guru⁴³ who would initiate him in the ascetic life and reveal to him the ultimate Truth.⁴⁴

Tāyumānavar's encounter with the maunaguru (The Silent Teacher), while serving the Nayak of Tiruchirappalli,

40 Jñānapōtini, supra., p. 404.

41 Kuppaswamy Mudaliyar, "Sṛīmat-Tāyumānacuvāmikaḷ Varalārum Avar Matakkoḷkaiyum", Centamil, III(1904), 476.

42 T.P., V.6; V.8; XX.7; XXIII.2; XII.7; XLI.4.

43 T.P. XXVII.15; XXXIII.2.

44 In Śaiva Siddhānta, the idea of God has its highest expression in the conception of a Guru who is the spiritual preceptor. When an aspirant aspires for a vision of God and communion with Him, the Lord appears in a suitable form and gives spiritual initiation depending on the spiritual maturity of the aspirant. Tāyumānavar repeatedly referred to the Guru in his hymns: VI:1; IX.6 & 9; XIII.7; XVI.8; LXIII.126 etc. The section Cinmayānantaguru (Teacher of Cognitive Bliss) is nothing but an extolling of the greatness of God in the person of the Guru.

was a turning point in his life. Tāyumānavar, as usual, went to the temple of Tāyumānesvar for worship. On his return from the shrine he met the maunaguru, possibly in front of the Cāramāmunivar maṭha in Tiruchirappalli. This meeting has been described as similar to that of a wife being enraptured by the presence of her husband or like iron being attracted to a magnet.⁴⁵ This meeting was a wonderful experience in the life of the poet-saint and that experience of the divine presence, love, happiness, peace and joy is expressed in the praise of the guru found on the section of a poem called Maunaguruvaṇakkam (Obeisance to the Silent Teacher):

...civānupūti
 maṅṅaloru corṅkoṅ ṅeṅaittaṅṅuṅ tāṅṅaṅṅiṅ
 vālvitta ṅānakuruvē
 mantrakuru vēyōka tantrakurū vemūlan
 marapilvaru maṅṅakuruvē.

Oh, Thou preceptor of mantras, Oh Thou
 Preceptor of yoga tantra, Oh, Thou
 preceptor of mōna, who art descended
 from Mūlar. Oh Thou preceptor of Wisdom,
 who has through "one word" saved me causing
 to attain the state of śivānubhūti (V.4).

According to tradition, the disciple shedding tears of joy fell at the feet of the Master. It seems that the guru was holding a book in his hand and Tāyumānavar, filled with anxiety, asked for the name of the book the guru was

⁴⁵ Jñānapōtini, supra., p. 405.

carrying with him. Surprisingly the guru was silent and went ahead towards the Tāyumānaesvar temple. Tāyumānavar followed the guru and finally the guru reached the temple and sat in padmāsana.⁴⁶ The guru was impressed with the disciple's sincerity of purpose and started answering his questions. To the question as to the name of the book the guru held, the answer was SS. To the questions what is Śiva, what is jñāna and what is siddhi, the answers were pati is Śivam; knowing Him as He is jñānam; and the fruit of that knowledge is siddhi (realization). The truth-loving poet-saint asked many more questions related to the nature of Reality, the knowability of Reality, human bondage, and freedom from that bondage (pāśam). It is said that the guru smiled at those questions and asked him to make himself fit for receiving the truth through the removal of doubts and the destruction of contradictions with the help of the proper dīkṣa (initiation) and the study of the book SS.⁴⁷ The guru asked the saint to depart and to continue his studies and work and to have a gṛhastha (household) life until he was fit for the path of jñāna, only then would he, the guru, initiate Tāyumānavar into the ascetic life. Having greeted him in a special way by saying cummāiru (be

⁴⁶ It is a meditation posture where one sits with legs stretched in front of him placing his right leg on the left thigh and the left leg on the right thigh.

⁴⁷ Jñānapōtini, supra., pp. 406-409.

still),⁴⁸ the guru went away. Tāyumānavar left the temple with joy and gratitude at the love of this guru who opened his inner eye to see and experience the truth behind all worldly things.⁴⁹

Tāyumānavar continued his duties in the royal court. At the same time he was meditating on what the guru had advised. He stood to practise meditation in front of dakṣiṇamūrti in order to attain advaita mukti which is the merging of the soul with the Ultimate Reality. This craving to live in the Divine presence and to live in tune with the Infinite had changed his outlook towards his life in the royal court. The things he witnessed in and around the society of his time clearly revealed the nature of the worldly life. The 17th century Vijayanagar history is filled with political butchery, local treachery, social animosity, royal indolence and religious pretence. The royal court, where he was employed, was disrupting his spiritual sensibility. This social and religious situation, coupled with the meeting with the guru or the maunaguru darśanam,

⁴⁸ This pronouncement from the Guru had tremendous force in the life of the saint. In his hymns he refers to cummāiru in many places (V.2; XI.I; XII.6 & 8; XIV.31). Also cf. M. Arunachalam, "Cummā", Kumarakuruparan, XIV(1963), 583-591. This brief article gives the etymological meaning of the word cummā and briefly discusses the sense in which cummā is used by Arunakirinatar, Campanta Munivar, Parañoti Munivar and Kumarakuruparar.

⁴⁹ Centamil, supra., pp. 476-478.

brought about a revolutionary change in his vision of life in this world.

As knowledge gradually dawned upon Tāyumānavar he rose above the transitory forms of royal comfort and happiness. His internalized attention, intensified concentration, and faith in the inner reality gave him a new spirit that made him put a stop to his work in the royal household. In order to conform to life in harmony with the Divine, he eventually left the palace and the position he held in the royal court.

4. Call to Asceticism

Tāyumānavar started his life as a wandering saṅnyāsin (ascetic) by going on pilgrimage. He, together with his cousin, visited many places such as Nallur,⁵⁰ Veeralimalai,⁵¹ Pudukottai⁵² and Rameswaram.⁵³ It is said that in Veeraḷimalai he stayed with the group of ascetics called cittars (Skt. Siddhars). According to the poet-saint these Siddhars are "those who have divine powers; who have attained the noblest order of viewing Vedānta and Siddhānta alike": vetānta cittānta camaraca nappilaiperra vittaka

⁵⁰ About ten miles from Tiruchirappalli.

⁵¹ About twenty miles from Tiruchirappalli.

⁵² Pudukkottai was also known as Kapilai Nakar.

⁵³ Rameswaram, further south of Pudukkottai, was known as Tevai Nakar.

cittarkanam (VII.1ff). We shall later see that Vedānta Siddhānta samarasa position will be a favourite theme in the religious poetry of Tāyumānavar, a theme which runs through the whole corpus of his hymns.

Tāyumānavar might earlier have heard of the greatness of these saintly people and it was very appropriate for him to visit them and experience their spiritual fervor. He calls them "Śivayōgins" (contemplators of Śiva, VII.3); "masters of perfection" (VII.4), "authorities in the matter of attaining the final mukti" (VII.8), and "people related to spiritual joy" (VII.9). It is very important that early in his quest he went to the Siddhar group and they became an inspiration for his own asceticism. K. Subramania Pillai⁵⁴ tells us of another event based on hearsay or local legend that happened during this stay in Veeraḷimalai. In this village the saint was looked after by a vellāla who was childless. It is said that after caring for Tāyumānavar this person was blessed with a son. The boy was given the name Tāyumānavar and according to Subramania Pillai even now the family members attach the prefix "Tāyumānavar" to their names.

From Veeraḷimalai the saint journeyed to Rameswaram. While he was in Rameswaram his brother, Chidambaram Pillai,

⁵⁴ K. Subramaniya Pillai, Tāyumānaswāmikāḷ Varalārum Nūlarāyicciyum, supra., p. 12.

came to the place and persuaded the poet-saint and Arulayyappa Pillai to go to Veṭāraṇyam. They went to Veṭāraṇyam where he was urged by his mother and brother to get married and enter into the family life. He then recalled the upadeśa (advice) of the maunaguru. In compliance with the request of the family and in obedience to the maunaguru (The Silent Teacher) he married Mattuvarkulali (lady of flowing fragrant tresses) and had one child by her, named Kanakasabapati, before she suddenly died.

In the life of Tāyumānavar the death of his mother followed closely by that of his wife proved to be a turning point. The departure of his mother and wife convinced him of the fleeting nature of life. Their demise, at the same time, strengthened his deep-rooted spiritual desire for ascetic life. He therefore entrusted his son and all his possessions to his brother and left for the ascetic way of life.

It is likely that from Veṭāraṇyam he left for Tiruchirappalli to meet his guru who had promised him that he would see Tāyumānavar after the fulfilment of his duties in the court and in family life. Now, seeing the fitness and disposition of Tāyumānavar, the guru performed the nirvāṇa dīkṣa⁵⁵ and initiated him into the ascetic order.

⁵⁵ Dīkṣa (initiation) is an important ceremony in the Saiva religion. Through different dīkṣas the disciple who seeks truth is spiritually purified and made fit to realize

Having become completely separated from the bonds of family and from all wordly ties,⁵⁶ Tāyumānavar became a full-fledged ascetic in the robes of a wandering saṅnyāsin. As a jīvanmukta (liberated while living in the world) he travelled from place to place visiting shrines, singing the praises of Śiva and drawing people to the presence of Śiva. According to tradition⁵⁷ Tāyumānavar became the head of the Maunaguru Maṭha in Tiruchirappalli and in 1662 A.D. he "attained the lotus feet of the Lord".⁵⁸

Supreme Truth. According to Umāpati (14th century A.D.), one of the preceptors of the teaching line (Santānācāryas) of the Śaiva Siddhānta, dīkṣa is manifestation of the power of Siva (śivasya vyāpārātmaka-śaktiḥ). This is performed by a competent teacher (guru) and it enables one to diligently perform one's duties and helps in the hearing and understanding of the revealed Word. See K.Sivaraman, Saivism in Philosophical Perspective (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), p.385. Also see J.Gonda, Change and Continuity in Indian Religion (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), pp.315. Nirvāna dīkṣa is a higher form of dīkṣa where the guru who has already God-vision and is ever in God-experience initiates the disciple towards a direct God-realization. With this dīkṣa the thoughts, the words and the deeds of the disciple become holy and God-realization is made possible. This immediate means of mokṣa "qualifies one for directly receiving jñāna" K.Sivaraman., op.cit., p.385.

56 TP. XL.1; XLI.9.

57 Centamilccelvi, supra.(no. 2), p. 6.

58 K. Subramaniya Pillai, supra., p. 18.

CHAPTER II

TAMIL NADU AT THE TIME OF TĀYUMĀNAVAR

1. Political and Social Situation

The life and thoughts of a thinker or writer will always be influenced to some extent by the political, social, economic and religious predicament of the particular period. The socio-economic and politico-religious situation at the time of Tāyumānavar can be understood only with reference to the political actions of the Nāyaks¹ who started as the lieutenants of the powerful Vijayanagar emperor and ended up as semi-independent rulers during the declining years of the Vijayanagar empire.

The Tamil country, under the vigorous Vijayanagar Emperor, Krishnadeva Raya (1509 - 1529), was divided into three Nāyakships: Madura, Tanjore and Gingi. The Madura Nāyakship was comprised of Salem District and the whole of the region south of the Kavery. Tanjore included the fertile region of the Kavery, while the Gingi Nāyakship was made up of the coastal area from Nellore in the north to the

¹ "Nāyak" in Sanskrit means a leader or a chief. In Southern India it denotes the hereditary title of certain Telugu castes. In general the term Nāyak means a doer, an agent or a representative. See Bishop R.Caldwell, A History of Tinnevely, supra., p. 62.

river Coleroon in the south. The Nāyaks who governed the respective regions ruled largely through local chiefs also called Nāyaks (pālaiyagars/polīgars). The polīgars had to supply military forces (pālaiyams) to the central government through the principal Nāyaks.²

The foundation of the Nāyakship of Madura was actually laid by the Vijayanagar emperor Achyuta Raya when Viswanatha Nayak became "the master of the Kingdom of Madura".³ The year assigned to the above event, according to Nelson, is 1558 - 1559.⁴ As regards the power and the continuity of the Nāyaks, the Epigraphica Indica states that "the Nāyak regime developed first into a governorship which became hereditary and then into what was practically a hereditary monarchy".⁵ The Nāyaks fully acknowledged the overlordship of the Vijayanagar emperors and the central government until the battle of Talikota in 1565 A.D. This battle, a combined attack of the armies of the sultans of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Golconda and Bidar against the Vijayanagar empire, greatly weakened the empire and

² A. Krishnaswami, The Tamil Country Under Vijayanagara (Annamalai Nagar: Annamalai University Historical Series, 1964), pp. 193-194.

³ T. A. Gopinatha Rao, "Vellangudi Plates of Venkatapati-Deva-Maharaya I: Sakasamvat-1520", Epigraphica Indica, XVI (1921-22) p. 320.

⁴ J. H. Nelson, The Madura Manual (1868), p. 87.

⁵ Epigraphica Indica, vv. 46-57, IX (1907 - 1908), p. 341.

diminished allegiance on the part of the Nāyaks towards the Vijayanagar emperor.

The Civil War of Topur (1614 - 1617 A.D) was the final blow against Vijayanagar. The civil war was the result of the imprudent policy of Sriranga II which estranged the feelings of his subjects and strengthened the hands of his enemies.⁶ The King's subjects were disappointed because of the mismanagement of the affairs of the state. The injudicious demands placed on some high officers, like the surrendering of lands, money and jewels, made them drift away from the emperor. The resultant civil war ruined the empire both materially and morally. To sum up, the battle of Talikota and the civil war of Topur caused the final ruin of the once glorious Vijayanagar empire.

The history of Vijayanagar after 1617 is one of constant wars and plundering raids. The Nāyaks now set themselves up in opposition to the weak Vijayanagar emperors and openly conspired with enemies of the empire. The selfish policy of Tirumala Nayak of Madura, for instance, resulted in the Muslim invasion of Gingi which later adversely affected Tanjore and Madura as well. Though Sriranga III tried to restore the power of the empire the Nayaks of Madura and Gingi resisted the attempts of the

⁶ R. Sewell, A Forgotten Empire (London:1900), pp. 222-231.

emperor and this resulted in a further attack on the Kingdom by the Muslim states of Bijapur and Golconda.⁷

The author of Camarasa Jñāniyar⁸ remarked that the time of Tāyumānavar was a period of political confusion in Tamil Nadu and that robbery, treachery and debauchery were characteristic of the political strategy of the time. This remark seems appropriate if one looks at history. The tragic death of Sriranga II and his family is one of the frequently cited examples for demonstrating political confusion and moral perversion. During the reign of Venkata I (1614 A.D.) a civil war was going on over the succession to the throne, with the loyal supporters of the King headed up by Yachama Nayaka and the supporters of the son of Venkata under the leadership of Jagga Raya. When Venkata I died, Sriranga II became the King but his accession to the throne was opposed by Jagga Raya and Timma Nayak. These two came to the palace under the pretext of giving homage to the king and suddenly broke into open rebellion. They seized the King, deposed him, and then placed Jagga Raya's nephew on the throne. The loyal captain, Yachama, then hurriedly organized the troops of Sriranga II and tried to save the King. While he was unsuccessful, Yachama managed to save.

⁷ R. Sathyanath Aiyar, Tamilaham in the 17TH Century (Madras: University of Madras, 1956), pp. 30-31. Also see C. K. Srinivasan, Maratha Rule in the Carnatic (Annamalai Nagar: Annamalai University, 1945), p. 55.

⁸ P. Sri, Samarasa Jñāniyar, supra., p. 65.

Sriranga's second son Rama. Meanwhile Jagga Raya sent his brother either to murder the King or ask the King to kill himself. The King under pressure beheaded the queen, and then slew his youngest son and daughter. The King's eldest son then beheaded his wife, and finally Sriranga fell on his own sword and killed himself. Captain Yachama, however, reorganized the army, challenged Jagga Raya, and defeated all the King's enemies and enthroned Prince Rama, son of Sriranga, as the new ruler. Both Yachama and Jagga Raya then strengthened their armies with the support of their respective adherents. In this trouble-ridden situation the Madura Nāyak lent his support to Jagga Raya, while the Tanjore Nayak joined Yachama.⁹

South India was thus gradually put into great disorder by the fighting amongst the Vijayanagar factions. The Nāyaks, who were after more power, used the opportunity to abandon their allegiance to the Vijayanagar emperor. The Nāyaks of Madura and Tanjore became quasi-independent by 1640 A.D. It is said that the Vijayanagar prince, Sriranga, was sent to bring them into submission. Tirumala Nayak, having obtained help from Golconda, repelled the royal troops and by 1642 he was practically independent and ruled Tiruchirappalli and Coimbatore as well as Madura. The Tanjore Nāyak was not so successful. Though he made an attack on the Gingi Fort, Raghunath Nayak of Tanjore

⁹ R. Sewell, A Forgotten Empire, supra., p. 222.

eventually had to submit to the power of the Vijayanagar suzerain.¹⁰

The political and social situation of the whole of Tamil Nadu was deteriorating day by day. In one of the letters written in 1640 by the English Factory at Madras to its Directors in London it is reported that

this country is at present full of wars and troubles, for the King (of Vijayanagar) and three of his Naiks are at variance, and the King of Bijapur's army is come into the country on one side, and the King of Golconda on the other, both against this (the Vijayanagar) King.¹¹

In 1648 A.D. the Bijapur Sultan brought in 8,000 freebooters who were not paid soldiers but were permitted to plunder as a reward for their service. The raids and robberies and devastations of those freebooters led to the ravaging of a vast part of the country.¹² Internally,

the Nāyaks of Madurai and Tanjore were constantly at war with one another, and the armies of Bijapur made descent on the country with intent to conquer all the Hindu rulers. About 1663 the forces of Bijapur ruined the country about Trichinopoly until they were beaten off by Chokkanatha of Madura. They destroyed the suburbs, seized the crops, and burned the villages.¹³

¹⁰ R. Sewell, The Historical Inscriptions of South India (Madras: University of Madras Historical Series, No. V, 1932), p. 277. Hereafter this work will be referred as HISI.

¹¹ R. Sewell, HISI, p. 279.

¹² Ibid., p. 280.

¹³ Ibid., p. 283.

The constant war between the Nāyaks, the invasions from the Golconda and Bijapur Sultans, and the famines occurring at different times, especially in 1630 and 1670, brought about anarchy in the country.

The Nāyaks failed to understand the crushing problems of the people. We find a good example of the people's reaction to the oppressive nature of their ruler in an inscription of the time. Vijayaranga Chokkanatha was the Nāyak of Madura in 1712. In spite of the suffering of the people resulting from wars and famines, the ruler increased taxes and did not do anything to help. One man, in utter helplessness, threw himself from a tower and was killed. Then, at last, the Nāyak reduced the taxes.¹⁴ The political, social and economic situation of Tamil Nadu from the 16th to 18th centuries is summarized by two historians in the following statements. J. H. Nelson concludes that

the extinction of the Nayak dynasty was undoubtedly a great blessing for Madura; because, it was opposed to all improvement ... and rendered true happiness an impossibility to all classes, rich and poor, noble and degraded.¹⁵

Bishop R. Caldwell wrote:

Their (the Nāyaks) reigns record little more than a disgraceful catalogue of debaucheries, treacheries,

¹⁴ J. Burgess and Natesa Sastri, Tamil and Sanskrit Inscriptions (Madras: Madras Archaeological Survey of Southern India, No. 24, 1886), p. 110.

¹⁵ J. H. Nelson, Madura Manual, supra., p. 176.

plunderings, oppressions, murders and civil commotions, relieved only by the factitious splendour of gifts to temples, idols and priests, by means of which they apparently succeeded in getting the brahmans and poets to speak well of them, and thus in keeping the mass of the people patient under their rule.¹⁶

These evaluations of the Nāyak's rule show the general historical atmosphere of the period. We do not have any internal evidence in the writings of Tayumanavar about the political situation of his time, but it would be legitimate to assume that as a faithful servant in the royal court he would have silently witnessed treachery, murder, oppression, moral degradation and political intrigue. We are probably also justified in assuming that the depressing events going on in the royal circle made him quit the palace and go in search of peace, higher values and eternal truths. It would not be an over-statement to assume that the political and social gloom made him compose hymns: (a) picturing human nature as led by unlimited desire with the kings and rulers always struggling to extend their power (II.I0); (b) revealing the transitoriness of the whole world with its glory, wealth and position (II.8; VIII.10); (c) disclosing the illusiveness of the luxurious life and pleasure in the world (X.9); and (d) inviting everyone to seek emancipation from the clutches of this life (X.10).

¹⁶ Bishop R. Caldwell, A History of Tinnevely, supra., p. 62.

2. Religious Situation

The religious policy of the Nāyaks and the religious situation of Tamil Nadu in the period under consideration are also important for understanding Tāyumānavar's life and thought. The religious policy of the Vijayanagar Emperors and the Nāyaks was one of toleration. Although generally Vaiṣnavites, they actively supported other sects of Hinduism by way of liberal grants to maṭhas and temples. Other religions like Islam and Christianity were also tolerated in the empire. In La Mission du Maduré d'après des Documents inédits¹⁷ it is said about Tirumala Nayak that "he loved and protected the Christian Religion, whose excellence he recognized". Veerappa Nayak's permission granted missionaries the opportunity to build Churches, and De Nobili's famous missionary activity in Tiruchirappalli (1606 - 1648 A.D.) took place during and just after the reign of Muttu Krishnappa. These examples show their policy of tolerance of different religions. The Nāyaks supported religion, for they seemed to believe that it was their responsibility to promote and safeguard the spiritual and moral welfare of the people.

A number of books refer to the sectarian disputes of the 17th and 18th centuries, but, none of them deals with

¹⁷ By J. Bertrand, S.J. in Four Volumes. This particular reference is found in Vol. III, p. 50 as translated by and found in R. Sathyanatha Aiyar, History of the Nāyaks of Madura, supra., p. 203.

the issue in detail. R. Sathyanatha Aiyar is of the opinion that

though there were petty disputes among the various sects, they were not serious enough to disturb their (the Nāyaks) harmonious social relations and co-operation for common ends.¹⁸

It is difficult to know which of the sects were actively involved in disputations and religious rivalries in Southern India during the 17th and 18th centuries. Tāyumānavar frequently refers to the different creeds being involved in disputing and fighting with one another (1.1-2; XIII.10).¹⁹ Although he alludes to religious rivalries in many of his hymns he does not explicitly tell us about any particular creed actively involved in sectarian conflicts and debates.

Looking at the question from the vantage point of well-known historical sources we know that in Tamil Nadu during the period under consideration there were several schools of thought such as Śaivism, Vaiṣnavism, Advaita Vedānta, Dvaita of Madhva, Buddhism and Jainism, Islam and Christianity. While Islam and Christianity were newly spreading their tenets, Buddhism and Jainism were fast disappearing from the scene so that the major rivals were the different sects of Hinduism in their various manifestations. In the presence of these different

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 193.

¹⁹ A few other hymns where the Poet-Saint refers to religious acrimony are, XIV.9; XXV.25; XXVI.5; XXVII.II; XXVII.51; XXXVII.1,8; XLII.25.

religious groups there could have been sectarian bitterness and rivalry. Such bitterness arises when followers of a particular creed are so unyielding in championing their tenets that the true spirit of religion is lost. This approach to championing the doctrine of one sect over another naturally led to the underestimation of the worth of other religions and paved the way for bitterness and rivalry between the sects. When the ruling chiefs of such places, where religious hostility prevailed, took up the cause of one of the sects, this resulted in the development of an even more intense warring spirit and intolerance between the sects. It is in this context that Tayumanavar asks the question:

...camayakō ṭikaḷelān
 tanteyvam enteyvamen
 reṅkuṅ toṭarntetir vaḷakkiṭavum niṅratetu

What is that which stands, which makes a million sects continuously contest everywhere crying my God, my God (I.I).

A number of references to "continuous religious contests" (toṭarntetir vaḷakkiṭavum) in his hymns direct one to the religious acrimony of his days. Tāyumānavar, being aware of disharmony among religious faiths, tried to find a common ground for the meeting of all the creeds and the transcending of their differences.

The following instances make clear how religious tensions were being expressed in the region. An example of religious tension was the long-standing boundary dispute between the two great and neighbouring temples of Srīraṅgam (Vaiṣṇavite) and Tiruvanaikkaval (Śaivite).²⁰ It was a custom that on the Eighth day of the Paṅkuni-uttiram festival²¹ the Ranganatha image of Śrīraṅgam temple was taken in procession to a maṅṭapa in the garden of Tirumangaimanna on the southern bank of the river Coleroon. On the way towards the garden of Tirumangaimannan the image of Ranganatha was also taken to Tiruvanaikkaval, as was the custom, for a washing of the Lord's Feet in jambutirtham (the tank). It is said that for unknown reasons the Śaivas of Tiruvanikkaval resisted this old religious practice in 1376 and blocked the procession. This intimidation resulted in hostility between the two religious sects leading to an armed strife between them.²² The case was taken to the Vijayanagar King and through the royal mediation the dispute

²⁰ Srīraṅgam is a small town in the outskirts of Tiruchirappalli. The distance between Srīraṅgam temple and Tiruvanaikkaval is only half a mile.

²¹ For a detailed study on this feast see P. Younger, "Ten Days of Wandering and Romance with Lord Raṅkanāta: The Paṅkuṇi Festival in Śrīraṅgam Temple, South India" Modern Asian Studies 16,4(1982), 623 - 656.

²² The year of this incident is said to be in 1376 A.D. See V. N. Hari Rao, History of the Śrīraṅgam Temple (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1976), pp. 140.

was settled by erecting a boundary wall between the Srīraṅgam and Tiruvanikkaval temples.

The royal zeal for a religious sect sometimes caused religious rivalry. In an early era the Cola King's favor for Śaivism made the Śaivites believe in the doctrine : śivāt parataram nāsti (there is none greater than Śiva). The Śaiva sect, being conscious of its royal support had in the Eleventh century, tried to force Rāmānuja and his followers to subscribe to the superiority of Śaiva religion. Rāmānuja and his followers rejected the demand of the Śaivites, and Rāmānuja, knowing the danger of his life, left for Mysore. The two ardent followers of Rāmānuja, Periya Nambi and Kurattalvan, were then taken to the royal court where they represented their ācārya and discussed with the king Krimikantha the supremacy of Viṣṇu. The King did not accept the arguments and tried to compel them to subscribe to śivāt parataram nāsti (there is none greater than Śiva). The disciples of Rāmānuja would not accept the King's order and it is said that the Cola King ordered them tortured and blinded.²³ This event is said to have taken place during the reign of the Cola King Krimikantha whom historians have sometimes identified as Kulottunga I (1070-

²³ See S. Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. V. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), p. 45.

1118 A.D.)²⁴ and sometimes as Kulottunga II (1133 - 1150 A.D.).

Another case of the zeal of the Cola King²⁵ for the Śaiva sect creating religious tension between the Śaivites and Vaiṣṇavites was the removal of the Viṣṇu image from the Cidambaram temple. King Kulttunga II (1123 - 1146 A.D.), while renovating the Nataraja shrine at Cidambaram, desecrated Viṣṇu by removing the image of God Viṣṇu from the courtyard of the hall of Tillai. This naturally created a kind of religious tension between the two sects.

It is generally said that the time of the Vijayanagar Emperors reversed the favoritism, and it was a time of proselytism on behalf of Vaiṣṇavism. An extract from Prapannāmṛtam by Anantarya, referred to in the Sources of Vijayanagar History,²⁶ is interesting in this regard. Anantarya boasts that when the Vijayanagar Emperor Venkatapati became a disciple of Tatacharya, an ardent Vaisnava missionary, a large number of the King's subjects also became Vaiṣṇavites.

²⁴ Dasgupta, Op. cit., Vol.III., p.104.

²⁵ It is often said that the Cola Kings extended their patronage to both Saiva and Vaisnava religions. But when we see events such as the above toleration, we suspect them of their religious favoritism.

²⁶ Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, Sources of Vijayanagar History (Madras: University of Madras, 1919), p. 251. Also see H. Heras, Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara, Vol. 1 (Madras: B.G. Paul & Co., 1927), p. 522.

This kind of proselytism was followed by hot disputes at the royal court among the Saiva and Vaisnava teachers. There was one such dispute between Tatacharya (Vaisnavite) and the court poet Appaya Dikshitar (Saivite) (16th century). In this argument Appaya Dikshitar was victorious and thereby reconverted many Vaisnavites to their former faith of Saivism. It is said that this made Tatacharya an enemy of Appaya Dikshitar and the former even plotted to put an end to the latter's life.²⁷ Another debate between the Vaisnava philosopher Vijayindra Tirtha and the Veera Saiva Guru of Kumbakonam held at the Kumbakonam maṭha lasted for eleven days. In this argument Vijayindra Tirtha was defeated and in accord with the rules of the debate, the defeated Vijayindra became a Veera Saivite and entered the Veera Saiva Maṭha at Kumbakonam.²⁸

During the reign of Cokkanatha Nayak (1659 - 1682) an advaitin called Vajrangi was preaching Saivism in Srirangam. Srinivasa Desikar (Vaisnavite) was called in for

²⁷ G.R. Subramaniam Pantulu, "Discursive Remarks on the Augustan Age of Telugu Literature", Indian Antiquary, XXVII(1898), 322-336. We may also recall here the philosophical contest between Sivagrayogin and Manavala Mamuni (Vaisnavite). In this contest, Manavala Mamuni was continuously defeated by the Saivite Sivagrayogin. It is said that the followers of Manavala Mamuni could not bear it and they set fire to Sivagrayogin's residence.

²⁸ Gopinatha Rao and T. S. Kuppuswami Sastri, "Arivilimangalam Plates of Srirangaraya II". Epigraphica Indica, XII(1913-1914), p. 346.

a debate which took place in the garden of pakṣirāja, opposite to the garuṭa shrine in the Śrīraṅgam temple. Vajrangi was defeated in the debate and the whole group of Śaivites, it is said, was converted to Vaiṣṇavism.²⁹

During the reign of Tirumala Nāyak (1623 - 1659), Kumaragurupara, the author of Irrattaimanimālai³⁰ and Maduraikkalambakam,³¹ went to different parts of the country conducting disputations with rival sects including Islam.³² Another poet, Śivaprakasa, is said to have met Christian missionaries for disputations and is believed to have composed a polemic refuting the Christian creed. The polemic was called Ēsumatanirākaraṇam³³ (Rejection of Christianity).

During the rule of Krishnappa Nayak (1564 - 1572), there arose a dispute on the question of the erection of the image of Viṣṇu in the temple at Cidambaram. Krishnappa Nāyak was observing the work of reinstalling the image of Vishnu, which had been removed centuries earlier by the

²⁹ According to the Chronicle of Srirangam Temple (Koil-Oḷugu) (p.188) the debate lasted for 44 days. See V.N.Hari Rao, History of the Śrīraṅgam Temple (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1976), p. 194.

³⁰ It is about the goddess Minakshi of Madura.

³¹ It has 102 stanzas praising Chokkalinga, Siva, the deity of Madura and His sports.

³² K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, History of India, 3rd edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 385.

³³ Ibid., p.385.

Śaivites. When the emperor sought to place the temple of Govinda Raja within the great Śaiva Temple of Cidambaram, a problem arose over the question of whether or not it was lawful to place the image of Viṣṇu in the temple at Cidambaram. Irrespective of objections from the interested group, the Nāyaka decreed that the repair of the shrine proceed and reinstalled the image with all solemnity. The priests of the temple were against it and threatened that they were determined to jump down from the top of the gopuram of the temple if the image of Viṣṇu were reinstalled. Krishnappa Nayak was unmoved by the threat and the priests climbed up to one of the gopurams of the temple and started to cast themselves down while the Nāyaka was in the temple. It is said that twenty of the priests died in this way before the Nāyaka in anger shot dead two more. The rest went off to different places and the Nāyaka accomplished his task.³⁴

Besides the disputes between the sects, there were also disputations within each sect. Among Vaiṣṇavas this was primarily between Tēngalais and Vadagalais.³⁵ Within

³⁴ Quoted from the letter of a Missionary, Fr. N. Pimenta, to Fr. C. Squavia as recorded by H. Herras, The Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara, supra., pp. 553-554.

³⁵ A great division occurred among the Vaiṣṇavites on the interpretation of the nature of prapatti (self-surrender to God) (See S. Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. III., op. cit. p. 374). The term Prapatti has various meanings; it is a kind of attachment to God where a devotee conceives of God as the sole saviour; it also means faith that God would protect the soul; appeal to protection; a

Vaiṣṇavism there was another discord on the question of expounding the Vaiṣṇava darśana(system of thought). The Pravacana School (Sri Bhāṣya Pravacana) insisted that everything be based on the Vedānta Sūtras with the help of Rāmānuja's commentary (in Sanskrit). The Dravidamaya Pravacana School emphasised the study of the 4,000 sacred prabandas of the Ālvars(in Tamil). Among Śaivas it was

feeling of one's own limitedness; the commonly accepted meaning is "complete self-surrender" all others are means to this goal. See S.Radhakrishnan, The Vedānta According to Sankara and Rāmānuja (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1928), p.271. This self-surrender to God makes the devotee extremely charitable and friendly to everybody. The Vadagalai School laid stress on man's part similar to that of the monkey to its little one where the little one has to exert itself to maintain the grip. The Tengalai School, who are more directly in the line of succession to Ālvars, emphasised God's grace and maintained the position that all that man has to do is to remain passive like that of the cat and the kitten, where the kitten is passive in the mother's mouth. The nature of the rivalry between these Schools may be found in the following remark: "Though the leaders themselves were actuated by a spirit of sympathy with one another, yet their followers made much of these little differences in their views and constantly quarrelled with one another, and it is a well-known fact these sectarian quarrels exist even now" S.Dasgupta, History of Indian Philosophy, Vol.III, op.cit., p.120. There are a number of differences between the two groups and those usually cited are known as ashtadaśa bhedas (Eighteen differences) like the Vadagalai understands divine grace as cooperative while for the Tengalai it is irresistible and what man has to do is to remain passive; the former takes karma and jnana as ancillary to bhakti, the latter understands each of them as independent. For the Vadagalai prapatti is an act of winning grace and the Tengalai accepts prapatti as an unconditional surrender devoid of any motive. For other differences see N.Jagadeesan, History of Sri Vaisnavism in the Tamil Country, (Madurai: Koodal Publishers. 1977), pp.198. For a study on the potent cause of struggle between these two sects see V.Rangacharya, "The Successors of Ramanuja and the Growth of Sectarianism Among the Sri-Vaishnavas" Journal of Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society, XXIV (1914 - 1915), 102 -136.

between Śaiva Siddhānta and Advaita Vedānta teachers. This philosophical dispute followed the traditional style of refutation. Śaiva Siddhānta ācāryas like Aruṅṅanti in the SS and Umapati in the Caṅkarpa Nirākaraṇam wrote using traditional forms of refutation. They presented Siddhānta position as the only viable and conclusive position and provided a dialectical refutation of Advaita Vedānta and all other schools of thought.

During Tāyumānavar's time disputations and refutations between different sects (for academic interest) appear to have become more intense and to have picked up some of the general atmosphere of political and religious rivalry. This conclusion is derived from the reading of a few of his hymns such as I.1; XIII.10 and XIV.3-4³⁶ where he speaks about the futility of refutation in attaining the goal which is mukti. For Tāyumānavar knowledge for the sake of silencing others with fascinating speech will not lead one to mukti:

...vellāma levaraiyum maruṭṭiviṭa vakaivaṇṭa
vittaiyen muttitarumō...(VII.10).

The whole verse (VII.10) shows his dislike of a "show" of knowledge and denounces the pomp and display of learning. It has already been shown that even in the opening verse (I.1) of the hymns itself, he alludes to the triviality of

³⁶ TP., XX.9; XXV.25; XXVI.5; XXVII.II,51; XXVII.8; XXXVII.1; XLII.25; XLIII.5.

contesting between various religions over their exclusive claims to know the One Reality which is beyond all the sects: "What is that which stands, which makes various sects continuously contest for the sake of that Truth which is beyond their reach".

The uselessness of indulging in vain controversy by juggling technical words is depicted in the following verse:

paṇmu kaccamaya neṛipa ṭaittavaru
 miyāṅka ḷēkaṭavu ḷenṛiṭum
 pāta kattavarum vāta tarkkamiṭu
 paṭiṛa runtalai vaṇaṅkiṭat
 taṇmu kattiluyir varava ḷaikkum...

Originators of multifarious sects, (who are so stubborn in their arguments and counter-arguments, that they produced many sects), the unholy ones who claim they are gods (ahambrahmavādins / aikiyavādins / māyāvādins) and those who indulge in controversies, bend their heads in your presence (XIII.10).

Though it is difficult to determine what is the particular sect or sects that he is referring to, we can safely draw three conclusions. First, there was a variety of creeds actively presenting their cases during Tāyumānavar's time. Second, those sects were indulging in controversies, disputes and refutations. Third, those debates and refutations were not considered by him to be helpful for "civapōkam" (Skt. Śivabhōgam) (XXX.3) and "civānupava" (Skt. Śivānubhava) (VII.10) and the knowledge of Śiva (XXVII.51). On the contrary, he held that God-

experience is the axis of truth and this made him try to intuit the essence of different religions and hold that intuitive experience is the centre around which all religions can harmoniously meet.

3. Other Formative Factors

The above-mentioned political, social and religious conditions of the time left their stamp on the writings of the poet-saint Tāyumānavar. In addition, there are a few other formative factors which ought to be mentioned as influencing the thought, writings and the message of the saint. First and foremost of these factors is his personal religious experience (śivānubhava). There are hymns which describe vividly the experiential basis from which he looks at the world (IV.2; VI.1-2 and XI.8-9).³⁷ His mystical experience verbalized in the above hymns is sufficiently clear for us to postulate that the primary motivation for his views on the different religious systems stems from his own vivid religious experience. Other systems provide a place for this kind of experience (anubhava), but the basis of their whole system was not exactly anubhava or experience itself but rather doctrine and textual interpretation. They kept anubhava on the side, and debated on other grounds. For Tāyumānavar, however, exegetical and theological

³⁷ TP., XIII.5; XVIII.12; XXI.-1-2; XXII.4; XXIII.2; XXIV.2,12,14; XXVIII.41,65-66; XLIII.107,377 etc.).

disputes had only secondary importance and anubhava was central.

A second factor, which presumably promoted the spirit of reconciliation was his reading and re-reading of the devotional (stōtra) literature of the Nāyanmārs (6-9 A.D.)³⁸ as well as the doctrinal (śāstra) literature of the preceptors of Śaiva Siddhānta theological tradition (12-16 A.D.).³⁹ I use the expression "re-reading" to suggest that his approach to those literary works was not as a mere follower belonging to the tradition. Using insights from his own religious experience he was able to perceive the hidden meaning and the potential for a true and new understanding present in Śaiva Siddhānta itself. For example the SS is the most comprehensive and systematic statement of Śaiva Siddhānta in Tamil. It is presented in two parts: one in the form of refutation of other systems called parapakkam (resembling the avirōdhādhyāya of the Brahma Sūtra) and a second part called supakkam. The second part, which continues the polemical style to some extent, also breathes in many places, a true all-embracing spirit. In the opening verse, for instance, describing the concept of Godhead (Śivam) in Śaiva Siddhānta, SS speaks of it as "what is the fulcrum of the respective insights of the Six Schools of Religion". At another place, it raises the

38 TP., XI.3; XIV.30; XXII.14.

39 TP., XXIII.26; XIV.31; XLV.ii.4-5; XLV.iii.8.

question of the norm by which to adjudge or adjudicate the truth of religion, when one is confronted by different religions with their mutually conflicting claims to truth. The true religion is one which does not conflict with other faiths and beliefs but "justly" accommodates everything in the locus of all-embracingness:

ōtu cama yaṅkaḷporu ḷuṅaru nūlka
 ḷoṅrōṭoṅ rovvāma luḷapalavu mivaṅṅuḷ
 yātucama yamporuṅūḷ yātiṅ keṅṅi
 ṅituvākum matuvalla tenumpiṅakka tiṅṅi
 nītiyinā ṅivaiyellā mōriṭattē kāṅa
 niṅṅatiyā torucamaya matucamayam poruṅū
 lāṭalinā ṅivaiyellā marumaraiyākamattē
 yaṭaṅkiyiṭu mavaiyiraṅṅu maraṅaṭikkī ḷaṭaṅkum

Religions and schools (of thought) and Scripture are many and they disagree with each other. Therefore it is asked which is true religion, which is true school (of thought), which is true Scripture. The one which does not conflict with other faiths, and the one which justly includes everything in the locus of all-embracingness is the true religion and true school (of thought) and true Scripture. The Vedas and the Āgamas embody them (above conditions) and they are comprehended under the Divine Feet of Hara (SS, VIII. 13).⁴⁰

It may be noted here that the last line of SS, VIII. 13 is a kind of postscript stating that the Vedas and the Āgamas in their generality present such a unifying vision and that these again in their turn are only comprehended under the

⁴⁰ Text taken from Meykaṅṅa Cāttiram, (Dharmapuram: Adhinam Publications, No.377), 1955.

unity of the "Divine Feet". What is suggested here is that the ultimate norm for perceiving the essential non-conflicting nature of religions and religious claims must come from the experience of the "Divine Feet", a picturesque symbol of the Highest Gnosis (parāvidyā). The spirit of comprehension and inclusion advocated in the above passage is taken up and even more clearly spelled out by Tāyumanavar:

pōṇakam irukkiṅra cālaitai vēntuva
 pucittar kirukkumatu pōl
 purutarperu tarmāti vētamutaṅ ākamam
 pukalumati nālāmpayaṅ
 ṅānanerī mukyanerī kātciyanu manamutal
 nāṅāvitaṅka tērntu
 nāṅnān eṅakkuḷaṅ paṭaipuṭai peyarttiṭavum
 nānkucā taṅamumōrntiṭ
 taṅanerī yāṅcariyai yāti cōpāṅamur
 raṅupakṣa campupakṣa
 māmiru vikaṅpamum māyāti cēvaiyum
 aṅintiraṅ tōṅreṅnumōr
 mānata vikaṅpamaṅa veṅruniṅ patunamatu
 marapeṅṅa paramakuruvē

Just as all kinds of menus are served to eat in the dining hall, in the same way the following are for the benefit of the souls (to attain the final state of mokṣa). The Vedas and the Āgamas lay down dharma etc. (artha = wealth, kāma = pleasure, and mokṣa = liberation). Jñāna (knowledge) is the important

path. The pramanas like perception and inference; the four sādhanas (spiritual disciplines) and the proper gradational steps beginning with caryā are there in order to uproot the mad state of consciousness. Going through them all, you the great teacher instructed me in the difference between śampupakṣa⁴¹ and anupakṣa⁴², and then revealed the māyā nature of this world and completely conquered my confused mind with Thy teaching of the Supreme nature of our tradition which is neither one nor two (V.5).

His argument is that religion is one in that it provides food for the hungry. Foods, even though varied, he argues, are alike in being delectable to the taste of the hungry. His acceptance of various means for the realization of God, and his positive approach towards differing views are clearly reflected in this hymn which is a concrete example of his re-reading and re-interpretation of the śāstra literature in order to wrest the sense of tolerance towards other traditions from it.

A third factor that seems to have contributed to Tayumanavar's wider outlook towards different faiths and his passion for unitive experience is the precedent provided by the old Tamil cittar (Skt. Siddhar) tradition. The Siddhar tradition goes back to the great Tirumūlar. Kamil

41 With God's help the soul realizes the eternal truths through a guru. See TPMV., pp. 108 - 109.

42 It is the way in which souls reach the state of righteousness by themselves. Ibid., 108-109.

Zvelebil,⁴³ one of the distinguished historians of Tamil literature, talking about that tradition says:

whenever the 18 cittar are enumerated traditionally in Tamil Nadu, one begins with Tirumular. Tirumular is undoubtedly one of the direct and most influential forerunners of the movement.

Elsewhere the same author in his book on cittar (Skt. Siddhar) tradition writes:⁴⁴

It is usual among the Tamil Siddhas themselves to regard Tirumular as the greatest exponent of Yoga in South India and as the first master of that "revelation"; reinterpreting the timeless doctrines within the framework of the Tamil language, culture and literature.

Tāyumānavar, in his own context, was influenced by Tirumūlar's reinterpretation of doctrine. In all his hymns in the section called maunaguruvaṇakkam (Obeisance to the Silent Teacher) (V.1-10), Tāyumānavar concludes every verse with a reference to Tirumūlar. Besides, the inclusion of Tirumular among the four saints (the other three are Māṇikkavācakar, Śivakkiyar and Aruṇakirināthar (XIV.31)) is enough to show Tāyumānavar's admiration for and acceptance of Tirumūlar. It was Tirumūlar, the early sage of Saiva Siddhanta, who first used the expression Vedānta-Siddhānta, and strove for a discernment of the common element in the

⁴³ Kamil Zvelebil, The Smile of Murugan (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), p. 221.

⁴⁴ Kamil Zvelebil, The Poets of the Powers, (London: Rider and Co., 1973), p. 73.

two traditions. There is an entire section of 37 verses in the Eighth Tantram of the Tirumanṭiram of Tirumūlar which discourses on the six antas ("Ends"). To become truly Śiva is the quintessence of the teaching of Vedānta Siddhānta. All other antas are only secondary to it and therefore are vain (avam). The only praiseworthy thing for Tirumūlar, therefore, is Vedānta Siddhānta. What Tirumūlar has in mind, here, under Vedānta is the Upaniṣads, and under Siddhānta it is the Śaiva Āgamas. The Vedānta-Āgama (Vedānta-Siddhānta) synthesis is one of the central teachings of Tirumūlar:⁴⁵

civamātal vetānta cittāntamāku
 mava mava māku mavvav viranṭuñ
 civamāñ catācivan ceytonṟa nāñā
 ṇavamāṇa vetānta ṇānacittāntamē

Becoming Śiva is the goal of Vedānta and Siddhānta. All other goals are secondary to it and are vain. Śiva's exercise of benevolence towards His sentient beings is the (attainment of) unique knowledge of Vedānta and Siddhānta. (Tirumanṭiram, 2393).

So it is very likely that Tāyumānavar. was aware of this precedent in Tirumūlar and the Siddhar group in general, a group he praises as adepts accomplished in the art of the realization of the harmony of Vedānta and Siddhānta-
vedānta cittānta camaracanan nilaiperra vittakac

⁴⁵ Tirumanṭiram, Stanza, 2393 as found in Ramana Sastri's Edition, (Madras: The Madras Times Printing & Publishing Co., 1911) p. 505. All references to the Tirumanṭiram will be quoted from this edition.

cittarkanamē (VII.1-10). It may incidentally be noted that the Siddhars are "iconoclastic" non-conformers, but at the same time "mystical" in their approach. They reject creeds and rituals and caste pretensions. What is important and enduring for them is the "mystic experience" and godly life, realizable without the crutches of any scripture or institution.

A fourth feature of Tāyumānavar's thought is his fascination with the theme of love (appu) (IX.2; XLIII.14) which plays a great part in his mystical poetry and naturally predisposes him in favour of the harmony of religions and the advaitic union. Love is the celebrated focus of the earliest Tamil Saṅgam poetry and is its bequest to subsequent religious and ethical literature throughout the history of Tamil poetry. The theme of love runs through the whole gamut of Śaiva Siddhānta as well. Tirumantiram, the text referred to earlier, equates the known experience of love with the unknown experience of Śivam:

appuñ civamum iraṇdenpa raṇivilā

raṇpē civamāva tāru maṇikilā

raṇpē civamava tāru marintapi

ṇaṇpē civamā yamarntirunt āre

The ignorant think that love and Śivam are two. They do not know that love is Śivam. After knowing that love is Śivam they abide in the love which is Sivam. (Tirumantiram, 270)

From the point of view of love Tāyumānavar tries to reinterpret the inclusive attitude of Advaita Vedānta. In

this attempt he tries to rediscover the implicit bhakti of advaita by seeing it as the soul's deepest love relationship to God (VI.9; XLIII.278; XLIV.8). This non-dual relation is explained as "making me Thou" (ennaitānākkal, XXXIV.8) and is expressed through love imagery (XLIV:1-6 and 19). In this love which involves attachment and assimilation (VI.7; XIV.18) Tayumanavar perceives the true sense of oneness and interprets the doctrine of "oneness" as a forceful doctrine of grace or aruḷ (I.1; XVIII.68; XXIV.40) - universality of grace.

A final formative factor, which helped shape his thoughtful regard for the integral vision, was his own predilection for the ascetic life, which is intrinsic to the advaitic awareness. Positive asceticism has a tendency to transcend all social and institutional narrowness, rising above both class and religious rivalry, and thus it usually refrains from the exclusivist approach towards other traditions. It is an exaltation above the level of the average life, which is of necessity subject to religious, social and institutional compartmentalizations. Asceticism, as a way of life, includes a truly non-partisan approach to truth. After the call to the ascetic life, Tayumanavar, although a Saiva Siddhantin, felt the impulse for making a careful tie with Advaita Vedānta, the system which in Hindu culture is the classic legitimizer of the ascetic outlook. This tie gave him a multiple religious loyalty and set his

mind on the non-partisan approach so characteristic of his work.

The political, social and religious conditions prior to, and at the time of Tāyumānavar, and other formative factors which left a lasting stamp on the thought and writings of the poet-saint are discussed in the preceding few pages. The political and social conditions were depressingly violent and confusing, and the disputations and religious rivalries between various sects and sub-sects within Hinduism were the distinctive marks of the religious situation of the period. Tāyumānavar being well aware of both the political and religious predicaments of the time stepped onto the scene. The poet-saint, having realized the unitive experience in his life, responded to the challenge of the society through his devotional and mystical hymns. The heart of his religious hymns is an invitation to a basic, deep and intuitive unity experience (advaita anubhava) where all faiths meet irrespective of their religious diversity: teyva capaiyaik kāṇapatarkuc cera vāruñ cakattīrē: Oh people of the world come together to see the Divine Hall that bestows liberation.⁴⁶

46 TP., XXX.2.

CHAPTER III

THE HYMNS OF TĀYUMĀNAVAR¹

In earlier chapters we have established the probable date of the life of our poet-saint, and the social, political, religious and other factors that influenced his life, thought and writings. This chapter is a synopsis of his hymns which will serve as a help for understanding his religio-philosophical and mystical thinking.

Tāyumānavar has a unique place in the Tamil literary tradition. His style combined simplicity and sweetness.² His singularity as a poet-saint is very well expressed in the acclamations he has received as the "prince among Tamil mystical poets" and "the psalm singer of Hinduism".³ Tāyumānavar's name is a household one in Tamil Nadu and North Sri Lanka. As a religious and mystic poet, breathing lofty conceptions, he has few equals in any language. The

¹ The original copy of the hymns as found in the olai (palmyra leaves) called etu is kept, although in a very poor condition, at the Dharmapuram Ādihanam Manuscript Library, at Mylatutturai. The texts referred to in my work are taken from the Tirruppanantal Edition (1951) and unless otherwise stated the translations are my own.

² R.S. Subramaniam, St. Tāyumānavar: His Life, Teachings and Mission (Madras: Meykantan Press, 1912), p. 10.

³ Muttu Coomara Swamy, The Poems of Tāyumānavar (Malaysia: Durai Raja Samgam, 1977), p. 3.

erudite Sri Lankan Śaiva Siddhānta scholar Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalam comments on the hymns of Tāyumānavar as "verses imbued with high spiritual experience and of rare metrical beauty and melody, which enjoy a wide popularity in Tamil land, being on the lips of young and old".⁴

1. Structure of the Hymns

The hymns of the saint are divided into Fifty-Six sections.⁵ Each section contains a number of hymns and the variation in the number of hymns between different sections is very great. For example, while section Forty-Three (Parāparakkanni = The Most High Couplet) contains 389 hymns, sections Thirty-Two (Mukamelām = All Thy Face), Thirty-Four (Tannai = Thou God), Thirty-Five (Ākkuvai = The Creator), Thirty-Eight (Akilāntanāyaki = The Goddess of the Universe) and Thirty-Nine (Periyanāyaki = The Great Goddess) contain only one hymn each. A glance at the following figures will

⁴ P. Arunachalam, Studies and Translations: Philosophical and Religious (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecarie Ltd., 1937), p. 181.

⁵ See TP., Tiruppanantal Kasi Mutt Edition (1952), S. R. Manikka Mudaliyar Edition (1916), Ramanatha Pillai Edition (1966), and Ramakrishna Tapovanam Edition (1980). In Dharmapuram Adhina Edition (1965) the numbering is Fifty-Five. The reason for this is that this edition does not include the Tiruarulvilāsa Paraśiva Vanakkam (Invocation to the Transcendental and Auspicious Grace of Śiva) in the main body. The three hymns offering obeisance to the Supreme Śiva is not set apart in other editions and thereby the total number appear as Fifty-Six in other editions.

make clear the disproportionate nature of the sections:

<u>Section Number</u>	<u>Name of the Section</u>	<u>Number of Hymns</u>
Forty-Three	parāparakkaṇṇi	389
Twenty-Eight	uṭalpoyyuṅavu	83
Twenty-Seven	pāyappuli	59
Twenty-Five	eṇakkeṇacceyal	28
Two	paripūraṇāṇantam	10
Fifty-Two	niṅṅanilai	3
Thirty-Two	mukamelām	1
Thirty-Four	taṅṅai	1
Thirty-Five	ākkuvai	1
Thirty-Eight	akilāṇṭanāyaki	1
Thirty-Nine	periyānāyaki	1

It is not clear whether Tāyumānavar himself arranged his hymns under these headings or whether his son or disciple, who edited his poems and provided the manuscript material for later publication, organized them thus for reasons that seem to reflect several different principles: sometimes thematic; sometimes metric; and often the title is simply the opening word of a hymn.

The total number of hymns as found in most of the editions is 1452. In the Puvai Kaliyanasundara Mudaliar Edition (1916), however, the total number of hymns is 1451.

For unknown reasons he has left out a hymn from the section uṭalpoyyuravu (Attachment To Illusory Body) (XXVIII.63).⁶

The 1452 hymns are rhythmically composed and follow the standard Tamil metres (yāppu). The number of lines in various hymns varies according to the metre. The hymns in akaval and vaṇṇam consist of thirty-eight and twenty-four lines respectively. There are 129 hymns consisting of eight lines each, while 458 hymns have only four lines. The majority of the hymns have only two lines and are called kanniṣ (couplets). There are 863 of these couplets (kanniṣ) which, though short, are well known for the way they beautifully express the saint's life, philosophical insights, spiritual longings and God-experience.

Tāyumānavar, by following the classical and popular metres (yāppu) of Tamil poetry⁷ to express his own religious

⁶ The hymn missing from this edition is the following:

avaṇē paramum; avaṇē kuruvum;
avaṇē akila maṇaittum - avaṇētam
āṇavarē conṇāl avarē kuruvenakku
nāṇavaṇāy nirpatenta nāl

He indeed is the Supreme. He in fact is the Guru. He is truly all pervasive. Those who have become Him (united with Him) say (Witness) that He indeed is my Guru. When will be that day when I become Him (XXVIII.63).

⁷ The following are the main metres (Yappu) used in the hymns:

<u>Name of the Metre(yāppu)</u>	<u>Number of Hymns</u>
Akaval	1
Vaṇṇam	1

and God-experience, joined a galaxy of other hymnologists in the Tamil literary tradition. The akam theme of Saṅgam period - the tender and intimate love between the beloved ones - is thoroughly employed in Tāyumānavar's paiṅkilikkanni (The Green Parrot Couplet) and ānantakkalippu (The Bliss Festivity) where he depicts the mystical love as a love relation of the individual soul and God. He aligns himself with the great tradition of his saintly predecessors of Tamil Nadu with his bhakti-evoking and thought-provoking hymns which obviously use early hymns as an inspiration. He recalls those great saints while the poet-saint pays obeisance to them. He calls many of them by name and extols their praises.⁸ The saints for whom he has the greatest reverence and appreciation are Tirumūlar, Sambandar, Sundarar, Appar, Māṅikkavācakar, Meykaṅṅār, Umāpati, Paṭṭiṅattar and Aruṅakirinātar.⁹

Cantam	11
Vaṅci	5
Āṇandakalippu	30
Vēṅpa	83
Kuṅṅal vencenturai	51
Kali (koccaḱa kali)	21
Kali (Kalitturai)	42
Kali (Kaliviruttam)	80
Kali (Kaṭṭalaḱai kalippu)	3
Kali (Kaṭṭalaḱaik kalitturai)	60
Āciriyaḱviruttam - 6 foot	89
Āciriyaḱviruttam - 7 foot	22
Āciriyaḱviruttam - 8 foot	58
Āciriyaḱviruttam -12 foot	118
Kaṅṅikal	777

⁸ See TP., V.1-10; XIV.31; XLV:ii.1-13; XLV:iii.1-9.

⁹ See supra., pp. 13.

2. Thematic Division of the Hymns

A division of the hymns into types on the basis of themes is difficult. The trouble with this type of division is that there is a repetition of the same ideas in various hymns, and there is a mixing up of different themes in a single hymn. In general one cannot discern a progression of ideas in the hymns. Nevertheless P. Sourirajan has classified the hymns into three divisions.¹⁰

The first division contains sections I - XIV, according to Sourirajan, and is primarily about the transcendent nature of God. This division, however, contains many other important themes like the predicament of the soul (IV.3; VIII.1); paths towards the realization of mukti (IV.2; V.5; X.8-9; XII.4; XIII.6); the realization of the goal (XII.7; XIII.10); and the call for unity and universal religion (I.1; IX.9; X.3; XII.1; XIII.10). The second division, comprising sections XV to XLII shows the eminence of Śiva. There are many hymns here directly praising Śiva's eminence (XXXI; XXXVII; XXXVIII and XXXIX). In the same division, however, there are a number of hymns depicting the miserable condition of the individual in the world (XVI; XVIII; XXVII; XXXII and XLII). The main thrust of section XIX is the importance of the Vedas and the Āgamas. The call for God-experience, and the

¹⁰ P. Sourirajan, supra., p. 20.

inexpressibility of that experience are the key themes of sections XXX, XLI and XLII. The nature of a true devotee is the subject matter of sections XXXVI and XLI. A folkloric presentation of God and the religious experience are the themes of the third division which includes sections XLIII-LVI. There are a number of references to purāṇic myths and folk-lore in this part, and these stories are used to communicate the transcendent nature of God, and other religious concepts and philosophical ideas. The overall purpose of this part, however, which is entirely in the form of kanniṣ (couplets) is mysticism and religious experience. There are repetitions of some of the themes discussed in earlier sections and a very strong longing for God-experience is clearly brought out. Overall this three-fold division of the hymns seems somewhat arbitrary because all of the major themes recur throughout the corpus.

Another way of comprehending the hymns is to describe the important themes found throughout the corpus. Paraśivavaṇakkam (Adoration to the Transcendental Śiva), the First Section of three hymns, may be taken as a beautiful preface. The themes of that section are: the transcendence of God, the religious disputes (the situation of the society), and the call to unity. These same themes are returned to again in the concluding Sections, namely the Akaval (LV) and Vaṇṇam (LVI). The themes of those three sections if set in parallel columns would look as follows:

<u>Paraśivavanakkam</u> (I)	<u>Akaval</u> (LV)	<u>Vannam</u> (LVI)
Transcendence of God	Transcendence of God	Transcendence of God
Fighting of myriads of creeds for the possession of the Reality (The situation)	Number of creeds (The situation)	Man's nature (The situation)
Call for searching the One Beyond and Its experience which transcends all differences	Call for unity	Call for the experiential Realization

These central themes, thus systematically presented in the preface and conclusion of the corpus, tie the entire body of his work together.

In the Paraśivavanakkam (Adoration to the Transcendental Śiva), the poet-saint starts with the transcendence of God and then raises a challenge to the religious leadership of his day by showing the futility of different religious sects fighting among themselves and claiming possession of the Supreme Reality as theirs. As a unifying argument the poet-saint says that Reality is non-dual and that non-dual Reality is above the clashing creeds, and therefore it is futile to fight and argue on the question of who possesses God. The conflicts and divisions could be harmonized, according to the saint, if non-dual Reality, which is "unknown to the heart", even while (it) shines in great effulgence in the heart" (cittamari yātapāṭi cittattil niṅṅilaku tivya tēcōmayam) (I.3) is known through experience. The true religious search must be a pursuit for

the experiential knowledge of the Transcendental Reality. This pursuit will transcend religious sectarianism and eliminate religious acrimony.

When organized in accord with this stated theological concensus, all the hymns of Tāyumānavar can be seen as expressing the three themes listed in the above column. Essentially he is interested in two questions concerning the nature of Ultimate Reality and its realization. Following his own words we shall formulate the questions as follows: First, while shining in the heart why is Reality unknown to the heart? Secondly, when and how will Reality be known to the heart? The contents of the hymns of Tāyumānavar, can thus be expressed in terms of the following four themes:

1. The Lord is envisioned as Transcendent and Immanent; as Guru, Father and Mother, Grace, Śiva and Śakti.
2. The soul is in bondage. The soul being bound by impurities, multiple in kind, is unable to realize the Reality which dwells within the self (first question).
3. Release is by way of initiation, following the paths of devotion, rite, integration and enlightenment and by adhering to the teachings of realized sages and Scripture, and, above all by God's grace (second question).
4. God-experience (anubhava) transcends all religious differences and it is this intuitive God-experience which can be the meeting point of all religions.

3. Concept of God in the Hymns

In the hymns the concept of God is presented as transcendent and immanent. In the opening hymn itself the poet describes the transcendent nature of God by saying that Reality cannot be localized in terms of here and there, and that Reality is beyond the reach of thought and speech (I. 1). In its transcendental aspect God has neither discernible attributes nor distinguishing marks. It is beyond cognition and devoid of all form, and is the Intelligence beyond our thought and speech (VI.1; III.1). The Transcendent Reality is devoid of characteristics of form or formlessness and the Supreme One cannot be defined in terms of birth, death, bondage and lineage (III. 5). The Reality beyond our finite comprehension is eternal, has no beginning, middle or end (ātinadu antamum illātāy) (IV. 10). The Supreme Being is beyond the reach of the Vedas and Āgamas, in the sense that it is the Object of the śāstras and all other works based on the sacred scriptures. The Vedas and the Āgamas, although they praise Him and spread the knowledge of Him, can give only an incomplete idea of the immeasurable fullness beyond all conception (XXIV.18). Being the crown and summit of the Vedas, the Absolute transcends the vision alike of the celestials, the seers and the siddhas (III.8).

In the section called Cukavāri (the Ocean of Joy) the poet-saint concludes each of the twelve hymns with the phrase cuttanirkkuṇamāṇa parateyvamē paraṅ cōtiyē cukavāriyē (O Ocean of joy, oh purely attributeless Absolute Transcendent Brightness) (IX, 1-12). The transcendence of God is brought out in a number of other beautiful images. In III. 2 the poet calls God "the One without quality and mark" (kunaṅkuri yonrara), while in other hymns he sees God as "the mighty, unspeakable stillness" (pecāta periya mōṇam) (III. 3). In I.1, God is conceived of as that "which is beyond the reach of thought and speech" (manavākkiniḷ taṭṭāmal niṇratu). God is "ever existent, perfect, interpenetrating Intelligence, beyond the dimensions of length, breadth and height" (nīnta neṭu maiyumakalak kurukkuṅ kāttā/nirāi paripūraṇa varivāy nitta māki) (XIV.13). In section IV God is praised as "cinmayānanta guru" (Divine Master of Cognitive Bliss) (IV.1-11). The transcendence of God is clearly brought out in the description of God as "the Pure Fullness that neither goes nor comes" (pōkku varavu aru irukkum cutta pūraṇam) (LIV.18) and calling God turiyam¹¹ or the "beyond". In

¹¹ TP., III.1,4,5,8. There are various states of human experience. Turiyam meaning the "fourth" stands for the state beyond jāgra (wakeful state of the consciousness), svapna (dream state of the consciousness) and susupti (dreamless state of the consciousness). Turiyam and turiyātītam are distinctions in the human experience of the Absolute without difference.

III.1 God is envisioned as "the shining flame in the turiya state" (turiyaṇaṭu vūṭirunta periya porul) (III.8).

The transcendent nature of God explained in various hymns is nicely summarized in the following hymn:

kūṭuta luṭaṅpirita laṅṅunirt tontamāyk
 kuvitaluṭaṅ viritala ṅṅuk
 kuṇamaṅṅu varaviṇoṭu pōkkaṅṅu nilaiyāṅa
 kuriyaṅṅu malamumaṅṅu
 nāṭutalu maṅṅumēl kīḷṅaṭup pakkameṅa
 naṅṅutalu maṅṅuvintu
 nātamaṅ ṅaivakaip pūtapē tamumaṅṅu
 ṅāturu vin ṅānamaṅṅu
 vāṭutalu maṅṅumēl oṅṅaṅ ṅiraṅtaṅṅu
 vākkaṅṅu manamumaṅṅu
 mannupari pūraṅac cukavāri taṅṅilē
 vāymaṭut tuṅtavacamāyt
 tēṭutalu maṅṅaviṭa nilaiyenṅa maṅṅiyē
 cittāṅta muttimutalē
 cirakiri viḷaṅkavaru ṭakṅiṅā mūrṅtiyē
 cinmayā ṅantakuruvē

That which is devoid of union or separation, unattached, knowing no contraction or expansion, having no quality, neither born nor dying, having no permanent mark, knowing no impurity, not outside seeking, neither up nor down, neither side nor centre, neither the bindu (the point) nor nādam (sound essence), knowing no difference of the five elements, devoid of the distinction of the seer, the seen and the seeing, unflagging, neither one nor two, without words or thought, in that ocean of abiding Bliss and plenitude, Oh the Silent Teacher

Thou hast taught me to drink with mouthful and become immersed and forefeit even the sense of search. Oh Silent Teacher initiate me into that state of Truth. Oh Thou who are the bestower of mukti as prescribed in the Siddhānta. Oh Thou, Lord of the south, shining upon the hill of Siva (Tiruchirappalli). Oh Thou who art the Guru of Consciousness and ānanda (Bliss) (IV.8).

In the hymns of Tāyumānavar we also see the transcendent blended with the immanent conception of God. This hyphenated concept is distinctly expressed in the phrase "ellām āki allātumāki" (III. 12) (Having become all, and yet becoming nothing). It shows God's presence in everything. Even while he is beyond it, God is in all but all is not God. The immanence and transcendence of God is further presented through the analogies of the vowel and the consonant (akaravuyi reluttanait tumāki) (III. 12), oil in the seed (ellilenney) (III. 8) and "fragrance in the flower" (malarinmaṇam) (III. 8).

akaravuyi reluttanai ttumāki vērāy
 amarntateṇa akilāṇṭa maṇaittu mākip
 pakarvaṇavel lāmāki alla tākip .
 paramākic collariya pānmai yākit
 tukaḷarucaṅ karpavikar paṅka ḷellān
 tōyāta arivākic cutta māki
 nikarilpacu patiyāna poruḷai nāṭi
 neṭṭuyirttup pēranpāl niṇaital ceyvām

Let us mediate with our longing expressed in sighs and with great love for that Supreme One which like the vowel "A" permeates all other letters and yet

stands separate; that which becomes all in the universe yet stays beyond the universe; and that which is spoken yet unspoken; and that which is pure and incomparable, the embodiment of knowledge; and that which is unaffected by resolution and dissolution; that which is the Lord of the bound souls (III. 12).

Vowel "A" is considered in Tamil grammar the primary and first sound a human can utter, and it is thought of as present in every other vowel or consonant. Even in a simple consonant that vowel is implied and understood, and so it is completely identified with the consonant itself. Neither of them is independent. They are connected and inseparable. Likewise the immanent nature of God is in all forms of life - they are inseparable. The same idea is conveyed in the other analogies mentioned above.¹²

Although the transcendent One is devoid of all attributes and beyond name and form, the devotees and the mystics out of love and devotion are able to praise God by using manifold names and attributes. The poet therefore although a true devotee and mystic, fully aware of the transcendence of God, nevertheless calls Him by names which are considered only attributes and descriptions emerging out of the soul's intimate relationship with Reality.

¹² TP., VIII.2. Mistakenly, people have understood Tāyumānavar as a pantheist. See Reinhold Rost, "Tamil", Encyclopaedia Britannica, XIth Edition (1911). In this article Reinhold Rost presents Tāyumānavar as a pantheist (Vol. XXVI). He is not a pantheist, but is a panentheist.

In 1.2 the poet sings that the names of the Supreme One are countless (pēraṇaṅtam). Sections One to Fourteen are filled with this kind of attributive and descriptive praise of the Divine. In VI.1, for example, he describes God as the One devoid of qualities (nirkūṇa), painless (nirāmaya), self-existent (nirālampā), inaccessible to senses (nirviṣaya), beyond the universe (viśvātīta), ever-full like space (vyōmaparipūraṇa), ever-blissful (catāṇanta), Lord of Wisdom (ñānapakavan) etc.

Out of love and devotion the poet-saint sees God as absolute purity: nirviṣaya cuttamāna nirvikāran (the unextended and unchanging and perfect purity) (I. 3). The poet intuitively the Almighty as: cankarpa vikarpankaḷ ellām tōyāta arivu āki (true wisdom untouched by likes or dislikes) (III. 12). The mystic poet being convinced of the power and need of Divine Grace (aruḷ) calls God "karuṇaipravāka aruḷai" (the flood of beneficent grace) (X. 6). The Lord is conceived of as the omnipresent one while the poet sings: pāl veyya māyaik/kūraṇaituṅ kaṭantavellaic ceta māki/kuraivarānin rituniraivē (Oh Fullness, Omnipresent One, resting beyond the plane of māyā which is replete with illusory phenomena and beyond imperfections) (XIV. 3). The omnipotence of God is acknowledged and praised in VI. 3: ellāmu nuṭaimaiyē/ ellāmu nuṭaiyaceyale/ eṅkaṇum viyāpinī (all are Thy possessions; all are Thy acts; Thou pervades everywhere).

The spiritual experience of Tāyumānavar makes him praise and glorify the Supreme Reality in all possible human ways. In his vision of God as Power he describes God by all familial terms like Father, Mother, Beloved and by Grace and Light. The vision of God as Father and Mother¹³ is found in a number of places.¹⁴ In XXXI: 1 - 2 the saint calls God Father and Mother and the most gracious one who made Himself known as the mother, Tāyumāna, in Tiruchirappalli (śiragiri):

....toḷavō ruruvilē

tāyun tantaiyu mānōy cirakirit

tāyumāna tayāpara mūrttiyē

Oh Gracious Lord Thou emerged in one form as Father and Mother for the whole world to worship. (Oh

¹³ God's love is compared to a mother, and the understanding of God as "Mother" is expressed in various hymns. The name "Tāyumānavar" itself refers to the story of God's saving act in the form of a mother. A young woman is expecting a child and her mother, very anxious to help her daughter at that time, plans to make the journey to her daughter's house which journey entails crossing a river. Word is received that her daughter is in labour, and her mother sets out to go to her. However, when she reaches the river, she finds it overflowing and impossible to cross. In her disappointment and distress, she prays to the Lord Tāyumāneśvarar at the bank of the river before turning back home. Her prayer is heard by the Lord and He appeared to the daughter in the form of her mother, taking care of her as her mother would have done, thereby demonstrating that "God also become a Mother" and hence the title Tayumanavar. See K. Subramaniya Pillai, Tāyumānaswāmikal Varalārum Nūlarāyicciyum, op.cit., p. 21.

¹⁴ The following hymns shall be cited as examples: TP., XVIII.25,43; XX.5; XXII.5; XXIV.10,20; XXVIII.36; XXIX.6; XXXVI.7; XXXI.2; XLI.2; XLVI.12,27; XLVII.19; LI.8-9.

Lord) Thou also became a Mother (Tāyumāna) in Tiruchirappalli. (XXXI. 2).

While paying obeisance to God, the poet recalls the love of God and acknowledges that God has raised the poet as a loving mother; yemmai aṭimaikkā valarttetutta annai pōl (III.11). The poet-saint sees God as a refuge of everyone. Here the God-loving poet says that even if he has evil tendencies in his mind, the motherly love and care of the Supreme will not forsake him: "pollāta cēyeṇil tāyallaḷ nītamō" (IX.3). In XVIII.24 we find a beautiful analogy where the poet prays to God to draw him, as magnet draws iron, to the Lord who is also a Mother. In the same section, in hymn 25, the poet-saint calls God Father and Mother: annai appaṇen āvittunai (Mother, Father, Thou art my support) (XVIII.25). The sections Malaivalarkātali (The Mountain-bred Beloved) (XXXVII), Akilāntānāyakī (The Goddess of the Universe) (XXXVIII) and Periyanāyakī (The Great Goddess) (XXXIX) exclusively praise God in the figure of Mother, the śakti of Śiva which is Śiva Himself in the form of Love and Grace.

In a number of hymns the poet-saint envisions God as the Lord of grace.¹⁵ In manifold ways he expresses the power of the grace of God which is manifested in the

¹⁵ Tayumanavar uses arul, karuṇai and ṭayai in order to signify the theme of grace. Karuṇai is used in VI.4; XI.8; XXV.13,25; XXVII.5; XLIII.52. Ṭayi is used in XXXI.2; XLVI.15.

universe, in the lives of human beings and in his own life. In the section Karuṇākarakkaṭavuḷ (Lord, the Source of Grace)(VI), he calls God "karuṇākarakkaṭavuḷ" (VI.1-11) and sees everything as the manifestation of God's benevolent grace (karuṇai). In IV.4 he says that it is the divine grace (aruḷ) that enabled the poet to approach God. In V.6 the poet-saint acknowledges that as light is the only refuge in the darkness it is the light of grace (aruḷ tārakam) that is his refuge in reaching salvation. The saving power of grace is explained in VIII.6 and XLIII.369.

The poet-saint uses a number of metaphors in order to convey the blessedness and outpouring of the grace. In XLVI.15 he uses ṭaya for grace and compares it to the compassion of a loving mother: tāyinum nalla ṭayāluvē. In XLIV.17 comparing grace to a King the poet asks whether aruḷ as the kind of grace will draw him to God as a magnet draws iron into it: kāntam irumpaik kavarntiluttā lenna aruḷ/vēntan emaiyiluttu mēvuvanō... (Will the King of grace draw me unto Him as a magnet draws iron unto it?). The saving power of aruḷ is well brought out through the following metaphor of aruḷ punai (raft of grace):

aracēniṅ tirukkaruṇai allā tonrai
 aṟiyāta ciṟiyēnnāṅ ataṇāl muttik
 karaicērum paṭikkunarūṭ puṇaiyaik kūṭṭuṅ
 kaippiṭiyē kaṭaippiṭiyāk karuttuṭ kaṅṭēṅ

Oh Lord, I am an ignorant and little one who knows nothing but your holy grace. Therefore I see in my mind that holding unto the saving handle of the raft of your grace can carry me to the shore of mukti (XL. 3).

Grace is presented as something to be sought after by the wise and is seen as the end of the Vedas ...ariñar/āyumarai muṭivāna aruḷ...(the grace which the wise sages are in quest for and which is the final end of the Vedas (VIII. 4). There are a number of hymns where the poet explains grace in various ways,¹⁶ but aruḷ is always God's benevolent gift (aruḷ varam) (XXIV.10), and God is the embodiment of aruḷ (aruḷellām) (XVIII.68).

The immanent nature of God is further brought to light in the thought of God as Indweller and Guru. As an indweller The Supreme dwells as a King in the heart of the devotee and fights against the evils which lead one into the darkness:

...

itayaveḷi yeṅkaṇun taṅṅaracu nāṭucey

tirukkumita noteneramum

vāṅkāni lātaṭimai pōrāṭa muṭiyumō

...

The Supreme indwells in the heart of the devotee as a saviour who leads the soul ashore through the depths of births and deaths. Can I, the slave, forever fight with it (V.9).

¹⁶ TP., VI.8; VIII.10, X.6; XVIII.66; XLV.19-20; XLVI.32.

The indweller is seen as the one who dispels the darkness of all impurities and is the one who always invites the soul to the source of Bliss.

uḷḷamē nīnkā enṇaivā vāven
 ruḷappilā āṇantamāṇa
 veḷḷamē poḷiyuṅ karuṇaivāṅ mukilē
 veppilāt taṇṇaruḷ vilakkē
 kaḷḷamē tuṇakkun tūveḷip parappē
 karuveṇak kiṭantapāl māyap
 paḷḷamē vīlā teṇaikkarai yēṇrip
 pālippa tuṇṇaruṭparamē

You the Indweller who invites me with whom you stand inseparable. You are the cloud who pours the endless bliss like a torrent. You are the light of grace shedding light without heat. You are the expanse of pure vacuity that dispels the deceit of delusion (XIX. 4).

In the hymns of Tāyumānavar, the poet vividly explains the idea of God-Guru. There are two sections, namely, Cinmayānantaguru (Teacher of Blissful Wisdom) (IV:1-11) and Maṇṇaguruvaṇakkam (Obesiance to the Silent Teacher) (V.1-10), which exclusively extol the greatness of God in the person of the Guru. In the former, each hymn is addressed to God as the Lord of Blissful Wisdom and all the hymns of the latter conclude with "Oh the Teacher of the mystic word, the Teacher of Yogins, the Lord of Silence descended from the sage of Mular's line." While the

Cinmayanantaḡuru section emphasises the God-Guru as Teacher of Blissful wisdom, Maunaḡuruvaṇakkam explains the coming of God into the human environment in the form of a Guru.

God-Guru took the human form in order to save the souls from the world of māyā. The nature of Guru's involvement in the world and the way of liberating the soul from the limitations of the world are spelled out in the following hymn:

kāṇariya vallavellān tāne kaṭṭuk
kaṭṭāka viḷaiyumataik kaṭṭo tētān
viṇiṇiṛkarp pūramalai paṭutīp patta
vintaiyenak kāṇavoru vivēkaṅ kāṭṭa
ūṇurakkam iṇpatuṇpam pērū rāti
ovviṭavum yenaippōla uruvṅ kāttik
kōṇarāvōr māṅkāṭṭi māṅai yīrkkuṅ
kolḷaiyena aruḷmauna kuruvāy vantu

The innumerable sufferings produce themselves in great number. In order to render them ineffective you arrived showing me the discriminative knowledge that burns the suffering as fire consumes the mountain of camphor. Having taken a human form like me, who has hunger, sleep, pleasure, pain, name and native place, you came as a Silent Teacher. Just as a deer is captured with the help of another deer, you captured me by your grace (XIV.17).

In the section Cinmayānantaḡuru (Teacher of Cognitive Bliss), the Guru is contemplated and seen as "cirakiri viḷaṅkavaru dakṣinamūrti" (Dakṣinamūrti (Southern-

faced Form), Thy splendour shine on Siva's hill). Dakṣinamūrti, the eternal Guru, has manifested Himself on the Mount Sira in order to shelter the soul in the bounties of grace and to show the ineffable saving truth (corūpa anupūti). The Guru is the bestower of mokṣa which is the goal of Siddhanta (cittānta muttimutal) (IV.1-10). The Guru is meditated upon as a liberator of the soul who is bound by the noose of pāśa (bond). The poet says that the Guru rushed to save the souls who had fainted due to the grasp of the impurity (IV. 3). The poet, in IV.6, sings that the God-Guru saved the soul from the dark chamber of ānava, and the cycles of birth and death.

The God-Guru is also seen as a revealer. It is the Guru who revealed that the Vedas and the Āgamas are one: vētākamattuṇi piranṭillai yonru...) (V. 2). The Guru is the silent revealer who imparted the knowledge of the path of realization Śivajñāna : civañāna citti nerī maunōpatēśa kuruvē...(V.2). It is the Guru who disclosed the truth that in order to attain mokṣa one must follow the path of jñāna. In this sense the poet considers the way of knowledge (jñāna mārga) to be the superior mārga for attaining the goal: ñānanerī mukyanerī (V.5). In V.3 the poet-saint says that it is the Guru who imparted the knowledge that the essential and operational character of Vedānta and Siddhānta is samarasam, and that this in turn is nothing but Śivānubhūti, the experience of Śiva (vetānta cittānta camaraca

civānupūti) (V.4). This aspect of Tāyumānavar's teachings shall be explained later. The "Cinmayānantaguru" (The Teacher of Cognitive Bliss) communicated a great truth that beyond all the structured religions remains the samarasa state of the soul and it is here the soul enjoys the state of perfect bliss, which is the operational basis for meeting of all religions (IV. 4).

In order to signify the different aspects of the teachings and also the modes of imparting of the teaching, the Guru is called by different names by the poet-saint. Thus, we have the following names: cinmayānantaguru (Teacher of Cognitive Bliss) (IV. 1-11), ñānaguru (Teacher of Wisdom) (V. 1-10), maunaguru (Teacher of Silence) (V. 1-10; XIV. 17), maunōpatēsaguru (Teacher of Silent Instruction) (V. 2), mantraguru (Teacher of Mantras) (V. 1-10), tantraguru (Teacher of Tantra) (V. 1-10), aruḷguru (Guru of Grace) (XXXIII. 2), saṭguru (Teacher of Truth) (XVIII. 25; XIX. 6) and saccitānantaguru (Teacher of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss) (XIX. 8).

The Guru is conceived of as Lord Siva. "Guru with three eyes sat under the banyan tree (VI. 1; VI. 5; XV. 5); maunaguru with the matted hair (IX. 6); the three eyed Lord (IX.9); mauna Śiva who taught truth to Janaka and others (XXVIII. 50); all those references to Siva are enough to conclude that the Guru in different forms is Lord Himself.

Silence (mauna), which is always associated with God, is seen as a result of the Guru (maunaguru) granting that state of spiritual disposition to the devotee as he advances on the way to God realization. The centrality of mauna and its association with Guru is expressed in the following hymn:

citta maṇi vaṭapāl maṇinan tīpakunṭa
 cutta maṇi yeṇamūva rukkuṇ toḷumpuceytu
 catta maṇa mutalmūṇru maṇamun tāṇpaṭaittēṇ
 nitta maṇamal lālaṇi yeṇmaṇṇai niṭṭaikalē

Having done the devoted service to the three called citta maṇi, vaṭapāl maṇi and cutta maṇi who performs sacrifices (who sat at the fire place), I obtained the primary three-fold silences beginning with vāk mauna. I do not know of any other niṣṭā (meditation) than eternal silence (mauna) (XXVII. 26).

The above hymn (also XLIII. 276) refers to three different maṇis (who are gurus) and the three-fold gifts of mauna. The three maṇis are citta maṇi, vaṭapāl maṇi, and cutta maṇi. The citta maṇi is the Guru in his aspect of seeking and granting grace out of his compassionate love for the souls. He is also called upadeśa guru (the Teacher who instructs the disciple).¹⁷ The vaṭapāl maṇi is the Guru, signifying Dakṣiṇāmūṛti, "sitting under the tree" - the archetypal guru who instructs gods and humans alike. The

¹⁷ TPMV., Tāyumānaswāmikāl Tiruppātal Tirattu (Madras: Kalaigana Malikai Depot., 1916), p. 470. Also see Tiruppanantal Edition, p. 126.

cutta mauni in his aspect of dīkṣāguru provides instructions and ritually initiates the disciples into the high levels of spiritual realization. The same hymn refers also to the different grades of the mauna state, namely vāk mauna, mana mauna and kāya mauna (word, mind and body silence) which are different stages of attaining the ultimate union with God.

God, according to the conception of Tāyumānavar, as found in the hymns, is a transcendent One. He is also transcendent-immanent as praised and glorified by the devotees and mystics. As a mystic, the poet-saint also sings of the immanent nature of God drawing from purāṇic fables and folk-lore. God is described here as one with many anthropomorphic characteristics and other details. This kind of presentation of God was to satisfy the popular religious yearning and make God's presence felt among the common people in a language understandable to them. The poet-saint drew upon many well known purāṇic figures, myths and incidents and presented God in the common man's vocabulary. God is presented as one with long, thick and matted hair, with the Ganges and the moon set on his head. In XXVIII.48 the poet describes God as the one with red-matted hair decorated by the moon (tinkal aṇi ceṅcāṭaiyan). In another hymn Tāyumānavar portrays God as the one who has

the moon, the Ganges, the konrai¹⁸ and daṭura flowers on His holy head (XVIII. 71).

In the Purāṇa, Śiva is pictured as the One who is decorated with snakes, and as the one who swallowed the venom as nectar. This picture of Śiva is recalled when the poet-saint describes Śiva as "one with dark poison in His throat" (kāḷa kaṇṭamumāy, XXII.9); "one with his neck decked with dark poison" (kār pūṭṭa kaṇṭan, XLV.i.1); "the Lord who swallowed venom as nectar" (XXI.7); "the one who is decorated with the red-eyed snakes" (ceṅkaṭ paṇiyāy, XXVIII.48).

In the hymns there are a number of places where the poet addresses God as "the three-eyed God" (mukkaṭ pirān, XVIII. 50, 52); "the three-eyed flaming red gem" (mukkaṇ māṇikka cōti, XVIII. 53); "three-eyed fruit" (mukkaṭ kaṇi, XL. 7; XXVIII. 49).

Representation of God as the one who is smeared with ash is common in the Purāṇas. Tāyumānavar recalls the same image when he invokes God by praising Him as "the white ash daubed Lord" (veṇṇīrran, XV. 4); and "the ash worn like fragrant sandal" (nāru nārcānta nīra, XXI. 7). The God of bliss is said to be the one whose body is radiant with the white dust of ashes (veṇpoṭi pūṭṭa mēnic cukaporuḷ, XXVII. 7).

¹⁸ Konrai is a genus of flower trees - Cassia. Śiva, crowned with Konrai flowers is described as Konraicūti.

The association of God with certain animals is common in purāṇic-lore. In XVIII. 9 Tāyumānavar presents Siva as riding on a bull, and in XXVIII. 48 the same Siva is represented as the one who has a deer in one of his hands. Hymn XXVIII. 24 praises Siva as the God who wears the tiger's skin (puliyin ataḷuṭaiyān).

God Śiva, in the Purāṇas, is always associated with different kind of weapons. Tāyumānavar in his hymns introduces God as "the one with the trident" (cūlap paṭai uṭaiyāy, XXVIII. 48) and as "the Lord wielding the gleaming axe" (tuṅkamalu mānuṭaiyāy, XXVIII. 48). In XX. 9 the poet calls the Lord "red and eight-armed."

The Purāṇic conception of God likewise associates God with various incidents. Those events are retold by the poet-saint in such a way as to show the loving and protecting nature of God. Lord Siva burning the cities of the enemies (XXVII. 55) and swallowing the deadly poison while churning the milky ocean (II. 9; XXIII. 9; XXIV. 31) are among the favourite events showing the protective power of God. Lord Siva using Mount Meru as the bow at the time of burning the three cities (II. 9), kicking the Lord of Death (Yama), and granting permanent longevity to Markanteya (XVIII. 17; XXVIII. 43; XLIII. 128) are examples which convey the dearness of God to His people. Consuming kāma in the fire of God's third eye (XXVIII. 43) and plucking off one of the heads of Brahma (XV.3; XXVIII. 24, 62) are

further examples demonstrating the power and saving nature of God. These purānic and folk-loric presentations of God in the hymns of Tāyumānavar allow him to communicate with the popular religious mind, while at the same time they help express the poet's overall philosophical and theological conception of God.

4. Concept of Bondage in the Hymns

The three bonds which enslave the soul are anava, karma and māyā. Tāyumānavar elaborately explains in his hymns the various modes in which bondage presents itself and describes them employing the language of his religious tradition, Śaiva Siddhānta, as "impurities" which make the soul finite and ignorant. Speaking of the bonds, Tāyumānavar refers to the primal impurity and asks :

āṇavattō ṭattuvita māṇapaṭi meyññāṇat
tāṇuvinō ṭattvitañ cārunāḷ ennāḷō

When shall I have the inseparable union with the Lord who is the true Knowledge just as I am now inseparably united with āṇava mala (XLV.xiv.28).

In bondage the soul is in an advaita relation with the primal impurity and liberation consists in the realization of a true advaita relation with God.

What is spoken of here as primal impurity is not mere absence of knowledge but a positive principle of darkness whose nature is to hide the Reality from the self.

As the impurity of darkness (irul malam) it deludes the soul. Its hiding and deluding nature are referred to when the poet calls it pāśa irul (the dark bond, V. 1). In IV. 6 the poet-saint says that the souls are concealed in the darkness of āṇava:

kāriṭṭa āṇavak karuvaṛaiyil ariṇaṛra
kaṇṇilāk kuḷaviyaip pōl

...

In the dark womb of primal impurity, I lie fettered
like an ignorant and blind babe.
...(IV.6).

This primordial impurity is capable of hiding
everything from the soul, both itself and everything else:

uṇṇilaiyum eṇṇilaiyum oruṇilai yeṇakkiṭan
tuḷariṭum avattaiyāki
uruvutān kāṭṭāta āṇavamum oḷikan
toḷikkinra irulennavē
tan nilaimai kāttāt oruṅka ...

The impurity of darkness that does not reveal its
form, but causes the ignorant condition of
perceiving Thy nature and my nature as identical,
like darkness that is dispelled at seeing light,
may be retracted without showing forth its nature
(X.11).

As a positive principle of darkness it permeates all bodily
and mental organs and generates through them the limiting
evils like passion, lust, covetousness, sufferings, likes
and dislikes, pride, attachment etc. (IV. 3). Its removal

is made possible when the souls are led to higher stages of spiritual advancement, and in the state of mukti the power of darkness is completely uprooted.

punmalattaic cērntumala pōtam poruntutal pōy
 ninmalattaic cērntumala nīnkunaḷ enṇāḷō

Association with deceitful impurities gives one mala-consciousness. When will I merge with Thy Pure (nirmala) state, so as to be released from my impurity (XLV.vi.17).

The other bond co-existing with the primary one in the eternal soul is karma. The poet-saint states that God fettered him with the bond of karma: intappāril paṭarntavinait/taṭaiyāl taḷaiyiṭṭu... In this world binding me with the blockage of karma (XXVII. 55). Being aware of the evil consequences of karma, the saint asks why the Supreme One planted the "I"-ness and burdened him with the body of flesh and blood and governed the soul by the immutable law of good and evil:

nānānīñ kenumakantai eṇakkēn vaittāy
 nalvinaitī vinaiyenavē naṭuvē nāṭṭi
 ūnārum uṭarcumaiyen mītēn vaittāy
 uyireṇavu mennai yonrā vuḷḷēn vaittāy

...

Why did you place the pride of self-assertion which reiterates "I-ness". Why did you make me in the process and carry the burden of this flesh-filled body which circling around good and evil actions? Why did you give me within this body, you naming it, life? (XVI. 5)

There are many hymns where the poet-saint laments the evil consequence of karma. It consists of the evil of self-ignorance :

ennaiyinna tenrariyā ēlaikkum ākeṭuvēn

munnai viṇai kūṭal muraiyō parāparemē

Is it is proper that the previous karmas associate with me, the helpless one who does not know myself. Oh Supreme One I am ruined (XLIII. 162).

The soul under the spell of karma is directed towards desire, cycles of birth and death (XXXVI. 5; XLIV. 29). In XXVII. 38 and XXIV. 47 the saint laments karma as it causes countless births with never-ending burdens. Karma makes the soul a slave of this life (XI. 8) and a beast of burdens (XX. 10). Consequently the soul experiences pain and pleasure and is subject to the wearying cycles of births and deaths.

Being co-existent with the eternal souls, karma induces the souls to act through the body, mind and speech. It acts in order to enjoy, and enjoys in order to act. Through actions the souls accumulate the merits or demerits (punya or pāpa) of these deeds. With reference to the fruits of deeds, the poet speaks of two kinds of karma (iruvinaṅai, XII. 2; XVI. 2; XLIII. 160,164). The two-fold karmas are nalvinaṅai (good karma) and tīvinaṅai (evil karma) (XVI. 5). When the soul does any act of good (nalvinaṅai) or bad (tīvinaṅai) in any egoistic spirit, it has got to reap the

fruits of such act whether good or bad. Good deeds (nalviṇai) as well as bad deeds (tīviṇai) are the source of re-births.

Karma, understood as the deed and fruit of manifold deeds, is classified into three according to the time of its fructification. Tāyumānavar refers to them as the "three mires" (XLV. 6. 21):

cañcitamē yāti carakkāṇa muccēṟum
ventapori yāka aruḷ mēvunāḷ ennālō

When will be the day when the three mire-like accumulations of karma beginning with sañcitam will be burnt up by Thy grace (XLV. vi. 21).

Tāyumānavar also specifies the nature of the "three" modes in which the bond karma functions:

enṇēnān piṟantuḷala vanta vāriṅ
keṇakkenaōr ceyalilaiyē ēlai yēṇpāl
muṇṇēcey viṇaiyeṇavum piṇṇē vantu
mūḷumviṇai yeṇavumvara muṟaiyēn entāy

How come I have been born and made to suffer here in this world? I do not have any action of my own. Is it, then, proper for actions done earlier and actions accruing in the future (for fruition) come to me, the poor one, Oh my Lord (XLII. 27).

Tāyumānavar here refers to the accrual in the future of karmas, which is technically called āgāmiyam. Sañcitam is the accumulated karma of the former births. It is the karma which is carried forward from the time when a deed is done, to the time when the fruit of that deed is experienced:

tollaivinaik kiṭāyca cuḷalkinṛa nānoruvan
 ellaiyilā ninṅaruṅai eytuvaṅō-vallvanām
 mōṅa kuruvē muḷutinaiyun tānuṅarnta
 ṅāṅa kuruvē navil

In accordance with my old karma I am distressed in mind (revolve through successive births). Will I be able to attain your boundless grace? Tell me Oh Silent Teacher, Oh Teacher of Wisdom who has realized all that is to be realized (XXVIII.30).

Prārabdham is the functioning of sañcitam in the present birth (XLII. 27; XLIII. 162). The work of these three-fold karmas is cyclic in its fructification. Enjoyment or suffering which the soul experiences as a result of past actions in the form of prārabdham becomes the source of fresh acts, which are called āgāmiyam.

The soul which always longs for freedom and spiritual tranquility is enslaved by the bond of karma. The aim of the soul, therefore, is always to get rid of the intolerable misery, birth and death, coming in quick and never-ending succession, caused by karma which is as expansive as oceans and as huge as mountains:

kaṭalet taṅaimalai ettanai yattanai kaṅmamataṅ
 kuṭalet taṅaiyat taṅaikaṭal nuṅmaṅal okkumintac
 caṭalattai nāṅviṭu muṅṅē yuṅaivantu cāraviruṭ
 paṭalattai māṅṅrap paṭātō nirainta parāparamē

The karma is as expansive as the ocean and as huge as a mountain. How many are the bodies that are taken due to this karma. To count them is as

fruitless as counting the fine sand in the ocean. Therefore, before I depart from this body, will you not remove the veil of darkness so that I can reach you. Oh Supreme Omnipresent One (XXVII.38).

The poet-saint being anxious to attain mukti looks forward to the day when the evil of karma will be overcome:

paikūḷ viṇaitāṅ paṭucāvi yā kavemak
keṅkōṅ kiraṇaveyil eytuṅṅāḷ ennāḷō

When will be the day, when the rays of grace of our Lord will be discharged upon us in order to dry up the accumulated crops of karma (XLV. vi. 19).

kuṛittavita mātiyāṅ kūṭumviṇai ellām
vaṛuttavittām vaṅṅamaruḷ vantaṭṭuṅṅāḷ ennāḷō

When will be the day of the arrival of the grace to grill the seeds of stored actions caused by mind, speech and body (the agents of thinking) (XLV. vi. 20).

In addition to the aforementioned bonds, Tayumanavar also speaks of the bond of māyā. This non-intelligent, primordial matter serving as the material cause for the cosmic evolution is described in various ways by him in order to express its veiling power (V. 3). The all pervasive māyic control (akilamāyai) which represses the mind and the world are seen in expressions such as "manamāyai" (māyā which deludes the mind, IX. 9; X. 3; XI. 4; XIX. 7); "māyai caṭam" (māyā which makes the unreal body as real, XXVII. 32; XXI. 9); "māyaip perum paṭai" (maya the great army, XXVII. 1); "māyā cakam" (māyā the world); "pāḷ veyya māyai" (useless

and scorching māyā, XIV.3); "maikāttu māyai" (māyā which shows darkness, XLIII. 330).

There are thus multiple bonds at work in enslaving the souls. They hide and veil the truth from the souls. These binding impurities (malas), however, are removable and when the souls become mature and pure those bonds disappear from the souls. The process involved in the maturing of the bonds and of the bound soul, the descent of grace etc. are themes which are elaborated in accord with the theology of Śaiva Siddhānta. These shall be discussed later.

5. Concept of Soul in the Hymns

Another theme we find in the hymns is the portrait of the human soul. There are several hymns showing the existence of countless numbers of human souls, each being without beginning and distinct from the psycho-physical organism. This distinctiveness of the soul is seen to differentiate the soul from the body, senses, mind and the like. In LIV.9 the poet-saint tells us what the soul is not. The soul is not the five elements,¹⁹ nor the sense

;

¹⁹ The five elements are ākāśa, air, fire, water and earth.

organs.²⁰ The soul is neither the organs of action²¹ nor the inner organs:²²

.... pārāti pūtanī yallai-unnip
pārin tiriyaṅ karaṇanī yallai
ārāy uṇarvunī enrān...

You are not the five elements beginning with the earth. Reflect carefully, you are not the indriyas and karaṇas (organs of action, perception and intellectual organs). You are the consciousness that thus reflects, said He. (LIV. 9).²³

The hymns also show the two important features of the soul. First, the soul never stands alone by itself. Its existence is always in association or relationship with either the world or God. Second, the soul assumes the nature of that with which it associates. That is to say, its essence lies in its identification, whether it is in identification with the world causing delusion or with Pure Spirit which means liberation. This is brought out in the simile of the crystal and the objects adjacent to it:

²⁰ The jñānendriyas (sense organs) are: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin.

²¹ The karmendriyas (organs of action) are: mouth, hands, feet, anus and genitals.

²² The antaḥkaraṇas (inner organs) are citta, manas, ahaṅkara, and buddhi.

²³ Also see., TP., XIV.18.

vantaṇuṭal poruḷāvi mūṇrun taṅkai
 vacameṇavē attuvā mārkkā nōkki
 aintupulaṅ aimpūtan karana māti
 aṭuttakuṇam attaṇaiyum allai yallai
 intavuṭal aṇivariyā maiyuni yallai
 yātonṇu paṇṇinatan iyalpāy niṇṇu
 pantamaṇum paḷiṅkaṇaiya cittu nīyūṇ
 pakkuvaṅkaṇ ṭaṇivikkum pāṇmai yēmyām

You are not those guṇas that are associated with five elements and five organs. You are not that one who looks forward to the six-fold adhvas²⁴ (pathways). You are not the one who controls the body, substance and soul. You are neither the knowledge nor the ignorance nor the body. You are the Cit that resembles the crystal which takes on the nature of the thing with which it associates. I am the one who knows at the right moment of your maturity and instruct (XIV.18).

As the object which comes into contact with the crystal determines the colour of the crystal, the self becomes one with the thing with which it dwells. Thus the soul could be associated either with the world or with God. In this respect the soul as cit stands different from God who is also Cit. The latter is the one who provides the appropriate instruction to redeem the soul from its bondage.

Because the soul partakes of the things with which it happens to associate, the souls are said to be either sat or asat:

²⁴ The six adhvas are the mantra, pada, varṇa, Bhuvana, tattva and kalā. For details on adhvas see Umapati, Sivappirakācam, No.3.

ariyāmai cāriṇ atuvāy arivām
 neriyāna pōta tuvāy nirkuṇ-kuriyāl
 catacat taruḷuṇarttat tāṇuṇarā ninra
 vitamur rarivenumpērmey

When it is associated with ignorance, it becomes ignorant. When it is associated with the state of knowledge it exists as knowledge. When Grace thus makes it know, it knows sat and asat. This is its true nature as knowledge (XXVIII. 22).

The soul is conceived of and presented in the hymns as a conscious self passing through different stages of consciousness (avasthas). In the section XXIV.25-26 Tāyumānavar speaks about different stages of consciousness (avasthas)²⁵ namely, the jāgra (self consciousness), svapna (dreamy consciousness), suṣupti (sub-consciousness), turiya (pure consciousness) and turiyātīta (cosmic consciousness). The final state is the turiyātīta state where the soul attains the feet of God and is one with God. The poet says that mature souls understand the nature of each stage of consciousness and they conduct themselves accordingly:

cākkiramā nutaliṇilin tiriyam pattuñ
 cattāti vacaṇāti vāyu pattum
 nīkkamilan takkaraṇam puruṇaṇōṭu
 niṇṇāmup pāṇaintu nilavuñ kaṇṇat

²⁵ One may recall here the original teaching on the avasthas as found in the Māndūkya Upanishad I.3-7.

tākkīyacop paṇamataṇil vāyu pattum
 aṭuttanācat tātivaca nāti yāka
 nōkkukara ṇampuruṭa nuṭaṇē cūṭa
 nuvalvar iru pattaintām nuṇṇi yōrē

The persons of penetrating knowledge will say that in my forehead is the wakeful state with 35 tattvas: the 10 indriyas,²⁶ the 10 viśayas²⁷ beginning with śabda, vacana etc., the 10 vāyus (vital airs like prāna, apana, vyana, udana etc.) and the inseparable four antaḥkaraṇas²⁸ which function with puruṣa (XXIV.25).

soul: The next verse explains the other avasthas of the

culuttiita yantanirpi rānañ cittañ
 collariya purutanutaṇ mūṇṇa tākum
 vaḷuttiyanā piyil turियam pirāṇa nōṭu
 maṇṇupuru ṭanuṅkūṭa vayanā nirkum
 aḷuttiṭumū lantaṇṇil turīyā tītam
 ataṇiṭaiyē puruṭa ṇoṇri amarum ṇānam
 paḷuttiṭumpak kuvararivar avattai aintir
 pāṅkuperak karuviniṅkum paricu tāne

In the heart which is the abode of suṣupti are there the prāna, citta and the inseparable puruṣa. The navel is the abode of turīyāvastha where prāna and puruṣa shine together. Turīyātītam is in the mulādhāram where puruṣa alone is seated with power. The mature people on whom jñāna has ripened will know the nature of the organs in the five avasthas

26 The five jñānedriyas and the five karmendriyas. See above.

27 That which appear from the jñānedriyas (hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell) and the karmendriyas (speech, walking, giving, evacuation, and pleasure).

28 See above.

and they will conduct themselves in terms of those avasthas (XXIV. 26).

The state beyond turiya (the fourth) is turiyātīta, the state of consciousness, which is a state of pure Divine consciousness. In this state, the soul enters into conscious experience of oneness with God.

Another characteristic of the soul as found in the hymns is the soul's longing for liberation. This is interiorized in the form of the yearning of the saint's soul and is expressed throughout the hymns.²⁹ The whole section of XLV .vii. 1-8 is a desperate longing for the knowledge of the true self. In one of the hymns he asks "when will we know our selves instantly through grace, giving up the foolish idea that the three gunas are the soul" (XLV.vii.1). In the same section, in hymn Three the poet sings "when would we perceive that our souls are the embodiment of cit and that they carry the impermanent physical body which is controlled by the tattvas". The nature of that union with God is described in the expression "camattunilai" (equalling state).³⁰ The camattunilai is a state of union between God and the soul which is characterized as a state devoid of the difference between the one and the two (onṛiraṅṭu millatuvāy) and it is also a state which retains the difference between the one and the two (onṛiraṅṭu

²⁹ TP., XXXIII.1ff; XXXIX.1; XLV.xi.1ff.

³⁰ See TP., XLV.xiv.15.

mullatuvāy). The unique nature of this oneness will be discussed later in Chapter Six of this work.

The attainment of mukti (liberation) is seen as a passage or crossing from one state to the other. The soul, as we find in the hymns, passes through three stages namely kevalāvastha (XLV.6.25; XIV.30; XXIV.15), sakalāvastha (XIV.30; XVI.2; XXIV.15; XLV.vi.25) and suddhāvastha (XLV.vi.27). In the kevalāvastha the soul is fully enveloped in the darkness of āṇava mala under which the inherent powers of the soul like intellect, will and emotion are kept inactive. In the sakalāvastha, the souls on account of God's grace take suitable bodies and are involved in different activities in various environments. In the śuddhāvastha all the binding bonds of the soul are shattered once and for all and the soul attains freedom which is eternal bliss. This is, as it shall be shown, a straight forward narration of the doctrine of Śaiva Siddhānta.

6. Liberation from Bondage

The souls bound by impurities are not left in darkness unredeemed forever. Liberation from this bound state of the soul is possible. The pathway to the ultimate goal starts with the divine act of initiation (dīkṣā) by a guru. Dīkṣā, as a spiritual discipline, is to scorch the force of the malas (kṣīyate paśubhāvanah) and free the soul from their grip, thereby conferring on the disciple the vision and

bliss of jñāna (dhīyate vimalam jñānam). In the hymns V.2 and V.5 the poet discusses different dīksās. Through samaya dīkṣā the guru initiates the aspirant into the religious life, making him fit for observing the disciplines in order to purify the body, mind and soul. In V.2 the poet refers to the viśeṣa dīkṣā by which the guru mentally advances the disciple to do kriyā and yoga; to perform Śiva puja (worship of Śiva), to study the Śivāgamas and to enter into yoga marga. Through nirvāna dīkṣā the guru makes the thoughts, words and deeds of the disciples spotless and pure and thus qualifies the disciple for directly receiving wisdom (jñāna).

Once thus initiated, the four main paths of devotion, rite, yogic integration and enlightenment are undertaken by the seeking soul. These paths are four stages in the spiritual evolution of the soul. These stages are beautifully expressed by comparing the fruits of them to the bud, the flower, the unripened fruit and fully ripened fruit respectively on the way of spiritual realization:

virumpun cariyaimutal meyñāna nāṅkum
arumpumalar kāykanipōl anrō parāparamē

Oh Most High (the Beginning and the End) the practices of caryā, kriyā, yoga and jñāna are like the bud, flower, unripened fruit and ripened fruit (XLIII. 157).

Tāyumānavar elaborately explains each marga. In caryā, as it is explained in the Śaivāgamas the devotee becomes

involved in the ordinary religious duties such as cleaning the temple premises, gathering flowers and making garlands for the image of the Lord, lighting the lamps etc. Through these external services, the devotee attains Śiva lōka (the abode of Śiva). The spirit of this mode of devotion is recaptured by Tāyumānavar in the form of devotion to devotees of God.

anparpaṇi ceyyavēṇai ālākki viṭṭuviṭṭāl

inpanilai tāṇēvan teytum parāparame

Oh Supreme One (the Beginning and the End) if you grant me the eagerness to serve the devotees, the state of bliss will come upon me of its own accord (XLIII. 155).³¹

In this hymn the poet-saint claims that he can have the blissful experience of God by serving others. The performing of charitable works to God's devotees (anpar paṇi) gives the saint the state of bliss (inpanilai). This is jñāna in caryā - the experience of the Lord in and through the performance of ordinary duties dedicated to God.

In the mode of rite the devotee performs worship to the forms of Śiva and sings Śiva's praises and does the daily fire-rites. Through these acts, acts of worship performed to God, the devotee establishes a sense of intimacy with God, and experiences the joy of living in

³¹ Also see, TP IV.1; XVI.1; XXVII.31.

nearness to Siva. Tayumanavar's description of this mode is as follows:

neñcakamē kōyil niñai ve cukantam appē
mañcañanīr pūcai koḷḷa vārāy parāparamē

My mind is the temple, my thought is the fragrance (offertory for worship) and my love is the water for ablution. Oh Supreme One (the Beginning and the End) would Thou come and accept my offering (XLIII.151).³²

The external acts done so far with right intention prepare the devotee for meditation and internal worship. In the yoga state the relation of the devotee to God is closer through meditation and there are many hymns where the poet-saint extols the path of yoga giving details about yoga postures (yogāsanas) and the eventual attaining of mastery over the body and achieving spiritual intimacy:

kālpiṭṭu mūlak kañalaimati mañtalattin
mēleluppil tēkam viḷumō parāparamē

Oh Supreme One (the Beginning and the End), will the body fall down (will there be death) for the yogi who arrests air within (prāṇāyama), who arouses fire at the base (arouse kundalīnī) and makes kundalīnī reach the sahasrāra, above the forehead (chandramāṇḍala)³³ (XLIII: 153).

Kundalīnī, (that which remains coiled), the serpent power, is described as the supreme consciousness. Passing through various steps of yoga one is able to cultivate mental

³² Also see, TP., VI.8; XLIII.155.

³³ TP., V.8; VII.6-7; X.9; XII.1; XIV.1; XXII.7; XXVII.28,31; XXXVIII.1; XLIII.153.

concentration and finally the yogi through undisturbed concentration attain Oneness with the Supreme. Realization of Oneness by way of yoga makes Tāyumānavar to praise and glorify the yoga path :

vaṭṭa mīttolīrpi rāṇa vāyuvēṇu
 nikaḷa mōtūkama ṇāñceyūm
 manamēṇumperiya matta yāṇaiyaiēṇ
 vacamā takkiṭiṇṇum maṇṭalaṭ
 tiṭṭa murravaḷa rāca yōka mivaṇ
 yōka menṇaraiṇar pukaḷavē
 ēlai yēnulakil nītu vālvaniṇi
 iṅki taṅkumaṇu māṇamō
 paṭṭa varttanar parāvu cakratara
 pākya māṇacuka yōkamum
 pāra kāviya kavitva nāṇmarai
 parāya ṇāñceymati yūkamum
 aṭṭa cittiyuna laṇpa rukkaruḷa
 virutu kaṭṭiyaponṇaṇṇamē
 aṇṭa kōṭipukaḷ kāvai vālum aki
 lāṇṭa nāyakiyeṇ ammaiye

If I, the poor one, am able to control the mad elephant-like mind which is enchained by the shining and circling vital breath, then the learned will praise my achievement as the result of the praiseworthy Rājayoga which is most desirable in all the three worlds. Thus praised, I will live for long. What, then, is the proof for this? You are the golden Swan who had resolved to grant the dear devotees the gift of auspiciousness (cakratara pākya) which is praised by all kings; the poetic ability of composing great epics; the sharpness of mind which is capable of reciting the four Vedas in their entirety; the Eight

Great Siddhis;³⁴ You are praised by the whole world,
Oh Cosmic Goddess (akilaṅṅānāyaki), who resides in
Tiruvanikka (XXXVIII. 1).

The greatness of the yoga path is reiterated here. It is this path that helps one to control the wild-elephant-like mind (manameṇum periya matta yānai) and grants one the fitness for God realization. This is the reason that Tāyumānavar praises the glorious path of yoga.

The culmination of these various paths is jñāna which is called sanmārga for it takes the soul straight to Sat which is God. The superiority of this marga is clearly spelled out in many places in the hymns. In XXVI. 3 the poet-saint says that caryā, kriyā and yoga are only preparatory and are superseded by jñāna : patamūnruṅ kaṭanta varkku mēlāna ṅānapāta...Here, patamūnru refers to the above three paths and the respective stages of spiritual advancement. The path of jñāna leads the soul to the final state of śivasāyūjya where the soul attains supreme release and is one with Śiva.

The excellence of the jñāna mārga (path of knowledge)

³⁴ The siddhis are a special kind of psychic and supernatural powers a yogi possesses when he purifies his mind and attain perfection. The commonly cited Eight Siddhis are animan (the power of reducing oneself to the size of an atom), mahiman (the power of increasing one's size), laghiman (lightness), kāmāvasāyitva (the power of attaining things desired), prākāmya (the power to overcome natural objects and go anywhere), īśitva (the power of dominion over animate and inanimate nature), vaśitva (the power of assuming any form) and gariman (the power to penetrate matter).

is emphasized when he sees jñāna as the only path for the attainment of mukti:

pattineri nilaininṛum navakaṇṭa pūmip
 parappaivala mākavantum
 paravaiyiṭai mūlkiyum natikaḷiṭai mūlkiyum
 pacitāka minṛivelunā
 mattiyiṭai ninṛumutir carukupunal vāyuvinaṭai
 vaṇpaci taṇakkaṭaittu
 maunat tiruntumuyar malainulaivu pukkiyum
 maṇṇutaca nāṭimurruṇ
 cutticey tummūla prāṇanō taṅkiyeic
 cōmavaṭṭattataittuṇ
 collariya vamutuṇṭum arṇpavuṭal karṇpaṅka
 ṭōṛunilai niṛkaviṛu
 citticey tuṇṇāṇa malatukati kūṭumō
 cittānta muttimutale
 cirakiri viḷaṅkavaru takṣinā mūrṭṭiyē
 cinmayā ṇaṇṭakuruvē

Can one attain moksa without jñāna even if one follows the path of devotion or circumambulating this vast world of nine divisions or even if one takes a holy bath in the ocean and in different rivers, or survives without eating or drinking in the centre of fire, or remains silent by feeding on dry leaves, water and air, or by withdrawing oneself into the caves of high mountains, or cleansing the ten nadis (10 principal nerves), or by elevating a fire with one's breath into the orb of the moon, or by drinking the nectar, or by attaining great siddhis in order to sustain the body for ages? (IV.11).

Liberation, according to the saint, is guaranteed by

jñāna:

kaṇmaṇeri tappir kaṭunaraken renṇālum
naṇmaitaru ñānaneri nāmaṇaiva tennaḷō

Faltering from the path of karma leads to severe hell.
The path of knowledge always grants the Good. When
will I embrace this path (XLV.xv. 1).

In one place the poet calls this superior path the "oru col māṛkkam" (the path of one word) (XLV.xv.3). Jñāna annihilates all the malas and leads the soul to mukti. The power of jñāna in exterminating the bonds (pāśas) is effectively spelled out in metaphorical expressions such as "ñānak kaṇal" (the spark of knowledge) (IV.7), and "ñānāgni" (Skt. jñānāgni) (the fire of knowledge, XLV.xv.11). Jñāna marga then is the direct and immediate means for attaining the Highest end (V.5).

The bondage caused by multiple bonds is now broken and the soul is matured (malaparipākam) (IV. 7) by passing through different paths (sādhanas). The soul on the way to its God-realization adheres also to the Scriptures (XIX.1-3), to the lives and teachings of the realized souls (XLV. ii and iii), to the performance of dāna, tapas and dharma (XLIII. 157-58), to the chanting of the pañcākṣara (na ma si va ya) (V. 8: maṇimantra) and the practice of śivōhambhāvana (meditation of identity with Śiva) for the total liberation from all the impurities (malas). According to Tāyumānavar,

attainment of the Supreme goal without Grace is as unlikely as a man searching for a lost elephant inside of a pot or a man crying for the possession of the moon in the sky (IV.2). The soul fulfills all the above conditions, and then finally blessed by the benevolent grace of God (IV. 4; VIII. 6; XI. 8; XXV. 13; XXVII. 5; XXXI. 2; XLVI. 15 etc.), it experiences the Supreme Reality (IX. 11) as nirmala (pure), changeless, beginningless, devoid of qualities, forms and tattvas (IV. 8).

In this state the liberated soul (mukta) experiences its state of realization of "non-duality" with God (X. 3). The poet calls this state of God-soul relation attuvita niccaya corūpa cākṣātkāra anupūti (immutable bliss of the true unitive nature) (VI.1), śivānupūti (Blissful experience of Śiva) (V.4), attuvita anupava (unity experience) (XXVI. 7), cācuvata muttinilai (state of eternal liberation) (X. 5), śivasāyūjya mutti (unity with Śiva (XI. 3; XII. 2,7), nirvikalpa samādhi (indeterminate absorption) (XLIII. 51, 245, 327, 352), siddhānta muttimutal (the final state of Divine Bliss) (IV. 1-11), śivamayam (likeness of Śiva) (XXVIII. 65-66) etc.

It is within the framework at once of Vedānta and Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy that the depth of Reality is seen in the above description of the final state of liberation (mukti). In XLIII. 359 the poet-saint says that only realization of Reality as both saguṇa and nirguṇa is real

insight. Such was indeed his insight. He says that he intuited the truth as it is and instantly his deceptive mind disappeared. His analysis of various categories (tattvas) and other philosophical concepts and his critical reasoning makes one see in him at work the mind of a reflective philosopher (X. 2-3). His critical thinking is seen particularly in section XV Tēnmukam (The Honey Face) where the poet defends his position on Reality as against the Buddhists, materialists and other schools. His critical reflection is crucial to his refutation of the ekātmavādin's (The Absolutist's position) view on the final relation between God and soul (XIII.10; XLIII.103; XLV.xv.7).

Tāyumānavar, however, is more a religious mystic than a philosopher. A mystic's longing for union with the Supreme God is beautifully shown in XLV. x. 1-14 and XLV. xi. 1ff). The mystic's description of God, speaking out of his own personal experience is always exuberant and refreshing as may be seen in many hymns (XIV. 24-32; XLIV. 5, 12-13, 18, 24, 33, 44; LIV.1, 2, 3, 7). Words fail to express that divine experience and in the struggle to articulate it the poet-saint employs a number of allegories, parallels and metaphors and finally says that it is impossible to describe and says "I shall be quiet" (XLIV.24).

The poet-saint as a philosopher had an intuitive knowledge of Reality (XLIII.98,275), and as a mystic always

longed for the experience of merging with God (XLV.x.1-14). As a realized soul the poet would say "I have become your own in such a way that karma is absolved, egoism is eliminated and Beatitude is reached" (XLIII.375). This blessed state of oneness is a gift of God's grace and Tāyumānavar thinks of it very much that way: "You enlightened me and I realized the state of non-separation, within You" (XLIII. 372).

The Ānandakkaḷippu (The Bliss Festivity) (LIV. 1ff) section taken by itself suffices to attest to the mystical elevation of the poet and his advaita union with God. The possession of intuitive knowledge and the experience of Oneness with God does not restrict the poet-saint to the theoretical and intellectual level alone. The practical operation of the "attuvita anupavam" (Skt.advaita anubhava) (XXVI.7) of Tāyumānavar is the bed-rock of his hymns.

7. Impact of His Hymns

Tāyumānavar's hymns, following the rules of classical poetry and the spirit of his predecessors, were immediately popular with the saint's contemporaries, and they had an important influence on the generations that followed. People of his own time liked both the devotional and philosophical hymns of the saint. In VII.8 he says that his hymns have emerged out of his undivided devotion to God, and the Tamil world will probably find fault with them. He says

that he has sung his poems as suggested by his imperfect knowledge. The poet hopes that the hymns will be liked by the people not because they are the inspired utterances that God graciously initiated as in the case of the Sacred poems that are revered as revelations but because of their love and tolerance and that the world will elicit information through the grace of God about the Divine experience of the author. The following hymn spells out the above feelings of the poet:

kaṅṅalamu teṅṅavumuk kaṅṅiyenavum vāyūru
 kaṅṅeṅavum aṅṅiyeṅuttuk
 kaṅṅavularkaḷ taṅṅatataḷa aḷṅṅutaḷutu pēypōr
 karuttileḷu kiṅṅravellām
 enṅṅataṅṅi yāmaiyaṅṅi venṅṅumiru pakutiyāl
 iṅṅṅutami ḷeṅṅtamiḷinuk
 kiṅṅṅalpaka rāṅṅtulakam āṅṅāmai mēḷiṅṅ
 ṅṅṅiruttalāl itṅṅtamiḷaiyē
 coṅṅṅava niyāvaṅṅavaṅṅ mutticit tikaleḷāṅ
 tōyṅṅtaneṅṅi yēpaṅṅittir
 collumeṅṅa avarṅṅṅiṅṅkaḷ coṅṅṅavavai yiṅṅciṅṅritu
 tōyṅṅtakuṅṅa cāṅṅtanēṅṅavē
 miṅṅṅalpera lēcolla accolkēṅṅ ṅṅṅaṅṅaimaṅṅam
 viṅṅkacippa tentanālō
 vēṅṅtānta ciṅṅṅtānta camaraṅṅaṅṅaṅṅ nilaipēṅṅra
 viṅṅṅṅakac ciṅṅṅṅar kaṅṅamē

These metrical hymns are not the Divine inspired poetry, tasting like the nectar of sugar cane, the

three fruits and the candy that savors in the mouth. They are the outcome of my cry of despair and the thoughts that arise in my mind without any order or sequence. My Tamil verses are composed out of the stuff of my knowledge and non-knowledge alike. The world hopefully, out of infinite forbearance, will not find fault with it. Oh learned ones, you who are well versed in the path of mutki and siddhi, when you are asked about the author of these Tamil Verses, would you answer that it was by one who was "imbued with few good qualities". When will be the day when I will hear such illuminating words and obtain happiness. Oh the host of Siddhas who have attained the highest state of vedānta siddhānta samarasam (VII.8).

The impact of Tāyumānavar's poems on the religious literature of Tamil in the last two centuries is an undisputable fact. The impact is not confined to religious literature that originated within centres like the Śaiva institutions that played a great role in educating the literati of the Tamil public. It spread to the masses and also to areas outside the circle of the religious movements. As illustration of the varied nature of that impact of Tāyumānavar's religious poetry in the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries, we may refer to three instances : a mystic, Ramalingaswamikal (1823 - 1874), who does not consider himself as belonging to any school; a Muslim Sufi, Mastan Sahib (1830 -?); and a nationalist Subramanya Bharati (1882 - 1921).

In the work of Ramalingaswamikal (also known as Vallalar) he does not make any direct reference to Tāyumānavar. Vallalar's use of camaraca canmārka, which echoes all through his hymns, was clearly a theme he got

from Tāyumānavar. In XLV.xiii.2 Tāyumānavar uses the phrase arravarkku arra, originally used by Sambandar in the Tēvāram III.120.2; and in XLV.xiii.3 Tāyumānavar uses ennuṭaiyatōlanumāy which is originally used by Sundarar in the Tēvāram IV.11.5. The same phrases are found in Ramalingaswamikal's Arutpa I.3.525 and IV11.5.

Mastan Sahib, a muslim poet of Tamil Nadu, uses the special poetic forms such as ānandakaḷippu, nirāmayak kanni, ekkālak kanni etc. introduced by Tāyumānavar. These forms are recognized by all as associated with Tāyumānavar who used those forms in his pāṭalkal (hymns). One who reads Mastan Sahib's Rakuman kanni (No. XI) will recall Tāyumānavar's use of cumma and would not miss Mastan Sahib's indebtedness to Tāyumānavar.

Subramanya Bharati in his writings confirms the deep impact of Tāyumānavar on him. The Tāyumānavar Vālttu of Bharati is an acknowledgement of the greatness of Tāyumānavar by the most illustrious poet of this century. According to S. Bharati, Tāyumānavar was the greatest saint of the land who was a mauni. He also realized the unity of the Absolute and sought bliss in its realization. Bharati's Tēciya Kīṭaṅkal, Tāyin Maṅikkoṭil Pārīr and Tamil Tāy are consciously similar in form and rhythm to the Ānandakaḷippu (The Bliss Festivity) of Tāyumānavar.

Tāyumānavar's hymns were liked by both scholars and the common people. The reason for this fascination is the

mixture of themes and their appropriate literary forms chosen by the poet-saint. According to Varadarajan, Tāyumānavar is appealing to scholars because a few of his hymns are the "outpouring of a great Saint's heart soaring in the philosophical heights".³⁵ Philosophical ideas are carefully treated in the hymns. The hymns on God, soul, bondage, the union between God and soul, and many other related issues give philosophical depth to the hymns. Those philosophically high reflections expressed in the common man's language had a great impact on the ordinary people. For example the transcendence of God as found in the hymns like III.1.5; IV.8; VIII.2 is brought down to the level of popular religious belief by presenting the transcendent God in terms of puranic fables and folk-lore (XXI.7; XXVIII.45; XXVIII.48; XXVII.55; XXVIII.24, 62 etc.). The souls (paśu) in the world, the nature of their activities, their bondage, the efforts of the mind, buddhi and citta are philosophical problems and these philosophical concepts are brought to the common man's understanding by way of imagery and metaphor. The fact that Tāyumānavar brought these ideas of soul, mind etc. to the common man's understanding, with the use of metaphors and imageries shows that he did not use abstractions. The soul's activities in the world are said,

³⁵ M. Varadarajan, "Mystic Poems of St. Tayumanavar" in C.T.K. Chari, ed., Essays in Philosophy Presented to Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan on his Fiftieth Birthday, (Madras: Ganesh & Co. Private Ltd., 1962), p. 326.

for instance, to be like a garland in the hands of a monkey (vānarakkaim mālai) (XLV.vi.5). The illusions affecting the paśu are made clear through the popular story of kātikatai (story of Kāti).³⁶ The illusive nature of the mind is made clear by the metaphor of indrajālam (III.6) and horns of the hare (XV.1). Imagery such as the "darkness of bondage" (pāśavirul, V.1), or the "wilderness of bondage" (pāśatavi, II.1) illustrate the soul's bondage caused by the malas (impurities of ānava, māyā and karma). Images such as "monkey-like mind" (manamāna vānaram) (XLV.vi.5), "serpent-like buddhi" (puttiyenum aravu) (XLV.vi.8), "wild elephant-like ahaṅkara" (āṅkāra mennumata yānai) (XLV.vi.9), "ocean-like citta" (cittamenum kaṭal) (XLV.vi.10) provide very appropriate explanations of the nature of those faculties to ordinary people. The metaphors of bud, flower, unripened

³⁶ See TP., XIII.9. The Story of Kati (Katikatai) is narrated in Yōga-Vāśitta (Skt. Yoga-Vāśistha) (13/14 A.D.). The book gives a popularized presentation of Advaita Vedānta. In the Kātikatai, the story of a Brāhmin called Kāti, the author of YV presents māyā and its veiling power for better understanding of common people. Kāti performed tapas (penance) for the purpose of comprehending māyā. His tapas (penance) was accepted and the Lord appeared to him and fulfilled the desire of the Brahmin, Kati. One day while bathing in a pond he was in the throws of a powerful illusion, imagined and believed that he had forgotten all mantras and dhyāna (meditation), he pictured himself dead and cremated, he then imagined himself born again of a lower caste mother, growing up, marrying, having children, all of whom died; now he started wandering until being made a king and ruled until it became known that he was born of a lower caste mother at which time his subjects being ashamed immolated themselves, with the result he felt so responsible that he threw himself into the fire; and ending the illusions he immediately emerged out of the water. This story of Kati is to demonstrate the nature of māyā.

and ripened fruit (arumpumalar kāykani, XLIII.157) used in the explanation of the fruits of the four-fold paths of caryā, kriyā, yoga and jñāna respectively, are easily understood by anyone. The power and superiority of the jñāna mārga (path of knowledge) is lucidly shown in the following metaphors: ñānakkanaḷ (IV.7); ñānākni (Skt. Jñānāgni = the fire of ñāna, XLV.xv.11) ñāna ṭinākaran (Skt. Jñānadinākaran = the sun of knowledge, XXVIII.50) and ñāna vaivaḷ (the sword of knowledge, XLIII.176). The soul's union with God is aptly described in the images of "harmony in music" (paṇṇin īśai XLV.xiv.1), "salt in the sea" (appinitai uppu XLV.xiv.6), "water in the milk" (pālotunīr pōḷ XLV.xiv.23) and "camphor aflame" (karppūra tīpam XLV.xiv.8).

The versatility of the poet-saint is described by R.

S. Subramaniam:

As a philosopher he is remarkable for the clear grasp of abstruse doctrines and for the dexterity with which he clothed them in popular words. As yogi, he practised all stages and as a jnani, he saw and lived in the light of wisdom.³⁷

Tāyumānavar's hymns, because they are outward expressions of his inner God-experience, (VII.8) have a unique impact on people. His call for ending religious

³⁷ R.S. Subramaniam, supra., p.10

disputes,³⁸ and his invitation to everyone to experience the bliss of God,³⁹ and his appeal to religious unity,⁴⁰ have a telling impact on people of any religious loyalty:

His special feature was the bridging of the yawning gulf between practical religion and abstruse philosophy. He gave life to philosophy in order that it may appeal to the heart and be inviting to the thirsty soul. Dry philosophy blossomed forth, at his hands, into the cool shade of the Grace of God and the life-giving nectar of Bliss, to ease the weary pilgrim of life.⁴¹

The poet-saint shares his God-experience by articulating the glory of this intuitive experience (advaita anubhava) in his hymns and inviting everyone to come and experience the bliss of mokṣa (XXX. 3) and to behold the divine call which grants mukti (XXX. 2). Tāyumanāvar appeals to people to reach beyond the realms of which religious systems speak (XXVI. 3). He calls for experiencing harmony and love (XIV. 10), universal sound (XIV. 11) and universal religion (XIV. 9). The saint's intuitive knowledge and śivānubhava make him strongly suggest to the proponents of different religious sects the futility of getting involved in religious and theological disputes and controversies. In XLIII. 304 the poet-saint hints at the uselessness of expounding truth in crores of

³⁸ TP., I:1-2; XIII:10; XIV:3,4,9; XXV:25; XXVI:5; XXVII:2,51; XXXVII:1,8; XLII:25; XLIII:5,52:3

³⁹ TP., XXX.1-3

⁴⁰ TP., I.I; IX:9; X.3; XII.1; XIII.10

⁴¹ R.S.Subramaniam, supra., pp. 24-25.

In LII. 3 Tāyumānavar asks the question about the purpose of learning. He answers the inquiry by stating that the aim of learning is not to assist in disputes between different schools of thought but the aim of scholarship should be inpaṇiṣṭa (Blissful contemplation), leading one to unitive experience, and this is, according to the poet-saint, the quintessence of Vedānta and Siddhānta.

CHAPTER IV

TĀYUMĀNAVAR AND VEDĀNTA

This investigation is an attempt to understand Tāyumānavar's understanding of Vedānta. It is important because Vedānta as understood by the poet-saint is the foundation of the samarasa experience. This experience is the kernel of Tāyumānavar's teachings as found in his hymns.

1. General Understanding of Vedānta

Vedānta is an exposition of the deepest truth of the Vedas which record the experience of the ṛṣis (seers) of old who perceived the highest truth through intuition. There are two ways of understanding the nature of the revelatory source of Vedānta. The first way is the understanding of Vedānta as the highest order of knowledge (Parāvidyā). The Mundaka Upaniṣad calls this Vedānta vijñāna (Vedānta Knowledge) (III.2.6). According to the orthodox and traditional view the Vedic truths are eternally revealed truths. "The Veda is indeed revelation of Truth itself, eternal and inerrant. It cannot be superseded..."¹ Those truths have neither authors, human or divine, nor are they

¹ K. Sivaraman, Śaivism in Philosophical Perspective (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), p. 27.

disclosed or taught by God. These truths have existed from eternity and great Vedic seers (ṛṣis) were able to perceive them (mantra dṛastārah). Those sages were special people because they were able to grasp those eternal truths that existed before them through tapas and the transparency of their souls. They gave this highest mystery in Vedānta (vedānte paramam guhyam) (Śvet. Up. VI.22) verbal form and declared it to people. It is in this sense that śruti is called apauruṣeya, an authorless, eternally-revealed truth. There is also a second meaning, more significant for the subject of our study. Revelation, here, is understood in a mystical sense. The Vedic truths are accepted as transmitting of the personal mystical experience of the ṛṣis themselves.

The term Vedānta denotes different meanings. Literally Vedānta means the end and aim of the Veda (vedasya antah). The Vedānta as the "end" of the Veda stands for the concluding part of the Vedas. The concluding portion of the Vedic canon are the Upaniṣads. "End" (antah) also means the goal. In this sense Vedānta is the consumation of the teachings of the Vedas. In both these senses the original use of the word Vedānta was to refer to the Upaniṣads. One has to remember here that the Veda was not called Vedānta. Only the Upaniṣads use the label Vedānta and describe it as Vedānta-vijñāna (Vedānta knowledge) (Mund. Up. III.2.6) and Vedānte paramam guhyam purākalpe pracoditam (The Supreme

mystery in Vedānta which has been uttered in olden time) (Śvet. Up. VI.22). The integral unity of both the Veda and Vedānta shall be summarized as follows:

"The Veda is surely the one and only source by which the Supreme or the Ultimate comes to be known. But Vedānta signifies the "knowing" itself, in the rigorous sense of pure gnosis, beyond the empirical and the discursive aparōkṣānubhūti or jñāpti (Śankara) or, alternately speaking, in the ecstatic sense of participation bhaktirupāpanam jñānam (Ramanuja).²

The term "Vedānta" is also used to denote the Sūtra period which came later than the Upaniṣads. In the Brahma Sūtras,³ which is the exegesis and exposition of the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. The aim of Brahma Sūtra was finding harmony in the teaching of the various Upaniṣads. Vedānta, understood as the Brahma Sūtra, is the basis for the third meaning of Vedānta as a darśana (vision of truth) from the root dr̥ś meaning to "see". This third meaning of Vedānta is the theological elaboration and systematization of the Vedānta by bringing it into relation with various schools of thought that were in vogue at the time. The Brahma Sūtra, of course, provided the basis for further exposition, elaboration and diversification which was

² K. Sivaraman, "The Role of the Śaivāgama in the Emergence of Saiva Siddhānta: A Philosophical Interpretation", in Peter Slater and Donald Wiebe, eds., Traditions in Contact and Change (Waterloo: Wilfrid University Press, 1983), p.59.

³ The Brahma Sūtra is also called The Vedānta Sūtra as the philosophy has its support on the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavadgita and the Brahma Sutra.

Dasgupta states: "Śankara's commentary on the Brahma Sūtras is the root from which sprang forth a host of commentaries and studies on Vedantism of great originality and vigour and philosophic insight".⁴ The word Vedānta is now used for the system of philosophy set out by Sankara and based on the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavadgīta and the Brahma Sūtra.

We shall thus notice three definite periods in the progression of thought of Vedānta Philosophy. The first is the creative period represented by the Upaniṣads. The second is the period of harmonization of the Upaniṣadic teachings. The Brahma Sūtra is the expressed form of that harmonization of thought. The third period of the Vedānta is the period of further exposition and systematization represented by a number of commentaries on the Brahma Sūtra and many other independent treatises. This period is noted for its tension arising from Śankara's absolutistic interpretation of the Supreme truth of the Upaniṣads. The ultimate Truth for Śankars is Pure Being, Pure Intelligence and Pure Bliss and is devoid of all forms and qualities. The Scriptural description of satyam, jñānam anantam brahma (Brahman is Being, Consciousness and Infinite) (Taittiriya Up. II.1) according to Śankara does not refer to qualities of Brahman, for each is one with Brahman, each is indicative of the essence itself. The characteristic features we

⁴ S.Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol.I (Cambridge: The University Press, 1963) , p.418.

attribute to Brahman are transcended as it is shown in the famous Upaniṣadic dictum "neti neti" (not this, not this). Brahman, according to Śāṅkara is the God beyond God, the Parabrahman. This Reality is impersonal and can not be thought of as either subject or object of experience. In the One Reality both the subject and the object are identical. The God who is bereft of any relationships and attributes is not a God in the ordinary understanding of the term God. The God to whom we attribute qualities and the one who is in relation to human beings and the world is the apara brahman (Iśvara). The impersonal Absolute is mediated through Iśvara. This distinction between God and God beyond (para and apara brahman), nirguṇa and saguna Brahman created a tension in Śāṅkara's idea of God and the sequel of that tension was the appearance of the absolutistic and theistic schools of thought within Vedānta. The absolutistic school (non-dualistic) conceived of Brahman, the ultimate Reality, as an impersonal principle. The theistic school (dualistic) represented Brahman as a personal God. An awareness of this difference and the tension that follows in its trail in conceiving the ultimate Reality within Vedānta provides the backdrop for understanding the Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam of Tāyūmānavar which will be discussed later in this study.

2. Vedānta in Tamil

Experiencing of Oneness between God and soul is the "end" (anta) of Vedānta. This unity, in its highest form, known as advaita, is manifoldly presented in a number of Tamil writings. The Tamil Vedānta works had also possibly directed Vedāntic thinking of Tāyumānavar. There are, however, no specific references in Tāyumānavar's work either Sanskrit or Tamil works on Vedānta, although one can surmise that Tāyumānavar must have been influenced by them.

The earliest Tamil literature produced during the first few centuries before and after the Christian era is known by the name Saṅgam literature. Tōlkāppiyam (ca. 3rd B.C.), the grammatical exposition of the Tamil language used in the time of Saṅgam, divided the subject matter (poruḷ) of both grammar and other literary works into akam (inner) and puram (outer). Those akam (inner) poetic compositions represented romantic love between the sexes with all its feelings like emotional encounter between the lovers and incidents like infidelity, separation and then patient waiting for the final re-union. This love between the sexes which relates "expressly and exclusively to the theme of what is aptly translated as "interior landscape"⁵ (akam poetry). The distinguishing feature of its "interiority" is

⁵ See, A. K. Ramanujan, trans., The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology, (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1967).

that it pertains to the "inner world" and speaks of something "non-objectifiable".⁶ When K. Zvelebil⁷ commented on the akam genre as "broader and deeper than the Sanskritic "kāma" he was implying, I believe, to that "non-objectifiable" dimension of love presented in the akam poetry of the Saṅgam age. The non-objectifiable experiential component provides the basis also for understanding the role of experience in the context of religion.

The Śaiva bhakti - poets used this love imagery to convey their passionate longing and intense devotion to Siva. Love between the lover and the beloved with its "emotions and incidents"⁸ is an "appropriate symbol of the true path (sanmārga)" and "even the paradigmatic model for representing gnosis (jñāna) in its quintessential form".⁹

Paripāṭal, part of the Eṭṭuttokai (Eight Anthologies) (ca. 2nd A.D.), is a collection of poems extolling gods. During the festivals devotees sang praises of gods and it is said that they prayed for love and grace and expressed their longing to live at god's feet

⁶ K. Sivaraman, "The Esoterics of Sexual Love in Manikkavacakar's Tirukkovaiyar", paper presented at the Seminar, McMaster University, Hamilton, 1985.

⁷ The Smile of Murugan (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), p. 21.

⁸ M. Dhavamony, Love of God According to Śaiva Siddhānta (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 108.

⁹ See K. Sivaraman, supra., p. 2.

(Paripāṭal, 18.54-56; 21. 68-70).¹⁰ Advaita, understood as an experience of oneness in love (appu) and "living at god's feet", shall thus be found in the Tamil Saṅgam literature.

Tirukkural, a post-Saṅgam work is well known for its presentation of love and other lofty religious principles. Tiruvaḷḷuvar, the author of Tirukkural is known in Tamil Nadu as an "advaitic ṛṣi expounding an advaitic way of life".¹¹ The goal of life according to Tirukkural is "reaching the feet of the incomparable God" (1.7) and "clinging to the feet of the Lord" (1.4). The advaita way of life is a life lived in love which is characterized by kindness and righteousness. Chapter Twenty-Five of the Tirukkural which is on the possession of benevolence marks, according to the celebrated commentator of Tirukkural (Parimeḷaḷakar), the beginning of the section on asceticism which is the culmination of householder's life. In this section, toward the end, Tirukkural has chapters on Instability (Nilaiyamai), Knowledge of the Truth (Meyyunaṅartal) and The Extirpation of Desire (Avāruttal), in all of which the ideas of the Advaita are to be found.

¹⁰ See Dhavamony, supra., p. 111.

¹¹ Meenaksisundaram Pillai, Advaita in Tamil (Madras: University of Madras, 1974), p. 6.

poruḷalla varraip poruḷenru uṇarum

maruḷāṇām māṇāp piṇappu

Of things devoid of truth as real things men deem; - Cause devoid of degraded birth the fond delusive dream (Tirukkural, 36.1).¹²

The verse, which points out a soul's failure to discriminate the real from the not real, sums up the essence of the teachings of Vedānta.

Tirumūlar,¹³ the author of Tirumanṭiram, understood advaita as a spiritual oneness and it received a lucid exposition in his work. In one of the hymns Tirumūlar says "becoming Śivam is the end of Siddhānta Siddhi" (civamātal cittānta cittiyē, TM., 1437). The path suggested for the realization of that goal is appropriate learning and practice of true yoga:

karpaṇa karṛuk kalaimannu meyyōka

muṇpata ṇāna muṇaimuṇai naṇṇiyē

torpata mēvit turicarṛu mēlāna

tarparaṇ kaṇṭulōr caivacittāntarē

Those who learned what to be learned and those who practiced the true yoga gradually attain wisdom by meditating on self-knowledge and become free of impurity. Those who see "that truth" (tarparam) are saiva siddhāntins (TM., 1421).

¹² Tirukkural as translated by G.U.Pope and others (Tinnevely: South Indian Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, 1958), p.94.

¹³ Supra., p. 12.

The "seeing" of truth as attaining the state of union with God is possible only through love (anpu). The terms bhakti (Tml. patti) and anpu (love) stand for a deeper love relation between the bhakta (devotee) and God. Tirumūlar even goes that far to use Śivam as anpu and vice versa:

anpun civamum iraṇdenpa rarivillā

ranpē civamāva tāru maṛikilā

ranpē civamāva tāru maṛintapi

nanpē civamā yamarntirunt āre

The ignorant think that love and Sivam are two. They do not know that love is Śivam. After knowing that love is Śivam they abide in the love which is Śivam (TM., 270).

In the highest state of bhakti, that state reached through faithful practise of the spiritual discipline (sādhana) of caryā, kriyā, yoga and jñāna (TM., 1455), the devotee's (bhakta's) heart is dissolved into love (anpō ṭuruki yakaṅ kuḷaivār) (TM., 272) and he leaps into true knowledge and reaches final realization of God and God takes abode in the devotee's (bhakta's) love (en appil ninrān) (TM., 275). He also refers explicitly to Vedānta and to the Advaita (TM, 1421, 1422, 1437, 1441) but means by it the final realization. The state of final realization of God that Tirumūlar presented in his work is advaita. It is personal, mystical experience of Śivam. This mystical experience (anubhava) of loving union with God has become a

recurrent and favourite theme ever since the Tirumantiram of Tirumūlar.

The hymns of Ālvārs and Nāyanmars are outward expressions of their love (anpu), devotion (bhakti) and God-realization. Sambandar, whose hymns stand first in the Śaivite Canonical Works,¹⁴ called Pannīru Tirumurai (hereafter PT) explicitly explains the "when" of a bhakta's (devotee's) realization of God: "when you bhaktas (lovers of God) remain united to the Sacred Feet of the Perfect Father of Anniyur, then you are liberated."¹⁵ Appar, a friend of Sambandar, sought liberation (mukti) in constant meditation:

Why chant the Vedas, hear the śāstras' lore? Why learn daily the books of right conduct? Why know the six Vedāṅgas again and again? No release except to those who constantly meditate on the Lord. (PT., No. 2405).¹⁶

Nammālvār's Tiruviruttam containing one hundred and four stanzas has expressed many times his longing for union with God. This is presented under the figure of the love of a maid for a man. The omnipresence of God, according to the following hymn, is realized only by the way of love:

¹⁴ Kārikkālammaiār's (Middle of 6th century A.D) three Tamil works (Arputattiruvantāti, Tiruviraṭṭai manimālai, and Tiruvālaṅkāṭṭu mūttatiruppatikam) precede Sambandhar, who refers to Ammaiār, but the reference here is to order of precedence in the Tēvāram.

¹⁵ No. 289. Pannīru Tirumuraip Peruntirattu. (Madras: Saiva Siddhanta Society of Tirunelveli, 1961).

¹⁶ Ibid., as translated by M. Dhavamony, supra, p. 152.

Many a different way of worshipping
 and many clashing creeds from different minds,
 and in the many creeds their many gods
 Thou'st made, spreading abroad thy form! O thou
 matchless, I will proclaim my love for thee
 (Tiruviruttam No.96).¹⁷

Tirumangai Ālvar takes refuge at the the Feet of the Lord of Srirāṅgam. "Taking refuge at the Feet of the Lord" is a figurative expression for union with God. This state of spiritual progression is presented again as attainable only through love:

Thou didst not spurn the great son of the wind
 As ape, and of another race,
 But, so that love and longing greater grew
 Than ocean, thou didst love, and say:
 "There cannot be a recompense for all
 that thou hast done for me; I will
 embrace thee, thou of faultless truth." That such
 a shining boon to me may come,
 longing, the refuse of thy feet I seize,
 Lord of Srirangam with its beauteous tree.

(Periya Tirumoli, V.2)¹⁸

In Tiruvācakam (hereafter TVM) the well known mystical work of Maṅikkavācakar, we have the climax of mystical outpourings of unity experience (advaita anubhava). There are many hymns where Maṅikkavācakar vividly expressed his profound advaita experience. In the TVM. LI.1 we have a glimpse of his religious experience:

To me, living with the ignorant, who did not know the path of mukti (liberation). He, hurling out the

¹⁷ As translated by J.S.M. Hooper, Hymns of the Ālvars, (London: Oxford University Press, p. 929), p. 87.

¹⁸ As translated by J.S.M. Hooper, supra., pp. 41-42.

"old deeds", taught the path of love (bhakti). He, exterminating impurities from my mind, made me Sivam and took me for His own. The Supreme Lord thus was so gracious to me. Oh wonderful Lord who is so blessed as I am (TVM, LI.I).

In Tirukkōvaiyār, another work of Māṇikkavācakar the love theme takes the form of sustained allegory. Attention may be drawn to a line (Verse 7) of the text which combines the language of love and the language of advaita: nāṇ ivalām pakutip porppārarivār? - who can know this mystery (porppu) of my being one with this lady-love?

We have sampled from the Śaiva and the Vaiṣṇava hymns those indicative of unity experience (advaitānubhava) as meaning advaita in its popular, pre-scholastic, sense.

The devotional (stōtra) literature of the mystic-poets, however, took another turn with the sāstra (theological) literature which contains the theology of Tamil Śaivism. The doctrine of love, bhakti, grace, mystical union with God and other themes found in the stōtra literature are preserved in the sāstra literature. The primary aim of this doctrinal literature, however, is scholastic in its approach to religious doctrines. "Advaitam" as presented in Meykantar's SB, Arulnanti's SS, Umapati's Saṅkarpa Nirākaranam and his other works is a doctrinal category and they are critical of the way it has been developed in the Sanskrit tradition. Attention will be given to these works in the next chapter when we take up Śaiva Siddhānta. There were, however, in a somewhat later

period popular religious works in Tamil which uphold "Advaita" over against Śaiva Siddhānta which they consider dualistic. Two of these are Kaivalya Navanīta (The Cream of Liberation) and Yoga-Vāsitta (Skt. Yoga-Vāsisṭha = The Knowledge of Vasista) (hereafter YV).

The author of Kaivalya Navanīta (hereafter KN) is one Tandavaraya Swami whose period (16/17th century A.D.) is antecedent to that of Tāyumanavar. The purpose of this work is clearly stated as:

I proceed to tell you the true nature of the Absolute Being, to explain bondage and liberation so that even those who are too dull to learn the Scriptures, may understand.¹⁹

This verse makes it obvious that the ultimate Truth presented in this work is for the common man's comprehension. This is made possible through the use of analogy. For example in one of the sections of the KN the guru explains the various stages of jñāna by telling the story of the Daśaman (the tenth man). The ten men on their journey had to cross a river. Once across the flooding river they want to make sure that no one is missed. Each one started counting leaving himself out and ending up with only nine. They were all in grief on the loss of the tenth man in the river. A man who came by that way helped to count them and revealed the tenth man. The words of the man

¹⁹ KN., I.5 translated by Ramananda Saraswati (Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 1965), p. 2.

who helped them thus became revelatory and they got rid of their doubt and were very happy. Now the guru will explain the story as follows. Their ignorance of the tenth man is ajñāna (non-knowledge/ignorance); the non-appearance of the tenth man is the āvarana (veiling); weeping over the lost tenth man is vikṣepa; hearing and believing the words of the passenger on the road is parōkṣa jñāna (hear-say); the realization that the tenth man is revealed, although he always existed with them, is aparōkṣa-jñāna (direct (experience), disappearance of their grief is duhkhanivṛti (cessation of grief) and the removal of doubt is ānanda (bliss). The story of course despite its popular garb was familiar to the works of Scholastic Vedānta. Śankara narrates this story in his Bṛhadāraṇyakōpanisadbhāṣya (I.4.7) and Upadeśasāhasrī (XII.3 and XVIII.176). But the way in which the story is narrated and interpreted in KN brings out its popularity and profundity at the same time.

While the First part of the KN exposes the truth (tattva viḷakkam), the Second Part clears the doubts (sandehateḷittal) emerging from the First part. According to KN, the experience of Brahman is the final goal, (Siddhānta) and it is attained only through jñāna which is an everlasting enquiry (KN II.45). In one of the dialogues between the guru (teacher) and śiṣya (disciple) the teacher instructs the student that if anyone knows one's self and the Lord, one becomes that Lord. Becoming Brahman is the

final goal which is difficult to attain. The disciple, however, is instructed that it is possible through Divine grace, upadeśa (instruction) and sādhana (spiritual discipline).

The YV was an adaptation and recreation to suit the popular imagination of the masses. The YV (also known as Vaśiṣṭa Rāmāyaṇa, Mahā-Rāmāyaṇa, and Ārṣa-Rāmāyaṇa) (ca. 13th century A.D.) in Sanskrit itself is a popularized presentation of Advaita Vedānta, and it is not surprising that the text was rendered in Tamil poetry more than once. It has had a great impact on the large section of the people and continues popular even to this day. It is the most important śāstra studied today in Vedāntic maṭhas of Tamil Nadu such as the Koiyulur Adhinam.

The YV embodies the teachings of a God-realized sage Vasista to an unenlightened pupil. The disciple's questions on suffering, the fleeting nature of the world and the state of existence free of ignorance (I.30.11) are answered by the enlightened guru in such a way as to suit the popular mind.

The role of renunciation (sañnyāsa) is very much emphasized in the advaita of Śankara. Absolute renunciation of action seems impossible for sage Vasista. According to the YV performing or giving up of any kind of religious, moral or wordly action is immaterial for self-realization (VI.199.31). What is required for God-realization is "peace within" (VI.3.38). Sage Vasista says:

Renouncing the activities of life and residing in the forest away from wordly disturbances do not in the least help one whose mind is fickle and restless. The home itself is a quiet forest for one whose mind is peaceful, whereas a forest is like a noisy city full of men and activities for one who is not at peace within (VIb.3.38).²⁰

It is clear from the above statement that God-realization is possible for anyone who truly wills it and whose mind is trained through the study of philosophical works, association with the wise and pursuing a practical method of self-realization (V.5.5; VIa.69.27). The main path (mārga), however, for self-realization is jñāna (knowledge) (III.6.1.ff).

The jñāna that has been pointed out by Vasista is not merely an intellectual conviction. The intellectual certitude in the course of time should expand into the Absolute and must live the life of the Absolute. Self-knowledge in the fullest sense is the actual living in the Absolute experience. The emphasis on living the Absolute experience in the YV makes this work:

highly honoured among Indian Vedantins, for its philosophy and its hints on practical mysticism, as also its literary beauty and poetry. The saying about it, among Vedantins, is that it is a work of the Siddha-avastha, i.e., for the philosopher-yogi who, having mastered the theory, is passing onto the practice of it; while the other well-known works, even the Gita, the Upanishads, and the Brahma-

²⁰ Trans. by B.L. Atrey, in Deification of Man. Its Methods and Stages According to the Yogavasittam. (Benares, 1936) p. 6.

sūtras, are works of the sādhana-avasthā, i.e. for those who are yet trying to master the theory.²¹

This brief analysis should suffice to show the prevailing of Vedānta thought in Tamil. Advaita, the highly praised state of Vedānta, understood as a state of inseparable union, is found in various forms in the Saṅgam poetry, the Tirukkural, the Tirumanṭiram, the stōtra literature of the Śaiva Nāyanmārs and Vaiṣṇava Ālvars, the Pāṭuturai, the Kaivalya Navanītam, and the YV and many other works in Tamil. The advaita found in these Tamil works may be differentiated from the academic and philosophic (scholastic) advaita of Śāṅkara and others. While scholastic advaita emphasised theory and learning for academic interest, sādhana and spiritual experience were the distinguishing marks of the above mentioned Tamil advaita. It does not mean theory has no place in the Tamil advaita. Theory is helpful insofar as it clears the doubts of the sādhaka in his way towards a knowing-communion with God. It is a "knowing-communion" because knowledge of God further leads the soul into deeper and more intimate relation with God. In Tamil advaita²² the doctrinal "oneness" and the other abstractions of scholastic advaita are explained in a

²¹ Bhagavan Das, Mystic Experiences, 3rd edition. (Madras: Theosophical Society, 1959), preface.

²² What is meant is the presentation of the advaita in popular Tamil works. Meenaksisundaram Pillai calls it "Popular advaita". See Meenaksisundaram Pillai, supra., Advaita in Tamil.

common-man's idiom and in terms of the spiritual experience (communion with God) of the sādhaka which is possible through appropriate sādhanas (spiritual discipline). This intimate spiritual relationship is made possible to everyone who faithfully follows the spiritual discipline and thereby gets rid of attachment to things.

In Tamil advaita the spiritual experience (advaita anubhava) is a love-union. Advaita in Tamil is an inseparable love-experience and that loving communion with God is now re-directed to the practical realm of everyday life. Advaita relation, visioned through a broader perspective of deepest love, when extended to the practical life becomes a social force. Advaita, as a social force, cannot accept and tolerate any divisive elements in the society. In this sense Tamil advaita was against the claim of superiority of the higher castes and it argued for making the Vedas available for study of everyone. The advaita state in this understanding is taken as possible for people in all conditions of life. Scholastic Advaita insisted that Brahma-vidyā should be learned only through the Vedic Sanskrit and not through any other language. Advaita in Tamil opposed this and popularized philosophy and theology in Tamil. The right to open new maṭhas and pursue saṅnyāsa (ascetic life) was made available to all those who chose it. All these new changes were argued for and established on the foundation of the central ideal of advaitic oneness. This

oneness as a love-experience (understood not sentimentally, but to mean experience of concern and compassion) is wide open to include everyone, especially the poor, the discriminated and the suffering. The Tamil word arul brings out this sense. Tiruvaḷḷuvar speaks of arul as the child begotten of love arul ennum anpin kuḷavi.... (Tirukkuraḷ,76.7). Concern for the poor and the oppressed and the down-trodden are viewed as service performed to God. Tirumūlar has expressed this high ideal in the well known verse :Naṭamātak kōyi namparkkon rīyir/Paṭamātak kōyir pakavarṅka tāmē : Whatever is offered to the One residing in the temple of a living body, will indeed be an offering made to the supreme God in the temple in which is held aloft the flag (Tirumantiram, 1857). The call for unity of castes and creeds emerging from the advaitic ideal of oneness was well presented in popular Tamil works discussed above. Vedānta as understood and presented in those early Tamil works had a possible influence on Vedāntic interpretation developed by Tāyumānavar.

3. Tāyumānavar's Understanding of Vedānta

We shall look at a few hymns in order to examine Tāyumānavar's understanding of Vedānta. The poet-saint used the philosophically and theologically significant word Vedānta in a number of hymns. Philosophically he took Vedānta's import to lie in the fact that Vedānta referred to

an everlasting and never perfectly knowable truth which is critically sought by the cognitive mind. Theologically he saw Vedānta as significant because the realization of the truth of Vedānta is the object of adoration, praise and realization for the saintly seers, mystics and God-loving people.

A serious study of the hymns will show that the poet uses the term Vedānta in a great variety of ways. There are Forty-One places where the poet explicitly uses the term Vedānta. In VI.6, XXXVII.1 and XLI.11 Vedānta is used to mean the end (anta) of the Vedas. In the section Karuṇākarakkaṭavuḷ (God, Ocean of Mercy) (VI) he praises God as "the merciful One who performs the blissful dance in the hall of inconceivable intelligence" (karutariya circapayil ānanta nirttamitu karuṇākarakkaṭavulē) and then characterises God as:

...

viṇṇe viṇṇātiyām pūtame nātame
vētame vētāntamē

....

Oh (You who are) Space, elements which begin with Space, Eternal Sound (nadam), the Veda and the conclusion of the Veda...(VI.6).

In the first hymn of the section Malaivalarkātali (The Mountain-bred Beloved) (XXXVII.1)²³ the poet-saint names the

²³ One of the most venerated manifestations of Śakti, according to the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition is the gentle and benign Umā, beloved of Śiva (Śiva-kāmi). Umā under the name

goal of Vedānta as "vedāntamōnam". The "stillness", that is Vedānta (vedāntamōnam), is the light and bliss where all religions like rivers merge into the great ocean:

....

natiyuṅṭa kataleṅac amayattai yuṅṭapara
 nāna ānantavoḷiyē
 nātānta rūpamē vētānta mōname

....

Oh the Light and bliss of Supreme knowledge, which consumes all religions (all religions converge in Thy Light) as rivers merge into the ocean. Oh Stillness, the goal of the Veda, Thy Form is seen where vibration ends (nātānta rūpam) (XXXVII.1).

Vedānta, conceived of as the goal of the Veda, could be explained only by silence²⁴ and is further expressed in the hymn XLI.II. The all-pervading nature of God is explained as nādam, and end of nādam and space and it is also described as the knower, knowledge as well as the object of knowledge; the Veda and the end of the Veda.

of Malaivaḷarkātali (The beloved of the Mountains), is worshipped at Tevai (the city of the Lady) near Ramnad in Tamil Nadu.

²⁴ Śankara's reference to (Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya II.2.17) a teacher Bahva whose answer to his disciple Vaskalin on the question about Brahman may be recalled here. When enquired about Brahman for the first time the guru kept silent. When the disciple asked about Brahman for the second time, the guru said: brūmah khalu tvaṁ tu na vijñānāsi (I am teaching you but you do not understand). The disciple asked again about Brahman and then the guru said: upaśāanto' yam ātma (silence is the self).

Advaita, the culmination of Vedānta, is found in the following hymn where the poet-saint points out the contrast between the knower and the known which is comprehended in Advaita:

nātame nātānta veliyē cutta
 ñāturuvē ñānamē ñēyamēnal
 vētame vētamuṭivāṇa mōṇa
 vitteyin kennai yini viṭṭitātē

Oh eternal nādam, Oh space where ends the eternal nādam; Oh the object of Wisdom and the teacher of perfect Wisdom and Wisdom itself; Oh auspicious Veda and the cause of the silence which is the goal of Veda, do not separate yourself from me here (do not forsake me here) (XLI.11).

Vedānta presented as the goal of the Veda is also found in IV.7. The eternal truth, which is the beginning as well as the end (ātiyām antam) (IV.7) of all seeking, is found in Vedānta. The pre-eminence and exaltedness of Vedānta, where is found the eternal Truth, is echoed in the praising of it as "arumaiperu pukaḷ ... vetānta" (the greatest and renowned Vedāntam) (IV.7).

The term Vedānta also is used to mean the household of Vedānta system. Vedānta here does not seem to stand for a particular system. It is used as the name for the general household in which different schools of Vedānta could co-exist under the same roof. This idea of co-existence of various systems is also part of Tāyumānavar's understanding of Vedānta. In the following hymn the poet conceives of God

as the Light (viḷakku) lit in the house of Vedānta (vetānta veetu):

pōtāntap puṇṇiyarkaḷ porricaya pōrriyenum
vetānta veetil viḷakke parāparamē

Hail and Victory to You parāparam, the Light lit in the house of the Vedāntam. Thus praise the holy ones who have attained wisdom (XLIII.18).

In this larger household are to be found different human thought-systems, each claiming superiority over the other.²⁵ Vedānta as the householder of the "Vetānta Veetu" (the house of Vedānta where found various Vedānta thoughts) illumine and inspire all truth-seekers and in this sense no Indian orthodox systems can stand separated from Vedānta.

Vedānta is also used to describe the experiential state of the human soul. There are a number of hymns which point to showing the struggle of the poet in describing the soul's quest for the truth and the soul's longing for being one with Reality. In II.2 the poet speaks about the transient nature of beings which creep (ūrvaṇa), walk (naṭappana), fly (parappana) and are immovable (iruppana). According to the poet the everlasting reality is the "upacānta vētavetāntañāna" (the knowledge spoken by the Veda and Vedānta which gives tranquility (II.2). The goal which the souls must strive for is Vedānta jñāna which is characterised as pure vastness (veruveḷi), unattached to

²⁵ TP., I.1; XIII.10; XIV:3,4,9; XLIII.5; LII:3).

anything (nirālampam), absolute-nothing (niraicūnyam) and tranquil (upacāntam). The knowledge (jñāna) which grants calmness of mind (upacāntam) to an ascetic is the ideal of Vedānta. A true seeker of jñānam has to bear this ideal in mind and pursue it throughout one's life's journey.

The specific theology of Vedānta is distinctly brought out in II.5. The poet-saint's intuitive experience of the unique identity between his self and the Supreme Self is realized when Tāyumanavar became aware that neither his existence nor his actions are separate from the Divine:

cantatamu meṇatuceyal ninatuceyal yaṇenun
tanmaininai yaṇriyillāt
tanmaiyaḷ veralēṇ

My action is always Thy action. The nature of my self does not exist apart from Thee (II.5).

This, according to the poet-saint, is the nature (cupāvam) of Vedānta. His aspiration for this state is carried on in the rest of the above hymn:

...
intanilai teḷiyanāṇ nekkuruki vāṭiya
iyaṛkaitiru vuḷamaṛiyumē

How much I longed with a melted heart for the realization of this state (of non-difference) is known to Thy Divine mind (II.5).

The soul in its advancement to perfection will perceive everything in its proper perspective. In this

state the mind acts as a witness devoid of any attachment whatsoever to anything. In this state of spiritual advancement the soul has perfect discernment in recognizing the transient nature of the world. The soul at this stage²⁶ is in possession of the intelligence and it knows that the goal of Vedānta is the enjoyment of the bliss of release. This state of blessedness is granted to the soul by His grace (ninnataruḷ) (II.8):

vārāte lāmoliya varuvana velāmeyta
 manatu cāṭciyatākavē
 maruvanilai tantatum vētānta cittānta
 maṛapu camaraca mā kavē
 pūrāya māyunaṛa vūkamatu tantatum
 poyyūṭalai nilaiyaṅrenap
 pōtaneri tantatuñ cācuvata ānanta
 pōkame viṭennavē

....

It was Thy grace that granted me the state where the mind as witness has given up the things that are unattainable and accepted the things that are attainable. It was Thy grace that granted me to know the nature of Vedānta and Siddhānta as samarasa. It was Thy grace that enabled me to realize that this impermanent body is transient and to realize that release is the enjoyment of the eternal Bliss (II.8).

²⁶ When it is advanced to spiritual maturity and possesses the ability to discern the difference between the temporary and the eternal.

Tāyumānavar sees this unique state of the soul as the tradition of Vedānta (vetānta marapu) (II.8) which provides room for samarasam, the prime theme in the hymns of the poet-saint, which will be discussed in the last chapter.

Māyā, the deluding medium, obscures the true knowledge and prevents the soul from attaining grace by way of playing out the feat of indrajalām (entangling techniques) in the mind. The means for vanquishing māyā, according to the poet-saint, is the realization of the conclusive nature (the goal) of Vedānta (vetānta nirvākanilai):

ātikka nalkiṇava raṇinta māyaikken
 aṇivanṇi yiṭamillaiyō
 antarappuṭpamum kāṇaliṇ nīrumōr
 avacarat tupayōkamō
 pōtitta nilaiyaiyu mayakkutē apayanāṇ
 pukkavaruḷ tōṇṇitāmal
 pōyyāṇa vulakatte meyyā niṇṇuttiiyen
 puntikkuḷ intracālaṇ
 cātikku tēyitanai vellavum upāyanī
 tantaruḷva tenṇrupukalvāy
 caṇmata stāpaṇamum vētāntacittānta
 camaraca nirvākanilaiyum
 mātikkoṭaṇta parappelām aṇiyavē

vantarūḷu ṅānakuruvē

mantrakuruvē yōka tantrakuruvē mūlan

maṅapilvaru maṅnakuruvē

Who gave power of ruling to this māyā? Has it not any other place than my intelligence? Would this māyā, like the sky-flower and the mirage, be of any use in my state of need. Oh God, it (māyā) obscures from me the true path (of your teaching), which Thou hast imparted unto me. Māyā makes the impermanent world appear as permanent. It persists in my mind by resorting to entangling techniques (indrajāla). I surrender to you for Thy grace manifest. Tell me when are you going to suggest to me the means of conquering this māyā. Oh the preceptor of Wisdom confer grace on me so that I may have the knowledge of the six religions and the essential nature of Vedānta and Siddhānta and the knowledge of the expanse of universe in all its directions. Oh Thou preceptor of Mantras, Oh Thou preceptor of Yoga and Tantra, Oh Thou preceptor of Mouna who are descended from Mūlar, Oh Thou preceptor of Widsom (V.3).

The Vedāntic goal of the blissful release, which is clearly spelt out above, is the only concern of the Vedānta-mind of Tāyumānavar. Anything that stands in the way of that pure Vedāntic intention is vehemently criticized or simply rejected. In the following hymn he denounces the lōkāyata's (materialistic) position. Vedānta here stands for the state of exposure of pure spiritual values: .

miṅṅanaiya poyyūṭalai nilai yenrum maiyilaku

vilikoṅṭu maiyalpūṭṭum

miṅṅārkaḷinṅpamē meyyenrum vaḷarmāṭa

mēlviṭu corkkamenrum

ponnaiyalīyātuvaḷar poruḷenru pōrriyip

poyvēṭa mikuti kāṭṭip

poraiyarivu turavital ātināṅ kuṅamelām

pōkkilē pokaviṭṭut
 taṇṇikari lōpāti pālmpēy piṭittitāt
 taraṇimicai lōkāyatan
 camayanaṭai cāramal vētānta cittānta
 camaraca civānupūti
 maṇṇaloru corṅkoṇṭenai ttaṭuttāntan pin
 vaḷvitta ṅānakuruvē
 mantrakuruvē yōkatantra kuruvē mūlan
 maṅapil varu maṇṇakuruvē

Oh Thou preceptor of Mantras, Oh Thou preceptor of Yoga and Tantra, Oh Thou preceptor of Mauna who art descended from Mūlar, Oh Thou preceptor of Wisdom, who has through one word saved me and caused me to attain the state of Śivanupūti where Vedānta and Siddhānta are at one. Thou prevented me from falling into the path (creed) of the materialists (lokāyata) who believe that this physical world (physical body) which is fleeting as lightning is permanent; and thinking that the pleasure of women, who trap by their decorated eyes, is real; and imagining the high-storied mansions as heaven; and protecting gold as an imperishable and ever prosperous object; and who having given up the good qualities such as patience, knowledge (perceptivity), detachment (renunciation), love etc. had come under the spell of evil qualities such as lōpa (V.4).

This hymn is a typical example of the forceful writing of the saint when he speaks out against people who hold false and materialistic goals which are contrary to the genuine, scripture-based spiritual values of Vedānta. Tāyumānavar's understanding of Vedānta as God-experience involves the rejection of all those who do not accept God-experience like the materialists. One may see that Tāyumānavar is

describing not so much the materialist philosophy that the School professes as a doctrine, but the practice of it seen in secular living with thought and attention focussed only to one's own prosperity and well being in this world may be called materialist.

The poet-saint's admiration and appreciation for people who lived up to the spiritual experience of Vedānta is expressed in the Section Cittarkaṇam (The Assembly of the Siddhars., VII). The Siddhars were saintly people who by the practice of yoga (VII.2,5) attained the blissful state of Wisdom. All through this section the poet-saint praises them for destroying the dark elephants of āṇava (VII.9); controlling their minds (VII.6) which twirl like a windmill (VII.7); for their wisdom and familiarity in the path of mukti and siddhi (VII.8); for conquering the senses and enjoying peace (VII.5); for possessing all gentle qualities (VII.5); and for their elated spiritual joy as a result of the Divine Blessing (VII.9).

Although the poet glorifies the Siddhars for their many attainments, the most conspicuous reason for extolling them is their realization of "the end of the Veda". In all the hymns of this section the poet-saint praises them for their unique attainment of the eminent state of "the realization of the blissful end of the Veda" :

....

vētānta cittānta camaraca nan̄nilaiperrā

vittakac cittarkaṇamē

Oh the assembly of siddhars who have attained (realized) the tranquil state of Vedānta and Siddhānta (VII.1-10).

In Cukavāri (The Ocean of Bliss) (IX.10) the poet-saint rhetorically asks for the dwelling place of God. It is not to be found in the philosophical schools of the world nor in the sun or moon or earth or in the zenith of the universe or in any of the visible objects in the universe. The dwelling place of the Divine is in the follower who, standing up with melting heart, offers God flowers, and whose senses and faculties of perception are completely given up, being totally lost in the Divine contemplation. This "losing" of the self to the Divine is the goal of Vedānta, according to Tāyumānavar:

aṅṅamuṭi taṅṅilō pakiraṅṅa mataṅṅilō

ālarimaṅṅala naṅṅuvilō

aṅṅanaṅṅuvilō amirṅṅa mati naṅṅuvilō vaṅṅpar

akamuruki malar kaṅṅūvit

teṅṅamiṅṅa varumūrṅṅti nilaiyilō tikkut

tikantattilō veṅṅiyilō

tikaṅṅvintu nāṅṅanilai taṅṅilō vētānta

cittānta nilai taṅṅilō

kaṅṅapala poruṅṅilō kānāṅṅa nilaiyeṅṅak

kaṅṅa cūṅṅiyamataṅṅilō

kālamoru mūn̄rilō piravinilai taṅn̄ilō
karuvikara ṇankaḷōynta
toṅtarka ḷiṭattilō n̄iv̄ir̄ruppatu
toḷumpaner kuḷavu pukalāy
cuttanirk kuṇamāṇa parateyva mēparaṅ
cōtiyē cukavāriyē

Oh God, the pure One void of all qualities, Oh ocean of happiness (Bliss), Oh supreme splendour, wilt Thou not reveal to me, Thy slave, the place of Thy residence. Dost Thou reside in the summit of the universe, or in the space beyond this universe, or in the centre of the region of the sun or in the midst of fire, or in the centre of the divine nectar-endowed moon or in the form of the murti (the image) worshipped by Thy devotees with melting hearts offering You flowers, or in the eight corners of the earth, or beyond those limits or in space or in the eminent condition of bindu and nāda, or in the state of Vedānta and Siddhānta or in the various objects, or in the void invisible to us, or in times present, past and future, or with Thy followers who are detached from senses and intellectual powers (who are absorbed and lost in Thy Contemplation) (IX.10).

4. Vedānta as Advaita

Tāyumānavar, in a few hymns, understands Vedānta as advaita in the sense of the oneness between the soul and God. Vedānta, understood as advaita, means the inseparable union between the individual soul and God. This unity he understood to be the goal of all Scriptures and the culmination of all human quest.

In nineteen places,²⁷ the poet-saint has used "advaita" as the commonly accepted philosophical and theological consumation of thought and experience within the Vedānta-household (vedāntaveetu, XLIII:18). An analysis of those hymns will help us see what he considers the true meaning and significance of the term advaita.

In XLIII:293 the poet-saint explicitly attempts to convey the meaning of advaita. In this particular verse advaita is described as cuttanilai and "ayikya anupavam". As "cutta nilai" it is the highest state of separate souls and is next to absorption.²⁸ Advaita as "ayikya anupavam" is the pure and unitive experience beyond all description:²⁹

attuvitamāṇa ayikya anupavamē

cuttanilai annilaiyār colvār parāparamē

Oh the unitive experience, which is advaita, indeed, is the pure state. Oh parāparam, who is capable of describing that state? (XLIII:293).

Tāyumānavar used advaita in one place to mean absolute Reality. In I:3 he uses attuvita vattu to mean that Reality which is a non-dual substance (irantaṅṅa poru). This non-dual "substance" (Reality) is worshipped and praised as

²⁷ TP., I:3; IV.2,7; V:1; VI:1; X.3; XVII:7; XXIV:9; XXVI:4; XXVI:7; XXVIII:16; XXVIII:6; XLIII:293; XLV:2.4; XLV:13.2; XLV:14.28; XLV:15.4.

²⁸ See., A Tamil English Dictionary by Visvanatha Pillai, 7th edition, 1963.

²⁹ In X:3 the poet puts the same idea as unnai nān enru pāvikkīn attuvita mārkam (I-contemplating-Thee-as myself is the state of advaitam).

peerless and self-effulgent; the intelligence of all intelligences, and the Truth above all religious conflict and clash:

attuvita vattuvai corpirakā cattanīyai
 arumaṛaikal muracaṛaiyavē
 arivīnuk kaṛivāki ānanta mayamāṇa
 atiyai anātiyēka
 tattuva corūpattai matacamma tamperāc
 cālam̄pa rakitamāṇa
 cācuvata puṭkala nirālam̄pa ālam̄pa
 cāntapata vyōmanilaiyai
 nittanir malacakita niṣprapañca capporuḷai
 nirviṣaya cuttamāṇa
 nirvikā rattait taṭattamāy niṇṇelir
 nirañcana nirāmayattaic
 cittamari yātaṇṇi cittattil niṇṇilaku
 tivyatē cōmayattaic
 cīrpara veḷikkulvalar taṇṇarama tānapara
 tēvataiyai añcaliceyvām

I worship with folded hands the non-dual substance (attuvita vattu), the unique and self-effulgent (corpirakāca) import of the Word, the One whose greatness is proclaimed by the inestimable Veda as the Intelligence of intelligences (arivīnukkarivu), the Bliss nature (ānanta maya), who is the First One, the beginningless and the essence of reality (tattuva corūpam), who is above religious claims, who is eternal perfection (cācuvata puṭkala), the supportless but itself is the support (of all things) (nirālam̄pa ālam̄pa), the tranquil (cāntapaṭa), the pure ethereal space (vyōmanilai), the unchanging and pure (nitta nirmala) that is devoid of relation to object (nirviṣaya), the

object beyond all cosmos (niṣprapañca poru), independent but the one on whom all things depend, the faultless (nirañcana), the blemishless (nirāmaya), the divine life that shines in the mind without the mind knowing it, the Supreme God who as the Supreme lives in the eternal space of consciousness (I:3).

Advaita is the pure and the proper state of the individual soul wherein dwells the Supreme Soul (IV:7).

"Advaita" contemplated in this sense, is a pre-requisite for the dwelling of the Supreme in the hearts of the devotees. The other dispositions for the abiding of the Absolute Reality in the heart of the individual are a mind of submissiveness and true devotion:

....

arumaiperu pukaḷperṛa vētānta cittānta
mātiyām antamiṭṭum
attuvita nilaiyarāy enṇaiyān ṭunṇaṭimai
yānavarka ḷarivinūṭum

....

Thou dost stand inseparable in the good and renowned Vedānta and Siddhānta, as the beginning as well as the end. Thou art found in the hearts of Thy followers who have attained the state of non-duality (attuvita) and made themselves Thy slaves and become Thy true devotees (IV:7).

The individual self is always restless until it reaches the supreme goal. The supreme end is advaita and the individual's longing for that state of oneness with the Supreme is expressed in a single word: "attuvitāvañcai" (IV:2). The yearning for that advaita state is a quest for

merging with the Supreme Lord. This merging is mukti (liberation) which is the final truth and this ultimate state of final truth is advaitam.

In the section Cinmayānantakuru (Teacher of Cognitive Bliss) (IV:2) the advaita state is described as vākkumanam anukāta pūranapporul (the perfect state beyond words and thoughts). Meditation on the sublimity and subtlety of that ideal state awakens self-awareness in the saint. This self-awareness and self-consciousness make the poet say that he is a sinner who perceives the impermanent body which crumbles like the bank of a deluged river, as permanent (ākkaiyenum iṭikaraiyai meyyenra pāvinān). This supreme state of advaita union is like a dream. The longing for realization of that dream is presented as: ariyakompil tēnai muṭavan iccittapati ākum (it is like a crippled person longing for honey to be found on the top of the branch of a tree, IV:2). The advaitanvāñcai (longing for advaita), here, is equivalent to the desire to merge with God which is the final truth of Vedānta.

The section Eṅkumniraikinra Porul (The Omnipresent Truth) (X) is very important in this regard. In this section, in verse 3 alone, the poet-saint uses advaita three times:

vētamuṭaṅ ākama puranamiti kācamutal
 vērumuḷa kaliakaḷellām
 mikkāka vattuvita tuvitamārka kattaiyē

virivā veṭutturaikkum
 ōtariya tuvitamē attuvita nānattai
 uṅṭupaṅu nānamākum
 ūkamanu pavavcana mūṅṅukkum ovvumī
 tupayavā tikaḷcammatam
 ātali nenakkiṅic cariyaiyā tikaḷpōṭu
 miyātonṅu pāvikkanān
 atuvāta lālunṅai nānenru pāvikkiṅ
 attuvita mārkkamuḷalām
 ētupā vittitiṅum atuvāki vantarulṅey
 entainī kuṅaiyu muṅṅō
 ikapara miraṅṅinilum uyiriṅuk kuyirāki
 eṅkuniṅrai kiṅṅaporulē

Oh the all-filling Intelligence, Thou, as the Soul of all souls, art the all-pervading One. The Vedas and the Āgamas, the Puṛaṅas and the Ithihasa, and all other sciences speak elaborately the paths of advaitam and dvaitam. The inexplicable dvaitam (ōtariyatuvitam) is the path that leads to the knowledge of non-duality. This statement is consonant with reason, experience and tradition. Further, it is agreed upon by both the dualists and the non-dualists. Therefore, for me will suffice my caryā and kriyā. As I become the image that I conceive of in my mind, should I contemplate Thee as myself so that I shall also attain the state of advaita (non-duality). Oh my Father, who bestows grace, come before me in any form in which I can conceive of Thee. Hast Thou found any deficiency in me? (X.3).

We shall examine this hymn in four different parts. In the first part (vētamutan...virivāveṭutturaikkum) the poet points out a scriptural foundation for holding both the positions advaita and dvaita. In the second part the poet

discusses both advaita and dvaita, but makes advaita the goal and dvaita the path that leads to that goal (ōtariya tuvitamē....). The third part drawn from the same verse shows that the view that the advaita is the goal of dvaita and has the concurrence of testimony, reason and experience, and even further shows the concurrence of the advocates of dvaita and advaita. The fourth part (uṅṅai nānenṅu pāvikkīnmārkkamuralām) explains the advaita nature. This understanding of advaita (uṅṅai nānenṅu pāvikkīn) examines one of the great revelatory pronouncements like "Thou are That" of the Upaniṣads. A number of those revelatory pronouncements of the mahāvākyas which proclaim the union between soul and the Supreme, constitute the essence of Upaniṣadic teachings. These are understood by Tāyumānavar as the heart of Vedānta: the union between human soul and Supreme Lord.

Commenting on "ōtariya tuvitamē....ñānamākum" the commentator³⁰ says that Tāyumānavar sees dvaita jñāna as the cause of advaita jñāna. This is the Vedāntic view. Tāyumānavar, however, calls dvaitam "ōtariyatuvitam" injecting into it a mystical element. According to the poet-saint only "ōtariyatuvitam" is the means - not just any dvaitam - which will lead to advaitam. The "ōtariyatuvitam" which the poet speaks of has an unspeakable element in it. Only that dvaitam where there is a kind of merging of the

³⁰ TPMV., pp. 202-204.

human and Divine will lead one to advaitam. For example, in Samkhya there is dvaitam - Puruṣa and Prakṛti. One is stuck with Puruṣa and Prakṛti and will not reach the Supreme One. The advocates of "ōtariyatuvitam" concede advaita to be the crowning end of their own dualistic framework, and in that sense they too lay claim to advaita, albeit interpreting it differently. To Tāyumānavar this is the verdict of experience.

The integral relation between dvaitam and advaitam and the sādhana (spiritual discipline as the pathway) to attain the ultimate state is echoed in the following hymn:

apporuḷum āṇmāvum āraṇanūl coṇṇapati
 tappillāc cittonṛāñ cātiyināl - eppaṭiyun
 tēril tuvitañ civākamame collunittai
 ārumiṭat tattuvita mām

As declared by the Vedas, the soul and That Object are unmistakably cit by their inherent nature. By whichever way you investigate, the duality will become advaita when one reaches niṣṭa which the Saivāgamas speak of (XXVIII.16).

The soul by means of prescribed sādhana (spiritual discipline) enters into the state of disposition and leaps into the knowledge of the Supreme. In other words, dvaitam leads one to advaitam. Vedanta, thus, is understood as the unique God-soul relation. In order to assert that non-separation he uses the term advaita. Advaitam as an assertion of non-separation is described in a number of hymns. In the following verses advaita is used in a

descriptive³¹ sense. The advaita state is presented in XLV.15.4 as a pre-condition for the soul's passage into a more subtle state of intimate relation, the Śuddha Śivam:

attuvita menra anniyaccor kaṇṭuṇarntu
cutta civattait toṭaruṇāḷ ennālō

When shall I abide by the pure Śivam³² after being seen and known by the word advaitam (which is apparently separate as word is separate from its meaning) which is the assertion of non-separation (which is a state devoid of duality) (XLV:15.4).

There are two ways of understanding this verse. One is having the wordless experience of Śuddha Śivam after hearing and learning about the expression "attuvitam". And the second meaning is whether there is a state beyond the one indicated by the expression advaitam which itself is a non-dual condition of relation between God and soul. In whichever way it is taken, Tāyumānavar is here referring to the distinction within experience of an earlier stage when one receives the word from the preceptors and the culminating stage of oneness as Śuddha Śivam. What the poet-saint hints at is the truth that once the individual soul is awakened by advaita-consciousness - a state where

³¹ Descriptive in the sense of the portrayal of God-soul union.

³² Śuddha Śivam - what is meant by attaining or being bound by the Śuddha Śivam is the soul's realization of the unparalleled advaitic union with Siva, the One God. In a sense the term is a theological description of the advaitic union.

there are no distinctions or differences - the soul dissolves into the Supreme Lord.

Advaita relation is also described as a stimulus for religious unity and the promotion of peace and tranquility between various religious creeds. This is possible, according to Tāyumanavar, only through the intuitive knowledge which brings about an intimate relation with the Infinite. This intimate relation with the Infinite is advaitam and it is beautifully illustrated by the simile of "ñānamattakagam" (wild elephant like knowledge) and "attuvitamatam" (Advaita-intoxication):

ācainika ḷattinai nirttūḷi paṭavutaṛi
 aṅkāra muḷaiyaiyerri
 attuvita matamāki matamārum ārāka
 aṅkaiyiṅ vilāliyākkip
 pācaviruḷ taṅṅila leṅaccuḷit tārttumer
 pārttup parantamaṅataip
 pāritta kavaḷamāyp pūrikka vuṅṅumuka
 paṭamāṅṅa māyai nūrit
 tēcupera nīvaitta ciṅmutti rāṅkucac
 ceṅkaik kuḷeyaṭakkic
 ciṅmayā ṅantacuka veḷḷam paṭintuniṅ
 tiruvarut pūrttiyāṅa
 vācamuru carcāra mīteṅṅai yoruṅṅa

mattakaca menavaḷarttāy

manṭrakuruvē yōka tanṭrakuruvē mūlaṅ

maṅapilvaru maunakuruvē

Placing me on the company of men who are filled with Thy grace, Thou hast trained me like an elephant wild with wisdom, which exterminating the pillar of egoism (to which it had been tied) shatters into pieces the chains of desire; which being intoxicated with the rut of advaitam (the experience of oneness) casts out the six religions like the mucus flowing down from the elephant's proboscis; which roars in anger at the darkness caused by bondage (pāśa) as if it were its own shadow; which rolling into the ball of rice consumes with much delight the mind looking up and spreading out (the wandering mind), which strips away māyā (which makes things shine) as if it were a decorative cloth that covered its face; and then drowning in the great ocean of spiritual happiness, obeys only the beautiful hands that hold the goad (aṅguśam) which is marked with the seal of Consciousness (cinmudra). Oh Thou the Preceptor of Mantras; Oh Thou the Preceptor of Yoga Tantra; Oh Thou the Preceptor of Mauna, who art descended from Mūlar, Oh Thou the Preceptor of Wisdom (V.1).

The author of the hymn in a simple and understandable language describes here the consequences of the advaita experience. It is also autobiographical in the sense the above verse begins saying that he was chosen from out of a group of the recipients of grace for the vocation of jñāna. The simplicity and understandability of the hymn lies in the use of a string of appropriate elephant similes such as mattakagam (wild elephant) and attuvitamam (advaita-intoxication). An elephant when it becomes mad destroys everything in its way; shatters into pieces the chains, uproots the post to which the elephant is tied; destroys the

cultivation; eats up completely the vegetation it likes; in wild movement goes in whatever direction it pleases.

The individual soul once controlled by the true knowledge and possessed by the true spirit is liberated from all these forces. Being intoxicated with the bliss of inseparable union (advaita), the individual soul casts out all kinds of bonds such as egoism and religious narrowness like the wild elephant (mattakagam) flushes out the river of mucus from its trunk. The individual soul in this state of oneness with the Supreme is totally under the spell of the revealing wisdom of the seal of supreme consciousness (cinmudra).

In the following hymn Tāyumānavar uses advaita in order to express the state of incomprehensible (akōcara) (Skt. agōcara) deliverance (nirvṛti). In VI:I the ungraspable experience is characterized as advaitam (non-dual), the true and svarūpa experience:

nirrkūṇa nirāmaya nirañcaṇa nirālampā
 nirviṣaya kaivalyamā
 niṣkaḷa acaṅkacañ calarakita nirvacāṇa
 nirṭtonta nittamukta
 tarpara viśvātīta vyōmaparipūraṇa
 catāṇanta ñānapakava
 campuciva caṅkara carveca eṇrunaṇ
 carvakālamum niṇaivanō
 arṇputa akōcara nivirttipeṇum aṇparuk

kāṇanta pūrṭṭiyuāṇa
 attuvita niccaya corūpacā ksātkāra
 aṇupūti yaṇucūtamum
 karpaṇai yaṇakkāna mukkanutaṇ vatanilar
 kannū tiruntakuruvē
 karutariya circapaiyi lāṇanta nirttamitu
 karunākarak kaṭavuḷē

Oh qualityless (nirkuna), painless (nirāmaya),
 passionless (nirañcana), independent (nirālampa),
 the embodiment of moksa which is objectless
 (nirvisaya) and devoid of form, the unattached
 (niskāla), the immovable, the Silent One
 (nirvacana), the non-dual One, the eternal, the
 Free, self-abiding (tarpara), the ever full like
 space (vyōmaparipūrana), the one who is eternally
 blissful, the Lord of Wisdom (nānapakavān), the
 embodiment of bliss (śambu), the auspicious one
 (Śiva), one who does good (śankara), Oh Lord of all,
 when shall I think of you thus always. Oh three-
 eyed Teacher who is seated under the banyan tree,
 Thou dost make obvious to Thy expiated devotees who
 hath obtained the wonderful (arputa) and
 incomprehensible (akōcara) freedom, Thy essential
 form apart from all fiction as perfect bliss,
 inseparable (non-dual), true, and svarūpa experience
 Oh merciful Lord who does the blissful dance in the
 hall of pure consciousness which is beyond the reach
 of thought (VI.I).

The sublimity of God-experience is well depicted in the use
 of attuvita niccaya corūpa cāksātkāra aṇupūti. The
 experience of Śiva is the "seeing of own self" (corūpa)
 (Skt. svarūpa). It is an intuitive perception (sāksātkāra).
 This seeing of Self, which is intuitive non-dual experience,
 according to Tāyumanavar, is advaitam.

"Attuvitānanta cittam" (blissful advaita-
 consciousness), as found described in the hymn XVII:7 again

is descriptive of the advaita state of consciousness. In fact the whole hymn presents the characteristic features of a person who has penetrated into the self and realized the self:

aṭimuṭiyum naṭuvumaṛra paravelimēṛ koṇṭāl
 attuvita āṇanta cittamuṇṭām namatu
 kuṭimulūtum piḷaikkumoru kuraiyumillai yeṭutta
 kōlamellam naṇrākuṅ kuṛaivunirai vaṛavē
 viṭiyumuta yampōla varuḷutayam peṛra
 vittakarō ṭuṅkūṭi viḷaiyāṭa lākum
 paṭimulūṭum viṇmulūṭun tantālum kaḷiyāp
 pālaruṭan unṃattar picācarkuṇam varumē

If you rise into the supreme space (paramākāśa) which has neither beginning nor end nor middle, then you will have the consciousness of the bliss of advaitam (oneness) (blissful advaita-consciousness). All our clan will survive. There will not be any unfulfilment. Whatever course of effort you have taken will all be good and it will be possible to live and sport with the wise ones in whom the grace has risen like the sunrise which has neither excess nor deficiency (perfect). These perfect ones will be in mentality like children, the frenzied and the possessed who do not rejoice even when the world and heaven are given (XVII.7).

According to this hymn the one who has unitive experience of the self is a perfect one. There is nothing more nor less in him. There is neither the lack of anything nor any sense of unfulfilment in him. The mind of detachment and contentment is described in such a way that any ordinary person can have a glimpse of the uniqueness of that perfect state. The advaitic-consciousness of a sage is compared to

the mind of a child, a mad fellow and to a possessed. Children do not think of the fruit of their actions. For the mad ones both friend and foe are alike and they never care for anything. The possessed ones, though one administers thrashing and pain to their body, the effect is on the evil spirit that possess them rather than on themselves, and they suffer no pain.

The person who is in the state of happiness because of being one with the Supreme (advaitānantam) is beyond the limiting conditions of desiring for the fruits of work and is free from pain and pleasure. This disposition of the individual soul, according to Tāyumanavar, is advaitānantam, which is the essence of Vedānta.

The indwelling power in the self is a great unitive force. This unitive force is characterized by various attributes. In the section called Maṅṭalattin (Of the World) the poet describes the advaita state as "bliss giving vastness", "ocean of bliss", "all pervading and shining light" and "unchanging bliss":

vālvāṇaittun tantaviṇṇa mākatalai
 nallamirtai maniyaip ponnait
 tālvāraṇen nuḷattirunta tattuvattai
 attuvita cāran taṇṇaic
 cūlperumpē roḷiyaiyoḷi parantapara

veḷiyai inpac cukattai mārā
 tēḷulakuṅ kalantinrāy nālaiyā
 yenrumām iyarkai taṇṇai

It is the great ocean of bliss from which comes all life; It is the nectar, gold and ruby. It is the tattva, the indwelling power, which uplifts me; It is the essence of advaita (which is not two with soul or one alone); It is a great all-encompassing shining light; It is light filled eternal vastness; It is bliss spread around in the seven worlds (ēḷulakam kalantinrāy); And it is the same today, tomorrow and all days (unchanging) (XXVI:4).

The very idea here which lends meaning to all the epithets is the "attuvita cāram" the essence of Advaita. Advaita, here is a state of unitive experience where the God-soul relation is neither "one nor two".

The Vedāntic end, which is advaitānupavum (Skt. advaitānubhava) (unitive experience), though closest to oneself, is beyond the reach of the humans. In a very descriptive way the poet says that even the endless Vedas confess their inability to grasp the advaitānubhava (unitive experience). The poet, however, does not leave the seeker of truth in utter hopelessness. It is his conviction that God cares and protects and makes the God-reflecting souls like unto Himself. This making of souls like unto Himself and the nature of that relation are further explained in the following hymn:

attuvita vaṇupavattai aṇantamaṇṇai
 inṇaminṇam aṇiyē meṇṇum
 nittiyattāi nirāmayattai nirṅkuṇattait

taṅṅaruḷāl niṅaiṅvuk kuḷḷe
 vaittuvaittup pārppavarait tāṅāka
 ennāḷum vaḷarttuk kākkuṅ
 cittinaimāt tūveḷiyait taṅmayamām
 āṅanta teyvan taṅṅai

That (cit) which is (the end of) advaita experience about which the endless Vedas still reiterate "we do not know". That eternal, defectless and qualityless God, by its grace protects and cares for those who always have "Him" in their mind and constantly reflect upon Him. That pure space and blissful One makes them as Himself (XXVI:7).

Advaitam, here, is the highest state of experience. Even the Vedas could not totally proclaim it. They proclaim it as what cannot be proclaimed: "neti,neti" - "not this, not this". Religious sects which are involved in disputes, rather than impartially seeking the truth, cannot grasp the truth of advaita. The one who unceasingly contemplates the Lord experiences that unitive state through the eyes of the mind and abides in Him by the grace of the benevolent God. This abiding in Him makes the jñāni - the seer - penetrate into the mystery and thus experience the Self in the self.

Advaitam is the inseparable and exalted non-dual and divine union beyond the transient pleasures and pangs of the world:

cakamaṅaittum poyyenavē tāṅuṅarntāl ṭukka
 cukamaṅaittum poyyaṅrē cōrā-tikaparattum

viṭṭupiriyāta mēlāṇa attuvitak

kaṭṭukkuḷ āvatenrō kāṇ

When one realizes that all the world is a lie then all pain and pleasure are also lie. Is it not so? Therefore without losing hope let us look forward to when it will be the day for realizing that inseparable and exalted state of advaita which is the same here as well as there (in this world and the other world) (XXVIII:6).

This hymn raises a vital question. Can one reach that non-dual and divine state here in this world? According to Tāyumānavar the answer is affirmative. Advaita, understood and explained above could be reached here. It is possible that when the soul is released from the bondage of ignorance, the Divine grace liberates the soul from all binding forces and leads the soul to the exalted and inseparable bond of advaita.

Vedānta for Tāyumānavar is realization of Truth of Veda (vedaṣya antah). This understanding of Vedanta, in its foundational sense of the Upaniṣads - as the anubhava of the seers (ṛṣis) - makes Tāyumānavar focus his thinking on the experiential aspect of Vedānta. The experiential state of Vedānta has its culmination in the advaita anubhava (unity experience). Vedānta, thus, for Tāyumānavar is advaita. It does not mean that Tāyumānavar did not understand the Vedānta as theological elaboration and systematization of the Upaniṣads by various Schools of thought and he was not making use of Vedāntic ideas of Śankara and others. However, as the later elaboration and systematization also

purport to uncover the experiential content of Vedānta, Tāyumanavar's explanation of advaita also may be seen to partake in their ideas like e.g. in the last mentioned verse. In that verse there is a clear reference to the idea of mithyā of the systematic Vedānta. The study of his hymns will help us reasonably conclude that his understanding of Vedānta is mainly in the primary sense of the word as representing the anubhava of the Vedic seers. Understanding of Vedānta in this sense - as unitive experience - is helpful in transcending all religious differences and disengaging the schismatic fight on religious and doctrinal issues taking Vedānta back to its more original and integral sense.

CHAPTER V

TĀYUMĀNAVAR AND ŚAIVA SIDDHĀNTA

Śaiva Siddhānta is a special philosophical school of Southern Śaivism which continues as a living religio-philosophic system for the Tamil speaking people of Southern India, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Malaysia. The Scriptures of the School are the Vedas, the Āgamas, the Tirumurai and the Fourteen Siddhānta Śāstras. Its special way of analyzing the three eternal principles (tripadārtha), pati (God), paśu (soul) and pāśa (bond); its explanation of unity in difference (bhedābheda);¹ and its adoption of experience (anubhava)² as a criterion of truth mark the distinctive features of Śaiva Siddhānta as a philosophy. It is a living religio-philosophic system because of its large following in

¹ It is also called dvaitādvaita (dualistic non-dualism). See S.Radhakrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol.II (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1948), p.751. Also see S.Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol.V, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), pp.49.

² On the criterion of experience K.Sivaraman in his work Śaivism in Philosophical Perspective writes "The accomplished character of Saiva Siddhanta therefore, follows from the acceptance of the criterion of experience.....The reliable testimony embodying this experience is Siddhanta par excellence". Op. cit., p. 24.

India, Sri Lanka, South-East Asia and other countries³ where Tamil speaking Hindus have immigrated; and because the questions it raises and the answers it suggests have great significance for philosophy and religion everywhere. Śaiva Siddhānta is inclusive and universalistic in its nature, as we shall see later, and that inclusiveness and universalism arise from its basic understanding of love and personal God-experience. We will examine these dimensions of this philosophy and see how Tāyumanavar integrated them in this and the following chapter.

1. The Vedic and the Āgamic Foundation of Siddhānta

It is the combined Vedic and the Āgamic foundation⁴ that gives Śaiva tradition the credibility of orthodoxy and the sense of greatness which make it popular with the masses. The idea that the two bodies of scriptures are in harmony is, however, not acceptable to all.

³ See J.Gonda, A History of Indian Literature (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), p.175. For a recent study on the spread of Śaiva Siddhānta over South-East Asian countries like Cambodia, Champa, Burma, Siam, Laos, Java, Bali, Sumatra and Borneo, see P.Thirugnanasambandhan, "Saivism in South-East Asia" in Śaiva Siddhānta Perumantram Muttuvilā Malar (Madras: Śaiva Siddhānta Perumantram, 1986), pp. 41-43. For Śaiva Siddhānta in the Western countries see K. Gnanasoorian, "Hinduism in Europe and North America, with special reference to Śaiva Siddhānta in the West today" in Śaiva Siddhānta Perumantram Muttuvilā Malar, op.cit., pp. 25-29.

⁴ For an account of the Āgama as the Scriptural foundation of the Śaiva Siddhānta see infra, pp. 172.

There are some Tamil scholars who see an irreconcilability between the Vedas and the Āgamas. Those scholars would disavow any continuity between the Vedas and Śaiva Siddhānta. They would argue that only the Fourteen Siddhantic Śāstras⁵ are the source of Śaiva Siddhānta. These same scholars would also be highly critical of the traditional belief that the Śivajñānabodham of Meykaṇṭār is a translation or paraphrase of the Raurava Āgama's jñānapāda. Instead, they would maintain that the Tamil Śivañānapōtam is the original treatise and the twelve Sanskrit verses alleged to be found in the Raurava Āgama is the Sanskrit translation of the Tamil Śivañānapōtam. In brief, according to this school, Śaiva Siddhānta is an exclusively Tamil School of thought and has nothing to do with the Sanskrit śāstras, the Veda or the Upaniṣads.⁶

Even prior to the time of Meykaṇṭār there was a ritualist school of Śaivism represented by, for example,

⁵ The Fourteen Śāstras listed in the chronological order are: Tiruvuntiyār, The Tirukkalirruppatiyār, The Śivañānapōtam, The Śivañāna Cittiyar, The Irupāvirupatu, The Unmaivilakkam, The Sivapirakacām, The Tiruvaruṭṭpayan, The Caṅkarpa Nirākaraṇam, The Porrrippakroṭai, The Nēṅcuvitūtūtu, The Vinavenpā, The Koṭikkavi, The Upmaineri Viḷakkam. The date of composition of those works fall between the 12th to 14th century A.D. For a clear account of the contents see M.Dhavamony, op.cit., pp.175.

⁶ For a detailed account of this point, the following work (currently out of print) may be consulted. K. Subramania Pillai, Śaiva Siddhānta Unmai Varalāru (1931). For a brief account of people involved in this debate see K.Sivaraman, "Traditions in Contact and Change", op.cit., Note no. 9.

Soma Sambu (11th century A.D) and Aghora Siva (12th century A.D)⁷ who emphasize the kriyā (ritual) aspect of Saiva religion based on the kriyā sections of the Śaivāgamas. The ritualistic dimension of this Siddhānta is clearly not drawn from the Vedas and the Tamil scholars who see the School as independent emphasize that point. The dualistic emphasis in the Saiva Siddhānta thought derives its edge from the espousal and emphasis on kriyā (ritual). The ritualist Saivites do not accord any place to the concept of advaitam,⁸ nor do they accept jñāna as the source or the sole means to mukti. Instead, they emphasize dīkṣā (divine initiation),⁹ which is kriyā, as the means of mukti. This dualistic group whenever it interprets the "jñānānmukti" (Realization by means of knowledge) mentioned in the Saiva Āgamas, interpret jñāna as dīkṣā. The followers of the ritualistic tradition of Saiva Religion did not go along with a synthetic presentation of Śaiva Siddhānta seeking to harmonize it with the teaching of the Veda. The ritualistic tradition was, however, not a homogenous one and was comprised of a number of groups each following a particular

⁷ Helene Brunner, Ed. and Intro., Sōmaśambu Paddhati, Vol.1, (Pondicherry: Institut Français d' Indologie, 1963), p. XLII and "Le Sādhaka, Personnage Oublié du Śivaïsme du Sud", Journal Asiatique, CCLXIII (1975), 412.

⁸ It is very clear from Aghora Siva's remark "the Siddhantagama is offered as an antidote to those who are obsessed with advaita" (Ratna-Traya, 211).

⁹ See above Chapters Three and Four.

Āgama. Each Āgama gives its own list of padarthas (categories) and dīkṣas. As a result there had been no effort among the ritualists to find a common framework before the coming of Meykaṇṭār.

The Sanskritic Śaiva tradition that preceded the time of Meykaṇṭār leaned towards a dualistic and pluralistic interpretation of Reality. There are "Eight Manuals" (Aṣṭaprakarāna) written and exegetted by the thinkers of the Ritualist tradition, and each supports the dualistic interpretation of the Śaivāgamas.¹⁰ With regard to the Scripture, they accept the Āgamas as the sole authority. While some of the more radical of them specifically rejected the Veda, particularly Vedānta, the generality of the writers did not expressly disavow the Vedic source but held that it drew only from the Āgamas. It is only some modern interpreters of that tradition who insist on a rejection of the Vedas. The tradition proper in its classical form both before and after Meykaṇṭār does not reject the Vedas but only holds that the system does not draw directly from the Vedas. The pre-Meykaṇṭār Śaiva Siddhānta tradition was not a single or consistent system.

Meykaṇṭār formulated the Siddhāntam as the truest meaning of Vedānta. The Meykaṇṭār tradition looks upon the Śaiva Āgamas as the vyākhyāna (interpretation) of the Vedas.

¹⁰ See K.Sivaraman, Saivism in Philosophical Perspective, op.cit., pp.32.

In this synthesis of Vedic and Āgamic tradition put forward from a new perspective, advaitam became the hallmark of Śaivism. With Meykaṇṭār Śaiva Siddhānta tradition became śuddha advaita śaiva siddhāntam. This description of Śaiva Siddhānta as the pure advaita (śuddha advaita) will be discussed later in this chapter.

Although a small percentage of Siddhānta theologians still hold to the irreconcilability of the Vedas and the Āgamas, the generality of the interpreters of the tradition agrees that there is a connection between the Vedas and the Āgamas. There are passages in the Āgamas themselves which are cited to show their general agreement with Vedic teaching. Suprabhedāgama says "Siddhānta consists of the essence of the veda" (siddhānta veda sārātvāt). The Makūṭāgama states "the essence of the Veda is this tantram (Āgama)" (veda sāram idam śāstram). The same Āgama in another place says: vedāntartham idam jñānam siddhāntam paramam subham : "This Siddhānta knowledge which is the significance of Vedānta is supremely felicitous".¹¹

The earliest Tamil author of Śaiva Siddhānta who clearly anticipates Meykaṇṭār in this regard is Tirumūlar. His work Tirumanṭiram is a monument of the Āgamic learning coupled with deep insights born of personal experience. In

¹¹ As quoted in S.S. Suryanarayana Sastri, The Śivādvaīta of Srikantha (Madras: University of Madras, 1972), p.3.

the Tirumanṭiram Tirumūlar brings out the relation between the Āgamas and the Vedas as follows:

vetamō tākama meyyā mirāivanū
 lōtuñ cirappum potuvumen ruḷḷana
 nāta nuraiyavai nāti lirantantam
 pētama tenpar periyōrk kapētamē

The Vedas and the Āgamas are true, both being the revelations of the Lord; consider them as expounding the general and the special doctrines. They are the work of the Lord, it is suggested that the two differ in their conclusions; on careful scrutiny, the great ones take them to be non-different.
 TM 2397.

Śrikaṇṭa (12th century) in his commentary on the Vedānta Sūtras comments: vayantu vēdasivāgama yorbhedam napaśyāma iti: "But we do not see any difference between the Vedas and the Āgamas dealing with Śiva". He, however, states the difference as one of educational relevance: the Veda is open for the first three castes which have the privilege of Vedic initiation. The Āgama, on the other hand, is special, alike for all the four castes (Srikantabhāṣya, II.2.38).

Aruḷnanṭi Sivācārya (13th century) the great disciple of Meykaṇṭa in his SS (VIII:2:14-15) speaks about the importance of and relation between the Vedas and the Āgamas. He calls both alike mutal nūl (revealed books). These books according to the author, are eternal in the sense that they are revealed by the eternal God. The Vedas are said to be "general, and given out for all"; the Āgamas are "special and revealed for the benefits of the blessed,

and they contain the essential truths of the Vedas and Vedānta!".¹²

This vision of the unity of the Vedas and the Āgamas found in the Meykaṇṭa corpus points back to the Tamil Śaiva hymns which are the main inspiration for the tradition. The hymns of the Tevāram sung by Sambandhar (3. 57. 10 and 3. 79. 6), Sundarar (7. 84. 8 and 7. 96. 6) and the hymns of Maṇikkavācakar (Tiruvācakam 1. 4 and 2.10), all acclaim that Śiva is disclosed in the Scripture of the Vedas and the Āgamas alike.

The relationship between the Vedas, the Āgamas, the Tirumuṟai, under which falls the above mentioned Tevāram and the Tiruvācakam of Maṇikkavācakar, and the Meykaṇṭa Śāstras is popularly pictured by the following verse:

vētam pacu atanpāl meyyākamam nālvar
 ōtum tamil atani nuḷḷuṟucey-potamiku
 neyyinuru cuvaiyā nīḷ veṇṇey Meykaṇṭān
 ceyta tamil nūlin tiram

The Veda is the cow; the Āgama is its milk, the Tamil (Tēvaram and the Tiruvācakam) of the four Saints is the ghee churned from it; the excellence of the well instructive Tamil (SB) of Meikaṇḍa Deva of Thiruvennaiṃallur is like the sweetest of such ghee.¹³

¹² Sivagnāna Siddhiyār, VIII.II.14-15 as translated by J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, (Madras: Maykandan Press, 1913), pp. 229-230.

¹³ As found in J.M.Nallaswami Pillai, Sivagnāna Bōtham of Meikanda Deva (Madras: The South Indian Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, 1984), p. xix.

The great Vedic and the Āgamic scholar V. V. Ramanna Sastri's observation on the relation between the Vedas and the Āgamas is instructive here:

the Upaniṣads teach the highest parōkṣa truths from the intellectual plane. The Āgamas have a practical end in view and they begin where the Upaniṣads leave. In other words, the Āgamas teach men how to make the parōkṣa truths actual facts of aparōkṣānubhava, while they are still embodied.¹⁴

Although this is stated somewhat tendentiously it is not without significance. It reflects the perception by the tradition of the continuous and complementary nature of the two sets of revelation. The Vedas emphasize the aspect of quest while the Āgamas embody the quest as well as the realization.

2. Śaiva Siddhānta as Śaivāgamas

The term Śaiva Siddhānta may be understood in different senses. In its original sense Śaiva Siddhānta is a proper name for the body of the revealed Scripture which forms the original source of the knowledge of the all-transcending Word (parā vāk), which is God's unspoken Thought. Śaiva Siddhānta, understood in this sense, means the Śaivāgamas emanating from Śiva. The Śaivāgamas themselves apply the term Śaiva Siddhānta to the Twenty-

¹⁴ As quoted in K. M. Balasubramaniam, Special Lectures on Saiva Siddhānta (Annamalai: The Annamalai University, 1959), p. 4. Also ref. S.S. Suryanarayana Sastri, Śivādvaita of Srikantha, op. cit., p.5.

Eight Āgamas.¹⁵ The Kāmikāgama in its Tantravatāra pātala (section) uses Śaiva Siddhānta to refer to the Twenty-Eight Āgamas.¹⁶ The Trika¹⁷ tradition refers to the corpus of the Twenty-Eight Śaivāgamas as Śaiva Siddhānta.¹⁸ Even Abhinava Gupta, an outsider to the tradition, seems to refer to Śaiva Siddhānta as the Āgamas when he wrote "siddhānta karmabahulam malamāyādi rupitam".¹⁹

Besides perceiving Śaiva Siddhānta in its primordial sense as referring to a body of Sacred Scripture (the Āgamas) originated from Śiva Himself, there is a derivative

¹⁵ See K.Sivaraman, "The Role of the Śaivāgama in the Emergence of Śaiva Siddhānta: A Philosophical Interpretation", op.cit., p.677, foot note no.20. Also see the same author's article "Śaiva Siddhānta and Religious Pluralism" in Harold G.Coward (ed.), Modern Indian Response to Religious Pluralism (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p.168, foot note no. 18.

¹⁶ K. Sivaraman, "The Role of the Śaivāgamas in the Emergence of Śaiva Siddhānta", op.cit., p.677 (note 20).

¹⁷ The term "trika" is used to mean the entire Saiva thought of Kashmir. It is known as the Trika System for this philosophical system is based on the triad of Āgamas—the Siddha Āgama, the Nāmaka Āgama and the Mālini Āgama (Tantralōka 1,35;1,49). Another reason for the name trika is that this system admits three triads called the parā (the higher), the aparā (the lower) and the parāparā (combination of both the higher and the lower).

¹⁸ Tantralōka, Vol.I, 37 - 48 as referred to in K. Sivaraman, Saivism in Philosophical Perspective, op.cit., p.435 (footnote no.22).

¹⁹ Tantralōka, XII,400 as referred to in Śaivism in Philosophical Perspective, op.cit., p.677.

meaning of the term.²⁰ Śaiva Siddhānta, in the second sense, is conceived as an exegesis and systematization of the Scriptural teachings. As exegesis, Śaiva Siddhānta claims to be authentic representation of the Vedic and Āgamic revelation. This exegesis is intended as a help in grasping the original intention of the Sacred Scriptures. In this sense the Āgamas are the expansion of and the only legitimate complement to the Veda. The Āgamic teachings are exegetically interpreted as re-discovering the eternal message within the Vedas and are established as the accomplished and final truth (Śaiva Siddhānta) relating to the Ultimate Reality perceived as Śiva.²¹ Śaiva Siddhānta system, thus, according to the second sense of the term outlined above, is an exegetical interpretation of the intuitions embodied in the Scriptural revelation. The experiential dimension embodied in the Sacred Scripture is further sought to be uncovered and systematized in the light of the perception and experience of the saint founders of the tradition. Śaiva Siddhānta as we understand today is the harmonization and systematization of the Śaivite

²⁰ The Saiva Siddhanta understood as the doctrine of the Āgamas can be confusing. "Although the Āgamas apply the term Śaiva Siddhānta or Siddhānta - Tantra to the doctrine which they expound, one had better avoid it in this connexion, because it has become naturalized as the name of the philosophical system developed in Tamil works since the 12th century". J.Gonda, op.cit., p.155.

²¹ See K.Sivaraman, "The Role of the Śaivāgama in the Emergence of Śaiva Siddhānta", op.cit., p.60.

doctrines found in the Vedas, the Āgamas and the Tirumurai through intuitive reasoning and extensive learning and research by men of genius like Meykaṅṭār (13th century), Aruṅnandi (13th century) and Umapati (14th century). Śaiva Siddhānta, as we understand it today, shall be studied as two phases of thought development viz the Āgamic Śaiva Siddhānta and the Śuddhādvaita of the Meykaṅṭa tradition.

The Āgamic Śaiva Siddhānta tradition claims divine origin because its basis is the revelation of God through the Twenty-Eight Āgamas.²² The Āgamas, which bear the same divine and authoritative status ascribed to the Vedas, are

²² The Twenty-Eight Āgamas are Kāmika, Yogaja, Cintya, Kāraṇa, Ajita, Dīpta, Sūksma, Sahasra, Aṃsumān, Suprabhedā, Vijaya, Nihsvasa, Svāyambhuva, Anala, Vira, Raurava, Makuṭa, Vimala, Chandrahāsa, Mukhabimba, Prodgita, Lalita, Siddha, Santana, Sarvoktha, Pārameśvara, Kiraṇa, and Vātula. See N.R.Bhatt, ed. Rauravāgama, Vol.I (Pondicherry: Institut Francais D'Indologie, 1961), p.xviii. These Twenty-Eight Āgamas are called mūlāgamas (principal Āgamas). Kāmikāgama is said to be the first of the series and therefore when the Twenty-Eight Āgamas are referred to it is expressed as "the kāmika and the other Āgamas". See S.Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol.V, op.cit. p. 124 and J. Gonda, A History of Indian Literature, op.cit., p. 182. These Āgamas are said to have emerged from the five mouths of Śiva namely Sadyojata, Vāmadeva, Aghōra, Tatpuruṣa, and Īsana. The Kāmikāgama, Tantrāvātara Paṭalam verse 4 refers to the coming of the Āgamas from the mouth of Śiva. To each of these principal Āgamas is attached a number of secondary Āgamas called Upāgamas. Rauravāgama Vol.I, op.cit. gives a list of 207 such Upāgamas. Most of the Āgamas are not published and of those published most are either incomplete or partial. They are either in the grantha script or in the nāgari script. For example, all sections of Suprabhedāgama and Kiraṇa are published in grantha script; only the kriya pāda section of Kāmika, Kāraṇa, and Makuṭa are published and they are in grantha script; kriyā pāda section and few chapters of vidyā pāda (knowledge section) of Ajita and Raurava are published in nāgari script and vidyā pāda section of Mataṅga is published in nāgari script.

said to be written in Sanskrit, Prakrit and some local dialects.²³ They have been made available in print only recently through the efforts of the French Institute of Indology in Pondicherry, India.

Tirumūlar in his Tirumanṭiram as observed earlier refers to the Āgamas. According to Tirumūlar the Āgamas have come from the Supreme Śiva (Tirumanṭiram, verses 67-72) and they are numerous (Tirumanṭiram, 74). In verse 67, however, he restricts the number of Āgamas to twenty-eight and in verse 73 he further reduces the number to nine giving their names as Kāraṇam, Kāmikam, Vīram, Cintyam, Vātulam, Viyamalam, Kālōttaram, Cupiram and Makuṭam. The Tēvaram hymnists who lived between the 7th and 9th centuries A.D. refer to and praise the Āgamas in their hymns (Sambandhar, 3. 57. 10 and 3. 79. 6; Sundarar, 7. 84. 8 and 7. 96. 6; Māṇikkavacaḡar, Tiruvācakam, 1. 4 and 2. 10). These references at least establish that the age of the Āgamas is before the 6th century A.D. Referring to the time of the Āgamas S. Dasgupta says "The date of the Āgamas cannot be definitely fixed. It may be suggested that the earliest of them were written sometime in the second or third century A.D; and these must have been continued till the thirteenth or fourteenth century".²⁴

²³ Dasgupta, op.cit., p.15.

²⁴ Dasgupta, op.cit., p.40.

In the broadest sense, Āgama simply means "that which has come" (a - gama). This may be understood in two senses. First, that which has been handed down from Śiva to the Sages. In the second sense it can mean the traditional transmitting of knowledge from teacher to pupil. A somewhat fanciful meaning is derived by splitting the word Āgama into its component letters, namely, "a" - "ga" - "ma" which denotes pati, paśu, and pāśa respectively, the three entities and their relationship which the Āgamas deal with. The following Sanskrit verse shows the significance of the Āgamas for the formation of a religious tradition: "Āgatam Śiva vaktrebhyah gatam ca girijā mukhe / Matam ca Śiva bhaktānam āgamam cheit katyate": The agamas originated from the faces of Śiva, fell on the ears of Parāśakti and spread in the world as the mata (religion) of the Śiva bhaktas". A different but similar way of understanding the term Āgama is splitting it into "a" = knowledge; "ga" = liberation; "ma" = removal of bonds. It is so called because "the study of the āgama and a faithful adherence to its codes liberates the soul from bondage or worldly fetters, causes realization of the Supreme, and ultimately confers Eternal Bliss".²⁵

Āgamas deal with a wide range of topics like rituals, construction of temples and temple architecture, rules for priests and devotees, philosophy etc. The

²⁵ The above are cited in M. Arunachalam, The Śaivāgamas (Mayuram: Gandhi Vidyalayam, 1983), p.12.

contents of the Āgamas are brought under four main sections (pādas) namely jñana pāda (dealing with knowledge, philosophy), yoga pāda (dealing with yogic practices), kriyā pāda (dealing with rituals) and caryā pāda (dealing with personal conduct and discipline).

The jñāna pāda deals with the fundamental philosophical ideas. This part of the Āgamas discusses pati (Lord), paśu (soul), pāśa (the fetters) that bind the soul viz āṇava mala, karma mala, māyā mala; the relation between the above three entities; the thirty-six tattvas (categories); the final goal etc. This section, provides the theoretical basis for the other sections (pādas).²⁶

The yoga pāda is the scantiest part in the āgamas. This section which is sometimes interwoven with the kriyā and caryā sections describes the structure of human body and provides means for concentrating the mind for meditation on Śiva which finally helps the soul in attaining samādhi

²⁶ Hélène Brunner seems to minimize the significance of the theoretical section in the Āgamas. "Cette situation - l'absence presque générale de section théorique et l'aisance avec laquelle on peut supporter ce manque - traduit bien le caractère de la vie religieuse enseignée par les āgama: c'est un ritualisme franc" - "This situation - the almost general absence of the theoretical section and the ease with which one can support this omission - transmits the character of the religious life taught by the Agamas well: it is a pure ritualism. "Le mysticisme dans les agama sivaïtes", Studia Missionalia, 26 (1977), 291. This apparent dismissal of the cosmological and ontological views of the Āgamas is a contradiction because in the same article p.313 she explains the inter-relation between the practical and the theoretical sections of the Āgamas. See infra. p. 180. (I gratefully acknowledge Mr. Gus Hubbard's assistance with the French here and elsewhere in this study.)

(intense concentration). (Rauravāgama, jñānapāda, chapter I, section 7.5; Suprabhedāgama, yogapāda, 3.53).

The kriyā pada (section on rites) is the largest section in all the available āgamas. It lays down an elaborate code of conduct, instructions on the installation and consecration of deities, temple construction and temple architecture, daily rites, fire rites (agnikarya), Śiva puja, daily worship, daily and annual festivals etc. and helps the soul in understanding and realizing the purpose of life behind those elaborate rites and rituals.

The caryā pāda, the code of personal conduct and discipline, is a basic preparation intended to purify the body, mind and spirit of a person who has to advance in his spiritual life and attain oneness with Śiva. It deals with the prescribed duties and ceremonials of the worshippers, with purificatory ceremonies, and with other rites.

This four-fold division is not in fact found in all the āgamas and a particular āgama may omit certain sections. For example, of the āgamas available in print today only three, namely the Suprabhedā, the Mrgendra, and the Kiraṇa have all the four pādas (sections). While the Rauravāgama contains the jñāna and kriyā sections, the Kāmika, the Kāraṇa and the Ajita contain only the kriyā section. A second important point to bear in mind is that a section (pāda) should not be seen as independent or mutually exclusive. All the sections in an ascending order (from

caryā to jñāna) lead the soul to final goal - liberation (mukti). This is the sense of the following Mrgendrāgama verse found in jñānapada 2.8:

iti vastu-trayasya-asya prāk-pāda-krita samsthiteh
caryā-yogā-kriyā-padair-viniyogo' bhidā syate

These three categories are treated of in the first pada (the jnanapāda) and it will be taught below that these must also be taken over into the caryā, kriyā, and yoga pādas also.²⁷

The inter-relatedness of these four sections is stated by Helene Brunner²⁸ as follows:

Le succès implique à la fois la connaissance théorique du but et des moyens, qui relève du jñānapāda et du yogapāda, et la connaissance pratique du chemin, qui relève du kriyāpāda et du caryāpāda. C'est pourquoi l'on ne peut isoler les unes des autres les quatre sections des āgama; et c'est pourquoi il serait vain, comme on peut en être tenté d'abord...

The success implies at the same time the theoretical knowledge of the goal and of the means, which belongs to the jñāna section and to the yoga section, and the practical knowledge of the path, which belongs to the kriyā and caryā sections. This is why one cannot isolate the four sections (padās) of the Āgamas, the one from the other; and that is why it would be in vain to be tempted to look firstly for the mysticism of the Āgamas by referring solely to the first two sections and considering them most important.

²⁷ As translated by M. Narayanaswami Aiyar, "The Mrgendra Agama", Siddhanta Deepika, IV (October 1900), 99.

²⁸ Héléne Brunner, "Le mysticisme dans les agama sivaïtes", op.cit. p. 313. Although Helene Brunner finds here a relation between the theoretical and the practical sections of the Āgamas (and sees the jñānapada as the "most important" section), in the beginning of the same article (p.291) she denies the importance of the theoretical section in the Āgamas.

The Āgamas, understood as Śaiva Siddhānta, lay down three eternal entities, viz., pati (Lord), paśu (Soul) and pāsa (bond) as fundamental entities of the āgamic Śaivite philosophical system. The Mrgendrāgama, jñānapāda, chapter 2 verse 1 gives the picture of Śiva, the God, and the summary of the whole system :

Śiva is beginningless, free from defects, the all knower. He removes from the infinitesimal soul the web of bonds that obscure its nature.²⁹

While this verse presents Śiva as eternal, pure and all-knowing, it speaks also about the existence of an infinitude of souls and their fettered nature, like the spider bound by the web, and about the release of the soul by God. The Ajitāgama, Kriyāpāda Section One, conceives of God as Brahman and says:

Brahman has two forms (st.25), the higher (parā Brahman) which is beyond word and thought and is the Highest Siva, and the definable Brahman which can be the object of meditation and is Sadaśiva, materialized as the syllable Om...³⁰

The Ajitāgama, in Section Two of the Kriyāpāda, describes pati as:

Śiva, Sarvottara ("Superior to All"), Sthanu ("Immovable One"), Paramātma ("Highest Soul"), Maheśvara ("Great Lord"), of the form of "existence, consciousness, and bliss", without the distinction

²⁹ As found in J.N.Farquhar, An Outline of the Religious Literature of India (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967), p.194.

³⁰ J.Gonda, A History of Indian Literature, op. cit., p.195.

of being and not-being, omnipresent, called by the name Brahman, higher than the gross and the subtle, the manifested and the unmanifested and both (manifested and unmanifested), the external and the internal and both external and internal, the uninterrupted and the interrupted and the uninterrupted-and-interrupted, male and female and neither man nor woman...light and darkness, the near and the far....the four Vedas proclaim Him and so do all other scriptures...³¹

The souls and the world cannot have their existence without God (Śiva) who is both transcendent and immanent. The creation of the world is effected through His Divine creative energy (śakti), which is the instrumental cause, and māyā, the primordial matter out of which develops the material world under God's śakti, which is the material cause.

The question of creation brings in the other two entities, pāsā and paśu. God's creation is not for Himself, nor is it purposeless, it is for the "enslaved" souls. Souls are all-pervasive and they possess eternal power by the Supreme power of God. They have the potential for intuitive knowledge and spontaneous action (caitanyam drk-kriyā-rūpam).³² This power of soul, however, is veiled by malas (impurities). The Mrgendrāgama, while describing the nature of the souls, says:

nā vyāpako na-kṣaṇiko na eko na-āpi jadātmakah
na akartā-abhinna-cid-yogi pāsā ante sivatā-sruteh

³¹ Ibid., p.196.

³² Dasgupta, op.cit., p.21.

The Atma is not avyapi (not omnipresent, limited), not momentary, not a non-doer, and is ever united to intelligence, for it is heard that after the pāśa is removed, he attains to the state of Śiva.³³

The pāśa (bonds) which this verse speaks of obscure the souls. This obscuration is for all the beings and it is beginningless, dense, great and possessed of numerous powers which reside in every soul and are cast off when their time comes. This casting off takes place when the grace of Siva descends on the soul (Mrgendrāgama, jñānapāda, 7.8). The pāśa that enslaves the potentially all-knowing soul is described as: atmā mala-āvritah sarvajñatve kiñcit-jñata yatah: The soul is enveloped by impurity (malam) and so is limited in knowledge although potentially it is all-knowing. The mala which has always veiled the souls is ānava mala, the soul is born with it. The ānava mala which binds and restricts the all-knowing and all-pervasive nature of soul is eternal with the soul and can be detached only when the time comes (when it is ripened) by the saving energy of God (anugrahaśakti). The other two pāśas (fettters) are karma and māyā. The association of the souls with body, time and place involve them in actions or deeds. Karma is produced by the activities of body (kāya), speech (vāk) and mind (manas) (Mrgendrāgama, jñānapāda, 8.4). Action (karma) is performed by people desiring the fruits of their actions. Karma is thus of the nature of accumulating merit or demerit

³³ Mrgendrāgama, jñānapāda, 6.7 as translated by N. Narayanaswami Aiyar, op.cit., p.152.

and this is eternal. Karma is a pāśa when there is longing for fruits of the action and thereby desire for further action, and consequently the soul is world-bound and its real nature obscured.

The Mrgendrāgama describes the nature of māyā mala as:

tad-ekam-aśivam bijam jagatas'-citra-śaktimat
sahakāryadhikāra anta-samrodhi vyāpy-anaśvaram

It is single, unpropitious (aśiva), the seed of the universe, and possessed of manifold śaktis. It obstructs the soul till the authority of its helper (karma) should cease and is universal and imperishable.³⁴

Māyā as the material cause produces the world and the bodies and so bondage comes out of the products of māyā. In this sense māyā is the original cause of bondage. It is a pāśa as long as its products are objects of enjoyment for the soul and thus obstructing the true goal of the soul. As a pāśa it restricts paśu (soul) and obstructs the full expression of the real nature of ātma (soul).

The souls which are bound by the above fetters live in the world so that the malas get ripened. The created world in this sense is a milieu wherein the souls may be prepared for detachment from the matter which fastens itself to them. They realize the true Self, which is liberation (mokṣa).

³⁴ Narayanaswami Aiyar, op.cit., p.193.

In an effort to achieve this ideal state, as described in the jñānapāda of the āgamas, the other practical sections yoga, kriyā, and caryā come into play. The observance and following of prescribed rituals as laid down by the caryā and kriyā sections, and the training of mind for undisturbed meditation of Siva through yoga make the soul ascend to the higher state of human consciousness. The soul's ultimate release from the pāśas and consequent attaining of the state of union with Śiva is then realized through the descent of God's power (śaktinipāta) and by means of advanced divine initiation (dīksā). This is spelled out in the jñānapāda of Rauravāgama as follows:

Just as darkness quickly disappears when it encounters sunrise, thus after obtaining initiation one is freed from merit and demerit (dharmādharma). Just as the sun illuminates these worlds with its rays, thus God shines (becomes manifest) with his powers (śakti) in the mantra sacrifice. Just as small sparks dart out of the fire, thus the powers come forth from Śiva. When (ritually) urged (used) they reach the bodies of those who aspire to success (sādhaka), just as the sun with its rays removes the impurity which is on the earth. Thus the Lord receives those who have been initiated by the combined use of his śaktis. Like water thrown into water or milk poured into milk, thus the one who knows the mantras obtains oneness merely by initiation. Just as a mass of cotton thrown into a blazing fire is burnt and completely destroyed never to become cotton again, thus... the initiated will not be reborn evermore.³⁵

The āgamaic Śaiva Siddhānta is a philosophical system with a practical interest in ritual. The philosophy

³⁵ Rauravagama, jñānapāda, 1. 8. 3 as found in J.Gonda, op.cit., p. 190.

is mainly found in the jñānapada of the Āgamas which deals with the three eternal entities pati, paśu and pāśa; and with related issues such as the doctrine of causation, the thirty-six tattvas (principles) etc. Their discussions present the purpose of life as the shedding off of the binding impurities and as the attaining of Oneness with Śiva. The main interest of the āgamas, it may be noted however, is not a systematization of philosophical thought. "For their authors the attainment of the highest goal is much more essential than metaphysical speculation".³⁶ It is in setting forth the concrete steps to the attaining of the highest ideal of union between God and the soul (pati and paśu) that we find the theological harmony of the āgamas. In other words the philosophy of the jñānapāda is directly linked to a practical concern. The yoga practice, the religious practices anchored on rites and rituals elaborately explained in the kriyā and caryā sections, the detailed descriptions on the construction of temples and other places of worship, minute details on the consecration and installation of deities, all of these topics converge on the question of how to achieve the realization of the unity between soul and Siva, the Supreme God. This is the theological harmony linking the various sections (padās) of the āgamas, which, as we shall see, impressed Tāyumanavar

³⁶ J. Gonda, History of Indian Literature, op.cit., p. 167.

and served as a formative factor in the development of his own samarasa-vision. The caryā, kriyā, and yoga are oriented towards fixing the right disposition in the soul and then leading the paśu (soul) to the likeness of pati (God) which is the purpose of life envisaged in the philosophical section (jñānapāda) of the Āgamas.

3. Śaiva Siddhānta as Suddhādvaita

The second phase of the development of Śaiva Siddhānta thought is led by Meykaṇṭhār and his followers mentioned above. This school also recognizes śruti (scripture) as the direct revelation from God (Śiva) and holds the view that Scriptures are devoid of imperfection and are called mutal nūl (revealed book). Such are both the Vedas and the Āgamas (SS. VIII. 14). The exact relation in which all other Sacred literature stands to these "revealed books" is clearly explained by Aruṇanti in his Supakkam part of the SS (VIII.14). Of secondary importance are the smṛitis: the Purānas, the Ithihāsa, the Śāstras relating to various arts and sciences (the Sixty-Four kalās) etc. They constitute the vaḷi nūl (Secondary Guide Books). These "books" are a guide to the mutal nūl in the form of explanations, always in accord with the mutal nūl yet varying in actual content. The sārbu nūl are aid books and while they differ in many ways they essentially agree with

both the mutal nūl and vaḷi nūl.³⁷ Of these three kinds of books, the mutal nūl (the Vedas and the Āgamas) are incomparable because they were revealed by the perfect eternal God and Śaiva Siddhānta has its foundation in these sacred revelations from God.

The fundamental doctrine of Meykaṇṭār's śuddhādvaita as presented in the opening section (the first three sūtras) of SB is the same as that of the Āgamic Śaiva Siddhānta, namely the truth of tripadārtha "the triple categories", pati (God), paśu (soul) and pāśa (bond). These three constitute the phenomena of life and existence. However, the new element that is introduced here is the advaita relation between them. What these three categories mean in the literature of the Meykaṇṭār tradition may be briefly discussed here.

The SB establishes the existence of God by way of pointing at the "Agent". God is the First Cause (nimitta kāraṇa) behind the world of the forms of "he" (avaṇ), "she" (avaḷ) and "it" (atu) which undergo creation (urpatti), conservation (titi) and dissolution (nācam) (SB. I.1). The Siddhantic theory of creation is satkāryavāda, according to which the world which is an effect from the cause is already contained in the cause. The causal process is a case of coming-to-be of what already exists in a latent form.

³⁷ See Tolkappiyam, the oldest extant Tamil grammatical work (ca. third century B.C.), poruḷatikāram, Marapiyal, 66.

Śiva is the Primal Cause of the world (SB.I. 1) and His cosmic functions are the operations of His Śakti, the power of God. God in Himself is the efficient cause, māyā and karma being the material and instrumental causes respectively (SB. I.2b and II. 2). Although God is the efficient Cause of the world-process, He remains changeless (SB. I.2c) in his nature. The nature of God is summed up as One, Absolute, Eternal, Pure, Supreme, Qualityless, Infinite Wisdom, Blissful etc. (Śivappirakāśam, XIII).

The "motive" for God's creation, as SS says, is love and it is not for His own good but for the benefit of all forms of life (SS I.47). The creation of the world is to facilitate the process of "maturing" the impurities (malas) that defile the soul beginninglessly. By existing and working in the world the soul's defilements become ripened and ready for removal. Life in the world is a pre-requisite for the dawn of saving knowledge (jñāna).

The cosmic functions of God can also be seen as the taṭastha-lakṣaṇa ("definition per accidens") of the Supreme. They constitute the "general knowledge" of God. He is the Cause (kāraṇa) of the origin, sustenance and cessation of the world. The world process defines the "that" of the Supreme.³⁸ SS gives the taṭastha-lakṣaṇa of Śivam as follows:

³⁸ See K.Sivaraman, Śaivism in Philosophical Perspective. Op.cit., p.130.

Ulakelā māki, vēray uṭaṇumāy oḷiyāyoṅki
 alakilā vuyirkaḷ, kaṇmattu āṇaiyiṇ amarntu cellat,
 talaivanāy, ivarṛin taṇmai taṇakkeytalīṇrit tānē
 nilavuciṅ ramalanāki, niṇraṇan nīṅkā teṅkum

The Supreme Being who guides innumerable souls according to His Will and each one's karma is One with the universe, and is different and is one-and-different; He is the Transcendent Light; He is the First Cause unaffected by the limitedness of His creatures; He is Self-luminous and pure (devoid of malas) and pervades everything. He remains different from nothing (Siddhiyār, Supakkam, II.1).

This taṭastha-lakṣaṇa, as it is clear from the above verse, is the existential and phenomenal description of God which enables one to penetrate into the deeper and essential nature of God. This is possible through meditation and the resulting intuitive experience (anubhava) constitutes the svarūpa-lakṣaṇa ("definition per proprium") of God. This description takes on a negative form. SS states it as follows:

civaṇaru vuruvumallaṇ cittinō ṭacittumallaṇ
 pavamutar roḷilkaḷonṇum paṇṇiṭuvāṇu mallaṇ tavamutal
 yōkapōkam tarippava ṇallaṇṛāṇē yivaipera
 viyaintumonṇu miyaintiṭā viyalpiṇāṇē

Śiva is neither a rūpi nor an arūpi; neither cit nor acit. He does not create nor sustain nor perform other functions. He is neither a Yogi nor a bhōgi. Although present in all things and pervading all things inseparably, the Supreme is of a nature different from all these. (SS, I.70).³⁹

³⁹ Ibid., p. 161.

With regard to the question as to whether or not God has form SS replies in the language of paradox. He has form (uruvam), no form (aruvam) and He is of formless form (uruvāruvam) (SS. I. 38 and 70). The SS verses I. 46, 47 and 54 also speak of God assuming forms. The question here is why God takes forms which imply limitations of time and space. These forms, according to the above verses are not material but spiritual forms, symbolic of His love and grace. In SS I.54 it is said that unless the Supreme assumes various forms the humans cannot have the manifestations of His five Divine operations (pañcakrityas) namely srsti (creation), stiti (preservation), saṁhāra (destruction), tirōbhāva (concealment), and anugraha (grace). All these functions pre-suppose God assuming the form of a person who acts in relation to the creature (paśu). Devoid of the Divine manifestation in concrete forms there are neither divine grace nor sacred revelation. The SS I.46 shows the necessity of the Supreme assuming forms, and the next verse (I.47) says His form is gracious Love and His attributes and knowledge are again grace or love. Thus everything is seen through the single frame of love. In I.11.37 the Siddhiyār says the pañcakrityas of the Divine are acts of His grace. The terms "grace" (aruḷ) and

"love" (appu) are interchangeably used. This is consistent with their usage in Tamil religious literature.⁴⁰

The pati of Śaiva Siddhānta is the same as is described in the Upaniṣadic language as "śivam advaitam caturtam" (Māndukya Up., VII). As Śivam, God is Bliss itself. By this is meant that He is infinitely blissful and bestows bliss on all. By using the description as advaitam, His relation with the soul as "inseparable" is indicated. This description is indicative of a unique relationship in which pati stands to paśu. Siddhāntic understanding of pati, paśu and pāśa is beautifully summarized in the following words of Umapati:

paḷk^aalaiyākama vētami yāvaiyṇun karuttup
 patipacupācan terittal patiparamē yatutā
 ṇilavumaru vuruvinṅrik kuṅankuṅrika ḷinṅri
 ninmalamā yēkamāy nittamāki
 yalakiluyirk kunarvāki yacala māki
 yakantitamā yānanta vuvuvā yaṅṅric
 celavaritāȳc celkatiyāȳc ciṅṅitākip peritāȳt
 tikaḷvatutar̄ civamen̄par teḷintuḷōrē

The leading object of many kalei-gnanam, scientific treatises, twenty-eight divine Ākamam, the four Vetham and various other sāstiram, is to explain the three eternal entities, pathi, pasu, pāsam. Pathi is param (Brahm), Deity. The same is also called Tat-Śivam. This deity, the enlightened teacher, is neither purely spiritual, nor embodied; is not possessed of any physical organs; has neither

⁴⁰ Tirukkural speaks of aruḷ as the child begotten of love : aruḷ eṇṇum appin kuḷavi (Tirukkural, 76. 7).

qualities nor names; is ever free from malam; is one; and eternal; is the source (or power) of understanding to innumerable souls; is fixed in position; illimitable in its nature (or immense); exists in the form of gnānam; is the form of happiness; is difficult of access to unstable worshippers, but is easily approached by those who worship in the orderly course; and shines as the least of the little, and the greatest of the great (Śivappirakāśam, 14).⁴¹

Pati, understood as caturtam (the fourth)⁴² is the Being which surpasses the sweep of human consciousness and is realized through integration (yoga) as pure Consciousness itself.

Pāśa, the bond which accounts for the enslavement of the soul, and from which it stands in need of liberation by Divine grace, is of three kinds, namely āṇava, karma and māyā (SB. I; II. 2c; IV. 2). The latter two viz, karma and māyā are not only material means for providing locations and bodies and experiences of pleasure and pain needed by the souls, but they also concurrently accomplish the process of maturing the soul.

Āṇava is the primary mala which remains with the soul through eternity (SB.I). Since it is connected with āṇu (soul) all through eternity it is called āṇava. The other malas are adventitious, and are conjoined to the āṇava

⁴¹ Śivappirakācam: 14 as translated by Rev. Henry Hoisington, Journal of the American Oriental Society, IV. (February-July 1853-54), 143.

⁴² The other three states of human consciousness are jāgrat (waking), svapna (dream), and suṣṭi (sleep). The original text is Māṇḍūkya Up. VII. It is also found in the Maitri Up. VI:19.

mala secondarily. Thus āṇava mala is called sahaja (natural) and the other two are called āgantuka (those joined later) malas. Āṇava mala is not merely the absence of knowledge. As a positive principle of darkness, though it is jaḍa (unconscious), it serves to hide the soul's inherent powers of knowing, feeling and willing. As irul malam (impurity of darkness)⁴³ it deludes the soul, blinds the vision and hides itself and everything else from the soul. The power of āṇava mala is weakened when the soul is led to higher stages of spiritual life and āṇava mala ceases to affect the soul when the soul attains mukti (SB. X), its screening powers having been neutralized by the influx of divine light.

Karma mala is the bond that underlies the soul's deeds, both accounting for their genesis and providing their consequences (SB.I.2a). It is a generic name for the fruit of deeds. SS says karma is the act of the soul in its embodied state (II.10). The acts may be either good or bad and consequently there are good karmas and bad karmas (SS. II.13). It is the cause for the varieties in bodies taken by the souls and in their bodily experiences. It induces the soul to act through body, mind and speech and thus accumulate the merits and demerits of the deeds. It is the cause of the soul's experience of pain and pleasure, and it

⁴³ See Umapati's Tiruvārūṭṭayan, 3. 2ff.

takes the soul into the transmigratory tract (cycles of births and deaths) (Śivappirakāśam, 29).

Karma mala is sub-divided into three branches. This division is made according to the fructification of deeds of the soul. Āgāmī refers to the good and bad deeds one performs during a given birth. The fruit of those karma is to be experienced in future births. Sañcita is the accumulated karma of former births. It is the karma carried forward from the time when a deed is done to the time when the fruit of that deed is experienced. Prārabdha is the functioning of the accumulated karma of former births in the present birth. Thus it is formed out of sañcita and is the direct cause of the body in the present life and its works and enjoyments. In a way we see here a cyclical process of karma. The pain or pleasure one experiences as the result of past deeds (prārabdha) becomes the source of fresh acts (āgāmī). The fruits of such acts are stored in sañcita from which in turn emerges prārabdha. The ever-recurrent order of karma is explained in SS II: 12:

mēlaikku vittu māki viḷaintavai yuṇavu māki
 ñālattu varumā pōla nañceyum vīpaikaḷellā
 melattān paḷamāc ceyyu mitamaki taṅkaṭ kellā
 mūlatta tāki yenṅum vantaṭu muṅaimai yōṭē

As the fruit of husbandry yields us food for present enjoyment and seed for tomorrow, so also, our acts account for our present enjoyment and form seed, the

fruit of which will be enjoyed in a future birth. This is the eternal order of karma.⁴⁴

The effect of each action and reaction is continuous and in this sense it seems an everlasting cyclic process. Kārmic principle, however, becomes inoperative when soul attains oneness with Śiva (SB. X.2a). Karma mala now cease to affect the soul because the acts of the liberated soul are "the acts of God Himself" (SB. X.2a and b). Liberation, it may here be recalled according to Meykaṇṭhār, consists of the realization of non-duality.

Another bond (pāśa) which binds the soul is māyā mala. This non-intelligent, primordial material principle is eternal and is responsible for cosmic evolution, serving as its material cause. As the cosmic substrate, māyā is the material cause of the universe and the universe exists for the purpose of making possible the eventual redemption of the soul from all bonds. Māyā, as the material cause, cannot by itself operate giving rise to the universe. It performs its function but with the aid of an intelligent, efficient cause. It is this mala that provides souls with location, instruments and objects of experience (SS. II. 52). The forms which arise when māyā is acted upon by an efficient cause are tanu (bodies), karāṇa (organs), bhuvana (world) and bhōga (objects of experience).

⁴⁴ SS. II. 12 as translated by J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, op. cit., p. 166.

Āṇava, karma and māyā, which are thus delusion-causing in different ways, veil the true nature of the soul, produce the illusion of enjoyments and put the souls in bondage. They are inter-related with one another. Their functions may be compared to the sprout (karma), bran (māyā) and chaff (āṇava) in the paddy.⁴⁵ Thus we see how the malas keep the soul fettered in their physical, moral and spiritual existence. Just like the chaff in the paddy induces the growth of the sprout therein, the āṇava mala induces the soul's capacity for experience (efficient cause). We notice that the bran helps the growth of the sprout out of the paddy. Māyā mala acts as the accessory (instrumental cause) inducing the soul to experience pleasure and pain with its body (tanu), organs (karaṇa), world (bhuvana) and objects of enjoyment (bhōga). Like the sprout stems from the paddy, the karmamala creates and constitutes pleasure, pain and suffering and so it is the material cause.

The three malas exist and function in subjection to the power of God. Māyā and karma are utilised as the means or accessories by which He helps the soul gain release from its bondage. Although āṇava and Śiva co-exist in the soul,

⁴⁵ Commentators differ as to which is which. For Umapati Sivacarya āṇava is like sprout; māyā is like bran and karma is like chaff (Śivappirakāsam, 25). For Sivagra Yogi āṇava is like bran; māyā is like chaff and karma is like the sprout. The comparison followed here is that of Sivanana Yogi for whom āṇava is like chaff; māyā is like bran and karma is like sprout.

unlike the soul, Śiva is unaffected by ānava's presence. Śiva's work upon the ānava mala is by His own will. Through His aruḷ śakti (power of grace) He frees the souls from the darkness of ānava. The soul that undergoes the cycle of birth and death, pain and pleasure, under the powerful spell of the malas is not eternally left in this peril. The SB clearly speaks about the annihilation of the triple fetters which bind the soul. The moment when the soul become one with Śiva and realize all its actions are His actions then ānava, karma and māyā will disappear from the soul:

avaṇē tānē yākiya aṇṇeri
 yēkanāki yiraipaṇi nirka
 malamāyai tanṇoṭu valviṇai yinrē

When the soul becomes one with Lord, as the Lord is one with the soul, and dwell in the divine service, then the formidable karma (valviṇai), along with the impurity (ānava māla) and māyā pass away. (SB. X)

This is to show the total annihilation of the pāśas in the realization of the oneness (ekanāki) of God which expresses itself in practical life as "doing only His will" (Iraipaṇi nirtal). The removal of malas is beautifully compared to the complete disappearance of darkness in the presence of blazing light (erikatiriṇ munnirul pol) (SB. X. 2e).

The third of the triple categories is the paśu (soul). The soul is called paśu because it is bound by pāśa which as we have seen is the principle of ignorance (SS. IV:

11-20). Śaiva Siddhānta believes in the existence of a countless number of finite souls, an infinity of them. This multitude of souls is figuratively expressed by Umapati by comparing them to the number of days that are past since evolution and the days that are yet to be:

pirantanāl mēlum piṛakkunāḷ pōlun
 tuṛantōr tuṛappōr tokai (Tiruvarutpayan).⁴⁶

These souls are eternal and ultimate; immortal and perennial as God Himself.

The soul has its habitation in the body⁴⁷ yet it is independent of the body. The soul is neither the body (SB.III. 1a), nor sense organs (SB.III. 3a), nor the inner faculties (SB. IV. 1a) but that which identifies with them as "me" and "mine". It receives its body from God in accordance with its deeds (karma). This body and soul are inseparable. The soul is spiritual (cittu) and hence has no form nor shape nor any other perceptible attribute. It is arūpa (formless) and vibhu (all-pervasive) (SS. IV. 20) As a spiritual entity it exercises the three spiritual functions of jñāna (knowing), icchā (feeling) and kriyā

⁴⁶ Also see Śivappirakāśam, 19.

⁴⁷ There are three bodies which the soul inhabits. The sthūla body which is visible to our eyes. The sūkṣma body, made up of the five prāṇas (vital breaths), manas, jñānendriyas and karmendriyas, is the body which the soul inhabits during the state of dream and during the transition of the soul from one body to another. The karāṇa body is the subtlest and innermost body that the soul inhabits.

(acting). The eternal intelligence and power of the soul, however, are self-concealed on account of its inherent conjunction with mala (anava mala) (SS.IV. 20). It is the Siddhanta faith that ānava mala must first become ripe and then it becomes fit for removal, and is removed from the soul in mokṣa. The freed soul is thus in a state of receiving Divine grace which imparts saving jñāna (wisdom). With the dawn of jñāna the soul comes into union with God (pati).

The soul has a peculiar nature worth noticing. It never stands alone by itself. The soul is always found in association either with darkness or the twilight zone called the world or with the effulgent Light of God. To be associated means that the soul assumes the nature of that with which it is associated. Because of this peculiar nature the soul becomes dark in kevala due to the ānava mala; it is individualized while associated with organs, body etc. in sakala, and it becomes omnipresent in the śuddha state when associated with Śivam. Thus its association is compared to the crystal or mirror which reflects the nature and colours of the object with which it comes into contact, even while it retains its own nature.⁴⁸ On account of this nature of the soul becoming that with which it gets associated with, the soul is called satasat

⁴⁸ Cfr. Sivajñānabōdham, VIII.3; Sivajñāna Siddhiyār, VIII.37 and Svet. Up. II:14 & 15.

(SB., VII; SS., VII. 2). The sat nature stands for the eternal and never-changing Reality. The soul becomes sat while it cognizes the sat. The asat nature of the soul is that which in consequence of identification with asat undergoes change in its condition. One may thus see a certain similarity between the soul's life in asat and its life in sat though resulting in experiences as divergent as bondage and liberation.

Saiva Siddhanta conceives of an hierarchical order among souls namely vijñānakalas, pralayākālas and sakālas (SB., VIII. 2; SS., VIII. 2). This of course is part of the Śaivāgama doctrine. The difference in their place in the order is a function of the number of malas that defile them. On the top of the hierarchy is the vijñānakalas. These souls are believed to be impaired only by āṇava mala. Certain classes of souls either belong to or have ascended through spiritual discipline to this order, which is above the sway of karma and māyā. This is the region of śuddha māyā and the souls in this order are mature and fit for the final operation of Siva's grace. With the dawning of Divine grace from within the āṇava is cast off and the soul is released from all the binding forces. The second order is the pralayākālas who are tainted by both āṇava and karma malas, but are free from māyāmala. These are the souls which exist in the state of cosmic dissolution. When there is fresh evolution it becomes sakāla being alerted by karma

mala. In the bottom of the order is the sakalas, the full-fledged empirical souls, who are defiled (infected) by all the three malas (āṇava, karma and māyā). Release for pralayākala and sakala souls is effected differently in accordance with the difference in the nature of their bonds. To the pralayākala souls God appears in His celestial form when their two malas have become ripe and in the case of the sakala souls, God assumes the form of a human teacher (guru). The latter through the mediation of the Scripture and the Tradition (sampr̥dāya) inculcate saving knowledge.

The soul bound by the triple impurities of āṇava, karma and māyā (malas) is not left forever in darkness. When the soul is made "fit", by way of casting off the impurities, the saving knowledge (jñāna) is imparted and the soul is liberated from the bondage caused by the malas. SB VIII speaks of this saving process. The souls through tapas advance in spiritual life. Tapas, here, signifies the three Saiva paths viz caryā, kriyā, and yoga (SB. VIII). Diligent following of the above paths hastens the "ripening" of the impurities. The soul is now disposed for the descent of God's grace (śakti). It is at such conjunction of factors that God appears as Guru and imparts knowledge (jñāna). It is the Siddhantic understanding that through Divine grace the bonds of āṇava, karma and māyā are cast out once and for all and the soul attains supreme jñāna, which is true liberation (SP., VI. 2). In this state of perfection the

soul enjoys communion with Śiva (śivatvam) and experiences bliss in its life. This experiential oneness which marks the substance of Release is what is described as śuddhādvaita.

The soul (paśu) released from all the binding forces enters into a new relation with the Supreme. It is a kind of relation which subsists between two distinct things which now become non-dual (advaita) by the power of intimate association. SB introduces the notion of advaita in two different contexts. The first context is sūtra II, while talking about Sivam as causing the fivefold cosmic operations for redeeming the soul from bondage. The expression avaiyē tāneyāy of the sūtra II reflects the unique relation in which God stands as He performs the cosmic functions of creation etc. The second context is the sūtra XI which describes mokṣa which consists in the soul realizing its non-dual relation with Sivam. When the soul enters the life of mokṣa or when "in ceaseless, unwavering love, the soul unites to Śiva's Feet" (ayarā anpiṇ aran kaḷal celumē) (SB. XI), it is said to accomplish "integration with Śivam" (Śivayōgam). Just as Siva is and has been "non-dual" with the soul in its life in the world; standing one with it although hidden from its purview - the soul in Śivayōga becomes in its experience of union with Siva "non-dual", surrendering its sense of "I do" and even its very sense of being an "I".

In the unique relationship expressed in "God is one, different, one and different with the world" (ulakela māki verāy, uṭanumāy) (SS. II. 1), we find three kinds of relationships viz., abheda (non-difference between soul and God), bheda (difference between soul and God) and bhedābheda (difference and non-difference between soul and God). The kind of oneness Śaiva Siddhānta speaks about is different from the above kind of relations although it admits bheda only in the sense of a relation between the eyes and the sun in seeing; the abheda relation is to the extent in which there is identity between soul and body. Likewise the bhedābheda relation is true in the sense of the relation that we find between the seeing soul and its eyesight.⁴⁹ To these three kind of relations thus distinguished and held together at the same time Meykaṇṭār draws our attention in his illustrative verse under the Twelfth sūtra:

For the enlightened He is not other than the world, He is not one with the world, He is not both other than and one with the world. But because the relation is non-duality, which includes all these three, all things are His form. Nevertheless, thou who knowest the truth of non-duality, worship in love.⁵⁰

This non-dual relation between soul and God is "śuddhādvaita" according to Meykanta and the one who "knows

⁴⁹ See SB. II. 1; SS. II. 1.

⁵⁰ SB, XII. 4a as translated by Gordon Matthews in Śiva-ñāna-Bōdham: A Manual of Saiva Religious Doctrine (Oxford: University Press, 1948), p.28.

the truth of non-duality" is described by him as an "attuviti" (advaitin).

Umapati Sivacarya finds the greatness of Śaiva Siddhānta precisely in its interpretation of advaita which he characterises as "true and pure". Śaiva Siddhānta is hailed by him in this non-dual sense in view of this unique interpretation of advaita:

We expound here the beauty of Śaiva Siddhānta, the cream of the Vedānta, the excellent beauty of which consists in its exposition of the Advaita, postulating an inseparable relation, like body and soul, eye and sun, and soul and eye, and supported by the teaching on Dharma of the books of the highest authority. This Advaita is unlike the theories of other schools which postulate the bheda relationship as it exists between light and darkness, the bhedābheda relationship existing between Word and Meaning, and the abheda relationship between gold and the ornament. Our doctrine of Advaita is supported by perfectly logical methods and it is the light to the truth-seekers and darkness to others.⁵¹

The inseparable union that exists between God and soul as shown above is pure advaita (śuddhādvaita). Advaita does not mean here "one" (ekam) in the sense of being literally without a second (SB. II.1; SS. II.2). The very thought of "one" implies the idea of a second thing, that which thinks of it as one. Advaita here, therefore, means "not two" and it avows the soul's inseparable oneness with

⁵¹ Śivappirakāśam No. 7. Original text and numbering of the hymn as found in Meykanta Sāttiram (Dharmapuram: Dharmapuram Publications, 1956), p.246. This translation is as found in K. M. Balasubramaniam, Special Lectures on Saiva Siddhānta (Madras: Annamalai University, 1959), p. 34.

God while denying "separate existence and separability of God and soul".⁵² This advaita relation as understood by Śaiva Siddhānta in terms of "One" and "second" may be well explained as follows:

Advaita, according to Śaiva Siddhānta, affirms neither the absence of a Second (monism) nor implies the being of a second (dualism), but affirms only the secondless of the second. What appears to be second to Brahman the order of existence is, nevertheless not essentially second to it, because Brahman is Presence involving union, pervasion and relation. What is therefore denied of the two is their otherness which alone furnishes the basis for duality and what is affirmed by implication, is their inseparability, inalienability...⁵³

Advaita is also seen as a relation characterized as ananya (non-difference): attuvita menṇa collē anniya nāttiyai yunarttumāyittu - The word advaita itself points to non-difference (anniyānātti) (SB., II. 1). Ananyam (inseparability / non-difference) denotes the intimate and inseparable relation between God and soul. According to this unique relation, although there exists a difference in substance, no separation is possible.

The SS uses the term ananya in a few places to denote the advaita relation between God and soul. The soul being liberated from the bonds of impurities (malas) and assisted by Divine grace perceives the Supreme God as ananya: aruḷinālē yaṇaniya mākak kānpan (SS., VI.6).

⁵² SP. II.1 as trans. by J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, op. cit., p. 11.

⁵³ K.Sivaraman, Śaivism in Philosophical Perspective, op.cit., p.143.

Advaita understood as non-difference (ananya) between God and soul is further found in SS :

As God is not different from the soul, as He is in the soul, and as He is the thinker of all the soul's thoughts, as in Him there is no distinction of "I" and "mine".⁵⁴

The advaita relation of God and soul according to the author of SS is thus again a case of oneness without a second, but in the sense of inseparable unity. This inseparable unity does not mean that the soul becomes God nor God becomes the soul. The ultimate Reality is One in the sense of being "one" with the souls but at the same time is different from soul. Aruṇanṭi summarizes this unique relation in his other work Irupāvirupahtu⁵⁵ as "onrā kāmā lirantākāmal onrumiraṅtu minrākāmal" - "neither one nor two, nor both, nor again is it a negation of either".

Advaita relation is sometimes called tādātmya. The Siddhāntic use of tādātmya (identity) is different from that of the advaita of Śankara, where tādātmya is used for the appearance of one thing as two (mithyā tādātmya). According

⁵⁴ SS., VI. 8 as translated by J.M.Nallaswami Pillai, op. cit., p. 217.

⁵⁵ Irupāvirupahtu (Irupā Irupahtu) (XX. 9 - 10). It indicates a type of poetic composition where the venpā metre and akaval metre alternate for twenty verses. This work praises Meykaṅṭa for his exposition of the Śaiva Siddhānta truths.

to Siddhānta, in tādātmya relation two things become one by the power of intimate association (atu ātu atal).⁵⁶

Advaita whether understood as ananya or as tādātmya, represents the heart of the God-soul relation, and implies the negation of all factors that seem to intervene and stand between and alienate man from the divine ground. It is the affirmation of the inalienable indwelling of God within man.⁵⁷

Śuddhādvaita is thus the unique interpretation of advaita by Siddhānta School of Meykaṇṭha and his followers. The way it is understood may be presented in the following words:

Śaiva Siddhānta on account of its interpretation of the advaita in an "unqualified" sense as meaning inseparable, non-dual existence, is called Śuddhādvaita. The term "śuddha" is not understood on par with viśiṣṭa or kevala as introducing some qualification to the notion of advaita but as "qualifying" advaita negatively as unqualified...⁵⁸

The point made here is that advaita purports to address not the question of number but the nature of God as related to the soul. The soul's destiny consists in realizing that relationship in which it stands in union with God.

⁵⁶ See SS. as translated by J.M.Nallaswami Pillai, op.cit., p.164.

⁵⁷ See K.Sivaraman, Śaivism in Philosophical Perspective, op. cit., p.142.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 496 (note 30).

V. Tāyumānavar and Śaiva Siddhānta

While analyzing Tāyumānavar's religious poems (Chapter III) we have seen the tenets of Śaiva Siddhānta interspersed in those hymns. A few significant ideas may be singled out here in the light of the presentation of the basic tenets of Śaiva Siddhānta understood as Śaivāgamas and also as Śuddhādvaita. Focusing on some of these ideas in Tāyumānavar's hymns will help to highlight his drift towards samarasam which will be explained in the next chapter.

How close Tāyumānavar stands in relation to Śaiva faith may be brought out by referring to a host of statements that he makes in his hymns. In them he seems in effect to say not merely that Śaiva faith is very special but that it is indeed the faith:

caiva camayamē camayañcamayā tītap paḷam poruḷai
 kaivantitavē manṛuḷveli kāttu mintak karuttaiviṭṭu
 poyvan tulaluñ camayanēri pukuta vēṇṭām muttitarun
 teyva capaiyaik kāṇpataṅkuc cēra vāruñ cakattīrē

Śaiva religion alone is the religion. In order to grasp, in realization, the ancient Truth which truly transcends all religions, do not pursue the paths of religions that often labour under the guidance of falsehood overlooking the Supreme Truth which is disclosed by the idea of vacuity or space. In order to enjoy this vision of the liberation-giving hall of divine Reality, come and assemble ye people of the world. (XXX. 2)

Tāyumānavar thus places Śaivam as the crown of all faiths and he considers other systems as faulty since they ignore the inner truth and become absorbed in external lies (poy).

(poy). In XIV.10 the poet-saint says that the Vedāgamas and the Vedāṅgas⁵⁹ bow down before the supreme Vedānta's crown (Śaiva Siddhānta) where alone is found the blessed harmony and ecstatic love: "It is beautiful (aḷakiṭu) indeed namely the picture of vaidika śaivam, i.e. the Śaivam which is the essence of the Veda, being seated on the elevated throne wearing the crown of silence on its head, the six limbs of the Veda bow in veneration before it".

The point of interest to be noted here is that the poet-saint defines Śaivam not as a religion in the sense of an "ism" but as a point of convergence where the different traits of other creeds (XIV:12) merge. In this sense he holds that Śaivam represents the highest and most perfect stage in the evolution of Hindu religious thought. Referring to the above hymn R. Shanmugam Pillai interprets him as holding that "Śaivism is the universal state for all to enter and assume the bliss which each likes".⁶⁰

Tāyumanavar as one may see from his description of Śaivam as Vaidika Śaivam followed both the Vedas and the Āgamas. According to the saint the Vedas are the paths,

⁵⁹ The Vedāṅgas (six limbs of the Vedas) are sikṣa (science of grammatical elements), kalpa (body of rules and rituals), vyākaraṇa (grammar), nirukta (etymological explanation), chandas (magical hymns), and jyotiṣa (astronomical science).

⁶⁰ See. Siddhanta Deepika IV, No. 7 (December 1900), 155.

the Āgamas are the horse, and Śiva is the guiding hand which makes one wonderfully walk in the path:

āraṇa māṛkkat tākama vāci
 arputa māyanaṭan ṭaruḷuṅ
 kāraṇa muṇarttuṅ kaiyumniṅ meyyuṅ
 kaṅkaḷ mūnruṭaiyaveṅ kaṅṅe
 pūraṇa ariviṅ kaṅtila matanār
 pōṛripip puntiyō ṭiruntu
 tāraṇiyuḷḷa maṭṭumē vaṇaṅkat
 tamiyaṅēṅ vēṅṭiṭat takumē

Oh the three-eyed One who is my Light, your hand and body explain that the Vedas are the road and the Āgamas, like horses, wonderfully proceed on that path. Yet, I have not fully realized it. Therefore, I beseech Thee that I should worship Thee by praising with this mind as long as I live on this earth with this buddhi (XIX:1).

The importance of this verse is that it shows the complementary nature of the Veda and the Āgama. The Vedas stand for the general enunciation of the Truth and the Āgamas stand for the more specific approach to those truths in life. The aptest analogy used here is that the Vedas are more like the road and the Āgamas are like the horses that tread on the road. The road helps one to walk swiftly and wonderfully. The point that Tāyumānavar makes here is that the hand, the bodily form and the three eyes (kaiyum nin meyyum kaṅkaḷmūnrum) which are all peculiar to Śiva indicate this profound insight about the complementariness of the

Vedas and the Āgamas. By hand is meant the gesture, called cinmudra.⁶¹ Śiva in His form as the Teacher under the banyan tree (Dakṣiṇāmūrti) imparts instruction through the mode of the cinmudra. Cinmudra indicates the central truth of the Āgamas (Śaiva Siddhānta), namely the paśu disaffiliating itself from the three kinds of pāśas (āṇava, karma and māyā) and uniting itself with Paṭi which is the support and the basis for both paśu and pāśa. Likewise the physical forms which are spoken of and enunciated for the purpose of worship in the Āgamas are all indicative of the indispensable nature of the Āgamas. And how it compliments the more general ideas of worship or upāsana is found in the Vedas. The vision of three eyes also indicate Śiva as the giver of life in the world, the two eyes standing for day and night, and also of His being the giver of salvation, which is indicated by his third-eye which is knowledge.

In another hymn the poet-saint laments the inaccessibility of the full truth of the sacred Śāstras, both the Vedas and the Āgamas:

curuti yēcivā kamankale unkalār collum
oruta nippporuḷ alavaiyī tennavā yuṅṅō

⁶¹ For a clear explanation of the term mudra as it occurs in Sanskrit religious literature and particularly as cited in Nirmalamani's Commentary Prabhā on Aghorasivacarya Paddhati, see Mudrālakṣhaṇam, written and edited by S.S.Janaki (Mayiladuturai: International Institute of Śaiva Siddhānta Research, 1986).

poruti raikkāṭal nuṇmaṇal eṇṇinum pukalak

karuta eṭṭitā niraiporuḷ aḷavaiyār kāṇpār

Oh! the Vedas and the Āgamas, is it possible to define by measurement (by logic, disputes and reasoning) that One and Unique Substance which is explained by You. Even if one succeeds in counting the tiny sand particles on the seashore, who can measure and define the fullness of the great One which is beyond speech and thought (XXIV:18).

In this verse one can see that Tāyumānavar speaks of the Vedas and the Āgamas in their hyphenated form as alike revelations which speak of the immeasurable and the unique Reality. Despite the fact that the Āgamas provide access to the Vedic truths and complement the Vedic revelation by making it closer to the concern of the aspirants, the Truth itself revealed therein remains inaccessible to the reaches of logic and language. It is only through experiencing (anubhava) the Truth disclosed in the Vedas and the Āgamas that one may have access to it.

Tāyumānavar holds that truth and perfect bliss are to be found in both the Vedas and the Āgamas. When the poet refers to these achievements he calls out at one breath both the Vedas and the Āgamas:

āraṇaṅkaḷ ākamaṅkaḷ yāvume āṇanta

pūraṇamē uṇmaip poruḷennum-kāraṇattai

ōrāyō vuḷḷuḷḷē urruṇarntav vuṇmaiyaip

pārāyō neṅcē pakar

Oh mind why will you not perceive the Truth by looking within and being in tune with the reason for the Vedas and the Āgamas alike declaring that the

supreme Truth is nothing but the fulfilment of Bliss (XXVIII.11).

Tāyumānavar speaks also of the theoretical, and practical significance of the Vedas and the Āgamas. In XXVIII:16 he states that while the Vedas declare the non-duality of God and the soul, the Āgamas say that the non-dual nature shall be realized in deep meditation: ... tēril tuvitañ civākamamē colluniṭṭai/ ārumiṭat tattuvita mām: If one ponders, the dualistic Śaivāgama alone indeed speaks of the true enstasis (niṭṭai). On reflection one can see this as the substance of non-dual realization. This shows the theoretical and practical dimensions of the Vedas and the Āgamas.⁶² The Supreme self and the individual self are one in their essence, free from fault, that is to say they are members of the same class of atman (spirit). The Śaivāgamas while making use of the language of dualism in speaking of them as two, however, recommends that through meditative contemplation their non-duality can be realized.

It is clear from the above analysis of the hymns of Tāyumānavar that he was drawn to and inspired by both the Vedas and the Āgamas. Anchored in the Vedas and Āgamas (XIX:1; XXIV:18; XXVIII:11 and 16) and delving into the enlightening works of both the samayācāryas and santānācāryas⁶³ and other teachers like Tirumūlar and

⁶² The whole verse is translated above, in Chapter IV.

⁶³ See supra., p. 13.

Arunakirinatar of Śaiva Siddhānta tradition (V:1-10; XI:3; XIV:30-31; XXVIII:26; LXII:14; LXIII:356; LXV:2.4,5 & 7; LXV:3:3,4, & 8; LXV:13:7-8). Tāyumānavar - himself a saint and teacher of the same school - sets forth his own creative insight in respect to that tradition.

There are a few hymns where the poet-saint attempts to emphasize certain points of his faith. In those hymns he spells out as the essence of Siddhānta the meeting point of Vedānta and Siddhānta and all other religions. There are thirty-one hymns⁶⁴ where the poet-saint uses the word Siddhānta to signify the ultimate goal of this form of faith and to re-establish its superiority as inclusive of and transcending particular faiths of religion. Of those thirty-one hymns, in fourteen cases he uses Siddhānta together with Vedānta in order to show the harmony between the two, and in seventeen cases he uses Siddhānta alone to establish its superiority.

These special hymns convey cardinal thoughts of the poet on Śaiva Siddhānta conceived as the name of an all-inclusive faith. Some of these hymns extol the supreme Truth of Siddhānta which is the point of convergence in the midst of the multiplicity of sectarian disputes. This is

⁶⁴ That is not to mean that these are the only references to the Siddhānta system. In these places he specifically uses the term "Siddhānta" while in many other places he refers to his faith by way of recalling the preceptors of the faith, mentioning the tenets of the school of thought, or cherishing the places significant to his religion.

clearly outlined in the very opening hymn which is also very popular :

aṅkiṅ keṇātapāṭi yeṅkum prakācamāy
 āṇanta pūrttiyāki
 aruḷoṭu niṛaintatetu taṅṅarul veḷikkulē
 akilāṅṭa kōṭiyellān
 taṅkum patikkiccai vaittuyirk kuyirāyt
 taḷaittatetu maṇavākkiṅil
 taṭṭāmal ninṛatetu camayakō ṭikaḷelān
 tanteyvam eṅteyvamen
 reṅkum toṭarntetir vaḷakkiṭavum ninṛatetu
 eṅkaṅum peruvaḷakkāy
 yātiṅum vallavoru cittāki yinpamāy
 eṅṛaikku muḷḷatetumēl
 kaṅkulpaka laṅṅinṅa ellaiyuḷa tetuvatu
 karuttiṅ kicaintatuvē
 kaṅṭana velāmōna vuruveliya tākavuṅ
 karutiyaṅ cali ceykuvām

What is that which is not confined to "here" or "there", but pervades all space as boundless bliss and all-filling splendour? What is that which exists as Life of life, willing the entire universe to abide in the space of its grace? What is that which stands beyond the reach of thought and words? What is that which stands unaffected while myriads of religions eternally debate and claim it to be "our God", "their God"? What is that which is eternally everywhere and ever remains as the cit of everything, the embodiment of bliss and the subject of endless contentions? Further, what is that which has for its region where neither day nor night is found? That Subject alone is worthy of thought. Therefore, let us meditate and worship that Subject

perceiving all we see as of the form of the unspeakable one (maunam) (I.1).

That point of convergence, spoken of here as beyond religious dispute and contention, is mukti (IV:1-XI; XLIII:19); mauna (IV:4; IX:10); "śivanūputi" (V:4); "samarasam" (II:5). All these abstruse and subtle terms point to a Supreme state - the endless abiding of the soul at the sacred Feet of Supreme Śiva. Mukti is the final beatitude emerging from the absorption of the soul with God. It is the endless felicity and everlasting happiness springing forth as the release of the soul from transmigration:

muttānta vīti muḷaritoḷum anparukkē

cittanta vītivarun tēvē parāparamē

Devotees who are on the way to release worship Thy lotus Feet. Oh Lord Thou dost appear to them in the path of Siddhantam. (XLIII:19)

In the section Cinmayānantaguru (Divine Master of Cognitive Bliss) (IV:1-XI) all the hymns conclude with two affirmations, namely Śiva is the bestower of mukti, and mokṣa is the end of Siddhānta:

....

cittāntanta muttimutalē

cirakiri viḷaṅkuvaru ṭakṣinā mūrṭtiyē

cinmayā nantakuruvē

Oh Thou who art the bestower of mukti as prescribed in Siddhanta. Oh Thou who art the Lord of the South, shining upon the hill of Siva

(Tirucchirappalli). Oh Thou who are the Guru of Consciousness and Bliss.

Another term Tāyumānavar uses in his hymns to denote the highest, sublime state of perfection is mauna (stillness). In IV:4 the poet-saint praises God for creating the objects of the universe, consciousness and revealing the Vedas and the Āgamas. As a conclusion to these praises the poet says that God has created a number of religions and beyond those religions the mauna state which is the converging point of all religions:

aivakai yeṇumpūta mātiyai vakutta tanuḷ
 acaracara pētamāṇa
 yāvaiyum vakuttural laṅivaiyum vakuttu maṅai
 yātinū laiyum vakuttuc
 caivamuta lāmaḷavil camayamum vakuttumēr
 camayaṅ kaṭantamōṇa
 camaracam vakuttanī yunnaiyāṅ aṅukavun
 taṅṅaruḷ vakukkavilaiyō
 poyvaḷarum neṅciṅarkaḷ kāṅāta kāṅciyē
 poyyilā meyyaraṅivir
 pōtaparipūraṅa vakaṅṅitā kāramāyp
 pōkku varavaṅṅaporuḷē
 teyvamaṅai muṅivāṅa piraṅava corūpiyē
 cittānta muttimutalē
 cirakiri viḷaṅkavaru ṅakṅinā mūrṅtiyē
 cinmayā ṅantakuruvē

You are the creator of the five kinds of elements and everything that is animate and inanimate. Thou hast imparted true knowledge and hast spoken the Vedic lore, and Thou, hast formulated endless religions starting with Śaivism and hast revealed mauna samarasam (where all religions merge) which is beyond all (created religions). And will you not grant grace so that I can come unto Thee. Oh that vision which is veiled to persons in whose hearts falsehood grows. Oh eternal Reality, not liable to births and deaths, and being of the form of the impartite and the ever full awareness in the knowledge of those of truth devoid of any untruth. Oh Thou art of the praṇava form, the end of the divine Veda, Thou are the bestower of mukti as prescribed in the Siddhānta. Oh Thou who art the Lord of the South, shining upon the hill of Śiva (Tiruchirappalli). Oh Thou who are the Guru of Consciousness and Bliss (ānanda) (IV:4).

This mauna which he esteems so much is a blissful state where the Supreme peacefulness reigns. It is the firm belief of the poet that all religions must seek after this conciliatory and blessed state where they will experience harmony. It is a challenge to religious faiths because it is beyond their ordinary reach - "camayam kaṭanta mōnam"- and they have to seek beyond to realize that state of mauna which is the truth of Siddhānta. The state of mauna is the self-controlled situation of the devotee who has become absorbed and lost in Divine contemplation. This is explicitly stated by the poet in hymn IX:10 where Tāyumānavar seeks the presence or the indwelling of the Supreme God. His dwelling is not in the summit of the universe; it is neither in the region of the sun nor the moon; it is neither in the idols people worship nor in the creatures of this world; the true dwelling place of the

Divine is in the heart of the devotee who has become immersed in Him through contemplation. This mauna state and the indwelling of the Divine is also the central theme of the hymn which is already translated above.

Siddhānta is the experiencing of śivānupūti (V:4). Anupūti (Skt. anubhūti) is the experience of superhuman knowledge obtained from Śiva.⁶⁵ This boon, obtained from God, leads the soul to final bliss. In this state of God-experience all the differences which exist among various religious faiths cease. In V:4 the poet says that in the "śivānupūti" both Vedānta and Siddhānta are one.⁶⁶ Siddhāntam, according to the poet, is samarasam (II:5). Samarasam, here, is understood as the realization of truth and the experience of oneness. In this experience of absolute unity - advaita union - the soul realizes that its activities are divine actions and the soul experiences itself as inseparable from the Divine:

canatatu meṇatuceyal niṇatuceyal yāṇenun
tanmainiṇai yaṇriyillāt
tanmaiyaḷ veraḷēn vētānta cittānta
camaraca cupāva mituvē
intanilai teḷiyanān nēkkuruki vāṭiya
iyaṅkaitiru vuḷamaṅiyumē

⁶⁵ Winslow, Tamil English Dictionary, op.cit.

⁶⁶ This indeed is the nature of Vedānta Siddhānta Samarasam.

innilaiyi lēcar̥ r̥irukkaven̥ r̥ālmaṭamai
 itacatru vākavantu
 cintaikuṭi koḷḷutē malamāyai kaṇman
 tirumpumō toṭuvalakkāyc
 cenmamvaru mōvenavum yōcicku tēmaṇatu
 cirattaiyeṇum vāḷumutavip
 pantamaṛa meyññāna tīramun tantēṇaip
 pātukāt taruḷceykuvāy
 pārkkumiṭa meṅkumoru nīkkamaṛa niṛaikinṛa
 paripūra ṇāṇantamē

My action is always Thy action. The nature of my self does not exist apart from Thee. Therefore I am not different from Thee. This indeed is the nature and essence of Vedānta and Siddhānta samarasa. How much I longed for, with melted heart, the realization of this state (state of non-difference) is known to Thy Divine Mind. When I am asked to be in this condition for a while, ignorance (maṭamai) comes as an enemy within and settles down in my mind and the mind ponders; will the malas - the māyā mala and karma mala pursue me and will birth continue perpetually. Therefore protect me by offering grace (pāṭukāt taruḷcey) which is the sword and the true knowledge (the valour of true knowledge) to uproot attachment (bondage). Oh ever-filling Bliss that is omnipresent and seen everywhere one looks (II:5).

Siddhānta is understood, by the poet-saint in the above hymns, as culminating in the ideas of mokṣa, mukti, mauna, śivānubhuti and samarasam. This is the highest goal - the point of convergence - where all religions shall merge just like the waters of various rivers merge in the vast ocean.

Although this experiential state seems impossible to attain, the poet-saint makes it clear that it is an attainable state (XXX.2). He warns that no one should give up the idea of attaining that blissful liberation. Tāyumānavar gives hope and inspires people by enumerating those great souls of Śaiva Siddhānta who have already attained the Siddhānta goal.

The whole section of Cittarkaṇam (The Assembly of Siddhars) (VIII:1-10) is a tribute to Siddhars who according to the poet are great in their spiritual powers, are kings of yoga, and are souls who have attained the eminent condition of Siddhānta.

The Siddhānta goal which is always craved for by the saint is attained in the divine contemplation. In VI:7 he refers to Markandeya and Sukar⁶⁷ as two great sages who realized the great Siddhānta truth:

cantatamum vētamoli yātonru parṛinatu
 tānvantu muṛṛumēnalāl
 cakamī tiruntālum maraṇamuṇ ṭenpatu
 catāniṭṭar niṇaivatillai
 cintaiyaṛi yārkkītu pōtippa tallavē
 ceppinum vekutarkkamām
 tivyaṇa mārkkaṇṭar cukarāti muṇivōrkaḷ
 cittānta nityaralarō
 intrāti tēvataikaḷ pīramāti kaṭavuḷar

⁶⁷ It is already referred to in the preceding pages.

irukkāti vētamunivar
 eṇṇariya kaṇanātar navaṇāta cittarkaḷ
 iravimati yātiyōrkaḷ
 kantaruvar kiṇṇararkaḷ maṇṇaiyarka ḷiyāvaruṅ
 kaikuvit tiṭuteyvamē
 karutariya cir̄capayilāṇanta nirttamiṭu
 karunākarak kaṭavulē

The Vedas say that if one holds on to a thing one will attain that thing. Therefore those who are always in niṣṭa never think of death even while they live on this earth. This cannot be taught to the unrealized ones. Even if one attempts to explain (that) it will generate only debate. Are not the divine sages Markandeya, Sukar etc. the eternal ones (eternal ones because they realized that the Siddhānta Truth goes beyond the mind). Oh God, you are worshipped by deities beginning with Indra, by gods beginning with Brahmā, also by sages well versed in the Vedas, and by countless gaṇas, the nine Siddhas, Sun and Moon, Gandharvas and Kinnaras and many others. Oh merciful Lord who does the blissful dance in the hall of pure Consciousness which is beyond the reach of thought (VI:7).

Following the teachings of his preceptors and being inspired by those great souls (vittaka cittar) the poet-saint cries out for the great gift of realization of the Siddhānta goal. He prays for that ecstasy of perceiving the supreme stage of unity between Vedānta and Siddhānta. This is the realization of God in His absoluteness devoid of form and attributes which is beyond the reach of the religions and beyond human mind and tongue. That supreme stage is the state of identifying oneself with God as Love where dualism is no more visible and this is the anubhava state of the

soul which is the true end of Siddhāntam. This "samarasa śivānupūti" praised in the hymn V:3 is already explained above.

The poet moved by the highest goal of Siddhānta praises Siddhānta and as a faithful follower of his faith says "Śaiva religion alone is the religion" (caiva camayamē camayam) (XXX:2). It is here that the poet-saint experiences "paramānupūti" (IV:9) and "atuvitānantam" (XVII:7) - the experience of being one with Śiva. The poet praises that great light of Siddhānta as the thought of all thoughts and the life of every life which is impartially present in all things. Tāyumānavar is of the conviction that the faithful and beloved devotees of Śiva will experience the flow of inestimable and blissful nectar and will "see" Him devoid of all forms and attributes:

yātumaṇa niṇaiyumanta niṇaivukku niṇaivāki
yātiṇ pālum
pētamaṇa niṇṇuyiruk kuyirāki yanparukkē
pērā ṇantak
kōtilamu tūrṇarumpik kuṇaṅkuriyon ṇrattannaik
koṭuttuk kāṭṭun
tītilparā paramāṇa cittāntap pēroḷiyaic
cintai ceyvām

I meditate on the glorious Light of Siddhānta, in which there is no evil, the Thought which the mind thinks (thought of all thoughts), the Life of all life existing without distinction in all objects. (I meditate on) the source of the flawless flow of blissful nectar to its loving followers. (I

meditate on) that which is revealing itself to them (faithful followers) as formless and devoid of qualities (III:2).

Tāyumānavar in IV:7 calls his faith arumaiperu pukaļperra cittāntam (the precious and renowned siddhāntam). This is precious and eminent because Dakṣiṇāmūrti, the eternal guru, manifests Himself to his devotees and purifies the carnal body with the fire of wisdom. The Divine grace transforms one's life like the alchemist's solution purifies the gross and unrefined gold into the finest gold:

karumaruvu kukaiyaṇaiya kāyattin naṭuvuṭ
kaļimputōy cempaṇaiyayāṇ
kāṇṭaka virukkanī ṇāṇavaṇal mūṭṭiyē
kanivupeṛa uļļurukkip
paruvama taṛintuniṇ ṇaruļāṇa kuļikaikoṭu
paricittu vēticeytu
pattumāṛṛut taṅka mākkiyē paṇikonṭa
pakṣattai eṇcollukēṇ
arumaiperu pukaļperra vētanta cittānta
mātiyām antamītum
attuvita nilaiyarāy eṇṇaiyān tunṇaṭimai
yāṇavarka laṛivinūṭun
tirumaruvu kallā laṭikkīlum vaļarkinṇa
cittānta muttimutalē
cirakiri viļāṅkavaru takṣiṇā mūrṭtiyē
cinmayā nantakuruvē

Thou dost stand non-dual in the good and renowned Vedānta and Siddhānta as the beginning as well as the end. Thou art found in the hearts of Thy followers who have made themselves Thy slaves and become Thy true devotees and Thou redeemed me. While I existed in the body that comes of womb, I lie hidden as copper ensconced in the dross. Thou didst establish the fire of jñāna thoroughly melting my heart. At the right point Thou didst touch me with the alchemist's solution of Thy grace and transmuted me into pure gold. How can I praise you for this act of compassion. Oh Thou who flourishes under the banyan tree. Oh Thou who art the Lord of the South shining upon the hill of Siva (Tiruchirappally). Oh Thou who art the guru of Consciousness and Bliss (ānanda) (IV:7).

The role of the teacher is compared to that of an alchemist. The underlying assumption of alchemy is that the base metal becomes, when purified of its dross, transmuted into gold because of its original affinity with it. This reflects Siddhanta doctrine that the soul which has intrinsically its affinity as cit with Śivam, however, remains beginninglessly obscured by malam (impurity).

Tāyumānavar, the true follower of Śaiva Siddhānta thus understood, figuratively perceives his religion as the very fertile and productive land for the soul's growth and fructification. Mukti is a state of consciousness and the experiencing of this avastha is the culmination of a gradual process. The process of realization can be compared to seed sown in the land, its sprouting, growing and bearing fruit. In order to produce the maximum fruit the soil must be very fertile. Our poet-saint and mystic compares Saiva Siddhanta to the best, most fertile soil for the soul to grow to maturity (malaparipākam) and find its fulfilment in Śiva-

Enjoyment (śivabhōgam). This is expressed in the following hymn:

muttānta vittē muḷaikkunila māyeḷunta

cittānta māṛkkac ciṟappē parāparamē

Oh most Supreme Being, the seed of mukti, the path of Siddhānta is the fertile soil for the sprouting of Thy seed (XLIII:365).

In XLIII:206, which was discussed above, the poet sees the delightful silence (mōna nalam) as the goal of both Vedānta and Siddhānta. While Vedānta, here, is seen as the general system, Siddhānta, according to the poet, is the special one. Vedānta is, according to the poet, a stepping stone and an ornament to Siddhānta which is special for Tāyumānavar.⁶⁸ One may recall here that Tirumūlar said that the Vedas and the Āgamas are both inspired and the difference between them is that the Vedas are general and the Āgamas are special (Tirumanṭiram, 2397). It may thus be seen that the idea of samarasam, which will be thematically explained in the next chapter, is already present as a part of the very meaning of Siddhāntam.

It has already been said that the family background of the poet-saint was Śaivite and he was brought up in the Saiva religious faith. In the introductory chapter and elsewhere I have pointed out that Tāyumānavar was a Śaiva Siddhāntin. The religiosity of his parents, his quest for

⁶⁸ See. Meykantaṅṟṟtiurai, op.cit., p. 620.

the Supreme Truth, his initiation into the teachings of the ācāryas of Śaiva Siddhānta by the Mauna Guru, his singing of the glory and praise of God Śiva and the preceptors of Śaiva religion, his delving into the doctrines of Śaiva Siddhānta, and his exaltation of Śaiva religion in his hymns are enough to convince one that Tāyumānavar was a steadfast Śaiva Siddhāntin.

Śaiva Siddhānta, as explained above, based on the authoritative works like SB, SS, Śivappirakāśam and other basic works of the school, is indeed the Siddhānta of Tāyumānavar as found in his hymns. Tāyumānavar, although he himself does not speak like a theologian of Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, is a true Śaiva Siddhāntin who had delved into all the tenets of his religion. This has been shown in the third chapter of this work. His comprehension of the Vedas and the Āgamas, his acquaintance with the works of the preceptors of his religion, and his prayerful meditation on the truths of Śaiva religion account for his role as an ardent and faithful follower of Saiva Religion. A deeper perception of the eternal truths with the help of the mauna guru and a Divine grace-assisted leap into the mystery of blissful wisdom granted him a mystical God-experience and a philosophical insight into the hidden dimensions of Saiva religion. His hymns are an attempt to give expression to that mystical experience and philosophical intuition. The grasp of the tenets of the faith of Saivism and the

contemplation on its truth leads to his personalizing of the truth of the religion. It is on this level that we find Tāyumānavar to be a great mystic within Śaiva Siddhānta. The personal experience of the Divine truth of his religious tradition helped him to express the abstruse and subtle thought in simple language. As Śaiva Siddhānta scholar Subramaniam Pillai puts it "he is remarkable for the clear grasp of abstruse doctrines and for the dexterity with which he clothed them in popular words".⁶⁹

The way he praises the ultimate Truth of his religion as found in the Vedas and the Āgamas and the reverence he shows to the Saint Founders, the line of Teachers and other great gurus of the tradition convince one that Tāyumānavar was one of the great Śaiva Siddhāntins of his time. What makes Tāyumānavar distinct from others is his own God-experience. It is this personal experience that he means when he speaks of mokṣa and mukti (IV:1,8,9-11); "śivānupūti" (V:4); "śivapōkam" (XXX:3); "attuvitānantam" (XVII:7) and "paramānupūti" (IV:9). He invites everyone to experience that blissful and tranquil state. As a Śaiva Siddhāntin he says that Śaiva religion is the best place (XLIII:365) to experience that attuvitānantam - the bliss of being one with Śivam. This God-experience as we shall see is the centripetal force binding Vedānta and Siddhānta. The

⁶⁹ R. S. Subramaniam Pillai, St. Tāyumānavar, the Life and Teachings, op.cit., p. 10.

convergence of Vedānta and Siddhānta at the point of "advaitānandam" is Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam, which will be taken up for further study in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VI

VEDĀNTA SIDDHĀNTA SAMARASAM

The study of Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam (oneness of the quintessence of Vedānta and Siddhānta) here poses three main questions. First, what is Vedānta? Second, what is Siddhānta? Third, what is samarasam? The first two questions are already dealt with in the previous two chapters. Vedānta, for Tāyumanavar, is the singular relation of the soul (self) to God. This relation is advaita. This unitive experience (advaitānubhava) is the highest and essential teaching of the Upaniṣads as expounded in the mahāvakyas (great proclamations of the truth of oneness) such as prajñānam brahma (Intelligence is Brahman) (Ait.Up.III.3); aham brahmāsmi (I am Brahman) (Brh.Up.I:4.10) and tat tvam asi (That Thou art) (Ch.Up.VI.8.7 and VI.16.3). Siddhānta, according to him, is the experiencing of the eternal and inseparable union with Śiva (Sivabhōgam) which is a state of endless bliss. This experiencing is realized by way of ascending through various stages of (sōpanam) spiritual life and transcending all thoughts. While Vedānta gives philosophical depth to the thought of Tāyumanavar, Siddhānta grants mystical and theological fervor to his ideas as Siddhāntic experience is

understood to transcend all other thought, system and tradition.

1. Diverse Views of Samarasam

The idea of samarasam which is the central focus of this study will be discussed in detail in the following pages. The Tamil Lexicon splits the word samarasa into "sama" and "rasa" giving the meaning as equality, harmony and identify (orrumai). A second understanding of the word, according to the Lexicon, is impartiality (naṭunilaimai). The Tami-English Dictionary¹ explains the word as reconciliation (camātānam) and equality. The Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary² gives a variety of meanings to the word samarasam. Splitting the word into samam and rasam and taking the word in the context of camātānam Winslow gives the meaning as peace and tranquillity. A second meaning conferred in the context of reconciliation is agreement, the act of reconciling opinions and views. A third meaning is equality (oppu); and finally the word is understood as fellowship and familiarity. The Sanskrit Dictionary³ gives the word samarasa the meaning of "having equal feelings." The two other Sanskrit words which convey

¹ R.V. Viswanatha Pillai, Tamil-English Dictionary (Madras: Madras School Book and Literature Society).

² M. Winslow, Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary (New Delhi:Asian Education Services, 1862).

³ Apte, Sanskrit English Dictionary.

a similar meaning, as mentioned above, are samadarśana (impartial looking on things) and samadṛṣṭi (the act of looking on things without any acrimony or prejudice).

The earliest work in which I came across the word samarasam is the popular Saivite work Laḷitāsahasranāma.⁴ The work containing 320 slōkas in three chapters occurs in the second part of the Brahmānda Purāṇa which is listed as the last of Sri Veda Vyasa's Eighteen Purāṇas. In one of the texts it is said:

satyajñānānandarūpa sāmārasya parāyaṇa
kapardinī kalāmālā kāmādhukkāmārūpinī

The wife of Kaparda (Śiva), is the garland of Kalās, The fulfiller of desires, the last resort of co-equal nature (Siva and Sakti) and the form of Truth, Wisdom and Bliss (202).

The verse and the commentary use samarasa to convey the idea of unity and oneness like that found between Siva and Śakti. The word used in the text is "sāmārasya". This word, here, is the combination of "sama" and "rasya". "Sama" is the vr̥dhi (strong) form of "sama" meaning likeness and similarity, while "rasya" means juicy, tasty and palatable.

⁴ One of the Vira-Śaiva Sanskrit works called Siddha-Siddhānta-Paddhati uses the word sāmārasya to mean Śiva and Śakti. The oneness between Śiva and Śakti is expressed by sāmārasya.

Commenting on the verse the commentator Saubhāgya Bhaskāra writes:⁵

prapañca mātāpitarau prāncāu jāyāpati
 stum'iti
 'bhōgtrbhōgya karanōrbhisamkshaye
 sāmārasyarasa dohinī śive'
 tyādikālidāsokticca Samapradhānau
 Samasatvau samu tayoriti śruticca

The learned men say "we praise the ancient pair, the parents of the Universe. Each is the end attained by the penance of the other. Kalidāsa says "Śiva (Devī) milks out the essence of the co-equal nature when the waves of the enjoyer, enjoyment and the means are calm". The śruti says "equally pre-eminent, equally fundamental, both are equal".

In the light of the text and commentary mentioned above we can say that samarasam in this context refers to the unity of Siva and Śakti, a basic theological tenet of Saiva Siddhānta.

J. M. Nallaswami Pillai⁶ uses the word samarasam in order to bring forth the ideas behind the two related words samadṛṣṭi and samadarśanam. He takes samarasam to mean looking at events impartially and seeing two things equally (iruvinaiooppu) which is implied by the Siddhāntic doctrine of the equality of two karmas. He takes samadarśanam and

⁵ R. Ananthakrishna Sastry, trans., Lalitāsahasranāma with Bhāskara's Commentary (Madras: Adyar Vasanta Press, 1925), p. 291.

⁶ J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, "Samarasam", Siddhāntam, I (1928), 269-275.

samadr̥ṣṭi to refer to an understanding which retains the distinctness of each system while being open to other traditions without any acrimony and partiality.

According to Muttiah Pillai,⁷ another Śaiva Siddhānta scholar of this century, samarasam is a matter of discerning the complementary character of various teachings and accepting different religious disciplines as complementary to one another. He says that samarasam is vetantāmum cittāntamum orrumaiyāna cuvai yutaiyana : both Vedānta and Siddhānta have a taste which is identical. Orrumaiyāna cuvai consists of the right placing of the relations of the three Siddhānta entities: pati, paśu and pāśa.

In the book Śaivattin Samarasam, Tiru V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar expresses the opinion that samarasam is a matter of going beyond all discrimination on the basis of jāti (caste), religion, creed, nationality and language. The well-known scholar says that the main characteristic of a true religion is samarasam in the sense that a true religion always promotes unity.⁸ The same writer in another work called Katavul̥k kātcciyum Tāyumānavarum, says that samarasam is seeing God

⁷ Muttiah Pillai, "Samarasam", Siddhāntam, I (May-June, 1912), 147-157.

⁸ Tiru V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, Śaivattin Samarasam (Madras: Sadhu Printing Press, 1926), p. 16.

(kaṭavulkkatcci),⁹ a state which is possible through God's grace. In this sense samarasam is the end of religion. All existing differences are viewed as very important for growth, (p. 28) and plurality is for the sake of unity.

The author of Samarasa Jñāniyār, commenting on Tāyumānavar, perceives samarasam as Tāyumānavar's bhaktānubhava (love-experience) and śivānubhuṭi (Śiva-experience).¹⁰ Here, the author takes samarasam as an experience which makes one realize his union with God.

Kasivasi Sivananda Yatindra Swamy in his book Nannilai Tīrppu views samarasam as a religion of co-operation and collaboration. This religion is not bound by the clutches of tribe, gotra, caste etc. The author propounds this kind of samarasam in order to overcome those binding clutches.¹¹

Samarasam is understood as a harmonizing of all men by pointing them to a common truth to which all can subscribe.¹² Isaac Tambyah briefly deals with samarasam in his book Psalms of a Śaiva Saint. After stating that samarasam is bringing into union the Siddhantic and Vedantic

⁹ Tiru V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, Kaṭavul Kātcciyum Tāyumānavarum (Madras: Sadhu Printing Press, 1928), p. 40.

¹⁰ P. Sri, Samarasa Jñāniyār (Madras, Amuda Nilayam, 1963), p. 28-36.

¹¹ Kasivasi Sivananda Yatindra, Nannilai Tīrpu (Madras, 1936), p. 6.

¹² Swami Vedacalam, Śaiva Siddhānta Gñāna Bodham (Madras, 1915), p. 15.

postulate that "God and the soul are neither one nor two", he describes what samarasam is not. According to Tambyah samarasam is not a colourless eclecticism; it is not the pacific thought that all religions are the same; neither is it an attempt at harmonizing all creeds.¹³

The above scholars project their own view of samarasam into Tāyumānavar's understanding of it. Those interpreting samarasam as found in the religious poetry of Tāyumānavar often tend to overlook the uniqueness of the poet's view of samarasam which is discussed below.

2. Tāyumānavar's View of Samarasam

Having gone into different renderings of the word samarasam I am inclined to say that it is Tāyumānavar who used the word Vedānta Siddhanta samarasam in a unique way. He is the originator of the mystical and theological understanding of samarasam. In order to understand the depth of his view hidden in the concept of Vedānta Siddhanta samarasam, we shall now look at his hymns.

Tāyumānavar used the word samarasam sixteen times in his hymns. Out of the sixteen occurrences ten are found in the section called Cittarkanam¹⁴ (The Assembly of Siddhars)

¹³ Isaac Tambyah, Psalms of a Śaiva Saint (London: Luzac & Co., 1925), p. xxxi.

¹⁴ The other six references shall be found in TP. II:5 & 8; IV:4; V:3 & 4 and XX:1

(VII.1-10) vētānta cittānta camaracanan nilaiperra/vittakac cittarkanamē - "Oh the assembly of Siddhars who have realized the tranquil state of samarasam of Vedānta and Siddhānta". In this section the poet-saint extols the Siddhars as the lions of asceticism (tavarācacinkam) (VII.9), the people who always remain in the state of contemplating Śiva (civayōkanilai nirpavar) (VII.3); and the people who have attained eight Siddhis.¹⁵ His admiration for Siddhars is on account of their God-realization and mystical union with God, and their living by the grace of the Supreme Śiva (VII.3) and their being masters of perfection (VII.4).

One who is aware of the unorthodox lives of those Siddhars will question Tāyumānavar's approval, and his appreciation and exaltation of those who were considered "radicals" in their time. They were "radicals" and "rebels" because they were iconoclastic and non-conformists. They rejected creeds and rituals which they described as "pretensions and crutches", and they did not subscribe to any religious institution. How could Tāyumānavar praise such a group? He accepted and acknowledged them for their mystic experience and godly life (VII. 1-10). Their experience of God enabled them to "see" the essence of Vedānta and Siddhānta. Another possible reason for Tāyumānavar recognizing the Siddhars may be their

¹⁵ See supra., p. 99.

acknowledgement by Tirūmular and the Tēvāram Saints themselves. According to Tirūmular they are the saints who have eradicated malas, who live in the final state of deliverance and who have become Śivam (Tirumanṭiram, 497). Although one may not be sure that this description directly alludes to the Siddhars, there is another verse which is a clear reference to the Siddhars: "Those who live in yoga and see the divine light (oli) and power (cakti) through yoga are the Cittars" (Tirumanṭiram, 1490).¹⁶ In Sundarar's Tēvāram (VII. 52. 10) reference is made to the group of devotees as well as to the group of Siddhars (pattar cittar palar...) who all always adore God (Śiva). There is another reference to the Siddhars in the same verse: ... cittar cittam vaittapukalc ciruvan...: "The servant who cherishes the Siddhars in the heart". The servant here is Sundarar and he recognizes the greatness of the Siddhars. The Siddhars, thus, have the distinction of being recognized and cherished by great people like Tirumular and the Tēvāram hymnists like Sundarar. It is natural, then, that Tāyumānavar, himself a mystic, recognized the eminence of the Siddhars. In Chapter Four of this research it has been stated that the advaita relation envisioned as oneness in deepest love has become a social force which could not tolerate any sense of superiority based on language, caste

¹⁶ See Kamil Zvelebil, The Smile of Murugan, op. cit., p. 225.

and creed. The Siddhars realizing this unitive experience (advaitānubhava) which is the essence of Vedānta and Siddhānta teachings, opposed the brāhmanical domination and the exaggerated and excessive emphasis on religious rituals at the cost of the spirit of the rituals; in short, they rejected the brāhmin-led caste system. Here one may remember Tirumūlar's flings at brāhmin priesthood, especially at its hollowness when not accompanied by devotion. The example of the Siddhars, their God experience and the fact that they lived up to that anubhava and transcended the limiting conditions of caste etc., were a stimulus for Tāyumānavar's own growth into the experience of Śiva (śivānubhava). Therefore, he openly hailed the greatness of those Siddhars whose spiritual life was a source of inspiration for his own broader vision of religion.

In the hymn II.5, which was already discussed in Chapter Five, Tāyumānavar asks for Divine Help through grace (pātukāt taruḷceyka , II.5) in order to penetrate into the mystery of knowledge (jñāna), and to be one with the ever-filling and perfect Bliss (paripūraṇa ānantam, II.5). Once this penetration into the secret depth of Wisdom is made and the intuitive knowledge is attained, the perception of the soul of its relation to the Self is :

cantatamu menātuceyal niṇātuceyal yāneṇun
 taṇmainiṇai yanṇiyillāt
 taṇmaiyāl vēralēṇ vētānta cittānta
 camaraca cupāvamituvē

My action is always Thy action. The nature of myself does not exist apart from Thee. Therefore I am not different from you. This indeed is the nature of the quintessence of Vedānta and Siddhānta. (II.5)

This beautiful verse fittingly spells out the true meaning of samarasam as understood by Tāyumānavar. The realization that "I am not different from Thou" (taṇmaiyāl veralēṇ) is Samarasam. It leads one back to the Upaniṣadic mahāvakyas like aham brahmasmi (Bṛh. Up. I.4.10) which proclaim the unity of the soul with the Ultimate. This is the advaita idea of the relation of the soul with the Absolute - parama śivam. The oneness described by Tāyumānavar, however, is not complete absorption. The nature of this relation is expressed in the following hymn:

onṇiranṇu millatuvāy onṇiranṇu muḷlatuvāy
 niṇṇa camattunilai nerperuva tennāḷo

When shall I attain straight that equalling state of union without the distinction of one and two and that equalling state of union with the difference of one and two (XLV:14.15).

There are many other hymns which show his craving for the unitive experience which implicitly refer to the nature of samarasam (camaraca cupāvam). In the above hymn he uses the term camattunilai to convey the state of

samarasam. In the experience of the ultimate Union "I reach that equal state where one and two are not".¹⁷ The idea of camatṭunilai, here, is a spiritual state which looks at the diversities of the world of becoming real without losing sight of the essential and ultimate unity of Being. While he points at Vedānta (Advaita) understanding of mukti as the state of oneness (onṛiraṅṭu millatuvāy nilai) (also cfr. XXVIII.63: nāṇavaṇay nirpatu), he also highlights the Siddhānta position on the understanding of mukti as onṛirantu mullatuvāy ninṛa nilai - a state of union where the difference is kept up while holding onto the unique state of oneness. This view of Tāyumanavar is consistent with that of the SS :

ulakelamāki, verāy, utanumāy oḷiyāy ōṅki
alakilā vuyirkaḷ, kaṇmattu, āṇaiyin amarntu cellat,
talaivanāy, ivarṛin taṇmai taṇakkeytalinṛit tānē
nilavucī ramalanāki, ninṛaṇan, nīnkā teṅkum

The Transcendent Light is One with the world, yet is different, and is one and different. The Supreme guides innumerable souls and each one's action by way of His will. The Perfect One pervades all, yet unaffected by the imperfections of Its creatures, and stands as Pure Self-luminous and secondless (SS, II. I).

Even more categorically Arulnāṅṭi Sivacarya says in his other work Irupāvirupatu: onṛākāmal irantākāmal

¹⁷ P. Arunachalam, Studies and Translations: Philosophical and Religious (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries Co. Ltd., 1937), p. 250.

onrumiraṇṭun inrākāmal - Without being one, without being two, without being neither (XX. 9-10).

The views of both Vedānta and Siddhānta are brought into the meeting point of samarasam where one sees everything as Śivam and experiences the presence of Śiva everywhere (eṅkum civamē, cfr. XXVIII.65-66). The following hymn too infers the idea of samarasam:

pācam akalāmaṅ patiyiṅ kalavāmal

mācil camattumutti vāykkunāl ennālō

When will the day for that freedom (mutti) of pure equality come without complete separation of ānava malam and without completely merging in the Lord (XLV.14.16).

Camattumutti, here, is nothing but the unitive state of the soul with the Lord (pati). As a Śaiva Siddhānta Saint, as referred to in the above hymns, while he speaks of the merger of the soul with the Lord he does not take it as complete absorption of the soul in the pati (Lord). The state again is onray verāy... Another important point here is that the poet-saint does not hope for that day of complete separation and annihilation of the ānava mala (pāśam). He does so because as a Śaiva Siddhāntin it is his conviction that although ānavamala has to be controlled, it cannot be uprooted because it serves as an access to pati. Holding onto Siddhānta teachings about God and the soul, Tāyumānavar attempts to bring together both Siddhānta and

Vedānta under one encompassing spirit of samarasam which is nothing but "Śivānūputi" (V.4).

In II.5 Tāyumānavar communicates the nature of samarasam as an inseparable union where the soul experiences and affirms that it is not different (veralēn) from Thee, and whatever the soul does is His act (enatuceyal ninatuceyal). This union or "feeling of oneness" for Tāyumānavar is made possible through and only through benevolent grace, which is fundamental to Saiva Siddhānta teaching. This is referred to in the following:¹⁸

vārāte lāmoḷiya varuvaṇa velāmeyta
 maṇatu cāṭciyatākavē
 maruvanilai tantatum vetānta cittānta
 marapu camaraca mā kavē
 pūrāya māyuṇara vūkamatu tantatum
 poyyuṭalai nilaiyaṇṇenap
 pōtanerī tantatum cācuvata āṇanta
 pōkamē viṭṇṇavē
 nīrāḷa māyuruka vuḷḷaṇpu tantatum
 niṇṇataruḷ inṇumṇṇum
 niṇṇaiyē tuṇaiyeṇṇa eṇṇaiyē kākkavonru
 niṇaivucaṇ ruṇṭākilo
 pārāti yaṇiyāta mōnamē yiṭaiviṭāy
 paṇṇrāka niṇkavaruḷvāy

¹⁸ Also see Sivajñānabodham, V. and Sivajñāna Siddhiyār, III.5.8 and III.6.8).

pārkkumiṭa meṅkumoru nīkkamaṛa niṛaikinṛa
paripūra ṇāṇantamē

It was Thy grace that granted me the state where the mind as witness (in detachment) could give up the things that are unattained and accepted the things that are attained. It was Thy grace that granted me to discern without doubt the nature of Vedānta and Siddhānta as samarasa. It was Thy grace that enabled me to realize that this deceitful nature of the body is transient and to realize that release is the enjoyment of the eternal Bliss. It is your grace that bestows love for Thee which melts and flows unceasingly like water. Furthermore, the thought of protecting me occurs in Thee who art my only refuge. Grant me Thy grace so that I shall ever remain attached to the mona (stillness) which can not be known by any tattvas (categories) like earth. Oh ever-filling Bliss that is omnipresent and seen everywhere one looks (II.8).

The whole tone of this hymn is one of a search for God's grace. It is his firm faith that one cannot attain that camaracaniḷai, the experience of the harmony of Vedānta and Siddhānta (which he implies later in the same verse is the realization of complete silence (mōnam),) without God's grace. With God's grace the soul can ever remain attached to the stillness which is the culmination of all thoughts and represents the attainment of transcendence. The poet-saint's prayer here is for that grace by which he could hold on to the mōna that cannot be known by any tattvas but only by His grace (aruḷ).

Tayumanavar characterizes samarasam as mōna samarasam (stillness in the realization of the essence) in the hymn IV.4 which has been translated above in Chapter Five. This mōna samarasam raises a challenge for all

structured religions. For the latter the task will be to acknowledge the "beyondness" outside the reach of particular faiths (camayam kaṭanta mōna camaracam). The challenge also consists in accepting the goal. Mōna samarasam is the end of all religions and Tāyumānavar's point is that in such a challenge lies the convergence of all religions irrespective of their diversity as expressions of faith.

The samarasa state explained above in IV.4 is also seen as a serene and peaceful state of the soul. Shanmugham Pillai¹⁹ translating the mōna and samarasam of this verse comments that the serene state of the soul is to be found in the blissful state of mōna (silence), where reigns supreme the conciliatory peacefulness (samarasam). Samarasam is that serene state of mind which neither word nor language can explain. This pure transcendental consciousness is as much objectless as it is wordless. The Reality which is above words and above language can only be expressed by silence. This idea which as we had earlier explained is also a central idea of the Upaniṣads (cfr. Tait. Up. VI.22; Muṇḍ. Up. III.1.8; and Ait. Up. I.3.3).

It was shown in the previous chapter that Tāyumānavar was a true Śaivite by faith, but in terms of religious experience he goes beyond the structures of a particular religion. That which is beyond all visible

¹⁹ Shanmugham Pillai, "Hymns of St. Tāyumānavar", Siddhānta Deepika, I (July, 1897), 6-10.

religions is the experience and; according to Tāyumanavar it is mōna samarasam. This mōna samarasam is a state of silence where one experiences Supreme Bliss and this experience (anubhava) is the point where all differences are set aside; all religions meet and merge; and in this blissful state Vedānta and Siddhānta are no longer two polarizing systems but two roads which merge in the realm of unitive experience (samarasam). The poet-saint accepts the revelatory aspect of each religion but still claims that they all come to the common path of "silence" (mōnam) which is the point of convergence for all religions.

In another section of his hymns Tāyumānavar views samarasam as realization of Śiva (sivānubhūti):

....vētānta cittānta
 camaraca civānupūti
 maṅṅavoru corṅkoṅ ṅenaittaṅuttāṅtanpin
 vālṅvitta ṅānakuruvē
 mantrakuruvē yōka tantrakuruvē mūlan
 marapilvaru maṅṅakuruvē

Oh Thou the Preceptor of mantras, Oh Thou the Preceptor of yoga and tantra, Oh Thou the Preceptor of mauna who art descended from Mular, Oh Thou the Preceptor of Wisdom, Thou hast saved me by "One Word" (oru col) and made me to attain the Samarasa "Śivānupūti" where Vedānta and Siddhānta are one (V.4).

Personal experience of the Supreme in one's life is beyond description, and the most appropriate way of explaining the experience is silence (mauna). It is an intimate union

where the soul feels that it is liberated from the clutches of all binding forces (pāśa) and gradually drawn to the experience of Śiva (Śivānubhūti). By using the expression Samarasa Śivānubhūti the poet-saint beautifully pictures the quiescence of the soul which has experienced Self in his own self. Once the soul abides with the Supreme, it is in a state of everlasting peace and tranquility and quiescence. This abiding and quiescency is samarasam.

Tāyumānavar always craved for attaining that blissful state of Śiva-experience (Śivānubhūti). He, in admiration for both Samayācāryas (the Saint Founders of Śaiva Religion) and Santānācāryas (the line of Teachers of the Śaiva Religion), always eulogized them for their God-experience (cfr. XIV.30-31; XXVIII.26; LXV.ii.4-5,7; LXV.iii.8). For Tāyumānavar they are the gurus who realized the Supreme in their lives (avanē tām ānavar). Those masters have witnessed that He alone is the guru, and our poet-saint's desire for the same realization is shown in the following verse:

avanē paramum avanē kuruvum
 avanē akila maṇaittum avanē tām
 ānavarē conṇāl avarē kuruvenakku
 nānavanāy nirpatenta nāl

He indeed is the Supreme. He in fact is the Guru. He truly is all pervasive. Those who have become Him (Those who were united with Him) say (witness) that "He indeed is my Guru". When will be that day when I become Him. (XXVIII.63)

This idea of "I becoming Him" (nān avanāy nirpatu) is frequently found in the hymns. Attaining that unspeakable state of the soul's unitive experience, seen as samarasam, is possible only through grace (arul). This, however, does not mean that the individual soul is very passive. "Making me Him" (ennaittānākkal XLIV.8) is a process. It is a process in the sense that the individual soul has to cast out all that binds (pāśam) him obstructing his way to liberation. This condition is stated in the last sections of the poet-saint's hymns:

uḷḷatu millatu māymuṅ - urra
 uṇarvatu vāyuṅ nuḷaṅkaṅṭa tellān
 taḷḷeṅa ccolli yen aiyaṅ - ennait
 tānākki kkoṅṭa camarttaippār tōḷi

Oh companion, He (knowingly) made me Himself by asking me to reject whatever your mind realized by its own process of knowing as being and non-being (LIV.8).

In this process of casting away the bondage (pāśam) all traditional means are recommended (cfr. XII.1), while placing ñāna neṅi (the path of discriminative knowledge) as the main path (mukhya neṅi) (cfr. IV.11; LXV.15.2).

The realization process involves the fulfilment of certain requirements. God's grace (aruḷ), as pointed out above, comes in first place. Halting one's thought in terms of "I" and "mine" (halting mental activity) is another most

important condition for God-realization. The following hymn shows the process of God-realization in a nutshell:

an̄parukkan̄pāṇa meyyan̄ - aiyan̄
 āṇanta mōṇan̄ aruṭkurunātan̄
 tan̄pātañ̄ cenniyil vaittān̄ - en̄nait
 tāṇarint̄ tēṇmaṇantāṇiṇan̄ tēnē

My Lord is the embodiment of love to his devotees. He is Blissful Silence and gracious Master (to His lovers). He crowned my head with His (holy) feet. Concomitantly I realized myself and had my mind die (my mind ceased thinking) (LIV.10).

According to Śaiva Siddhānta one can attain that Supreme state of Union only through the Divine grace (tiruarul). In the above hymn it is figuratively expressed as tan̄pātañ̄ cenniyil vaittān̄ (He crowned my head with His feet). The moment He placed the feet on the head of His devotee, the soul allowed its ego-mind to go dead and realized the Self. Both "dying" and "Realization" happened concomitantly. This death of the mind (maṇam tān̄ irantēnē) refers to the dying of the self bound by impurities (malas) āṇava, karma and māyā. This breaking of the limiting conditions of the self ensures the soul its spiritual elevation. In this wider perspective all the mārgas (paths), which prepare the individual self to get rid of the binding forces are accepted and the individual has to practise different paths according to his ability. All different paths help the realization of one's self which is the goal of all enquiries.

Tāyumānavar's extolling of the advaita union and the state of samarasam is siddhantic in nature. The following hymns shall be taken as examples of this point:

....

onrōṭirantēnā camaraca corūpacukam
 urriṭaven maṇatiṅ vaṇṇan
 tiruvaruḷ muṭikkavitēkamoṭu kāṇṇaṇō
 tēṭariya cattākiyeṅ
 cittamicai kuṭikoṇṭa arivāṇa teyvamē
 tecōmayāṇantamē

Will I see the fulfilment of the desire of my heart (for camaraca corūpa cukam) when I am still in this body by the act of your grace which fills my mind with the bliss of camaraca corūpam (seeing the essential form) which is neither the state of "one" nor "two". O Bliss of teeming splendour, O Supreme Intelligence, Thou art my seeking Reality which is hard to find while (Thou) dost dwell in my heart (XII.1).

In the illustration of the Blissful state as onrōṭirantēna Tāyumānavar clearly enunciates the Siddhānta view of "oneness in God". According to Siddhānta teaching the unity is neither one nor two. The Siddhānta position on the union of the individual soul with the Supreme Self as not one of identity nor complete absorption is further shown in XXII.10:

yāṇeṇal kāṇen pūraṇa niṇaivil
 yātiṇum irunṭa pēroḷi nī
 tāṇeṇa niṇkuñ camattura venṇait
 taṇṇava nākkavun takuñkāṇ

vāneṇa vayan̄ki yon̄riran̄ṭennā
 mār̄kāmā ner̄i tantu mārāt
 tenena rucittuḷ apar̄aikkalanta
 celvamē cir̄para civamē

You are the great light which is all pervasive. In the equilibrinous state of mind I do not see me as myself. To make me worthy of this state You made me yours. Having shown the path of "seeing" which is neither one nor two, and giving me the blissful pleasure (like that) of honey that does not lose its taste of sweetness, You unite with your devotees, Oh precious Divine Siva (XXII.10).

The union of matured souls with the Lord is neither a state of "one-ness" nor "two-ness". In both above mentioned hymns Tāyumānavar brings Vedānta and Siddhānta together and characterizes samarasam as the advaitic experience of Śiva (advaitam āna aikiyānupavamē, LXIII.293). Being a Śaiva Siddhāntin he further describes this unitive experience as onrōṭṭiran̄ṭeṇa camaraca corūpacukam - the nature of the union is neither one nor two.

The poet-saint does not restrict his insight (darśana) to the theoretical level alone. He wants to see the practical application of that supreme realization. Therefore, he asks for the divine grace to illumine him in finding the operational aspect of that transformative experience of Śiva. His prayer in the following hymn is to have that kind of experience which helps him be involved in the practical realm of existence:

.....

caṇmata stāpaṇamum vetānta cittānta
 camaracanir vākanilaiyum
 mātikko ṭaṇṭa parappelām aṛiyavē
 vantaruḷu ṅānakuruvē

....

Oh the Preceptor of Wisdom, come and grant me Thy grace so that I may have the knowledge of the accomplishment of furthering the founding of the Six religions and also the state of upholding the oneness of Vedānta and Siddhānta (V.3).

Tāyumānavar here pleads for the Lord's grace for comprehending the essential nature of Vedānta and Siddhānta which is samarasam.

The use of "vētānta cittānta camaraca nirvākanilai" needs special attention here. For Tāyumānavar the idea of samarasam is not a theoretical one devoid of any practical application. Here we find the characteristic note of our poet-saint. He does not want philosophy and religion to be very dry, restricted to the realm of abstraction. In other words, the abstract Vedānta philosophy of the Impersonal One is here brought to the level of practical religion. Here we may recall Chapter IV of this research where advaitānubhava was presented also as providing a basis for concern for the integral growth of every one irrespective of one's caste, creed and religion. This is promotion of fellowship and it is one of the operational dimensions (nirvākanilai) of

samarasam as understood by Tāyumānavar. It is in this context that he asks for Divine help in understanding the practical state of the "vetānta cittānta camaracam". The operational dimension of samarasam is found also in the meeting of all faiths around the all-embracing harmonious spirit of God realization. The poet-saint praised, glorified and incessantly longed for that inseparable union, and invited everyone to anticipate in that bliss-giving experience of oneness: "O people of the world come together to see the Divine Hall that bestows liberation" (TP., XXX, 1 - 3).

CONCLUSION

At the very outset of this study it was stated that the religious core of the hymns of Tāyumānavar is the notion of Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam, the experiential intuition of an underlying essence shared by both Vedānta and Siddhānta. The introductory chapters discussed the general situation which serves as the backdrop for the life and writings of Tāyumānavar, and the formative factors which influenced his religious poetry and its message for the generations that followed him. The analysis of the poet-saint's hymns showed the depth of his understanding of the truth of Śaiva Siddhānta and the kind of relation he perceived between God, soul and the world, a relation he described, as an advaita relation. Chapter IV outlined the original vision of Vedānta as found in the Veda and the Upaniṣads, its scholastic interpretation, and the popular understanding of Vedānta as found in the Tamil religious literature. This discussion showed Tāyumānavar's familiarity with both the doctrinal as well as the popular understanding of Vedānta. As shown in the last section of that chapter, the poet-saint finally concluded that the essence of Vedānta was advaitānubhava (unity experience) and

experience as the spiritual, social and unifying force which everyone must realize. This unique interpretation of Vedānta as advaitānubhava left room for him to see how every tradition could participate in that everlasting blissful experience. At the center of the chapter is therefore anubhava (experience). Śaiva Siddhānta tradition which was the tradition of his immediate religious background, is understood by him as the essence of the teachings of the Veda, the Āgamas, and the Saint Founders of the tradition. In these contexts too the poet-saint demonstrates that anubhava (Śivānubhava) is the goal of Siddhānta. The meeting point, thus, for both Vedānta (non-dual) and Siddhānta, which he describes as "dualism that defies scrutiny" (ōtariyatuvitam), is samarasam, which is the experience of the essence of both the the Veda and the Upaniṣads, on the one hand, and the Āgamas, on the other.

A few significant ideas emerge from this study. The idea of samarasam, as we have seen, is the central point of the religious poetry of Tāyumānavar. Samarasam, as we understand it from this study, is not an overlooking of the distinctness of the respective traditions; these are considered here with a clear awareness of their differences as religious traditions. Yet, he argued, in their zeal to maintain conceptual distinctness, the traditions often tend to overlook the essential teaching of the original vision which is all-inclusive and all-embracing. If they could

focus on that core they could see that the differences in their respective conceptual formulations are only peripheral. Indeed they point to a center which is the experience of oneness.

Samarasam is not a religion. Tāyumānavar does not advocate a new religion of samarasam as something which would have to be brought into existence by rejection of the old philosophical structures of Vedānta and Siddhānta. He is not pleading for any discarding whatsoever, but rather for the awakening of each tradition to seek what is present in its own depth. Only in this way will one truly share his experience with other traditions and participate in the experiential richness of other religions.

Samarasam, for Tāyumānavar, is neither a doctrine nor a mere harmonization of creeds. It is rather a call for lending attention to that which makes harmonization possible. The two traditions of Vedānta and Siddhānta can be reconciled as concordant when they are viewed in the light of their experiential core. The differences of "non-dualism" and "dualism" when thus viewed in the light of what lies at their root, will cease to be "different". They will become a mere conceptual distinction.

Samarasam is also a reconciliation between "thought" and what is beyond or behind "thought". This point is important; for when people progress in their spiritual ascent they may tend to come to despise thought itself. The

thought system itself must rather yield to the vision of what is behind it helping one to awaken to it. Tāyumānavar always approved and acclaimed Vedānta and Siddhānta as two thought systems of intellectual depth. His quest, however, as we understand from the study of the hymns, went beyond the reach of thought and entered into the realm of experience. Tāyumānavar characterizes this experiential state as mauna samarasam - the silent experiential state- which is witnessed only in silence. Nevertheless he does not despise the philosophical and theological systems which provide the support of reason and intelligibility to the spiritual experience of the soul. Samarasam, thus, is the highest and most exalted spiritual state where the issues of whether ultimate Reality is one or many lose their meaning. In this highest experiential state Vedanta and Siddhanta converge. In this unspeakable and silent state of samarasam, divergence, duality, discord and disputes are transcended and what is left is convergence, non-duality, concord and harmony of religions, because this is "the common path of silence wherein the truth of all religions merge" (TP. IV.4).

A further important point concurrent with the above is the practical turn Tāyumānavar gives to samarasam, the essence of Vedanta and Siddhanta. This is brought out in the singular expression "camaraca nirvākanilai" (the operational aspect of samarasam). The practical dimension

of mystical experience has great significance. It is this insight of the poet-saint that makes him still relevant centuries later. The samarasa-mind which he speaks about is wider in its spiritual outlook, is open to include others, and is ready to meet and dialogue with other traditions. Samarasam in this sense is a cohesive force emanating from the heart and spirit of religion itself, from religious experience (anubhava). One may say that "experience" is the basis of the meeting of religions and even all humanitarian endeavours that accompany it. Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam, understood thus, can be viewed as providing a potential insight into the religious pluralism of any age. In the wider horizon of unity experience, religious traditions may be seen as co-existing for mutual growth and enrichment. Nothing seems more natural than that they meet and participate in that harmonious and tranquil context of spiritual experience.

A final point of this analysis is Tāyumānavar's understanding of Vedānta and Siddhānta. There are a variety of ways in which the concept of Vedānta is used. The poet-saint's understanding of Advaita Vedānta as love-union and social force is different from the understanding of scholastic Advaita. By defining this love-union in the Viśiṣṭādvaita language of "sāyūjya" he clearly shows that he does not understand advaita experience, otherwise called samarasam, as identical with the non-dualism of scholastic

Vedānta. Vedānta and Siddhānta are understood as the experiential state of the human soul. In this sense samarasam is as close to the non-dualism (advaita) of Vedānta as it is to the dualism (ōtariyatuvitam = dualism that defies scrutiny) of Siddhānta; in fact it is above both. Advaitānubhava is the common ground of religious experience for both Vedānta and Siddhānta. In this sense the poet-saint is a non-conformist Vedāntin and also a non-conformist Siddhāntin in an original and creative manner. In both respects he did not merely follow the line of the Śāstras (scholastic Vedānta and Siddhānta), but re-interpreted them on the criterion of his own intuitive experience. So in the quest for samarasam Tāyumānavar is not really trying to combine or synthesize the two systems, but seeks the common experiential roots in religion as such.

The basis of Tāyumānavar's vision of Śaiva Siddhānta and Vedānta in terms of a mutual encompassing encounter needs to be underscored. It is not the scholastic method of containment through refutation. It is found in the mystical experience of Śiva (Śivānubhava). By use of the concept of Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam the poet-saint unfolded the potentially ecumenical and inclusive elements that are present in the two traditions themselves but are often obscured by theological rancor and polemical zeal. I describe this as an ecumenical approach in the sense that it provides a common meeting place and includes the various

traditions within the "household" of Hinduism. The word ecumenism has usually been used to refer to an attempt to recapture the sense of oneness among the Christian Churches. The terms "ecumenism" and "ecumenical", in this study of Tāyumānavar, are intentionally extended to mean the spirit of openness which potentially also provides for inclusiveness between religions. In seeking to reconcile Vedānta and Siddhānta, the poet-saint seems to have focused his eye on the potentially all-embracing and inclusive elements present in the heart of all religions.

Samarasam follows most naturally from his understanding of the two traditions of Vedānta and Siddhānta. Thus his hymns are a call to the exponents of the traditions to return to the ground of experience which is an experience of non-otherness. In the heart of such experience there is no place for distance or division between oneself and the other. Tāyumānavar's attempt to show the common ground of the two traditions, and his appeal to the followers to focus on the essential and central message rather than on what is merely of the nature of "cumulative" to their traditions, is the core of Vedānta Siddhānta samarasam. Experiencing the essence of religious traditions as also integral to one another is samarasam. Samarasam understood as advaitānubhava (unity experience) at least provides a vision of unlimited possibility and endless endeavour. The experiential realization of oneness between

God and the soul, and between religious traditions, is a possibility more or less distinctly envisaged by all religious traditions and therefore deserves to be further explored. In that sense Tāyumānavar's call is relevant even today, for in a religiously pluralistic society, the meeting of religions at the point of realization of their essence can certainly create space for a constructive and spiritually meaningful co-existence.

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