

TEXT, INTERPRETATION AND RITUAL USAGE OF TAMIL ŚAIVA POEMS

By

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ABSTRACT

This study is about the nature of two Tamil Śaiva poems, "Tiruppalliyeḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai", their structure as text, the style in which they are interpreted, and the way in which they are used in ritual events. These two poems are narrative moments rather than longer narrative sequences. They are interpreted in commentarial literature, and in ritual, by situating the utterance of them as events in different narrative worlds. The significance of the poem is the significance of the event in a particular world. The meaning therefore changes from narrative world to narrative world, and even within the same narrative world if the poem is situated as a number of different events. In this study, the poems were generally situated in one or more of six narrative worlds: the *akam* world of love, the *puṛam* world of heroism, the theological world of Śaiva Siddhānta, the world of the hero's biography, the world of the poet-saint's (Māṇikkavācakar) life, and the world viewed from the perspective of one's own life.

This study contributes to scholarship firstly as an understanding of Tamil Śaivism, by studying the interaction between the Tamil Śaiva poems, their interpretation and their use in ritual, which illustrates a basic style of interpretation within which there is considerable interpretive freedom. Secondly, this research contributes to the wider area of "Tamil Studies" in that it shows links between this style of interpretation, and that of the classical Tamil *akam* and *puṛam* poems. Thirdly, this research contributes to performance and ritual studies by focusing on the "ritual text" as a text in itself, and by suggesting that the significance and principle of coherence of the "ritual text" lies in the specific situation in which it is created and interpreted, rather than in the nature of the source texts. Lastly, this study includes field research on two relatively new temples in the village of Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, west of the city of Madurai.

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An earlier version of part of the argument made in Parts I and II was presented in a paper entitled "An Example of Text and Interpretation in Tamil Culture" at the joint Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute - Canadian Asian Studies Association session of the 1993 Learned Societies Conference. I would like to thank all those who commented on my presentation, and especially Dr. Paula Richman who later read the paper and made valuable comments.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Descriptive Note	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vii
Note on Transliteration	viii
INTRODUCTION	1
PART I: TEXT	15
I.1 The Poems	17
I.2 Precedents and Later Developments	48
Summary	67
PART II: INTERPRETATION	68
II.3 The Poems in the <i>Akam</i> Narrative World	72
II.4 "Tiruppalliyēluc̣ci" in the <i>Puṟam</i> Narrative World	98
II.5 The Poems in the Śaiva Siddhānta Narrative World	108
II.6 The Poems in the Biographical Narrative Worlds	135
II.7 Interpretive Strategies and Classical Precedents	150
Summary	174
PART III: MODERN USAGE	176
III.8 <i>Tiruvanantal Pūcai</i> , Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple: "Tiruppalliyēluc̣ci" in the <i>Puṟam</i> Narrative World	180
III.9 "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple: "Tiruvempāvai" in Māṇikkavācakar's Biography	209
III.10 Nākamaḷai Putukkōṭṭai: Citti Viṇāyakar and Nākamaḷai Murukaṅ Temples	239
III.11 "Tiruppalliyēluc̣ci" and "Tiruvempāvai" in First Person Biography	265
III.12 Pattern of Usage	291
Summary	308
CONCLUSION	310
List of Appendices	314
Appendix I: Temple Diagrams	315
Appendix II: Composite "Ritual Text" for the "Pāvai Singing" at Citti Viṇāyakar and Nākamaḷai Murukaṅ Temples, Nākamaḷai Putukkōṭṭai	324
List of Plates	333
Plates	334
Bibliography	339

NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

I have generally followed the scheme of transliteration found in the *Tamil Lexicon*:

அ	a	ஐ	ai	ஞ	ñ	ர	r	ஜ	j
ஆ	ā	ஓ	o	ட	ṭ	ல	l	ஷ	ṣ
இ	i	ஔ	ō	ண	ṇ	வ	v	ஸ	s
ஈ	ī	ஔ	au	த	t	ழ	ḷ	ஹ	h
உ	u	ஃ	k	ந	n	ள்	ḷ	க்ஷ	kṣ
ஊ	ū	க	k	ப	p	ற	r		
எ	e	ங	ṅ	ம்	m	ன்	ṅ		
ஏ	ē	ச	c	ய	y				

Tamil uses Sanskrit loan words, and there is usually more than one way of transliterating these words into Tamil, and then from Tamil into English. Since this is a thesis about Tamil works and worship in the Tamil language, I generally use a Tamilized form of Sanskrit words because, in my experience, Tamilized Sanskrit loan words have become Tamil words, and are pronounced and enjoyed in their Tamil forms as part of the Tamil language.

There are situations in which I have not followed the above scheme. Words that are found in an English dictionary, such as karma, appear as spelled in the dictionary and are not in italics. I have used the English transliteration of a Tamil name, if a person provided one. Tamil names of authors of works in English appear as they do in that work. I have used the common transliterated form of place names such as Madurai. The names of Sanskrit works such as the Śaiva Āgamas are transliterated directly from their Sanskrit rather than from their Tamilized forms. I have conformed to the standard transliterated form of some words such as Śiva and Śaiva Siddhānta rather than the strict Tamil forms of Civam, Civaṅ or Caiva Cittānta. I have transliterated the Tamilized form, however, when referring to the manifestation of Śiva or other deities in particular temples in Tamil Nadu.

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of Tamil Śaiva poems: their structure, the style of their interpretation and the pattern of their use in ritual. In this thesis I have focused on two poems, "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyēḷucci". On the basis of an analysis of the characteristics of these two poems and the strategies utilized in their interpretation, I have articulated a style of interpretation and a particular view of text assumed by this style. This style of interpretation also provides a framework for understanding how these two poems are used in worship. I believe the perspective of text and interpretation presented here can be used to understand the way in which other Tamil Śaiva poems are interpreted and used in worship.

"Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyēḷucci"

The two poems studied here are included in the canon of the Tamil tradition of Śaiva Siddhānta which is found predominantly in Tamil Nadu, South India.¹ Tamil culture and literature has a long and continuous history. Inscriptional evidence attests to the existence of the great Tamil kingdoms in the third century BCE.² The earliest extant Tamil literature,

¹ I use "Tamil tradition of Śaiva Siddhānta" to refer to the tradition which takes the twelve *Tirumuṟai* and fourteen *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiram* as their central texts (see below). Other traditions of Śaiva Siddhānta exist, such as those which emphasize some of the Sanskrit Śaiva Āgamas. The Tamil tradition acknowledges the Śaiva Āgamas (as well as the Vedas) as authoritative texts.

² Ashoka's edicts (269-232 BCE) refer to the Cōḷa, Cēra and Pāṇṭiya Kingdoms as independent neighbours to the south. N. Subrahmanian, *History of Tamilnad (to A.D. 1565)*, 5th revised ed. (N.G.O. Colony, Madurai: N.S. Ennes Publications, 1986), 35.

the classical poetry, is dated to at least the early centuries of the common era, and some scholars date parts of it to even a few centuries earlier.³

The central texts of Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta are divided into two groups: the twelve *Tirumuṟai* and the fourteen *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiram*. The first eleven *Tirumuṟai* are collections of devotional poems by a number of authors. The twelfth *Tirumuṟai*, commonly referred to as the *Periya Purāṇam* (The Great Story), is a hagiographical account of the lives of sixty-three saints in poetic form. The twelve *Tirumuṟai* were composed between the third and twelfth centuries, although the dating of some of the texts is highly controversial. The fourteen *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiram*, composed between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, are regarded as the core philosophical texts for this tradition.

"Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyelucci" are sections of the *Tiruvācakam*, which is one of the two parts of the eighth *Tirumuṟai* composed by the saint, Māṇikkavācakar. Māṇikkavācakar has been placed as early as the third century CE and as late as the tenth, although most scholars place him in the ninth century. He is not included as one of the sixty-three saints whose stories are told in the twelfth century *Periya Purāṇam*.⁴

There are several accounts of Māṇikkavācakar's life. One of the earliest is found in the *Tiruvālavāyūṭaiyār Tiruṣṭaiyāṭar Purāṇam* by Cellinakar Perumparrap Puliyūr Nampi composed probably in the thirteenth century. This text relates the "sixty-four sports of Śiva" in the Madurai area of Tamil Nadu. Four episodes of this text relate events in

³ There are many discussions of the dates of the classical literature. For approaches to dating Tamil literature see Kamil V. Zvelebil, *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 97-101.

⁴ Glenn Yocum provides a discussion of Māṇikkavācakar's date in *Hymns to the Dancing Siva: A Study of Māṇikkavācakar's Tiruvācakam* (New Delhi: Heritage Publisher, 1982), 46-50. Paul Younger, an exception among current scholars, provides a fresh analysis of the available data and in agreement with the thirteenth *Tiruvālavāyūṭaiyār Tiruṣṭaiyāṭar Purāṇam* argues for a fifth century dating of the saint: Paul Younger, *The Home of the Dancing Śivan: The Traditions of the Hindu Temple in Cītamparam* (Forthcoming), c. 197-207 n. 9, 10.

Māṇikkavācakar's life. A full biography, the *Tiruvātavūraṭikaḷ Purāṇam*, was composed in the late fourteenth to early fifteenth century.⁵

"Tiruppalliyelucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" are associated with specific periods in the ritual cycle of Śaiva temples. "Tiruppalliyelucci" is primarily associated with the earliest daily worship period in which the presiding deity of a temple is awakened.

"Tiruvempāvai" (and also "Tiruppalliyelucci") is specifically connected with ritual activity during the Tamil month of *Mārkaḷi* (mid-December to mid-January). The singing of "Tiruppalliyelucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" during these ritual periods was studied in two different temple settings in Madurai, South India: Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvavarar Temple in the heart of Madurai city and the Citti Viṇāyakar and the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples in the village of Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai.

The Status of Current Research

A substantial amount of scholarly work has been done on classical Tamil poetry, including Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava devotional poetry, Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*, Śaiva Siddhānta theology, temples, and the prescriptive texts for Śaiva ritual, the Śaiva Āgamas.

The research on classical Tamil poetry includes translations and descriptions of the poems, considerations of themes in the poetry, attempts to understand the milieu in which the poetry was composed, and explanations of the poetic system. Some of the important translations are A. K. Ramanujan's *The Interior Landscape* (1967) and *Poems of Love and War* (1985), G. Hart's *Poets of the Tamil Anthologies* (1979), and J. V. Chelliah's *Pattupattu* (ca. 1946). Descriptions of the poetry and explanations of the poetic system are

⁵ See William Harman, "Two Versions of a Tamil Text and the Context in which They were Written," *Journal of South Asian Studies* 5, 1 (Sept. 1987), 1-18. See chapter 6 below for biographical data on Māṇikkavācakar.

found for example in J. H. Marr's *The Eight Anthologies* (1985), K. Zvelebil's *The Smile of Murugan on Tamil Literature of South India* (1973) and the works of Ramanujan and Hart just mentioned. Works that are more thematic in approach are V. T. Manickam's *Marutam: An Aspect of Love in Tamil Literature* (1982), X. S. Thani Nayagam's *Landscape and Poetry* (1966), and K. Kailasapathy's *Tamil Heroic Poetry* (1968). Translations and studies on the *Tolkāppiyam*, the classical Tamil treatise on grammar and poetics, include P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri's (1949) translation of the text, and G. Sundaramoorthy's *Early Literary Theories in Tamil* (1974).

There are a number of studies and translations of the Śaiva devotional poetry. Indira Peterson in *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints* (1989) translates selections from the first seven *Tirumuṟai* which are the works of three saints, Tiruñānacampantar, Tirunāvukkaracar and Cuntarar. David Shulman has translated all of the seventh *Tirumuṟai* by Cuntarar in *Songs of the Harsh Devotee: The Tēvāram of Cuntaramūrttināyaṇār* (1990). Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam* has been translated by G. U. Pope (1900), G. Vanmikanathan (1980) and Balasubramanian (1958). To my knowledge the ninth and eleventh *Tirumuṟai* have not been translated. I believe the translation of the tenth *Tirumuṟai* is underway. The twelfth *Tirumuṟai* has been translated by T. N. Ramachandran (Part I, 1990). English studies of the poems include: P. S. Somasundaram's *Tirujñāna Sambandar: Philosophy and Religion* (1986) on Tiruñānacampantar; Dorai Rangaswamy's *The Religion and Philosophy of the Tevaram* (1958) on Cuntarar; G. Yocum's *Hymns to the Dancing Śiva* (1982), Radha Thiagarajan's *A Study of the Mysticism in Tiruvācakam* (1983), and R. Navaratnam's *A New Approach to Tiruvacagam* (1971) on Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam*; and R. Gopalakrishnan's *Religion and Mysticism in the Periyapurānam* (1990).

Recent English scholarship has begun to explore the relationship between classical Tamil poetry and the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava devotional poetry. Ramanujan in *Hymns for the Drowning* (1981), Norman Cutler in *Songs of Experience* (1987), and their combined effort in "From Classicism to Bhakti" (1983) in *Essays on Gupta Culture* suggest how the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava poets have utilized classical poetic conventions. Friedhelm Hardy in *Viraha Bhakti* (1983) discusses how the theme of "separation" in classical poetry was incorporated into Vaiṣṇava poetry. G. Subbiah in "Patterns of Religious Thought in Early South India" (1988) suggests that the world view implicit in the classical poetry underlies the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava devotional perspective.

Various works are available on Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy. These include: translations of some of the fourteen *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiram*, such as the *Civañānapōtam* translated by G. Matthews (1948), J. Piet (1952), and M. Dhavamony (1971); a review of the basic ideas found in a variety of canonical texts such as T. B. Siddalingaiah's *Origin and Development of Saiva Siddhanta Upto 14th Century* (1979) and Dhavamony's *Love of God According to Saiva Siddhanta* (1968); a translation and study of one *cāttiram* such as Rama Ghose's *Grace in Saiva Siddhanta* (1984) on the *Tiruvaruṭṭpayan*; or a study of a particular *cāttiram* and its commentaries such as Devasenapathi's *Śaiva Siddhānta as Expounded in the Śivajñāna-Siddhiyār and its Six Commentaries* (1966); and the more encompassing study of Śaiva Siddhānta by K. Sivaraman, *Śaivism in Philosophical Perspective* (1973).

Many studies have been done on temples in India. Of particular relevance to this thesis are those on the Madurai Miṇāṭci-Cunṭarēcuvarar Temple such as A. V. Jeyechandrun's *The Madurai Temple Complex* (1985), C. Fuller's *Servants of the Goddess: The Priests of a South Indian Temple* (1984), and Carol Breckenridge's "The Śrī Mīnākṣi Sundarēśvarar Temple: Worship and Endowments in South India, 1833 to

1925" (1976). Also of importance for this study is Richard Davis's *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe* (1991) which describes the ritual universe of the Śaiva Siddhānta Āgamas. Davis relies substantially on the *Kāmikāgama*, which is one of the two Āgamas said to be the basis of worship at Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple.

Although there is a substantial amount of scholarship on classical and Śaiva devotional poetry, Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta and temples and temple ritual, there has been no particular study of the strategies of interpretation of Śaiva poems nor of their usage in ritual. Cutler makes a strong move in this direction with his theory of Tamil devotional poetics in *Songs of Experience* (1987). He develops his theory in the context of Śrīvaiṣṇava theology and the Śrīraṅgam Temple ritual. He notes parallels that suggest the same model is at work in the Tamil Śaiva context. The perspective presented here is based on research conducted in the Śaiva context. It has been influenced by Cutler's theory but it also differs from his in important ways. Peterson, in the introduction to her translation of Śaiva poems, discusses the interpretation of the poems by the traditional singers of the Śaiva poems, the *ōtuvārs*. She argues that they interpret in public performance outside the *pūcai* context firstly through their selection of songs and secondly by repeating and embellishing portions of poems. Peterson notes that the constraints of ritual limit the opportunities for the *ōtuvār* to interpret the poems.⁶ This study does not look at the role of the *ōtuvār* outside temple ritual as Peterson does, but focuses on the use of the poems in ritual situations whether or not they are sung by an *ōtuvār*.

⁶ Indira Viswanathan Peterson, *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 59-75.

Approaches, Scholarly Influences and Sources

My strategy has been to take up two Śaiva poems for a case study, with the expectation that the conclusions would be applicable to the wider context of the interpretation and use of Śaiva poems. The approach has been three-fold. I first analysed the structure of the poems. I then, endeavoured to identify strategies of interpretation evident in understandings of the poems. Finally, I observed and participated in rituals during which the two poems, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai", are sung.

I have found the work of several scholars particularly helpful for this study. Norman Cutler, in *Songs of Experience*, analyses the Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva canonical poems, and the classical *akam* and *puṛam* poems in terms of speakers and addressees.⁷ I found this approach very useful and began my study of the structures of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" along the same lines. My analysis of the interpretive strategies was influenced by the "reader-response" perspective that a text has meaning when it is read or recited. I have been influenced in particular by Wolfgang Iser's "The Reading Process" and Stanley Fish's *Is there a Text in this Class?* and "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser". My discussion of the nature of the poems has been informed by Iser's idea that the reader fills in ambiguities in the text during the reading process.⁸ I have been influenced by Fish's view that the reader's experience of a text is shaped by interpretive strategies which the individual brings to the text, that these strategies determine the formal units of the text around which the reader builds meaning, and that the interpretive strategies that the individual might use are determined by the interpretive communities of which the person is

⁷ Norman Cutler, *Songs of Experience: The Poetics of Tamil Devotion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 11, 19-38, 61-70.

⁸ Wolfgang Iser, "The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach" in *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism*, ed. Jane P. Tompkins (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), 50-69.

a member.⁹ I found Stuart Blackburn's monograph on the bow song tradition of Southern Tamil Nadu, *Singing of Birth and Death* (1988) helpful for the study of the ritual usage of texts. His study shows how a source text can be changed and its significance dramatically altered when it is used in ritual.

The fieldwork for this study was conducted in the area of Madurai city, Tamil Nadu in 1990-91 and 1993-94. During these periods I collected a number of editions of the poems, and a variety of interpretations in the form of questionnaires, interviews, commentaries and other secondary literature. I conducted questionnaires and interviews in order to gather individuals' views on the poems, their meanings, the significance of the rituals in which they are used, and the individuals' own worship activity. I gathered fifty-seven questionnaires and conducted fifty-two interviews. The questionnaires were gathered and the interviews conducted almost exclusively with adherents of Śaivism. Slightly more men than women responded to questionnaires or were interviewed.¹⁰ During my field work in 1993-94, I had the opportunity to interact in a more leisurely and extended way with many of those who had responded to questionnaires or had been interviewed on my previous field trip. Although I refer to these interviews and

⁹ Stanley E. Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980).

¹⁰ Twenty-one interviews were with women while thirty-one were with men. I received twenty-nine questionnaires from women and twenty-eight from men. Generally I have not mentioned the names of those interviewed or those who responded to the questionnaires as in most cases these were conducted with the understanding that I would not be mentioning names. This was not a random sample. I found people were more willing to co-operate if I had been referred to them. The interviews often took place in a small group. The questionnaire formed the basis of the interview, but the interviews did not necessarily follow the order of the questionnaire. The questions of the interview were adjusted when interviewing specialists such as the professional singers, the *ōtuvārs*, or the priests. The order and concerns of the questions of the questionnaire were collecting biographical data; ascertaining the person's degree of acquaintance with the poems and their personal worship pattern; determining the individual's understanding of the poems and certain ritual events; and collecting any other comments the person wished to make.

questionnaires only to a limited extent, they were a necessary preliminary step in my research as it is the pattern which I saw initially in those interviews and questionnaires that has been developed into the discussion of text and interpretation presented in this thesis.

The earliest known written commentaries on the *Tiruvācakam* date from the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries.¹¹ There are several collections of short aphorisms of unknown authorship on *Tiruvācakam* providing the meaning of the poems which probably predate the first written commentaries.¹² The interpretations presented here were selected from published works as they were generally more thoroughly worked out than those received from individuals in the interviews and questionnaires. The major interpretations presented here are drawn from the work of five men and one woman, all of whom belong to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. There is an additional interpretation, whose authorship is uncertain, which is usually dated in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. Five of the interpretations were written in Tamil and two in English.

The two ritual settings focused on in this study are the Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple in Madurai and the Citti Viṇāyakar and the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, a village approximately ten kilometres west of Madurai city. I studied the same three ritual events during both field trips: the early morning *pūcai* and the ten day "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, both at the Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, and the thirty day recitation of the poems, known as "*Pāvai* Singing" at the two temples in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai.

¹¹ See Mu. Aruṇācalam, "Tiruvācaka Uraip Patippukkaḷ" in *Tiruvācakam: Cila Ārāyccik Kuṟippukkaḷ* (Citamparam: Caiva Cittānta Makā Camāja, 1965), 143-53. The interpretation of Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar is thought to be the earliest written commentary on the *Tiruvācakam*, although the "Tiruvempāvai Karuttu" on "Tiruvempāvai" alone seems to predate Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation. See chapter 5 below for a discussion of these two commentaries.

¹² *Akattiya Cūttiram, Tiruvuḷḷakiṭakkai, and Tiruvācaka Uṇmai*. Radha Thiagarajan, *A Study of Mysticism in Tiruvācakam* (Madurai: Madurai Kamaraj University, 1984), xv-xvi.

The Argument

The theory proposed here is that Śaiva poems, in both secondary literature and in ritual usage, constitute a text which is interpreted within one or more narrative worlds. The "text" (what is interpreted) may be a single poem, a verse of a poem, or a collection of poems or parts of poems. These poems or their parts are episodic moments rather than longer narratives. They are monologic or dialogic utterances. The particular identity of the speaker is not made known in the poem. The poem may, however, contain information about the gender or role of the speaker or speakers. The addressee may or may not be provided with a specific identity. The poems also may convey varying degrees of information about the time and place in which they are spoken.

Interpretation consists primarily of providing a particular context in which to understand the "text". This is accomplished by situating the poem as an event in one or more narrative worlds, usually by providing an identity for the speaker and identifying the occasion on which it was uttered. A more detailed interpretation may provide an identity for the addressee and details of the setting also. By narrative world, I mean a world in which a particular story takes place. Each narrative world is constituted by a sequence of events which sets the broad parameters of activity within that world. The poems considered in this study were generally situated into one or more of six narrative worlds. These were the *akam* world of love, the *puṛam* world of heroism, the theological world of Śaiva Siddhānta, the world of the hero's biography, the world of the author saint's life, and the world viewed from the perspective of one's own life. The significance of the utterance (i.e. the meaning of the text) and the coherence of the meaning depend to some extent upon the poem being situated coherently in the narrative world.

Viewed from Fish's perspective, this style of interpretation is a strategy evident in Tamil culture, and the individual narrative worlds or combinations would be the interpretive

sub-communities. Fish understands Iser's 'gaps' to be the result of the interpretive strategy brought to the text rather than being in the text itself.¹³ It seems that part of the interpretive strategy of the examples cited in this study is to assign identities to the speaker or addressee and identify the utterance as a particular occasion or situation in a narrative world. This implies that the strategies at work assume an ambiguity regarding the identity of the speaker or addressee, and the particularities of the occasion or situation of the utterance. In this study, I refer to these ambiguities as though they are in the poem itself, when more precisely I should say that they are gaps assumed by the common style of interpretation.

In the three rituals studied this conception of text and style of interpretation was operative. The poems were situated in narrative worlds, specifically biographies. In the early morning worship, the poems were situated in the biography of the presiding deity, Cuntarēcuvarar. In the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, "Tiruvempāvai" was situated in the biography of the poet, Māṇikkavācakar. In the "*Pāvai* Singing" in the two village temples, the singing of the poems was situated in the lives of individual devotees, first person biographies.

In these three ritual events, however, the utterances which were situated were not the poems, "Tiruppalliyelucci" and "Tiruvempāvai", as they appear in their canonical state. In the ritual contexts of this study, the utterances consisted of a collection of source texts, which included all or parts of "Tiruppalliyelucci" and "Tiruvempāvai". The combining of source texts into the utterance of a performance actually constitutes the creation of a new text which will be referred to as the "ritual text" in this study. Furthermore, the

¹³ Stanley Fish, "Why No One's Afraid of Wolfgang Iser" in *Doing What Comes Naturally: Change, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* (Durham: Duke University press, 1989), 68-86.

significance of this new text and the coherence of its meaning depend to some extent upon the narrative world in which the utterance is situated. Extending Fish's idea that interpretive strategies determine the formal units of the text around which one builds meaning, I am suggesting that the interpretive strategies at work in the construction of the "ritual text" determine not only the formal units of the text, but also its composition and boundaries.

The understanding of text and interpretation proposed here, and the pattern of usage evident in the use of Śaiva poems in ritual have precedents in the earliest Tamil literature, the classical *akam* and *puṛam* poetry. The structure of the devotional poems is the same as that of the classical poems. The strategy of interpretation has antecedents in the colophons of the classical poems. The pattern of behaviour evident in the use of the poems in the three rituals studied here follows a pattern of behaviour implicit in the *puṛam* poems. The religious world of the modern Śaiva has been strongly influenced by the world of the classical poetry.

Scholarly Significance

This study makes a contribution to scholarship in several ways. Firstly, it contributes to an understanding of Tamil Śaivism by studying the interaction between the Tamil Śaiva poems, their interpretation and their use in ritual. It illustrates that there is a basic style of interpretation of the poems and that within this basic style there is considerable interpretive freedom. It also illustrates the contrast between the use of the hymns in a large well established temple and in two small local temples. Secondly, this thesis contributes to the wider area of Tamil Studies, by showing links between the style of interpretation of Tamil Śaiva poems and Tamil classical poems, and by suggesting links between a pattern of religious behaviour and a pattern of relating to the hero expressed in the classical *puṛam*

poetry. Thirdly, the study contributes to the field of performance and ritual studies by focusing on the "ritual text" as a text in itself, and by suggesting the significance and principle of coherence of the "ritual text" lies in the specific situation in which the text is created and interpreted rather than in the nature of the source texts. Lastly, the data collected on the new village temples, in which the "*Pāvai* Singing" takes place, contributes to studies on local temples in the making.

Organization

The thesis is organized into three parts. In the perspective of text and interpretation being presented here, the "text" is what is interpreted and the interpretation is the meaning or significance that results by providing a context (i.e. a narrative world) in which to understand the "text". Part I and Part II are complementary in that the "texts" presented in Part I are the subjects of the interpretation in Part II. Part I describes the characteristics of the "texts". Chapter 1 provides a translation of "Tiruppalliyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" and highlights characteristics of the poems relevant for the interpretations presented in Part II. Chapter 2 argues that these structures and characteristics are found in the classical *akam* and *puram* poems, and illustrates how these same features are evident even in poems which were composed later than the twelve *Tirumuṟai*.

Part II: Interpretation explains and illustrates the strategies of interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyēḷucci" primarily as found in commentaries. Each of the first four chapters of Part II describes a different narrative world, and considers interpretations and the strategies utilized by particular interpreters of the poems. Chapter 3 describes the *akam* narrative world, and provides two interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyēḷucci" as framed by this world. Chapter 4 considers "Tiruppalliyēḷucci" as framed by the *puram* world. Chapter 5 considers two interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai"

and one of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" as framed by the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world. Chapter 6 considers "Tiruvempāvai" as understood within Māṇikkavācakar's biography and both "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" as understood in a general way within the first person biography. In chapter 7 it is argued that the strategies evident in the examples given in the previous chapters have antecedents in the colophons of the classical poems.

Part III: Modern Usage examines the use of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" in the Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple and in the Citti Viṇāyakar and Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples. The conception of text and the style of interpretation developed in Parts I and II is operative in the rituals presented in Part III also. In these rituals, however, "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" are source texts even though the poems are especially associated with these rituals. A new text is constructed (the "ritual text") which is the subject of interpretation in the following three ritual events. Chapter 8 provides a description of the Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, the first early morning *pūcai* and the singing and interpretation of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" as part of the "ritual text" of this event. Chapter 9 consists of a description of the ten day "Tiruvempāvai" Festival at the Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, and the interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai" as part of the "ritual text" of this festival. Chapter 10 provides descriptions of the Citti Viṇāyakar and the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples and of the "*Pāvai* Singing". Chapter 11 consists of the interpretation of the "ritual text" of "*Pāvai* Singing" and of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" as part of this text. In chapter 12, I argue that the pattern of behaviour evident in these three ritual events is the same as a pattern implicit in *puṛam* poetry, and that the boundaries, composition and meaning of the "ritual texts" of these events is dependent upon the narrative world in which the singing of the poems is situated and upon the particularities of the specific ritual settings.

PART I: TEXT

munnam avaṇuṭaiya nāmam kēṭṭāḷ;
mūrtti āvaṇ irukkum vaṇṇam kēṭṭāḷ;
piṇṇai āvaṇuṭaiya ārūr kēṭṭāḷ;
peyarttum avaṇukkē picci āṇāḷ;
aṇṇaiyaiyum attaṇaiyum aṇṇē nīttāḷ;
akanṇāḷ akalitattār ācārattai;
taṇṇai marantāḷ; taṇ nāmam kēṭṭāḷ;
talaippaṭṭāḷ naṅkai talaivaṇ tāḷe!

First she heard his name;
She heard about the beauty of his form;
Then she heard about his place, Ārūr;
Even though they tried to redeem her,
she became mad for him;
That day she abandoned her mother and father
and all such things;
She did not care about worldly customs;
She forgot herself; She forgot her name;
Our sister reached the hero's foot.¹

¹Tirunāvukkaracar, poem 6512, transliterated from *Tēvāram: Hymnes Śivaites Du Pays Tamoul*, Publications De L'Institut Français D'Indologie No. 68, 2 (Pondichéry: Institut Français D'Indologie, 1985) 256. Translated with the guidance of Dr. (Muṇaiivar) Ā. Āṇantarācan, Department of Śaiva Siddhānta, Madurai Kamaraj University.

Ten of the twelve *Tirumuṟai*, the Tamil Śaiva canonical poems, are anthologies of collections of poems. These anthologies are in part organized by author. One of these poems can be enjoyed by itself or it can be appreciated along with other poems.

Devotees and the traditional singers of the poems, the *ōtuvārs*, select poems from the canon to sing during worship. Within the twelve *Tirumuṟai*, they may choose from thousands of verses. Devotees also choose poems from non-canonical anthologies as well. There are many modern anthologies of poems culled from the *Tirumuṟai* and non-canonical collections of poems. Songs from these new anthologies are selected and sung by devotees during group or personal worship.

The characteristics of the Tamil Śaiva poems lend themselves to this kind of use. They tend to be short. Even if they are longer poems, portions of a poem can be selected and used. The poems also tend to be discrete episodic moments rather than longer narratives. Furthermore, there tends to be an ambiguity regarding the identity of the speaker, the event which the poem represents and the setting in which the poem takes place. Therefore, the poems can be strung together easily and can be shifted from context to context within the larger Śaiva universe.

These characteristics are evident in the earlier classical Tamil *akam* and *puṟam* poems, and a large number of poems composed after the *Tirumuṟai* poems. They also are organized into collections of poems. These poems also can be appreciated by themselves or along with other poems. Furthermore, they exhibit the same types of ambiguities evident in the Tamil Śaiva canonical poems.

In chapter 1, these characteristics of Śaiva canonical poems will be illustrated by an analysis of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyelucci". In Chapter 2, these characteristics will be illustrated by reference to specific examples of classical *akam* and *puṟam* poems, and briefly by reference to some later poems.

I: Chapter 1: The Poems

Both "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" are collections of poems (or verses) which individually represent single moments or events rather than a continuous narrative. The speaker or speakers of these poems do not have a particular identity explicitly expressed in the poem. The poem may or may not indicate the speaker's gender. The addressee in some poems is given a particular identity, and in others is only identified by gender or by second person pronouns or by verbal forms. The extent to which the setting is provided varies from poem to poem.

The chapter begins with a short explanation of the organization of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci". This is followed by a transliteration and then a translation of each poem. The chapter concludes with a short description of the two poems.

"Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" are from *Tiruvācakam*. *Tiruvācakam* has 656 poems divided into fifty-one units, each of which has its own title. All but the first four units are subdivided into smaller units without titles. Editions of *Tiruvācakam* tend to number the poems primarily according to their position within the 656 poems, and secondarily according to their position within the smaller unit. *Tiruvācakam*, and a second work consisting of 400 poems entitled *Tirukkōvaiyār*, constitute the eighth *Tirumuṟai*, all of which, according to tradition, was written by the saint, Māṇikkavācakar. The eighth *Tirumuṟai* is part of the twelve *Tirumuṟai* which collectively constitute the first part of the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta canon.

"Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" occur regularly in the same form, order and position in all the editions of *Tiruvācakam* which I have seen.¹ That is to say,

¹ The order of the poems in the edition do not follow the chronological composition of poems provided in Māṇikkavācakar's biography as told in the *Tiruvātavūṟaṭikal*

"Tiruvempāvai" always has twenty poems in the same order, and it always appears as the seventh unit in the *Tiruvācakam*. The first poem of "Tiruvempāvai" is the 155th poem of the *Tiruvācakam*. "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" always has ten poems in the same order, and always is the twentieth unit in the *Tiruvācakam*. The first poem of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" is the 366th poem of *Tiruvācakam*.

The poems of each of these two units are linked together by a phrase which concludes each poem in the group. In "Tiruvempāvai" this phrase is "*ēl ōr empāvai*" and in "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" it is "*paḷḷiyeluntarulāyē*". The titles of these poems are thus thought to come from the refrains.

Translation

"Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" have been translated into English before. The purpose of providing a translation here is to focus attention on the markers of the speakers and addressees. These markers are in bold type in the transliteration of the poems and in the translation. As a result of this emphasis, the translation may be somewhat awkward at times. For example some of the poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" end with "*emperumāṅ paḷḷi eluntarulaḷāyē*". I have translated this phrase with two subjects, "our Lord" and "you", because both are present in the Tamil. This translation does not attempt to duplicate rhythm or rhyme. I have tried to some extent to present the order of ideas in translation as they occur in the poem in Tamil.

I have consulted primarily three Tamil and two English sources for these translations. Kantacāmi Piḷḷai's edition of *Tiruvācakam* presents two versions of the

Purāṇam. Glenn E. Yocum, *Hymns to the Dancing Śiva: A Study of Māṅikkavācakar's Tiruvācakam* (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1982), 56.

poems: one split into discrete words and one unsplit.² The transliteration presented here is based on his split version of the poems. I have used Varatarājan's commentary³ for the syntactic expansion of phrases, and Aruṇaivaṭivēl Mutaliyār's commentary⁴ for his grammatical and explanatory notes. I have also consulted Pope's⁵ and Vanmikanathan's⁶ translations of the poems.

"Tiruvempāvai"⁷

Poem 155/1:⁸

Ātiyum antamum illā arum perum
 cōtiyai yām pātak kēttēyum vāl taṭam kaṅ
 mātē vaḷarutiyō vaṅ ceviyō niṅ cevi tāṅ
 mātēvaṅ vār kaḷakaḷ vāḷttiya vāḷttu olipōy
 vītivāyk kēttalumē vimmi vimmi meym marantu
 pōtu ār amaḷiyiṅ mēl niṅrum puraṅtu inṅaṅ
 ētēnum ākāḷ kiṭantāḷ enṅē enṅē
 itē emtōḷi paricu ēl ōr empāvāy

Without beginning or end
 the precious great Effulgence
 we sang about;

² Nī. Kanatacāmip Piḷḷai, *Tiruvācakam: Mutar Pakuti Mūlam*, Iraṅṅam Patippu (Citamparam: Aṅṅāmalai Palkalaik Kaḷakam, 1984).

³ Ji. Varatarājan, *Tiruvācakam: Virivurai* (1971; Ceṅṅai: Paḷaṅiyappā Piratars, 1987).

⁴ Aruṇaivaṭivēl Mutaliyār, *Māṅikkavācaka Cuvāmikaḷ Tiruvācakam Tirukkōvaiyār Ākiya Eṭṭān Tirumuṛai [Kuṛippurayutaṅ]* (Tarumapuram: Tarumapuram Ātīṅam, 1966).

⁵ G. U. Pope, *The Tiruvaçagam or 'Sacred Utterances' of the Tamil Poet, Saint, and Sage Mānikka-vāçagar*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900; republished by University of Madras, 1979).

⁶ G. Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam: An Original Interpretation and Complete Translation* (Thiruppanandal: Sri Kasi Mutt, 1980).

⁷ This translation is a modified version of the one presented in my M.A. thesis: "An Interpretation of Māṅikkavācakar's "Tiruvempāvai" (University of Calgary, 1987).

⁸ Poem 155/1 means: poem 155 in *Tiruvācakam* which is poem 1 in "Tiruvempāvai".

although **you** heard,⁹
Oh Bright wide-eyed Maiden,
 still **you** sleep?
 Are **your** ears hard?

Upon hearing the loud sounds,
 the praise of Mātēvaṅ's long anklets in the street
 exclaiming overwhelmingly
 forgetting [her]self
 rolling on the bed filled with flowers
 incapacitated like this
she lay.

Ah! Ah!
 What indeed is this nature of **our** friend?

Oh our Lady!

In this poem the speaker or speakers are indicated by first person plural markers (*yām*, *em*). The reference "*emtōli*" suggests that the speaker or speakers and addressee are female, as "*tōli*" is a word used to indicate friendship between females.¹⁰ The addressee is indicated by second person markers and vocatives (*kēṭṭēy*, *mātē*, *vaḷarutiyō*, *niṇ*). No particular setting is suggested in the poem.¹¹

Poem 156/2:

pācam parañcōtikku **enpāy** irāppakal **nām**
 pecum pōtu eppōtu ippōtu āṛ amaḷikkē
 necamum **vaittanaiyō nērilaiyāy nērilaiyīr**
 cī cī ivaikum cilavō viḷaiyāṭi
 ēcum iṭam ītō viṇṇōrkaḷ ēttutaṛku
 kūcum malarppātam tantaruḷa vantaruḷum
 tecan civalōkaṇ tillaic cirampalattul
 īcaṇārkkku aṇpu āṛ **yām** āṛ ēl ōr empāvāy

You used to express love for the Supreme Effulgence

⁹ See M. S. Andronov, *A Grammar of Modern and Classical Tamil*, 2nd ed. (Madras: New Century Book House, 1989), #128, #257.

¹⁰ *Tamil Lexicon* (Madras: University of Madras, 1982).

¹¹ The reader familiar with Norman Cutler's *Songs of Experience* will recognize the style of analysis of trying to identify the speaker and addressees, and the way in which they are present or absent in the poem. I am not, however, using his elaborate typology for a variety of reasons. Norman Cutler, *Songs of Experience: The Poetics of Tamil Devotion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 11, 19-38, 61-70.

night or day
whenever **we** spoke.
Now, is **your** affection for the full bed?
O well-adorned One!

O well-adorned Ones!
Shame! Is this really the place to playfully reproach?

for he who is luminous
who graciously comes to give the blossom-foot
which withdraws from the praises of the celestials
for the Lord of Śivaloka
for the Lord in the hall at Tillai
Do **we** have love?

O our Lady!

This poem, and the following two poems, are frequently understood to be a dialogue between a single female and a group of females, or someone speaking on behalf of the group.¹² The basis for this perspective in this poem is the two second person addresses, one in the plural (*nēriḷaiyīr*) and one in the singular (*nēriḷaiyāy*), as well as first person markers (*nām*, *yām*) and second person singular markers (*eṇṇpāy*, *vaittaṇaiyō*). The female gender of the speakers is inferred from "*nēriḷai*" meaning 'suitable ornaments' used about ladies.¹³ Here the setting would seem to be the sleeping area of the person addressed.

Poem 157/3:

muttu aṇṇaveḷ **nakaiyāy** muṇ vantu etir eḷuntu **eṇ**
attaṇ āṇantaṇ amutaṇ eṇṇu aḷḷurit
tittikkaṇ **pēcuvāy** vantu uṇ kaṭai **tiravāy**
pattu **uṭaiyīr** īcaṇ paḷa **aṭiyīr** pāṅku **uṭaiyīr**
puttu **aṭiyōm** puṇmai lirttu āḷkoṇṭāla pollātō
ettō **niṇ** aṇṇuṭamai **ellōm aṇiyōmō**
cittam aḷakiyār pāḷārō **nam** civaṇai
ittanaiyum vēṇṭum **emakku** ēḷ ōr empāvāy

O **You** with a white smile like a pearl!

¹² In the discussion of the remaining poems of "Tiruvempāvai", I will refer to speakers in the plural when plural markers are used, even though the speaker may be one person speaking on behalf of the group.

¹³ *Tamil Lexicon* gives the meaning for "*nēriḷai*" as "Lady, as adorned with fine jewels" and cites "*nēriḷaiyāy nēriḷaiyīr*" from this poem.

previously **you** came before [us]
and sweetly, mouth wateringly would say:
"My Father!, Blissful One, Ambrosial One!".

You come and open the door!

O **you** with devotion! O **you** ancient devotees of the Lord! O **you** beautiful ones!
Is it wrong to accept and forgive the faults of **us** who are new devotees?

Would [you] mislead [us]?
Don't **we** all know **your** affection?
Shouldn't those with beautiful hearts sing to **our** Śiva?
All this is necessary for **us**.

O our Lady!

The dialogue in this poem is also indicated by second person singular (*nakaiyāy, pēcuvāy, tīravāy, niṅ*) and plural addressees (*uṭaiyīr, aṭiyīr*). It has as well some first person plural markers (*aṭiyōm, ellōm aṭiyōmō, nam, emakku*). No gender is indicated. The poem includes the reported speech of the single addressees. The setting suggested is the house of the single addressee.

Poem 158/4:

oḷ nilattil **nakaiyāy innam pularntinrō**
vanṇakkilimoliyār ellārum vantārō
eṇṇik koṭu uḷḷavā **collukōm** avvaḷavum
kannait tuyinru avamē kālattaip **pōkkātē**
viṇṇukku oru maruntai vētavilup poruḷai
kaṇṇukku iniyāṇai pāṭik kacintu uḷḷam
uḷ nekku niṇru uruka **yām māṭṭōm nīyē** vantu
eṇṇi kuṟaiyil **tuyil ēl** ōr empāvāy

O **you** whose smile is like a luminous pearl!
Has it not dawned yet?

Have all those who speak like beautiful parrots come?

We will count and tell [you]. Don't **you** waste time sleeping!

about the one Medicine for Heaven,
about the Excellent Sense of the Vedas,
about the He who is agreeable to the eyes,
singing
heart melting,
mind dissolving,
while dissolving,

we won't [do it].

You come and count!
If it is deficient, [go back to] **sleep!**

O Our Lady!

This poem contains first person plural markers (*collukōm, yām māṭṭōm*) and second person singular forms (*nakaiyāy, pōkkātē, nīyē, tuyil*). This structure suggests that the poem is a monologue. However it is often understood to be a dialogue. The sentence "Have all those who speak like parrots come?" is taken to be the utterance of the one person in response to the question by the group, "Has it not dawned yet?" The location also seems to be the house of the single addressee. This poem has the first explicit suggestion that the time of the activity is dawn (*pularntinrō*).

Poem 159/5:

māl ariyā nānmukanum kāṇā malaiyinaī nām
pōl arivōm enru uḷḷa pokkaṅkaḷē pēcum
pāl ūru tēnvāppaṭirī kaṭai tiravāy
ñālamē viṇṇē pīravē arivu ariyān
kōlamum nammai āṭkoṅtaruḷik kōtāṭṭum
cīlamum pāṭi civaṇē civaṇē enru
ōlam iṭiṇum uṇarāy uṇarāy kāṇ
ēlakkulali paricu ēl ōr empāvāy

"That mountain unknown by Māl, unseen by even the Four-faced One,¹⁴
those like **us** can know"

You deceitful One, whose honied mouth flows with milk, speak such lies,
you open the door!

about the beauty of him who is unknown by the knowledge
of the world, the heavens and other [worlds],
about the characteristics that remove faults
and graciously accepts and rules **us**;
even if [we] cry unrestrainedly singing,
See! you do not feel! **You** do not feel!

Oh you fragrant locked one!

Consider [this] nature,

¹⁴ "Māl" and "the Four-faced One" are respectively Viṣṇu and Brahmā.

O our Lady!

This poem is usually interpreted to be a monologue. The speakers are indicated by the first person plural marker (*nammai*). The addressee is one female indicated by the singular vocatives "*paṭirī*" and "*ēlakkulali*", and other singular second person forms (*tiravāy*, *uṇarāy uṇarāy kāṇ*). This poem also contains the reported speech of the addressee. Again the setting seems to be the house of the addressed person.

Poem 160/6:

māṇē nī nenṇalai nālai vantu **uṅkaḷai**
nāṇē eḷuppuvan enṇalum nāṇāmē
 pōṇa tīcai **paḱarāy** iṇṇam pularntinrō
 vāṇē nilaṇē pīravē arīvu ariyāṇ
 tāṇē vantu **emmai** talaiyaḷittu āḱkoṇaṭaruḷum
 vāṇ vārkaḷal pāṭi vantorkku **uṇvāy tiravāy**
 ūṇē **urukāy uṇakkē** uṇum **emakkum**
 ēṇōrkkum tam kōṇaip **pāṭu** ēl ōr empāvāy

O Doe!

Yesterday, even though **you** said:

"Tomorrow **I** indeed will come and awaken **you**, [you did not come]"

Tell [us], without feeling ashamed, what happened to that promise.

Has it not dawned?

for those who came singing about the great anklets of Him

who comes

gives **us** grace

and accepts [us]

Open your door!

Your body does not melt.¹⁵

Only **you** can feel [this way].

for **us**

for those like [us]

sing about our king.

O Our Lady!

¹⁵ "*urukāy*" can be taken as either a negative statement (you do not melt) or an imperative (melt!).

This poem, and the remaining poems of "Tiruvempāvai", are often taken to be the address of the group or representative of the group to a single individual. The speakers are indicated by first person pronouns (*emmai*, and *emakkum*) and the addressee by second person pronouns (*nī*, *uṇ*, *uṇakkē*), the singular culturally feminine vocative (*māṇē*) and singular imperatives or negatives (*pakarāy*, *tiravāy*, *urukāy*, and *pāṭu*). The reported speech also maintains the distinction between the group (*uṅkaḷai*) and the person addressed (*nāṇē eḷuppuvaṇ*). The setting suggested is dawn at the addressee's house. The word translated here as "door", *vāy*, may also mean "mouth".

Poem 161/7:

annē ivaiyum cilavō pala amarar
 uṇṇarku ariyāṇ oruvaṇ irum cīrāṇ
 ciṇṇaṅkaḷ kēṭṭa civaṇ eṇṇē vāy **tirappāy**
 teṇṇā eṇṇā muṇṇam tīcēr meluku **oppāy**
 eṇṇāṇai **eṇ** araiyaṇ iṇ amutu eṇṇu **ellōmum**
conṇōm kēḷ vevvērāy iṇṇam **tuyilutiō**
 vaṇ neṅcap pētaiyar pōl vālā **kiṭattiyāl**
 eṇṇē tuyiliṇ paricu ēl ōr empāvāy

Sister! Could it be:

that **You** would open [your] mouth "Śiva"
 upon hearing of the emblems of Him
 of great beauty
 who is without equal
 who is unknowable to the conceptualization of the gods;
 that **You** would be like wax before a fire
 [upon hearing] "O Southern One"?

Listen!

all of us individually without exception have cried:

"**My** Lord, **My** King, Sweet Ambrosia!".

Still **you** sleep?

What is this blissful sleep that

You would lie
 indifferent
 inactive
 like a naive one with a hard heart.

O our Lady!

In this poem the speakers are indicated collectively by first person plural markers (*ellōmum*

conñōm) and individually by a first person singular marker (*en*). The addressee is indicated by a singular feminine vocative (*annē*) and singular second person markers (*tirappāy*, *oppāy*, *tuyiluti*, and *kiṭatti*). The setting in this poem is the sleeping place of the addressee.

Poem 162/8:

kōli cilampa cilampum kuruku eṅkum
 ēlīl iyampa iyampum veṅcaṅku eṅkum
 kēl il paraṅcōti kēl il paraṅkaruṅai
 kēl il viḷup poruḷkaḷ **pāṭinōm kēṭṭilaiyō**
 vālī itu eṅṅa urakkamō vāy **tiravāy**
 āliyāṅ aṅṅuṭaimai ām ārum ivvārō
 ūlī mutalvaṅāy ninra oruvaṅai
 ēlai paṅkāḷaṅaiyē **pāṭu** ēl ōr empāvāy

Everywhere

the rooster crows
 the birds chirp.

Everywhere

in seven notes music sounds
 the white conch shells resound.

We have sung about:

the noble things without compare,
 the Supreme Grace beyond compare,
 the Supreme Effulgence without compare.

Did **you** not hear?

Bless [you]!

What is this? Is it sleep?

You open [your] door!

Is this indeed the manner in which [you] show [your] affection
 for him who is the sea [of grace]?

Sing about Him

who is without equal,
 who stands underlying the cosmic rest,
 who is part woman.

O our Lady!

There are few explicit indicators of the speakers and addressee in this poem. The speakers are identified by a first person plural marker (*pāṭinōm*) and the addressee by second

person singular markers (*kēṭṭilai*, *tiravāy*, and *pātu*). The poem lists the sounds of dawn.

This suggests that the time at which the poem is set is dawn.

Poem 163/9:

munṇaiṇ paḷampōruṭkum munṇaiṇ paḷamporuḷē
 piṇṇaiṇ putumaikkum pērttum apperriyaṇē
uṇṇaiṇ pirāṇākap perra **uṇ** cīr **aṭiyōm**
uṇ aṭiyār tāḷ **paṇivōm** āṅku avarkkē pāṅku āvōm
 aṇṇavarē **emkaṇavar** āvār avar ukantu
 conṇaparicē toḷumpāyp **paṇiceyvōm**
 inṇavakaiyē **emakku em kōṇ** nalkutiyēḷ
 enna kuraiyum **ilōm** ēḷ ōr empāvāy

Oh Ancient of ancient things!

Oh Newness of new things!¹⁶

We who have attained **you** as Lord are at **your** holy feet.

We bow to the feet of **your** devotees.

We will be companions to them only.

Only they will be **our** husbands.

We will serve [them]

obediently doing what they desiringly say.

If **you** grant this to **us O our King**,¹⁷

we will be without want.

O our Lady!

The speakers are identified here by a number of first person plural forms (*aṭiyōm*, *paṇivōm*, *āvōm*, *paṇiceyvōm*, *em*, *ilōm*). The reference to obtaining husbands implies that the speakers are females. The addressee or addressees were female in previous poems when gender was indicated. In this poem, the addressee is male which is conveyed by *pirāṇ*, a masculine noun. The addressee is also identified by singular second person pronouns (*uṇṇai*, *uṇ*, *nalkuti*). This poem provides no clues which suggest a setting.

¹⁶ I thank Dr. R. Radhakrishnan, University of Calgary for the translation of these lines.

¹⁷ "King" (*kōṇ*) is grammatically in the nominative case. It is often taken as an address. See Varatarājan, *Tiruvācakam*, 244; Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God*, 223; and Pope, *Tiruvaçagam*, 109.

Poem 164/10:

pātālam ēlinum kīl col kalivu pātamalar
 pōtu āṛ puṇai muṭiyum ellāp poruḷ mutivē
 pētai oru pāl tirumēṇi onru allāṇ
 vētamutal viṇṇōrum maṇṇum tutittālum
 ōta ulavā oru tōḷaṇ toṇṭar uḷaṇ
 kōtu il kulattu araṇ taṇ kōyil **piṇāppillaikā!**
 ētu avaṇ ūṛ ētu avaṇ pēr āṛ urrār āṛ ayalār
 ētu avaṇaip pāṭum paricu ēl ōṛ empāvāy

The foot-blossom
 surpassing words
 lies below the seven netherworlds.

The crown
 filled with flowers
 alone is the end to all things.

His form
 is not only the form
 which is part woman.

He is to his devotees
 the one friend
 who cannot be contained by the praise
 of the Vedas, celestials and humans.

O Young Girls of the temple of Araṇ of the faultless lineage!

What is his village?

What is his name?

Who are relatives?

Who are neighbours?

How can [one] sing about his nature?

O our Lady!

The speakers are not indicated explicitly in the poem by any markers except *em* in the refrain. The addressees are identified only by the feminine plural marker *piṇāppillaikā!*.

Most of the poem is a third person description of the male God, Śiva (*araṇ*). The setting is often interpreted to be a temple based on the vocative "O young girls of the temple".

Poem 165/11:

moy āṛ taṭam poykaipukku mukēr eṇṇak
 kaiyāl kuṭaintu kuṭaintu uṇ kalal pāṭi
 aiyā valī aṭiyōm vāḷntōm kāṇ āṛ āḷal
 ceyyā veḷ nīru āṭi celvā ciṛumarūṅkul
 mai āṛ taṭam kaṇ maṭantai **maṇavālā**

aiyā nī āṭkoṅṭaruḷum viḷaiyāṭṭil
 uyyvārkaḷ uyyumvakai eḷlām uyntu oḷintōm
 cyyāmaḷ kāppāy emai ēl ōr empāvāy

Entering the wide tank
 swarming with bees,
 scooping, scooping with [our] hands
 sounding "mukēr",
 singing about **your** anklet:

Oh Father, see!
 That is how **we**
 who have been devotees for generations
 have lived.

O Red One
 like a full flame!
O Rich One
 smeared with sacred white ash!
O Husband of the woman
 with wide blackened eyes and a small waist!
O Father!
We have been saved
 by all the redemptive ways of those who are saved
 by **your** sport that graciously enslaves.
 Without failing in strength,
you will protect **us**.

O our Lady!

The speakers and addressee are mentioned explicitly a number of times in this poem. The speakers refer to themselves with first person plural markers (*aṭiyōm vāḷntōm, oḷintōm, emai*). The addressee is indicated by singular male vocatives (*aiyā, ceyyā, celvā, maṇavāḷā*), singular imperatives (*kāṇ*) and other singular second person markers (*uṇ, nī, kāppāy*). The setting is often taken to be a tank or some other type of pond from the reference to tank in the poem.

Poem 166/12:

ārta piṇavit tuyar keṭa nām ārttu āḷum
 tīrttaṅ nal tillaic ciṅṅrampalattē tī āḷum
 kūttaṅ ivvāṇum kuvalayamum eḷlāmum
 kāttum paṭaittum karantum viḷaiyāṭi
 vārttaiyum pēci vaḷaicilampa vār kalaikaḷ
 ārppu aravam ceyya aṅikuḷal mēl vaṅṅu ārppa

pūt tikaḷum poykai kuṭaintu uṭaiyān poṅpātam
ētti irumcuṅai nir āṭu ēl ōr empāvāy

Praising

He who is the holy water
in whom we joyfully bathe to remove the suffering of binding birth,
He who is the dancer
who dances with fire in the little hall in good Tillai,
He who sports
preserving, creating and concealing the heavens, the earth and all [others],
scooping in the pond
resplendent with flowers,
while bees buzz around [our] pretty hair,
while waistlets loudly jangle,
while bangles tinkle,

praising the golden foot of Him who possesses,

play

in the waters of the great hill tank!

O our Lady!

In this poem, the speakers are indicated explicitly by one plural pronoun (*nām*). However, the female gender of the speakers in this poem and also in poems 13, 14 and 15 is understood from the description of them in the poem. The addressee is not identified at all. The singular imperative "play" (*āṭu*) suggests a single addressee. This poem and the remaining poems, with the exception of poems 16 and 19, end with the single imperative "play". Much of the poem talks about a male figure in the third person who can be identified as Śiva by the reference to the dancer in Tillai. In Tillai, Śiva has the form of Naṭarācar. The reference to pond or mountain tank suggests the setting is a small body of water.

Poem 167/13:

paim kuvaḷaik kār malarāl cemkamalappaim pōṭāl
aṅkam kuruku iṅattāl pinnum aravattāl
taṅkaḷ malam kaḷuvuvār vantu cārtaliṅāl
eṅkaḷ pirāṭṭiyum emkōṇum pōṅru icainta
poṅku maṭuvil pukap pāyntu pāyntu **nam**
caṅkam cilampa cilampu kalantu ārppa
koṅkaikaḷ poṅka kuṭaiyum puṅal poṅka
paṅkayappūm puṅal pāyntu āṭu ēl ōr empāvāy

With the flowers of the beautiful blue water-lily,
 with the beautiful full buds of the red lotus,
 with the flocks of birds,
 with woven sounds,
 [and]
 because of those who have come to wash off their blemishes,
 this pond resembles **our** King and **our** Lady;

springing, springing into that swelling pond,
our bangles jangle and anklets tinkle together,
 [filled with happiness **our**] breasts rise,
 fomenting the stirred waters,
 leaping into the waters with lotus flowers,
play!

O our Lady!

The speakers are identified by plural first person pronouns (*eṅkaḷ, em, nam*). In this poem also, the addressee is not indicated explicitly. The reference to pond here suggests the setting is the pond.

Poem 168/14:

kātu āṛ kuḷai āṭa paim pūṇ kalaṅ āṭa
 kōtai kuḷal āṭa vaṅṭiṅ kuḷām āṭa
 cīṭappunal āṭi cīṛampalam pāṭi
 vēṭap poruḷ pāṭi apporuḷ āṃā pāṭi
 cōti tīram pāṭi cūḷkonṛait tār pāṭi
 āṭi tīram pāṭi antam āṃā pāṭi
 pētittu **nammai** vaḷarttu eṭutta peyvaḷai taṅ
 pātattīram pāṭi **āṭu** ēḷ ōṛ empāvāy

while

pretty earrings wave,
 beautiful adorning ornaments sway,
 flower-adorned locks wave,
 and swarms of bees sway,
 moving the cool waters,
 singing of the sacred hall,
 singing of the substance of the Vedas,
 singing of the essence of that substance,
 singing about the nature of the Effulgence,
 singing about the wreath of *konṛai* ,
 singing of the nature of the beginning,
 singing the way which is the end,
 singing of the nature of the foot of the bangle-wearer
 who separates and fosters **us**,

Play!

O our Lady!

The speakers are identified in the poem by only one plural first person pronoun (*nammai*).

The addressee is not indicated explicitly. Again the setting suggested is the pond.

Poem 169/15:

ōr oru kāl **emperumāṅ** eṅru eṅrē **nam** perumāṅ
 cīr oru kāl vāy ōvāḷ cittam kaḷikūra
 nīr oru kāl ōvā neṭum tārai kaṅ paṅippa
 pār oru kāl vantaṅaiyāḷ viṅṅōrait tāṅpaṅiyāḷ
 pēr araiyaṅku iṅṅāṅē pittu oruvar ām ārum
 ār oruvar ivvaṅṅam āḷkoḷḷum vittakar tāḷ
 vār uruvap pūṅ **mulaiyīr** vāy āra **nām** pāḷi
 ēr uruvap pūm puṅal pāyntu **āṭu** ēl ōr empāvāy

She would speak unceasingly:

sometimes about the glories of **our** Lord
 sometimes repeatedly crying: "**Our** Lord".

Sometimes she would be on the ground
 eyes wet with long streams [of tears].
 sometimes due to the happiness in [her] heart
 the tears would not stop.

She would not show respect even to the celestials.

This is the manner of a person
 who is maddened for the great King.

Who is such a person?

O Ones whose breasts are adorned with an embossed band!

Let **us**,

singing with a full mouth
 of the foot of the knowing One who takes and rules in this way
 leaping into the waters with beautiful flowers,

play!

O our lady!

In this poem the speakers are indicated by the first person plural pronouns (*nam, nām*).

The addressee is mentioned explicitly by the second person plural vocative, *mulaiyīr*.

Again the setting is suggested by the word, pond (*puṅal*).

Poem 170/16:

muṅṅi kaḷalaic curukki eḷuntu uṭaiyāḷ

ennat tikaḷntu emmai āḷuṭaiyāḷ iṭṭitaiyiṅ
 minṇip polintu empirāṭṭi tiruvaṭimēḷ
 poṅ am cilampil cilampi tiruppuruvam
 ennac cilai kulavi nam tammai āḷ uṭaiyāḷ
 taṇṇil pirivu ilā em kōmān anparkku
 muṇṇi avaḷ namakku muṇ curakkum iṅ aruḷē
 ennap poliyāy malai ēḷ ōr empāvāy

Advancing, compressing the sea, arising and being visible
 like she who possesses,
 appearing, flashing
 like the small waist of her who possesses and rules **us**,
 resounding
 like the beautiful gold anklets on the holy feet of **our** Lady,
 bending a bow
 like the holy brows,

like her sweet grace which advances and abounds
 for the devotees of the King
 who is inseparable from her who possesses **us**
 and for **us** first of all

Pour [your rain] **O Cloud!**¹⁸

O our Lady!

The speakers of this poem are identified explicitly in the poem by five first person plural pronouns (*emmai*, *em*, *nam tammai*, *namakku*). The addressee, a rain cloud, is indicated explicitly by the second person verbal form, "pour" (*poliyāy*), by the noun *malai* which means both rain and cloud, and by the comparison of the Goddess to the storm cloud. No particular setting is indicated in the poem.

Poem 171/17:

ceṅ kaṅ avaṅ pāl ticaimukaṅ pāl tēvarkaḷ pāl
 eṅkum ilātatu ōr iṅpam nam pālatā
 koṅku uṅ karum kulali nam tammaik kōtāṭṭi
 iṅku nam illaṅkaḷ tōrum eḷuntaruli
 cem kamalap poṅ pātam tantaruḷum cēvakaṅai
 am kaṅ aracai aṭiyōṅkaṭku ār amutai
 naṅkaḷ perumāṅai pāṭi nalam tikala
 paṅkayap pūm puṅal pāyntu āṭu ēḷ ōr empāvāy

¹⁸ "Cloud" (*malai*) is not in a vocative form. It is, however, taken that way. See Varatarājan, *Tiruvācakam*, 251. It also can be taken as the subject of the first line of the poem. See Aruṅaivaṭivēḷ Mutaliyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 296.

That one delight is not
 the Red-eyed One's
 the Four-faced One's
 the celestials'

it is **ours**

O One with the Fragrant Black Locks!

when [he]

removes **our** faults
 graciously arises in each of **our** homes
 and bestows the red-lotus golden foot.

about that guardian who thereby graces;
 about the King with beautiful eyes;
 about the Supreme Ambrosia for **us** who are devotees;
 about **our** Lord;
 singing

so that well-being will flourish
 springing into the waters
 beautiful with lotus flowers

play!

O our Lady!

The speakers are indicated by a number of first person plural markers (*nam, nam tammai, aṭiyōṅkaṭku, naṅka!*). The addressee is distinguished by a single vocative. The vocative suggests that the person addressed is female as *kuḷal* is a word which is used to indicate a female's hairstyle, although it also has a broader meaning as well. The setting suggested in the poem is a pond (*puṅal*).

Poem 172/18:

aṅṅāmalaiyāṅ aṭikkamalam cenru iraiṅcum
 viṅṅōr muṭiyiṅ maṅittokaivīru arṅṅāl pōl
 kaṅ ār iravik katir vantu kār kalappa
 taṅ ār oḷi maḷuṅki tāraikaikaḷ tām akala
 peṅ āki āṅ āy ali āy piraṅku oli cēr
 viṅ āki maṅ āki ittaṅaiyum vēru āki
 kaṅ ār amutamum āy ninraṅ kaḷal pāṭi
peṅṅē ippūm puṅal pāyntu **āṭu** ēl ōr empāvāy

Like the lotus-foot of Him who is in Anṅāmalai
 before which the diamonds on the crowns of the gods who bow there
 lose their lustre
 the sun's rays
 come, pervade space
 conceal darkness

and the cool light of the stars dulls and yields.
 Singing of the anklet of Him who remains apart [yet]
 becomes female, male and neuter,
 becomes the sky with bright light,
 becomes the earth,
 becomes all these,
 and becomes ambrosia which fills the eye,
 leap into the flower-filled waters,
O Girl!
 and **play!**

O our Lady!

There are no explicit markers identifying the speakers in this poem. The addressee is a single girl indicated by the singular vocative *peṇṇē*. The setting suggested in this poem is a pond (*puṇal*) also.

Poem 173/19:

umkaiyil piḷḷai **uṇakkē** aṭaikkalam enru
 aṅku appalañ col putukkum **em** accattāl
eṅkaḷ **perumāṅ** **uṇakku** oṇru **uraippōm** **kēḷ**
em koṅkai **niṅ** aṅṅar allār tōḷ cēraṅka
emkai **uṇakku** allātu eppaṇiyum ceyyaṅka
 kaṅkul pakal **emkaṅ** maru oṇrum kāṅaṅka
 iṅku ipparicē **emakku** **em** **kōṅ** nalkutiyēḷ
 eṅku eḷil eṅ nāyiru **emakku** ēḷ oṅ empāvāy

"The child in **your** hands is given to **you!** in trust",
 because of **our** fear which is renewed by that old saying,
we will say one thing to **you our Lord, listen:**

Let not **our** breasts join the shoulders of those who are not **your** devotees.
 Let not **our** hands do any service which is not for **you**.
 Let not **our** eyes see anything else [but you] night or day.
 If [you] grant, **our** King, to **us** here this status,
 what does it matter to **us** where the sun rises?

O our Lady!

This poem has a relatively large number of markers indicating the speakers and addressee. There are nine first person plural markers referring to the speakers (*em*, *eṅkaḷ*, *uraippōm*, *emakku*) and three singular second person pronouns referring to the addressee (*uṇakku*, *niṅ*). The speakers reveal their gender by referring to their breasts. The addressee is male (*perumāṅ*, *kōṅ*). The setting is not specified.

Poem 174/20:

pōrri aruḷuka **niṅ** āti ām pātamalar
 pōrri aruḷuka **niṅ** antam ām cem taḷirkaḷ
 pōrri ellā uyirkkum tōrram ām poṅ pātam
 pōrri ellā uyirkkum pōkam ām pūm kaḷalkaḷ
 pōrri ellā uyirkkum itu ām iṅai aṭikal
 pōrri māl nānmukaṇum kāṇāta puṅṅarikam
 pōrri **yām** uyya āṭkoṅṅaruḷum poṅmalarkaḷ
 pōrri **yām** mārkali nīr āṭu ēl ōr empāvāy

Praise [be to you]!

Let [us] be graced with **your** foot-flower which is the beginning.

Praise [be to you]!

Let [us] be graced with **your** red sprouts which are the end.

Praise [be to you]!

[Your] golden foot is the basis of all life.

Praise [be to you]!

[Your] flowery anklets are happiness to all that lives.

Praise [be to you]!

[Your] two feet are the end for all life.

Praise [be to you]!

[Your] white lotus was not seen either by Māl or the Four-Faced-One.

Praise [be to you]!

[Your] golden flowers graciously accept [us] so that **we** are redeemed.

Praise [be to you]!

Let **us** play in the water during Mārkaḷi!

O our Lady!

In this poem the speakers are identified by two first person plural pronouns (*yām*) and the addressee is also indicated by two second person singular pronouns (*niṅ*). The reference to the white lotus that Viṣṇu and Brahmā did not see, indicates that the addressee is Śiva.

"Tiruppalliyēḷucci"

Poem 366/1:

pōrri eṅ vāḷ mutal ākiya poruḷē
 pularntu pūm kaḷarṅku iṅai tuṅai malar koṅṅu
 ērri **niṅ** tirumukattu **emakku** aruḷ malarum
 eḷil nakai kaṅṅu **niṅ** tiruvaṭi **tolukōm**
 cēru itaḷk kamalaṅkaḷ malarum taṅ vayal cūḷ
 tirupperunturai urai **civaperumānē**
 ēru uyarkoṭi **uṭaiyāy emai uṭaiyāy**
 emperumān paḷḷi eḷuntaruḷāyē

Praise [be to you]!

O Substance which is the Source of **my** life!

It has dawned!

offering entwined flowers to [your] beautiful anklets,
seeing the beautiful smile on **your** face which radiates grace to **us**,
we will serve **your** feet.

O Lord Śiva who dwells in Tirupperunturai!

surrounded by cool fields in which lotuses blossom in the mud,

You possess the banner of the bull!

You possess **me**!

O our Lord¹⁹

You graciously arise from the bed!

The speaker or speakers in this poem are indicated by singular (*en*), and plural first person pronouns and verb forms (*emakku*, *tolukōm*, *emai*, *em*). The addressee is indicated by second person singular pronouns (*niṅ*), second person addresses (*uṭaiyāy*, *eḷuntaruḷāyē*), a masculine address (*civaperumāṇē*), and a non-gendered address (*poruḷē*). The time of day is dawn (*pularntu*). The place would seem to be the presence of an image of the deity based on the reference to offering flowers to the deity's feet and seeing the smile on the deity's face. More specifically the place could be the town of Tirupperunturai.

Poem 367/2:

aruṇaṅ intiraṅ ticaṅ aṅukiṇaṅ iruḷ pōy
akaṅratu utayam **niṅ** malart tirumukattiṅ
karuṇaiyiṅ cūriyaṅ eḷa eḷa nayaṅak
kaṭi malar malara maru aṅṅal am kaṅ ām
tiraḷ nirai arupatam muralvaṅa ivai ōr
tirupperunturai urai **civaperumāṇē**
aruḷ niti tara varum āṇanta **malaiyē**
alai kaṭalē paḷḷi **eḷuntaruḷāyē**

¹⁹ This form of "Lord" (Perumāṇ) is nominative. It is often taken as a vocative. See Aruṇaiṅṅaiṅ Mutaliyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 456; and Varatarājaṅ, *Tiruvācakam*, 392. In this translation it will be treated as a vocative in the poems in which it appears except poem five.

Aruṇaṇ has reached Intiraṇ's direction.²⁰
 Darkness has gone.
 While the sun rises higher and higher,
 like the compassion that radiates on **your** face,²¹
 and while the scented flowers bloom
 [like your] eyes
 the ordered crowds of bees²² there begin to buzz.
Consider these [things].
O Lord Śiva who dwells in Tirupperunturai!
O Mountain of Bliss who comes to give the treasure of grace.
O wavy Ocean!

You graciously arise from the bed!

The speaker or speakers of this poem are not identified at all. The addressee, Śiva, is indicated by a second person singular pronoun (*niṅ*), a masculine address (*civaperumāṇē*), and non-gendered vocatives (*malaiyē*, *kaṭalē*). The time of day is again dawn indicated by the rising of the sun.

Poem 368/3:

kūviṇa pūm kuyil kūviṇa kōli
 kurukukaḷ iyampiṇa iyampiṇa caṅkam
 ōviṇa tārakai oḷi oḷi utayattu
 oruppaṭukiṇratu viruppoṭu **namakku**
tēva nal ceṇi kaḷal tāi iṇai **kāṭṭāy**
 tirupperunturai urai **civaperumāṇē**
 yāvarum aṇivu **ariyāy emakku eḷiyāy**
emperumāṇ paḷḷi eḷuntaruḷāyē

The *kuyil* has called.
 The rooster has crowed,
 The birds have chirped.
 The conches have sounded.
 The light of the stars has gone.
 The light of the sun has appeared.

²⁰ Intiraṇ is the Lord of the east. Aruṇaṇ is the charioteer of the sun. The arrival of Aruṇaṇ represents the red color that precedes the dawning of the sun. Aruṇaivaṭivēl Mutaliyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 456.

²¹ I am following Aruṇaivaṭivēl Mutaliyār in connecting *utayam* with *cūriyaṇ*: Aruṇaivaṭivēl Mutaliyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 456.

²² *Aṇupatam* (6-footed) is usually understood to mean bees (*vaṇṭu*). See Aruṇaivaṭivēl Mutaliyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 456; Kantacāmip Piḷḷai, *Tiruvācakam*, 245; Varatarājaṇ, *Tiruvācakam*, 393; Pope, *Tiruvaçagam*, 208.

O God! Lovingly,²³ **you** showed [your] two good special ankleted feet
to **us**.

O Lord Śiva who dwells in Tirupperunturai!

You are unknowable to everyone,
[yet] **you** are easily accessible to **us**.

Our Lord,

You graciously arise from the bed.

The speakers are indicated by three plural first person pronouns (*namakku, emakku, em*).

The addressee, Śiva, is identified by singular addresses (*kāṭṭāy, ariyāy, eḷiyāy*), and masculine addresses (*tēva, civaperumāṇē, perumāṇ*). The poem indicates it is dawn by reference to the appearance of the sun and the disappearance of the light of the stars.

Poem 369/4:

in icai vīṇaiyar yālinar orupāl
irukkoṭu tōttiram iyampīnar orupāl
tunṇiya piṇai malark kaiyīnar orupāl
toḷukaiyar aḷukaiyar tuvaḷkaiyar orupāl
ceṇṇiyil aṅcali kūppiṇar orupāl
tirupperunturai urai **civaperumāṇē**
eṇṇaiyum āṇṭukoṇṭu in aruḷ puriyum
em perumāṇ paḷḷi eḷuntaruḷāyē

In one group are those who play the sweet music of the vīṇai and yāl.
In one group are those who recite the stotras and the Rg Veda.
In one group are those whose hands hold woven flowers.
In one group are those who worship, those who weep and those who tremble.
In one group are those who worship with hands on [their] heads.

O Lord Śiva who dwells in Tirupperunturai!

Our Lord

who accepts even **me** and gives sweet grace,

You graciously arise from the bed.

In this poem the speaker is identified by a singular (*eṇṇai*) and a plural first person pronoun (*em*). The addressee, Śiva, is indicated by two addresses (*civaperumāṇē, perumāṇ*). The poem does not speak about dawn, but rather describes a scene of worshippers.

²³ I am using Vanmikanathan's translation of *viruppoṭu* here. Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God*, 316.

Poem 370/5:

pūtaṅkaḷ tōrum **ninrāy** eṇiṅ allāl
 pōkku ilaṅ varavu ilaṅ eṇa **ninaip** pulavōr
 kītaṅkaḷ pāṭutal āṭutal allāl
 kēṭṭu **ariyōm unaik** kaṅṭu arivārai
 cītam koḷ vayal tirupperunturai **manna**
 cīntaṅaikkum **ariyāy eṅkaḷ** muṅ vantu
 ētaṅkaḷ aruttu **emmai** āṅṭu aruḷpurium
emperumān paḷli eḷuntaruḷāyē

Besides [many] saying that **you** are in each element,
 Besides the knowledgeable
 singing songs about **you** that say
 "he does not go, he does not come"
 and dancing,

we have not heard and do not know about those who see and know **you**.²⁴

O King of Tirupperunturai with cool fields!
You who are inaccessible to thought,
 are **our** Lord who
 comes before **us**
 removes [our] faults
 rules **us**
 and gives grace.

You please arise from the bed!

In this poem the speakers are identified by first person plural pronouns (*eṅkaḷ*, *emmai*, *em*) and a first person plural verb (*ariyōm*). The addressee is indicated by vocative (*manna*) and other second person singular forms (*ninrāy*, *ninaip*, *unaip*, *ariyāy*). The addressee is not explicitly identified as Śiva in this poem. The only suggestion for the setting is the reference to Tirupperunturai.

Poem 371/6:

pappu aṅa vīṭṭu iruntu uṅarum **niṅ** aṅiyār
 pantaṅai vantu aruttār avar palarum
 maippu uṅu kaṅṅiyar māṅiṭattu iyalpiṅ
 vaṅaṅkukinrār aṅaṅkiṅ **maṅavāḷā**
 ceppu uṅu kamalaṅkaḷ malarum taṅ vayal cūḷ

²⁴ Aruṅaivaṅiṅvēl Mutaliyār explains that this line refers to those who try to see and know God in the same way as they know worldly things. *Tiruvācakam*, 459.

tirupperunturai urai **civaperumānē**
 ippirappu aruttu **emai** āṇṭu aruḷ puriyum
emperumān paḷḷi eḷuntaruḷāyē

Your devotees who are in release with quieted [minds]
 who removed [their] bonds
 worship
 as human [women] with eyes [highlighted in] black.

O husband of Aṇaṅku!

O Lord Śiva who dwells in Tirupperunturai
 surrounded by cool fields with blossoming red lotuses,

Our Lord who
 removes this birth
 rules **us**
 and gives grace,

You please rise from the bed.

The speakers in this poem are only identified by two first person plural pronouns (*emai*, *em*). The addressee is identified as the male God, Śiva (*civaperumānē*). He is also indicated by a second person singular pronoun (*niṅ*) and other masculine vocatives (*maṇavāḷā*, *perumān*). The only reference to a possible setting is the mention of Tirupperunturai.

Poem 372/7:

atu paḷac cuvai eṇa amutu eṇa aritarku
 aritu eṇa eḷitu eṇa amaram ariyār
 itu avan tiru uru ivan avan eṇavē
eṅkaḷai āṇṭu koṇṭu iṅku eḷuntaruḷum
 matu vaḷar poḷil tiru uttarakōca
 maṅkai **uḷḷāy** tirupperunturai **mannā**
 etu **emaip** paṇi koḷum āru atu **kētpōm**
em perumān paḷḷi eḷuntaruḷāyē

Even the *immortals* do not know
 that is the taste of fruit,
 [that is] ambrosia,
 [that is] inaccessible to knowledge,
 [that is] accessible,
 [But we know and declare]²⁵
 this is his holy form,

²⁵ This follows Aruṇaivaṭivēḷ Mutaliyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 460; and Varatarājan, *Tiruvācakam*, 398.

this "He" is that "He",
You who are in Tiruvuttarakōcamaṅkai [surrounded by] sweet groves!
 graciously rules **us**
 and arises here.
O King of Tirupperunturai!
We ask what is the way in which **we** may serve?
Our Lord,

Please arise from the bed.

In this poem the speakers are again indicated by first person plural pronouns (*eṅkaḷai*, *emai*, *em*). The addressee is not identified explicitly as Śiva. He is however mentioned as being in Tiruvuttarakōcamaṅkai and the king of Tirupperunturai. The first reference is a second person singular form and the second is a singular male vocative. The setting suggested by this poem is Tiruvuttarakōcamaṅkai.

Poem 373/8:

muntiya mutal naṭu irutiyum **ānāy**
 mūvarum arikilar yāvar marru arivār
 pantu aṅai viraliyum **nīyum nin** aṭiyār
 paḷam kuṭil torum eḷuntaruḷiya **paranē**
 cem taḷal purai tirumēṇiyum kāṭṭi
 tirupperunturai urai kōyilum kāṭṭi
 antaṅaṅ āvatum kāṭṭi vantu **āṅṭāy**
 ār **amutē** paḷli eḷuntaruḷāyē

You are the
 beginning which preceeds [all],
 the middle
 and the end.

[when] the three²⁶ do not know [you], who else will know [you]?

O Lord

you and she whose fingers holds a ball
 graciously appear in each of the ancient huts of **your** devotees.
 Showing the form like [the column of] red fire,
 showing the temple in Tirupperunturai,
 showing the brahman,
you came and ruled.

O full Ambrosia!

²⁶ Vanmikanathan identifies the three as the gods who perform the three cosmic functions of creating, preserving and destruction: Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra. Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God*, 318 n. 8.i, 8.ii, 8.iii.

You graciously arise from the bed.

The speakers are not identified in this poem at all. The addressee is indicated by second person singular pronouns (*nīyum, niṇ*) and verb forms (*āṇāy, āṇāy*), as well as vocatives. The vocative, *paraṇē* (O Lord), indicates the addressee is male, while the vocative, *amutē* (O Ambrosia), is neither male nor female. The setting is not indicated, although the mention of Tirupperunturai suggests that it may be the setting.

Poem 374/9:

viṇṇakat tēvarum nanṇavum māṭṭā
viḷupporuḷē unā²⁷ toḷuppu **aṭiyōnkaḷ**
 maṇṇakattē vantu vāḷac **ceytānē**
 vaṇ **tirupperunturaiyāy valī aṭiyōm**
 kaṇ akattē niṇru kaḷitaru **tēnē**
kaṭal amutē karumpē virumpu aṭiyār
akattāy ulakukku uyir **āṇāy**
em perumāṇ paḷḷi eḷuntaruḷāyē

O Excellent Substance

whom the gods who live in the sky cannot approach.

O he who came on earth and gave well being to **us** who are **your** devotees who serve.

O You of abundant Tirupperunturai!

O Honey who gives joy
 to the eyes of **us** who are hereditary devotees!

O Ocean of Ambrosia! O Sugarcane!

You are in devotees who desire [you]!

You are the soul of the world.

Our Lord,

Graciously arise from the bed.

The speakers in this poem are identified by first person plural forms (*aṭiyōnkaḷ, aṭiyōm, em*). The addressee is identified by second person singular addresses (*tirupperunturaiyāy, akattāy, āṇāy*) or vocatives which are male (*ceytānē, perumāṇ*) or ungendered

²⁷ See Ka. Cu. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār, commentator, *Śrī Maṇivācakapa Perumāṇ Tiruvāy Malarntaruḷiya Tiruvācakam Ārāyccip Pērurai* (Maviṭṭapum, Iḷāṅkai: Patmā Patippakam, 1954), 784 for an explanation of this form. I thank Dr. Ā. Āṇantarācan for explaining the form to me: Ā. Āṇantarācan, Interviews with the author, Madurai, 1990.

(*viḷupporuḷē, tēṇē, amutē, karumpē*). The reference to Tirupperunturai suggests that place is the setting.

Poem 375/10:

puvaniyil pōyp piravāmaiṅ nāḷ **nām**
pōkkukinrōm avamē intap pūmi
 civaṅ uyyak koḷkinra āru enru nōkki
tirupperunturai uraivāy tirumāl ām
 avaṅ viruppu cytavum alaravaṅ ācaip
 paṭavum **niṅ** alarnta mcyk karuṇaiyum **nīyum**
 avaniyil pukuntu **emai** āḷkoḷḷa **vallāy**
ār amutē paḷḷi eḷuntaruḷāyē

O You who dwell in Tirupperunturai,
 when Tirumāl and He of the flower²⁸
 desired [your grace]
 realizing that:
 "by not being born on earth
 we have wasted [our] days;
 this earth is the way in which Śiva saves;"
You with **your** true manifested grace,
you are able to enter earth
 and enslave **us**.
O abundant Ambrosia!

You graciously arise from the bed.

The speakers refer to themselves with one first person plural pronoun (*emai*). The speakers report the speech of Viṣṇu and Brahmā in which they refer to themselves with first person plural forms (*nām pōkkukinrōm*). The addressee is identified by second person singular pronouns (*niṅ, nīyum*), two second person singular addresses (*tirupperunturai uraivāy, vallāy*) as well as a non-gendered address (*amutē*). Here also the setting could be Tirupperunturai.

²⁸ Brahmā.

Description

The structures of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" differ from each other. Each of the ten poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" are monologues. The refrain, "You please arise from the bed", is easily incorporated into the rest of the poem, structurally and semantically.

The structure of "Tiruvempāvai" is more complicated. Some of the poems are understood to be dialogues, particularly poems 2, 3 and 4. Sometimes, however, more of the poems, or even all of the first ten poems, are taken as dialogues.²⁹ The structure is further

complicated by the refrain which is not always easily incorporated into each poem. For example in poem 9, all of the poem except the refrain is addressed to a male; the refrain is addressed to a female. Interpreters of "Tiruvempāvai" resolve this difficulty differently.

Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar incorporates it into his interpretation. The refrain is important in

Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār's interpretation for determining that the poem is associated with a vow. The *pāvai* addressed in the poem is the goddess to whom the speakers are doing

the vow.³⁰ Aruṇaivaṭivēl Mutaliyār, on the other hand, maintains that the refrain has no meaning beyond identifying the poems as part of a particular type of song, the *pāvai*

songs.³¹ I have omitted the refrain when considering the addressees in "Tiruvempāvai".

In both poems each individual poem is a single event. Since each poem is a monologue or short dialogue, the utterance of it constitutes a single event - a short episode.

The duration of the utterance when recited or sung equals the duration of the event

dramatized in the poem. Each poem can stand autonomously as a single event, or they can

be taken together as a sequence or as a collection of utterances on the same topic. Both

situations occur in interpretation and usage. All the poems taken together, either as a

²⁹ See Part II, chapter 5 on Śaiva Siddhānta.

³⁰ Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 460, 468.

³¹ Aruṇaivaṭivēl Mutaliyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 276. Varatarājaṅ, *Tiruvācakam*, 236 also says that the refrain has no meaning.

sequence or as a collection, also constitute an event when uttered. In this situation also, the time it takes to recite or sing all the poems equals the duration of the event.

The event of each poem can be identified in a basic way. In "Tiruvempāvai", the event is generally taken to be female characters awakening one or more friends, making requests, praising and bathing. In "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" the event is commonly understood to be the speaker awakening the addressee.

The speakers in both poems do not have particular identities. For the most part the speakers are identified only by first person pronouns. First person pronouns do not convey a specific identity. In Tamil, they convey number, but not gender. In "Tiruvempāvai", the speakers can be understood to be female in poems 1, 2, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 19. The speaker in "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is only identified by first person pronouns. The poems provide no more information about the identity of the speaker.

The addressees of both poems are particularized to a varying extent. In "Tiruvempāvai", all the poems but 12, 13, and 14 have second person markers. Second person markers in Tamil convey number, but neither gender nor a particular identity. However the gender is known in many of the poems. The addressee or addressees are female in poems 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 10, 15, 17 and 18. In poems 9, 11, and 19 the addressee is male. In poem 9, the addressee is also identified by non-gendered terms. Poem 11 suggests that the addressee is Śiva. Śiva's identity in poem 11, is deduced from the reference to ash and the column of fire. Śaivas wear ash as one of their symbols. Śiva took the form of a column of fire in order to resolve a dispute between Viṣṇu and Brahmā about whom was greater.³²

³² Yocum discusses the frequent references to this myth in the *Tiruvācakam*. *Hymns to the Dancing Śiva*, 142-4; 161 n.6.

The identity of the addressee is given more precisely in "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci". All poems utilized second person forms of pronouns or verbs except poem 4, which has these only in the refrain. In poems 5, 7, 8 and 9 the addressee is also male. The male God is identified as Śiva in poems 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. These masculine vocatives are accompanied by ungendered addresses in poems 1, 2, 8, 9 and 10.

The extent to which the setting is indicated in the poems varies. In "Tiruvempāvai" the temporal setting is mentioned in several of the poems as dawn, and in the final poem the Tamil month of *Mārkaḷi* is mentioned. The place of the activity inferred from the poem is a house or several houses in the earlier poems, and a body of water in the later poems. In several poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" dawn also is mentioned. The setting can be taken to be Tirupperunturai as Śiva is addressed as the Lord who dwells in Tirupperunturai. Yet in poem 7 the addressee is also mentioned as being in Tiruvuttarakōcamaṅkai.

"Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" are collections of poems linked together by a refrain. The poems of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" are discrete monologues or dialogues, the utterance of which constitutes an event. The speakers of the poems do not have a specific identity. At most the gender of the speaker is given or suggested. The addressees may or may not have a particular identity. The extent to which the setting is described varies. It is never identified in a definite way. These basic characteristics of the two poems are also found in the earliest Tamil poetry and in poetry composed in later times.

I: Chapter 2: Precedents and Later Developments

The features of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyēḷucci" described in the previous chapter are characteristic of a large portion of Tamil literature from the first extant forms, the classical poetry, to modern times. The classical poems and the post-canonical Śaiva devotional literature exhibit similar organizational features. These poems are also discrete episodic verses. They are primarily monologues. The particular identity of the speaker is not provided, however the gender of the speaker may be known either explicitly or by inference. The addressees, as in "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyēḷucci", are sometimes given a particular identity. Likewise the setting is specified in varying detail.

The prominence of the episodic single poem in Tamil Literature cannot be overstated. Kamil Zvelebil writes:

As a matter of fact, it is possible to classify almost the entire literary production in the Tamil language under the binary division of *tokainilai* and *toṭarnilai*, i.e. solitary stanzas arranged in anthologies (*tokai*), and connected, narrative or descriptive discourses. (Zvelebil's n. 18). It is hardly an overstatement when we maintain that the solitary, independent, individual poem has always been the most characteristic, most typical, also probably most productive, form of ancient and modern, and to a lesser extent, even medieval poetry in Tamil. It is distinct and detached from other poems, self-sufficient and self-contained, and can be comprehended and enjoyed in itself. It is fit to be anthologized in collections (cf. Sanskrit *kosa*, Tamil *tokai* or *kottu*). . . . In contrast, *toṭar-nilai* (Zvelebil's n. 19) represents connected narrative, or descriptive discourse (epics, *puranas*, *prabandhas*, novels).¹

The longevity of this type of literature is significant. G. Subbiah has argued that the world view implicit in the classical poetry underlies the perspective of the devotional

¹ Kamil Zvelebil, *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 139-40. Others have made the observation that Tamil Literature can be viewed from the perspective of this binary division; see for example: A.M. Thomas, "Literary Genres in Tamil: A Diachronic Study," in *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*, vol. 1 (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1990), 347-8. Zvelebil sees the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava devotional poems to be direct descendents of the *akam* and *puram* individual poems. K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, vol. 10 of *A History of Indian Literature* (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), 93-4.

poetry.² The structural features of the poetry are integral to actualizing important aspects of that world view in the devotional context. That poetry continues to be composed and used in this style suggests a continuity of world view and values extending from at least the early centuries of the common era to the present.

This chapter begins with a brief introduction to the classical poetry. The structural features will be illustrated by reference to specific classical poems. Finally, these features will be briefly highlighted in poems composed later than "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyeḷucci".

The classical poems are organized into collections of collections. The poems in individual anthologies are ordered by some criteria other than chronology.³ They are generally classified into two types: those which are about love (*akam*) and those which are about matters other than love (*puṛam*). Each type of poem has its own set of poetic conventions. Sometimes there is disagreement regarding whether a poem should be classified as either *akam* or *puṛam*, as it shares conventions of both.⁴

The body of classical poetry consists of two collections: *Pattuppāṭṭu* (The Ten Poems) and *Eṭṭuttokai* (The Eight Collections). *Pattuppāṭṭu* is a collection of ten poems, each of which is by one author and is dedicated to one human hero. The exception to this

² G. Subbiah, "Patterns in Religious Thought in Early South India: A Study of Classical Tamil Texts" (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 1988). See Part III, chapter 12 for further discussion of this point.

³ The possible exception to this is *Patirruppattu*. See Subbiah, "Patterns in Religious Thought in Early South India," 180-1.

⁴ J. Parthasarathi, "Puram Poetry," in *The Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*, vol. 1 (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1990), 163. A basic explanation of the poetics of *akam* and *puṛam* poetry will be given in the following section on interpretation. There is a substantial amount of literature on the classical poems. Some titles have been listed in the introduction to this thesis and could provide a point of departure for those not already familiar with classical Tamil poetry.

is "Tirumurukāruppaṭai" which is dedicated to the God, Murukan.⁵ The poems are not divided into verses. They range in length from 103 lines to 782 lines. N. Subrahmanian classifies three of the ten poems ("Mullaippāṭṭu", "Kuriñcippāṭṭu" and "Paṭṭinappālai") as *akam* poems and the remaining seven as *puṛam* poems.⁶ There is not, however, really a consensus on the classification of all of these poems as either *akam* or *puṛam*.⁷

Eṭṭuttokai is a collection of eight anthologies of poems. Four collections of the eight have four hundred poems: *Neṭuntokai* (The Collection of Long [Poems]),⁸ *Narriṇai* (The Good Tinai), *Kuṛuntokai* (The Collection of Short [Poems]), and *Puṛanānūru* (The Four Hundred *Puṛam* [Poems]).⁹ The first three are anthologies of *akam* poems and are in *akaval* metre. The last is a collection of *puṛam* poems and has poems in *akaval* and *vañci* meters. *Neṭuntokai* is organized according to a numerical scheme based on poetic situations. For example, the poems of *pālai* situation appear as poems 1, 3, 5, and so on in the collections. Poems on *kuriñci* situations are numbered 2, 8, 12, and so on. The poems of *Narriṇai* and *Kuṛuntokai* show no particular organizational scheme. *Puṛanānūru* tends to be grouped according to the hero praised, if this is known, as well as the theme of the poems. The poems of *Neṭuntokai* are thirteen to thirty-one lines long. Those of *Narriṇai* are eight to thirteen lines long. The *Kuṛuntokai* poems are four to eight lines long. The poems of *Puṛanānūru* are generally between five and twenty-five lines.¹⁰

⁵ This poem is also included in the eleventh *Tirumurai* of the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta canon.

⁶ N. Subrahmanian, *An Introduction to Tamil Literature* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1981), 16.

⁷ Parthasarathi, "Puram Poetry," 163.

⁸ This is also known as *Akanānūru* (The Four Hundred Akam [Poems]).

⁹ The following discussion follows Kamil V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 78-102, except where otherwise indicated. The extant number of poems in these collections is actually 400 plus or minus one or two depending on whether or not the invocatory verse is included or poems are missing.

¹⁰ John Ralston Marr, *The Eight Anthologies: A Study in Early Tamil Literature* (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1985), 69.

The remaining four collections are: *Kalittokai*, *Aiṅkuṟunūru*, *Paṭiṟrupattu* and *Paripāṭal*. *Kalittokai* (The Anthology of Kali [Poems]) and *Aiṅkuṟunūru* (The Five Short Hundred [Poems]) are collections of *akam* poems. *Paṭiṟrupattu* (The Ten Tens) is a collection of *puṟam* poems. *Paripāṭal* is classified as either *akam* or *puṟam*.¹¹ All the 150 poems in *Kalittokai* are in *kali* metre. Likewise all the 22 extant poems of the original 70 in *Paripāṭal* are in *paripāṭal* metre. *Aiṅkuṟunūru*'s 500 poems and *Paṭiṟrupattu*'s poems are in *akaval* metre. The poems of *Kalittokai* and *Aiṅkuṟunūru* are grouped according to the five situations of *akam* poetry. *Aiṅkuṟunūru* has 100 poems on each situation. The poems of *Kalittokai* are divided unevenly among the five situations. In both collections, a single author is credited with all the poems on one situation. *Paṭiṟrupattu* is a collection of ten decades each dedicated to a king of the Cēra lineage. Eight of the ten decades are extant today. The poems in *Aiṅkuṟunūru* are 3 to 5 lines long. Those of *Kalittokai* vary from 11 to 80 lines. The poems of *Paripāṭal* run from 32 to 140 lines. *Paṭiṟrupattu* poems are between 8 and 57 lines in length.¹²

Aiṅkuṟunūru exhibits a further organizational pattern. Each group of one hundred poems is organized into a decade. The poems of each decade are on the same theme or linked together by a repeated phrase or word and sometimes also with the technique of *antāti*. The repeated phrase or word, or the common theme is also the title of the decade. For example, the twenty-fifth decade of the second hundred is called "Veṟi pattu". As Jotimuttu explains: "Veṟi is the process of divination of the priest of *Murukan*, the deity of the mountainous region."¹³ Each of the poems in this decade is on this theme.¹⁴ Decade

¹¹ For example, Marr refers to it as an *akam* collection (*The Eight Anthologies*, 369-70, 327), and Parthasarathi as *puṟam* ("Puram Poetry," 613).

¹² Subbiah, "Patterns in Religious Thought in Early South India," 45-6.

¹³ P. Jotimuttu, trans. and comm., *Aiṅkuṟunūru: The Short Five Hundred (Poems on the Theme of Love in Tamil Literature): An Anthology* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1984), 25.

26 is an example in which all the poems repeat the same phrase. Each poem begins with the phrase: "*kuṇṛak kuṛavaṇ*" which means "Inhabitant of the Mountain".¹⁵ Decade 39 is called "The Peacock Decade". The word *maññai*, peacock, appears in each poem of the decade. The examples four and five for *akam* poems below are taken from this decade. *Antāti* is a poetic technique in which the last segment of the preceding poem begins the following poem. Sometimes the last segment of the final poem begins the first poem of a group allowing all the poems enclosed in this way to be taken together as a unit. This technique is used to some extent in *Aiṅkuṛunūru* decade 18. The title of the decade is "The *Toṇṭi* Decade" because *Toṇṭi*, the name of a town appears in each decade. Most of the poems are linked by *antāti*.¹⁶ "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" are like the decades of *Aiṅkuṛunūru* in which poems with repeating phrases are grouped together and entitled by that same phrase. Furthermore, "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" is also like those decades in which the poems are all on the same theme. Whether or not these collections of poems should be taken as a sequence is a matter of interpretation, and will be discussed in Part II.

The dating of the classical poetry is tentative. Zvelebil has written extensively on the subject. In his more recent, *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature*, he devotes a chapter to the discussion of problems and issues on dating the classical literature.¹⁷ Zvelebil dates all of the *Pattuppāṭṭu* poems except "Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai" between 190 CE and 275 CE. He is not so clear about the date of "Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai", putting it both around 250 CE and also later at the close of the classical period and the

¹⁴ See Jotimuttu's explanations of each verse. He does not attempt to link the verses in a sequence. *Aiṅkuṛunūru*, 24-29.

¹⁵ Marr cites this example. *The Eight Anthologies*, 345.

¹⁶ Thomas suggests that the organizing and linking features of the classical anthologies are the forerunners of the *toṭarnilai* (the sequencing of verses). "Literary Genres in Tamil," 347.

¹⁷ Zvelebil, *Companion Studies*, 98-128.

beginning of the bhakti period. Zvelebil dates the poems of *Narriṇai* and *Kuṟuntokai* between 100 and 250 CE. He places the poems of *Aiṅkuṟunūru* slightly later, between 150 and 300 CE. He suggests that the poems of *Puṟanāṇūru* were composed over a longer period, 100 BCE to 300 CE. Of the second group of four collections, Zvelebil dates *Paṭiṟruppattu* as the earliest with its poems being composed between 150 to 200 CE. He places the composition of the poems of *Aiṅkuṟunūru* slightly later at 180 to 250 CE. Zvelebil dates both *Paripāṭal* and *Kalittokai* in the transition stage from the classical era to the bhakti era between the fourth century to fifth century CE.¹⁸

The characteristics of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" identified in the previous chapter are like many of the *akam* and *puṟam* poems of the earlier classical age. The structure of *akam* and *puṟam* poems continues on into the devotional period, although the content is adapted to the devotional milieu. In the following pages, I will show that the structure of the *akam*, *puṟam* and devotional poetry is the same. The examples of classical poems presented below have been selected from four of the anthologies: *Kuṟuntokai*, *Aiṅkuṟunūru*, *Kalittokai* and *Puṟanāṇūru*.

Akam Poems¹⁹

1. *Kuṟuntokai* 42

O man from the land
 where a waterfall
 in the cleft of a mountain

¹⁸ K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (1975), 78-102 and Subbiah, "Patterns in Religious Thought in Early South India," 54. As Subbiah notes, Vaiyapuri Pillai dates "Tirumurukāṟruppaṭai" as late as the eighth century.

¹⁹ I have consulted Tamil editions of the poems: Po. Vē. Cōmacuntaraṇār, *Kuṟuntokai* (Tirunelvēli: Teṅṅintiya Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippuk Kaḷakam Limiṭeṭ, 1965); Po. Vē. Cōmacuntaraṇār, *Aiṅkuṟunūru* (Tirunelvēli: Teṅṅintiya Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippuk Kaḷakam Limiṭeṭ, 1972); and Po. Vē. Cōmacuntaraṇār, *Kalittokai* (Tirunelvēli: Teṅṅintiya Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippuk Kaḷakam Limiṭeṭ, 1975).

declares that a great rain
 fell in torrents
 last night:
 even if your passion dies,
 will the love between us
 ever fade?

Kapilar
 (trans. M. Shanmugam Pillai and David E. Ludden²⁰)

In this poem the speaker and addressee are explicitly indicated by first (*em*) and second person markers (*nāṭa*, *niṇ*). The gender of the speaker is not known. The vocative *nāṭa* indicates that the addressee is male. The setting of the utterance is ambiguous.

2. *Kuruntokai* 36

That day when my man
 from the hilly land,
 where a *māṇai* vine clings
 to an elephant that sleeps
 by a bo[u]lder,
 embraced my shoulders and spoke
 an undying oath,
 saying, "You are in my heart
 and without you. I am not!"
 was it painful to you, my friend?

Paraṇar
 (trans. M. Shanmugam Pillai and David E. Ludden²¹)

The speaker is not identified explicitly in the poem, even though the translation includes first person markers.²² First person markers are present in the speech of the man which is reported by the speaker of the poem (*alēṇ*, *yāṇ*). The addressee is indicated explicitly in the poem by "you friend" (*tōḷi niṇvāyiṇ*). The setting in which the speaker speaks is not indicated.

²⁰ M. Shanmugam Pillai and David Ludden, trans. *Kuruntokai: An Anthology of Classical Tamil Love Poetry* (Madurai: Koodal Publishers, 1976), 116.

²¹ Shanmugam Pillai and David Ludden, *Kuruntokai*, 141.

²² "[M]y man" in the translation is "he" (*avaṇ*) or "he of the land" (*nāṭaṇ*) in the poem. Likewise, "my shoulders" in the translation is "good shoulders" (*narrōḷ*) and "my friend" is "friend" (*tōḷi*).

3. *Kuruntokai* 11

These bangles,
 carved from the shining conch,
 slip from my wrists.
 Everyday, sleepless, I live in loneliness
 with my weeping eyes.
 O my heart:
 we will escape from living here
 like this;
 rise up and lead the way
 to where he is!
 He is beyond the good land
 where *Vatukars* [wear] garlands of basil flower,
 beyond the frontiers of many-speared *Kaṭṭi*:
 and even though they speak in foreign tongues,
 I will follow him.

Maramūlaṅār
 (trans. M. Shanmugam Pillai and David E. Ludden²³)

This poem is addressed to the speaker's heart. The speaker is indicated by first person singular markers (*eṅ*, *valipāṭal*) and the plural marker (*uykuvam*). The addressee is indicated by a vocative (*neñcē*), an imperative (*eḷu*), and an optative (*vāḷi*). The time and place of the utterances are not mentioned in the poem.

4. *Aiṅkurunūru* 295

My heart that went away with the chieftain
 of the mountainous region, where
 the peacock that returns to its abode
 because of the fire of the mountaineers
 goes like girls playing ball,
 afflicting the birds on the stubbles—
 will it ever return by itself?
 Or since it longs to stay, will it abide there?

Kapilar
 (trans. P. Jotimuttu²⁴)

²³ Shanmugam Pillai and David Ludden, *Kuruntokai*, 416.

²⁴ Jotimuttu, *Aiṅkurunūru*, 52.

The speaker is indicated explicitly in this poem by the the first person singular pronoun (*en*).²⁵ The addressee is not indicated explicitly. The setting of the poem is not specified.

5. *Aiñkurunūru* 299

Even the long-petalled blue water-lily
 which blossomed in the lovely pool
 on the slope of the mountain of the chieftain of the hills
 does not have the radiance like the eyes
 of the mountain lassie of lovely, adorned hair and a swinging gait.
 Nor does the peacock have a grandeur like hers!

Kapilar
 (trans. P. Jotimuttu²⁶)

There are no first person or second person markers identifying the speaker or addressee in this poem. The setting for this poem also is not explicitly indicated.

Akam Dialogue

1. *Kalittokai* 94

The following is an excerpt from *Kalittokai* poem 94 which is forty-five lines long and is not divided into verses. I have selected Ramanujan's translation of only the first eight lines to illustrate the existence of dialogue in the classical collections. Many of the poems in *Kalittokai* are dialogues.²⁷

Hunchback woman,
 the way you move is gentle
 and crooked as a reflection
 in the water,
 what good deeds
 did you do that I should want you so?

²⁵ In this poem and the previous poem, the first person speaker is indicated by exactly the same phrase, *en neñcē* (my heart). Here the *ē* is an emphatic, not a vocative as in the previous poem. The verb endings referring to the heart are in the third person singular.

²⁶ Jotimuttu, *Aiñkurunūru*, 54.

²⁷ Subbiah, "Patterns in Religious Thought in Early South India," 79-80.

O mother! (she swore to herself) Some
 auspicious moment made you dwarf,
 so tiny you're almost invisible,
 you whelp born to a man-faced owl,
 how dare you stop us to say
 you want us? Would such midgets
 ever get to touch such as us!²⁸

The dialogue is between a male dwarf and a hunchback woman. In both exchanges the speakers are indicated explicitly in the poem by first person markers (*ucāvuvēṇ*, *emmai*). Also in both exchanges the addressee is explicitly identified by second person markers (*tōṟṟanai*, *iyaluvāy*, *niṇṇōṭu*, *nī*, *vilakkiṇai*, *niṇ*). The characters' identities as a hunchback and a dwarf are known by description. Their respective genders are conveyed by gendered references: O son! (*makaṇē*); and, later on in the poem, female hunchback (*kūṇi*). The setting, mentioned further on in the poem, is a palace at high noon.

Puram Poems²⁹

1. *Puranāṇūru* 92

You cannot compare them with a lute.
 The tenses are wrong, the meanings unclear,
 and yet the words of a little son
 fill a father with love.
 The words of my mouth are like that also,
 O Neṭumāṇ Añci
 who have taken many enemy forts with guarded walls,
 for they make you show your love.

Auvaīyār
 (trans. George L. Hart III³⁰)

²⁸ A. K. Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War: From the Eight Anthologies and the Ten Long Poems of Classical Tamil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 209.

²⁹ I have consulted the Tamil edition by U. Vē. Cāminātaiyaravarkaḷ, *Puranāṇūru Mūlamuma Paḷaiya Uraiyum* (Madras: Dr. U. Vē. Cāminātaiyaravar Library, 1971).

³⁰ George L. Hart III, *Poets of the Tamil Anthologies: Ancient Poems of Love and War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 162.

The speaker is indicated by the first person singular pronoun (*eṇ*). The addressee is also the hero of the poem. He is identified by name in a form which can be understood to be a vocative (Nc̣umāṇ Añci) and by the second person singular familiar pronoun (*nī*). No particular setting is evident in the poem.

2. *Puṛanāṇūru* 87

Enemies, be careful when you take the field.
Among us is a warrior
who will face you in battle.
He is like a wheel made over a month
painstakingly
by a carpenter who makes eight chariots
in a day.

Auvaīyār
(trans. George L. Hart III³¹)

The speaker is indicated by one first person singular marker (*em*). The addressees are identified by a second person plural imperative (*ōmpumiṇ*) and a second person plural address (*teṇṇir*). The address conveys the addressees' role as enemies. The identity of the hero of the poem is not known.

3. *Puṛanāṇūru* 101

He welcomes us still
as on the first of days,

though we go there
not just one day,
or two days,
but many days
with many friends,

does Atiyamāṇ Añci of the jeweled elephant
and the artful chariot.

Whether the time for gifts

³¹ Hart, *Poets of the Tamil Anthologies*, 160. This poem was cited by Cutler also in the context of identifying the structures of *puṛam* poems. Norman Cutler, *Songs of Experience: The Poetics of Tamil Devotion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 64.

comes right now
or is put off for later,

it's like fodder
left in reserve
on the elephant's tusk,

always there
at hand, waiting;
it won't become a lie.

O wishful heart,
do not scramble for it.

Bless him,
his works.

Auvaīyār
(trans., A. K. Ramanujan³²)

The speaker is indicated in the poem by the first person plural verb, *cellalam*. The addressee, according to Ramanujan's translation and the notes in the Tamil edition, is the heart indicated by "heart" (*neñcam*) and the optative (*vāḷka*). However, there remains some ambiguity regarding whether or not the "heart" is the addressee, as it is not in the vocative form and the optative in Tamil conveys no person, number or gender. The hero, Atiyamān Añci, is explicitly mentioned in the poem.

4. *Puṛanānūru* 312

To bring forth and rear a son is my duty.
To make him noble is the father's.
To make spears for him is the blacksmith's.
To show him good ways is the king's.

And to bear
a bright sword and do battle,
to butcher enemy elephants,
and come back:

that is the young man's duty.
Poṇmuṭiyār
(trans., A. K. Ramanujan³³)

³² Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 139.

³³ Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 185.

The speaker is identified explicitly in the poem by first person singular pronoun (*en*). It is clear that the speaker is a woman from the reference to giving birth in the poem. The addressee is not explicitly indicated in the poem. No setting is indicated in the poem.

5. *Puranānūru* 128

When the ape
on the bough
of the jackfruit tree
in the town's commons

mistakes for fruit
the eye
on the thonged drumheads
hung up there by mendicant bards,

he taps it,

and the sound rouses
the male swans below
to answering song

in Potiyil, that hill where the clouds crawl,
hill of Āy
with war anklets on his feet,

hill inaccessible
to great kings,

yet open to the approaches
of dancers.

Muṭamōciyār
(trans., A. K. Ramanujan³⁴)

There are no markers in the poem which identify the speaker or addressee. The hero of the poem is named, Āy. The poem describes his place, Potiyil. His place may or may not be the setting for the poem.

³⁴ Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 152.

Description

Each of the *akam* and *puṛam* poems cited is a monologue, with the exception of *Kalittokai*

94. Each represents a single scene or episode. As with "Tiruvempāvai" and

"Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" the time it takes to utter the poems is the duration of the action of the poem. This episodic quality of the poems is characteristic of the classical poems in general.

As G. Subbiah says:

Perhaps the most striking feature of the classical Tamil poems is that each has been conceived and delivered within a discrete spacial context and moment. The relatively longer poems in the *pattu*. [*sic*] collection also are 'occasional' or solitary poems which do not develop or expand any story in a linear or continuous manner over an extended period of time.³⁵

The speakers in both the *akam* and *puṛam* poems are anonymous. At most the speaker's gender or role is conveyed either explicitly or implicitly. In *Kalittokai* 94, the speakers are a male dwarf and a female hunchback. In *Puṛanāṇūru* 312, the speaker is a female, more specifically a mother. The examples of the classical poems provided here, and the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" are exactly the same in that no speaker has an identity beyond gender or role.

The treatment of addressees varies. In some poems the addressee is anonymous without even the characteristics of gender or role as in the *akam* poems *Aiṅkuṛunūru* 295 and 299, and the *puṛam* poems *Puṛanāṇūru* 312 and 128. In some poems, gender or role is provided, as in the *akam* poems *Kuṛuntokai* 42, 36, 11 and *Kalittokai* 94, as well as in the *puṛam* poems *Puṛanāṇūru* 87 and 101. In the *puṛam* poem *Puṛanāṇūru* 92, the addressee has a particular identity; he is Neṭumāṇ Añci. "Tiruvempāvai" and

³⁵ Subbiah, "Patterns in Religious Thought in Early South India," 173. Some scholars suggest that the *akam* and *puṛam* poems were originally part of long narratives and were taken from these narratives and collected into anthologies. Subbiah provides a strong argument against this position (173-81). In any event, the classical poems have been preserved as anthologies of single solitary stanzas.

"Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" are the same as the examples provided with respect to the treatment of the identity of the addressees, as the addressee in those poems varied from simply having gender to being specifically identified as Śiva.

The setting in the classical poems, as in "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", is suggested but never certainly provided. *Kuṟuntokai* 42 refers to the man of the hills, but it is not clear where or when the poem is actually spoken. Likewise *Puṟanānūru* 128, refers to Potiyil, the place of Āy. The poem may be spoken there or it may be spoken somewhere else, perhaps to inform others about this particular place. So also in "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", the addressee is referred to in a number of poems as Lord of Tirupperunturai. This suggests that the setting of the poems is Tirupperunturai. The poem could, however, be uttered anywhere with Śiva of Tirupperunturai in mind. Although the hero of a particular poem is connected to a particular place, the event of the poem (its utterance) need not necessarily be tied to that place. Some poems do not provide a specific setting but only a type of setting such as the suggested battlefield in *Puṟanānūru* 87. The poem could be spoken at any battlefield. Likewise in "Tiruvempāvai", a number of poems refer to bathing in a pond, but the pond could be any pond. There is ambiguity regarding the settings of the classical poems and the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci".

The examples of the classical *akam* and *puṟam* poems, and "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", as examples of Śaiva Siddhānta canonical poems, share the characteristics of being episodic poems whose speakers are anonymous, whose addressees may or may not be particularized, and whose settings are ambiguous. These characteristics are also found in later Tamil poetry. Furthermore the organizational features evident in the bodies of poetry from which the classical examples and "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" have been taken are found in later poetry as well.

Later Developments

"Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" are themselves early forms of what became two independent genres. Tamil texts divide Tamil literature into genres by varying criteria such as content, form, pattern arrangement, number of stanzas, folk verse rhythms and content, letters of the alphabet, garland (*malai*) (grouping verses on basis of content, or formal devices such as refrains), two or more criteria, and whether or not it is narrative verse. "Tiruvempāvai" is an example of a genre based on refrain. "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" is an example of a genre based both on theme (awaking from sleep) and refrain.³⁶

There are at least six other *pāvai* collections of poems. The most famous of these is "Tiruppāvai" by Aṅṭāḷ who is often dated slightly before Māṅikkavācakar. There is evidence of a Jain *pāvai* poem based on a verse quoted in the *Yapparūṅkalavirutti*. In addition to those, there are two Tiruvempāvai poems by the Advaitan Tattuvarāya of the fifteenth century,³⁷ one by another Advaitan Kācīkānantañānāccārya Svāmikaḷ about Śrī Vīracēkarañānatēcīkar, and one composed by Uṭumalai Iḷaṅkaṇṇaṅ in 1982 about Murukaṅ at Tiruccentūr.

There are at least fourteen collections of *paḷḷiyelucci* poems composed from the ninth century until now. Mu. Aruṅācalam identifies the following ten *paḷḷiyelucci* poems by six different authors: Toṅṭaraṭippoṭiyālvār's (ninth - early tenth century) "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" addressed to Viṣṇu in Śrīraṅkam; Tattuvarāya Cuvāmikaḷ's (fifteenth century) five *paḷḷiyeluccis* poems addressed to Grace, Cīvappirakāca Cuvāmikaḷ, Corūpānanta Cuvāmikaḷ, Tattuvappirakāca Nāyaṅār and Paripūraṅappirakāca Nāyaṅār; Citampara Cuvāmikaḷ's "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" to Murukaṅ at Tiruppōrūr (eighteenth century);

³⁶ Thomas, "Literary Genres in Tamil," 344-46.

³⁷ Mu. Aruṅācalam, "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" in *Tiruvācakam - Cila Ārāyccik Kurippukkal* (Citamparam; Caiva Cittānta Makā Camāja, 1965), 14-16.

Irāmaliṅka Cuvāmikaḷ's "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" (nineteenth century) addressed primarily to the great light of grace; the famous Subramania Bharati's "Pāratamātā Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" (twentieth century); and Ceṅkalvarāya Piḷḷai's "Taṅikēcar Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" (composed in 1959).³⁸ In addition to these there are: Veḷḷiyampala Tampirāṅ's (seventeenth century);³⁹ Civappirakacam's (seventeenth century);⁴⁰ Tiruppūvaṇam Kācikānantañānāccārya Svāmikaḷ about Tirukkaḷar Śrī Vīracēkarañānatēcikaḷ; and recent one by Uṭumalai Iḷaṅkaṇṇaṅ about Murukaṅ at Tirucentūr.

I have been able to see four of the *pāvai* poems and five of the *paḷḷiyēḷucci* poems listed above.⁴¹ The basic structure remains the same. They are collections of episodic poems, although the number of poems varies, linked together by a common concluding phrase. In the *pāvai* poems, the concluding phrase is a variation of "*empāvai*". In the *paḷḷiyēḷucci* collections, it is a variation of "*eḷuntaruḷāyē*". Most of the poems in these collections of poems are monologues. An exception is poem fifteen of Aṅṅāḷ's "Tiruppāvai" which can be interpreted as a dialogue. As with the examples of classical poems and Māṅikkavācakaḷ's "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", the addressees in the poems are particularized to a varying extent. The addressees change in Aṅṅāḷ's "Tiruppāvai" as they do in Māṅikkavācakaḷ's Tiruvempāvai.

Generally in these poems the speaker is either not indicated at all in the poems, or is only indicated by first person pronouns or by gender. In other words the speaker is anonymous. There are two exceptions to this: the last poem of the Vaiṣṇava

³⁸ Aruṅacalam, *Tiruvācakaḷ*, 13-17.

³⁹ Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (1975), 205

⁴⁰ Mu. Varadarajan, *A History of Tamil Literature*, trans. E. Sa. Visswanathan (1972 Tamil public.; New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1988, 206-7.

⁴¹ The *pāvai* poems are: Antal's "Tiruppāvai", the Jain verse, Kācikānantañānāccārya Svāmikaḷ's, and Uṭumalai Iḷaṅkaṇṇaṅ's.

The *paḷḷiyēḷucci* poems are: Toṅṅaraṭippoṭiyālvār's, Irāmaliṅka Cuvāmikaḷ's, Subrahmania Bharati's, Kācikānantañānāccārya Svāmikaḷ's, and Uṭumalai Iḷaṅkaṇṇaṅ's.

"Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" by Toṅṅaraṭippotiṅyālvār and the last poem of Aṅṅāḷ's Vaiṣṇava "Tiruppāvai". Both of these are signature verses which identify the author of all the poems of the collection. A signature verse is the last poem of a small collection of poems (usually ten) which generally identifies the poet of the collection and the benefit to be gained from singing or hearing the poem.

There is some debate regarding whether the signature verses were composed by the poet of the collections or by later authors, and were then added by redactors of the poems.⁺² These poems, however, are present in the canonical presentations of the poems, and do make a connection between the poet and the previous poems of the collections, even though the previous poems do not themselves identify the poet.

It is important to understand that signature verses make up only a small portion of the Śaiva devotional poems. For example, the canonical collection of the four major Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta poets, Tiruṅṅāṅacampanṅar, Tirunāvukkaracar ("Appar"), Cuntarar and Māṅikkavācakar consists of 8928 poems.⁺³ Only about five percent of the poems by these four poets are signature verses.⁺⁴

Furthermore, poems that are associated with a signature verse in a canonical presentation, may in usage be disassociated from the signature verse. Śaivas often sing a combination of their favourite poems culled from various decades of the canonical poems

⁺² Cutler, *Songs of Experience*, 28.

⁺³ This calculation is based on: *Tēvāram Paṅṅmurai: Hymnes Śivaïtes du Pays Tamoul*, ed. T. V. Gopal Iyer and François Gros, 2 vols. (Pondichéry: Institut Français D'Indologie, 1984-85).

⁺⁴ *Tiruvācakan* has no signature verses, and I am told that Tirunāvukkaracar did not use signature verses either. This means that there are 3722 poems without associated signature verses. Of the remaining 5206 poems which constitute the work of Tiruṅṅāṅacampanṅar and Cuntarar, if we assume that there is a signature verse for approximately every 10 poems, then there are about 475 signature verses out of a collection of 8928 poems.

as well as other poems.⁴⁵ Therefore the significance of the signature verses and connection between the voice of the poem and the poet becomes even more tenuous in actual usage.

Most of the *pāvai* and *paḷḷiyelucci* genre poems referred to here are indisputably later than Māṇikkavācakar's. They illustrate the same structure as the examples of the classical poems provided in this chapter, and Māṇikkavācakar's "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci". They are just small samples of a large volume of poetry composed since Māṇikkavācakar's time. In Part III further examples of poems composed in the post-Śaiva Siddhānta canonical period which share this structure will be discussed.

⁴⁵An example of this will be provided in Part III. During the interviews, and particularly in the questionnaires, the respondents listed the poems which they usually sang in personal worship, usually identifying them by the first few words of the poem. The group of poems were usually culled from from various authors.

PART I: Summary

The focus in Part I has been on "texts", poems which will be the subject of the interpretations in Part II. "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" are collections of poems, while they are also parts of larger collections. The status of the links between individual poems within the collections called "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is somewhat ambiguous. The poems are short, and each poem in itself represents an event. The collection of poems also constitute an event. The setting of this event may be specified to a limited extent. Most of the thirty poems are monologues. A few poems are dialogues, although the exact number varies with interpretation. The speakers of the individual poems have no identity. They may be identified in the poem only by first person markers or descriptive material which may indicate gender or role. The addressees are sometimes anonymous and sometimes identified as specific individuals.

These characteristics are also found in the earliest Tamil literature, the classical *akam* and *puṟam* poems, and Tamil poems composed after the Śaiva Siddhānta canonical poems. All these poems are organized into nested collections. Both the classical and later poems also have specific poems representing individual events in which the speaker is unidentified, the addressee may be identified (*puṟam* poems only), and the setting is specified only to a certain extent.

These characteristics allow considerable flexibility for interpreting the poems. In Part II, I will show how different interpretations provide different contexts in which to understand "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and how within these different contexts the poems take on different meanings.

PART II: INTERPRETATION

WHAT SHE SAID

(to her friend who had talked ill of
him when he could overhear, so he
would hurry to marry;)

Wider than the earth
and higher than the sky,
and deeper than the vast ocean
is my love for this man of the hills,
where bees make honey
from the black-stalked *kuṛiñci* flower.

Tēvakulattār
Kuṛuntokai 3¹

¹ Translation by M. Shanmugam Pillai and David Ludden, trans., *Kuṛuntokai: An Anthology of Classical Love Poetry* (Madurai: Koodal Publishers, 1976), 92.

The primary strategy used to interpret "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyeḷucci" is to provide a context in which to understand them. More precisely, these two poems are interpreted by situating them as events which occur in one or more narrative worlds. Five different worlds in particular reoccurred in my questionnaires and interviews and in the commentaries, as frames of interpretation: the *akam* world, the *puṛam* world, the world of Śaiva Siddhānta theology, the poet's biography, and the personal biography.

A "narrative world" here refers to a world in which a particular story takes place. In the *akam* narrative world the events are connected to the private world of the unfolding love relationship between a hero and heroine. The *puṛam* narrative world is constituted by events which may acceptably occur in public such as heroic acts, grief over death, displays of power or generosity, and praise of virtue, honour or fame, and which may be understood within the biography of a hero or poet. The events of the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world are connected to a particular view of the spiritual development of the soul. In the narrative world of the poet's traditional biography, the events are religiously significant developments in his or her life. In the first person or personal biographical narrative world the events belong to the life of the reader or reciter.²

² Cutler has already noted the tendency to use narrative as an interpretive device for devotional poetry and its precedent in the classical Tamil poetry. According to Cutler, devotional poetry is interpreted to be the direct expression of the author, just as *puṛam* poetry is interpreted to be the direct expression of the *puṛam* poet, and thus both the devotional and *puṛam* poets' biographies serve as the frame of interpretation for devotional and *puṛam* poetry respectively. A "narrative of love" serves as the interpretive frame for *akam* poetry. Cutler emphasizes the poem tied to a particular narrative context: the *akam* poem understood within the *akam* context; the *puṛam* within the *puṛam* poet's biography and the devotional poem within the devotional poet's biography. Norman Cutler, *Songs of Experience: The Poetics of Tamil Devotion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 62, 102, 107.

In the perspective I am developing here, I am emphasizing the free-floating poem capable of being tied to many narrative contexts because in the following examples of Śaiva interpretations the same poem is in fact situated in different narrative worlds. "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyeḷucci" are devotional poems and they are interpreted within the devotional poet's biography, but Śaivas also interpret them within the *akam*

The different interpreters situate the poem usually by providing an identity for the speaker and indicating the occasion on which the poem was uttered or its theme. In doing so, the interpreters identify the act of uttering the poem as an event in a specific narrative world.

The significance or "meaning" of the poem then depends on the world in which it has been situated, on its position as an event in that specific world. Therefore, the meaning or significance of the poem changes when it is situated in different worlds or even differently in the same world. The meaning of the poem to some extent depends on the poem being understood to be a situation which fits coherently in the narrative world in which the poem is being interpreted, and on the poem being shown to correspond adequately to that situation. In the examples of interpretations to be presented below, this generally has been accomplished by correlating elements of the poems to aspects of an event in a particular narrative world.

All of the following interpretations understand the poems to be religious poems. The use of various narrative worlds are different ways of conveying the religious significance of the poem.

Part II of this thesis will consist of examples of interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyēḷucci" in the five narrative worlds. Two interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyēḷucci" understood within the *akam* narrative world are presented in chapter 3. A *puṟam* perspective of "Tiruppalliyēḷucci" is provided in chapter 4. I did not find any explicitly *puṟam* interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai", but I will argue in Part III that the use of "Tiruvempāvai" in ritual is sometimes *puṟam* in form. Two interpretations of

narrative world, within the *puṟam* narrative world, within the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world and within the reader or reciter's own life. I am suggesting that the poems are able to float freely and be interpreted within different frames most importantly because the poems themselves generally do not explicitly provide the identity of the speaker.

"Tiruvempāvai" and one of "Tiruppalliyelucci" in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world are provided in chapter 5. In chapter 6, the poems are situated in the poet's and in the "first person" biographies. Finally, in chapter 7 the strategy of interpretation evident in these examples will be shown to have precedents in the colophons and poetics associated with the earlier classical poems.

II: Chapter 3: The Poems in the *Akam* Narrative World

The *akam* interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" place the poems in the world of love. This frames the divine-human relationship in terms of a humanized love situation in which God is the male lover and the soul, devotee or poet is the female lover. The framing of the relationship in this way is controversial in Śaiva Siddhānta circles. The dominant view is to reject such an interpretation, but there are people who do construe the relationship in the lover-beloved mode.¹

Two interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" within the *akam* world will be presented here.² The first is by Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār and the second by G. Vanmikanathan. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār's commentary on "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is taken from his voluminous commentary on the *Tiruvācakam* published shortly before his death in 1954. He was a scholar of classical Tamil literature who early in his career conducted research on the *Tirumuṟai* at one of the major Śaiva Siddhānta institutions, Tiruvāvaṭuturāi Ātīṇam. The middle and later parts of his career were spent in Sri Lanka as an educator. He maintained his connections to Tamil Nadu through the Madurai Tamil Cankam (Sangam) as an examiner, and through contributions to their publication, *Centamiḷ*.³

¹ Four questionnaire respondents (two male and two female) framed "Tiruvempāvai" in terms of the lover-beloved relationship with God as hero and the soul or Māṇikkavācakar as heroine. I know for certain that one of the four is a follower of the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition. I deduced that the other three are also Śaivas based on attendance at a Śaiva temple, knowledge of Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, and the singing of Śaiva songs in personal worship. In an interview, another important spokesperson for Śaiva Siddhānta said that Māṇikkavācakar represents the lover-beloved relationship with God.

² Radha Thiagarajan also interprets "Tiruvempāvai" in this frame: *A Study of Mysticism in Tiruvācakam* (Madurai: Madurai Kamaraj University, 1983), 144-5.

³ Ka. Cu. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār, commentator, *Śrī Maṇivācakapa Perumāṇ Tiruvāy Malarntaruḷiya Tiruvācakam Ārāyēccip Pērurai* (Maviṭṭapum, Ilaṅkai: Patmā

G. Vanmikanathan was an important lay scholar of Tamil religious literature. His interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" are taken from the introductions to individual poems and the essay at the beginning of his English translation of the *Tiruvācakam*, first published in 1971. He maintained that he arrived at his *akam* interpretation prior to seeing Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's commentary.⁴ Vanmikanathan regarded the Advaitan Śaṅkarācārya of Kañci as his guru, but was an adherent of Śaiva Siddhānta theology. Interestingly enough his potentially controversial translation was re-issued in 1980 by Śrī Kāsi Maṭam, another important Śaiva Siddhānta institution. He died in the late 1980s.⁵

The chapter will begin with a brief overview of *akam* poetics in order to provide a context for understanding the interpretations of Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār and Vanmikanathan. This will be followed by presentations of their interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai", and then their interpretations of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci".

The *Akam* Narrative World

In explaining the basic parameters of *akam* poetry, I will use the *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram*, a grammatical and poetic treatise, usually dated with the classical Tamil poetry in the early centuries of the common era, and the *Nampiyakapporuḷ Viḷakkam*, a late thirteenth

Patippakam, 1954). The information on Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's life is taken from "Uraiyaciriyar" by Iraja. Civa Campacivacarma (xiv-xvii) in the above edition of the commentary and from an entry in Cu. A. Irāmacāmiṭṭavār's *Tamiḷ Pulavar Varicai*, Pakuti 3 (1955, rpt.; Madras: Tirunelvēlit Teṅṅintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpatippuk Kaḷakam Limiṭeṭ, 1968), 134-6.

⁴ G. Vanmikanathan, trans., *Pathway to God through the Thiruvāchakam* (New Delhi: The Delhi Tamil Sangam, 1971; repr., Tiruppanandal: Kasi Mutt, 1980). See 214-5 for Vanmikanathan's statement that he developed his *akam* interpretation independently of Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār.

⁵ Details about Vanmikanathan's life are taken from the back cover of *Pathway to God through the Thiruvāchakam*, 1980 edition. Information about his death was communicated to me in 1990.

century or early fourteenth century work on *akam* poetics, as well as the insights of modern scholars.⁶ The theory of *akam* poetry is defined in terms of different poetic situations, the number of characters and the occasions on which the characters may speak. The different *akam* poetics situations were not explicitly linked into a narrative sequence in the early theory of the *Tolkāppiyam*.⁷ Theoreticians of later times did create a narrative out of these poetic situations.

Akam poetry proper has 5 situations (*tiṇai*).⁸ The five divisions and the corresponding situations of love are: *kuṟiñci* - lovers' union, *mullai* - patient waiting, *neytal* - anxious waiting, *marutam* - infidelity, and *pālai* - separation. Each situation is correlated to a time, a place, and a set of animate and inanimate things appropriate to that

⁶ Scholars have debated the date of the *Tolkāppiyam*. Some of the issues are whether the text preceeds the classical poetry, or was composed after, or was composed in sections over a period of time. Generally it is associated with the same time frame as the classical poetry. There has been a substantial amount of scholarly work on classical poetics. Some titles have been cited in the introduction (2-3). My intention here is to provide what is needed to understand the *akam* interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyēlucchi".

All references to the *Tolkāppiyam* are to the *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram sūtras* numbered according to P. S. Subrahmanya Sastri, *Tolkāppiyam: The Earliest Extant Tamil Grammar* (Madras: Kuppaswami Sastri Research Institute, 1949).

⁷ J. Parthasarathi, "Akam Poetry" and "Puram Poetry" in *The Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*, vol. 1 (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1990), 151-2, 163. An overview of *akam* poetics can be found in John Ralston Marr, *The Eight Anthologies: A Study in Early Tamil Literature* (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1985), 14-30; K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, vol. 10 in *A History of Indian Literature* (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), 34-42; Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 231-297; M. Shanmugam Pillai and David Ludden, *Kuṟuntokai: An Anthology of Classical Love Poetry* (Madurai: Koodal Publishers, 1976), 1-30; and K. Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murukan on Tamil Literature of South India* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973).

⁸ *Akam* in its broadest understanding has two additional situations, *kaikkīlai* and *peruntīnai*. *Peruntīnai* is "forced loveless relationship: a man and a woman, mismatched in age, coming together for duty, convenience, or lust," while *kaikkīlai* is "(literally, the 'base relationship'), the one-sided affair, unrequited love, or desire inflicted on an immature girl who does not understand it." Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 236.

spatio-temporal circumstance.⁹ These phenomena are used to suggest the particular theme of the situation. For example, *kuṛiñci* is associated with the mountains, the cold and early frost seasons, and night time. A poet attempting to suggest a theme in the situation of lovers' union could use any one or more of these elements to indicate the general situation of lovers' union.¹⁰ Occasionally, phenomena from two different regions could be combined in a poem, thereby providing different nuances on a theme in a situation.¹¹

The people described in *akam* poetry are generally thought to be characters in roles, rather than particular individuals.¹² The basis for this view is the *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram sūtras* which say: "In the five *tiṇais* which are in the middle where mention is made of human beings, their individual names should not be mentioned. Individual names may be mentioned in *puṟu-t-tiṇai* and not in *akattiṇai*."¹³ This rule ensures that no individual identity, nor any particular historical context, is provided for *akam* characters.¹⁴

The *Tolkāppiyam* and *Nampiyakapporuḷ* indicate which kinds of characters may inhabit the *akam* narrative world by indicating who may speak, the occasions on which they are permitted to speak, who may have their speech reported, and whom can be

⁹ *Pālai* is not assigned a separate region as it is thought to be a condition which can occur in the other four situation. It is, however, assigned a temporal circumstance with its own animate and inanimate objects. See Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 237 and Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (1974), 36-40.

¹⁰ See Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 242; Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murukan*, 92-100. *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram, sūtras* 56, 57.

¹¹ Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 241-3. See also G. Sundaramoorthy, *Early Literary Theories in Tamil: In comparison with Sanskrit Theories* (Madurai: Sarvodaya Ilakkiya Pannai, 1974), 23-4.

¹² On the basis of these *sūtras* the characters of *akam* poetry are usually understood to be human archetypes or human ideals. See Shanmugam Pillai and David Ludden, *Kuṟuntokai*, 3; Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 235; Cutler 1987: 62.

¹³ *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram, sūtras* 56-7. *Sūtra* 80 on the other hand says that gods are not prohibited from verses concerned with love or human beings, and *sūtra* 84 says that "Predecessors have said that the true names of heroes may be mentioned in erotic verses". The issue of the use of names is further discussed in chapters 4 and 7 below.

¹⁴ Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 235.

addressed. The *Tolkāppiyam* recognizes the *akam* relationships as having two main stages: premarital (*kaḷavu*) and marital (*karpu*). In the premarital stage of love, there are six characters who may speak: the hero (*kiḷavan*), the heroine (*kiḷatti*), the hero's friend (*pāṅkāṅ*), the heroine's friend (*tōli*), the foster mother (*cevili*) and brahmins (*pārppāṅ*).¹⁵ After marriage, six additional characters may speak: the minstrel (*pāṅṅ*), the dancer (*kūttan*), one female dancer (*viḷali*), the courtesan (*parattai*), learned men (*aṟivar*) and passers-by (*kaṅṅōr*).¹⁶ The *Nampiyakapporuḷ* adds one's own mother to this second group.¹⁷ The following characters do not speak directly, but may have their speech reported: villagers (*ūrār*), neighbours (*ayalōr*), residents of the street (*cēriyōr*), those who know of the stages of lovesickness (*nōy maruṅkaṟiṅṅar*), the father (*tantai*) and the elder brother (*taṅṅai*).¹⁸ The heroine's mother never speaks to the heroine or the hero,¹⁹ but she may speak with those who saw (*kaṅṅōr*) the event, her daughter's friend (*pāṅki*), the foster mother (*cevili*), those who know the affliction of [the daughter's] mind (*cintainōy aṟivōr*), the wise (*aṟivar*), neighbours (*ayalōr*), divinity (*teyvam*), and brahmins (*antaṅar*).²⁰ The *Nampiyakapporuḷ* indicates that all the characters who are allowed to speak (except the heroine's mother), are also permitted to hear the speech of the hero and heroine.²¹ The speeches of the brahmins and the wise can be heard by all characters.²²

¹⁵ Sundaramoorthy, *Early Literary Theories in Tamil*, 57; *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram*, *sūtra* 492. See also the *Nampiyakapporuḷ sūtra* 213.

¹⁶ Sundaramoorthy, *Early Literary Theories in Tamil*, 68-69; *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram*, *sūtra* 493.

¹⁷ Kā. Ra. Kōvintarāca Mutaliayār, ed. & notes, *Nāṅkavirāca Nampi Iyāṟiya Akapporuḷ Viḷakkam Paḷaiya Uṟaiyuṅṅ* (1943, rpt. Madras: Tirunelvēlit Teṅṅintiya Caivacittānta Nūṟpatippuk Kaḷakam Liṁiṅṅ, 1989), *sūtra* 214. Zvelebil dates this work during the reign of Maravarma Kulacekara I, 1268-1308/9. K. V. Zvelebil, *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 148.

¹⁸ *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram*, *sūtra* 494. See also *Nampiyakapporuḷ*, 215.

¹⁹ *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram*, *sūtra* 495; *Nampiyakapporuḷ*, 218.

²⁰ *Nampiyakapporuḷ*, 219. See Subrahmanya Sastri, *Tolkāppiyam*, 73.

²¹ *Nampiyakapporuḷ*, 225 and the accompanying note.

²² *Nampiyakapporuḷ*, 226.

The main characters, the hero and heroine, are expected to reflect a standard for a love relationship. Zvelebil, explains:

According to TP 25-6, and Ilampūraṇar's commentary, only free men can lead a happy life. Servants and workmen are outside the five *akam*-types, for they cannot attain wealth, virtue and happiness; they do not have the necessary strength of character; they are moved only by passion and impulses. Only the cultured and well-matched pair is capable of the full range of love The lovers should be well-matched in lineage, conduct, will, age, beauty (or figure), passion, humility, benevolence, intelligence and wealth (TP 273).²³

The *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram* indicates on which occasions a character may speak. The following are a few examples of the many possible occasions. The hero may speak to the heroine after their first meeting describing how attractive she is or trying to make her understand his suffering (*sūtra* 98). He may speak when he has been sent away, or when the heroine's friend is about to decide to help him meet the heroine (*sūtra* 100).²⁴

The connecting of *akam* poetic events into a sequence which constituted a narrative world evolved over time. The sequencing of *akam* situations in poetry is manifest, in the *kōvai* genre. The earliest of the *kōvai* is *Pāṇṭikkōvai*, thought to have been composed in approximately the 7th century.²⁵ Another early *kōvai* work is *Tirukkōvaiyār* attributed to Māṇikkavācakar. It consists of four-hundred verses representing a sequence of *akam* situations.²⁶

²³ Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murukan on Tamil Literature of South India*, 92.

²⁴ More occasions are provided in the *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram* regarding when a character may speak. There is some disagreement among commentators in the discussion of *sūtra* 105 regarding whether the occasions listed apply to the hero or heroine. See Subrahmanya Sastri, *Tolkāppiyam*, 73.

²⁵ C. Manoharan and M. Mathialagan, "Akapporul Kovai" in *The Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*, vol. 2 (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1992), 48-50. If however, an early date for Māṇikkavācakar is accepted, then his *Tirukkōvaiyār* would be the earliest *kōvai* collection.

²⁶ Cutler discusses the *kōvai* genre and *Tirukkōvaiyār* in *Songs of Experience*, chapters 4 (81-110) and 5.

Over time, in theoretical works, sequences of *akam* events were articulated in great detail. The exact details vary somewhat among the different trends of *akam* theory.²⁷ J. Parthasarathi provides an overview of the sequence of *akam* events based on the trend of *Nampiyakapporuḷ* and its successors, which has been, according to him, the most influential tradition of *akam* poetic theory. His sequence of *akam* events is broadly divided into *kaḷavu* (secret love) and *kaṟpu* (married love). In *kaḷavu* there are four main sequential situations: 1) natural union (*iyaṟkaippuṇarcci*); 2) union which occurs on the second day (*iṭantalaippāṭu*); 3) the situation in which the hero's friend finds out about the relationship (*pāṅkaṟkūṭṭam*); and 4) the situation in which the heroine's friend finds out about the relationship (*tōḷiyiṟkūṭṭam*). Within these four situations there are many sub-situations. Here, only the last will be elaborated as it has direct relevance for understanding the interpretations to be discussed below.

According to Parthasarathi, the majority of *akam* poems are concerned with the fourth of the premarital situations. He illustrates this division with a few sub-situations. One subdivision is the group of possible situations in which the heroine's friend actually learns about the relationship. He provides three examples: a) the friend realizes that the hero is up to something when he comes into the presence of the heroine or the friend under a pretext; b) the friend realises that the heroine has had union because she will not violate

²⁷ Parthasarathi divides most of the theoretical work on *akam* poetry from the *Tolkāppiyam* upto the nineteenth century into four main trends. The four main trends stem from the *Tolkāppiyam*, *Iṟaiyaṅṅarakapporuḷ*, *Nampiyakapporuḷ* and Pērciriyar's commentary on the *Tirukkōvaiyār* as reproduced in the *Muttuvīriyam*, "Akam Poetry," 149. Other summaries of the sequence can be found in Sundaramoorthy, *Early Literary Theories in Tamil*, 26-39 and Shanmugam Pillai and David Ludden, *Kuruntokai*, 5-14. Sundaramoorthy describes this narrative structure in great detail, and closely relates his description to the *sūtras* of the *Tolkāppiyam*. He suggests that the hero and heroine have no verbal or physical contact on their first meeting. This is reserved for subsequent meetings. He notes that the *Tolkāppiyam* is not clear on whether or not the lovers are sexually intimate before marriage. He indicates that the poetry suggests that they are. Sundaramoorthy, *Early Literary Theories in Tamil*, 26-34.

her chastity by worshipping another besides her "husband"; c) the friend realizes that there is a relationship when the hero comes to give the heroine the *talai* (dress made of foliage).

A number of sub-divisions follow the heroine's friend's discovery of the relationship. Each sub-division has its own set of possible situations. After finding out about the relationship, the friend may refuse to help the hero meet the heroine. As a result, the hero may threaten to make the relationship public by taking drastic action such as riding the palmyra horse or jumping off a mountain. The hero will eventually convince the heroine's friend to help him. She will then arrange for the hero and heroine to meet in fields near her house or even within the boundaries of her house. These clandestine meetings may lead to gossip and scandal, which results in the heroine being confined to the house. The heroine's friend may then demand that the hero marry the heroine. According to Shanmugam Pillai and Ludden, also during the arranged meeting stage the hero may leave the heroine for several reasons, one of which is to search for wealth for their marriage and married life.²⁸ During this stage the heroine may show physical signs of stress, either because of the hero's absence, because of gossip, or because of fear that he may not become her husband for some reason or other.²⁹ The heroine's mother may become concerned about her state and call in a diviner to identify what is ailing her. The friend may then reveal the cause of the heroine's suffering to the foster mother out of concern for the heroine, who in turn tells the heroine's mother. This results in either the marriage of the hero and heroine, or in their elopement if the parents do not approve of the marriage.³⁰

Parthasarathi lists six situations of the marital stage in the relationship (*kaiyu*): 1) making the relationship public; 2) enjoyment of married life; 3) sulking; 4) love quarrel; 5)

²⁸ Shanmugam Pillai and David Ludden, *Kuruntokai*, 8-9.

²⁹ Shanmugam Pillai and David Ludden, *Kuruntokai*, 9-10.

³⁰ Parthasarathi, "Akam Poetry," 155-8.

restoration of normalcy; and 6) separation. The sulking and love quarrel are usually a result of the husband's affairs with other women.³¹ In the marital stage, as in the premarital stage, the hero may leave the heroine for various reasons, such as to study, to be an ambassador, to go to war, or to acquire wealth.³²

The Poems in the *Akam* Narrative World

Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār and Vanmikanathan understand themselves to be interpreting "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" within the *akam* narrative world.³³ Their interpretive efforts are for the most part directed towards showing how the poems fit into the *akam* world by identifying the speakers and addressees as characters of that world, and by showing that the poems are events in that world. They generally agree on what *akam* identities are assigned to the speakers and to the addressees, but, they do not agree on the *akam* occasions on which the two poems are spoken. The two poems have different meanings in the two interpretations, because the interpreters emphasise different aspects of the poems and place them in different positions in the *akam* narrative world.

In Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai", the main characters are the heroine, her friends, and the hero. The event to which the poem

³¹ Parthasarathi, "Akam Poetry," 159.

³² Parthasarathi, "Akam Poetry," 159.

³³ Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's commentary on "Tiruvempāvai" is found on 457-504, and his commentary on "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" is found on 770-87 of *Tiruvācakam*. The relevant pages for Vanmikanathan's interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" are in Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 37-70, 213-228, 314-19, and 325-6. See Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 457 for an explicit reference to his view that "Tiruvempāvai" is *akam*.

Vanmikanathan's interpretation is in English, and he actually uses very little of the technical terminology of Tamil poetics. Besides explicit statements that he is interpreting within the Tamil frame of love, the occasional *akam* technical term does appear such as "thalavi" (heroine), "kalaviyal" (secret courtship), and "karpiyal" (public declaration), 37-47.

corresponds is the *Mārkaḷi* bathing ritual in which young girls undertake a vow directed toward a *pāvai* (a doll or temporary image) in order to obtain good husbands for themselves and rain for the land. The friends have already discovered the relationship between the heroine and the hero. Situated in this way, the poem is understood to be about the heroine's friends prodding the heroine to participate in the vow so that she may marry her lover and they may marry his followers.

Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār provides identities from the *akam* world for most of the speakers and addressees of the poems.³⁴ The speakers in "Tiruvempāvai" are the heroine (*talaimakalī*, *talaivi*) or her friends (*āyattār*). The addressees are each other, the hero (*talaivaṇ*) who is god, the temple girls or a cloud. The speaker or speakers are one or more of the friends in poems 1, 5 to 8, 13 through 15, 17 and 18. All these poems are addressed to the heroine. The fifth poem is also in part addressed by one companion to another. The dialogue poems (2, 3 and 4) are an exchange between the companions and the heroine. In poem 9 the friends address the hero, who is God. The companions and the heroine address the temple girls who have rights to serve in the temple in poem 10. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār identifies the speakers of poem 11 only by the third person plural pronoun (*avar*), but in the preceding (10) and the following poem (12) the companions and the heroine both speak. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār seems to take poem 11 also as the speech of the companions and heroine together. God is the one addressed in poem 11. In poem 12, the companions and the heroine encourage each other to praise and bathe. Again in poem 16 there is some ambiguity as to whether or not when the companions speak the heroine is included. This poem is addressed to a cloud. Poem 19 is the companions'

³⁴ Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār allows for the possibility of more than one identity for the speaker and addressee in some poems. In poems 3, 4 and 7, I have used what appears to be his primary choice in his discussion of the speakers and addressees of each poem.

address to God. Poem 20 is addressed to God and we assume Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār who uses the third person plural (*avar*), means it is to be spoken by the companions.

Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār provides a full explanation of how he understands the setting and sequence of events in "Tiruvempāvai". He argues that poems 1 through 5 occur before the heroine has opened her door, which means that the event which the poems represent takes place at her house. Poems 6 to 9 are uttered while the companions and the heroine proceed along the street.³⁵ He does not specifically state the setting for poems 10 through 20, but poem 10 is addressed to the temple girls, so it seems clear that he assumes the group is at the temple. Poems 11 through 20 enjoin bathing, so he again seems to assume that they are at the water. His analysis implies that poems 1 through 10 represent a fixed sequence of events, and he assumes they should be taken in the order in which they occur in the canon.

The point of connection between "Tiruvempāvai" and an event in the *akam* narrative world is the bathing ritual. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār explains how the bathing ritual fits into the *akam* world.

All the ancient books call the *Mārkaḷi* bath the "Tai bath". The hero comes of his own accord to virgin girls and he gives the garland and waist dress of leaves in such a way that they accept, and thereby he makes public his hidden love and leaves. These virgin girls who naively accept that [gift], being chaste (*karpu*), feel they should marry [him]: this is the tradition - so the *Mārkaḷi* bath is intended for the purpose of obtaining marriage (translation mine).³⁶

In the sequence of *akam* situations described by Parthasarathi (see above), the hero's giving of the waist dress is a situation in the premarital stage of love in which the

³⁵ See Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 477-478.

³⁶ Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 463-4. In support of this he cites the classical poems: *Narriṇai* 80; *Kalittokai* 59; *Paripāṭal* 11, 74-92, 116-21, 134-40. The word Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār uses for garland is "*tār*", and for waist dress leaves is "*talai*". Cutler discusses the possible association between the *Mārkaḷi* and the Tai bath in *Consider Our Vow*, 5-14.

heroine's friend comes to realize that there is a relationship between the heroine and the hero. Placing "Tiruvempāvai" at the time of the *Mārkaḷi* bathing ritual indicates that the heroine has already received the waist dress and that the friends already know about the relationship between the hero and heroine. In Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's view, the friends want the heroine to marry the hero so that they in turn can marry the hero's friends and all can enjoy a good life.³⁷ "Tiruvempāvai" is about a heroine who has a relationship with a hero which has been discovered by her friends already. She and her friends are doing the *Mārkaḷi* bathing ritual in order to obtain the hero as her husband and to ensure her chastity so that in due course the friends can marry his followers.³⁸

Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār situates "Tiruvempāvai" even more specifically within this general situation. The heroine had promised to awaken her foster-mother and her companions, but the heroine did not come. The poem begins with the speech of a person who is angry firstly because the heroine did not come and awaken her, and secondly because the heroine did not get up when they all came to awaken her. Instead of getting up she sobs and rolls around because she had forgotten her promise to awaken them.³⁹

Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār also makes connections between many of the individual poems and the *akam* world by showing how specific elements of the poem bear an *akam* interpretation.⁴⁰ As an example, we may consider his interpretation of the word, *āḷiyaṅ*,

³⁷ See Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's commentary on verses 9 and 19, *Tiruvācakam*, 483-5, 502-4.

³⁸ For examples of references to the heroine's current state of love and previous experience with the hero see Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's commentary on poems 6, 7, 9, and 13, *Tiruvācakam*, 479, 480-1, 484, 493). See the commenatry on poems 9, 16 and 19 for Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's explanation that the companions are requesting to marry the devotees and that that request is a request for the hero to marry the heroine also, *Tiruvācakam*, 483-5, 496-7, 502.

³⁹ Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 466, 468-69.

⁴⁰ See Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's commentary on verses 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 20, *Tiruvācakam*.

which occurs in poem 8. He takes this to mean "because of drawing the circle".

According to him, the hero has come, given the garland, instilled love in the heroine and left. The heroine who is now separated from the hero, draws a circle as a way of divining when the hero will return.⁴¹

"Tiruvempāvai", in Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's interpretation, is a poem about a heroine in a love relationship. Her friends have discovered the relationship and are eager that she undertake the bathing ritual with them, so that she will quickly marry the hero and they will soon marry his friends.

"Tiruvempāvai" - Vanmikanathan's Interpretation

"Tiruvempāvai", in Vanmikanathan's interpretation, is a poem about how the friends of the heroine discover that she is in love with the hero. The main characters and the setting are the same as in Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's interpretation. Vanmikanathan, however emphasises a different aspect of the poem when situating it as a different event in the *akam* narrative world.

Vanmikanathan's characters are also drawn from the *akam* world. They are the heroine, the hero and the heroine's friends. Unlike Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, however Vanmikanathan assigns a specific identity to the heroine. The heroine is "Māṇikkavācakar" who has "become a young girl" in this poetic situation. He gives "her" the name of

⁴¹ Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 482-3; Dr. Ā. Aṇantarācaṇ explained to me that, following an old superstition, she closes her eyes and draws the circle. If the two ends of the circle join it means the hero will return quickly, and if they do not join, his return will be delayed. Ā. Aṇantarācaṇ, interview with the author, Palkalainakar, Madurai, 15 April 1991. The line in the verse then becomes: "Is this the way of love in which you draw the loop?" Vanmikanathan's translation of the same line is: "Is this the way to become love-filled towards the Sea of grace?" Vanmikanathan takes "*āliyaṇ*" to mean "Sea of grace" thereby interpreting "*āli*" to mean "sea".

"Civakaami".⁴² He understands poems 1, 5 through 9 and 11 through 19 as entirely taken up with the speech of the friends. Poem 9, 11, and 19 are addressed to the *pāvai*. On the other hand in his translation he uses male addresses which suggest the poem is addressed to the hero. The *pāvai* is the female deity to whom the girls direct their vow. It is an image temporarily constructed for and worshipped during the vow.⁴³ In poems 12 through 15, 17 and 18, the girls address the heroine, enjoining her to join them in the bathing ritual. Like Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, Vanmikanathan takes poems 2, 3, and 4 to be dialogues between the friends and the heroine. Vanmikanathan understands the heroine to speak to her friends in poem 10. He also implies that poem 16 is said by the girls. In his translation it is addressed to the cloud. Poem 20 is the speech of the girls and perhaps also the heroine.⁴⁴

Vanmikanathan discusses the setting in more detail than Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār did. He sees the general setting as the *Mārkaḷi* bathing ritual undertaken in order to gain a suitable husband. Undertaking the bath does not imply any prior relationship with the hero, as it does in Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's interpretation.⁴⁵

Vanmikanathan also provides settings for most of the individual poems. Poems 1 through 10 are set at the heroine's house and poems 12 through 18 take place at the pond. The location of poems 11, 19, and 20 are not specified but he seems to place poem 11 at

⁴² Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 41-3. Civakāmi is the name of Naṭarācar's (or the Dancing Śiva's) consort in Citamparam. This is an interesting correlation as Māṇikkavācakar's biography depicts Māṇikkavācakar's attainment of *mutti* as a merging with the image of Naṭarācar at Citamparam.

⁴³ Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 41-2.

⁴⁴ Vanmikanathan identifies most of the speakers explicitly, except for poems 8, 16 and 20. From his comments about these verses it seems clear that they are the words of the girls. Furthermore, he has put the heroine's words in italics and explicitly says this. *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 215-6. Since the words in verses 8 and 20 are not in italics and he does not identify any other characters for this poem, it seems reasonable to conclude that these verses are attributed to the girls.

⁴⁵ Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 41-4.

the heroine's house,⁴⁶ and poems 19 and 20 still at the pond. He suggests that the girls arrive at the heroine's house between 4 and 5 AM, and that the time of the event in poem 8 occurs at about 5:15 or 5:30 AM when dawn is just breaking. He sets poem 18 at 6:30 AM at the earliest.⁴⁷

Like Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratyār, Vanmikanathan also sees the events alluded to in the poems in a definite sequence. In poem 1 the girls have arrived to take the heroine to the river. Poems 2, 3, and 4 represent an argument between the heroine and the girls at the heroine's house. In poems 5, 6, 7 and 8 the girls stand at her window. She has not gotten out of bed and will not speak to her friends. In poem 9 the friends, exasperated with her, make the image of the *pāvai* and make their vow without her. In poem 10 the heroine, drowsy, annoyed and impatient, comes out and addresses her friends. In poem 11 the astonished girls again address the *pāvai*. Poems 9, 11, 16 and 19 represent occasions when the friends remember their vow, which they had forgotten as a result of being distracted by the state of the heroine. In addition to remembering their vow in poem 19 (requesting devotees for husbands) they also ask the *pāvai* "to take care of this God-intoxicated child". In poem 20 they praise the feet of God. Vanmikanathan understands the injunction to play in the water to be spoken by the companions, who are themselves in the water, to the heroine, who is at the water's edge and does not participate in the bathing activity. He suggests that because the friends urge the heroine to join them in verse 18 ("play") the heroine never did leave the water's edge and participate in the bathing ritual.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ According to Vanmikanathan, they worship the *pāvai* at the heroine's house, and in poem 11 seem to turn to make one more prayer to it.

⁴⁷ Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 215-217, 227, n. 18.

⁴⁸ Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 215-7.

The aspect of "Tiruvempāvai" that Vanmikanathan focuses on when situating the poem in the *akam* narrative world is the state of the girl described in the first poem as crying, rolling and falling on the floor, completely unaware of herself. He writes:

"A single song of St. Thirunaavukkarasar serves as a summary of the 20 stanzas of this decad[e] and as an irrefutable authority for my interpretation, (pp. 40 et. seq.). St. Tirunaavukkarasar sings:

First, His name she heard;
 The colour of His form she heard;
 Later, of His AArōor she heard;
 Straightway, mad after Him she became.
 Mother and father the same day she forsook;
 She abandoned the traditions of her neighbours;
 She forgot herself; her name she lost;
 And set forth, our maid, to the Chief's feet.⁴⁹

In Tirunāvukkaracar's poem the girl hears of the hero, becomes mad for him, abandons all conventional reality, goes to the hero and reaches him. Vanmikanathan's interpretation of the first poem of "Tiruvempāvai" is that the heroine heard her friends coming down the street singing about Śiva and became overwhelmed with love. This is the state in which her friends found her. Her friends did not understand her state because of their own immaturity.⁵⁰ The purpose of Vanmikanathan's citation of Tirunāvukkaracar's poem seems to be to indicate that the behaviour of the girl in the first poem is that of one overwhelmed by love. The puzzled reaction of the girl's friends suggests to Vanmikanathan that these girls do not know about her love and therefore the relationship has been a secret. During the *Mārkaḷi* bathing ritual the friends begin to discover the relationship. The central event in this interpretation is a stage of premarital love, where the love is not yet known to her friends, and certainly not yet to the wider public.

⁴⁹ Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 214.

⁵⁰ Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 40-44.

Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram 97 identifies continuous thinking of the loved one as a stage in *kaḷavu*.

Vanmikanathan's interpretation of the poem, places the event earlier in the sequence of the lovers' relationship than Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's interpretation did.

Both interpreters place "Tiruvempāvai" in the *akam* narrative world which means that both understand the poem to be about a love relationship between a hero and heroine. They differ in that they position the event of the poem at different stages in the narrative. The interpreters give different elements of the poem priority when situating them. For Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār the important factor for placing the poem is the *Mārkaḷi* bathing ritual itself, which indicates to him that the heroine is in a relationship which is known to her friends, and that the heroine undertakes the bath in order to obtain the hero as her husband. Vanmikanathan, however, focuses on the state of the heroine in the first poem, and the discovery of that state by her friends who mock her because they do not understand her to be in love. Vanmikanathan then interprets the poems to be about a strong secret love. The meaning of "Tiruvempāvai" is different in the two interpretations, even though the same interpretive frame is used, because the interpreters focus on different aspects of the poem when identifying it as an *akam* event.

"Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" - Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's Interpretation

The main characters of Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's interpretation of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" are again the heroine, her friends and the hero. The *akam* event which the poem represents is the heroine and her friends awakening the hero from sleep on the morning after the marriage of the hero and heroine at his house. This places the event later on in the *akam* narrative sequence than "Tiruvempāvai".

Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār assigns the identities of *akam* characters to the speakers and addressees of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci". He generally identifies the speakers as the heroine and her companions when he discusses the whole of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in his

introduction. When commenting on each poem he attributes the poems to either the heroine (1 and 4), the companions (2), or both the companions and the heroine (3), although it is sometimes unclear which one of these three possibilities he intends.⁵¹ He understands the addressee to be the hero in every poem.

The individual poems represent a sequence of mood-events experienced by the heroine and her friends while they try to awaken the hero. The chronology of mood changes, however, is not found in the traditional order of the poems. In Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's alternative order the 10th poem is understood to be first, the 5th second, the 8th third, the 9th fourth, the 7th fifth, the 1st sixth, the 3rd seventh, the 2nd eighth, the 4th ninth and the 6th last. He rearranges the poems in an order which illustrates a progressive frustration on the part of the heroine and companions. The heroine and companions feel that by not getting up the hero is keeping himself from them, and they become disappointed and then frustrated. Initially they respectfully and cheerfully ask him to get up (10 and 5). In his third poem in the sequence (8), the cheerful effort to awaken him gives way to other feelings. They become frustrated because they cannot awaken him unless he is willing. In the next poem (9), Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār sees a suggestion of separation due to a love quarrel,⁵² for by prolonging sleep he is keeping himself from them. In the following poem (7) they think he is not arising because he is displeased with them, so they ask him what it

⁵¹ For example in poem 2, Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār indicates that the attendants and the heroine (*avaḷai uḷḷiṭṭār*) awaken the hero (*avaṅ*). He concludes the prose rendering of the verse with 'she said' (*eṇṇāḷ*), in the expanded explanation of the verse he attributes at least a part of the verse to "the companions" (*itu tōḷiyar kūṇru*). *Tiruvācakam*, 775-76. Because of this explicit statement, I take it that he assumes the companions are speaking in this verse. In poems 5 through 10 the speakers are referred to in the third person plural (*avar*), so it is not clear whether he means the companions or both the companions and the heroine are speaking.

⁵² Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār deduces the love quarrel from the reference to sugar cane. Love quarrels, whether real or fake, are thought to enhance the relationship. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 784-5.

is that he wants them to do so that he will again be pleased with them. In the next poem (1), they decide that what they should do is serve his feet, but he must get up so that they can do that, so in the following poem (3), they ask him to show his feet. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār sees in verse 3 a suggestion of the *akam* theme of separation in the reference to a kind of bird called *kuyil*.⁵³ They ask him why he is inaccessible to them now when previously he was accessible to them. In the next poem (2), the companions say that the hero has not come and seen the sights of dawn, and therefore they have not seen his face. They are disappointed and the heroine has closed her eyes because of this. Finally, in the last two poems (poems 4 and 6) they ask him if he is not willing to arise for them, would he please at least do so for the others who have come and are waiting to see him.⁵⁴

Before setting the poem in the *akam* frame, Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār acknowledges that the theme of awakening the hero from sleep is mentioned in two *puṣam* theoretical texts as a theme of *puṣam* poetry.⁵⁵ His argument is that when the hero is awakened in the encampment by bards, the theme is a *puṣam* theme. On the other hand, when the hero is awakened in his house by female attendants the poem should be understood as an *akam* poem. He makes several points to support this argument. Firstly,

⁵³ Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār actually connects the *kuyil* to the hot season in the situation of *akam*. Dr. Aṅṅantarācaṅ explains that the *akam* situation here is separation. Ā. Aṅṅantarācaṅ, interview with the author, Palkalaṅṅakar, Madurai, July 1990.

⁵⁴ This understanding of Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's interpretation comes from his explanation of the reordered verses in the introduction (*Tiruvācakam*, 772), and his commentary on each verse.

⁵⁵ The two *sūtras* are:

1. *Tolkāppiyam Puṣattiṅṅai* 36 (*Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram* 87). Subrahmanya Sastri translates this *sūtra* as "bards singing about the King's spotless good fame to wake him while asleep" (*tāvil nallicai karutiya kiṅṅantōrkkuṅ cūtar ēttiya tuyil ṅṅai nilaiyum*).

2. *Puṣapporuḷ Venpā* 9,9: "So that the kings of the earth who have extensive tribute may honor you with the spear who/which gives abundance, open the eyes which are like the white blossoms of lotus which surround the ponds around which birds sound on the flower blossoms which flourish in the place" (*aḷantatiṅṅaiyār akaliṅṅattu maṅṅṅar vaḷan tarum vēḷōy vaṅṅaṅkak - kaḷampoliya pūmalarmēḷ puḷ olikkum poykai cū[ḷ] tāmarai tūmalarkkaṅ ōrkatuyil*) (quoted from Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's commentary).

he says there is no poetic rule prohibiting the theme of a hero being awakened at home by female attendants. Secondly, the theme of women awakening a hero never occurs as a *puṛam* theme. Thirdly, he claims that there are other *akam* poems with the theme of awakening from sleep: i.e. *Kuṛuntokai* 147 and *Kuṛuntokai* 107.⁵⁶

After arguing in support of an *akam* interpretation of "Tiruppalliṅgi" Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār situates the whole poem in the *akam* narrative world. I will translate this portion as it illustrates several important aspects of the argument of this thesis:

Let [us] take the meaning appropriate for this section to be that the heroine and the female attendants awaken the hero who prolongs sleep desiring sexual union: "We saw the beauty of you sleeping on the bed and stand desiring to see the beautiful sight of you sitting majestically in the audience hall in the morning. We and your other female attendants have been expecting you with intense desire."

Let [us] take it as: All the companions including the very modest heroine, awaken from sleep the hero who prolongs false sleep because of a great desire for sexual union, even though it has dawned, even though the sun has risen and even though many wise ones and devotees had come to see [him].

This is the awakening from sleep at early dawn of the day after marriage to the hero who had delayed marriage [in order to collect] wealth, and upon collecting wealth, returned.⁵⁷

Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār indicates that he is explaining the "meaning" (*poru!*) of this section. His explanation of the meaning consists of: identifying the speakers as the heroine and female attendants; identifying the addressee as the hero; identifying the setting as around dawn; and stating that the specific event was the awakening of the hero on the morning after the marriage. He elaborates on the situation by saying that the hero prolongs

⁵⁶ *Kuṛuntokai* 147 is addressed to the dream which had awakened the hero from sleep. The dream was about the speaker's lover. The colophon attributes the dream to the hero, and indicates that the poem was said after the hero had awakened from a dream which he dreamed while he was separated from his lover.

Kuṛuntokai 107 is addressed to a rooster which had awakened the heroine while she slept with her lover. The colophon identifies the speaker as the heroine (she) and situates the occasion as being after the hero had returned from collecting wealth.

For translations see Shanmugam Pillai and David Ludden, *Kuṛuntokai*, 409, 249.

⁵⁷ Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, *Tiruvācakam*, ¶1-3, 771.

sleep even though people are waiting to see him because he desires sexual union. The heroine and the female attendants wish to see him in his audience hall.

Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's commentary on poem 1 provides an explanation of why he places the poem after marriage in the *akam* sequence. He interprets two vocatives in poem 1 as referring to the heroine's married state: "O Source of my life" is understood to mean "O lover who is the source for my domestic life", and, "You who possess me" is understood to mean "O He who made me a housewife".⁵⁸ Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār understands the epithets, "O Lord Civan who dwells in Tirupperunturai", "You who possessed the raised banner", and "You who possess me" cumulatively to be referring to the hero's coming, possessing her, then leaving to make money, and finally returning to marry her. He identifies Tirupperunturai as the place where the hero entered into the love relationship with her (enslaved her). The reference to the banner is the banner that he carried when coming to her on a horse. The reference to possessing her is understood to indicate both sexual possession and marriage.⁵⁹ In addition, her attitude of appreciation and devotion, and the fact that she has arisen earlier than her husband indicates that she is a proper wife.⁶⁰

Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār utilizes several aspects of the poem in order to situate it in the *akam* world. The primary focus seems to be the repeated reference to arising from bed and the several references to dawn. He identifies the awakening as a situation early in

⁵⁸ "Tiruppalliyelucci": "eṇ vāl mutal ākiya porulē", Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār: "eṇṇuṭaiya ilvālvirku mūlapporuḷākiyakātalanē"; "Tiruppalliyelucci": "eṇai uṭaiyāy"; Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār: "eṇṇai maṇaiyaṟap paṇiyāṭṭiyāka koṇṭavanē", *Tiruvācakam*, 773-4.

⁵⁹ Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 772, 773-5.

⁶⁰ "She said: 'I enjoyed seeing [you] lying on the bed, and upon seeing you arise from sleep [I] must praise [you]'. This section indicates that: 'sleeping after [the husband], rising before [the husband]' and worshipping the husband's feet is the duty of a chaste [wife]" (translation mine). Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, *Tiruvācakam*, 771-2, 773-4. See also *Tirukkural*, chapter 6 *kural* 5.

married life on the basis of his interpretation of the vocatives and the behaviour of the speaker in poem 1.

"Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci", in Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's interpretation is, then, a poem about a wife and her companions awakening her husband from sleep the morning after their marriage. Her husband playfully pretends not to be awakened, while she and her companions, misunderstanding his playfulness, become progressively frustrated with him.

"Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" - Vanmikanathan's Interpretation

Vanmikanathan's interpretation of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" is brief and somewhat confusing. He seems to move back and forth between an *akam* interpretation and a more mystical interpretation of the poem. The characters in his interpretation are the heroine, the hero and her family. The setting is her house. The event is a request for the consummation of the heroine's sexual desire.

Vanmikanathan's choice of *akam* characters differs from Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's. Vanmikanathan includes the heroine's family, but excludes the heroine's friends. The heroine is the speaker in all the poems. The addressee is the hero, God. Vanmikanathan understands the heroine's own family to be her audience.⁶¹

Vanmikanathan does not explicitly provide a setting for "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci". The setting can be deduced from his reference in the collection of poems preceeding "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" ("Tiruttacāṅkam"), where he explains that the hero comes to her house, and that poem 7 of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" is intended to be heard by her family.⁶² We can only assume that he also sets "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" at her place. Vanmikanathan provides no specific time at which the poem takes place.

⁶¹ Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 59.

⁶² Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 57-9.

There is also no explicit indication whether or not he considers the poems to represent a sequence of events. Since Vanmikanathan does not mention a sequence as he did for "Tiruvempāvai", and since he refers to a single realization by the heroine about the nature of the hero, it would seem that he takes all ten poems collectively as representing a single state of mind.

Vanmikanathan does not explicitly identify "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" as an *akam* event. Rather he situates "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" by placing the previous and following collections of poems as a sequence of events in the *akam* narrative. It is, therefore, possible to infer the *akam* event from the chronological position of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" within the others.

Vanmikanathan implies that the event of the poem is a request by the heroine to the hero for sexual fulfillment. Vanmikanathan places "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" prior to, but at the verge of, marital consummation. He divides the sixteen collections of poems which he interprets in the *akam* frame into *kaḷavu* (secret relationship) and *kaṟpu* (public relationship). The transition from the secret to the public stage occurs in collections fifteen to seventeen. In collection fifteen ("Tirutṭōṇōkkam"), the heroine declares her love to the hero directly, in violation of all norms of behaviour, because of her intense passion.⁶³ In collection sixteen ("Tirupponṇūcal"), she despairs over whether or not he will accept that love. According to Vanmikanathan, the actual shift to the *kaṟpu* stage occurs in collection seventeen ("Annaippattu") in which she, prompted by town gossip, publicly declares her love for the hero to her mother. In collection eighteen ("Kuyirpattu") she asks the *kuyil* bird to call her lover to her, and in collection nineteen ("Tiruttacāṅkam") the hero comes. I have inferred that for Vanmikanathan, the hero's arrival represents acceptance of her love. Collections

⁶³ *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram* 97, as translated by Subrahmanya Sastri, identifies "transgressing the bonds of modesty" as a state in *kaḷavu*.

twenty ("Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci") through twenty-two ("Kōyil Tiruppatikam") represent the movement into marital status which culminates in sexual union.⁶⁴

Although Vanmikanathan situates and understands "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and the following two collections within the *akam* frame, his discussion of them tends to digress into spiritual issues. In his discussion of collection twenty-two ("Kōyil Tiruppatikam") he explicitly correlates sexual and mystical union, and supports this equation with reference to the Hindu understanding of spiritual development. Collection twenty-two represents the consummation of marriage. The heroine has experienced sexual union with the hero, even as the soul is mystically united with God. The saint, "Māṇikkavācakar", has become a *jīvaṇmukta* (a soul who is released while embodied).⁶⁵ "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" represents a movement into marriage and a corresponding movement into mystical realization.

Vanmikanathan does not say what preliminary stage of marriage this is, only that it is at "the threshold of the nuptial chamber".⁶⁶ He translates the concluding refrain of each poem as, "Do graciously rise (in my heart)".⁶⁷ This implies that union has yet to occur.

Nevertheless, some realization does take place at this stage according to Vanmikanathan, which is expressed in poem 7: "This is He, this is His beautiful form". The hero has come to the heroine, and he is before her. This immediacy gives her greater clarity about him which Vanmikanathan interprets to be a realization that God is already in the soul waiting to be recognized.⁶⁸ The saint is on the verge of mystical union with God. The

⁶⁴ Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 44, 47, 54-70, 314.

⁶⁵ Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 70, 314, 325-6.

⁶⁶ Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 314.

⁶⁷ He also uses two variations of this translation of the refrain: "Do rise in Your grace, (in my heart)", and "Do, in Your grace, rise (in my heart)".

⁶⁸ Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 58-9.

Vanmikanathan specifically invokes the Mahāvākya statement, "*Tat tvam asi*", which he translates as, "that art thou", 59. His interpretation is somewhat ambiguous as he heads his discussion with, "He is arisen in me", yet translates the refrain as a request: "Do graciously

heroine is on the verge of sexual union with the hero.⁶⁹ Vanmikanathan, in emphasising the spiritual implications of his *akam* interpretations of "Tiruppalliyelucci", chooses not to be explicit about the *akam* correlate of the spiritual interpretation of, "Do graciously rise (in my heart)." There is no doubt, however, that in the *akam* frame, "Tiruppalliyelucci" represents the heroine's request to have her intense desire consummated.⁷⁰

As in the case of "Tiruvempāvai", both Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār and Vanmikanathan understand "Tiruppalliyelucci" within the *akam* narrative frame, and thereby understand the poem to be about the love relationship between a hero and heroine. However, they place the poem differently, and thus the poem has two different meanings. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār places the poem later in the narrative sequence after the marriage and presumably consummation has taken place. The poem is about the frustrations of the heroine and her friends when they try to awaken the hero while he playfully resists. Vanmikanathan places "Tiruppalliyelucci" at the verge of sexual consummation. The poem is about the heroine's intense sexual desire for the hero. Both interpretations emphasize the awakening expressed in the refrain which ends each of the poems of "Tiruppalliyelucci". The awakening is understood by Navanīta Kīruṣṇa

rise (in my heart)". In the Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, when a saint's song is correlated to a specific event it can be sung before or after the event with which it is connected. The significant point is that the song and the event are related. A song which Cuntarar sang, after having received wealth from Śiva, is recommended today to devotees to be sung to ensure that one has food and clothes in this life, as well as to gain *mutti*. See Ti. Cu. Cokkaliṅkam Ceṭṭiyār, *Paḷaṅ Taruṁ Tirumuṟaip Patikaṅkaḷuṁ Tutippāṭaḷuṁ (Varalāru-Palaṅ-Uraiyuṭaṅ)* (Maturai Valamapuri Accakam, 1977), 139-45. All eleven verses are cited in chapter 11 below. In a similar way, Vanmikanathan is not particular about his use of tense in discussing this song. Here also it is possible that the chronology of the song and event are not so significant as the fact that the song is associated with the desired result.

⁶⁹ Vanmikanathan does not imply that sexual union occurs in the stage of secret love.

⁷⁰ See Part III: chapter 11 for a description of the extreme state of desire of the heroine at this point in the sequence of love.

Pāratiyār's interpretation to refer to the impatience of a married heroine. In Vanmikanathan's interpretation, the awakening refers to the longing for consummation of the marriage.

Summary

Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār and Vanmikanathan employ the same strategy for interpreting "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyelucci". They place the two poems as events in the *akam* narrative world by assigning the characters of the poems the identities of characters of the *akam* world, and by identifying the occasion on which the poems are uttered as circumstances in that world. They differ regarding what events in that narrative world the two poems represent because they focus on different aspects of the poem when situating them. As a result of being situated differently the same poem sometimes has different meanings.

In the following chapter, I will show how the meaning changes even more drastically when "Tiruppalliyelucci" is placed in the other classical frame of interpretation, the *puram* world.

II: Chapter 4: "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in the *Puṛam* Narrative World

Interpretations of poems in the *puṛam* narrative world construe the divine-human relationship in terms of the king-subject, hero-bard, or master-servant relationship. In devotional poetry God is the king, hero, or master, while the devotee, soul or saint is the subject, bard, or servant. The relationships of the *puṛam* world are public in contrast to the private relationships of *akam*.

In the secondary literature, and in the questionnaires and interviews I conducted, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" was quite often connected to the *puṛam* narrative world. I have not seen "Tiruvempāvai" explicitly connected to the *puṛam* narrative world. However in chapter 7, and in Part III, I will show how it is interpreted in terms of individual biographies, which is a *puṛam* style of interpretation.

In this chapter, Mu. Aruṇācalam's interpretation of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" will be presented, following a description of the parameters of the *puṛam* narrative world.¹ This interpretation appears in a collection of essays written on the *Tiruvācakam* published in 1965.² Aruṇācalam, who died only recently, was a widely respected Tamil scholar who wrote a number of books in both Tamil and English on Tamil culture and on Śaivism. He was connected to the Śaiva Siddhānta organization, Caiva Cittānta Makā Camāja.

The *Puṛam* Narrative World

Whereas the *akam* narrative world is about the love relationship between the hero and heroine, the *puṛam* narrative world is constituted by events which may acceptably occur in

¹ Mu. Aruṇācalam, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in *Tiruvācakam: Cila Ārāccik Kuṛippukkaḷ*, (Citamparam: Caiva Cittānta Makā Camāja, 1965).

² Aruṇācalam, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci," 12-23.

public, such as heroic acts, grief over death, displays of power or generosity, and praise of virtue, honour or fame.³

There are two main Tamil theoretical works about *puṛam* poetry: *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram* (TOL) and *Puṛapporuḷvenṇpāmālai* (PPVM).⁴ These texts articulate *puṛam* poetics primarily in terms of poetic situations and themes, rather than in terms of characters and the occasions on which they speak. These poetic situations and their corresponding themes are listed below.⁵

TOL Akam Situations	TOL Puṛam Situations	No. of Themes		PPVM situations	No. of themes
<i>kuṛiñci</i>	<i>veṭci</i>	14	cattle raid	<i>veṭci</i>	20
"	<i>veṭci</i>	21	cattle-recovery	<i>karantai</i>	36
<i>mullai</i>	<i>vañci</i>	13	war prepar, invasion	<i>vañci</i>	21
<i>marutam</i>	<i>uḷiñnai</i>	8	siege of a fort	<i>uḷiñnai</i>	29
"	<i>uḷiñnai</i>	12	defence of a fort	<i>nocci</i>	9
<i>neytal</i>	<i>tumpai</i>	12	pitched battle	<i>tumpai</i>	24
<i>pālai</i>	<i>vākai</i>	18	victory	<i>vākai</i>	33
<i>peruntiṇai</i>	<i>kāñci</i>	20	transcience of the world	<i>kāñci</i>	22
<i>kaikkiḷai</i>	<i>pāṭāṇ</i>	20	praise	<i>pāṭāṇ</i>	48
			general heroism	<i>potuviyal</i>	12
			one-sided love	<i>kaikkiḷai</i>	19
			mismatched love	<i>peruntiṇai</i>	36
			residuary items	<i>olīpiyal</i>	18

³ See A. K. Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War: From the Eight Anthologies and Ten Long Poems of Classical Tamil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 235, 262-9. Ramanujan provides an interesting discussion of *akam* and *puṛam* as a shifting pair of terms.

⁴ According to Parthasarathi, later works are more or less repetitions of these two works. J. Parthasarathi, "Puram Poetry," *The Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature* (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1990), 163f.

Zvelebil dates the *Puṛapporuḷvenṇpāmālai* between 800-1000 CE in *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 51.

Overviews of *puṛam* poetics and poetry can be found: John Ralston Marr, *The Eight Anthologies: A Study in Early Tamil Literature* (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1985), 31-52; K. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, vol. 10 in *A History of Indian Literature* (Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), 34-36, 42-44; Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 231-297.

⁵ Adapted from K. Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan on Tamil Literature of South India* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), 104, 106.

The *Tolkāppiyam* lists seven situations, five of which deal with various aspects of war, and the remaining two which are praise and the transience of life.⁶ The *Tolkāppiyam* correlates the five situations of war with the five situations of *akam* proper. It also correlates the two situations of love which are inappropriate to *akam* proper, *peruntiṇai* and *kaikkīlai*, to worldly transience and praise. The correlation of the *puṛam* situation to the *akam* situations indicates that one could establish a correspondence of *puṛam* situations to *akam* geography. Ramanujan, however argues that the *puṛam* poets do not always use geographical indicators to suggest a *puṛam* situation.⁷ The *Puṛapporuḷvenṇpāmālai* expands on the situations set out in the *Tolkāppiyam* by including under *puṛam* the two kinds of love inappropriate to *akam* proper (*kaikkīlai* and *peruntiṇai*), and by introducing a category for general heroism and one for miscellaneous matters.

Although *Tolkāppiyam* and *Puṛapporuḷvenṇpāmālai* do not discuss *puṛam* poetry in terms of characters, characters can be deduced from the situations listed in the *Tolkāppiyam* and the poems. There does seem to be some restriction on roles in *puṛam* poetry as there was in *akam* poetry. The heroes are not depicted as lovers, rather they are depicted as kings, chieftans, patrons, warriors and noblemen. Kings and warriors are usually the dominant characters: many of the themes listed in the *Tolkāppiyam* and poems are directly concerned with them.⁸

⁶ For a translation of the *puṛam* situations and themes of the *Tolkāppiyam* see P.S. Subrahmanya Sastri, trans. and comm., *Tolkāppiyam: The Earliest Extant Tamil Grammar Text in Tamil, and Roman Scripts with a critical Commentary in English: Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram-Tamil Poetics* (Madras: The Kuppaswami Sastri Research Institute, 1949), *sūtras* 58-87.

⁷ Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 251-3.

⁸ A perusal of the description of the themes in the *puṛam* section of the *Tolkāppiyam* illustrates this. See *sūtras* 58-87. Ramanujan makes the interesting point that female characters are prominent in *akam* poetry, while male characters are dominant in *puṛam* poetry. He illustrates this by a comparison of the *akam* collection, *Kuṟuntokai*, with the *puṛam* collection, *Puṛanānūru*. He says that in *Kuṟuntokai*, 334 poems are assigned to women characters, whereas only 64 are assigned to male characters. In

The women characters of *puṛam* poetry, rather than being the young heroine, her friends, foster-mother and real mother, are older. They are usually mothers and wives of male heroes. In the list of themes found in the *Tolkāppiyam*, female characters appear most prominently in the situation of *kāñci* (transitoriness). There are two themes of mothers lamenting a famous son's death, and a theme about a mother ready to die on behalf of her son's honour. In the same situation (*tiṇai*) there are themes of the wife fearing demons, and, therefore, not going near her wounded husband; the magnanimity of the wife killing herself with the spear left by the dying husband; the wife lamenting the loss of her husband, the pitiable life of a widow; and the words of a wife to those who try to prevent her from entering the funeral pyre. The woman's role in these themes is primarily one of responding to the death of her son or her husband. The mother or wife may herself be a hero by virtue of her response to the death of her husband or son. *Puṛanānūru* 278 depicts a mother who has heard that her son died in a cowardly way on the battle field. She declares that if that is true she will slash the breast that nursed him.⁹ This poem powerfully expresses the valour of both the warrior and his mother.

Puṛam poetry exhibits some of the same male and female characters as *akam* poetry, but their function is different. Dancers (*kūttar*), minstrel (*pāṇar*), and female dancer (*viṛaliyar*) are characters in both types of poems. In *akam* poetry one of their roles is to be messengers between the quarreling husband and wife. In *puṛam* poetry their role is to praise the patron and direct others to him.¹⁰

The theoreticians of *puṛam* poetry did not connect the *puṛam* situations into a sequence of events as the theoreticians did for *akam* poetry, nor did a genre of poetry

Puṛanānūru, discounting poems by women in the role of bards, he says that there are only 18 poems about or by women. Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 268.

⁹ For a translation see Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 182.

¹⁰ See *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram* 87, 150, 166, 167, 176 and 191.

develop linking heroic events. It is possible that the poeticians provided for a sequence of events through the rule in the *Tolkāppiyam* that permits the use of individual names in *puṛam* poetry. Parthasarathi writes:

The line of demarcation between *puṛam* and *akam* poems is stated to be the avoidance of specific personal names of the heroes in the latter, mentioning only generic appellations; this contrasts with the use of such names allowed in the former (**Tolkāppiyam** *Poruḷ. Akattiṇaiyiyal-54*). (Incidentally we find that notwithstanding this freedom to use personal names, *puṛam* poetry in practice prefers to use generic appellations to an overwhelming extent).¹¹

The rule permitting the use of individual names, whether actually used or not, invites interpretation of the poem in terms of its place in an individual's life. This suggests that the sequential component of the *puṛam* narrative world could be supplied by individual biographies, even though the poem itself may mention only generic appellations. However, only that portion of the individual's biography which falls into the *puṛam* world of public activity is appropriately provided. The portion of the individual's life concerned with the private world of love should not be used. By using a particular biography as the sequence within which to understand an event, the *puṛam* character is given a specific identity.

The poeticians, therefore, provide for sequence differently in the *akam* and *puṛam* narrative worlds. In the *akam* narrative world, the poeticians constructed a general sequence of events from which poems are framed or against which poems are understood. In the *puṛam* narrative world the poeticians did not construct the sequence, but provided for the possibility of sequence by allowing the introductions of names in the poems. The name situates the poem as an event in the public life of a person.

¹¹ Parthasarathi, "Puram Poetry," 163. In fact names are permitted in *akam* poetry, as Parthasarathi goes on to say, but only as names of figures who form part of the background landscape. For a translation of the rule see chapter 3 above.

Interpretation in the *puṛam* narrative world is then a two-fold process. Firstly, the characters in a poem must be assigned a role from the *puṛam* narrative world - such as bard. Secondly the poem must be given a sequence, in which the event the poem represents is understood, by assigning a character a particular identity. One or more biographies could be assigned: one for the addressee, one for the speaker, and one for the hero if his name is not mentioned in the poem or if he is not the addressee.

In emphasizing this two-fold process for situating poems in the *puṛam* narrative world I am aware that I depart somewhat from the widely held view that *puṛam* poems are concerned with specific historic individuals. I am aware that the poetic rules for *puṛam* poems allows them to be about specific historic individuals, but this is the case only where poems mention a specific individual. According to Parthasarathi the use of specific names in *puṛam* poems is actually not very common.¹² Among the classical *puṛam* poems I am familiar with, specific names are used for heroes and addressees, but never for speakers. It is, therefore, not quite correct to say that specific historic poets normally speak in their own voices in the *puṛam* poems, as Ramanujan, Cutler, Samuel and Zvelebil seem to imply.¹³

"Tiruppalliyēluc̣ci" in the *Puṛam* Narrative World

Aruṇācalam's interpretation of "Tiruppalliyēluc̣ci" has to be understood in two stages. He first situates the poem in the *puṛam* world, and then he places it as a specific event in the

¹² See the long quotation on the previous page (Parthasarathi, "Puram Poetry," 163).

¹³ See for example Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 257; John Samuel, "Akappatal" In *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*, Vol. 2 (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1992), 40-1; Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (1974), 94; Norman Cutler, *Songs of Experience: The Poetics of Tamil Devotion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 62, 102.

Cutler, in an endnote, acknowledges that "based on textual evidence alone, the narrator's identity may be ambiguous", *Songs of Experience*, 76 n. 9.

life sequence of a specific individual, Māṇikkavācakar. In working through this interpretation he has to superimpose a number of roles upon one another.

The several superimposed roles in Aruṇācalam's interpretation are the bard-king relationship, the servant-master relationship, and the particularized relationship of Māṇikkavācakar and Śiva. The bard and king are *puṛam* characters. When "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is understood in terms of these roles, the speaker of all the poems is the bard and the addressee is the king. The roles of servant and master are not so clearly *puṛam* characters. However, they provide an overlap of probable inhabitants of the *puṛam* world and the world in which Māṇikkavācakar lived. Framed in this relationship, the speaker of the poems is the servant, and the addressee is the master. Finally, the relationship between Māṇikkavācakar and Śiva becomes the particular example of the other two relationships, and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is understood as a poem Māṇikkavācakar addresses to Śiva. In Aruṇācalam's interpretation, Māṇikkavācakar, in the roles of bard and servant, sings "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" to Śiva, his king and his master.

The setting for the event of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" when framed by these different relationships is in each case the home of the addressee early in the morning. The bard sings the song to the king in his encampment, or in his palace, at daybreak. The servant sings to his master in the early morning at his house. Māṇikkavācakar sings to Śiva in his temple at dawn.

Aruṇācalam emphasises two features of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" when he argues for understanding the poem as a *puṛam* event. The first feature is the reference to awakening in the refrain of each verse. The second is the question regarding what form of service the addressee requires of the speaker in poem 7.

Aruṇācalam indicates that awakening the hero is a well-known theme in *puṛam* poetry:

"We know from the *caṅkam* texts and the *Tolkāppiyam* . . . that when the king who had gone to war is sleeping without worry because of his great power in the army camp, the *cūtar* sing in order to awaken him from sleep at daybreak; the *pāṇar* sing to awaken the king from sleep at daybreak in the castle."¹⁴

One type of bard, the *cūtar*, awakens the king in the army camp, and another type of bard, the *pāṇar*, awakens the king in his castle. The question of how to interpret awakening the hero in his own home is a point of disagreement between Aruṇācalam and Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār. According to Aruṇācalam it is a normal *puṇam* theme. According to Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār it is an *akam* theme.¹⁵

Aruṇācalam also focuses on the idea of service expressed in poem 7: "O King of Tirupperunturai! We ask what is the way in which we may serve [you]?"¹⁶ In order to explain this phrase he brings up two situations which he suggests Māṇikkavācakar would have witnessed frequently. The first is the servant-master relationship in an agricultural setting, and the second is the servant-master relationship in a palace. According to Aruṇācalam, a landholder of the nobility would have had a number of scattered fields requiring different kinds of care. A good servant would come to the master even if the master had not arisen, awaken him, praise and worship him, and then ask what fields he

¹⁴ Translated from Aruṇācalam, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci," 13. See also pp. 12, 18. The *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram* reference for this theme is sūtra 87.

¹⁵ Aruṇācalam, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci," does not provide the specific references to support his argument. Neither the *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram* sūtra nor the *Puṇapporuḷvenpāmālai* sūtra specify where the king is awakened, and the *Tolkāppiyam* sūtra mentions only that the *cūtar* was awakening the king.

Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār understands this sūtra to refer to awakening the king in the encampment (*pācarai*) only. See Ka. Cu. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār, commentator, *Śrī Maṇivācakapa Perumāṇi Tiruvāy Malarntaruḷiya Tiruvācakam Āryāccip Pērurai* (Maviṭṭapum, Ilaṅkai: Patmā Patippakam, 1954), 770.

The *Puṇapporuḷvenpāmālai* sūtra does not mention who does the awakening, and it seems that Aruṇācalam only surmises that a *pāṇar* might awaken the king in the palace. It is an important point, as Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār argues, as we have seen, that the setting is a house, and that the heroine and other female attendants perform the task of awakening.

¹⁶ "etu emaip paṇi koḷum āru atu kēṭpōm".

should work in and what duties he should attend to that day. In a similar way the army commanders and royal administrators would enquire about their duties each day.¹⁷

According to Aruṇācalam, Māṇikkavācakar, as the prime minister to the Pāṇṭiya king would have witnessed both these types of situations.

Aruṇācalam suggests that when Māṇikkavācakar renounced worldly life, he continued with this servant role in his relations with Śiva; he went to Śiva awakened him, and asked what service he should perform:

When he renounced the world, and was made a servant and taken into the service of God, he did not forget this. With this thought he went and asked God what service [he should do]. He awakened and asked: "How do you accept me into service today? What service will I do today? Please give the command (translation mine).¹⁸

"Tiruppalliyēḷucci" then, when fully interpreted by Aruṇācalam, is a *puram* event situated in a particular individual's life. It is about Māṇikkavācakar (the bard-servant) awakening Śiva (the king-master) from sleep, and inquiring how he should serve him. The event occurs after he has renounced his position as prime minister to the Pāṇṭiya king.

The basic contours of the *puram* frame provides the substance of the interpretation. Aruṇācalam identifies the event as a *puram* event, and assigns *puram* roles to the speaker and addressee in the poem. He then provides a *puram* setting, and finally provides an individual biography as the background narrative sequence against which the single event of uttering "Tiruppalliyēḷucci" should be understood. This interpretation contrasts sharply with the *akam* interpretations of Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār and Vanmikanathan. In the first case the heroine and her friends were seen as trying to awaken the playful hero. In the second, the intensely passionate heroine was asking the hero for sexual fulfillment. In this

¹⁷ Aruṇācalam, "Tiruppalliyēḷucci," 21-2.

¹⁸ Translated from Aruṇācalam, "Tiruppalliyēḷucci," 22-3. Aruṇācalam follows this statement with a full quotation of poem 7.

puram framework the poem becomes respectful awakening of a king/master by a bard/servant. In chapter 5, I will show how the meaning of the poems change once again when understood in terms of the theological narrative world of Śaiva Siddhānta.

II: Chapter 5: The Poems in the Śaiva Siddhānta Narrative World

Interpretations of the poems in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world construe the divine-human relationship in terms of the relationship between Ultimate Reality, Śivam, and the soul.¹ Whereas in *akam* and *puṛam* poetry the relationships are portrayed as those appropriate to human life in the world, the Ultimate Reality-soul relationship is appropriate to all worlds, and its final fulfillment is beyond corporeal existence.²

In this chapter, two interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" and one of "Tiruppalliyeḷucci" which situate the poems in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world will be considered. The three Śaiva Siddhānta commentaries under consideration are dated in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. Aphorisms explaining the meaning of the *Tiruvācakam* predate these commentaries,³ but these interpretations are the earliest known written explanations of any length on the poems of the *Tiruvācakam*.

The first interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai" is called "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" ("Intention of "Tiruvempāvai")" and is of uncertain authorship. Almost all subsequent publications of "Tiruvempāvai" make some reference to this interpretation. A Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai Ātīṇam publication attributes the authorship to Tiruttaṇikai Śrī Vicākapperumālai, and its initial publication to Kāñcipuram Śrī Capāpati Mutaliyār in 1871.⁴ According to Zvelebil, Tiruttaṇikai Śrī Vicākapperumālaiyar was born in 1798 and was the son of a famous Vīraśaiva scholar. He became a professor of Tamil and a prolific author. Among his commentaries are one on the grammar, *Nanṇūl*, and one on

¹ Ultimate Reality is referred to by neuter gender in Śaiva Siddhānta.

² Śaiva Siddhānta regards the earth as one of many worlds.

³ See the list in the introduction.

⁴ Ta. Ca. Mīṇāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai, ed. *Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu Mutaliyaṇa* (Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai Ātīṇam, 1952), 1-6, 9.

Māṅikkavācakar's *Tirukkōvaiyār*. He also coauthored Winslow's well known *Tamil Dictionary*.⁵

Another source attributes the authorship of "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" to the eighteenth century Tiruppōrūr Citamparacuvāmikaḷ.⁶ He also was a Vīraśaiva, and a native of Madurai. According to tradition, the Goddess of Madurai, Mīṇāṭci, directed Tiruppōrūr Citamparacuvāmikaḷ in a dream to go to Tiruppōrūr. There he was associated with the Murukaṅ temple. He wrote a number of poetic works on the God, Murukaṅ, and one on Mīṇāṭci, as well as commentaries on various works. There is a story that he began a commentary on *Tiruvācakam*, but did not finish it.⁷

If either of these people were the author of "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu", we could say that the interpretation is dated to the eighteenth or nineteenth century. Since we are not sure of the authorship, I will refer to it as "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu". The presentation of it here is based on the version found in the *Tiruvāvaṭuturai Ātīnam* publication of 1952, which is a prose explanation of about five small pages on the first ten poems of "Tiruvempāvai".⁸

⁵ K. Zvelebil, *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 162; N. Subrahmanian, *An Introduction to Tamil Literature* (Madras: Christian Literature Society, 1981), 80-81. Zvelebil does not specifically connect Tiruttaṅikai Śrī Vicākkapperumāḷaiyar to "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu".

⁶ Ma. Pālacuppiramaṇiya Mutaliyār, "Aṅinturai" in *Tiruvempāvai - Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci (Mūlamum Uraiyum)* (Cenṇai: Caiva Cittānta Makācamājam, 1955), ix.

⁷ This information is pieced together from the following sources: N. Subrahmanian 1981:56, 72; Mu. Varadarajan, *A History of Tamil Literature*, trans. E. Sa. Visswanathan (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1988), 208; M. Arunachalam, "Saiva Literature" in *Literary Heritage of the Tamils*, ed. S.V. Subramanian and N. Ghadigachalan (Madras: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 1981), 193; R. Visvanathaiyar, "Muṇṇurai" in *Tiruvācaka Vyākḥānam* by Kāḷi Tāṇḍavārayar, Part I (Adyar: Mahamahopadhyaya Doctor V. Swaminathaiyar Library, 1954), xvi; K. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, vol. 10 in *A History of Indian Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), 214. Subrahmanian places him in both the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Varadarajan, Arunachalam, and Zvelebil place him in the eighteenth century. These scholars do not link Tiruppōrūr Citamparacuvāmikaḷ to this interpretation.

⁸ Mīṇāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai, *Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu Mutaliyaṇa*.

Although the authorship of "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" is linked to scholars with Viraśaiva backgrounds, the interpretation has considerable authority in Śaiva Siddhānta contexts. Vanmikanathan and Navaratnam both acknowledge it before proceeding with their own interpretations.⁹ Vanmikanathan even makes "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" sound like the official Śaiva Siddhānta interpretation when he says in his introduction to "Tiruvempāvai" that "Sri Dhandapaani Dhesikar of Thiruvaavaduthurai Mutt (monastery), in fact, condemns those who do not subscribe to this view".¹⁰ Each of the three main Śaiva Siddhānta institutions (Tiruvāvaṭuturai Ātīṇam, Tarumapuram Ātīṇam, Tiruppaṇantāḷ Śrī Kāci Maṭam) have included it with their published "Tiruvempāvai" editions.¹¹

The second Śaiva Siddhānta interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai" and the one of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" are taken from Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar's commentary on the *Tiruvācakam*. Little is known about "Cikāḷi" Tāṇṭavarāyar. His name suggests that he is from Cikāḷi. He was a disciple of Civakurunātarāṇakuru Cuvāmiyaṭikaḷ in the Poṇṭatakamala Āccāriya spiritual lineage at Tiruvārūr. The commentary was written in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. This places Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar in the early to mid-nineteenth century.

⁹ G. Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam: An Original Interpretation and Complete Translation*, 2nd ed. (Thiruppanandal: Thiruppanandal Kasi Mutt, 1980); Ratna Navaratnam, *A New Approach to Tiruvacagam*, 2nd. ed. (Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1971), 193-4.

¹⁰ Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam*, 213.

¹¹ The Tarumapuram Ātīṇam version is: Ca. Tāṇṭpāṇitēcīkar, *Tiruvācakam: Nūlārāycci Kurippurakaiḷuṭaṇ* (Tarumapuram Ātīṇam, 1949).

In a later Tarumapuram Ātīṇam edition of *Tiruvācakam*, Aruṇaivaṭivēḷ Mutaliyār criticizes "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" for it takes the meaning of one or two poems as the meaning for all the poems. Aruṇaivaṭivēḷ Mutaliyār, *Māṇikkavācaka Cuvāmikaḷ Tiruvācakam Tirukkōvaiyār Ākiya Eṭṭān Tirumurai [Kurippuraisyuṭaṇ]* (Tarumapuram: Tarumapuram Ātīṇam, 1966), 271-2. This issue will be discussed in chapter 7.

The Tiruppaṇantāḷ Śrī Kāci Maṭam version is: *Māṇikkavācaka Cuvāmikaḷ Aruḷiya Tiruvempāvai Kurippuraisyuṭaṇ] Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci (Polippuraisyuṭaṇ)* (Tiruppaṇantāḷ Śrī Kāci Maṭamṇ, 1961).

The commentary was edited by R. Visvanathaiyar and published by the Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. V. Swaminathaiyar Library in 1954.¹²

In contrast to the abbreviated "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu", Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar provides a general overview of the meaning as well as a poem by poem explanation. The commentaries on both "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" begin with the *Akattiya Cūttiram* and are followed by a summary commentary (*polippurai anupūti*). In addition, each poem has its own commentary. The poem is introduced with a phrase, which often seems to be a sentence fragment. It is followed by the poem and then a small section giving a Śaiva Siddhānta prose expansion of the poem. The commentaries are extremely terse and damaged in some places, and in spite of the fact that they are full commentaries, it is still difficult to gain an overall understanding of his view of the poem.¹³

This commentary was chosen, in spite of the difficulties in understanding it, for three main reasons: it is the first known full commentary on the *Tiruvācakam*; the author

¹² The biodata is from Visvanathaiyar, "Muṇṇurai," xvii. According to this introduction, Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar began the commentary in *Kaliyukam* 4945 or *Cālivākaṇam* 1756 (i.e. 1833).

¹³ In his introduction to the commentary, Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar writes that his guru taught him the meaning of the *Akattiya Cūttiram* and the summary commentary. The commentator says he wrote a word by word commentary (*pataviyākkīyāṇam*), an explanation of the minute details (*nuṭṭam*) and an elaborate commentary (*viri*). The detailed commentary on "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" to which he refers are apparently missing. See the "Uraippāyiram", 11-12.

The editor of Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's commentary provides the version of "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" but does not provide much help in understanding this commentary. My presentation of Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is particularly dependent upon the guidance received from Dr. (Muṇṇaiyar) Ā. Āṇantarācan who is a scholar of both Tamil language and literature, and of Śaiva Siddhānta. He was able to recognize a number of oblique references to other texts and partial quotes whose source was not identified either by the commentator or by the editor, and thereby suggest what invoking that text in the particular context might mean. Interviews with the author, Palkalainagar, Madurai, February - April 1991; February-July, 1994. Notwithstanding Ā. Āṇantarācan's invaluable insights, the presentation of the commentary is still somewhat tentative.

explicitly states that it has a Śaiva Siddhānta perspective;¹⁴ and it exhibits interpretive strategies which seem to me to situate the poems in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world.

As in the previous two chapters, I will begin with an explanation of the narrative world. This will be followed by "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" of "Tiruvempāvai", and then Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai" and then "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci".

The Śaiva Siddhānta Narrative World

The Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world is one in which all events are related to a particular understanding of the spiritual development of the soul. As there are a number of works in Tamil which articulate the poetics of the *akam* and *puṛam* poetry, so also there are treatises on Śaiva Siddhānta from which it is possible to extrapolate the parameters of the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world. These works are the *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiram* and their subsequent commentaries and secondary literature. There are fourteen *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiram* dated between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries.¹⁵

The characters in this narrative world are the souls, devotees (souls who have become followers of Śivam), Śivam and Catti (Śakti). Śivam is Ultimate Reality in its

¹⁴ He refers to the *Civañānapōtam* and the *Civañānacittiyār*, two of the fourteen core *Caiva Cittānta Cāttiram* in the introduction. According to Āṇantarācaṇ with whom I went over this difficult portion of the author's introduction, Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's perspective is that *civañāṇam* (Śiva-knowledge) is the essence of *Tiruvācakam*, *civañāṇam* is explained in the *Civañānapōtam*, and *civañāṇam* is what is elaborated on in the commentary. Ā. Āṇantarācaṇ, interviews with the author, Palkalainagar, Madurai, 11 July 1994.

¹⁵ They are: 1. *Tiruvuntiyār*; 2. *Tirukkaḷirruppaṭiyār*; 3. *Civañānapōtam*; 4. *Civañānacittiyār*; 5. *Irupā Irupatu*; 6. *Uṇmaiviḷakkam*; 7. *Civappirakācam*; 8. *Tiruvaruṭpayan*; 9. *Viṇaveṇṇpā*; 10. *Pōrrippakṛotai*; 11. *Koṭikkavi*; 12. *Neṅcuviṭu tūtu*; 13. *Uṇmaineriṇiḷakkam*; 14. *Caṅkaṛpa nirākaraṇam*. They are also called the *Caiva Cittānta Cāttiram*. Overviews of all fourteen texts can be found in T. B. Siddalingaiah's *Origin and Development of Saiva Siddhanta Upto 14th Century* (Madurai: Madurai Kamaraj University, 1979); and M. Dhavamoney's *Love of God According to Saiva Siddhanta* (Oxford: University Press, 1971). Both also discuss the preceding devotional poetry. The most fundamental of these texts is the *Civañānapōtam*.

ultimate state or any one of its manifestations. Śivam's anthropomorphic manifestations are male. Catti is Śivam's power or grace. Catti also has many manifestations. Catti's anthropomorphic manifestations are female.¹⁶

All the characters in this world except Śiva represent roles rather than particular historical or mythical figures, although they may be given a specific identity in a specific poem. For example souls which are not devotees may be given the identity of such figures as the demon, Rāvaṇaṅ, or the Jains or Buddhists. Or in the other extreme a devotee may be given an identity such as the saint Māṅikkavācakar or the God Viṣṇu. Śivam, however, is a specific deity. His position as ultimate being cannot be fulfilled by any other deity.

In Śaiva Siddhānta theology, the souls are divided into three classes: *viññāṅkalar*, *piraḷayākalar*, and *cakalar*. The categorization is based on the number of bonds (*malam*) which bind each soul. The *viññāṅkalar* souls are only bound by one bond, *āṇavamalam*, the primordial impurity attached to all souls. The *viññāṅkalar* souls dwell in the higher, pure regions of the Śaiva Siddhānta universe. The *piraḷayākalar* souls are bound by two bonds: *āṇavamalam* and karma, the predispositions accumulated from previous existences which determine the situation of the souls' current and future lives. The *piraḷayākalar* souls live in the middle realms of the universe. The *cakalar* souls are bound by all the bonds: *āṇavamalam*, karma and *māyai*, matter. The *cakalar* souls live in the lower realms of the universe. Human beings are counted among the *cakalar* class of souls. The last topic of the twelfth *sūtra* of the Tamil *Civañṅapōtam* states that this text is for the souls with three *malas*, the *cakalar* (*kuruvāl inṅu innūl mummaimalarkku*). Therefore, the sequence described here is concerned only with the *cakalar*.

¹⁶ The gendered distinction between Śiva and Catti cannot be maintained too rigorously. All forms of Śiva, including his adornments and weapons are grace.

The spiritual development of the *cakala* soul is divided broadly into three stages: *kēvalam*, *cakalam*, *cuttam*. Souls are understood to be beginninglessly covered by impurity (*āṇavamalam*), and are, therefore, considered to start life in an unconscious stage called *kēvalam*. Śiva brings about the worldly process so that the souls may enter the next stage, *cakalam* in which they attain partial consciousness through embodiment.

Embodied souls become attached to the world. A given soul may overcome this attachment by cultivating indifference to the outcome of its good and bad actions (*iruvinaiyoppu*) through various paths of devotion to Śiva. Therefore it is in the *cakala* stage, rather than the *kēvala* stage, that a soul has the possibility of becoming a devotee of Śiva. When equanimity with respect to the two kinds of action has been achieved the devotee's original impurity is considered to be mature and ready to be nullified (*malaparipākam*). This is accomplished through the descent of grace (*cattinipātam*). Śiva's power (Tirōtāṇacatti) which up until this time had functioned concealed in the soul, now operates openly (Aruḷcatti), finally revealing Śiva's existence in the soul, the *cutta* stage. This enlightenment experience is generally referred to as attaining or seeing God's feet.¹⁷

Śiva's activities concerning the spiritual development of the soul are referred to as the five cosmic actions. They are: 1. creation (*paṭaittal*); 2. preservation (*kāttal*); 3.

¹⁷ The basic form of this sequence is found throughout the *sūtras* and sub-topics (*atikaranam*) of Meykaṇṭār's *Civañāṇapōtam*. For example see *sūtras* 1; 1.2.a, b; 2.1.c; 2.2; 2.3; 3.7.a; 4.2; 5.2.a; 6; 6.1; 6.2.a; 8 all; 11.2.d. The first number refers to the *sūtra*, the second number to the topic, and the letters to the examples under each topic.

An English translation of the *sūtras* and an exposition based on a commentary by Śivañāyōgi of the eighteenth century is found in Gordon Matthews, *Siva-nana-bodham: A Manual of Saiva Religious Doctrine* (Oxford: University Press, 1948). Subsequent Śaiva Siddhānta works elaborate the basic ideas found in the *Civañāṇapōtam* and debate various interpretations. For example *malaparipākam* is thought to occur at four different rates which have been expanded into sixteen rates. Some of the terminology used in my summary such as *malaparipākam* and *cattinipātam* to my knowledge do not appear in the *Civañāṇapōtam* itself.

destruction (*alittal*); 4. concealment (*maraittal*); and 5. gracing (*aruḷal*). The first three activities are God's action with respect to inert matter, activities which are indirectly done on behalf of the souls. Creation is the act by which God makes the appropriate body for the souls, the appropriate instruments of knowledge, and the appropriate world out of matter (*māyai*). Preservation means sustaining the world for a period of time so that the embodied souls may undergo experiences. Destruction refers to removing the souls from the grosser products of *māyai*. It is a period of rest for the souls. The products of *māyai* devolve back into *acutta māyai* where they remain until it is time for the universe to be recreated.

The last two of the five activities are God's action with respect to the soul. Concealment refers to God's activity as *catti* of stimulating the soul so that it is capable of undergoing worldly experience in accordance with its karma. God's activity in the soul at this time is concealed from the soul. The mechanism by which God limits the soul's knowledge and remains concealed is *āṇavamalam*, or primordial impurity. God activates *āṇavamalam* and makes it function over a number of the soul's different embodiments. This activity weakens the power of *āṇavamalam*, and when its power has been sufficiently reduced, its effect is nullified. The soul's knowledge is then free from limitation, and the soul is able to experience God's presence within itself. God's first act of grace is the nullification of *āṇavamalam*, and the second is God's revelation of himself within the soul. The *catti* which functions concealed in the soul while the soul's knowledge is limited by *āṇavamalam* is called Tirōtāṇacatti (the *catti* of concealment). The *catti* which removes *āṇavamalam* and is revealed within the soul is called Aruḷcatti (the *catti* of grace).¹⁸

¹⁸ See the entry "Āintoḷ" in Ā. Āṇantarācaṇ, "Kalaiccol Viḷakkam" in *Uṇmai* (Cinkapur: n.p., 1993), 173; Ā. Āṇantarācaṇ, interviews with the author, Palkalainagar, Madurai, February 1994.

Śiva's five cosmic actions are depicted iconographically in Śiva's dancing form, Naṭarācar. Creation is symbolized by the drum in the upper right hand; preservation by the right hand raised as the symbol of hope; destruction by the fire held in the upper left hand, *tirōtāṇa* or concealment by the right foot which stands on the demon, and *mutti* (*mukti*) by the raised left foot.¹⁹ The image of Naṭarācar is important for this study because Māṅikkavācakar, the author of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyēlucci", is especially associated with this form of Śiva both in his biography and in one of the rituals studied here.²⁰

Four paths are prescribed for spiritual development while in the human form. These are: *cariyai*, *kiriyai*, *yōkam*, and *ñāṇam*. These are generally thought to be successive stages, although those in the later stages may still follow the patterns of behaviour characteristic of the earlier paths. The first three lead to births in other worlds. The last, *ñāṇam*, is the stage in which one attains enlightenment.²¹ In the path of *ñāṇam*, when the individual has reached the stage of *iruvinaiyoppu*, the guru comes to the individual and enlightens the person. The soul for the first time has a direct unmediated realization of Śiva, but even after enlightenment the soul in its human form is in danger of losing the clarity of its realization of Śiva due to the residual effects of *malam*. These souls

¹⁹ *Unmaivilakkam* # 35. See C. N. Singaravelu's translation in *Unmai Vilakkam (The Exposition of Truth) of Manavasagam Kadanthar* (Saiva Siddhanta Maha Samajam, 1981), 52-54. The *Unmaivilakkam*; is one of the fourteen *Caiva Cittānta Cāttiram*.

²⁰ Māṅikkavācakar refers to Naṭarācar in "Tiruvempāvai", as any reference to Śiva in Tillai, The Place of the Dance, is taken as a reference to Naṭarācar. Poem 12 has a particularly clear reference.

²¹ Each of the four great Śaiva saints are thought to exemplify one of the four paths and one type of relationship with Śiva. Tirunāvukkaracar is the exemplar of *cariyai* who stands as a servant to Śiva the master. Tiruñāṇacampantar is the exemplar of *kiriyai* and stands as a son to Śiva the father. Cuntarar is the exemplar of the path of *yōkam* and stands as friend to Śiva. Māṅikkavācakar is the exemplar of *ñāṇam* and stands as disciple in relation to Śiva the guru. The first three are believed to have attained *mutti* (*mukti*), even though they exemplify the patterns of behaviour which do not directly lead to *mutti*.

may prevent this by keeping the company of other devotees and by continuing spiritual practice.²²

The Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world is like the *akam* narrative frame in that it provides a general sequence of events. It is like the *puram* frame in which the hero is identified in the poem, and the hero's biography is invoked as the specific sequence for interpreting the poem, but the speaker's identity is not indicated in the poem. In both the *puram* situation and the Śaiva Siddhānta sequence, the hero is given a particular identity, but anyone can be the follower of that hero.

The "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" Interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai"

"Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" situates the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" as utterances which are constitutive of the creation of the lower orders of the universe. The utterance of the poem is then God's act of creation which includes the embodiment of the souls. The interpretation begins with enough of an explanation of the temporal and spatial aspects of the Śaiva Siddhānta universe to situate the poem as an event of creation, and then it identifies the key characters and their activity. This is followed by situating each of the first ten poems, and by providing the speakers and addressees with the identities of characters within this world.

The characters in this interpretation are some of the *cattis* and souls of the purer realms of the Śaiva Siddhānta universe. The speakers are the nine *cattis* involved in the

²² See *Civañānapōtam*, *sūtras*: 8 all; 9; 9.1; 9.3; 10, 10.1; 10.2.a, c, e; 11.2; 11.2.d; 12.2, 2.a; 12.3, 3a; 12.4.a, b. Subsequent texts elaborate and debate various aspects of these paths such as the fruits of the first three, their relation to *ñānam*, exactly what the guru does which leads to a discussion of initiation types, and types of aspirants. Specifically the *Civañānapōtam* enjoins meditation on Śiva (1.4.c), reciting the *pañcākkaram* (9; 9.3), praising God (11.2), keeping the company of devotees (12, 12.2,2.a), and worshipping the dress (and symbols) and the shrines of Śiva (13.3, 3.a; 12.4, 4.a).

periodic re-creation of the universe. Each of the first seven poems is addressed by one of the *cattis* to another. Maṇōṇmaṇi addresses poem 1 to another *catti*, Carvapūtamaṇi. Carvapūtamaṇi in turn addresses poem 2 to Pelappiramataṇi. Pelappiramataṇi then speaks poem 3 to Kalvikaraṇi. She in turn addresses Kāḷi with poem 4. Poem 5 is Kāḷi's address to Rauttiri. Rauttiri addresses Cēṭṭai with poem 6. Poem 7 is Cēṭṭai's address to Vāmai. Poem 8 is the speech of Vāmai. Lines one through five of poem 8 are addressed to Anantatēvar, and the remaining lines are addressed to a Civacatti (Śivaśakti) in the sphere of Viṣṇu. Anantatēvar is a highly evolved soul who is leader over the eight Vittiyēcuvavarar, who act as Śiva's agents in the impure realms of the universe. In particular, Anantatēvar initiates the re-creation of the mixed (impure *mayai*) and impure realms (*pirakirutī*) of the universe.²³ The commentary indicates that the Civacatti who resides in the place of Viṣṇu is concerned with the re-creation of elements from *pirakirutī*. The nine *cattis* speak poem 9 amongst themselves. The identities of the speakers and addressees for poem 10 are not clear. It may be spoken by the nine *cattis* mentioned in the first eight poems.²⁴ Other versions of this interpretation attribute poems 9 through 20 to the nine *cattis* as a group.²⁵

²³ See Richard H. Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe: Worshiping Śiva in Medieval India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 118. Davis uses the scheme of Śaiva Siddhānta cosmology based on the Sanskrit Śaiva Siddhānta Āgamas.

See also K. Vajravelu Mudaliar, trans., *Civanana Maṇḍiṭṭam*, by Civanana Munivar (Madurai: Madurai Kamaraj University, 1985), 175, 246.18. The *Māpāṭiyam* is an eighteenth century commentary on the *Civañāṇapōtam*.

²⁴ Visvanathaiyar, editor of Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar's commentary, suggests that others say all nine *cattis* sing this poem. He is supplying portions of Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār's version which, with *puṇarcci* or phonetic changes, are identical to this interpretation. Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār, *Tiruvācakam: Mūlamum Uraiyum* (Piruṅkimānakaram: Intu Yuṇiyaṅ Accukkūṭam, 1897). Also in poem 10, Iramacami's version has two less worlds than Capāpati Mutaliyār's, and one which has a different name.

²⁵ Mu. Irattiṅa Tēcikar, *Tiruvempāvai Uraiyāṭalum Tiruppallī Eḷucci Uraiyum* (Tiruvārūr: Nā. Rutrāpati Mutaliyār, Maṇi Viḷā Veḷiyītu, 1953), 30.

Tiruppanantāḷ Śrī Kāci Maṭam, *MāṇikkavācakaCuvāmikaḷ Aruḷiya Tiruvempāvai Kuṟippuraiyutaṅḷ Tiruppallīyeḷucci (Poḷippuraiyutaṅḷ)* (Tiruppanantāḷ Śrī Kāci Maṭam, 1961), 8.

In this interpretation, the activity of "Tiruvempāvai" is set in the higher and purer realms of the Śaiva Siddhānta universe. This universe has many worlds.²⁶ They can be categorized into three groups according to the material out of which they evolve: those from pure *māyai*; those from impure *māyai*; and those from *pirakiruti*, which is an impurer sub-category of impure *māyai*.²⁷ Each group has its own types of beings. The souls who live in pure *māyai*, the *viññāṅkalar*, are the most evolved spiritually. The souls of impure *māyai* are the *piraḷayākalar*. The souls of *pirakiruti*, the *cakalar*, are the least developed. The human world is one of the many that evolve from *pirakiruti*. The events of "Tiruvempāvai" as understood in this interpretation take place in pure *māyai*.

In pure *māyai* there are five hierarchically arranged regions: *nāta* (the highest and the most subtle), *vin̄tu*, *cātākkiam*, *makēcuram* and *cuttavittai* (the lowest and least subtle). Each has a presiding deity. The last three regions each have their own kinds of beings: the Aṅucatācivar in *cātākkiam*, the eight Vittiyēcivarar and a group of *cattis* in *makēcuram*, and the Mantirēcurar in *cuttavittai*. All three of these beings are *viññāṅkalar*.²⁸ More specifically the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" are uttered in the *makēcuram tattva*.²⁹

Mā. Vē. Nellaiyappa Piḷḷai, *Tiruvācaka Aruḷ Murait Tiruṭṭu Patavurai Viḷakka Uraiyuṭaṅ* (Tirunelvēli: Ne. Naṭarāja Piḷḷai, 1943), 102

A. Utaṅṭarāma Piḷḷai, *Tiruvempāvai* (Tiruttaṅi: Cuppiramaṅisvarar Cuvāmi Vakaiyarā Tēvastāṅkaḷ, 1963), 7.

²⁶ Lines one and two of poem 10, which refer to Śiva's transcendence spatially, are elaborated into an apparently exhaustive listing of all the realms in the universe.

²⁷ The interpretation, in its discussion of poem 10, provides a list of regions with the distance between each one from the lowest in *pirakiruti* to the highest in pure *māyai*.

²⁸ "Tiruvempāvai Karuttu", 3.

²⁹ "Tiruvempāvai Karuttu" places Maṅṅmaṅi and Anantatēvar in the *makēcuramtattva*, and refers to the *mandala* of *cattis* in that region (1-2). The *Māpāṭiyam* refers to the activation of Anantatēvar in the context of the discussion of the *makēcuram tattva*. Vajravelu Mudaliar, *Civanana Maṭaṭiyam*, 246.18.

The main factor for situating "Tiruvempāvai", as a whole, is the reference to the month of *Mārkaḷi* in the last poem. In Śaiva Siddhānta cosmology, the human year is divided into a day and night for the Gods (*tēvarkaḷ*). From *Āṭi* month (mid-July to mid-August) to *Mārkaḷi* month (mid-December to mid-January) is night time for the Gods; from *Tai* month (mid-January to mid-February) upto *Āṇi* month (mid-June to mid-July) is day time for the Gods. These six months are respectively the periods during which the universe in which human beings live is destroyed (*caṅkāram*) and then recreated (*ciruṣṭi*). In the yearly cycle of the gods, *Mārkaḷi* month is dawn, and is the time of the re-creation of the universe for the benefit of the souls who exist in the lower realms.³⁰ The events of "Tiruvempāvai" then constitute the re-creation of the lower universes, those of impure *māyai* and *pirakirutī*.

This interpretation explains the various references to awakening in the first eight poems of "Tiruvempāvai". The utterance of each of the first seven poems is intended to awaken the *cattis* involved in the creation of that universe. "Awakening" the *cattis* means "activating" them to their creative functions. The utterance of poem 8 activates Anantatēvar who is responsible for the evolution of the impure *māyai*, and Cīvacatti, who is responsible for the re-creation of the *pirakirutī*. Each of the first eight poems is then understood to be a stage in the creation of the universe.

The "Tiruvempāvai Karuttu" interpretation thus situates the utterances in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world as part of an act of creation. In terms of the sequence of events of this narrative world, it situates "Tiruvempāvai" at the stage where the souls become embodied. Creation moves the soul from the *kēvala* state to the *caḱala* state. In contrast to the *akam* and *puram* interpretations, the activity of these poems is thought of as occurring

³⁰ Mīnāṭcicuntaram Piḷḷai, *Tiruvempāvai Karuttu Mutaliyaṇa*, 1.

well beyond the human realm, in the higher and purer realms of existence. Both the speakers and addressees are *cattis* (i.e. forms of divine energy).

Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's Interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai"

Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's commentary is terse and the text is damaged in places so that it is difficult to gain a complete understanding of it. He does, however, illustrate the strategies of identifying the speakers and addressees, and situating the poem in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world. It is reasonably clear in the commentary what the poems taken as a whole represent. According to Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation, "Tiruvempāvai" consists of a series of events by which the *cattis* bring the soul to maturity, and the ensuing experience of enlightenment which is enjoyed by both the *cattis* and the soul. The main characters are the *cattis*, the purified soul and Śiva. The *cattis* in this interpretation are those whose function it is to stimulate the soul, not those who activate inert matter as is the case in "Tiruvempāvai Karuttu". The locus of activity in this case is the sentient soul, rather than the insentient *cutta* realms.

Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar assigns speakers and addressees to the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" from the characters of the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world. The speakers and addressees in most of the poems are *cattis*. The Tirōtāṇacattis appear as a group in each of the poems 1 through 10, but the identity of the other *catti* changes from poem to poem. In poem 1 Parācatti addresses, in sequence, Mūlamalacatti (*āṇavamalam*), then the Tirōtāṇacattis, and finally the soul. The text of the commentary on poem 2 is damaged. From the editor's reconstruction it would seem to be a conversation between the Tirōtāṇacattis and Nāṇacatti.³¹ Poem 3 is an exchange between "Iccācatti, the activator of Karmamalacatti",

³¹ The editor mentions that the commentary on this poem was damaged in eight places.

and the Tirōtāṇacattis. Poem 4 contains a discussion between the Tirōtāṇacattis and Kiriyaṇacattis. Poem 5 is a dialogue between the Mature Catti and Āticatti. In poem 6 the discussion is between Mature Tirōtāṇacatti and Inpacatti. In poem 7 the Tirōtāṇacattis addresses Teruḷcatti. Poem 8 is an exchange between the Tirōtāṇacattis and Aruḷcatti. Poem 9 is the exchange between the Tirōtāṇacattis and Inpākiyaśivacatti, in which God also is addressed. Poem 10 is an exchange between the Tirōtāṇacattis and Inpātīta aruḷcatti.

In poems 11 through 20, Śiva often is the addressee, and the soul or the *cattis* are the speakers. In Poem 11 the speaker is not identified. There are two addressees, the image of Śiva at the Madurai Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcurar Temple, Kaliyāṇacuntaraṇ, and the "Girl of Knowledge". Poem 12 is the speech of the "Civacattis who desire maturity", who we can conclude are the Tirōtāṇacattis. It is addressed to the "Girl of Knowledge". In poem 13 the "Cattis of Grace" speak to each other. The text of poem 14 has a gap in the portion which summarizes the poem and identifies the speakers and events, but a portion indicates that some class of *cattis* are the speakers in this poem. In poem 15 Parācatti addresses the Tirōtāṇacattis.³² The identity of the speaker is not provided in poem 16 but the poem is addressed to the "Girls of *Ñāṇam* who are the Friends of the Soul".³³ In poem 17 the speaker is not identified, but the poem is addressed to the "*cattis* who activate the pure souls". Parācatti addresses the *cattis* such as Tirōtāṇa in poem 18. In poem 19 and 20 the pure soul (*cuttāṇmā*) speaks. In poem 19 the Tirōtāṇacatti address Parācatti, and then the pure soul addresses Śiva. Poem 20 is the statement of the soul who has attained release addressing God.

³² "Girls of *Ñāṇam*" is probably the *cattis* addressed at the beginning of the commentary. Ā. Āṇantarācaṇ commented that anything said about Tirōtāṇacattis is normally applicable to the soul. Interviews with the author, Palkalainagar, Madurai, 9 February 1994.

³³ The choice of *tōḷi* to indicate friend is interesting, since it is a technical term used to refer to the friend of the heroine in *akam* poetics.

Eight of the first ten poems are interpreted as dialogues between various *cattis*. This contrasts with the interpretations of Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār and Vanmikanathan which understand only poems 2, 3 and 4 to be dialogues, and "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" which does not seem to take any of the poems as dialogues.³⁴ All of the three dialogue poems in Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's and Vanmikanathan's interpretations are between the heroine and her companions, suggesting that the three poems are part of the same event. For Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar, however, the dialogue poems seem to involve at least one different *catti* in each poem, which suggests that each poem is a separate event, as in "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu". Possibly each dialogue poem represents a different stage in the development of the soul.

The summary commentary (*polippurai anupūti*) at the beginning of Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's explanation of "Tiruvempāvai" situates the whole poem in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world. It describes the first ten poems as events by which the soul is brought to maturity. It says that the first ten poems describes the Tirōtāṇacattis awakening the beginningless *malacatti* (i.e. *āṇavamalam*). The sentences preceding the first reference to awakening *catti* situate the awakening activity in the context of the removal of the soul from *āṇavamalam*. The remaining ten poems are about the blissful experience of enlightenment. According to the summary commentary, the events of the last ten poems are those in which Aruḷcatti as Paraicatti gives the soul the highest bath of bliss.³⁵ In the end the soul has reached the *cutta* state, or the soul is enlightened. The interpretation,

³⁴ There are some versions of this interpretation which interpret some of the first poems as dialogues. Irattiṇa Tēcīkar, *Tiruvempāvai Uraiyātalum Tiruppalliyēlucci Uraiyum* (poems 2-4) and Irāmacāmi Mutaliyār, *Tiruvācakam* (poem 4).

³⁵ The *polippurai* suggests that another meaning for the last ten poems is that they are about the evolution of the universe from *cutta māyai*. The poem by poem commentary on the last ten poems focuses on the bath of bliss, and does not seem to make any reference to creation. I know only of "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" (discussed above) which interprets "Tiruvempāvai" as being about creation. It focuses on the first 10 poems.

therefore, focuses on God's two cosmic actions with respect to the soul, the concealment (poems 1 through 10) and granting of grace (poems 11 through 20).

Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar's comments on poems 10 and 11 confirm that he is following the direction provided by his teacher. In the explanation of poem 10, he says that *malaparipākam* is occurring. Introducing poem 11 he says:

Now, because the *malacatti*, which is inside, becomes mature as a result of the question and answer of the ten *cattis* in the previous poems, *tirōtāṇam* arises outside becoming *aruḷ*, so [the soul] stands and obtains the bath of *pēriṇṇam* which is dancing without ego, awakening from the sleep of *mala* in the space of *parai* (*ñāṇam*) [it] bathes in the ultimate bliss (*cukātītam*).³⁶

Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar here indicates that the questions and answers of the previous ten poems constitute the actions which bring the soul (that is *āṇavamalam*) to maturity. When the soul is mature, when it has attained the state in which *malam* is mature (*malaparipākam*), the hidden *catti* (Tirōtāṇacatti) reveals itself (becomes Aruḷcatti), and the soul's consciousness transcends the world and experiences the consciousness of Śiva. The result of the events of the first ten poems is, then, the bliss or enlightenment of the soul. Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar says that *tirōtāṇa* becomes *aruḷ*. This is a description of the event from the perspective of the activity of *catti*. This same event from the perspective of the soul is expressed as an "awakening from the sleep of *malam* (impurity) in the space of *parai* (*ñāṇam*) (knowledge)".

The point of departure for situating the first ten poems seems to be the "awakening" activity expressed in the form of dialogues in eight of the first ten poems. This question and answer, as we saw in the introductory remarks to poem 11, brought about the maturing of *āṇavamalam*. The point of departure for the remaining ten poems is the "bathing"

³⁶ Translated with the help of Ā. Āṇantarācaṇ, interviews with the author, Palkalainagar, Madurai, 30 April 1991. He says the sentence is not complete.

which is referred to in all the poems. Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar interprets this bath to be the bath of bliss, which is experienced when the soul is in the ultimate state of union with Śiva.

"Tiruvempāvai" in this interpretation reflects events which take place in the soul. In the first ten poems, the Tirōtāṇacattis are awakening the *āṇavamalam* residing in the soul. The Tirōtāṇacattis are the energies of Śiva that function concealed in the soul prior to enlightenment. The activity of the final ten poems is the soul bathing in the bath of bliss. The Tirōtāṇacattis who have before functioned in a concealed way now reveal themselves in and to the soul. This is the enlightenment experience. Throughout the interpretation the locus of the activity of "Tiruvempāvai" is the soul.

It seems in general that Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar interprets the first ten poems as a sequence of events by which the soul is brought to maturity, and the last ten as a collection of poems on the experience of *mutti*. The introductory statement to poem 11 implies that the soul's attainment of enlightenment is a result of the sequence of events that lead up to poem 11. On the other hand Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar identifies poem 1 as Parācatti grasping the highest soul, a clear reference to a state of enlightenment, but in the other poems in the first group it seems that enlightenment has not been obtained.³⁷ Probably he takes poem 1 as an introduction. Alternatively we might imagine, as in Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's interpretation of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", that the order of the poems in the edition does not represent the order of the poems as a sequence of events. One could, for instance, imagine poem 1 as the final event in the sequence of the first ten poems. Poem 10 says

³⁷ For example, the elaboration of poem 2 says that the maturity of *mala* has not yet come. Poem 4 is understood to contain a request for the state of '*niṭṭai*', a technical term referring to the soul's ultimate experience of Śiva or "*Śivapōkam*". In poem 5 there is a request to open the door of delusion, which suggests that *āṇavamalam*, the deluding principle, has not yet been removed. Poem 6 contains a reminder of the promise to give *ñāṇam* (enlightenment). In poem 8 the addressee is asked if her sleep is the result of *malam*, again suggesting that *āṇavamalam* has not yet been removed.

malaparipākam has occurred, or the *āṇavamalam* has matured and is ready for removal. Poem 11 talks about the bath of bliss. Poem 1 would fit in between these chronologically as the actual removal of the mature *āṇavamalam* which leads to the bath of bliss. The last ten poems seem to be a collection of poems around the topic of experiencing *mutti* and do not seem to represent a sequence.

"Tiruvempāvai" has been situated differently by the two commentators in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world. In "Tiruvempāvai Karuttu", "Tiruvempāvai" is about the creation of the universe. The first eight poems represent a sequence of single events in that process. In Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation, "Tiruvempāvai" is about the maturing of *āṇavamalam* and the soul enjoying the experience of bliss in *mutti*. Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation assumes the creation of the world. "Tiruvempāvai Karuttu" set the poems earlier in the sequence of the soul's spiritual development than does Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation. Both interpretations are quite different from the *akam* understandings discussed earlier.

Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar's Interpretation of "Tiruppalliyelucci"

Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar's commentary on "Tiruppalliyelucci" is very terse and difficult, and the ideas presented in the following analysis must be taken only as suggestions. He provides an identity for the addressees and some of the speakers in the poems of "Tiruppalliyelucci". He also provides the situation for "Tiruppalliyelucci" generally, and a suggested theme of each of the poems. Furthermore, in his prose expansions on the poems, he introduces a large number of Śaiva Siddhānta technical terms. "Tiruppalliyelucci" in this interpretation, is taken as a collection of poems on the same theme, but the poems do not necessarily represent the same event, as they do, for example, in Vanmikanathan's interpretation. The poems also do not seem to reflect a sequence of events which add up to a single event, as in

"Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" of "Tiruvempāvai" or Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation of the first ten poems of "Tiruvempāvai". If this is the case, each poem would seem to have its own meaning, as each poem represents a separate event. Therefore it is not possible to provide a meaning for "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" as a whole.

Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar provides identities from the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world for the addressee in all the poems, but identities for the speakers only in poems 1 through 4. The addressee in all poems is God, specifically identified as Śiva except in poem 8. Part of poem 7 is also addressed to the *tēvar* (gods).³⁸ The speakers in the first poem are the women, who are the "Citcattis of the enlightened soul" (*malaparipākavāṇmaciṅ-cattippenkaḷ*). The speaker in poems 2, 3 and 4 is a devotee (*aṭiyēṇ*). Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar refers to the speakers in the remaining six poems only by first person pronouns.

The setting for the poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is not clear. In most of the poems, the speaker speaks about aspects of enlightenment, without any indication of where the act of speaking is taking place. In poems 1 and 2 the setting is clear. In poem 1 the Citcattis in the enlightened soul address Śiva who is also in the soul. In a similar sense, the enlightened soul addresses Śiva within the soul in poem 2. The activity of these two poems, at least, takes place within the enlightened soul.

The summary commentary at the beginning of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" identifies the collection of poems as being about a state of enlightenment in which the soul is absorbed in Śiva to the exclusion of other experience.³⁹ The summary commentary itself phrases it as the rising of the sun in the soul (*uyir*), which is the fifth state beyond the *kēvala*, *cakala* and *cutta* states. This places the theme of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" at an advanced stage in the

³⁸ In the Śaiva Siddhānta world view, *tēvas* are souls who have attained a more exalted life form because of good karma in their previous life.

³⁹ I am following an interpretation of the summary commentary suggested by Ā. Āṇantarācaṅ, interviews with the author, Palkalainagar, Madurai, November 1990.

soul's spiritual development. The point of departure for situating the ten poems of "Tiruppalliyelucci" in this way is the reference to the rising sun in three of the poems, and the refrain which requests the addressee to arise.⁴⁰

In Śaiva Siddhānta theology, there are at least two schemes describing the devotee's evolving awareness of Śiva. One has four stages and the other has five stages.⁴¹ The last two stages in both schemes refer to the two different ways of being enlightened:

Śivayōkam and *Śivapōkam*. *Śivayōkam* is the state of the soul in union with Aruḷcatti. It is a state of enlightenment in which the soul can be active in the world. The soul uses grace rather than the instruments of *māyai* for knowing the world. In other words the soul is directed by grace. In *Śivapōkam* the soul is completely immersed in the experience of Śiva and enjoys his qualities. *Śivapōkam* is a state of bliss. The soul is incapable of knowing anything else while in this state, and is incapable of functioning in the world. This is the highest state for the embodied soul, but it is only temporary because embodied souls continue to participate in the world. Viewed from this perspective the fully evolved embodied soul is capable of these two modes of being. Perhaps when the summary commentary says that the soul leaves the *cutta* state and is in the fifth state, it means as Āṇantarācaṇ suggests, that the soul enters *Śivapōkam*.⁴² This interpretation implies a more

⁴⁰ Dawn is explicitly mentioned or described in poems 1, 2, and 3.

⁴¹ The stages in the four-fold scheme are: 1. *kēṭṭal* (hearing); 2. *cintal* (reflecting); 3. *teḷital* (clarity); 4. *niṭṭai* (experiential realization). The five-fold scheme is: 1. *cutta cākkiram*; 2. *cutta coppaṇam*; 3. *cutta culutti*; 4. *cutta turiyam*; 5. *cutta turiyātītam*. The five stages are the normal stages of the embodied soul (waking, dream, sleep, deep sleep, deepest sleep) with the adjective "pure" attached. In the Śaiva Siddhānta view, as one proceeds from wakefulness to deep sleep one moves deeper into the darkness of *āṇavamalam*. On the other hand, the soul advancing spiritually moves into greater degrees of purity rather than impurity. Ā. Āṇantarācaṇ, interviews with the author, Palkalainakar, Madurai, August 1990 and February, 1994. See also Ā. Āṇantarācaṇ, *Tacakāriyam* (Tirunelvēli: Aruḷnanti Civam Aruṭpaṇi Maṇṇam, 1993), 13-4.

⁴² Ā. Āṇantarācaṇ, interviews with the author, Palkalainagar, Madurai, August, November 1990; February 1994.

limited definition of the *cutta* state as that of the pure embodied soul still functioning in the world.

Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar identifies the theme for each of the poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" in the introductions to the individual poems. In poems 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6 the connection between the general situation described in the summary commentary and the situation of the individual poems is fairly clear. The introductory comment on poem 1 says that it is about the "arising of grace", which is the experience of Śiva in the soul. Poem 2 speaks about "when *pācam* leaves and *parañāṇam* emerges". *Pācam* and *parañāṇam* are Śaiva Siddhānta technical terms. *Pācam* refers to the three bonds of the soul: *māyai*, karma and *āṇavam*. *Parañāṇam* is the highest knowledge by which one experiences and realizes God. It is possible only when the soul has been freed from *pācam*.⁴³ The situation provided for poem 3 is that "the feet which are rare for others are easily accessible to me a devotee". Experiencing Śiva in the soul is regularly referred to as "experiencing the feet". The theme provided for poem 5 is that the "bent red foot is the ultimate satisfaction". This is a reference to the raised left foot of Naṭarācar which symbolizes the bestowal of grace and the experience of enlightenment. The theme of poem 6 is "God lives in the mind which has become diffuse". The main point of the Śaiva Siddhānta prose expansion is that the special devotees in the *Niṭṭai* state have pervasive minds and they worship the feet as a symbol of God's human form. *Niṭṭai* is a technical term in Śaiva Siddhānta referring to the soul's ultimate experience of Śiva. It is also called *Śivapōkam*.⁴⁴

In Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation, the poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" seems to be a collection of poems about various aspects of a situation, and they do not form a sequence

⁴³ See *Civañāṇapōtam*, *sūtra* 11 and *Civañāṇacittiyār Cupakkam*, 310 & 311 in *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiraṅkaḷ* (Cenṇai: Caiva Cittāntat Turai, Cenṇaip Palkalaik Kaḷakam, 1988).

⁴⁴ See notes 38 and 42 above.

of events or represent a single event. This point can be suggested by considering three poems: 1, 2 and 7.

The theme Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar gives for poem 7 is that it is a request for grace. In his prose expansion of the poem, the speaker asks: "Will we receive the true teaching?" The "Tiruppalliyeḷucci" refrain is interpreted as a request for the arising from the bed which is a request for enlightenment. Poem 7 is a request for the experience of enlightenment. It therefore represents a stage prior to the attainment of that stage in the soul's development.

Poems 1 and 2 are expressions from two slightly different perspectives of the experience of Śiva in the soul while in that state. These two poems represent an advanced stage in the sequence of events leading to the full spiritual development of the soul. The introductory statement indicates that poem 1 is about the arising of grace. The next statement in the commentary identifies the exact event of the poem: "the *cit cattis* of the soul, in which *malaparipākam* has occurred, have gathered and are praising the vision of God who is sitting in the audience hall which is the mind" (translation mine). Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar explains the phrase, "It has dawned", in the poem as "leaving *kēvala* and *cakala* states, *ñāṇam* which is the pure holy feet arose in [our/my] knowledge" (translation mine). The soul whose *malam* has matured has received enlightenment. We may conclude that the vision of God in the audience hall of the mind is another way of saying God has revealed himself to the soul and the soul is enlightened. The refrain is understood by Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar to be a request for God to accept the speakers' heart (*ematulaṃ*) as his audience hall. An audience hall is where the ruler makes himself available or reveals himself to his subjects.⁴⁵ We may suggest that this is a request that God, having revealed himself in the soul, should remain revealed.

⁴⁵ *Tamil Lexicon* (Madras: 1982) provides the following definitions for *ōlakkam*: Assembly of state, audience, royal presence, durbar; Hall.

The event of poem 2 is also an experience of Śiva in the soul, expressed this time from the perspective of the soul. Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's prose expansion of poem 2 is as follows:

Now, it tells how when *pācam* leaves, *parañāṇam* emerged.

[citation of poem 2]

The two deeds of the knowledge of the soul which search after lower [things] became equal (*iruvinaiyoppāki*) and *malaparipākam* was born; because of that their *pācam* left before Aruṇan who is *atitivaracattinipātam*; *māyai* which resembles a lamp is gone; as a result of the dawn of grace, the sun which is great bliss (*pēriṇṇam*) and the source for that grace shines, and gives grace for the soul, that compassion increases more and more, when the scent of Śiva which is in the soul diffuses, appearing as one with the soul (*apētavattuvitakkātcīyāka*), that great compassion of our Lord is the basis for that bliss [in the soul]; while the bees who are the devotees stand praising row by row, this is definitely the way of realizing the foot! O Highest Śiva of Tirupperunturai! O Mountain of *pēriṇṇam* which is the glance of grace [which leads the soul to] experience of Śiva [in its] own experience giving [to it] the gem of bliss! O Ocean of Knowledge! It is necessary to celebrate the festival of awakening in the mind of me your devotee! (translation mine).⁴⁶

The imagery of dawn in this poem is interpreted in Śaiva Siddhānta technical terminology. Aruṇan is the charioteer of the sun and represents dawn.⁴⁷ Aruṇan's arrival is compared to the descent of grace. Darkness leaving is compared to *pācam* leaving when grace descends. The rising of the sun is compared to the occurrence of great bliss (*pēriṇṇam*) which follows the descent of grace. The explanation indicates that the soul had attained equanimity with respect to the outcome of its good and bad actions (*iruvinaiyoppu*) and the maturity of *malam* (*malaparipākam*). Because of that *pācam* left when grace descended (*cattinipātam*). The lamp of *māyai* left. This means that the soul ceases to know by the instruments of *māyai*, the mental and sensory organs. It implies that the soul knows by grace, and therefore that the soul has achieved the state of *Śivayōkam*. Up until this point,

⁴⁶ Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar, *Tiruvācaka Vyākḥānam*, 737.

⁴⁷ *Tamil Lexicon*: Aruṇan can also mean the sun. In the commentary, however, there is a clear distinction between dawn and the sun.

the commentator uses only the past tense, and he does so three times, thereby emphasising that the state described has been attained. The commentator then shifts to the present continuous form of the verb when he describes the rising of the sun and the experiencing of pleasure. As the result of the dawn of grace the sun of great bliss arises and fills the soul. This is attaining the feet (*tiruvaṭi*).⁴⁸ The use of the present continuous suggests that this is the state from which the speaker speaks. The soul moves into the state of *Śivapōkam*. The commentary concludes with the statement that God should enjoy the festival of the bed in the devotee's mind. We may suggest that this reference is a longing that God should remain revealed in the soul.

The events of poems 1 and 2 are the actual experience of *Śivapōkam*, and the speakers speak from that state. The event of poem 7 is a request for that experience, and the speaker speaks from a different state. The first two poems talk about the same experience from the viewpoint of two different speakers. This suggests that the poems of "Tiruppalliyelucci" are not a collection of poems expressing a single event as they are in Vanmikanathan's interpretation. It also seems that since the same experience is expressed from two different view points, and that poem 7 is an event which occurs prior to the event of poems 1 and 2, that in Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation the poems of "Tiruppalliyelucci" do not represent a sequence, as they do in Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār's interpretation.

The meaning of Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation of "Tiruppalliyelucci" differs from that arrived at through the interpretation of Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār.

⁴⁸ "kiḷ nāṭalāṇa pacupōṭa iruviṇai yoppāki, malaparipākam **pirantatu**; avarriḷ alitīvara cattinipāṭamāṇa aruṇaṇ muṇ avar pācam **akanratu**; viḷakkaṇaiya māyaiyāṇatu **viṭintatu**; tiruvaruḷ utayamākavē, avvaruḷukku mutaliya pēriṇpac cūriyaṇ viḷaṅki...ivvakaiyō tiruvaṭi **peruvatu**" (emphasis mine). Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar, *Tiruvācaka Vyākhānam*, 737.

Vanmikanathan or Aruṇācalam. In Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's and Aruṇācalam's interpretations, the speaker(s) awaken the addressee from sleep. For Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, the speaker is the wife and her companions who want to see the hero sitting in state attending to those who have come to see him. For Aruṇācalam, the speaker is the bard-servant-devotee, Māṇikkavācakar, who wants to find out from Śiva what service he should perform for him. In Vanmikanathan's and Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretations, the poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" are about an awakening of the speaker. For Vanmikanathan this awakening is the heroine to sexual fulfillment which he correlates to mystical union. For Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar it is an experience of *Śivapōkam*. In Vanmikanathan's interpretation the fulfillment has not yet happened. In Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation in at least two poems it is happening at the moment the poem is uttered, and in another it has yet to happen.

Summary

"Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" have been situated as events in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world by the strategy of assigning characters of that world to be the addressees and speakers in the poems and by indicating the situation in that world to which the poems correspond. "Tiruvempāvai" was situated as two different events and therefore the meaning of it was also understood differently in the two interpretations. According to "Tiruvempāvai Karuttu", the utterance of "Tiruvempāvai" is the act of creation of the impure orders of the universe. In Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation, the utterance of the first ten poems effects the purification of the soul and the remaining ten poems are expressions of the resulting experience of bliss in the enlightened state. Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar utilized the strategy of assigning identities to the speaker to a lesser extent in his commentary on "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", but he did provide a theme for each of the poems, as

well as the general situation for the collection of poems as a whole. According to Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is about the experience of *Śivapōkam*, a complete blissful immersion in Śiva to the exclusion of all other experience.

In this chapter, "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" have been understood in terms of Śaiva Siddhānta theology. The events as understood in the interpretations presented here occur beyond the world of every day experience, as part of a cosmic drama. In chapter 6, I will consider the meaning of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" when they are understood in terms of the lives of individuals living in the human realm of experience.

II: Chapter 6: The Poems in the Biographical Narrative Worlds

Interpretations of the poems in biographical narrative worlds depict the divine-human relationship as one between a god and a particular individual. The events are ordered according to the chronology of the individual's own life. Either the speaker or the addressee have a specific identity. The setting is the specific time and place that the poem is uttered. The meaning or significance of the poems is the meaning or significance that it has when uttered at a particular point in the speaker's or addressee's own life.

Two biographical worlds will be considered in this chapter: the life of the composer of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", Māṇikkavācakar, and the "first person" narrative world. A brief summary of Māṇikkavācakar's life will be provided, followed by an interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai", in terms of that biography, by R. Navaratnam. Then an explanation of the "first person" biographical world will be given, and several examples of the significance of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" to the lives of individuals will be presented.

"Tiruvempāvai" in Māṇikkavācakar's Biographical World

There are several sources which provide information on Māṇikkavācakar's life.¹ His story has been told in four episodes in perhaps the earliest account of the "sixty-four sports of Śiva in the Madurai area", *Tiruvālavāyūṭaiyār Tiruḷḷaiyāṭal Purāṇam*, and retold again in a more popular and later account, *Tiruvālavāyūṭal Purāṇam* by Parañcōti.² The main source

¹ K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 221. See the list of sources in Radha Thiagarajan, *A Study of Mysticism in Tiruvācakam* (Madurai: Madurai Kamaraj University, 1983), 1 n. 1.

² See the introduction. According to Zvelebil references to Śiva's "sports" occur in various earlier sources, the earliest being the *Cilappatikāram* which mentions two sports. Zvelebil estimates a date for Parañcōti between 1450 and 1625. K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil*

is the *Tiruvātavūraṭikaḷ Purāṇam* by Kaṭavuḷmāmuṇivar.³ The whole *purāṇam* is an account of Māṇikkavācakar's life. The following account of Māṇikkavācakar's life is based on the English summaries of the *Tiruvātavūraṭikaḷ Purāṇam* by G. U. Pope and Glenn Yocum.⁴

Māṇikkavācakar's Narrative World

Māṇikkavācakar was a brahmin from Tiruvātavūr, a village located a short distance northeast of Madurai city. He was a talented and educated youth who at an early age became chief minister of the Pāṇṭiya king. He shone in this post. While chief minister, he was sent by the king to Tirupperuntuṟai⁵ to buy horses. Meanwhile, Śiva and his retinue appeared in Tirupperuntuṟai. Śiva sat under a tree, disguised as a human guru, surrounded by his retinue in human form. Māṇikkavācakar arrived in Tirupperuntuṟai, met this "guru", received spiritual teaching, and became enlightened. He then donated all his and the king's wealth to this guru. His assistants, unable to alter his course of action, returned and reported what had happened to the king. The king sent a message ordering Māṇikkavācakar to return. Māṇikkavācakar consulted Śiva who told him to return to Madurai and he would follow with the horses on an auspicious day. Māṇikkavācakar returned, and when the horses did not appear after some time, he was imprisoned.

Literature, vol. 10 in *A History of Indian Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), 177-185.

³ This *purāṇam* has been published with commentary by Pu. Ci. Puṇṇaivaṇanāta Mutaliyār, *Kaṭavuḷmāmuṇivar Aruḷiya Tiruvātavūraṭikaḷ Purāṇam Mūlamum* (1957; reprint, Tirunelvēli: Tirunelvēlit Teṇṇintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpatippuk Kaḷakam Limiṭeṭ, 1967). Zvelebil dates Kaṭavuḷmāmuṇivar in the fourteenth to fifteenth century. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (1974), 176; and *Tamil Literature* (1975), 221.

⁴ G. U. Pope, *The Tiruvaçagam or 'Sacred Utterances' of the Tamil Poet, Saint, and Sage Mānikka-vāçagar*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900; republished by University of Madras, 1979), xvi-xxxii. Glenn E. Yocum, *Hymns to the Dancing Śiva: A Study of Māṇikkavācakar's Tiruvāçakam* (New Delhi: Heritage Publishers, 1982), 50-4.

⁵ Today Tirupperuntuṟai is identified with Āvuṭaiyārkōyil.

Eventually, Śiva arrived with the horses disguised as a horse trader. Māṇikkavācakar was released. In the night, however, the horses turned into jackals, caused havoc and escaped. The horse trader was gone. The king, angry, ordered that Māṇikkavācakar stand in the dry Vaikai river-bed in the mid-day sun. The saint appealed to Śiva who, then, made the Vaikai River flood. Everyone was required to build up a portion of the river bank. An old lady who was not capable of doing the work herself, appealed to Śiva for help. He came disguised as a labourer and offered to do her work in exchange for the rice cakes that she sold. The labourer sported and behaved like a mad-man. The king ordered him to be beaten. The blow on his back was felt by all beings. The king realised that the labourer was Śiva, and as a result released Māṇikkavācakar from service.

Once Māṇikkavācakar was free from his worldly duties he became an ascetic. He returned to Tirupperunturai and remained there with Śiva and his devotees. After some time, Śiva prepared to return to Kailācam. He told the devotees to remain with Māṇikkavācakar for a little while longer and then to return to Kailācam also. He told Māṇikkavācakar to go to Citamparam, visiting shrines along the way. Māṇikkavācakar begged to go with Śiva, but was not permitted. Śiva left and the devotees remained for a little longer and then left also.

Māṇikkavācakar composed a number of poems while in Tirupperunturai. Then he travelled to Citamparam, visiting several places and composing poems along the way. He finally settled in Citamparam where he composed most of his poems. While in Citamparam he defeated the Buddhists in a debate.

One day Śiva came to him disguised as an ascetic from the Pāṇṭiya country. He asked Māṇikkavācakar to sing his songs, and while Māṇikkavācakar sang Śiva recorded them. The ascetic then asked him to sing a *kōvai* which he also recorded. Śiva took these songs to Kailācam and sang them to all the gods. Then Śiva placed them on the steps of

Citamparam Temple. The priests of the temple discovered the songs and sang them before a crowd that had gathered. The crowd went to Māṇikkavācakar to ask him to explain the songs. Māṇikkavācakar took them all to the temple. At the temple, Māṇikkavācakar pointed to Naṭarācar and said that he was the meaning of the songs. Māṇikkavācakar then went into the sanctum and merged with Naṭarācar, attaining *mutti*.

"Tiruvempāvai" in Māṇikkavācakar's Biography: Navaratnam's Interpretation

The interpretation presented here is by Ratna Navaratnam, a Sri Lankan educator and scholar of Tamil Śaivism. She was educated in Tamil Nadu and in London, England. She was later the principal of Ramanathan College in Sri Lanka, and subsequently held positions in the education department of the Sri Lankan government, ultimately as Director of Education. She is a Śaiva. Her interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai" are found in her study of *Tiruvācakam* which she submitted as a thesis to Annamalai University in Tamil Nadu in 1946.⁶

Ratna Navaratnam uses Māṇikkavācakar's biography as the frame for interpreting the *Tiruvācakam* in general, and "Tiruvempāvai" in particular. In her view, the poems, in their canonical order, reflect Māṇikkavācakar's spiritual development.⁷ She provides an

⁶This thesis was published twice, firstly under the title of *Tiruvachakam: The Hindu Testament of Love* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1963) and then under the title *A New Approach to Tiruvacagam* (Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1971). The second publication appears to be a somewhat revised version of the first. The information about her life comes from the back cover of the first publication, as well as from her introductory remarks.

⁷See Navaratnam, *New Approach to Tiruvacagam*, 32-3. Yocum notes that the order of the poems in standard editions of the *Tiruvācakam* differs from the order provided in the *Tiruvātavūraṭikaḷ Purāṇam*. He also suggests that the poems in their standard order do not reflect a spiritual development, as the poems at the end are not much different from those at the beginning. Yocum, *Hymns to the Dancing Śiva*, 56. Vanmikanathan agrees with Navaratnam that the standard order of the 51 units reflects Māṇikkavācakar's spiritual growth. G. Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam: An Original Interpretation and Complete Translation* (Thiruppananadal: Sri Kasi Mutt, 1980), 19-26.

identity for the speakers and addressee(s), establishes the setting, and locates the composition in the poet's life. According to Navaratnam, "Tiruvempāvai" was composed in Tiruvaṅṅāmalai, while Māṅikkavācakar was travelling to Citamparam. It represents an effort to lift his disheartened spirit.

Navaratnam assigns identities to the speakers and addressees in "Tiruvempāvai" in three ways. Firstly, the speakers and addressees are given a general role, and then are assigned the identities of individuals from Māṅikkavācakar's biography. The speakers and addressees in the first set of identities are young girls: girls inside different houses and friends outside who try to encourage them to join them. The girls are historic individuals, but they have no specific identities.⁸ In the second set of identities, Māṅikkavācakar is the girl inside the house, and Śiva's incarnated devotees are the group of girls outside. In this assignment of identities, the different girls in different houses from poem to poem become the same girl, "Māṅikkavācakar", in all the first eight poems.⁹ In the third set of identities, Māṅikkavācakar is the speaker as both the girl inside the house and the group outside. In this set of identities he talks to himself.¹⁰

Corresponding to the three sets of identities are two settings and three events. The first setting is the town of Tiruvaṅṅāmalai in December at dawn. Māṅikkavācakar witnesses young girls going from house to house awakening their friends and going to the

Radha Thiagarajan agrees that the poems of *Tiruvācakam* reflect Māṅikkavācakar's spiritual development, however, she does not see this development in the standard order of the poems. Rather, she suggests an alternative sequence for the poems which does reflect it. In this new sequence, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is reflective of an experience which occurs earlier in Māṅikkavācakar's development than "Tiruvempāvai". Thiagarajan, *Mysticism in Tiruvācakam*, xiv, 193-7.

⁸ Navaratnam, *New Approach to Tiruvācakam*, 188-193, 195.

⁹ Navaratnam's first set of identities follows the same assumptions about the formal units of the early poems of "Tiruvempāvai" as in the "Tiruvempāvai Karuttu". Her second set of identities follows the same set of formal assumptions about the early poems as in the *akam* interpretations of Vanmikanathan and Navanīta Kuruṣṇa Pāratīyār.

¹⁰ Navaratnam, *New Approach to Tiruvācakam*, 195-7.

tank to bathe.¹¹ This activity is the inspiration for this song. Both this activity, and Māṇikkavācakar's utterance of it, according to this interpretation, occur in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai.¹² The second setting is in the poet's mind. The poems of "Tiruvempāvai" are an imagined dialogue between himself and the incarnated devotees, and a real dialogue with himself. In the second event, the incarnated devotees urge a despondent Māṇikkavācakar to come, join them and go to Śiva. The third event is Māṇikkavācakar's effort, inspired by the exuberance of the girls whom he witnessed in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, to arouse himself out of his discouraged state.

Navaratnam places the composition of "Tiruvempāvai", and the experience which she feels it expresses, during Māṇikkavācakar's travels from Tirupperunturai to Citamparam. The poet had been left by his guru and his guru's devotees in Tirupperunturai. Following the instructions of Śiva, he was proceeding to Citamparam, and on his way he passed through Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. While there he saw the young girls going from house to house, awakening their friends and going to the temple tank to bathe.¹³ This is the occasion which prompts the composition of the poem, according to Navaratnam.

In situating "Tiruvempāvai", Navaratnam emphasises the references to Śiva at Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, the *Mārkaḷi* worship activity of awakening friends and going to bathe, and the state of the girl in poem 1. Navaratnam places Māṇikkavācakar in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai because in the poem Māṇikkavācakar can be understood to address Śiva in his particular form found in Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. In poem 18, Śiva is addressed as Lord of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. Also she understands references to Śiva as *cōti* (effulgence) to refer to Śiva in

¹¹ Navaratnam, *New Approach to Tiruvacagam*, 195.

¹² Navaratnam, *New Approach to Tiruvacagam*, 188-9, 195.

¹³ Navaratnam, *New Approach to Tiruvacagam*, 195.

Tiruvaṅṅāmalai, because his form there is the Linga of Fire.¹⁴ The *Mārkaḷi* activity provides the temporal setting of December and dawn, as well as the activity of awakening and the injunctions to bathe, which represent Māṅikkavācakar's effort to lift his spirits.

Navaratnam also focuses on the state of the girl in poem 1 when identifying Māṅikkavācakar's state of mind during this period of his life. Rather than being overwhelmed by love, as in Vanmikanathan's *akam* interpretation, the girl is disheartened. According to Navaratnam, Māṅikkavācakar was discouraged and lonely when he was left by Śiva and the devotees. He was discouraged because he felt that the reason he was left behind was because he was spiritually immature. He longs to be back in the community of devotees. It is in this state that he arrives in Tiruvaṅṅāmalai. He sees the joyfulness of the girls, and their efforts to encourage their friends to participate, and tries to coax himself out of his state of despondency. "Tiruvempāvai" is thus an expression of this effort.¹⁵

The meaning of "Tiruvempāvai" in Navaratnam's interpretation differs from Vanmikanathan's, Navanīta Kuruṣṇa Pāratiyār's, the "Tiruvempāvai Karuttu" and Kāḷi Tāṅṅavarāyar's. In Navanīta Kuruṣṇa Pāratiyār's, Vanmikanathan's and Navaratnam's the activity is similar, in that the group of girls awaken one girl and encourage her to join them in their activity, but the significance of this activity differs. In Navanīta Kuruṣṇa Pāratiyār's *akam* interpretation, the heroine's companions encourage the heroine to participate in the *Mārkaḷi* bathing ritual so she will marry the hero and they will marry his companions. In Vanmikanathan's *akam* interpretation, the girls are performing the appropriate ritual to gain a good husband. They try to encourage the heroine to participate in the bathing ritual but

¹⁴ Navaratnam, *New Approach to Tiruvacagam*, 183-4. See poems 1, 2, 5, 8, and 14. The reference in poem 5 is to the story in which Śiva appears before Brahmā and Viṣṇu, as a unbounded Linga of Fire, in order to resolve a dispute between them regarding which of the three is the greatest.

¹⁵ Navaratnam, *New Approach to Tiruvacagam*, 194-7.

she is so consumed with love for the hero, God, that she cannot. In Navaratnam's interpretation, Māṅikkavācakar tries to lift himself out of his depression. All three of these, more human, meanings of "Tiruvempāvai" are quite different from the meanings of the Śaiva Siddhānta interpretations, where "Tiruvempāvai" is seen as either the act of creation, or as the act of purifying the soul and submerging it in an experience of bliss.

First Person Narrative World

In the first person narrative world the poem is interpreted by situating it into the sequence of events in one's own life. In the previous four frames of interpretation the interpreter situates him or herself as part of the audience of the drama which is being enacted within the narrative world in which the interpreter understands the poem.¹⁶ In the first person narrative world, on the other hand, the interpreter puts him or herself completely within the drama. This is possible for several reasons. Firstly, the duration of the event of the poem equals the duration of the event dramatized in the poem. It is possible to actually live the event of the poem when reading or reciting it. Secondly, the narrators of "Tiruvempāvai" or "Tiruppalliyēḷucci" are minimal in that they simply report the speech of the poem without having any presence or identity in the poem at all.¹⁷ Therefore, the singer can easily become the narrator of that poem. In the first person narrative world then, the interpreter is the narrator of the poem. In monologue poems, the narrator may also identify with the speaker of the poems. The ambiguity regarding the identity of the speaker invites one to

¹⁶ I am indebted to James Lindholm, an honours student in a course I was teaching in the winter term of 1993, for the insight that in *akam* poems the reader may situate him or herself variously with respect to the action of the poem and can then take up various attitudes concerning that action.

¹⁷ See Seymour Chatman's discussion of minimal or non-narrated narratives in *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (1978; rpt. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 166ff.

provide an identity. Since the narrator of the poems has no identity either, the narrator can become the speaker. This means that to speak about the event is to enact it. Finally, since the speaker is also the main character of the events of the poem, the interpreter can become the main character and situate the event within their own life while reciting or singing the poem.

The situation for dialogues is a bit more complicated. The possibility of the narrator taking on the role of the speaker in the dialogue poems is impeded by the change of speakers.¹⁸ The speaker may, however, take on the role of the narrator, and incorporate the event of relating the poems as an event in his or her own life.

"Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" in the First Person Narrative World

When people whose work I read, or with whom I spoke, situated "Tiruvempāvai" or "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" in the first person narrative world, they tended to do so in a brief and vague way. Generally, there was not the sustained discussion of the poems situated in this narrative world as there was in the interpretations presented so far.

The strategy people use to situate the poems in the first person narrative world differs somewhat from those in the interpretations presented earlier. Rather than providing a specific identity for the speaker and indicating the specific event which the utterance is in that narrative world, the interpreters indicate the significance of situating the poem in the first person biography in a general way. There is a general consensus among the examples of interpretation provided here that the significance of "Tiruvempāvai" or "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" is that one may receive benefits by singing the poems to God or that one

¹⁸ Navaratnam overcomes this impediment between narrator and speaker in the dialogue poems by having the narrator take on both speaker roles - Māṇikkavācakar dialogues with himself.

may make requests to God through the poems. The suggested benefit or request may vary from interpretation to interpretation.

In this style of situating the poems, the identity of the speaker is not provided explicitly. It is assumed in the statement of the significance. The speaker is anyone who sings the songs or who makes requests through the songs. Anybody can sing the songs and therefore anybody can situate the poems in their own life and be eligible for the benefits or make requests to God through the poems. Sometimes an interpreter may also utilise singular or plural first person markers when explaining the poems. This technique emphasises that the poem is being situated in the first person biography.

People can suggest to others only in a general way what the meaning or significance of the poem is when it is situated in the first person narrative world because the meaning may vary from individual biography to individual biography. In order to know what "Tiruvempāvai" or "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" actually means in the first person narrative world one would have to look at specific examples of people situating the poems in specific contexts. We can, however, consider what people have suggested the significance is of interpreting "Tiruvempāvai" or "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" in the first person narrative world.

Three examples of the significance of "Tiruvempāvai" and four examples of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" are provided below. All the interpretations are from the twentieth century. The three interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" are taken from publications. Two of the interpretations of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" are from questionnaire respondents and one is from an interview. The fourth is from a twentieth century publication.

"Tiruvempāvai" in the First Person Narrative World

Civa Aruṇakiri Mutaliyār, in the introductory comments to "Tiruvempāvai" in his 1927 edition of the *Tiruvācakam*, says that one should recite "Tiruvempāvai" as part of one's

daily devotions. The person should arise before dawn, go outside, clean oneself, face north and east, apply ash on the forehead, worship Kaṇapati and the guru, recite the *Pañcākṣaram* and then recite *Tiruvempāvai* with great devotion. If one does not do the singing daily, it should be done at least during *Mārkaḷi* month. Those who worship in this way are worthy to receive God's grace, and they will obtain *Tiruvāruḷṅṅam*, enlightenment.¹⁹ Civa Aruṇakiri Mutaliyār's perspective emphasises the act of reciting rather than any aspect of the poem itself, but it is clear that the significance of the poem is that one personally gains enlightenment by singing it.

Ji. Cuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷai in an 1986 essay on "Tiruvempāvai"²⁰ indicates that there are both worldly and other-worldly benefits to be gained by singing "Tiruvempāvai" in *Mārkaḷi*. When discussing these benefits he employs the first person plural markers which have the effect of emphasising that singing "Tiruvempāvai" should be an event done in one's own life. Firstly he indicates that *Mārkaḷi* itself is a good time for gaining personal benefits. *Mārkaḷi* is a time in which darkness leaves and light rises, and is, therefore, the appropriate time for the "destruction of *our* distress" (italics mine), for the "end of confusion", for the end of affliction, and for the arising of pleasure. Further on he explains that one should arise at dawn, bathe in cool water and sing the *pāvai* songs. If one does this, then one will obtain bodily strength, wisdom, knowledge and grace for the soul.²¹ He concludes his essay with the injunction to the reader: "Let us study those [poems] and obtain the fruits (translation mine)."²² The use of the first person plural markers

¹⁹ Civa Aruṇakiri Mutaliyār, *Tiruvācakamum Tirukkōvaiyār Ceyyutṭiraṭṭum: Kuṟippuraiyūm Viṣaya Cūcaṇamum*, 2nd ed. (Ceṇṇai: Rōpil Acciytiracālai, 1927), 83.

²⁰ Ji. Cuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷai, "Pāvaic Cirippu" in *Tiruvācaka Neṟi* (Citamparam: Maṇivācakar Patippakam, 1986), 186-191.

²¹ Cuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷai, "Pāvaic Cirippu," 186.

²² "avarraipa paṭittup payaṅ peṟuvōmāka", Cuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷai, "Pāvaic Cirippu," 191.

emphasises that the people who should sing are himself and whoever reads his essay, i.e. particular individuals. The author then asserts that people should bathe and sing the "Tiruvempāvai" poems in *Mārkaḷi* so that they will be healthy and wise and will obtain grace. Cuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷai emphasises both *Mārkaḷi* month and the act of singing when situating the poem in the first person narrative world.

"Tiruvempāvai" is included in a collection of songs of praise from the *Tirumuṟai* and other texts, compiled and published in 1977 by a prominent industrialist of Madurai, Ti. Cu. Cokkaliṅkam Ceṭṭiyār.²³ He also refers to the importance of recitation and its benefits. Under the heading of "tradition" (*marapu*) he indicates that those who customarily recite other *Tirumuṟai* songs will recite only "Tiruvempāvai" during the ten days leading up to and including *Tiruvatirai* day in *Mārkaḷi* month. He argues in his introduction that such recitation brings worldly benefits. As he does not indicate any specific benefits for singing "Tiruvempāvai", perhaps he means the regular benefits of recitation, but under the heading of "fruit" he indicates that if the singing is done as a young girl's vow, the monsoon rain will come, the crops will grow, and the prosperity of the world will increase.²⁴ In situating "Tiruvempāvai" in the first person narrative world, specifically for young girls, he is emphasising the act of singing, and also emphasising poem 16, which is usually understood to be a request for rain, and also possibly poem 17, which can be understood as a general injunction to bathe so that well-being will flourish.

²³ Ti. Cu. Cokkaliṅkam Ceṭṭiyār, *Paḷaṅ Taruṁ Tirumuṟaiṭ Patikaṅkaḷuṁ Tutippāṭaḷkaḷuṁ (Varalāru-Palaṅ-Uraiṟuṭaṅ)* (Maturai Valamapuri Accakam, 1977).

²⁴ Cokkaliṅkam Ceṭṭiyār, *Paḷaṅ Taruṁ Tirumuṟai*, 170.

"Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in the First Person Narrative World

"Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is also situated in first person biography as an event in which the person sings the poems in order to make requests with a view to obtaining benefits, or without specifically making requests, in order to receive some benefit. At least two types of requests can be made through singing "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci": those which pertain to the singers' daily activities; and requests for *nāṇam* (enlightenment).

Two questionnaire respondents indicated that the significance of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is making requests connected with one's daily work. For one person, a 45 year old woman, it was awakening God and receiving permission to begin one's daily affairs.²⁵ For the other respondent, a 36 year old man, it was awakening God and asking God about the appropriate duties to perform.²⁶ Both people employed first person plural pronouns in their responses, indicating that others as well as themselves may situate "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in their life in this way. These interpretations focus on the awakening of God and the request about service found in poem 7. These views of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" are similar in this way to Aruṇācalam's *puṛam* interpretation, but different in that in these interpretations, it is any individual who may make this request, whereas in Aruṇācalam's interpretation, it was Māṇikkavācakar who made the request.

The idea that "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is a means through which the singer requests enlightenment is brought out in the explanation of the meaning of the poem in an interview with an elderly woman who is well respected for her knowledge of *Tiruvācakam*:

One conception of *paḷḷiyēḷucci* is awakening God and saying "come into the heart". "O God! come into my heart, remove my ignorance, graciously arise in my heart so that

²⁵ "Kālaiyil paḷḷiyarai tirappatarḷku munnāl paṭappaṭum pāḷal. Iraivaṇai eḷuppuvatāka tōṇṛinum nām nam aluvakaḷai toḷaṅkuvatarḷku Iraivaṇitam aṇumati peruvataḷka koḷḷalām".

²⁶ "Pāvaṇaiyil Iraivaṇ uraṅkuvataḷka eṇṇi Iraivaṇai tiruppaḷḷiyiṇṇu eḷuppi emakkuriya paṇikaḷai āṇaiyiṭu eṇa vēṇṭuvatu."

knowledge will come, give knowledge to me". The song which asks this is *paḷḷiyelucci* (translation mine).²⁷

The interpreter indicates that she is giving a general interpretation of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" where she says: "the song which asks this is "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci"." She, however, makes it clear that the significance of the poem is precisely as an individual request to God, by expanding on the initial statement about the song in a variety of ways, using a string of first person singular pronouns. This interpretation focuses on the refrain which requests God to arise from the bed. Here the bed is the speaker's heart and the arising is the arising of God as enlightening knowledge in the speaker's heart. This interpretation, like Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar's, associates the "arising" in "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" with enlightenment.

Civa Aruṇakiri Mutaliyār is more specific about the benefits of the daily recitation of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci". I translate as follows: "Those who recite this *patikam* daily in the early morning will be worthy of Śiva's grace. *Āṇavamalam* will wear away gradually and be reduced."²⁸ Civa Aruṇakiri Mutaliyār's interpretation seems to have no obvious link with specific poems in "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci", unless it is a correlation between the removal of spiritual darkness and the removal of physical darkness. This association is made in a poem by Cēkḷilār, the author of the *Periya Purāṇam*. He says: "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci is the removal of the inner darkness of those adorned with sacred ash and of the outer darkness of full night."²⁹ If this is so, Civa Aruṇakiri Mutaliyār is focusing on the dawn described

²⁷ "Paḷḷiyelucci enral iraivanai eluppi uḷḷatilē vā enrē collukira pāvanai. Iraivanē enṇuṭaiyē uḷḷatilē vā, enṇuṭaiyē ariyāmai pōkki, arivu varumpaṭiyāka enṇuḷḷuttilē eḷuntaruḷi enakku naṇattai koṭu enru kēṭkīra pāṭal paḷḷiyelucci." Interview with the Author, Madurai District, October 1990.

²⁸ Civa Aruṇakiri Mutaliyār, *Tiruvācakamum Tirukkōvaiyār Ceyyutṭiraṭṭum*, 142.

²⁹ As quoted by Aruṇācalam: "nīraṇintār akattiruḷum niraikaṅkuṭ purattiruḷum māṇavarum tiruppaḷḷiyelucci". Cēkḷilār says this in the story about saint Tirunāvukkaracar. Mu. Aruṇācalam, "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" in *Tiruvācakam: Cila Ārāccik Kurippukkaḷ*, (Citamparam: Caiva Cittānta Makā Camāja, 1965), 19.

in a number of the poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci". In any case, the specific benefit, in his interpretation, is the removal of the individual singer's spiritual darkness.

Summary

The interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in the biographical worlds indicate the significance of the utterance of the poem as an event in the life of particular individuals. Navaratnam understands "Tiruvempāvai" in terms of Māṇikkavācakar's biography as the poet's own efforts to lift himself out of his dispondent state after he had been left by Śiva and the other devotees. The significance of the poems in the first person biography is that specific requests can be made through the poems, or some benefit may be gained by singing them. The latter interpretation is similar to Aruṇācalam's interpretation of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in which Māṇikkavācakar is understood to be awakening God and asking what service he should perform. The examples of first person interpretation provided here indicate, in a general way, what the significance might be of situating "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in one's own life. To assess the actual meaning of situating these poems in first person biographies, specific examples from particular situations are required, which will be left to Part III.

However, before proceeding to Part III it is appropriate to bring into focus some of the issues evident in the understandings of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" presented in Part II. In chapter 7, the strategies of interpretation, and the implications of these strategies for the notion of "text" and the meaning of the "text", and their precedents in interpretation of classical poetry will be discussed.

II: Chapter 7: Interpretive Strategies and Classical Precedents

The strategies of interpretation seen in the preceding chapters have precedents in the colophons and organization of the classical poems. The classical poems are situated in the *akam* and *puram* frames by the colophons accompanying the poems, and also, in some collections, by the organizational pattern of the poems. These features situate the poems by providing identities for the speaker, and sometimes for the addressee, by indicating the occasion on which the poem was uttered, or by identifying the theme of the poem.

There are a few other aspects of the basic strategy of interpretation which were not specifically mentioned in the preceding chapters. One is that different interpreters will sometimes take the same poem and situate it as two different events in the same narrative frame. On the other hand the same interpreter may use more than one narrative world when interpreting a poem. Although there is considerable latitude among interpreters regarding how one may interpret a poem, there are sometimes disagreements regarding the legitimacy of using some narrative worlds or frames of interpretation.

The interpretations in the preceding chapters and the poetics of classical poetry make similar assumptions about what constitutes a coherent understanding of a poem. The coherence of an interpretation of a poem depends upon whether the interpreter has been able to fit the poem coherently within his or her chosen narrative frame. In addition, there is an assumption, especially in *akam* poetics, that poems are inherently ambiguous. The combination of a principle of coherence lying outside the text, and the principle that the poetry is ambiguous, results in an interestingly fluid notion of "text" and "interpretation".

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the interpretive strategies of the *akam* and *puram* poems cited in chapter 2, in order to demonstrate that the same strategies are at work in the interpretations of classical poems and devotional poems. Then the use of

narrative frames in the classical context, and then in the devotional context, will be considered. Following that, the idea of coherence and ambiguity will be considered first with reference to the classical context, and then with reference to "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyūcci".

Strategies for the Interpretation of Classical Poems

The combination of the organizational pattern and the colophons of the classical poems situate individual poems as a situation in either the *akam* or *puṟam* frames. Below are two tables providing the colophon information for the *akam* and *puṟam* poems cited in chapter 2. The sample of *akam* poems were selected from three anthologies: *Kuṟuntokai*, *Aiṅkuṟunūru* and *Kalittokai*. The colophons for these poems provide *akam* characters' identities for the speakers and addressees of the poems. They also identify the *akam* occasion on which each poem was uttered. The *Kuṟuntokai* colophons also provides the name of the poet of each poem. The names of the poets and the general situation of the poems taken from *Aiṅkuṟunūru* and *Kalittokai* are known from their position in their respective anthologies.¹

¹ The colophons of *Kuṟuntokai* provide the identity the speaker, the occasion on which the poem was uttered (which sometimes includes the identity of the addressee), and the name of the poet. The organizational pattern of *Aiṅkuṟunūru* and *Kalittokai* provides the identity of the poet, and indicates in which of the five basic *akam* situations the poem should be placed. One poet is considered to be responsible for all the poems composed under one of the five situations. The colophons indicate the occasion on which the poem was uttered. M. Shanmugam Pillai and David Ludden, trans., *Kuṟuntokai: An Anthology of Classical Love Poetry* (Madurai: Koodal Publishers, 1976), xiii; John Ralston Marr, *The Eight Anthologies: A Study in Early Tamil Literature* (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1985), 338-9, 348-9, 357-60, 363-4; K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, vol. 10 in *A History of Indian Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), 12-3, 47-8.

	Poem	Occasion	Poet
1	<i>Kuruntokai</i> 42 ²	"what her friend (said to him, refusing politely, when he said he wanted more and more meetings with her at night)"	Kapilar
2	<i>Kuruntokai</i> 36 ³	"What she said (to her friend, who showed signs of grief during the pre-marital separation"	Paraṇar
3	<i>Kuruntokai</i> 11 ⁴	"What she said (to her heart, to be heard by her friend when he was gone)"	Māmūlaṇār
4	<i>Aiṅkurunūru</i> 295	"What the heroine said thinking about [her] heart which had gone with [the hero who] when he had obtained permission to marry, left and was prolonged" ⁵	Kapilar (<i>kuṛiṅci</i>)
5	<i>Aiṅkurunūru</i> 299	"what the hero said to himself with a joyful heart when he saw the heroine who had experienced first union amongst her friends" ⁶	Kapilar (<i>kuṛiṅci</i>)
6	<i>Kalittokai</i> 94	"a dialogue between the hunchback and the dwarf who are slaves because of the statement "Learned men say that <i>punartal</i> [union], <i>pirital</i> [separtation] etc., are not avoided among slaves and servants, but they are outside the range of the five <i>tiṇais</i> mentioned, i.e. they belong to <i>kaikkilai</i> and <i>peruntiṇai</i> ". ⁷	Marutaṇiḷanā kaṇār (<i>marutam</i>)

² Shanmugam Pillai and Ludden, trans., *Kuruntokai*, 116. Ramanujan provides: "What her friend said to Him": A. K. Ramanujan, *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 39.

³ Shanmugam Pillai and Ludden, trans., *Kuruntokai*, 1976:141.

⁴ Shanmugam Pillai and Ludden, trans., *Kuruntokai*, 416.

⁵ Translation mine, from Po. Vē. Cōmacuntaraṇār, *Aiṅkurunūru* (Tirunelvēli: Tenṇintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpatippuk Kaḷakam Limiṭeṭ, 1972), 403.

⁶ Translation mine, from Cōmacuntaraṇār, *Aiṅkurunūru*, 410.

⁷ The colophon is translated from Po. Vē. Cōmacuntaraṇār, *Kalittokai* (Tirunelvēli: Tenṇintiya Caivacittānta Nūrpatippuk Kaḷakam Limiṭeṭ, 1975), 114. The quoted statement is *sūtra* 24 of *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram* as numbered in P.S. Subrahmanya Sastri, trans. and comm., *Tolkāppiyam: The Earliest Extant Tamil Grammar Text in Tamil, and Roman Scripts with a Critical Commentary in English: Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram-*

The colophon for *Kuṟuntokai* 42 indicates that the poem was addressed by the heroine's friend to the hero when he requested her to arrange meetings between him and the heroine. This clue places the poem in the fourth of the four premarital stages in the development of the love relationship. The colophon of *Kuṟuntokai* 36 indicates that the heroine is speaking to her friend, expressing her grief at the hero's absence. That places this poem in the fourth stage also because it assumes that the heroine has had union with the hero, the friend knows about it, and the hero has left. According to the colophon, *Kuṟuntokai* 11 is spoken by the heroine to her heart, to be overheard by her friend. This poem could be set at the same stage in the sequence as *Kuṟuntokai* 36.

The two poems from *Aiṅkuṟunūru* are about lovers' union as these are included in the *kuriñci* group of the anthology. The colophon of *Aiṅkuṟunūru* 295 indicates that the speaker of the poem is the heroine, but it does not provide an identity for the addressee. The colophon sets this poem at the very end of the premarital stage or at the beginning of the marital stage because the hero has obtained permission to marry and has gone, possibly to collect wealth for the wedding. The colophon indicates that *Aiṅkuṟunūru* 299 is spoken by the hero to himself. It sets the poem very early in the relationship as it mentions the first union with the heroine.

The placement of *Kalittokai* 94 in the anthology indicates that it is a dialogue between a hunchback and a dwarf. The colophon confirms the identity of the speaker and addressee implied in the poem. It does not, however, indicate an occasion for the utterance of the poem. The colophon justifies the hunchback and dwarf as being characters in a poem because they are slaves and can be involved in a love relationship. *Kalittokai* 94 is

Tamil Poetics (Madras: The Kuppaswami Sastri Research Institute, 1949). The translation of the *sūtra* is Subrahmanya Sastri's, p. 21.

not, however, considered to be a proper *akam* poem because slaves cannot be involved in a love relationship in the refined way of the hero and heroine of *akam* proper.⁸

The *puṛam* poems provided in chapter 2 were selected from *Puṛanāṅṅūru*. Each of the *Puṛanāṅṅūru* poems is accompanied by a colophon which, when it is complete, identifies the situation (*tiṇai*), the theme (*turai*), the hero and the poet.⁹ Some colophons provide additional information such as the occasion on which the poem was sung.¹⁰

The colophons which situate poems in the *puṛam* narrative world, therefore, provide slightly different information than do the *akam* colophons. Rather than providing the occasion on which the poem is uttered, the *puṛam* colophons provide the theme of the poem and the identity of the hero if it is known. They also suggest an identity for the speaker, but they only suggest an identity for the addressee if he is the hero of the poem. The formula in the colophon for identifying the hero and the poet is: "he or she sang about him" (*avaṅai avar pāṭiyatu*).¹¹ The poet's or the hero's name will be used in the formula if the poet and hero were not the author and subject of the previous poem in the anthology. This formula for identifying the poet and the hero strongly suggests that the poet is usually identified as the speaker of the poem. This technique situates the poem as an event in the lives of two specific persons: the poet and the hero. In this way the previously known biography provides the sequence of events in which to understand *puṛam* poems.

#	Poem	Tinai (Situation)	Turai (Theme)	Hero of Poem	Poet
1	<i>Puṛanāṅṅūru</i> 92	<i>pāṭāṅ</i>	<i>iyaṅmolī</i>	Ātiyamāṅ Neṭumāṅ Añci	Auvaiyār

⁸ See chapter 3 regarding why the hero and heroine, but not slaves and servants, are suitable characters for the five *akam* situations.

⁹ Marr, *The Eight Anthologies*, 73-74.

¹⁰ See for example the colophon accompanying *Puṛanāṅṅūru* 113 and 215.

¹¹ This is a portion of the colophon from *Puṛanāṅṅūru* 92.

2	<i>Puṛanānūru</i> 87	<i>tumpai</i>	<i>tāṇaimaṛam</i>	Ātiyamāṇ Neṭumāṇ Añci	Auvaīyār
3	<i>Puṛanānūru</i> 101	<i>pāṭāṇ</i>	<i>paricilkaṭū nilai</i>	Ātiyamāṇ Neṭumāṇ Añci	Auvaīyār
4	<i>Puṛanānūru</i> 312	<i>vākai</i>	<i>mūtiṇmullai</i>	-	Poṇmuṭiyār
5	<i>Puṛanānūru</i> 128	<i>pāṭāṇ</i>	<i>vāḷttu or iyaṇmoli</i>	Āy ¹²	Uraiyūr Eṇiccēri Muṭamōciyār

According to the colophons, *Puṛanānūru* 92, 87, and 101 are poems by Auvaīyār about Ātiyamāṇ Neṭumāṇ Añci. *Puṛanānūru* 92 and 101 have the same situation of *pāṭāṇ* (praise) but different themes. The theme given for *Puṛanānūru* 92 is *iyaṇmoli*. The *Puṛapporuḷveṇpāmālai* offers two interpretations for this theme: it is a request that the donor give to the supplicant like generous people give; or it is praise of the king.¹³ *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram* 86 lists the theme *iyaṇmolivāḷttu* and says it involves praising the king with reference to his ancestors. In this poem, it seems that Auvaīyār is praising Ātiyamāṇ Neṭumāṇ Añci's lineage. The theme for *Puṛanānūru* 101 is, on the other hand, *paricilkaṭānilai*. Neither *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram* nor the *Puṛapporuḷveṇpāmālai* lists this theme. The *Tamil Lexicon* explains it as: "[the t]heme of soliciting bounty from a patron who delays favour."¹⁴ In this poem, Auvaīyār is addressing her heart and indirectly requesting benefits from Ātiyamāṇ Neṭumāṇ Añci.

The theme of *Puṛanānūru* 87 is *tāṇaimaṛam* in the situation of *tumpai* (open battle). *Puṛapporuḷveṇpāmālai* provides three possible interpretations for this theme. The most appropriate one is that it is about expressing compassion for the enemies who have to

¹² I am following the colophon which says: "Āyai uraiyūr eṇiccēri muṭamōciyār pāṭiyatu" (*Puṛanānūru*, p. 245); and Marr (*The Eight Anthologies*, 80), in taking Āy to be the name of the hero rather than the name of the place.

¹³ *Puṛapporuḷveṇpāmālai* 9:6, 7.

¹⁴ *Tamil Lexicon* (Madras: University of Madras, 1982) cites this poem as the reference.

meet the stronger army in battle.¹⁵ *Puṛanāṇūru* 87 is Auvaiyār's warning to enemies about the capabilities of Āṭiyamāṅ Neṭumāṅ Añci.

The colophon of *Puṛanāṇūru* 312 identifies the poet as Poṅmuṭiyār.¹⁶ The colophon does not use the usual formula of saying the poet sings about someone. It just provides the poet's name and therefore does not suggest as strongly as is usually done that the poet is the speaker. The colophon does not indicate who either the addressee or the hero of the poem are. The theme, *mūtiṅmullai* in the situation of *vākai* ("ideals of achievement, victory")¹⁷ is, according to the *Puṛapporuḷveṅpāmālai*, about the heroic quality of women of a particular tribe, the Maṛakkuṭi.¹⁸ Therefore, Poṅmuṭiyār's poem is about the heroic quality of the Maṛakkuṭi women.

The colophon for *Puṛanāṇūru* 128 indicates that the poem is by Uṛaiyūr Eṇiccēri Muṭamōciyār about the hero Āy. The theme is *vālttu* or *iyaṅmoli*, as was the case for *Puṛanāṇūru* 92, the most appropriate interpretation of this theme is praising the nature of the king. *Puṛanāṇūru* 128 is therefore Uṛaiyūr Eṇiccēri Muṭamōciyār's praise of Āy's nature.

The interpretive strategies exhibited in the classical poems are the same as those evident in the interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" presented above. As we saw in Part I, chapter 2, not one of the speakers of either an *akam* or a *puṛam* poem cited had a specific identity. At most, the poems conveyed the gender or role of the

¹⁵ *Puṛapporuḷveṅpāmālai* 9.5. The other two versions are: describing the warrior who because of his ability fights without perishing and this averts disaster; and describing the strength of the king who causes battle. *Puṛapporuḷveṅpāmālai* 9:3 and 4.

¹⁶ Ramanujan does not include Poṅmuṭiyār among his list of women poets: *Poems of Love and War*, 323. N. Subramanian identifies the poet as a woman in *The Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index (Index of historical material in Pre-Pallavan Tamil Literature)*, Madras University Historical Series No. 23 (Madras: University of Madras, 1966), 618.

¹⁷ Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 252.

¹⁸ *Puṛapporuḷveṅpāmālai* 8.21.

speaker. The *akam* colophons of the interpreters supply the speaker with an identity from the *akam* narrative world. The colophons of the interpreters also provide identities for the addressees with the one exception of *Aiṅkuṟunūru* 295. Each colophon also identifies the occasion on which the poem was uttered, using the list of *akam* situations, and thereby makes the utterance of the poem an event in the *akam* narrative world. The poet's name is given for each poem, but the poet is not equated with the speaker of the poems. Therefore, we can say that *akam* poems are situated in the *akam* narrative world by identifying characters of the poems as *akam* characters, and by indicating that the occasion on which the poem was uttered is an *akam* event.

The colophons of the interpreters of the *puṟam* poems situate each poem in the *puṟam* world by identifying the themes of the poems as *puṟam* themes, and by situating the poems in particular biographical worlds. All five poems are given themes from the *puṟam* repertoire which indicate the type of *puṟam* event the utterance of the poem involves (praise, requesting benefits, giving advice). The colophons strongly suggest who the speaker is in four of the five poems, and less strongly in the fifth (*Puṟanāṇūru* 312). The colophons identify the hero in the same four, and in three of these the hero is identified in the poem itself.¹⁹ In sum, four of the poems are situated in the lives of two historical individuals, the poet and the hero. *Puṟanāṇūru* 312 alone is situated in one biography, the poet's.

The interpreters of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyelucci" in the preceding chapters follow the same strategies evident in the classical colophons. "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyelucci" were situated in the *akam* world by identifying the speakers of the two poems as *akam* characters and by identifying the occasion of the utterance of the poem as

¹⁹ The hero has no specific identity in either *Puṟanāṇūru* 87 or 312.

an *akam* event. "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" was situated in the *puṟam* narrative world by casting the speaker of the poems as a *puṟam* bard, and as a particular person, the poet Māṇikkavācakar, and also by identifying the event of the poem as a *puṟam* event. "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" were situated in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world by the two interpreters by assigning the speakers roles from the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world, and by identifying the event or theme of the poem (in Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci") to be an event or theme in that narrative world. "Tiruvempāvai" was situated in Māṇikkavācakar's biographical narrative world by assigning Māṇikkavācakar the role of the speaker, and by identifying the utterance of the poem to be a particular event in Māṇikkavācakar's life. Finally, "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" were situated in the first person biographical world by assuming that anyone could be the speaker of the poem, and by suggesting what type of event the utterance of the poem could be, when situated in one's own life.

The Use of Narrative Worlds

The classical poems, like "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", can be situated differently by different interpreters within the same narrative frame, and they can be situated in more than one narrative frame at the same time. Interpreters of classical poems sometimes disagree about where in a particular frame a poem should be placed.

Shanmugan Pillai and Ludden make the following statement concerning the *akam* collection, *Kuruntokai*:

Each poem is a dramatic monologue spoken by one of the characters at one narrative moment, although ambiguities in composition and interpretation of the poems sometimes renders it the case that one of several characters might be speaking in the poems, at one of several possible narrative moments. For example, many of the poems

attributed to "her friend" by the writers of the colophons might have been spoken by the female lover herself and vice versa.²⁰

Parthasarathi makes a similar statement regarding the *puṛam* collection, *Puṛanānūru*:

it is also seen that the specifications of colophons often do not fit (or only loosely fit) the content of the poems and that a verse is, on many occasions, assignable to more than one *tuṛai* [theme].²¹

According to Parthasarathi, it is also the case that some poems identified as *puṛam* poems could be identified with several different *puṛam* events.

We recall that Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār and Vanmikanathan situated "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" as different events, even though both were within the *akam* narrative frame. Likewise, the author of "Tiruvempāvai Karuttu", and Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar situated "Tiruvempāvai" at different points in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world, and supplied different identities from that world for the speakers of the poems.

A second pattern of frame usage in the interpretations above involved more than one narrative frame to interpret the poem. Interpretations of classical poems are generally understood within one frame or the other, but even there an interpretation occasionally utilizes both the *puṛam* and *akam* frames at once. Shanmugam Pillai and Ludden provide a modern example. They made the following comments after their translation of *Kuṛuntokai* 147:

Those separated from their lovers do not scold dreams for waking them with visions of their lovers; even though it is usually unpleasant to be wakened from sleep. The poet himself is a king; perhaps he had a dream of his wife when he was on a campaign of war.²²

²⁰ Shanmugam Pillai and Ludden, trans., *Kuṛuntokai*, 22.

²¹ J. Parthasarathi, "Puṛam Poetry" in *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*, vol. 1 (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1990), 166.

²² Shanmugam Pillai and Ludden, trans., *Kuṛuntokai*, 409. They say in the introduction that these comments are their own, pp. xiii-iv. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār refers to this poem when justifying his interpretation of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci". See chapter 3.

In the above comments, Shanmugan Pillai and Ludden employ both the *akam* and *puṛam* frames of interpretation. Their translation of the colophon for this poem identifies the speaker as the hero, and the situation to be "separation from his lover after a dream". The event itself is an *akam* event, but that *akam* event is then situated as a *puṛam* event by suggesting that the king is at war, and more importantly, by making the utterance an event in the life of the poet, Kōppercuñcōḷaṅ. With this interpretive move the poet is now speaking in his own voice, so the "impersonal" *akam* poem is now a "personal" *puṛam* poem.

Some of the interpreters discussed in earlier chapters above combined narrative frames when interpreting "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelūcci". Vanmikanathan, for instance, employs both the *akam* frame and the poet's biography to interpret the poems. The collection of poems that Vanmikanathan interpreted within the *akam* frame were a group of poems that in turn were seen as part of a particular stage of Māṇikkavācakar's spiritual development. Civa Aruṅakiri Mutaliyār's dominant frame of interpretation is the first person biography, however his explanation of the benefits of singing "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelūcci" were expressed in Śaiva Siddhānta terminology. He therefore utilises both the first person biography and the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative frames in explaining the poems. Navaratnam invokes the *akam* frame for poems 9, 15 and 19 within an interpretation of "Tiruvempāvai" where the dominant frame is the poet's biography.²³

Disagreements among interpreters of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelūcci" regarding in which narrative world a poem should be placed has a counterpart in the classical context. The classification of poems into the narrative worlds of *akam* and *puṛam*

²³ Ratna Navaratnam, *A New Approach to Tiruvacagam* (Annamalainagar: Annamalai University, 1971), 190-3.

is sometimes difficult because even the fundamental criteria for deciding whether a poem is *akam* or *puṛam* varies. John Samuel, for instance describes it as follows:

The classification of *Caṅkam* poetry into *akam* and *puṛam* is clearly made on the basis of the thematic content rather than another criteria. The former deals with romantic sentiments of love and associated situations; the latter is concerned with the heroic sentiments and matters not based on the subjectivism of love.²⁴

Parthasarathi, on the other hand, writes:

The line of demarcation between *puṛam* and *akam* verses is stated to be the avoidance of specific personal names of the heroes in the latter, mentioning only generic appellations; this contrasts with the use of such names allowed in the former (**Tolkāppiyam**, *Poruḷ. Akattiṇattinaiyiyal* -54). . . . There is, however, freedom in the *akam* verse-division for using personal names as part of the descriptive equipment of the landscape (*karupporuḷ*). As a result of this position, the exposition of many thematic details of *puṛam* (like battles, town and city life, etc.) gets included as allusions in the backgrounds depicted by the *akam* verses. Long poems with the *akam* content of love situations (e.g. **Neṭunalvāta** in **Pattuppāṭṭu**) are classified on theoretical grounds under *puṛam* if they happen to slip in a personal name or an indication thereof.

On the other hand, long poems predominantly dealing with *puṛam* detail but strung on the frame-work of a love-situation as the speech of a character in the love drama (like **Pattinappālai** in **Pattuppāṭṭu**) get classified under *akam* verse-division.²⁵

Ramanujan provides another example: when a woman is thought to speak in her own voice about love, the poem is classified as a *puṛam* poem.²⁶ In this case the topic is love and based on Samuel's criteria, we might expect it to be understood according to *akam*

²⁴ John Samuel, "Akappatal" in *Encyclopaedia of Tamil Literature*, vol. 2 (Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, 1992), 40.

²⁵ Parthasarathi, "Puram Poetry," 163.

²⁶ Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 257. He refers to *Puranānūru* 84. Interestingly enough, Ramanujan provides other examples of poems understood to be spoken by the heroine, composed by women poets. These, however, remain classified as *akam* poems. See for example *Kuruntokai* 68 (p. 21), 118 (p. 71), 202 (p. 91), and 325 (p. 49). Subbiah cites three examples of poems which in terms of content are love poems, but because the name of the hero is mentioned in the colophon, the poems are classified as *puṛam* poems. These poems are *Puranānūru* 84, cited by Ramanujan, and *Puranānūru* 83 and 85. G. Subbiah, "Patterns in Religious Thought in Early South India: A Study of Classical Tamil Texts" (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 1988), 194 n. 215.

conventions, but, the sentiment is attributed to a specific person, and the interpretive strategy becomes *puṛam*.

Interpreters of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" also disagree over how the two poems should be understood. Vanmikanathan dismisses "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" because he cannot see what "Tiruvempāvai" has to do with creation. In Vanmikanathan's understanding, the poem makes sense as understood within the Tamil path of love (i.e. the *akam* narrative world).²⁷ Navaratnam on the other hand dismisses "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" because "much of the special charm of this group of spontaneous poetry gets lost under the weight of this philosophical approach". In her mind the true meaning of the poems is to be found in the poet's expressions of his spiritual experience, and therefore they must be understood within the poet's biography.²⁸ Both of these interpreters reject the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative frame.

On the other hand, according to Aruṇaivaṭṭivēḷ Mutaliyār, the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world is the correct context in which to understand "Tiruvempāvai". He rejects any interpretation which construes the devotee as the beloved and God as the lover. That is, he rejects any interpretations within the *akam* narrative world such as those of Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār's and Vanmikanathan's. His primary reason is that such interpretations are inconsistent with the Śaiva perspective which he believes does not (like the Vaiṣṇavas) hold that the soul is embodied in the state of salvation. Since "Tiruvempāvai" is a Śaiva poem, he argues that it should be understood within the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative frame.²⁹

²⁷ G. Vanmikanathan, *Pathway to God through the Thiruvaachakam: An Original Interpretation and Complete Translation*, 2nd ed. (Thiruppanandal: Thiruppanandal Kasi Mutt, 1980), 213-4.

²⁸ Navaratnam, *New Approach to Tiruvacagam*, 194.

²⁹ Specifically, according to Aruṇaivaṭṭivēḷ Mutaliyār, Vaiṣṇavas understand the soul to have a divine body in the state of salvation (*mutti*) with which such a pleasure could be experienced. The Śaivas do not accept any embodied state as a state of release (*mutti*), and maintain that gender distinctions belong to the body alone. Secondly, the female

Interpretations of classical poems and of the devotional poems, "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci", thus both utilize the same basic strategy. They interpret a poem within a narrative frame by assigning identity to the characters of the poems, particularly the speaker, and by situating the utterance of the poem as an event in that particular narrative frame. Within the basic strategy there is considerable interpretive freedom. There are a number of narrative frames from which an interpreter may choose. An interpreter may situate a poem at more than one place in a particular narrative sequence. An interpreter may choose to use more than one frame to interpret a single poem. There is sometimes disagreement among interpreters, however, regarding where in a particular narrative frame a poem should be situated, or which narrative worlds are legitimate frames of interpretation for particular poems.

Coherence and Textual Ambiguity

Another feature which the interpretations in the preceding chapters share with the classical poetry is the presupposition that the coherency of the meaning of the poem is determined in part by the narrative background against which the poem is understood. This presupposition is seen in the articulation of *akam* poetics and is manifest in interpretations of *akam* poems. The theoretical texts which discuss *akam* poetics formulate a pattern of signs and things signified, which constitute the components of the *akam* narrative world. The signs are the elements of the poetic geography, which consists of the regions, the

Vaiṣṇava saint, Āṅṅāḷ, sang "Tiruppāvai", and is understood by tradition to have married God and to have obtained release. The Śaiva female poet saint, Kāraikkālammaiṅṅār referred to God as "Appā" and does not ask for God to be a husband. Thirdly, the Śaivas accept four paths as a means for obtaining release: servant-master, son-father, friend-friend, and student-teacher; but they do not accept the beloved-lover path. Aruṅaiṅṅivēḷ Mutaliṅṅār, *Māṅṅikkavācaka Cuvāṅṅikaḷ Tiruvācakaṅṅ Tirukkōvaiṅṅār Ākiya Eḷḷāṅ Tirumuṅṅurai [Kuṅṅippuraiṅṅuḷaṅ]* (Tarumapuram: Tarumapuram Āḷṅṅam, 1966), 264-6.

seasons, and the times of day (*mutarporu!*), and the animate and inanimate elements which inhabit those regions (*karupporu!*). The things signified are the human moods associated with love (*uripporu!*). According to *akam* poetics, a poet wanting to create an *akam* poem should express a thought about one of the moods by using the elements of the poetic geography which function as signs for that mood.³⁰ Understanding a poem in the *akam* frame, then, depends upon knowing the pattern of conventions which give each sign its significance, and upon recognizing the different elements of the poem as signs in a pattern.

Ramanujan's explanation of *Kuruntokai* 3 provides an example of how an *akam* poem is understood in the *akam* frame:

What She said

Bigger than earth, certainly,
 higher than the sky,
 more unfathomable than the waters
 is this love for this man
 of the mountain slopes
 where bees make rich honey
 from the flowers of the *kuṛiñci*
 that has such black stalks.

Tēvakulattār
Kuruntokai 3

The *kuṛiñci* flower and the mountain scene clearly mark this as a *kuṛiñci* poem about lovers' union. The union is not described or talked about; it is enacted by the "inset" scene of the bees making honey from the flowers of the *kuṛiñci*. The lover is not only the lord of the mountain; he is like the mountain he owns. Describing the scene describes his passion. The *kuṛiñci*, being a plant that takes about twelve years to come to flower, carries a suggestion assimilating the tree to the young tropical heroine who speaks the poem.³¹

³⁰ I am using Ramanujan's language of signifiers and signifieds used in the discussion of *akam* poetics. Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 236-41.

³¹ Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 244. Shanmugan Pillai and Ludden translate the colophon for *Kuruntokai* 3 as follows: "What she said (to her friend who had talked ill of him when he could overhear, so he would hurry to marry)". Shanmugam Pillai and Ludden, trans., *Kuruntokai*, 92.

Ramanujan situates the poem in the *akam* world by focusing on the *kuṛiñci* flower and the mountain which identify the poem as being about lovers' union. He then proceeds to correlate other elements of the poem to the situation of lovers' union: the activity of the bees to sexual union, the mountain to the hero, the *kuṛiñci* stalk to the heroine. He ignores other elements, the waters or the sky, when situating the poem and assumes that they do not function as signs in the *akam* narrative world.³²

In *akam* poetics, there is an assumption that the *akam* poem has an inherent ambiguity. This allows the interpreter to correlate the remaining elements of the poem once it has been situated initially in the *akam* narrative world. This inherent ambiguity is referred to in *akam* poetics as *uḷḷurāi uvamam*, which is comparison between elements in the poem for which there are no explicit markers indicating what elements are being compared. This means that the interpreter must identify the comparison and work out the correspondences, and this is done against the *akam* pattern of signification.

Both Cutler and Ramanujan identify the bees making honey from the *kuṛiñci* flowers with the sexual activity of lovers, in *Kuṛuntokai* 3, as an example of *uḷḷurāi uvamam*.³³ The sexual activity of the lovers is not stated in the poem but rather is deduced and worked out from the elements of the poem, within the *akam* pattern of signification. Cutler's explanation of this comparison illustrates this process quite clearly:

Kuṛuntokai 3 contains several clues that it is a poem of *kuṛiñci tinaṭai* and one dead giveaway is the reference to the *kuṛiñci* flower. In this poem the image of bees making honey from the *kuṛiñci* flower is implicitly compared with the hero and the heroine of

³² Ramanujan brings the waters and the sky into the interpretation when talking about the movement of the poem from the cosmic to the specific: Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 244-45.

³³ Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 244; Cutler, *Songs of Experience*, 84. Discussions of *uḷḷurāi uvamam* are found in Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 244-8; George L. Hart III, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), chapter 7.

the narrative and their union in love: the hero is likened to the bees, the heroine to the *kuriñci* flower, and honey to their love for each other.³⁴

Several points must be emphasised regarding the interpretation of *Kuruntokai* 3 according to *akam* conventions. Firstly, the poem is situated in the *akam* narrative world as a poem about lovers' union by focusing on certain elements in the poem which are understood to be signs in the *akam* poetic conventions. Secondly, other correspondences are worked out either between elements in the poem or between elements of the poem and the narrative frame which are consistent with the basic situation of lovers' union. Thirdly, the concept of implied comparison provides flexibility in the poem itself for working out the points of comparison. This means that there is room for determining how elements of a poem will be related to each other, and to the situation of the narrative frame. The coherency of the meaning of the poem depends on the poem being situated within the *akam* narrative world in a way which is consistent with the general patterns of signification of that world, and on the use of *uḷḷurai uvamam* which allows flexibility for patterning the correspondences of elements of the poem.

The suggestion here is that the presuppositions of coherency and ambiguity evident in *akam* poetics are also at work in the interpretations one finds of the devotional poetry of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci". The interpretations studied above use the strategy of situating a poem in the narrative world by corresponding an element or elements of the poem to a situation of that world. Utilising this strategy presupposes that the coherency of the meaning of the poem lies to some extent in the pattern of signification of the narrative world chosen by the interpreters.

³⁴ Cutler, *Songs of Experience*, 84. He goes on to say: "This network of associations was well known to the audience of *akam* poetry, and the ability to discern this and other similarly implied meanings in the poems' imagery was an essential part of this audience's literary competence." See also pp. 82-3 regarding the importance of understanding the narrative frame in order to "successfully" interpret an *akam* poem.

In the *akam* interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai", we see that Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār focuses on the *Mārkaḷi* bathing ritual in order to situate the poem, while Vanmikanathan gives priority to the state of the girl in poem 1. According to Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, the *Mārkaḷi* bathing ritual indicates the stage of the relationship: the heroine had a relationship with the hero; it has been discovered by her friends; and now they are eager that she should marry the hero. For Vanmikanathan, the state of the girl in poem 1 is the state of the heroine when her friends come to call her to participate in the bathing ritual, a state in which she was consumed by love for the hero.

In situating the poems in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world, "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" emphasises *Mārkaḷi* in the calendar year, and the awakening activity of the first eight poems. *Mārkaḷi* is the time during which the universe is recreated. The awakening activity represents an early stage in the recreation in which the *cattis* activate one another.

Kāli Tāṇṭavarāyar also seems to focus on the awakening activity in the first poems, but he interprets it as an awakening of the soul to *ñāṇam*. He emphasises the bathing activity when situating the final ten poems of "Tiruvempāvai", which he takes to be the bathing of the soul in the bliss of *ñāṇam*.

In situating "Tiruvempāvai" in the poet's biography, Navaratnam emphasises three elements of the poem: the references to Śiva being in the town of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, the state of the girl in poem 1, and the awakening and summoning activity. The reference to Śiva of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai indicates where the poet composed "Tiruvempāvai", and this geographical reference enables Navaratnam to determine at what stage in the poet's life the poem was composed. The state of the girl in verse 1 indicates Māṇikkavācakar's depressed mood at this stage in his life, and the awakening activity corresponds to Māṇikkavācakar's efforts to lift himself out of this state.

In situating "Tiruvempāvai" in the first person biography, Civa Aruṇakiri Mutaliyār's perspective emphasises the act of reciting rather than the elements of the poem itself. Cuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷai similarly emphasises the act of singing, as well as the fact that the singing is done in *Mārkali* month in particular. According to Cuppiramaṇiya Piḷḷai, *Mārkali* is a good time of year for the individual to gain in physical, mental and spiritual well-being. Cokkaliṅkam Ceṭṭiyār focuses on the act of singing the poem, but emphasises the request for rain as well. All three agree that the significance of the act of recitation is that the reciter will receive benefits.

The tendency to focus on an aspect of a poem in order to situate it in a narrative world is also seen in the interpretations of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci". Navanīta Kuruṣṇa Pāratiyār emphasises the awakening activity, as well as references in poem 1 in order to situate "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" as the act of the wife (the heroine) and her attendants awakening her husband (the hero). Vanmikanathan also focuses on the awakening activity, but relies on its position between other collections which he also has situated in the *akam* world, to place it specifically as the heroine's request for sexual fulfillment. Aruṇācalam focuses on the awakening activity as a *puṇam* theme and the request regarding service in poem 7 in order to place "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" as the event of Māṇikkavācakar going to Śiva, awakening him, and requesting what service he should perform. Kāḷi Tāṇṭavarāyar situates "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world also by reference to the awakening activity and takes the awakening to correspond to the experience of *nāṇam*.

"Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" was situated in the first person biography in various ways. In one interpretation, when situating it as one's own act of awakening God and proceeding with the day's work, the emphasis was on the awakening activity and the request in poem 7 to know what service should be done. Another interpretation, understanding the poem as one's own request for enlightenment, correlated the awakening activity expressed in the

refrain with the arising of Śiva as enlightening knowledge in the soul. Civa Aruṇakiri Mutaliyār emphasises the act of reciting "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", but also seems to focus on the references to dawn as the removal of spiritual darkness.

The interpreters of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", like the interpreters of the *akam* poems, situate the poems in the narrative world by emphasising one or two aspects of the poems. The interpreters of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", again like the *akam* interpreters, assume an ambiguity regarding how the parts of the poem relate to each other, and to the narrative world in which the poem is to be situated. The primary point of reference, for removing the ambiguity between parts of the poem, is the event in the narrative world to which the event of the poem is correlated. The interpreters' treatment of the relationship between the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" illustrate this point. Whether or not interpreters understand the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" to represent a sequence, or a collection of poems, depends in part upon what event the poem is thought to represent in the narrative world to which it corresponds.

For Navanīta Kuruṣṇa Pāratiyār, Vanmikanathan and Navaratnam the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" represent a sequence of events in the order in which they are traditionally received. This is consistent with their respective interpretations in which there is some sequence of activity. For all three interpreters, "Tiruvempāvai" most basically represents girls awakening each other and going to bathe, and so they retain the sequence of the poems. However the goal of this sequence of activity differs from interpreter to interpreter. In Navanīta Kuruṣṇa Pāratiyār's interpretation the activity is encouraging the heroine to participate in the *Mārkaḷi* bathing ritual so that her chastity can be preserved and they can get good husbands. In Vanmikanathan's interpretation, the sequence of activity represents the friends' progressive but still incomplete realization of the heroine's state. In

Navaratnam's interpretation the activity represents Māṅikkavācakar's ongoing efforts to improve his mood.

Similarly, in the "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" interpretation presented here, the first eight poems represent a sequence of events correlated to the creation activity. After these eight poems the creative activity is completed. Poems 9 and 10 and the remaining poems in other versions of this interpretation are taken as a collection of poems.

Kāḷi Tāṅṭavarāyar seems to take the first ten poems of "Tiruvempāvai" as a sequence, but not necessarily in the received order, and he seems to see the last ten as a collection of poems not necessarily in a sequence. The sequence of activity in the first ten poems represent the progressive purification of the soul, and the remaining ten are collections of poems about the experience of the bliss of enlightenment.

"Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" is interpreted as both a sequence and as a collection of events. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār interprets "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" as a sequence of events but not in the received order. The poem as a whole is thought to convey the progressive frustration of the heroine and her companions with the hero, so Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratiyār reorders the poems so that the sequence reflects this progressive development. Vanmikanathan takes the poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" as a collection of poems portraying the same event. The poem is a request for marital consumation. All the poems seem to be taken together as a single expression of this request. Kāḷi Tāṅṭavarāyar seems to take the poems as a collection on the same theme (enlightenment) but constituting different events. Some poems are taken as expressions of the soul or the soul's *cutti* while in the experience of enlightenment, while another poem is taken as a request to be given the enlightenment experience.

The various interpretations of poem 9 of "Tiruvempāvai" also provide an example of the process by which the interpreters work out other correspondences once the poem has

been situated in a narrative frame. Poem 9 contains four lines in which the speakers promise to serve the devotees of the addressee who will become the speakers' husbands. Both Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār and Vanmikanathan agree that the companions of the heroine speak all four lines as part of a request that God's devotees become their husbands. The fact that the heroine does not speak in this poem is crucial for their interpretation, because the girl inside the house is already in a love relation with God, the hero, so she definitely could not ask God for one of his devotees as her husband. In the *akam* frame, the heroine is always faithful to the hero, whether or not he is faithful to her.³⁵

In "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" these four lines are attributed to the nine *cattis* activated in the previous poems. The characters to whom the speakers refer are interpreted to be the beings of the lower realms of pure *māyai*. The nine *cattis* promise to serve the feet of the Aṅucatācivar and to be friends to the eight Vittiyeṅcuvarar. They assert that they will marry the Mantirēcurar.³⁶

Kāli Tāṅṭavarāyar attributes these four lines to different speakers: the Tirōtānacattis promise to serve the devotees; and Inpākiya Civacacatti utters the line referring to husband(s). The devotees whom the Tirōtānacattis promise to serve are the souls in whom they operate, who have become God's devotees and have obtained God's feet. The Tirōtānacattis promise to operate according to the wishes of these souls.³⁷ Civacatti says that the God whom they refer to is her husband whom they all will serve.

³⁵ Once the heroine and hero are married, his affairs with other women are a frequent source of quarrels.

³⁶ Aṅucatācivar are indicated by the phrase *tāḷ paṇivōm*; the eight Vittiyeṅcuvarar by *pāṅkāvōm* (friends); and the Mantirēcurar by *eṅkaṇavar*.

³⁷ The logic here may be something like this: before the soul gains enlightenment, the soul is activated by *catti's* concealed within them. They are not in a position to direct their *cattis*. After enlightenment the souls are guided by grace. They are aware of grace within them and act according to it. They do not need to be guided unknowingly.

The shift in meaning in these four interpretations of poem 9 is apparent. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's and Vanmikanathan's interpretations reflect the *akam* emphasis on this world and the human love relationship. "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu" reflects the Śaiva Siddhānta world view, but with an emphasis on creation and the spatial-temporal arrangement of worlds and their inhabitants, rather than on souls and their spiritual development. In Kālī Tāṇṭavarāyar's interpretation, the reference to devotees and service reflects the worldview of the Śaiva Siddhānta narrative world with an emphasis on God's action with respect to the souls through his various *cattis*, in particular those souls who are devotees and who have reached God's feet.

The presupposition that the coherency of meaning lies in the narrative frame and that a poem is inherently ambiguous allows considerable flexibility concerning how the text is treated when situating it in a narrative frame. In all the interpretations presented, the texts that are interpreted, are the twenty poems of "Tiruvempāvai", and the ten poems of "Tiruppalliyeḷucci". They all agree on the boundaries of the text, that it consists of twenty or ten poems. They do not agree on how the parts of the texts are related to each other. For example interpreters disagree on whether the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyeḷucci" should be taken as they are in their canonical order. They disagree on whether the verses should be taken as a collection of utterances on one topic or as a sequence of events. They also disagree on which poems are monologues and which are dialogues, and on divisions of speech and the meaning of the utterances within poems.³⁸

³⁸ All modern commentators do not operate on these assumptions to the same extent. Aruṇaivaivēl Mutaliyār does not accept this assumption of coherency if it violates the internal coherency of the poem. "Tiruvempāvai" is usually introduced in publications with the *Akattiya Cūtra* which summarizes the meaning for the poem as "In Praise of *Catti* (*cattiyai viyantatu*). He rejects this interpretation because, according to him, *catti* is mentioned only in poems 14 and 16. The other verses are not about *catti* and therefore it is not suitable to take the meaning of a part for the meaning of the whole (271-2). He also rejects the "Tiruvempāvaik Karuttu". He argues that if one accepts that the inner meaning

Summary

The strategies of interpretation evident in the interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" provided in this section have precedents in the interpretations of classical poetry. The classical poems and the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" are interpreted by situating them in a narrative frame. This is accomplished by assigning characters in the poems identities from the narrative world, and by identifying the event which the poem represents as an event in the respective narrative world. Poems may be situated differently in the same frame, situated in different frames or in more than one frame at the same time. There is disagreement within this basic strategy regarding what frames serve as the best background for interpreting a poem. This strategy has two basic presuppositions which can be traced back to the earliest *akam* poetics: one, the coherency of the meaning of the poem depends to some extent upon the poem fitting coherently in the narrative frame in which it is situated; and two, the poems can be inherently ambiguous. This strategy and its presuppositions have implications for understanding the characteristics of a text. A "text" is what is interpreted by situating it as an event in a narrative world. Its order and the relation of its parts depend on how the text is understood to be an event in a particular narrative world.

(*uḷḷuṟai poruḷ*) of the first eight poems is the *cattis* of creation awakening one another, then the inner meaning of the remaining twelve poems should be compatible with the creation of the world. He says that such an interpretation for those twelve verses is too forced (272). Even though Aruṇaivaṭivēḷ Mutaliyār believes that the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" should be interpreted according to the Śaiva tradition, this interpretation must present a meaning which is consistent for *all twenty* poems of "Tiruvempāvai".

Part II: Summary

I have argued in Parts I and II that there is a view of text and interpretation evident in "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" and its interpretations. This view is that the text is a poem (or group of poems) which represents an episodic moment in which there is some ambiguity regarding the identity of the speaker or narrator, usually the addressee, the situation which the poem portrays, and the setting of the poem. The text is understood by situating it in a narrative world which resolves some of these ambiguities. I have suggested that this concept of text and interpretation has precedents in classical *akam* and *puṛam* poetry.

In Part II, I have shown how "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" have been interpreted by situating them in various narrative worlds. I have defined a "narrative world" to be a world in which a particular story takes place. I suggested that "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" tended to be interpreted in one or more of five narrative worlds: the *akam* world, the *puṛam* world, the world of Śaiva Siddhānta theology, the poet's biography and the first person biography. This does not mean that these poems are only interpreted in these five worlds. They may also be interpreted in other worlds. I have described each of these narrative worlds, but this does not mean that these narrative worlds have been rigidly defined, or that all interpreters understand these narrative worlds in exactly the same way.

The poems were situated by identifying especially the speaker as a character of a certain narrative world, and the occasion or theme of the poem as a situation in that world. In determining where in a particular narrative world the poem should be placed, the interpreters tended to emphasize some aspects of the poem over others, and then interpret

other aspects of the poem in line with the situation in the narrative world in which the poem has been placed.

This strategy involves making certain presuppositions about the nature of "text". Firstly, it involves acknowledging that the coherence of the meaning of the text depends to some extent on the poem fitting coherently into a position as an event in a particular narrative world. Secondly, this strategy assumes that there is ambiguity in how the parts of the poem relate to each other, and therefore, that the "text" is not limited to a single view of the relation of parts.

There is a strong continuity between the classical and the devotional milieu in this matter of interpretation. The interpreters of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" assume a concept of text and interpretation already evident in classical poetry and poetics. In Part III we will see that this same model of text and interpretation is at also work in ritual events where "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" are recited.

PART III: MODERN USAGE

You can praise them,
tell them just
 what they want to hear,
cleave to them as servants,
but they will still give you nothing,
those fakes-

listen, you poets,
don't sing to them:
sing of our father's Pukalūr.

You will have in this world
 rice and clothes,
 a celebration,
 even an end to sorrow,

and in that other life
without a doubt
you will rule Śiva's world. (1/ 340)

Ūraṇ, the harsh devotee,
son of Caṭaiyaṇ,
father of Vaṇappakai.
from Nāvalūr
 with its flowering fields rich in honey,
sang these ten songs
to the wealthy lord who lives in southern Pukalūr
 where dense pockets of lotus
 rise high in the paddy-fields.

Those who can sing them
will doubtless
reach the feet of **dharm**a's lord (11/ 350)¹

¹ Translation by David Dean Shulman in *Songs of the Harsh Devotee: The Tēvāram of Cuntaramūrttināyaṇār* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1990), 205, 211.

Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva Tamil poems are sung as part of the daily and yearly worship in temples in Tamil Nadu, as well as part of personal or group worship. In Tamil Nadu, the month of *Mārkaḷi* is considered especially appropriate for worshipping God. People awaken to the sounds of religious music playing loudly from loudspeakers between four and five AM.² Singing Māṇikkavācakar's "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" are especially significant during this time. Children learn "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", along with the Vaiṣṇava saint Āṇṭāḷ's "Tiruppāvai", in *pāvai* schools.³ One poem each from Āṇṭāḷ's "Tiruppāvai" and one each from Māṇikkavācakar's "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is sung and commented on each morning of *Mārkaḷi* on All India Radio. Many temples in Tamil Nadu have "Tiruvempāvai" festivals during this month. People recite the poems in a wide variety of worship contexts: at temples, in recitation groups, or at home.

I chose to study the singing of these songs in three separate ritual events. Two of those events take place in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple in the heart of old Madurai city, and the other in the adjoining Citti Viṇāyakar and Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, which is about ten kilometers from Madurai. From a Śaiva perspective, Madurai and Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai both fall within a sacred geography defined by Śiva's "sixty-four sacred acts" associated with Madurai. The Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple is very large, ancient, and has a very well established ritual cycle.

² Fuller also makes this observation: C. J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India*, (New Delhi: Viking, Penguin Books, 1992), 182.

³ See Holly Baker Reynolds' discussion of *pāvai* schools in Madurai: Holly Baker Reynolds, "The Changing Nature of a Tamil Vow: The Challenge of Trans-Sectarian Bhakti in Contemporary South India" in *Boeings and Bullock-Carts: Studies in Change and Continuity in Indian Civilization*, vol. 4, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1990), 64-95.

In contrast, the two village temples are small, relatively new and have somewhat fluid ritual cycles.

The two settings provide three quite different examples of the ritual usage of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyelūcci". In the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, "Tiruppaḷḷiyelūcci" is sung each morning during the year as part of the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* ritual. In the same temple, "Tiruvempāvai" is sung as the central feature in the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival during the month of *Mārkaḷi*. Both events are highly institutionalized, with participation restricted, and only male participants. In the village context, "Tiruppaḷḷiyelūcci" and "Tiruvempāvai" are sung together, along with the Vaiṣṇava "Tirupāvai" in the "*Pāvai* Singing" which occurs yearly. The singing of the poems in this context is done by an informal group of singers who are almost entirely female.

The view of text and interpretation discussed in Parts I and II provides the basis for understanding the way in which the poems are used in these ritual events. The "text" of each ritual event is not, however, just the canonical text of the ten poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelūcci" and the twenty poems of "Tiruvempāvai", but it is a different "text" for each of the three rituals. I will use the phrase "ritual text" to refer to the text that is actually used in the different ritual events. By this term, I mean to refer to that which is sung as part of the act of worship by those who assume the role of performer of the songs during the ritual event.

A ritual performance of a poem is an interpretation of the poem. In the rituals, the poems are situated as part of a particular event in a particular setting. The poems are situated in three different biographical narrative worlds in these three rituals.

"Tiruppaḷḷiyelūcci" is framed as a *puram* event of awakening a "king", who is the God, Cuntarēcuvarar, in the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* at Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple.

"Tiruvempāvai" in the same temple is framed as an event in Māṇikkavācakar's biography in the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival. In the Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai temples both "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" are sung as part of individual devotees' worship, and are therefore situated in first person biographical narrative world. The significance of the poems in each ritual is determined by the significance that the particular ritual has in the respective narrative worlds.

In chapter 8, the daily singing of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* at Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple will be described and interpreted. In chapter 9, the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival at Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple will be described and interpreted. The temples in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai and the "*Pāvai* Singing" will be described in chapter 10, and interpreted in chapter 11. Chapter 12 consists of a discussion of the pattern of behaviour evident in these three rituals, the characteristics of the "ritual text", and the assumptions being made about the coherence of the meaning.

III: Chapter 8: *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*, Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple:

"Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in the Puṛam Narrative World

Temples in Tamil Nadu have a calendar of daily and yearly ritual events. In major temples, like the the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple in Madurai, eight prescribed rituals are conducted for the presiding deities each day. The first of these daily rituals is the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* in which the deities are awakened. In the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is sung during this ritual. The singing of the poem is understood to be part of the act of awakening the presiding deities of this temple, Cuntarēcuvarar and Mīṇāṭci. The performer singing is an *ōtuvār*, a temple employee. The *ōtuvār* has no particular identity in this ritual, except that the singing of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is like the *puṛam* theme of the bard awakening the king and the *ōtuvār* serves as the bard and Cuntarēcuvarar is the king.

This chapter will begin by providing a description of the setting of the ritual in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple and in the ritual cycle. It will be followed by a description of the characters participating in the event, and then a description of the ritual event. The chapter will close by showing that the singing of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is framed by the biography of Cuntarēcuvarar, as this is expressed in the structure of the ritual.

Setting: The Place: Madurai and the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple

Viewed from a Śaiva perspective, both Madurai city and the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple have legendary pasts. The *Tiruvīḷaiyāṭal Purāṇam* by Parañcōti relates sixty-four of Śiva's activities in the Madurai area and in doing so describes a sacred geography of the God's domain. The early stories tell about the discovery of the site of the temple, the building of Madurai city, and stories about how the deities, Mīṇāṭci and Cuntarēcuvarar,

came to be the presiding deities in the temple. According to the *Tiruvīlaiyātal Purāṇam*, the God Indra discovered a Linga and a tank in a forest. He set up a shrine there, and began worshipping. He continued to worship this Linga once a year. The shrine was rediscovered for the benefit of earthly beings by a seer who told the Pāṇṭiya king, Kulacēkaraṇ where it was. The king cleared the forest, and built a temple and a city there. Brahmins were brought from North India to perform the worship. In due course, the king appointed his son to succeed him and then died.

The king's son was unable to father a son of his own in spite of ten thousand years' effort, so he undertook a sacrifice in order to obtain a son. A young girl three years old with three breasts emerged from the sacrificial fire.¹ Her parents were told to call her Taṭātakai (Irresistable Valor), to raise her as a prince, and were promised that when she met her husband she would loose her third breast.²

Taṭātakai conquered the whole earth, and even the Gods, including Indra. She then went to Kailācam to fight Śiva. As soon as she saw Śiva her third breast disappeared, and she became modest as she realized that he was to be her husband. Śiva promised to marry her, and so she returned to Madurai to prepare for the wedding.

Śiva came to Madurai and they were married. He was crowned and took the name Cuntara Pāṇṭiyaṇ. They ruled Madurai together for some time, during which Śiva as Cuntarēcuvarar (the Beautiful Lord) performed many gracious acts. In time, they turned

¹ Irāya. Co., notes, *Tiruvīlaiyātal Purāṇam (Maturai kāṇṭam)* (Maturai: Mīṇāṭci Cuntarēcuvarar Tirukkōyil, 1973), 126 v. 537.

² See "Tatātagai, Pudumandapam", a photograph of a sculpture of Taṭātakai found in Putumaṇṭapam which is associated with the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, in D. Devakunjari, *Madurai Through the Ages: From the Earliest Times to 1801 A.D.* (Madras: Society for Archaeological, Historical and Epigraphical Research, 1979), n.p.

the kingdom over to their married son, Ukkira Pāṇṭiyaṅ, and retired to the shrines of the temple as Mīṇāṭci and Cuntarēcuvarar .³

One of Cuntarēcuvarar's sacred acts, before turning over the kingdom to his son, was to establish the Vaikai River. A great excess of food remained after Cuntarēcuvarar's and Mīṇāṭci's wedding. In order to dispose of the food, Cuntarēcuvarar caused his attendant dwarf to experience an insatiable hunger which enabled him to consume all the food and still want more. The dwarf's cravings were finally satisfied by the Goddess Aṅṅapūrṇīcuvarī. His hunger then gave way to an insatiable thirst, and so he drank all the water in the country. In order to alleviate the dwarf's thirst, Cuntarēcuvarar negotiated with the Goddess, Kāṅkai, to release some water. As a result the Vaikai River was formed and still flows through the city.⁴

The founding of Madurai up until the time when Mīṇāṭci and Cuntarēcuvarar retire to their shrines in the temple covers only the first twelve of the sixty-four sports of the *Tiruvīlaiyāṭal Purāṇam*. The other stories are about Cuntarēcuvarar's other activities in the Madurai area, or those of his followers such as Māṅikkavācakar and Tiruñānacampantar. Story fifty-one tells of the establishment of an academy of poets at Madurai. This story and stories fifty-two through fifty-five link, Cuntarēcuvarar directly with the poets of the classical poetry, and specifically attribute to him the composition of *Kuruntokai* 2. These

³ I have consulted the summaries in J. H. Nelson, *The Madura Country: A Manual* (1868; rpt., Madras: Asian Education Services, 1989), III:4-10; and Dennis D. Hudson, "Two Citra Festivals in Madurai," in Guy R. Welbon and Glenn E. Yocum, ed. *Religious Festivals in South India and Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982), 108-112. The marriage of Śiva and Taṭāṭakai is reenacted every year during the main festival of the temple, the Cittirai Festival, which has been very well described by Hudson.

See also William Harman, *The Sacred Marriage of a Hindu Goddess* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1989).

⁴ Nelson, *The Madura Country*, III:9, Stories 7 and 8; K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, vol. 10 in *A History of Indian Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), 181.

stories depict Cuntarēcuvarar as being directly involved in the composition of poems, the adjudication of the quality of poems, and in resolving disputes among poets.⁵

There are indirect references to the existence of Madurai city in the early centuries of the common era, but much of the structure of the old part of the present city dates from the sixteenth century.⁶ Madurai city today is the capital of Madurai District, and according to the 1991 Census the population of the city was 951, 696.⁷ The city is divided by the Vaikai River, which is a wide and flat riverbed that for most of the year is reduced to a series of small streams. Sometimes, however, the river floods and causes substantial damage. The Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple is at the centre of the old city on the south

⁵ See Nelson, *The Madura Country*, Part III, 29-32; and Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, (1974), 183-4. According to other traditional accounts, there were three academies of poets. The first two academies lasted thousands of years and both were destroyed when the city was overrun by the sea. The third academy lasted nearly two thousand years. All of the *Eṭṭuttokai* are said to have been composed by the poets of the third academy. The *Tolkāppiyam* is associated with both the second and third academies. See K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 55-61. The fourth Tamil Caṅkam was established in Madurai in 1901 by Pāṇṭitturai Tēvar, the Cētuṭaṭi ruler of Ramanatapuram. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (1975), 13. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār was associated with this Caṅkam as an examiner of Tamil scholars and as a contributor to their journal, *Centamiḷ*. See chapter 3. Madurai is well represented in the classical literature. "Maturaikkāñci", one of the ten poems in the *Pattupapāṭṭu*, is on Madurai city. Zvelebil dates this poem around 215 CE.: Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (1975), 79. It is the longest poem in *Pattupapāṭṭu* with 782 lines; see: J. V. Chelliah, trans., *Pattupattu: Ten Tamil Idylls: Tamil Verses with English Translation* (1946; republished by Thanjavur: Tamil University, 1985) 221-282. Subbiah indicates that all the existing *Paripāṭal* songs are on the Vaikai river which runs through Madurai, or to forms of Murukaṅ or Viṣṇu at places near Madurai. G. Subbiah, "Patterns in Religious Thought in Early South India: A Study of Classical Tamil Texts" (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 1988), 72. Kapilar and Paraṅar, two of the authors of the classical poems cited in chapter 2 (see also chapter 7), are mentioned in the fifty-third story and are therefore linked to Madurai city and the Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple.

⁶ See Holly Baker Reynolds, "Madurai: Kōyil Nakar" in *The City as a Sacred Centre: Essays on Six Asian Contexts*, ed. Bardwell Smith and Holly Baker Reynolds (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), 21-34

⁷ *Census of India 1991, Provisional Population Totals, Supplement to Paper-1 of 1991, Series 23: Tamil Nadu* (Government of India, 1991), 75-76.

side of the river, and is surrounded by streets in four concentric squares.⁸ The traffic on the square of streets immediately outside the compound wall proceeds one-way in a clockwise circumambulatory direction around the temple.

The Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple has been the subject of a number of scholarly studies, and there are therefore a number of descriptions, diagrams and pictures of the temple available.⁹ My description will be selective, emphasising those aspects which enable one to get a sense of the contrast between the singing of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyelucci" in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple and in the village temples where the "Pāvai Singing" takes place. The following description is based on my own observations in areas where I had free access, and on Jeyachandran, Fuller, and priestly informants for areas to which I had limited access. A diagram of the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple compound is found in Appendix I.3 and diagrams of Mīṇāṭci's and Cuntarēcuvarar's Shrines are found in Appendices I.1 and I.2 respectively.

The Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple consists of a large compound surrounding the shrines of the main deities, the Goddess Mīṇāṭci and God Cuntarēcuvarar. The temple compound covers an area of 847 feet on the east-west axis and 792 feet on the north-south axis.¹⁰ The compound of the complex has entrances on all four sides. One enters through tall towers called *kōpurams* at about the middle of the south, west and northern sides. There are two entrances on the eastern wall opposite the Mīṇāṭci and Cuntarēcuvarar

⁸ There are many temples in Madurai. However, the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple has geographical prominence and is the largest temple in the city.

⁹ See A. V. Jeyachandran, *The Madurai Temple Complex: With Special Reference to Literature and Legends* (Madurai: Madurai Kamaraj University, 1985); C. J. Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess: The Priests of a South Indian Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); and Devakunjari, *Madurai Through the Ages*.

¹⁰ Jeyachandran, *Madurai Temple Complex* (1985). According to Fuller it is approximately 850 feet by 720. Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, 2. Reynolds gives the measurements as 850 by 725 feet: Reynolds, "Madurai: Kōyil Nakar," 22.

shrines respectively. Within the compound walls are the Āṭi Streets which themselves enclose the main shrines of the temple. The two shrines are side by side, and open towards the east. Each shrine is a complex in itself with its own main deity, surrounding subsidiary deities and other significant figures. There is a large tank roughly opposite Mīṇāṭci's shrine, and another large shrine for Cevvantīcuvarar on the southeastern side of the temple inside the Āṭi Streets and main walls of the temple. There are many other structures such as halls (*maṇṭapams*), rooms of religious organizations, administration offices, kitchens, a shopping area, book stores, and quarters for elephants and cows.¹¹

The main entrance into Mīṇāṭci's shrine is through the Kiḷikkūṭu Maṇṭapam. In the Maṇṭapam opposite the main entrance to Mīṇāṭci's shrine there is an image of Nanti, Śiva's bull, and a *palipīṭam* at which people often worship. On the south side of the outer wall of the Mīṇāṭci complex is a small shrine housing Citti Viṇāyakar. On the north side of the entrance to Mīṇāṭci's complex on the same wall is another small shrine housing Kumāraṅ (Murukaṅ) with his two consorts. Also along this wall are the offices of the superintendent and his assistant, the place where personal worship (*arccanai*) tickets are sold, a book stall, a store room, and the Ūñcal Maṇṭapam (swing hall).

The Mīṇāṭci complex within the larger temple complex consists of the shrine of Mīṇāṭci and two *pirākārams* or concentric surrounding walkways. The whole complex is inaccessible to the non-Hindu. The main entrance¹² to the complex is through a door on the east side. One proceeds through this doorway into the second *pirākāram* and

¹¹ For a further discussion of the other facilities in the complex consult Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, Jeyechandrun, *Madurai Temple Complex* (1985), and Devakunjari, *Madurai Through the Ages*.

¹² The other entrance to the Mīṇāṭci complex is on the north side and leads directly into Cuntarēcuvarar's second *pirākāram*. There is also a gate on the west side but it is closed. See Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, p. xxvi, and Jeyechandrun, *Madurai Temple Complex* (1985), attached map.

immediately in front of the door is the flag pole, another *palipīṭam* and an image of Nanti. There are some shrines and *maṇṭapams* in the first and second *pirākāram*. These shrines are predominantly forms of Śiva's consort's divine children, Viṇāyakar and Murukaṇ. The main entrance into the first *pirākāram* is on the other side of the flagpole through the Six Pillared Hall which is a raised platform in the second *pirākāram* at the center of the eastern side. The first *pirākāram* and the central shrine are therefore higher than the second *pirākāram*.

The main shrine is situated on the western side of the first *pirākāram* midway between the north and south walls. It is divided into several rooms into which only the priests, their assistants and the Vedic chanters may go.¹³ The Goddess Mīṇāṭci, represented by an anthropomorphic image, resides in the innermost room. Extending from the outer room of Mīṇāṭci's immediate quarters are two long rails with a walkway in the middle. Towards the end of the rails, at the opposite end from the main shrine, there is an image of Nanti facing Mīṇāṭci. People worshipping Mīṇāṭci stand on the outer side of these rails. Conventionally, men stand on the south side and the women on the north side. The priest attends to the devotees from the middle. At the end of the rails along the north wall facing south is the *paḷḷiyarai* (bedroom). There is a large mirror hanging high up on the wall opposite Mīṇāṭci which devotees can look into and see the *pūcai* if the crowd is so great that they cannot work their way up to the railings.

The complex of Cuntarēcuvarar 's shrine, like Mīṇāṭci's, consists of a main shrine and two *pirākārams* (walkways). However, Cuntarēcuvarar 's complex is significantly larger than Mīṇāṭci's and contains many more shrines. Images of the sixty-three saints whose stories are told by Cēkkiḷār in the twelfth *Tirumuṟai*, The *Periya Purāṇam*, and

¹³ All three of these groups are brahmins. Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, 33-42.

other important saints are found in Cuntarēcuvarar 's complex, but not in Mīṇāṭci's. Also unlike the Mīṇāṭci complex, non-Hindus may enter the second *pirākāram*, but not the first *pirākāram* or the main shrine area.

The second *pirākāram* of Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine is very large and spacious. There is a shrine for the classical poets in the northwest corner.¹⁴ The walkways of the south, west and north sides open into a large area on the eastern side. In approximately the center of this area there is the Kampattaṭi Maṇṭapam, which is an area enclosed by fencing, with a very large image of Nanti facing Cuntarēcuvarar, a large *palipīṭam* and a flagpole.¹⁵ At the far northeastern corner is the Hundred Pillared Hall in which there is a large image of Naṭarācar. In the southwest corner of the Hundred Pillared Hall is the shrine for the Navakkirakam (nine planets). Proceeding southward from the Hundred Pillared Hall along the outer wall are two very large images of Akkiṇivīrapattiraṇ and Akōravīrapattiraṇ surrounded by an iron fence. On the other side of the eastern entrance there is another set of equally large images, Ūrttuvatāṇṭavar and Pattirakāḷi, also surrounded by an iron fence. At the foot of Ūrttuvatāṇṭavar (a dancing form of Śiva) is an image of Kāraikkālammaiṭṭar (one of the Śaiva canonical poets) watching him dance.

In the outer southeastern corner of this large area there is the Tiruñāṇacampanṭar Maṇṭapam containing the images of eight Śaiva saints. The images proceeding from the left to the right side of the *maṇṭapam* are of: Māṇikkavācakar; Cuntarar; Tirunāvukkaracar; Tiruñāṇacampanṭar; Neṭumāraṇāyaṇār; Maṅkaiyarkkaraci, Kulacciraṇāyaṇār, and Mūrttināyaṇār. The first four saints are worshipped in many places in Tamil Nadu whereas the remaining four are specifically connected with Madurai.

¹⁴ Devakunjari provides a picture of the outside of the *maṇṭapam* entitled "Entrance--Sangattār temple". Devakunjari, *Madurai Through the Ages*, n.p.

¹⁵ See the picture entitled "Nandi Shrine--Kambattadi Maṇṭapam". Devakunjari, *Madurai Through the Ages*. n.p.

The outer wall of the first *pirākāram* also contains a number of shrines. On the north side of the entrance proceeding south are two Lingas and three shrines of different forms of Murukaṅ: Murukaṅ as the Ascetic Taṅṭayutavaṅ at Paḷaṅi Temple; Murukaṅ as Kumāraṅ at Kaḷukumalai Temple and Murukaṅ as a child, Pālamurukaṅ. On the south side of the wall proceeding south there is a shrine to Aṅukkaiviṅāyakar, the form of Viṅāyakar who grants permission to enter the temple, and two more shrines with Lingas.

On the outer edge of the entrance into the first *pirākāram* are rather large images of the four main Śaiva saints: Tirunāvukkaracar and Tiruñānacampantar on the south side, and Cuntarar and Māṅikkavācakar on the north side. Inset into the south side of the thick entrance is an image of Atikārananti, chief of the temple.

The first *pirākāram* of Cuntarēcuvarar's complex has many shrines. There are images of human figures such as Cēkkiḷār, the sixty-three saints, and the ten collections of Śaiva saints¹⁶. There are images of the Goddesses Caracuvati, Turkkai, and Makāḷaçumi. There are also images of Śiva's children, Viṅāyakar and Murukaṅ. There are images of various forms of Śiva: Taṅciṅāmūrṭti (Śiva as guru), Iḷiṅkōrpavar (Śiva as the column of fire), Kācivicuvanātaṅ (Śiva as lord of Kāci), the processional images of Śiva as the Dancing God, Naṅarācar, Cittar (Śiva as a yogi) as well as various Lingas.

The main shrine of Cuntarēcuvarar consists of the rooms in which he resides and a larger area called the Makāmaṅṭapam. As is the case for Miṅāṭci, Cuntarēcuvarar, represented by a Linga, is in the inner of the rooms to which only the priests, their assistants and Vedic chanters have access.¹⁷ Two rails extend from the outer of the rooms

¹⁶ The *Tamil Lexicon* (Madras: University of Madras, 1982) identifies nine groups. Fuller says there are ten. Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, xii. I am following Fuller as he is specifically speaking about the Miṅāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple.

¹⁷ Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, 33-42.

towards the Makāmaṇṭapam, and the worshippers stand on either side of the rails as in Mīṇāṭci's shrine.

There are several shrines in the Makāmaṇṭapam. An image of Naṭarācar is installed in a Silver Hall on the north side of the Makāmaṇṭapam. On the south side there are the festival images of the four saints (Māṇikkavācakar, Cuntarar, Tirunāvukkaracar, Tiruñānacampantar), the sixty-three saints and the collection of ten saints, and the festival images of Cittar and of Śiva in his form as Cantiracēkaraṇ.

The Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple evolved over many centuries. I will briefly mention the stages of evolution suggested by A.V. Jeyechandrun. He proposes that there was a very basic shrine with an enclosing wall for Śiva in the seventh century. By the twelfth century the shrine for Śiva inside the wall had developed into a three-room inner sanctum. In addition, a small shrine for Mīṇāṭci had been built outside this complex. He suggests that in the thirteenth century the second *pirākāram* wall was added for Cuntarēcuvarar and a wall was built for Mīṇāṭci's shrine which became the second *pirākāram* wall. The temple complex was partially destroyed by the invading Muslims in the fourteenth century. The *palliyarai*, the first *pirākāram* wall for Mīṇāṭci's shrine and a hall for Naṭarācar in Cuntarēcuvarar's Makāmaṇṭapam were added in the fifteenth century. Most of the other structures of the temple were built between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, although additions and repairs continue to the present day.¹⁸

¹⁸ Jeyechandrun, *Madurai Temple Complex* (1985), 159-201. There is inscriptional evidence from which to reconstruct the evolution of the temple from the twelfth century onwards. Jeyechandrun also uses literary works.

Temporal Setting: the Ritual Cycle of Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple

The Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar temple has a well developed and complex ritual cycle. The rituals of the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temples are said to follow the *Kāmikāgama* and *Kāraṇāgama*, as well as Akōracivācāriyar's manual, *Śrī Pārāttanittiyapūjāviti-Uttaram*.¹⁹ The temple has daily, weekly, monthly and yearly worship cycles.²⁰ During the hours which the temple is open, but not during any *pūcai*, the priests perform special offerings on behalf of devotees.²¹ On some auspicious days couples are even married in Mīṇāṭci's shrine.

The formal ritual activity of the temple consists most basically of *pūcai* and processions. According to the Āgamas, *pūcai* is a form of worship consisting of a series of offerings (*upacāram*) to the deity. The number of offerings varies from list to list in the different Āgamas.²² Fuller has provided the following list:²³

1. Invocation of the deity
2. Offering a seat to or installation of the deity
3. Offering water for washing the feet
4. Offering water for washing the head and body
5. Offering water for rinsing the mouth
6. Bathing
7. Dressing or offering a garment
8. Putting on the sacred thread
9. Sprinkling perfume

¹⁹ Carl Gustav Diehl, *Instrument and Purpose: Studies on Rites and Rituals in South India* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1956), 57, 98, 148; Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, 136.

²⁰ There are also rare ritual events such as the purification of a temple, or the installation of a new image, or the consecration of a part of the temple.

²¹ See Fuller's description. *Servants of the Goddess*, 21-2.

²² See Richard H. Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe: Worshiping Śiva in Medieval India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 179 n. 8.

²³ Fuller indicates that he has reproduced this list with modification from Jan Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivism: A Comparison* (London: Athlone, 1970). *Camphor Flame*, 67. Jeyechandrun provides the same list expressed in slightly different English terminology. Jeyechandrun, *Madurai Temple Complex* (1985), 231 n. 76. Davis provides a description of offerings based on Āgamic texts: Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe*, 148-159.

10. Adorning with flowers
11. Burning incense
12. Waving an oil lamp
13. Offering food
14. Paying homage by prostration, etc.
15. Circumambulation
16. Dismissal or taking leave of the deity

According to Fuller, items one through five, and fourteen through sixteen, are omitted in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple. Items six through thirteen are offerings which are made by the priests to Mīṇāṭci and Cuntarēcuvarar. These items are normally referred to under four headings: bathing (*apiṭēkam* or *abhiṣekam*), decorating (*alaṅkāram*), offering food (*naivēṭṭiyam*) and offering lamps (*tīpārāṭṇai*).²⁴ Fuller does not include singing or the recitation of texts as part of his list of offerings, but according to the *Kāmikāgama*, the recitation of texts, singing of songs (in various languages) and dancing should follow the offering of incense to the deity.²⁵

The cycle of daily *pūcai* refers to the *pūcai* offered to the presiding deities in their immovable forms in the main shrines. *Pūcai* is conducted eight times a day for the presiding deities in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, although some of the *pūcais* are joined together so that there is actually only six separate *pūcai* times. According to the

²⁴ Fuller provides a composite description of *pūcai* as it is conducted at the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple. Bathing is item six; decorating includes items seven through ten, offering food is item thirteen, and waving the lamp is item twelve but is sometimes preceded by an offering of incense (item eleven). *Camphor Flame*, 64-67.

²⁵ Davis cites the *Kāmikāgama* 4.436-39: "He should have songs consisting of mantras sung, or else vina music may be played. After the offering of incense, there should be Vedic recitations or readings from other sacred texts, and after that songs in the Gauḍa, and other languages. Afterward he should have performed songs composed in the Dravidian language, or in uncorrupt Sanskrit, joined with dance, or songs in the eighteen languages using many tones." *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe*, 150.

Āgamas, eight daily *pūcais* is the optimal number.²⁶ The names and times of the *pūcai* in the Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple are posted on a board in the temple:²⁷

Daily Worship	Miṇāṭci	Cuntarēcuvarar
	AM	AM
1. Tiruvaṇantal	5:00	6:00
2. Viḷāpūcai	6:30-7:00	6:45-7:30
& 3. Kālacanti		
4. Tirikālacanti	10:30-11:00	11:00-11:30
& 5. Uccikālam		
	PM	PM
6. Cāyaraṭcai	4:30-5:15	5:00-5:30
7. Arttacāmam	7:30-7:45	7:45-8:30
8. Paḷḷiyarai	10:00	9:30

These *pūcais* usually start earlier in Miṇāṭci's shrine than in Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine. The exception is the last *pūcai* of the day, which begins in Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine because it is the *pūcai* in which his image is brought back to her shrine to spend the night.

A procession is the essential element of festival worship, during which movable images (*uṛcavamūrtti*) are taken around the precincts of the temple or to areas outside the temple. In the Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, the deities are taken in procession within the *pirākārams* of the temple, along the square of Āṭi Streets within the compound walls, or along the other three concentric squares of streets surrounding the temple compound.²⁸

Festivals are conducted throughout the year, and according to Jeyechandrun there are festivals for the various deities or saints on 300 of the 365 days.²⁹ Fuller lists eight

²⁶ Ār. Supramaniyaṅ, "Parārṭta Pūjai" in *Śiva Temples and Temple Rituals*, ed. by S.S Janaki (Madras: Kuppaswami Sastri Research Institute, 1988), 78.

²⁷ As of 3 July 1990. The same *pūcai* order is given by Nī. Cī. Cuntararāmaṅ. "Maturaik Kōyil Nittiya Valipātu" in *Maturait Tirukkōyil (The Madurai Temple Complex): Tirukkuṭa Naṅṅirāṭṭup Peruvilā Malar (Kumbabhisheka Souvenir)*, ed. A. V. Jeyechandrun (Madurai: Arulmighu Meenakshi Sundaresvarar Tirukkoil, 1974), 271-3. The number of *pūcais*, their order and times differ from Diehl's record of the Devastānam list: Diehl, *Instrument and Purpose*, 148-152.

²⁸ See Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, 17-21.

²⁹ Jeyechandrun, *Madurai Temple Complex* (1985), 215.

festivals for Mīṇāṭci and Cuntarēcuvarar together, and four for Mīṇāṭci alone.³⁰ The most important of these festivals is in *Cittirai* month in which, among other events, the marriage of Mīṇāṭci and Cuntarēcuvarar is reenacted. There are two festivals for Śiva in his form as Naṭarācar: one in *Āṇi* month and one on *Tiruvātirai* day of *Mārkaḷi* month. Festivals for Viṇāyakar, Murukaṅ and Nanti are held in *Māci* month. The saints' birthdays are celebrated by festivals as well.

Certain days of the week and certain days of the month also involve special worship. For example on Fridays the swing festival is conducted for Mīṇāṭci and Cuntarēcuvarar, during which they are swung on a swing in *Ūñcal Maṅṭapam*. On *piratōṭam* day,³¹ Cantiracēkaraṅ is taken in procession into the second *pirākāram* of Cuntarēcuvarar 's shrine.

Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai

"Tiruppalliyēluccei" is sung during *Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai*, the first *pūcai* of the daily ritual cycle at the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple. The *pūcai* takes about an hour to complete and involves quite a number of temple staff.

Cast and Audience

The Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple is huge and therefore requires a very large staff. Fuller has discussed the staff of the temple as of 1980, and it is only necessary here to consider the staff directly involved in the *Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai*.³² In *Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai*, a

³⁰ Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, 18.

³¹ According to the *Tamil Lexicon*, this is the thirteenth lunar day of the dark fortnight, a day which is auspicious for worshipping Śiva.

³² Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, chapter 2, 23-48. Fuller gives a short description of the duties and rights of the various positions, and their relative position in the hierarchy in society and in the temple.

number of priests, assistant priests, other temple support staff, *ōtuvārs* and musicians have direct roles. All these roles are filled by men. The many other staff which indirectly have roles such as the cleaning staff, the kitchen staff and the administrative staff will not be discussed here.

The role of the priest is the most important role in the overall ritual event in which "Tiruppalliyelucci" is sung. It is the priest who attends to the deities and makes the offerings during *pūcai*. There are two priestly families at the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple who have hereditary rights to perform priestly functions, but only one of these families has the right to perform the daily *pūcai*.³³ Every day there is one priest to attend to Mīṇāṭci and one to attend to Cuntarēcuvarar. The two positions are filled by a different priest each day according to a monthly schedule.³⁴ The *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* is conducted entirely by the priest of Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine, even though the *pūcai* takes place in both Mīṇāṭci's shrine and in Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine.³⁵ He usually has two brahmin assistants which accompany him as he goes from shrine to shrine.

The *ōtuvārs* are the professional singers of Tamil songs in general and of the *Tirumuṟai* in particular. They sing the songs primarily in temples during daily ritual and festival ritual. In the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, the *ōtuvārs* give a recital of Tamil songs, accompanied by instrumental musicians, in the morning and evening in Kiḷikkūṭu Maṇṭapam. It is the *ōtuvārs* who sing "Tiruppalliyelucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple.

³³ Fuller discusses these two families and their respective rights at some length: Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*.

³⁴ Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple Priest, interview with the author, Hamilton, Canada, December 1991.

³⁵ I am told that Cuntarēcuvarar's priest does this *pūcai* because this is the *pūcai* in which Cuntarēcuvarar's image is returned to his own shrine.

The actual singing pattern of the *ōtuvārs* deserves a separate study, however, a few general comments can be made here. One *ōtuvār* summarized the daily singing duty as singing the *Pañcapurāṇam* in the daily *pūcais*. This summary glosses over some interesting points. It seems that the *ōtuvārs* sing the *Pañcapurāṇam* only during the middle four daily *pūcais* and only in Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine. In the first and last *pūcai* times different songs are sung. The *Pañcapurāṇam* consists of selections from each of the following groupings of five *Tirumuṟai* texts:

1. *Tēvāram*, the first through seventh *Tirumuṟai*, which contains the poems of Tiruñānacampantar, Tirunāvukkaracar, and Cuntarar
2. *Tiruvācakam* and *Tirukkōvaiyār*, the eighth *Tirumuṟai*, by Māṇikkavācakar
3. *Tiruvicaippā*, which is a group of poems composed by nine different authors, in the ninth *Tirumuṟai*
4. *Tiruppallāṇṭu*, composed by Cēntaṇār, also in the ninth *Tirumuṟai*
5. *Periya Purāṇam*, the twelfth *Tirumuṟai*, composed by Cēkkiḷār

The *ōtuvārs* probably select one poem from each of the five groups according to their liking, as they do when they sing the *Pañcapurāṇam* in the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival.

Another *ōtuvār* informed me that during the daily *pūcai* to Mīṇāṭci, rather than the *Pañcapurāṇam*, the *ōtuvār* sings songs from other works such as *Maturai Mīṇāṭciyammai Piḷḷait Tamil* and *Apirāmi Antāti*, which are not part of the *Tirumuṟai*.³⁶ The singing of the *Tirumuṟai* songs in Cuntarēcuvarar's complex but not in Mīṇāṭci's complex is an important distinction which corresponds with the fact that the images of the saints who composed those songs are found in Cuntarēcuvarar's complex but not in Mīṇāṭci's.

There were six *ōtuvār* positions in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple in 1993-94. One is the hereditary position of the *Stala Ōtuvār* and the other five are non-hereditary salaried positions. While the position of *Stala Ōtuvār* may be several hundred years old,

³⁶ The Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple *Ōtuvārs*, interviews with the author, Madurai, August 1990; July 1994.

the position of non-hereditary salaried *ōtuvār* seems to be a fairly modern development which began around the 1940s.³⁷

The *ōtuvār* has a limited role in the *Tiruvānantal Pūcai*. The *pūcai* takes about fifty to sixty minutes, and the *ōtuvār* participates for only about ten minutes. The singing

³⁷ The superintendent, the *Stala Ōtuvār* and a few other *ōtuvārs* verified the number and status of *ōtuvārs*. I was told that the family of the *Stala Ōtuvār* was appointed with an endowment at the time of Tirumalaināyakkar (seventeenth century), and that it is recorded in Telugu on a copper plate. Details about the appointment of the *Stala Ōtuvār* at the time of Tirumalaināyakkar were provided by the *Stala Ōtuvār* and mentioned independently by a friend of the family.

An entry in the Government records of 1836 records a late succession dispute over the hereditary position of *ōtuvār* in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, because the right to the position had been registered in the names of the heirs of only two of three brothers. The third brother was claiming his share from his nephews. Devakunjari mentions that during the Nayak period and the early British period there were two *ōtuvārs* working in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple. It is not clear what the source of her information is, and it is possible that the two mentioned by her may be the two brothers recorded in this dispute.

There are at least two factors which suggest that the appointment of non-hereditary *ōtuvārs* began in the 1940's or 1950's. The first is that in the 1940s in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple the role of the temple dancers (*tēvatāci*) was eliminated, and the *ōtuvār* apparently took over some of their duties. Fuller had evidence that the *tēvatācis* used to sing in the first (*Tiruvānantal Pūcai*) and last *pūcai* (*Paḷḷiyarai Pūcai*), but notes that the *tēvatācis* stopped working in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple in the 1940s and that the dedication of girls as *tēvatāci* was banned by a law in 1947. Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, 38, 40-1, 188 n. 24.

The second reason for the change in the role of the *ōtuvārs* in the 1940s was that The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department developed a deliberate policy of appointing *ōtuvārs* and Vedic reciters in temples in Tamil Nadu. *Administration Report of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department for the period from 1 April 1953-54* (Madras: Superintendent, Government Press, 1955), 12-4. This is the earliest report that I saw. The policy could have been in place earlier. See also the reports of 1954-55:16, and 1955-56:17.

The reports for the years 1954-55 and 1955-56 show that two temples in Madurai District had *ōtuvārs* and Vedic reciters. *Administration Report of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department for the period from 1 April 1954-5* (Madras: Superintendent, Government Press, 1957), 16, 92; *Administration Report of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department for the period from 1 April 1955-56* (Madras: Superintendent, Government Press, 1957), 17, 64.

By the time of the 1960-61 report, only four more temples in the Madurai District had *ōtuvārs* or Vedic reciters appointed. *Administration Report of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (Administration) Department for the period from 1 April 1960-1* (n.p., n.d.), 101.

during this *pūcai* is done by one of the non-hereditary *ōtuvārs* who take turns performing this duty.

The instrumental musicians playing during *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* include a *nātasvaram* (wind instrument with a long pipe) player, a cymbal player and one or two drummers. They are present for most of the *pūcai* but do not play continuously. They proceed ahead of the priest during any major change of location, such as the procession from Mīṇāṭci's temple to Cuntarēcuvarar's. In this segment there are also bearers who carry the palanquin carrying Cuntarēcuvarar's image from Mīṇāṭci's shrine.

The audience for the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* consists primarily of devotees. The size of the crowd varies. In *Mārkaḷi* month the crowd is very large, including a significant number of Ayyappa *bhaktas* on pilgrimage to Sabarimala in Kerala. During *Mārkaḷi* month, the coldest and darkest time of the year, getting up very early and going to the temple is considered to be especially meritorious. When I was observing this *pūcai* in 1990-91, I noticed that many of the same people came to the temple on a regular basis. On the occasions when I went into Mīṇāṭci's shrine, the atmosphere at this early hour was relaxed, friendly and sociable.

Devotees are entitled to view the images of the deities (*taricaṇam*) in the main shrines and to receive various *piracātam*, or substances that transfer the deity's grace to the devotee, but they are not permitted to go close to the deities. In the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, devotees must also satisfy a basic dress code in that men are not permitted to wear a *kaili* or patterned piece of cloth; nor are they allowed to wear a *paṇiyaṇ* or sleeveless undershirt.

Thus during *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*, the priest of the Cuntarēcuvarar shrine conducts the *pūcai* aided by assistants, the *ōtuvār* sings, the musicians play, the bearers carry Śiva's

image back to his daytime seat in the main shrine, and the devotees may view the deity (*taricāṇam*) and receive grace (*piracātam*).

The Event³⁸

The *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* is primarily the act of awakening the God and Goddess, and returning them to their respective shrines for the day. Cuntarēcuvarar, who is represented by an image of his feet when he joins Mīṇāṭci every night, is returned to the Linga in his sanctum. The *pūcai* thus begins at Mīṇāṭci's shrine and concludes in Cuntarēcuvarar's.

Only two of the four offerings discussed above are included in this *pūcai*. In other words, there is no *abhiṣekam* or *alaṅkāram*, but there is an offering of *naivēttiyam* and *tīpārāṭṇai*. The *pūcai* starts at 5:00 AM and concludes before 6:00 AM. The ritual movement of the *pūcai* in both shrines is from the periphery toward the centre and back outside again. The motion inward and outward generally moves about the shrines in a

³⁸ There are several sources which refer to the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*. Fuller gives a brief description of the main features of the ritual as they occur at the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple and a list of deities worshipped during the *pūcai*. There are some minor differences between his list and mine: Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, 11-2; 168-70.

Diehl provides a fairly long description of the rituals the priest performs in order to prepare himself to undertake the worship, and a brief description of the worship itself based on Akōracivācāriyar's manual on worship, *Śrī Pārāṭṭu Nittiya Pūjāviti*. The description based on the manual seems to have little correspondence with what is actually done in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple: Diehl, *Instrument and Purpose*, 98-107.

Jeyechandrun provides another brief description based on the Tamil text, *Tamiḷ Viṭu Tūtu*. Jeyechandrun, *Madurai Temple Complex* (1985), 223-4.

Another short note about this *pūcai* is found in Cuntararāmaṇ, "Maturaik Kōyil Nittiya Valipāṭu," 271.

My description of the ritual is based on a detailed account from a priest, subsequent verification of that description with the same priest and another priest, clarifications from *ōtuvārs* and my own observations in 1990-91 and 1993-4. The description relies most heavily on informants for activity which is done inside the restricted area, and most heavily on my own observations for the activity done in areas to which I had access. I did see the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* on two occasions in the restricted area, and was given a fairly detailed tour of the inner areas. Therefore, I have an idea of the layout of the restricted area and some sense of the activity of the *pūcai* which takes place there.

clockwise circumambulatory direction. Diagrams of the route of the *Tiruvāṇantal Pūcai* in Mīṇāṭci's and Cuntarēcuvarar's Shrine are found in Appendix I, Diagrams 1 and 2 respectively. The numbers beside the names in the text below correspond to the numbers on the diagrams. The numbers indicate the location and the position in the sequence followed as the images are worshipped during this *pūcai*.

The *pūcai* begins outside Mīṇāṭci's shrine at the Citti Viṇāyakar shrine (1) which is on the south side of the outer wall of Mīṇāṭci's second *pirākāram* in Kiḷikkūṭu Maṇṭapam. The assistant priest holds out a pot containing the *naivēṭṭiyam* and offers the food to the deity with motions of his hand. Then he shows the five flame camphor lamp to that deity while he rings a bell. The priest and assistant priest, followed by a fluid audience, then move to the Kumāraṇ shrine (2) on the opposite side of the door leading into Mīṇāṭci's shrine, and there they repeat the same actions.

Then the priest and his assistant enter Mīṇāṭci's shrine and proceed to the bedroom (*paḷḷiyaṛai*) in order to wake up Mīṇāṭci and Cuntarēcuvarar (3). The crowd follows and gathers around the *paḷḷiyaṛai*. The *ōtuvār* stands on the west side of the door to the *paḷḷiyaṛai*. Usually he sings only one poem of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci",³⁹ and then the door to the *paḷḷiyaṛai* is opened. The *naivēṭṭiyam* is offered in the same way as at the other shrines by a motion of the priest's hand. Then a series of lamps are shown to the God and Goddess.

The priest and assistant go into Mīṇāṭci's sanctum, and rejoin her with her main image there (4).⁴⁰ They then leave the inner room and come out to one of the outer rooms

³⁹ During the ten days of the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival some *ōtuvārs* say they should sing "Tiruvempāvai" during this segment also. On two days in 1993 they sang the first poem of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" at the *paḷḷiyaṛai* and the last poem of "Tiruvempāvai" in Tiruñānacampantar Maṇṭapam.

⁴⁰ According to Fuller, the priest puts back Mīṇāṭci's nose ring and thereby restores her powers to her main image: Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, 12.

to offer *naivēttiyam* to her with the curtain drawn so that the public cannot see. This is followed by the offering of a series of lamps to Mīṇāṭci. The curtain is opened as the first lamp in the series is offered. The last lamp is then brought to the people who pass their hand over it and then raise their hands to their faces. The priest then distributes *kuṅkumam*, a red saffron powder associated with the Goddess. Passing one's hands through the camphor flame and receiving *kuṅkumam* are two ways of receiving grace from the deity.⁴¹

Once Mīṇāṭci has been restored to her main shrine, the priest then returns the image of Cuntarēcuvarar's feet to his shrine. There are a number of stops on the way. The priest and his assistant return to the *paḷḷiyarai* (5) and take the image of the feet to a palanquin which is kept opposite the *paḷḷiyarai* in the second *pirākāram* (6). The palanquin is taken in the non-circumambulatory direction to the Tirumalaināyakkar statue (7) in the southeast corner of the second *pirākāram*.⁴² A single wick lamp, a five layer lamp and a camphor flame are offered to the image in the palanquin on behalf of Tirumalaināyakkar, the seventeenth century ruler of Madurai. Between the Viṇāyakar shrine and the Six Pillared Hall (8, 9) two more lamps are offered to the image of Cuntarēcuvarar's feet. The palanquin is then taken out of Mīṇāṭci's shrine and into Kiḷikkūṭu Maṇṭapam where another lamp is offered to Cuntarēcuvarar beside a large granite stone (10).⁴³ These four offerings of lamps are provided for by *kaṭṭalais*, which in this context means provisions for a special

⁴¹ Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, 14.

⁴² That is, in a non-circumambulatory direction because Śiva should not be thought of as worshipping Mīṇāṭci. Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple Priest, interview with the author, Hamilton, Canada, December 1991. The list of services offered to a deity includes circumambulation. If Śiva were to be taken in the circumambulatory direction he would be thought of as worshipping Mīṇāṭci.

⁴³ I have not actually seen this stop, as on the occasions on which I observed this *pūcai*, the palanquin proceeded straight into the second *pirākāram* of the Cuntarēcuvarar shrine without stopping.

service to be offered to the deity on behalf of, or for the benefit of, some individual. In observing the ritual, it was not possible to identify who had provided for the services, nor on whose behalf they were being offered.⁴⁴

The image of the God's feet is then taken into Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine on the palanquin, led by the musicians and accompanied by the priest and his assistants. They proceed around the second *pirākāram* of Śiva's shrine in the clockwise circumambulatory direction. A number of stops are made on the way to the first *pirākāram*. The palanquin halts briefly at the shrine of the classical poets, the Caṅkattār temple (11) in the second *pirākāram*. I did not see any offering made there. The palanquin then continues its round of the second *pirākāram*, going around the large Nanti and stopping just in front of the guard (*tuvārapālakar*) on the south side of the door to Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine. An offering is made to Aṅukkaiviṇṇāyakar there (12) because it is he who gives permission to enter the temple. He receives *naivēttiyam* and the five flame camphor plate. The palanquin remains by the guard, and the priest and an assistant go to worship Atikārananti, the chief of the temple who is set into the south side of the main door. They offer him *naivēttiyam* and the five flame camphor plate (13). The priest and his assistant return to the palanquin and offer a single oil lamp, a five layer lamp and then a single camphor flame to the image of God's feet (14). This service is provided for by a *kaṭṭalai*,⁴⁵ and this is one of the favourite places for devotees to line up along the route and wait for the palanquin to come.

The palanquin is then taken inside to the first *pirākāram* and placed at the bottom of the steps on the south side of the main shrine beside the entrance leading to Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine (15). The priest takes the image of the feet and places it facing east

⁴⁴ The priest did not know who had provided for these services, nor on whose behalf they were being offered.

⁴⁵ There is no obvious beneficiary for this service either, based on an observation of the ritual.

near the Śiva Linga in the inner sanctum (16). *Naivēttiyam* is offered while the curtain is closed. Then, the curtain is opened, and the same series of lamps offered to Mīṇāṭci is offered to Cuntarēcuvarar. Afterward the priest brings the camphor flame to the devotees and distributes the sacred ash.⁴⁶ The sacred ash is associated with Śiva, as the *kuṅkumam* is with Mīṇāṭci, and to receive the ash is to receive grace from God.⁴⁷ At this point, Cuntarēcuvarar has been restored to his main shrine.

The final portion of the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* is the worship of many of the inhabitants of the shrines beginning in the Makāmaṇṭapam, proceeding to the first *pirākāram* and finishing in the second *pirākāram*. The priest first offers *naivēttiyam* to images in the Makāmaṇṭapam, starting with the Naṭarācar in the Silver Hall (17). Naṭarācar is offered *naivēttiyam*, a single lamp and a camphor flame. The priest then offers *naivēttiyam* and the camphor to Cantiracēkaraṇ (18), Uṛcavacittar (19) and the Nālvar or four saints (20).

The priest and the assistant then exit the Makāmaṇṭapam and proceed to the southeast corner of the first *pirākāram* where they worship the deities proceeding around the *pirākāram* in the circumambulatory direction. They begin with Cēkkiḷār (21) and continue in the following order: the sixty-three saints of the *Periya Purānam* (22), the Goddess, Caracuvati (23), Śiva in his form as guru, Taṭciṇāmūrtti (24), the festival deities (25), the festival image of Kārttikēyaṇ (26), Śiva in his form of the column of fire, Liṅkōṛpavar (27), Śiva as Lord of Kāsi, Kācivicuvanātaṇ (28), Cittar (29), the Goddess, Tūrkai (30), the festival images of Naṭarācar (31), the Aṭcara Liṅkam (32), the Goddess, Makālaṭcumi (33), and Irattiṇacapai Naṭarācar (34). The priest offers all of them

⁴⁶ At some point the image of the feet is then taken to a room and the door is locked.

⁴⁷ Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess*, 14.

naivēttiyam and the five flame camphor lamp. The festival images of Śiva, his consort, his children, Cantiracēkaraṅ and Atikārananti (25) are offered one more lamp between *naivēttiyam* and the camphor.

The priest and his assistants leave the first *pirākāram* and proceed to the second *pirākāram* led by the musicians. They worship the deities in the Kampattaṭi Maṅṭapam proceeding in a clockwise direction. All receive *naivēttiyam* and are offered the five flame camphor lamp. The priest worships the large Nanti first (35). They then proceed to the three forms of Murukaṅ on the outer first *pirākāram* wall and offer worship first to Taṅṭayutavaṅ (36) and then to Kaḷukumalai Kumāraṅ (37) and finally to Pālamurukaṅ (38).⁴⁸ The priest then goes to the Navakkirakam (nine planets) and worships them as a group (39). The priest offers worship to Naṭarācar, who is in the Hundred Pillared Hall, from the steps leading into the hall (40). Then the priest makes the offerings first to Akkiṇivīrapattiraṅ and Akōravīrapattiraṅ as a pair (41), and then to Ūrttuvatāṅṭavar and Pattirakāḷi also as a pair (42).

Finally, the priest and his assistant go to the Tiruñānacampantar Maṅṭapam. At this stage, the *ōtuvār* rejoins the *pūcai*. Inside the Maṅṭapam, a single flame is shown to the eight saints. The *ōtuvār* sings a poem which is inaudible from outside the *maṅṭapam*. On the floor in the *maṅṭapam* are several pails of milk. A brass pot is placed before the buckets of milk. The priest passes his hand over the brass pot. The brass pot is filled with milk. A ladle of milk from the brass pot is put into each bucket. The five flame camphor plate is shown. The flame is passed to the people inside (i.e., the *ōtuvār*) and then brought to the devotees outside the *maṅṭapam*.

⁴⁸ I was told that worship was offered to Pālamurukaṅ, but I did not actually see him receive it. I did not see the *pūcai* on the day that the priest who was describing it to me conducted it. Perhaps when he did this *pūcai* he made an offering to Pālamurukaṅ.

The devotees line up to receive *piracātam* from a platform near the Tiruñānacampantar Maṅṭapam (44). The *naivāttiyam* for this *pūcai* consists of fried rice (*pori*) and milk. The *Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai* ends with the distribution of the *piracātam* (milk only) to devotees. In the month of *Mārkaḷi* the crowd is so large that bamboo rails are erected to direct the line up of devotees for the *piracātam*.

The "Ritual Text"

The only poems sung in the *Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai* are those sung at the *paḷḷiyarai* at the beginning and in the Tiruñānacampantar Maṅṭapam at the end. Therefore the ritual text of *Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai* can be said to consist of only one poem selected from "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" and another poem chosen by the *ōtuvār* which is sung in praise of the saints at Tiruñānacampantar Maṅṭapam. The second poem may be a poem in praise of one saint one day, and another saint on another day. I was told that during ten days in *Mārkaḷi* month "Tiruvempāvai" is sung in place of the *Pañcapurāṇam* in the temple, but during all ritual events there was some disagreement among the *ōtuvār*s regarding whether or not "Tiruvempāvai" should also be sung instead of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" during those ten days. During at least a few of the ten days in *Mārkaḷi* month in 1993-94 the *ōtuvār* on duty sang the twentieth poem of "Tiruvempāvai" in the Tiruñānacampantar Maṅṭapam, but he also sang a poem from "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" in the *paḷḷiyarai*.

The "ritual text" for this ritual is then short and composite, drawing on only two source texts on any one day. The first source text is Māṅikkavācakar's "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci", and the second is any text which is a song in praise of one or more of the saints. The text is stable in that it consists of two poems, one of which is almost always from "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci", yet fluid in that there is flexibility regarding which poem from "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" is used, and which poem is chosen to be sung in the Tiruñānacampantar

Maṅṭapam. It is not possible to say definitely what the structure of the whole text is because the poem which is sung at the end of the *pūcai* in the Tiruñāṇacampantar Maṅṭapam may vary daily and it is the choice of the *ōtuvār*.

Interpretation: The *Puṛam* Narrative World & Cuntarēcuvarar's Biography

The singing of this "ritual text" is part of the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*, which is one event in the activities of the lives of Cuntarēcuvarar and Mīṇāṭci and their entourage at the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple. The *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* is the event of awakening the presiding deities, Cuntarēcuvarar and his wife Mīṇāṭci. The singing of these two poems in this event incorporates the utterance of the poems into the act of awakening. The event is understood like the *puṛam* event of awakening the hero from sleep. In the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, the "hero" is the deity Cuntarēcuvarar. The voice heard in this narrative frame is not that of the source poet nor that of individual devotees, but rather the voice of a special servant of the hero, who plays the role of the bard in the *puṛam* frame. Therefore the event of awakening is situated as an event in the life of a specific hero, but not as an event involving a specific poet.

The singing of "Tiruppalliyeḷucci" is unequivocally associated with the awakening of Cuntarēcuvarar and Mīṇāṭci. The priest, his assistants, the *ōtuvār* and the audience stand before the bedroom. The *ōtuvār* first sings a poem from "Tiruppalliyeḷucci", then the door to the bedroom is opened, *naivēttiyam* is offered and then *tīpārātanaḷi*. In this context, the poem is sung as a song of awakening. The poem is not sung at any other point during the *pūcai*.

This particular use of the song evokes the *puṛam* theme mentioned in the previous section on interpretation, namely the theme of awakening the king from sleep. We see part of Aruñācalam's *puṛam* interpretation of the hero being awakened in his castle by the bard

being evoked here. In this ritual setting, the king is the God, Cuntarēcuvarar, and his wife, the Goddess, Mīṇāṭci, and the bard is a temple representative who is especially assigned to this task. The *puṛam*-like event takes place in the quarters of Mīṇāṭci at the bedroom.

This perspective is given some support by the comments of a priest. He explained that there are two ways to enjoy God: absorbing him (*akattū[y]mai*) or going to him (*puṛattū[y]mai*). "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is the second variety. The priest's comments are suggestive of the classical *akam* and *puṛam* context, although he did not specifically make the connection. The *akam* (love) frame would be an indicator of the lover-beloved relationship with God or a mystical union; and the *puṛam* frame would be an indicator of the public relationship of king-subject with its primary motif of going to the hero and praising him. The priest, then, casts the worship of God in these two modes which seem to correspond to the two narrative worlds of *akam* and *puṛam*, and he seems to situate the singing of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in the *puṛam* narrative world.

The singing of the poems as part of a *puṛam*-like event of awakening the hero is situated in the biography of a particular hero and his heroine, rather than in the biography of a particular speaker, such as the poet. Although "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is sung in the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* in other Śaiva temples, the singing of it described above is a particular ritual form which takes place in a particular temple, the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple. There is no mistake about which deities are being awakened; they are Cuntarēcuvarar and Mīṇāṭci, the particular forms of Śiva and his consort who have manifested themselves in Madurai, who have a history in Madurai and who, as the *Tiruvīḷaiyāṭal Purāṇam* tells us, have proven to show concern for the inhabitants of Madurai and the surrounding area.

The emphasis in this ritual is on Cuntarēcuvarar. The *pūcai* is conducted by the priest who attends to Cuntarēcuvarar that day, even though part of the event takes place in Mīṇāṭci's shrine. The actual proportion of the ritual conducted in Mīṇāṭci's shrine is

minimal. There is the necessary preliminary worship of Vināyakar and Murukaṅ at the beginning, but no other supporting deities are worshipped there. The worship on the route is directed towards the image of the feet of Cuntarēcuvarar in the palanquin rather than towards Mīṇāṭci or the other images in her shrine. In contrast there is an elaborate worship which includes many of the subsidiary deities and saints after the procession reaches Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine. The *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* is particularly associated with Cuntarēcuvarar, and it is specifically the awakening of him and his household from sleep.

The event of awakening involves not only awakening the presiding deities, but establishing them in their day-time positions, making them comfortable, honoring them, and honoring other members of their household. The second poem used in the ritual is situated as part of the honoring of members of the hero's household, the saints. The event concludes with a sharing of the deity's beneficence (*piracātam*) among his followers.

The speaker or performer of "Tiruppalliyeḷucci" is not situated in any individual biography. The voice heard in this frame is not that of Māṇikkavācakar's, the composer of the source poem, nor that of the composer of the other poem (especially since this identity may change from day to day), nor that of individual devotees. Rather it is the voice of an officially appointed person for whom this is one of his duties. Neither Māṇikkavācakar nor any other poet has any particular presence in name or in image within this *pūcai*. The *pūcai* is called *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*, and it would not be called Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* or any other poet's *pūcai*. At no time during the *pūcai* is Māṇikkavācakar's image worshipped by itself. It is worshipped as one of the four saints in Śiva's Makāmaṅṭapam (20) and as one of the eight saints in Tiruñānacampantar Maṅṭapam (43), but in these contexts, Māṇikkavācakar has no priority over the other saints.

The voice of the song cannot belong to the audience. The *ōtuvār* is separated from the audience spatially in that he stands on the east side of the steps before the *paḷḷiyarai* while the audience is off to the south. In the month of *Mārkaḷi* when the crowd is bigger, the audience is separated from the immediate ritual space by ropes and at the end of the ritual, the *ōtuvār* goes inside the *Tiruñānacampantar Maṇṭapam*, while members of the audience may not. Furthermore, devotees in their role as devotees or as particular individuals are not permitted to sing in this *pūcai*; for it is only the *ōtuvār* who is permitted to sing as one fulfilling a role.

In the formal structure of the temple ritual, the *ōtuvār* does not sing on his own behalf. It is the duty of the salaried *ōtuvārs* to sing during this ritual as appointees, not because of who they are as individuals. There is no special association between an individual *ōtuvār* and the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*, it does not matter which particular *ōtuvār* performs that task on any given day.

The "ritual text" of the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*, which consists of a poem of "Tiruppalliyēḷucci" and another poem in praise of the saints, is situated and ritually interpreted, as part of the *puṇam* event of awakening the hero. The event takes place in the hero's house, the *Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar* Temple in Madurai, and consists of awakening a particular hero, *Cuntarēcuvarar*, his wife, *Mīṇāṭci*, and his household and preparing them for the day. The performer of the ritual text, the *ōtuvār*, has no particular identity and fulfills a role like the *puṇam* bard. In contrast, as we will now see, in the singing of "Tiruvempāvai" in the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, the speaker is given the particular identity of the poet, *Māṇikkavācakar*, and the interpretation of the "ritual text" is clearly in terms of the poet's biography.

III: Chapter 9: "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple:

"Tiruvempāvai" in Māṇikkavācakar's Biography

In the Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, "Tiruvempāvai" is sung only during the ten days up to and including *Tiruvātirai* day in *Mārkaḷi* month. During these ten days the *ōtuvārs* will substitute "Tiruvempāvai" for the *Pañcapurāṇam* in all ritual events. Also, during these ten days a special festival is celebrated to honor Māṇikkavācakar and "Tiruvempāvai" in the temple. The entire festival is situated as an event in Māṇikkavācakar's life. He is identified as the singer of the poem and he sings before different deities, although Naṭarācar, the dancing form of Śiva, has special prominence.

This chapter will begin with a short description of the characters who participate in the festival, and will be followed by a description of the festival itself. The final portion of the chapter will provide a short description of the "ritual text", and a discussion showing how the festival portrays Māṇikkavācakar to be the singer of "Tiruvempāvai".

Caste and Audience¹

¹ My observations of this festival were made most extensively in 1993-94, and the description presented below is based primarily on those observations.

Technically, the festival took place in December 1993 and did not span into January 1994, however I am referring to it throughout as "1993-94" since it is often the case that the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival does span 2 calendar years.

The data included from the 1990-91 festival will be noted when used. In 1990-91 the festival ran from 22 December to 1 January, and in 1993-94 it ran from 20 December to 29 December. I also conducted interviews with the *ōtuvārs* and one priest in 1990-91, and had ongoing discussions with some of the *ōtuvārs*, several priests and the superintendent of the temple in 1993-94. References to their views are taken from these interviews and the ongoing discussions.

Fuller provides a brief description of the festival. C. J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (New Delhi: Viking, Penguin Books, 1992), 195; and also mentions it in passing: 182-203.

There is an inscriptional reference to *kōvaṇars* singing "Tiruvempāvai" at Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple dated in the thirteenth century; see. ARE [Annual Report (on South

The main figures in the festival are the *ōtuvārs*, the priests and their assistants, the musicians, the bearers and the audience. All participants, except a few members of the audience, are male.

The most important role in the festival belongs to the *ōtuvārs*, and in particular the *Stala Ōtuvār*. The *Stala Ōtuvār* is distinguished from the other *ōtuvārs* by receiving a special honor (particularly the *parivaṭṭam* (which is a long piece of cloth tied around the head).² The *ōtuvārs* sing "Tiruvempāvai" during the festival. All the *ōtuvārs* of the temple participate in this festival.

Indian) Epigraphy] 192/ of 1942-3 quoted in A. V. Jeyechandrun, *The Madurai Temple Complex: With Special Reference to Literature and Legends* (Madurai: Madurai Kamaraj University, 1985), 366.

A date of the thirteen century is provided by K. G. Krishnan, "The Growth of the Madurai Temple Complex" in *Maturait Tirukkōyil (The Madurai Temple Complex): Tirukkuṭa Nannīrāṭṭup Peruvilā Malar (Kumbabhisheka Souvenir)*, ed. A. V. Jeyechandrun (Madurai: Arulmighu Meenakshi Sundaresvarar Tirukkoil, 1974), 196.

Devakunjari writes that a ten day festival conducted for Māṇikkavācakar in *Mārkaḷi* month in Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple was listed in a British record of 1802: D. Devakunjari, *Madurai Through the Ages: From the Earliest Times to 1801 A.D.* (Madras: Society for Archaeological, Historical and Epigraphical Research, 1979), 307.

There are inscriptional references to the singing of "Tiruvempāvai" in other temples. Four inscriptions refer to the "Tiruvempāvai" rights of the "dēvaraḍiyār/dēvaraḍiyāḷ" at Vilvāraṇyēśvara Temple at Nallūr in South Arcot District: *Annual Report on South Indian Epigraphy* (New Delhi: Department of Archaeology), ARE 143, 149, 160 and 161 of 1940-41.

There is also an inscription referring to the recitation of "Tiruvempāvai" before Māṇikkavācakar at the Vīraṭṭānēśvara Temple at Valuvur in Tanjavur District: *South Indian Epigraphy*, ARE 421 of 1912

Younger provides a description of the singing of "Tiruvempāvai" at Citamparam Temple during *Mārkaḷi*: Paul Younger, [forthcoming].

² "Honors" is a system of giving special recognition to people who are important in a particular ritual context. These people may be temple personnel or donors. Breckenridge defines a donor as any devotee who offers services, or supplies, or both, for the purpose of worshipping the deities. Carol Appadurai Breckenridge, "The Śrī Mīṇākṣi Sundarēśvarar Temple: Worship and Endowments in South India, 1833-1925," (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1976), 105. She discusses honors in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple on 105-24.

Recognition is bestowed upon the important person by giving them one or more items such as a headband (*parivaṭṭam*) during the ritual event. The primary significance of the honors is the prestige bestowed represented symbolically by giving the clearly specified

The priest and his assistants are perhaps the next most important individuals as they conduct the *pūcai* which accompanies the singing of "Tiruvempāvai". I was told that for each day of the festival a different priest had the rights to perform the priestly duties, but I observed that the same priest performed the duties for most of the festival. The priest makes the offerings of *naivēttiyam* and *tīpārātanai* to the deities and to the image of Māṅikkavācakar, distributes honors, and gives *piracātam* to the audience.

There were two groups of musicians in the festival, both of whom have roles in some segments. The first group is associated with the temple worship generally, while the second group only accompanied the *ōtuvārs*. The temple group is comprised of a *nātasvaram* player, cymbals player, drummer and accordian player who perform during daily *pūcai*, and play in front of the image of the deity when it is being carried in processions. There are three musicians who accompany the *ōtuvārs*: a drummer and two accordian players. They walk with the *ōtuvārs* behind the image of Śiva in the procession, and they accompany the *ōtuvārs* during the daily singing sessions in the Kīḷikkūṭu Maṅṭapam outside Mīṅāṭci's shrine. The *ōtuvār*'s musicians also receive honors in this festival.

Another visible role in the festival is that of the bearers. The bearers carry the platform with the festival images from place to place. Their level of fatigue dictates the pace of some segments of the festival, and they routinely receive *piracātam*.

I am using "audience" here to refer to those who come to the temple but do not fulfill any of the above roles or any official temple function. During this festival there is a

items in a ritual setting. Fuller suggests that the *parivaṭṭam* is one of the most important item to be given. C. J. Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess: The Priests of a South Indian Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 44-7.

very small crowd which watches the ritual in the various segments, receives the camphor flame and ash in the appropriate places, or goes in procession with the festival image.

Segments and Sequence

The festival may be divided into three segments: I. the activities of the first day; II. the repeated pattern of core activities of the second through the ninth day; and III. the activities of the final day. Segment I takes place in the Makāmaṇṭapam of Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine. Segment II takes place in several places: the east side of the Kampattaṭi Maṇṭapam, the Hundred Pillared Hall, the Āṭi streets, the Kiḷikkūṭu Maṇṭapam outside Mīṇāṭci's shrine, and the second *pirākāram* of Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine. Segment III is conducted at the Tiruñānacampantar Maṇṭapam. (Diagram 3 of Appendix I shows the locations of the various parts of the festivals.) All activities of the festival, with the exception of Segment I, occur in areas of the temple accessible to non-Hindus.

Segment I: First Day in the Makāmaṇṭapam of Cuntarēcuvarar's Shrine

The first segment of the festival represents a movement into the festival time. It is a relatively short event which takes place on the evening of the first day. It consists of *rekṣāpantaṇam*³ for Māṇikkavācakar, and singing before the Linga and Naṭarācar. The following description of this segment is based on a general description by a priest, my own observations, and a discussion with the *Stala Ōtuvār*.

According to an official statement about the festival, it was to begin before Arttacāmam *pūcai*, which on a normal day places the starting time around 7:45 PM. However, this festival runs concurrently with a ten day festival for Mīṇāṭci, and the

³ I have transliterated the term from the temple notice.

opening ritual of this festival starts only after the segment of Mīṇāṭci's festival has been completed.

According to one of the priests, Māṇikkavācakar is first given *abhiṣekam* (bath) and *alaṅkāram* (decoration) in the *cērtti*, the place in the first *pirākāram* where Māṇikkavācakar's festival image is kept during the ten days of the festival. Part of the saint's dress is a *parivaṭṭam* (a silk scarf of special honor). The adorned festival image of the poet, Māṇikkavācakar, is then brought into the Makāmaṇṭapam of Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine, and placed opposite the Naṭarācar in the Silver Hall in a direct line with the Linga in the main shrine. A string is then tied on Māṇikkavācakar's right wrist (*rekṣāpantaṇam*) to protect him during the course of the festival. The *ōtuvārs* sing the twenty poems of "Tiruvempāvai". After each poem, there is *naivēttiyam* and *tīpārāṭṭai*. The *naivēttiyam* consists of a banana and betel leaf. The *tīpārāṭṭai* consists of a single flame oil lamp and the five layered lamp. After the last poem there is a special series of lamps. The priest adds that the *Stala Ōtuvār* receives a *parivaṭṭam*, and the other *ōtuvārs* are given sacred ash.

My observation of this segment was restricted to what was in immediate line with the main doorway,[†] and it seemed to me that the image was being decorated in the Makāmaṇṭapam itself by the *ōtuvārs* at around 8:15 PM. Māṇikkavācakar was placed in direct line with the Linga as the priest described, and the priest stood between Māṇikkavācakar and the Śiva Linga (Cuntarēcuvarar), very near Māṇikkavācakar but south of the direct line between the Linga and Māṇikkavācakar. The priest's assistant stood in

[†]I observed the event from the doorway of the first *pirākāram*, the limit to which non-Hindus are allowed to go. Māṇikkavācakar was placed directly in front of the Linga, and therefore directly in front of the door. I could see the activity immediately surrounding Māṇikkavācakar, but could not see the *ōtuvār(s)* nor hear the singing.

approximately the same position but to the north of the line. The priest periodically rang a bell and showed a lamp first to the Linga, then to Naṭarācar and finally to Māṇikkavācakar.

The *Stala Ōtuvār* in a later explanation of the ritual sequence, said that he was the only *ōtuvār* who sang, and that he stood just east of a line between Naṭarācar and Māṇikkavācakar. First Māṇikkavācakar was given the *rekṣāpantaṇam*, then the *Stala Ōtuvār* received the *parivaṭṭam*, and then he sang twenty-five poems. The first five were the *Pañcapurāṇam*, and the other twenty were "Tiruvempāvai" poems. After each of the twenty-five poems a lamp was offered. We may recall that the *ōtuvār*s usually sing the *Pañcapurāṇam* during the daily *pūcai* in Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine, but sing only "Tiruvempāvai" during the ten days of the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival. Tying the string on Māṇikkavācakar (*rekṣāpantaṇam*) and singing the *Pañcapurāṇam* followed by "Tiruvempāvai" on the first day seems to represent the transition into the festival time and its activities.

Segment II: Days 2 - 9: The Core of the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival

The activities of the festival follow the same basic pattern for the middle eight of the ten days. All activities except for the daily decoration of Māṇikkavācakar, take place in areas accessible to everyone. It was possible, therefore, to observe in greater detail the activities of these days.⁵

The events of this portion of the festival take place in the morning. According to an official account they should begin at 6:30 AM, but in my observations they began as early as 6:20 and as late as 6:45. The whole event takes about one hour.

⁵I observed the events of segment II for seven of the eight days in 1993-94, and on one day of this eight day period in 1990-91.

Segment II can be sub-divided into 6 parts. This six-part segment starts after the daily decoration of Māṇikkavācakar, which occurs in the *cērtti* where the festival images of the presiding deities are kept in the first *pirākāram* of Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine. Each part involves different activities, and, with the exception of 1 and 6, they occur in different locations.

Segment II.1: The Stala Ōtuvār Sings before Māṇikkavācakar

The general pattern of II.1 is: Māṇikkavācakar's adorned image is brought on a platform to the second *pirākāram*, preceeded by the temple musicians. Māṇikkavācakar's image is placed on the eastern side of the flagpole in the Kampattaṭi Maṇṭapam, positioned so that he faces the Linga. The platform is very large and is carried with some difficulty by young male temple staff. The *Stala Ōtuvār* and the priest or his assistant stand between the Maṇṭapam and Māṇikkavācakar, facing the saint. The priest gives the *Stala Ōtuvār* ash.⁶ The *ōtuvār* sings a poem in praise of Māṇikkavācakar, and plays cymbals. When the *ōtuvār* finishes the poem, the image of Māṇikkavācakar, followed by the *ōtuvār*, the priest and his assistant, go into the Hundred Pillared hall.

This poem is found among other poems of praise to various deities and saints at the beginning of the *Tiruvīlaiyāṭal Purāṇam*. The following is a translation of the poem as it was provided by the *Stala Ōtuvār*:

In Praise of Māṇikkavācakar

without ever ceasing to worship the God who is the clarity of the Vedas
with [our] hands folded in worship on [our] heads
submerged in tears, weeping,
we will serve the devotees of the devotee who reached the feet.⁷

⁶ According to one priest, the *Stala Ōtuvār* when receiving the ash is receiving *piracātam* from Māṇikkavācakar.

⁷ Māṇikkavācakar Tuti

There was some variation from this basic pattern during the course of the festival. On three days this part of segment II was omitted altogether because, either the *Stala Ōtuvār* or the priest was not there.⁸ On two of the days there was no *ōtuvār* so the priest sent the platform to the Hundred Pillared hall for segment II.2. On the third day there was no priest, so the *ōtuvār* sent the platform to the Hundred Pillared Hall. On yet another day when the *Stala Ōtuvār* was not there, another *ōtuvār* was summoned by the priest to take his place.

It is difficult to assess the audience for this part of the ritual as it is conducted in a major thorough-fare of the temple and people are passing by who are unaware of this ritual. Many stopped and looked, but it is difficult to say whether they had come specifically to see this part of the event.

Segment II.2: Māṇikkavācakar Sings before Naṭarācar

Segment II.2 consists of the performance of all the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" before Naṭarācar. Māṇikkavācakar is placed on a dais facing Naṭarācar. The *ōtuvārs* stand in a line on Naṭarācar's right with the *Stala Ōtuvār* standing closest to Naṭarācar. The priest stands inside Naṭarācar's sanctum, also on the deity's right side. The assistant priest stands on Naṭarācar's left. Naṭarācar's shrine, the platform on which the *ōtuvārs* stand,

eḷutaṟu maṟaikaḷ tēṟā iṟaivaṇai
 poḷutaṟu kālattu yeṇṇum pūcaṇai viṭātu ceytu
 toḷuta kai talaimītu yēra tuḷumpu kaṇṇīruḷ mūḷka
 aḷutaṭi aṭainta aṇṇaṇ aṭiyavarkku aṭimai ceyvām

The *ōtuvār* cited this as being from the *Tiruvīlaiyāṭal Purāṇam*. There is a slight difference from a published version of the poem found in Irāya. Co., *Tiruvīlaiyāṭar Purāṇam: Maturai Kāṇṭam* (Maturai: Mīnāṭci Cuntarēcuvavarar Tirukkōyil, 1973), 8. The published version has "ellirkaṅkul" after "iṟaivaṇai", "aru" for "aṟu", "talaimēl" for "talaimītu", "tuḷumpu" for "tuḷumpu", and "mūḷki" for "mūḷka".

⁸On the day which I observed in 1990 this segment was also omitted. The *Stala Ōtuvār* came sometime later, and segment II.2 was delayed until he arrived.

and the dais on which Māṇikkavācakar is placed, are all raised several feet above the main floor. The audience stands on the main floor, usually the men on Naṭarācar's right side and the women on his left side. People who inadvertently move into the open space between Māṇikkavācakar and Naṭarācar, or who climb onto the platform where the *ōtuvārs* stand, are generally moved away by the *ōtuvārs* or the assistant priests.

The ritual begins with a showing of a series of five oil lamps and a camphor flame, shown first to Naṭarācar and then to Māṇikkavācakar. Then honors are distributed to the *ōtuvārs* beginning with the *Stala Ōtuvār*. The *Stala Ōtuvār* receives the *parivaṭṭam*, which distinguishes him from the other *ōtuvārs*. Then all the *ōtuvārs*, beginning with the *Stala Ōtuvār*, receive garlands, the camphor flame, ash and sandal. When this distribution of honors is completed the singing of "Tiruvempāvai" begins. Each *ōtuvār* sings a poem, beginning with the *Stala Ōtuvār*, and proceeding down the line of *ōtuvārs*, and then back to the *Stala Ōtuvār*. After each poem of "Tiruvempāvai" is sung, the priest shows a single oil lamp and then a camphor flame first to Naṭarācar and then to Māṇikkavācakar. After the final poem is sung and the oil lamp and camphor flame are shown, *naivēttiyam* is offered first to Naṭarācar and then to Māṇikkavācakar. Then a final series of lamps are shown to Naṭarācar and then Māṇikkavācakar. These are the same set of lamps that initiated the ritual. The final camphor flame is taken to the *ōtuvārs* first and then to the audience. Then sacred ash, *cunṭal* (chick pea snack), bananas and betel (*verrilai pākku paṭṭi*) are distributed to the *ōtuvārs* in the order in which they stand, beginning with the *Stala Ōtuvār*. Finally the sacred ash and *cunṭal* are distributed to the members of the audience.

This general pattern varied in several ways from day to day. I was told that every day a different priest had rights to perform in this ritual. Even if that is the traditional arrangement, on five of the seven days that I observed this segment the same priest performed the duties. This led to continuity in the performance of the priestly side of the

ritual. On one of the days on which a different priest officiated there were quite a few changes. The *naivēttiyam*, for instance, was offered prior to the initial set of lamps, at the beginning of the ritual rather than at the end. Also, this priest showed the initial set of lamps, as well as the other lamps after each poem. After the final poem he showed the first three lamps to Naṭarācar and not to Māṇikkavācakar, and only the fourth and fifth lamps were shown to Naṭarācar then Māṇikkavācakar.

The number of *ōtuvārs* participating in the ritual varied from three to six. For five days the same three *ōtuvārs* performed the singing of "Tiruvempāvai": the current *Stala Ōtuvār* and two others. On the eighth day of the festival the ritual started with only two *ōtuvārs*, neither of whom was the *Stala Ōtuvār*, and one of whom had not participated on the other three days. After a few poems another *ōtuvār* came, and he stood farthest away from Naṭarācar. During the singing of the next poem the retired *Stala Ōtuvār* came and took the position nearest to Naṭarācar. On the final day, five *ōtuvārs* participated and the sixth *ōtuvār* came in during the final series of lamps. On this day the retired *Stala Ōtuvār* took the position nearest to Naṭarācar, and the current *Stala Ōtuvār* actually stood last until a sixth *ōtuvār* arrived and stood after him.⁹

Occasionally other people did share the platform with the *ōtuvārs*. On two days there was a lay trustee of the temple, and on one of the days an acquaintance of the trustee

⁹The *Stala Ōtuvār* position is hereditary. The retired *Stala Ōtuvār* is the father of the current *Stala Ōtuvār*. When the father acts as *Stala Ōtuvār* he receives all the honors due to the *Stala Ōtuvār* such as the *parivaṭṭam* and priority in position and in receiving the other honors. I asked a priest about the switching of roles and which one of the two should receive the *parivaṭṭam*, and was told that it does not matter as both are the same, they together are the *Stala Ōtuvār*. So, although the son is now the current *Stala Ōtuvār*, when his father participates he defers, usually taking the last position among the salaried *ōtuvārs* and receiving honors last.

I did not see a distinction in the type of honors the salaried *ōtuvārs* received. However, one of the older salaried *ōtuvārs* usually stood beside the *Stala Ōtuvār* and therefore was usually second in receiving honors.

as well. On another day some boys were permitted by the *ōtuvārs* to share the platform. These people did not sing, and I did not see any woman on the platform during the ritual. On the final day, the musicians who accompanied the *ōtuvārs* stood on the platform behind the *ōtuvārs*, except for the drummer who stood on Naṭarācar's left, and after poem 2 returned to his usual position.

There were also variations in the distribution of honors. On the day that the two guests shared the platform with the *ōtuvārs*, the guests received the initial honors, even before the *ōtuvārs*. No guest, however, received a *parivaṭṭam*, which is the honor due to the *Stala Ōtuvār* alone. The guests also received the substances distributed at the end of this segment, prior to the *ōtuvārs*. The boys on the platform did not receive any honors as the guests had. On another day the garlands and other substances arrived late. Used garlands were distributed to the *ōtuvārs* at the beginning, but at about poem 5, the fresh garlands arrived, and there was a break in the singing while the fresh garlands were distributed. The *Stala Ōtuvār* also received the *parivaṭṭam* at this point, and the camphor flame was taken to the properly attired *ōtuvārs* before the singing resumed. On the final day, all the *ōtuvārs* and the *ōtuvār* musicians received a new piece of cloth as *parivaṭṭam*. On this day the *Stala Ōtuvār* did not wear the *parivaṭṭam* which he usually wore. On the days that the *ōtuvārs* arrived late, they received honors when they arrived.

There was little variation in the format of the singing of "Tiruvempāvai". The *ōtuvārs* stood turned towards Naṭarācar and sang. The *ōtuvār* closest to Naṭarācar always sang the first poem. The *ōtuvār* standing next to him sang the next and so on. The same *ōtuvārs*, however, did not always stand in the same place, so they did not always sing the same poems. The singing style was not uniform. Each *ōtuvār* would give a personal rendition of the poem he sang, embellishing one phrase or prolonging another.

The audience for this segment was composed of a few regulars, some people who came once and appeared to know what was going on, and people passing by who apparently saw some activity and came to see what it was. Generally the audience for the singing was fluid, composed primarily of people coming and going. During segment II.2 the audience sometimes grew to approximately thirty people. The core group, those who were present for most or all of this segment on a single day usually included between six and eight older women. The core group of men numbered as high as eight, but there were none at all on some days. There were about six regular women and one regular man who came almost every day and stayed. Occasionally members of the audience tried to sing along, but the variation in the *ōtuvārs'* personal styles made participation in the singing difficult.

Segment II.3: Māṇikkavācakar's Procession

After the activities at the Hundred Pillared Hall are finished Māṇikkavācakar's image is taken in procession around the Āṇi streets. He is carried on his platform out the main eastern gate of the Cuntarēcuvarar's complex to a cart. Meanwhile the other participants in the procession gather around the intersection of East Āṇi street and the hall leading to Cuntarēcuvarar's Shrine.

The procession has a number of components. The procession is led by a bull covered with an elaborate cloth supporting drums which the attendant beats. Two elephants follow also covered with elaborate cloths accompanied by their attendants. Two umbrella bearers follow the elephants. Next are the temple musicians - a *nātasvaram* player, an accordian player and a cymbals player. They are followed by the priest and his assistant who are in turn followed by Māṇikkavācakar's image on the cart. The *ōtuvārs* follow behind Māṇikkavācakar in a row singing "Tiruvempāvai" in unison. The

procession is completed by the *ōtuvār* musicians who walk beside and behind the *ōtuvārs*.¹⁰

The procession begins once all the participants have gathered. At the beginning the priest offers incense (*cāmpirāṇi*) to Māṇikkavācakar. Then the procession sets out in the clockwise circumambulatory direction, southward on East Āṭi Street. At each of the major and minor compass points the procession stops and the priest offers incense to Māṇikkavācakar. On the South Āṭi Street the procession stops at the Paṇṇiru Tirumuṛai Maṇṇam (Twelve Tirumuṛai Association).¹¹ *Pūcai* is offered through the priest by representatives of the *maṇṇam*. A plate with coconut, banana and camphor is handed to the priest. The priest breaks the coconut, and then puts it back on the plate. The torchbearer lights the camphor and the priest offers the whole plate including the camphor flame to Māṇikkavācakar. The priest then passes the flame on the plate to worshippers and returns the plate to the representative from the *maṇṇam*. The priest distributes sacred ash. The contents of the offering plate are shared with the torchbearers and cartpullers who distributed their portion of it amongst themselves. The procession then continues. In 1990 the procession made at least two additional stops. One was at one of the shops on East Āṭi Street and the other at the Tiruppukal Maṇṇam near the Twelve Tirumuṛai Association.

There was some variation from the general pattern on certain days. On the third day of the festival there was a heavy downpour at the time of the procession. The venue was changed to the covered second *pirākāram* of Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine. It took some effort to assemble the procession in there. The bull was not in the procession, only the two elephants eventually led the procession. One of the elephants was brought in the eastern

¹⁰ The drummer walked beside the *ōtuvārs* and the accordion players followed behind.

¹¹ According to one priest, arrangements had to be made in advance with the temple administration in order for the procession to stop along the way.

door of Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine to the south corridor and began the procession, and the other elephant joined the procession further on. Also on this day the procession did not stop at the Twelve Tirumurai Association, which is situated on South Āṭi Street, and I did not see a similar *pūvai* performed along the second *pirākāram* route. On the first day of the festival there was a man carrying a long silver staff who followed the temple musicians, but I did not see him on subsequent days.

Generally the *ōtuvārs* who sang in the earlier singing in the hall participated in the procession also. The exception to this was the retired *Stala Ōtuvār* who walked before Māṇikkavācakar in the procession without singing and who on the last day did not go in the procession at all. The same priest and assistant who officiated in the Hundred Pillared Hall also officiated in this part. On one day someone at the *maṅṅram* gave an offering directly to Māṇikkavācakar, but this is generally not permitted as only the priests are ritually eligible and have rights to offer worship to the festival images of the temple.

Few people follow along in the procession. Sometimes a few of the regulars from the recitations inside would participate. On at least one occasion a member from the Twelve Tirumurai Association joined in and followed the procession.

Segment II.4: Singing at Kīlīkkūṭu Maṅṅapam and Tiruñāṅacampantar Maṅṅapam

There are two concurrent ritual activities which take place after the procession. When the procession concludes at the main eastern gate of Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine, the image of Māṇikkavācakar is taken to the Kīlīkkūṭu Maṅṅapam and then to Mīṇāṭci's Shrine accompanied by the priest, his assistant, the *Stala Ōtuvār*, and the temple musicians (II.4a). In the meantime, the other *ōtuvārs* and *ōtuvār* musicians proceed to the Tiruñāṅacampantar Maṅṅapam and conclude the singing of "Tiruvempāvai" there (II.4b).

In the Kiḷikkūṭu Maṅṭapam, Māṅikkavācakar is placed in front of and facing Citti Viṅṇāyakar. The *Stala Ōtuvār* sings the second poem of "Tiruvempāvai". Then the priest offers milk, and a plate containing bananas and a camphor flame to Citti Viṅṇāyakar. Afterwards Māṅikkavācakar is taken to the main doorway of Mīṇāṭci's shrine, in the area in front of Nanti facing Mīṇāṭci. The priest, assistant and *Stala Ōtuvār* go inside the second *pirākāram* of Mīṇāṭci's Shrine and stand on the eastern side of the flagpole. Here the *Stala Ōtuvār* sings the sixteenth poem of "Tiruvempāvai". Again an offering is made, and on the last day I was able to see that the offering was made only to Mīṇāṭci, not to Māṅikkavācakar. Māṅikkavācakar's image is then taken to face Kumāraṅ (Murukaṅ) in the Kiḷikkūṭu Maṅṭapam. Here, the *Stala Ōtuvār* sings poem 5 of "Tiruvempāvai", and an offering is made to the deity but not to Māṅikkavācakar.¹²

There was not much variation from day to day in this segment. The day that the current *Stala Ōtuvār* did not come, his father, the retired *Stala Ōtuvār* sang the poems. The other *ōtuvār*s never participated in segment II.4a. On one occasion the *ōtuvār* put his hands over the flame after it had been offered to the deity. Two other times the *Stala Ōtuvār* received the *piracātam*, milk and bananas, which had been offered to the three deities after worship was finished at the Kumāraṅ shrine. On one of these days the *ōtuvār* shared the milk with a couple of female participants,¹³ one of whom was a regular attender at this event. The position of Māṅikkavācakar in front of the Mīṇāṭci Shrine was altered in order to prevent people from stepping in the line of Māṅikkavācakar's view of Mīṇāṭci. At first he was placed back from the main door, but on subsequent days he was moved closer

¹² Later some priests and the *Stala Ōtuvār* confirmed that there is no offering made to Māṅikkavācakar's image during segment II.4a. I was also told by the *Stala Ōtuvār* that it is their "family tradition" to sing these particular poems in front of these particular images during this festival.

¹³ These are the occasions on which these actions were specifically observed. I did not specifically see whether or not they happened on the other days.

to the door, thereby blocking the door in order to prevent people from stepping in front of Māṇikkavācakar.

In the other concurrent component of this segment (II.4b), all the other *ōtuvārs* who participated in II.2 and II.3 go to the Tiruñāṇacampantar Maṇṭapam accompanied by the *ōtuvār* musicians. They stand at the bottom of the steps of the *maṇṭapam* facing west, and complete the singing of "Tiruvempāvai". When this is concluded the *ōtuvārs* go to Kiḷikkūṭu Maṇṭapam, and generally reached there before that component of part four is completed.

Segment II.5: Māṇikkavācakar sings to Cantiracēkaraṇ and Consort in Procession

Segment II.5 consists of a procession around the second *pirākāram* of Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine in which the images of Śiva as Cantiracēkaraṇ and Māṇikkavācakar are carried. After the worship at the Kumāraṇ shrine has been completed, Māṇikkavācakar is taken to Cuntarēcuvarar's second *pirākāram* and placed just outside the doorway to Kiḷikkūṭu Maṇṭapam where he waits with the *Stala Ōtuvār*.

Meanwhile the priest and his assistant go to bring Cantiracēkaraṇ. First, they sprinkle water and show a single flame lamp to the large *palipīṭam* in the Kampattaṭi Maṇṭapam. Then, they go to the eastern side of the Kampattaṭi Maṇṭapam, where the image of Cantiracēkaraṇ is waiting there in a silver palanquin. The priest shows a single oil lamp to the palanquin. The palanquin is then carried to the south-east corner where another lamp is shown to the deities there, and it is then taken to the place where the image of Māṇikkavācakar and the *Stala Ōtuvār* are waiting. The entire procession then proceeds around the second *pirākāram* in the circumambulatory direction.

The procession is led by Māṇikkavācakar, proceeding backwards so that he faces the deity. The priest, his assistant, the torchbearer, and the *Stala Ōtuvār* follow

Māṇikkavācakar (i.e. they are looking at Māṇikkavācakar, while the deity behind them is inside a palanquin). The palanquin comes last with a trident bearer walking nearby. There are no bulls, elephants, umbrella bearers, or musicians (temple or *ōtuvār*).¹⁴ No other *ōtuvārs* participate in this segment. The *Stala Ōtuvār* sings all the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" in order while proceeding around the *pirākāram*. At each of the eight compass points the procession stops and a single lamp is offered to the deity in the palanquin.

In this segment I observed little variation from this general description. On one day it seemed that the priest made the motion of sprinkling water on the *palipīṭam* rather than actually doing so. Also on one day the trident was absent from the procession. One day in particular I noticed that the *Stala Ōtuvār* was singing particularly loudly and in a more complex way than usual. It happened to be the same day that one of the regular attenders of the festival was walking with the procession trying to sing along. As I said in reference to II.2, if she wanted to sing along with the *ōtuvār* it would have been difficult for her to anticipate where the changes would come, and I wondered if the *ōtuvār* was trying to impede this woman's participation by singing in a more complex manner than on other days, because an audience member does not have the right to participate in the festival in this way.

Very few audience members followed along with this procession, and I and my colleague were actually the most regular. On one occasion two family members of the *Stala Ōtuvār* accompanied the procession, and one woman who attended the rest of the festival regularly came on this procession several times.

¹⁴ I did not notice temple musicians, but one day I did notice the *ōtuvār* drummer.

Segment II 6: Māṇikkavācakar and Cantiracēkaraṇ in Front of the Linga

The final part of segment II is a *pūcai* conducted at the same place at which segment II begins, the space on the east-side of the flagpole in Kampattaṭi Maṇṭapam. The procession of II.5 terminates at this spot, and the image of Māṇikkavācakar is held facing Cuntarēcuvarar, as it is at the beginning of this segment. The palanquin is held between Māṇikkavācakar and the flagpole, facing south. The priest and his assistant usually stand between the palanquin and the flagpole on the south side, and the *Stala Ōtuvār* stands between the palanquin and the flagpole on the north side. If the *ōtuvār* has not already completed all the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" during the procession around the second *pirākāram*, he completes them here, and on two days he sang the twentieth poem of "Tiruvempāvai" at this point, while on other days he had finished singing before he reached this position.

The final *pūcai* includes offerings of incense, a single flame oil lamp, a five layer lamp and a single camphor flame. On the last day *naivēttiyam* preceded the offering of incense. Each of these things is offered to the Linga, the palanquin and then to Māṇikkavācakar. Occasionally the order of the offerings was changed and it was offered to the palanquin first. One day the offerings were made to Māṇikkavācakar first, but this was the day that a non-regular priest officiated. The final camphor flame is passed to the audience.

When this part of the ritual is completed the festival is finished for the day. Māṇikkavācakar's image is taken back to the *cērtti* where he resides for the duration of the festival. The participants disperse.

There was usually a fairly large audience for II.6. The location is a main thoroughfare and the participants had difficulty keeping people from walking through the

middle of the ritual space while they were getting ready. During the *pūcai*, and especially during *tīpārātanaī*, people crowded around and pushed in to see.

Segment III: Finale at the Tiruñānacampantar Maṇṭapam

The last segment of the festival is a performance of "Tiruvempāvai" before Mīṇāṭci at the Tiruñānacampantar Maṇṭapam. This portion takes place in the evening of the final day. According to Fuller, this segment coincides with the Poṇṇuñcal festival of Mīṇāṭci which is connected to the Eṇṇeykkāppu Festival.¹⁵

A festival image of Mīṇāṭci is placed on a swing which has been set up temporarily in the Tiruñānacampantar Maṇṭapam. The image of Māṇikkavācakar is placed at the bottom of the steps leading up to the Maṇṭapam on the eastern side of the steps facing west. The *ōtuvārs* line up on the opposite side of the steps. The priest and his assistants stand between Māṇikkavācakar and the *ōtuvārs* during the singing of "Tiruvempāvai", and during the rituals which seemed to concern Mīṇāṭci only, they stand or sit inside the Maṇṭapam. The rather large audience sits on the northwest corner of the steps behind ropes and barriers.

Around 7:00 PM Mīṇāṭci is brought into the *maṇṭapam* and placed on the swing, after a short *pūcai* with five other processional deities placed in the pillared area in front of the Hundred Pillared Hall. For the next fifteen minutes or so preparations and rituals are performed for Mīṇāṭci. A single flame offered to Mīṇāṭci signals the conclusion of these rituals. Immediately after this, the *ōtuvārs* receive sacred ash and a garland, beginning with the *Stala Ōtuvār*. The *Stala Ōtuvār* also receives the *parivaṭṭam*. The *ōtuvārs* then sing "Tiruvempāvai". Each sings a poem in turn, beginning with the *Stala Ōtuvār* singing

¹⁵ See Fuller, *The Camphor Flame*, 182-203 for a description of these two festivals.

the first poem. After each poem a single flame oil lamp and a single camphor plate are shown while the priest rings a hand bell. The lamp is shown first in the direction of Sōmāskandar in front of the Hundred Pillared Hall, then to Mīṇāṭci on the swing, and finally to Māṇikkavācakar.¹⁶

I observed that in the 1993-94 festival, four *ōtuvārs* participated in this segment. The retired *Stala Ōtuvār* was acting as *Stala Ōtuvār*, and therefore received the special honor of the *parivaṭṭam*.

The order of showing the lamps varied slightly after the first few poems. One time the oil lamp was shown to Māṇikkavācakar first and then to Mīṇāṭci, and on another occasion the camphor flame was shown to Sōmāskandar, Māṇikkavācakar, and then Mīṇāṭci. By far the most common pattern was Sōmāskandar, then Mīṇāṭci, then Māṇikkavācakar.

When the singing of "Tiruvempāvai" is finished, the *ōtuvārs* sing the *Pañcapurāṇam*. No lamp is offered to Mīṇāṭci between these five poems. When the singing of the *Pañcapurāṇam* is completed, a single flame oil lamp is shown and a single camphor flame. Then the camphor flame and ash are brought to the *ōtuvārs* and other significant people. In 1993-94, the flame was presented first to a temple administrator who was present, then to the *ōtuvārs*, and then to some women who participated in the later part of the ritual. Ash was then distributed to the administrator and *ōtuvārs*. Finally the *ōtuvārs* were given bananas and betel.

¹⁶ The *Stala Ōtuvār* confirmed that the lamp is shown to Sōmāskandar, one of the five festival images temporarily placed in front of the Hundred Pillared Hall rather than to Naṭarācar inside the Hundred Pillared Hall.

Māṅikkavācakar had no presence in the ritual after this.¹⁷ According to the *Stala Ōtuvār*, this concluded the festival for Māṅikkavācakar. As the first segment opened the festival by singing first the *Pañcapurāṇam* and then "Tiruvempāvai", this section closed the festival by singing first "Tiruvempāvai" and then the *Pañcapurāṇam*. After Mīṇāṭci leaves, Māṅikkavācakar is returned to the Makāmaṇṭapam of Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine, and the festival is finished. Any doubt that it was over for Māṅikkavācakar was dispelled when I saw the unceremonious way in which the image was hoisted onto an assistant priest's shoulder and carried away.

The "Ritual Text"

The "ritual text" of the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival at Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple is more complicated than the "ritual text" of the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*. It consists of: *Pañcapurāṇam* and all twenty poems of "Tiruvempāvai" in segment I; the *Tiruvilaiyāṭal Purāṇam* poem, the twenty poems of "Tiruvempāvai" sung twice, then poems 2, 16 and 5 of "Tiruvempāvai", and another singing of the twenty poems in segment II, all of which is

¹⁷ The remaining portion of this ritual concerns Mīṇāṭci, and is part of the Poṇṇūṅcal Festival. The retired *Stala Ōtuvār* and the current *Stala Ōtuvār*, the administrator and the priest went inside the *maṇṭapam*. At 7:35 a bell was rung and the swing began to move. At this point, one by one, several women went into the *maṇṭapam*, performed some actions, and then each received ash and betel, and then they left. This was followed by a long, seemingly intricate ritual in the *maṇṭapam* which involved circumambulating around Mīṇāṭci. Much of it was not visible from our position on the floor. After some time the *Stala Ōtuvārs* sang four poems from Māṅikkavācakar's song, "Tirupponṇūcal". Mīṇāṭci was swung on the swing. The *nātasvaram* was played. There was a final *pūcai*. The same five lamp series and single camphor flame which concluded the ritual in the Hundred Pillared Hall concluded this ritual also (i.e. the single flame oil lamp; the 5 layer lamp; the cobra headed lamp; the 5 wicks lamp and the pot). Each lamp was shown three times to Sōmāskandar first and then three times to Mīṇāṭci. The assistant priest then passed the camphor flame to the people and the priest distributed a powder. Two women went and received some substance and a garland. Mīṇāṭci was then returned to the other deities on the other side near the Hundred Pillared Hall to be taken in procession. The *ōtuvārs* did not receive any special items at this point.

repeated on each of the eight days; and a singing of all 20 poems and then the five *Pañcapurāṇam* poems in segment III.

The "ritual text" of "Tiruvempāvai" Festival therefore uses more than three source texts and utilizes them in a variety of ways. As we saw above the festival opened and closed with the *Pañcapurāṇam*. The *Pañcapurāṇam* consists of five different poems drawn from five groupings of the many poems of *Tirumuṟai*, composed by sixteen different authors.¹⁸ On the middle eight days a poem was sung from the *Tiruvilaiyāṭal Purāṇam*, which is the account of Śiva's activities in Madurai,¹⁹ and which is not one of the twelve *Tirumuṟai*. The particular selection comes from the praise portion at the beginning of the *Purāṇam*. "Tiruvempāvai" was sung in whole and in part, and the whole was repeated three times on each of the middle eight days of the festival.

This "ritual text" is fairly stable. In 1993-94 the only variation from day to day was whether or not the poem in praise of Māṇikkavācakar was sung, which depended on whether or not segment II.1 was omitted. It is possible that from year to year the specific songs constituting *Pañcapurāṇam* may also vary, thus altering the text from year to year. The requirement for singing the *Pañcapurāṇam* is that the selection be from certain texts, but the particular selection of poems is not specified.

The Singing of "Tiruvempāvai" as an Event in Māṇikkavācakar's Life

In the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival the singing of "Tiruvempāvai" is understood as the replication of an event in Māṇikkavācakar's life. The naming of the festival associates it directly with the saint, and his image is present in all segments of the festival. The singing and the activity is understood by *ōtuvārs* and priests to be done by Māṇikkavācakar

¹⁸ See chapter 8.

¹⁹ See chapter 6 and 8.

himself. The spatial arrangements, the ritual forms and the singing of the festival create distance between the *ōtuvārs*, who act on behalf of Māṇikkavācakar, and the audience. Each of these structural characteristics of the festival prevent devotees from participating in the activity associated with Māṇikkavācakar. In the festival Māṇikkavācakar is portrayed as the only devotee worshipping at the temple. The meaning of "Tiruvempāvai" as celebrated in this festival, is that it is Māṇikkavācakar's mode of praise, worship and supplication to God that leads to *mutti*.

The festival is referred to both as "Tiruvempāvai' Viḷā (festival)" and as Māṇikkavācakar's Festival. A temple administrative notice referred to the festival as "Tiruvempāvā' Uṟcavam" (*sic.*, temple festival), and the blackboard in the temple which notes the current events, referred to the first day of the festival as "Māṇikkavācakar Uṟsavarampam" (*sic.*, the beginning of the Māṇikkavācakar festival).²⁰ One Tamil calendar of events (*pañcāṅkam*), which indicates the starting dates of festivals in various temples in Tamil Nadu, refers to the festival as "The Sri Māṇikkavācakar 'Tiruvempāvai' Festival".²¹ In name, then, the festival is clearly associated with Māṇikkavācakar.

Māṇikkavācakar's image is also present in all the segments of the festival, and it is the only image that is present in all the segments. Both the specific setting and the addressee (to whom the songs are addressed, or for whom they are performed) change from segment to segment in the festival. In segment I, Māṇikkavācakar is brought before Cuntarēcuvarar and Naṭarācar in the Makāmaṅṭapam. He receives the protective thread and then in the person of the *Stala Ōtuvār* performs his song before these images. In segment II.1, he is praised by the *Stala Ōtuvār*. In II.2 the full "Tiruvempāvai" is sung as he stands

²⁰ The Tamil spelling of "festival" is copied directly from the temple notice and the blackboard respectively.

²¹ S. Vācaṅ, *Vācaṅ Cutta Tirukkaṇṭa Pañcāṅkam* (Cenṇai: Vācaṅ Pukhavus, 1993), 14; *Ibid.*, (1994), 14.

before Naṭarācar in the Hundred Pillared Hall. Then in II.3 he is taken in procession around the Āṭi streets. In II.4 he is taken before the images of Citti Viṅāyakar, Mīṇāṭci and Kumāraṅ (Murukaṅ). In II.5 he goes with Śiva (Cantiracēkaraṅ) in procession around the second *pirākāram*. In the last portion of this segment, II.6 he is worshipped along with both Cuntarēcuvarar and Cantiracēkaraṅ. Finally, in segment III he is stood near Mīṇāṭci and the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" are sung. In the festival Māṇikkavācakar is thus brought to six different places, and his "Tiruvempāvai" is sung before six different deities.

Although the location of the activities of the festival change, and the deities present for each event change, Māṇikkavācakar's image is always present. Furthermore, in all portions of the festival, the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" are sung only in the presence of the image of Māṇikkavācakar. This arrangement contrasts sharply with the singing of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēlucci" in the *Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai* where neither Māṇikkavācakar nor any other person has such a presence, in image or in name, because the ritual use of the poems in that case is completely different.

Māṇikkavācakar is especially associated with Naṭarācar in this festival. In segments I he is brought before Naṭarācar in the Makāmaṅṭapam, and in segment II he is brought before Naṭarācar in the Hundred Pillared Hall. A priest expressed the idea that there is a special relationship between Māṇikkavācakar and Naṭarācar, and an *ōtuvār* of the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple suggested that Māṇikkavācakar, "Tiruvempāvai", and Naṭarācar are especially linked with one another. These views seem to be supported by tradition, and by the poet's biography. Many of the *Tiruvācakam* songs are believed to have been sung in Citamparam where Naṭarācar is the main deity, and, as we saw in the summary of his biography provided in chapter 6, Māṇikkavācakar is thought to have finally attained full *mutti* by actually merging with Naṭarācar at Citamparam. We are suggesting that the festival emphasizes this special relationship by associating

Māṇikkavācakar regularly with Naṭarācar, even though Naṭarācar is not one of the presiding deities of the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple.

According to both priests and *ōtuvārs*, the singer of "Tiruvempāvai" in this festival is Māṇikkavācakar himself.²² One priest made the point in a negative way by explaining that Māṇikkavācakar in the festival is an idol and cannot sing, so the *ōtuvār* acts on his behalf. In a slightly different way the point was made by another priest when he referred to the events of the festival as a representation in which the *ōtuvārs* act as Māṇikkavācakar. Both *Stala Ōtuvārs* regard themselves to be singing the poems of "Tiruvempāvai" on Māṇikkavācakar's behalf. One of them actually said at two points during the festival that he was Māṇikkavācakar.²³ Regardless of whether the *ōtuvār* represents Māṇikkavācakar like an actor in a play, or through some stronger ritual identification, it is clear that for both the priests and the *ōtuvārs* the singer of "Tiruvempāvai" in this festival is understood to be Māṇikkavācakar himself.

The structure of the festival also suggests that only Māṇikkavācakar's voice (through his representatives) should be heard singing "Tiruvempāvai". Distance is created between the *ōtuvārs* who sing on Māṇikkavācakar's behalf and any other devotees who might want to participate. This is accomplished through spatial arrangement, through special ritual procedures and through specialized singing styles. On the first day, the image of Māṇikkavācakar and the *Stala Ōtuvār* stand in a special formation. The *Stala Ōtuvār* stands on the north side of Māṇikkavācakar and on the south side of Naṭarācar. On the other hand the audience has to stand on the opposite or the south side of Māṇikkavācakar. Similarly, in segment II.2 of the eight day cycle which takes place in the Hundred Pillared Hall, the images of Māṇikkavācakar and Naṭarācar, and the priests and the *ōtuvārs* are all

²² Fuller makes this point also: Fuller, *The Camphor Flame*, 195.

²³ The 1990-91 "Tiruvempāvai" Festival.

raised above the audience on platforms. The only exception to this was when the VIPs and special guests shared the platform with the *ōtuvārs*, but these men and boys did not sing "Tiruvempāvai". In the two processions (II.3 and II.5), the worship at Mīṇāṭci's Shrine (II.4), and in front of the flagpole (II.6) the spatial distance was not so marked, but at Mīṇāṭci's shrine and at the flagpole there was a real effort to keep people out of the space reserved for the ritual activity. In the final segment of the festival, Māṇikkavācakar's image, the *ōtuvārs*, and the other devotees are on the same level, but the devotees are behind rails and are moved back from the *ōtuvārs*.

Māṇikkavācakar and the *ōtuvārs* are both distinguished ritually from the audience (devotees) by special ritual markers. Māṇikkavācakar always wears a *parivaṭṭam*. The *Stala Ōtuvār* also receive the *parivaṭṭam* in segments I, II, and III. The other *ōtuvārs* and their musicians receives *parivaṭṭams* on the last of the eight days. On all the eight middle days of the festival in the Hundred Pillared Hall the *ōtuvārs* receive special ritual attention prior to the singing of "Tiruvempāvai". They receive the camphor flame (which is not taken to the audience), ash, sandal, and garlands. The special guests also receive these, but they did not join in the singing of the poems of "Tiruvempāvai". In the final segment, the *ōtuvārs* also receive similar special recognition before they began singing, and at the end of their portion of that event they received bananas and betel. The women who participated later in the ritual also received these honors after their participation, but not at the same time as the *ōtuvārs*.

The use of distinctive singing styles also creates distance between the audience and *ōtuvārs*. As noted above, in the Hundred Pillared Hall the *ōtuvārs* sing with their own personal embellishments, making it difficult to anticipate how the song will proceed and therefore making it difficult to sing along. It was also noted earlier how it seemed that on one occasion the *ōtuvār* sang in an even more complex style when someone did try to join

in. The easiest place in which a devotee could participate in the singing would be in the Āṭi streets procession, because the spatial arrangement there is less rigid, and during these processions there are no clear ritual distinction marking off the place for the *ōtuvārs* in the procession. The *ōtuvārs* are still marked off somewhat because they are walking in direct association with the cart carrying Māṇikkavācakar and are accompanied by their band. Onlookers can certainly identify the *ōtuvārs* as ritually significant, but no one is physically prevented from joining them.

The different segments of the festival show Māṇikkavācakar in various devotional poses. This is especially prominent in segment II which is repeated for eight days. II.1 and II.6 seem to be the preliminary and concluding segments respectively. Segment II.1 is an exchange between the *Stala Ōtuvār* and Māṇikkavācakar in which the *Stala Ōtuvār* praises Māṇikkavācakar before beginning to act on his behalf. Segment II.6 is a final *pūcai* to Cuntarēcuvarar, Cantiracēkaraṇ in the palanquin, and to Māṇikkavācakar. In between, Māṇikkavācakar becomes respectively performer (II.2), important devotee with all temple honors (II.3), a human worshipper (II.4), and a supplicant (II.V). Using language that reflects Māṇikkavācakar as the actor in the festival we can say that in II.2 he goes to Naṭarācar, stands before him and performs the 20 poems of "Tiruvempāvai". In the procession around the Āṭi streets (II.3), he is given all temple honors: the bull, the elephants, parasol, and musicians. According to the *ōtuvārs* and priests, taking Māṇikkavācakar in a procession with all the fanfare is showing him respect and acknowledging that he is an important person. He might be considered important because he was, according to his biography, the first minister of the King of Madurai, a great poet, and a saint who attained *mutti*. Yet the circumambulatory route and the singing of devotional songs picture him in a devotional pose, as one priest said, "worshipping God" in the procession. In II.4, Māṇikkavācakar is presented as a human who sings a song (a

poem of "Tiruvempāvai") and worships Citti Viṇāyakar, Mīṇāṭci and Murukaṇ. The fact that he is depicted as human here is made clear by the fact that he himself receives no *naivēttiyam* or lamps, as he does in some other parts of the festival.²⁴ Furthermore, like other humans he comes with a plate of offerings to be offered to the deity, and then receives back the camphor flame and *piracātam* through the *Stala Ōtuvār*. In the following segment (II.5) we see Māṇikkavācakar as a human supplicant.²⁵ He goes to the second *pirākāram*, and waits for Cuntarēcuvarar to come, and when Cuntarēcuvarar arrives Māṇikkavācakar proceeds backwards singing his songs. There are no processional elements such as bulls, elephants, umbrellas and musicians in this event. Only Cuntarēcuvarar receives offerings of lamps. These points underscore the fact that Māṇikkavācakar is a human in this segment, and is given no special recognition. In this eight day segment, Māṇikkavācakar is a performer, a great person who receives recognition, an ordinary worshipper, and one who makes requests of God.

Māṇikkavācakar is, however, no ordinary devotee. He is also depicted as divine at some points in the festival because he is offered lamps and the camphor flame. According to a priest, *tīpārātanaṭai* is offered only to deities, and Māṇikkavācakar receives offerings of lamps in segment I, segment II.2, II.3 and II.6, and III. This distinguishes him from devotees in the audience, and even from the *ōtuvār*s who are his representatives during the festival. He is a devotee, but he has also attained *mutti*. This gives him a status beyond

²⁴ This point was made clearly to me when I asked a priest and *ōtuvār* if Māṇikkavācakar received *naivēttiyam* or *tīpārātanaṭai* in this segment. I was told, "No!, here he is a human doing worship."

²⁵ The *ōtuvār* referred to Māṇikkavācakar as *viṇṇappattār*. When saying this the *ōtuvār* made the motion of going backwards bent over with hands folded. The image is standing and cannot bend over with hands folded, but it does explain why Māṇikkavācakar proceeds backwards in the second *pirākāram*. When I asked why the Āṭi streets procession had a bull, elephants and so on, but in the later procession in the second *pirākāram* did not, I was told that it was because in the later procession Māṇikkavācakar was a supplicant.

human. The *ōtuvārs* and other devotees in attendance at the festival are not recognized through ritual as being divine in this way.

In an interview with one of the *ōtuvārs*, it was asserted that my questions concerning the meaning of the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, and the meaning of "Tiruvempāvai" itself, ultimately come down to the same question. It was agreed that by giving importance to the "Tiruvempāvai" songs, the soul gains *pēriṅpam (mutti)*, and because the festival gives special recognition to the "Tiruvempāvai" songs, it also enables one to gain *mutti*. We may suggest that the significance of this festival is that it embodies Māṅikkavācakar's path to final *mutti*. In this festival Māṅikkavācakar entertains, praises, worships and petitions God through "Tiruvempāvai", and it was through the medium of his poems that he attained final *mutti*. The devotee, as an audience member in attendance at the festival, witnesses a path that leads to *mutti*. The devotee may also follow this path. As Civa Aruṅakiri Mutaliyār suggested, the devotee may sing "Tiruvempāvai" in his own worship of God and attain *mutti*.²⁶

Summary

The poems of "Tiruvempāvai" are sung in a special way in the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival at the Mīṅāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple in Madurai. The performer of these poems, as structured by the ritual and as understood by the *ōtuvārs* and priests, is Māṅikkavācakar. The poems and their significance is understood within the biography of the composer of the poems. The significance of "Tiruvempāvai" as presented in this ritual is that worshipping through these songs, as Māṅikkavācakar did, is a means of attaining the highest goal, final *mutti*. In chapter 10, we will see how the poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" and

²⁶ See chapter 6 above.

"Tiruvempāvai" can be understood quite differently when situated in the biographies of individual devotees rather than in the biographies of the "hero" or the "poet".

III: Chapter 10: Nagamalai Pudukottai:

Citti Viṇāyakar and Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples

In the two preceding chapters I have looked at the singing of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" in a large temple complex where there are people whose job it is to sing these and other Śaiva songs before the deities and saints who reside in the temple. Now, in this and the following chapter, I will consider the singing of these same songs in a temple setting in which there are no temple officials especially designated for singing. The setting of this and the following chapter is the village of Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai where there are two community temples: Citti Viṇāyakar Temple and Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple. The event is the "*Pāvai Singing*" (*pāvai pāṭuvatu*) which occurs once a year throughout *Mārkaḷi* month. The performers of the songs are devotees, predominantly woman, and the significance of the songs is the significance those devotees give them in terms of their own life.

This chapter will begin with a description of the village, the two temples, and the ritual cycle of the two temples. This will be followed by a description of the participants and the event. In chapter 11 I will then discuss the "ritual text" of the "*Pāvai Singing*" and the interpretation of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai".

The Village

Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai is a village about ten kilometers west of Madurai on a main road heading towards the western ghats. A long rocky hill called Nākamalai (Snake Hill) runs along the north side of the road, and the Vaikai River runs north of Nākamalai. The landscape is dotted with hillocks and fields.

The area around the village falls into the sacred geography of Madurai, and the domain of Cuntarēcuvarar and Mīṇāṭci, as defined by the traditional legends of the *Tiruvīlaiyāṭal Purāṇam*. According to the twenty-eighth episode in that text, the Jains (traditional rivals of the Śaivas) undertook a sacrifice and created a giant snake in order to destroy a zealous Śaiva King of Madurai. The king appealed to Lord Cuntarēcuvarar, who assured him that he would destroy the snake. After more appeals to Cuntarēcuvarar, the king succeeded in destroying the snake, and legend holds that the body of the dead snake became the long hill known as Nākamalai.¹

A bit further west of the village, on the north side of the Vaikai River is another sacred site whose story is told in the sixty-third episode of the *Tiruvīlaiyāṭal Purāṇam*. According to this story, another King of Madurai was a follower of the Jains, and was vigorously imposing this religion on his subjects. The Queen, Maṅkaiyarkkaraci, and the Prime Minister, Kulacciṛaiyār, summoned the Śaiva saint, Tiruñāṇacampantar, in the hope of restoring the king's faith in Śaivism.² Several contests took place between the Śaiva saints and the Jains, and in the final and decisive contest, both the saint and the Jains inscribed their respective religious principles on palm-leaves and the leaves were thrown into the Vaikai River to see which would flow against the current. Only Tiruñāṇacampantar's leaf floated upstream, and all the Jains were converted to Śaivism or put to death. The saint's leaf floated on until it was found in an area of the river surrounded by forest. Where the leaf was found the king discovered a Linga and built a

¹ J. H. Nelson, *The Madura Country: A Manual* (1868; rpt., Madras: Asian Education Services, 1989), III: 18-19.

² The images of Maṅkaiyarkkaraci and Kulacciṛaiyār are two of the four images of saints with a special association to Madurai in the Tiruñāṇacampantar Maṅṭapam in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple. See chapter 8.

temple there. This place is known today as Tiruvčatakam and there is a reasonably sized Śaiva temple there, quite near Nākamalai.³

Rock carvings on a hillock slightly south of Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai provide a concrete reminder of a former Jain presence in the immediate area. On this hill there is Jain cave with carvings cut into the rock, and higher up near the top of the hill are Jaina figures and Kirantam (Grantha; ancient script used by Tamils for writing Sanskrit) inscriptions carved into the rockface facing east.

The population of Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai was 12,398 according to the 1991 Census.⁴ The village seems to be composed of two different settlements: an older village style settlement to the northeast of the main road, and a newer town-like settlement to southwest of the road. The older area has narrow winding streets, the housing styles are mixed and houses tend to be crowded against each other, and there is a central meeting area called a *mantai*. In the newer area, by contrast, the streets are wider and organized in a grid pattern, and the houses tend to be large, free-standing structures within compounds, and there is no *mantai*. The older area is an agricultural settlement. On the other hand, the newer area is comprised of recent settlers with no ancestral ties to the land, who either work in Madurai, or teach or work in administration at Madurai Kamaraj University a few

³ The group of poems which the saint is thought to have inscribed on the palm leaf is called "Tiruppācuram" and is highly regarded among Śaivas. The first verse is included in the "Pāvai Singing". Nelson, *The Madura Country*, III:37; P. S. Somasundaram, *Tirujñānasambanadhar: Religion and Philosophy* (Madras: Vani Pathippakam, 1986), 27, 39 94-99; Indira Viswanathan Peterson, *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 281 n. 232. The temple at Tiruvčatakam was classified as one of the seven great temples in Madurai along with the Miṇāṭci-Cuntarčuvavar Temple, Tirupparaṅkunram Murukaṅ Temple, Kaḷḷalakar Temple, and three others in the early reports of the British upon their takeover of Madurai (c.a. 1802). Carol Appadurai Breckenridge, "The Śrī Miṇāṅṣi Sundarēśvarar Temple: Worship and Endowments in South India, 1833 to 1925" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1976), 152-3. See also Nelson, *The Madura Country*, IV:135-6.

⁴ *Census of India 1991, Provisional Population Totals, Supplement to Paper-1 of 1991, Series 23: Tamil Nadu* (Government of India, 1991).

kilometers to the west. The inhabitants of the older area tend to dress in the style of the Piramalai Kaḷḷar of the area, which for women means they wear their saris and hair in a distinctive manner. Some of the men wear the uniforms of service employees of the university. The women of the newer area wear their saris and hair in the way found in Madurai, and the men tend to dress in the western style of pants and shirt rather than in the more traditional *vēṭṭi* (dhoti).⁵

The two areas of the village maintain a kind of distance from each other. This is quite apparent in the following excerpt from the "Nākamalai Murukaṅ Tala Purāṇam":

In our village of Ālvārnakar N.G.O Colony, today there are one thousand houses, one college, two high schools, one middle school, a mosque, two churches and three temples. But in April 16, 1962 on Catācivam Road when Tiru. Amirtaliṅkam first set up his house, there were no other houses. On Feb. 7, 1964, when the first electric connection was installed in his house, there were only fifty houses.

On September 9, 1964 on Viṇāyakar Caturtti day, when Tiru. S. Tarmaliṅkamutaliyār installed Lord Viṇāyakar, he made this village in which our houses are, a village with a temple. He and the retired post-master Tiru. Veṅkacāmrā who performed the daily *pūcai*, obtained some donations and established the Piḷḷaiyār Temple (translation mine).⁶

Ālvārnakar is a sub-division of Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai on the west side of the village and south of the main road. The "Tala Purāṇam" attests to the newness of the settlement and to the number of educational and religious institutions in Ālvārnakar. The Citti Viṇāyakar and Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples are two of the three temples mentioned in the "Tala Purāṇam".

The older, northeast area of the village has at least six temples. There is an older temple north of the main road that was under renovation when I was there. Proceeding north from the main road one also passes temples for Ammaṅ, Piḷḷaiyār (Viṇāyakar), and

⁵ At the temple the traditional *vēṭṭi* is considered appropriate attire for men.

⁶ S. Catācivam, "Tala Purāṇam" in *Aruḷmiku Nākamalai Tirumurukaṅ Tirukkōyil Kuṭamulukku Viḷā Malar* (n.p.: Malarkkuḷu, 1993), 3. This "Tala Purāṇam" is one and a half pages long and lacks the legendary quality of those such as *Tiruvilāiyātal Purāṇam*.

Aḷakar (Viṣṇu), all of which are visible along the winding road. Proceeding north past the settlement and towards the eastern end of Nākamalai hill is a fairly large temple for Taḷātakai, the valorous form of Mīṇāṭci prior to her marriage to Śiva as Cuntarēcuvarar. The image installed in the temple, according to the priest, has three breasts, and the temple is said to mark the place of her birth. Preliminary inquiries suggest that the temple existed at least as early as 1921, but even it is not included in the enumeration of temples in the "Nākamalai Murukaṅ Tala Purāṇam". It seems clear that the "Nākamalai Murukaṅ Tala Purāṇam" assumes that the northeast area of Nākamalai Putukkōḷṭai with its own temples is a completely separate area from Āḷvārnakar. The temples of Āḷvārnakar, including the two about to be studied, serve primarily the relatively new settlement of literate, fairly educated middle-class Hindus.

The Citti Viṇāyakar and the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples

The "*Pāvai* Singing", during which "*Tiruppalliyēlucchi*" and "*Tiruvempāvai*" are sung, is arranged so that it begins at the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple and concludes at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple. These temples are considerably smaller and newer than the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple complex in Madurai, and the ritual cycles one finds there are much less complex than the one at the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple. There are only a few people on staff in each temple. (A Diagram of the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple is found in Appendix I.4, and that of Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple is in Appendix I.5.)

The Citti Viṇāyakar Temple complex is housed in a compound which covers approximately 4500 square feet. The only entrance to the complex is on the eastern side of the temple. There are six shrines in the complex: the shrine of the presiding deity, Citti Viṇāyakar, and the surrounding shrines of the five subsidiary deities. In front of the temple and facing Citti Viṇāyakar is an image of his mount, a rat (*mūñcūr*). The subsidiary

deities proceeding clockwise around the temple are: Civappirakācanātar, Cinnā Piḷḷaiyār set into the back of the main shrine, Pālacuppiramaṇiyar (Murukaṇ as a child), Cuntara Āñcanēya Cuvāmi (Rāma), and Cuntara Āñcanēyar (Haṇumāṇ). All except the Cinnā Piḷḷaiyār face the easterly direction and have their own structures. In addition to these installed images, there are two festival images, one of Viṇāyakar situated on Citti Viṇāyakar's right and one of Murukaṇ on his left. Within this temple compound there is a well,⁷ three sacred trees and a kitchen. There is also an organization called the Tiruppukaḷ Capai associated with the temple, dedicated to the singing of the songs to Murukaṇ which were composed by Aruṇakirinātar (the *Tiruppukaḷ*).

According to the "Nākamalai Murukaṇ Tala Purāṇam", the image of the presiding deity in the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple was installed in 1964. The inscriptions in the temple complex provide dates for the other shrines. The picture of Cuntara Āñcanēya Cuvāmi was installed in 1971,⁸ the structure housing the presiding deity (*ālayam*) was consecrated in 1975, and the image of Cuntara Āñcanēyar was installed in 1976; Pālacuppiramaṇiyar in 1991; and Civappirakācanātar in 1992. There are no dates available for the installation of Cinnā Piḷḷaiyār, but it is attached to the hall of the presiding deity which was built in 1975.

The Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temple is adjacent to and shares a compound wall with the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple. The compound of the Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temple covers an area of approximately 6400 square feet and is therefore slightly larger than the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple compound. It has one entrance which is also on the eastern side. The complex contains ten shrines: the shrine of the presiding deity, Nākamalai Murukaṇ, and the surrounding shrines of the eight subsidiary deities, and an image of Murukaṇ's mount,

⁷ The well was closed by July 1994. I was told it was polluted and that the temple now gets water from the adjacent Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temple.

⁸ Cuntara Āñcanēya Cuvāmi is represented by a colour picture rather than a sculpture as in the other shrines.

a peacock (*mayil vākaṇam*), which faces him. Above the entrance to the main shrine is a relief of the Goddess, Kajalaṭcumi. A small image of Viṇāyakar sits on the top step of the Murukaṇ shrine to his right, facing east. Three of the subsidiary shrines are attached to the main shrine. Proceeding clockwise around the shrine of Murukaṇ are: Taṭcaṇāmūrtti on the south wall facing south; Mahāviṣṇu on the west wall facing west; and Turkikai on the north wall facing north. There are five other free standing shrines: Cuntarēcuvarar (a Linga) is behind Murukaṇ in the southwest corner facing east. Mīṇāṭci Ammaṇ is behind Murukaṇ in the northwest corner, facing east. An image of Śiva's mount, Nanti the bull, is in front, and faces both the Linga and Mīṇāṭci. Nākarājar is to the northeast side of Murukaṇ at the compound wall, facing west. The Navakkiraham (nine planets) are situated in a single structure to the northwest of Nākarājar but to Murukaṇ's northeast. Finally, Caṇṭikēsvarar is situated close to Murukaṇ's shrine at its northeast corner and faces south. The compound has a borewell pump, funded by various branches of the Rotary Club, a kitchen, and a number of shrubs and trees.

The Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temple complex evolved even more quickly than the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple complex. The very first structural features, a *maṇṭapam* and a portion of the compound wall, were built in 1985. In July 1989 the temple committee began collecting donations in order to build a Murukaṇ Temple in the *maṇṭapam*. In October 1989 the construction was completed and the image of Nākamalai Murukaṇ installed. On 30 August 1991 the ceremony installing the images of Viṇāyakar, Taṭcaṇāmūrtti, Mahāviṣṇu, Turkikai, the Navakkiraham, Caṇṭikēsvarar and Nākarājar was conducted. The construction of the *vimāṇam* (small tower over the image of the main deity) began 26 January 1992. The construction of the Mīṇāṭci and Cuntarēcuvarar shrines began on 22 August 1992. On 25 January 1993 the *vimāṇam* was sanctified and the images of Mīṇāṭci

and Cuntarēcuvarar were installed. It took three and a half years to build the complex from the beginning of the collection of funds to its present state.⁹

Ritual Cycle of the Citti Viṇāyakar and the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples¹⁰

Both the temple structures and the ritual calendars of these two village temples are in the process of change. The installation of new deities leads to changes in the ritual pattern in order to provide for their worship. In the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple the images of Pālacuppīramaṇiyar and Civappīrakācanātar were installed after I had completed my fieldwork in 1991 but before I returned in 1993. As a result the rituals had been expanded to include these deities, with Civappīrakācanātar included in the daily ritual and Pālacuppīramaṇiyar in the daily, monthly and yearly schedule. Two new shrines are planned for the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple complex, one for Kācivicuvanātaṅ and one for Rama, Laksmanan and Sita. The ritual pattern will change again to incorporate them. When I completed my fieldwork in 1991 only the main Nākamalai Murukaṅ image was installed and receiving worship in the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple complex. Since then all the other deities in the temple were installed. Most of the rituals of the current ritual cycle developed since the beginning of my fieldwork.¹¹ The description of the two ritual cycles here presents what was in place as of mid-1994.

The Citti Viṇāyakar and Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples have daily, monthly and yearly ritual activities, and the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple also has some weekly rituals. The daily activity at both temples consists of daily *pūcai* and the performance of personal worship on behalf of devotees. In contrast to the eight daily *pūcais* at the Mīṇāṭci-

⁹ "Tala Purāṇam," 3-4; temple inscriptions.

¹⁰ The information about the ritual cycles is based on interviews with the priests of the temples, as well as some input from devotees.

¹¹ For example: Navarāttiri, Āṭi Paurṇami for Mīṇāṭci.

Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, these two temples have daily worship performed twice for the presiding deities. The times of the daily *pūcais* are coordinated so that devotees may watch at least the showing of the lamps at both temples. The morning *pūcai* takes place between 7:30 and 8:45 AM in the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple and begins at about 8:00 AM in the Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temple. In the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple the evening *pūcai* occurs at 6:15 and in the Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temple at 6:00.

In both temples the morning *pūcai* consists of bathing the main deity with various substances (*apiṭēkam* or *abhiṣekam*), dressing and adorning the deity (*alaṅkāram*), offering food (*naivēttiyam*) and then showing lamps which culminates in the showing of a camphor flame (*tīpārāṭṭai*). This four-fold structure of worship is the same as a full *pūcai* in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple.¹² The *abhiṣekam* and *alaṅkāram* is done first to the presiding deity and then to the subsidiary deities. Finally the lamps are offered to the main deity and then to the other deities.¹³ In both temples the evening *pūcai* consists of *naivēttiyam* and *tīpārāṭṭai* to the main deity and to subsidiary deities. There is neither *abhiṣekam* nor *alaṅkāram* during normal daily evening *pūcai*.

In the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple complex there are no special weekly *pūcais*. Every month there are two special days for Citti Viṇāyakar, one for Pālacuppiramaṇiyar and one for Cuntara Āñcanēyar. Yearly there is a four day festival for Citti Viṇāyakar, a six day festival for Pālacuppiramaṇiyar, a one day special event for Cuntara Āñcanēya Cuvāmi and a one day event for Cuntara Āñcanēyar. For the whole of *Mārkaḷi* there is the special early morning *pūcai* conducted to awaken the God, as *Mārkaḷi* is the dawn of the gods.

¹² See chapter 8 above. *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* is not a full *pūcai* in the sense that the deity is not bathed nor dressed during this *pūcai*.

¹³ In the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple, Ciṇṇa Piḷḷaiyār is not included in the daily worship.

In the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple complex there is a special *abhiṣekam* every Thursday morning for Taṭcaṅāmūrti. Tuesdays and Fridays are special for Turkkai and Nākarājar. Saturday is special for the Navakkiraham. Monthly, there are two special days for Nākamalai Murukaṅ, one for Viṅāyakar, two for Cuntarēcuvarar, one for Mīṅāṭci Ammaṅ and a *viḷakku* (lamp) *pūcai* which is undertaken by the village ladies each month at the temple.

Yearly there are seven special events for Nākamalai Murukaṅ, six for Cuntarēcuvarar, and three for Mīṅāṭci Ammaṅ. Five of the special events for Nākamalai Murukaṅ are single day events. The main festival for Nākamalai Murukaṅ, is the *Kantacāṭṭi* Festival in the Tamil month, *Aippacci*, which lasts six days. All of the special days for Cuntarēcuvarar are one day events. Two of Mīṅāṭci's yearly events are single day events, including her marriage which the reader will remember is the main festival at the Mīṅāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple. Her third yearly event is Navarāttiri which lasts nine days.¹⁴ For the whole of *Mārkaḷi* there is the special early morning *pūcai* conducted to awaken the God.

"Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" are sung as part of the "*Pāvai* Singing" which occurs every year throughout *Mārkaḷi* in the early morning. Three events at Nākamalai coalesce in the "*Pāvai* Singing", which are conducted as separate events in the Mīṅāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, one is the regular early morning *pūcai* which awakens the gods from sleep (*Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai*), the second is the singing of "Tiruvempāvai" during *Mārkaḷi* month, and the third is the special awakening *pūcai* for the gods because *Mārkaḷi* is dawn for the gods and the appropriate time to awaken.

¹⁴ The festival can be nine or ten days depending on the annual calendar.

The Ritual Event: "The *Pāvai* Singing"

Cast and Audience

The "*Pāvai* Singing" at the Citti Viṇāyakar and the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples consists basically of ordinary worshippers singing before the deities while the priest and his assistant perform the *pūcai*. The participants in the event are the priest, his support staff, the singers, the donors and the audience.

Each of the two temples has only one priest. Both are male brahmins who have undergone initiation which qualifies them to perform *pūcai* in Śaiva temples. The priest at the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple previously worked in a temple kitchen, as did his father, but he was trained for and then initiated into the priesthood. The priest at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple comes from a priestly family. Both priests receive a salary, and neither position is either hereditary or supported by endowments (*kaṭṭalai*). Normally, the priest of the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple collects the items for *pūcai*, prepares and conducts the *pūcai*, prepares the *piracātam* (food offering) and makes the personal offerings to the deities for individuals who come to worship. The Nākamalai Murukaṅ priest performs the same duties as the Citti Viṇāyakar priest except that he does not prepare the food offerings.

Both temples have other staff which participate in the *Mārkaḷi* month *pūcai*. At the Viṇāyakar Temple there is only one other person on staff, the woman who cleans. The cleaning lady cleans the temple precincts, sweeps and sprinkles water, draws the *kōlam* or rice flour designs on the floor, washes the *piracātam* vessels, and also rings the large temple bell during *tīpārātaṇai*.¹⁵ During *Mārkaḷi*, one of the female singers also swept, sprinkled water and drew the *kōlam* in both temples. The priest arranged to have another priest assist him with this *pūcai* during *Mārkaḷi*.

¹⁵ She dressed as a Pīramalai Kaḷḷar lady and identified Putukkōṭṭai, i.e. the northeast side of the village, as the place where she lived.

The Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple has two other staff members: the assistant priest and the watchman. The assistant priest cooks as well as assists the priest in *pūcai*, and he also makes private offerings to the deities on behalf of individuals. In the *Mārkaḷi* month ritual the assistant priest assisted the priest during the *pūcai*. On some days a brahmin member of the community also assisted these two priests. To my knowledge, the watchman had no special duties during *Mārkaḷi*.

There are two groups of singers, one at the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple and one at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple. I focused on the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple group primarily because my contacts were with this group during my first field trip, and therefore it was convenient to continue with this group during my more extensive study of the singing in my second fieldtrip. Also, the singing by a separate group at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple began in the years between the my two fieldtrips.

The lay singers in the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple are from the immediate surrounding community. They are predominantly female, with about two-thirds of the women being married and about one third unmarried and young girls.¹⁶ The female singers sit in front of Citti Viṅāyakar in a semi-circle. When they move to the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple they also sit right in the middle, facing the deity, in contrast to the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple "Pāvai Singing" group who sit in two rows at the sides in front of the main deity (see Plates No.s 4 and 5, photos 6, 7 and 8). There were occasionally some male singers, but they usually stood to the side or sat apart. The group of singers was smallest at the beginning of the event and grew as time passed.

The donors are those who pay for the special *Mārkaḷi pūcai* for that day. As each temple has its own special *pūcai*, each has its own donors. The name of the donors for the

¹⁶ This is based on my observation and on the fact that I knew the marital status of quite a few of the women.

day are written on a blackboard at each temple. Some of the donors are also singers. The donor has a special role in the *pūcais* at these temples,¹⁷ in contrast to the situation in the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple where the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival and the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* are largely supported by *kaṭṭalais* or endowments, and only the seventeenth century ruler Tirumalaināyakkar (qua donor) has any presence in the ritual.¹⁸

I am using "audience" here to refer to those who come to the temple, but do not fulfill any of the above roles. They represent the normal role of the devotee who goes to worship at a temple. They go to the temple, watch the *pūcai*, and when the camphor flame comes around they usually touch their hands to it and then to their eyes. Sometimes they will put money on the plate and receive sacred ash and *kuṅkumam* from the priest, and *piracātam* from the priest or devotees assisting the priest in the distribution.¹⁹ There was usually no audience for the early stage of the singing. The audience builds throughout the event at peaks at both temple during *tīpārāṭṭai*.

The Segments and Sequence²⁰

The "Pāvai Singing" of the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple group may be divided into five segments: 1. preliminary personal worship at one or both temples; 2. the singing and *pūcai* at Citti Viṇāyakar Temple (the core of the event); 3. singing and *pūcai* to the subsidiary

¹⁷ This will be described below in the discussion of the segments of the event.

¹⁸ See chapter 8.

¹⁹ At the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple the distributor seemed to be one of the regular singers. At the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple the two distributors were usually a member of the temple committee and another man.

²⁰ The data for the description of the sequence of the events itself was collected in *Mārkaḷi* month of 1990-91 and 1993-94. In both years *Mārkaḷi* month began on December 16 and concluded on January 13 making the month 29 days long. The data is based primarily on my observations in 1993-94.

deities at the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple; 4. singing and *pūcai* at Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple; 5. the concluding worship activities.

Segment 1: Preliminary Personal Worship ²¹

The full preliminary personal worship pattern begins with worship first at the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple and then at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple. This involves worshipping the main deity and circumambulation, and stopping at the subsidiary deities of one's choice. This pattern may be abbreviated or eliminated altogether. On two occasions I saw several people circumambulate at the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple only, because they had arrived after the singing had already begun, or after the singing should have begun. On two other occasions this segment seemed to be eliminated as it was late for the singing to begin. The people involved were leaders among the singers and had to immediately initiate the singing. On another occasion individuals arrived after the singing had started and immediately joined in without performing any preliminary worship. The members of the audience as well as the singers usually perform personal worship, and it is not uncommon to see people worship and circumambulate while the *pūcai* and singing are going on.

Segment 2: Singing and Pūcai at Citti Viṇāyakar Temple (the Core)

This segment, which is the core of the event, has two major components: the *pūcai* performed by the priest and his assistant; and the singing of the essential songs: "Tiruppalliyeḷucci", "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppāvai". Ideally, at the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple, the two components are synchronized. The general expectation is that the singing and the *pūcai* begin at about the same time and the singing of the essential songs should be

²¹ The information concerning this segment is based upon my observation of individuals who sang regularly during the month of *Mārkaḷi* at these temples.

completed before the final portion of the *pūcai* (the showing of the camphor flame). The whole segment should be finished shortly after 6:00 AM, but definitely before 6:15.²² During the days on which I observed, the singing and the *pūcai* usually began between 5:10 and 5:15, although on a few occasions they started as late as 5:20. They did not necessarily start at the same time, and on some days the singing would begin before the *pūcai* and on other days the *pūcai* would begin before the singing.²³

The *Mārkaḷi pūcai* consists of *abhiṣekam*, *alaṅkāram*, *naivēttiyam* and *tīpārātaṅai* for Citti Viṅāyakar. The priest begins the *abhiṣekam* by ringing a hand-bell and showing a single camphor flame. The *abhiṣekam* consists of the priest rinsing the image with water,

²² This general expectation was expressed to me several times by one regular singer. It was graphically expressed on the first day of *Mārkaḷi*, 1993-94 when the expectation was not met at all. The priest at the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple was new and this *Mārkaḷi* was his first at this temple. The previous priest had been there since about 1975 and was replaced by the new priest when he retired. Therefore in this particular temple there had been a well established pattern for the *Mārkaḷi* singing and the special *pūcai*. On 1 *Mārkaḷi* 1993-94 the singing started at 5:10. The *pūcai* started at 5:30 and was completed by 6:30. The third segment was omitted all together and the people at the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple missed segment 4, the final stages of *pūcai* at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple. At about 6:00 AM when it was clear that the priest was way behind schedule there was murmuring in the crowd and calls that the time was over ("*neram ayicchu*"). One person at least was actually telling people to go to the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple. Afterwards steps were taken to inform the priest of the correct time frame during which he should complete the *pūcai*. For the rest of the days that I observed, the priest conformed to the expected time frame.

Part of the reason for the late start of the *pūcai* was that the priest conducted personal *arcanai* from 5:00 to 5:30. A number of these *pūcais* were for the Ayyappa *bhaktas* marking the commencement of their eventual pilgrimage to Sabarimalai. I did not notice any such personal *pūcais* for the Sabarimala pilgrims nor others on the first day of *Mārkaḷi* in 1990-91, nor during the remaining days of 1993-94 did I see other personal *pūcais* conducted during segment 2 of this event. When I pressed a long-time regular singer regarding whether or not it was the custom for personal *pūcais* to be conducted during this event or any event, the response was that normally people will wait until after the *pūcai* is over. The person phrased their answer in such a way that no criticism was made of either the priest or the pilgrims for the events on the first day of *Mārkaḷi* or that anything inappropriate had happened. These events just did not happen again during the days I participated in the singing.

²³ In 1990-91 on the 3 days I participated, the singing and the *pūcai* started at the same time.

pouring on or applying a substance to the image, and then ringing the hand bell and showing a single camphor flame. There are usually five items including milk and the final item, sacred ash. The final camphor flame is shown to the deity, and then taken to the singers and audience by one of the priests.²⁴ Then a vessel of milk and the plate of ash which had been collected during the *abhiṣekam* are passed to the singing women for distribution amongst themselves, the audience, and those who come later. The curtain in front of Citti Viṇāyakar's shrine is then closed.

Behind the closed curtain the priest decorates the image of Citti Viṇāyakar while the singing continues outside. When the *alaṅkāram* is complete, the priest offers *naivēttiyam* to the deity behind the closed curtain. The priest then emerges from behind the curtain and goes to the other deities of the complex with a vessel of water and the food offering. Upon completion of the offering of *naivēttiyam* to all the deities in the complex the curtain is opened revealing the decorated deity.

The remaining activities of this segment are: the offering of a series of lamps, the donors' personal worship, doing *arccaṇai* (placing flowers on the deity and chanting his names) and the offering of a final set of lamps. The sequence varied somewhat. Sometimes no donors came forward, or the curtain would be opened after the donors' personal worship. During the personal worship of the donors, the priest asks the name and birth star for all the members of the family. The priest repeats the names to God and makes the offering on their behalf so that God will bless the whole family.²⁵ The priest also performs *arccaṇai*.

²⁴ On one occasion at least the camphor flame was handed to one of the women singers who then took it around to all the people present including the singers and the audience.

²⁵ *Pāvai* Group Singer, interview with the author, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, Madurai, 21 February 1994.

The final item of the *pūcai* always is the showing of a single camphor flame and a plate with five flames. This seems to be the highpoint of the *pūcai*. When these lamps are shown the singers and the audience press forward pushing in on one another to see the God. At this point the singers and audience become indistinguishable. After the five flame lamp is shown to the deity it is brought to the singers and the other worshippers. They put their hands over the flame, touch their hands to their faces, and then receive *kuṅkumam* and sacred ash from the priest.

The singing follows a regular pattern. It begins with two poems to Viṇāyakar and then two poems to Murukaṅ. Then all 10 poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", all 20 poems of "Tiruvempāvai" and all 30 poems of "Tiruppāvai" are sung. The singing of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", "Tiruvempāvai", and "Tiruppāvai" is considered essential for this ritual event.²⁶ A poem in praise of the Vaiṣṇava saint, Āṇṭāḷ, is sung after her poem, "Tiruppāvai". These sixty-five verses were completed on all the days on which I participated.²⁷ If there is time before the *pūcai* is completed other songs are sung. These additional songs are selected according to personal preference. On most days the *Pañcapurāṇam* was sung after the poem in praise of Āṇṭāḷ.²⁸ A number of additional songs were frequently sung, not all of which were familiar to me. One of the regular singers wrote these songs out for me on her own initiative, which I have translated and included as Appendix II.

²⁶ *Pāvai* Group Singer, interview with the author, Nākamalai Putukkōḷṭtai, Madurai, 21 February 1994.

²⁷ On 10 January 1994 the singing of the verse in praise of Āṇṭāḷ was completed as the final lamp was being shown.

²⁸ Of the sixteen days on which I was at the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple for all of segment 2, I know definitely that the *Pañcapurāṇam* was sung on eleven days: 16 December 1990; 12, 13 January 1991; 18, 30, 31 December 1993; and 1-4, 11 January 1994. I am fairly certain that it was sung on at least one other day (17 December 1993). The particular selections constituting the *Pañcapurāṇam* that were sung came from the pamphlet: *Tiruccirāmpalam Pañcapurāṇam* (Tirunakar: Tirumurai Maṅgam, 1990).

Segment 3: Singing and Pūcai to the Subsidiary Deities at Citti Viṇāyakar Temple

Segment three also consists of both worship and singing. After the five flame camphor is shown to Citti Viṇāyakar, the assistant priest takes it to the singers and the audience. Meanwhile the main priest takes a single camphor flame to the other deities in the complex: Civappirakācanātar (sometimes), Pālacuppiramaṇiyar, Cuntara Āñcanēya Cuvāmi and Cuntara Āñcanēyar. He shows it to each deity in turn and finally it is held for people to touch. Then the worshippers proceed to the Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temple.

The worship during this segment to some extent goes according to personal preference rather than the group consensus evident in segment 2. After receiving the five flame camphor plate, people go to the other deities in the complex and worship as the priest shows the lamp. However, the priest moves quickly from shrine to shrine, and when the crowd is large at the main shrine not all the people can both receive the five flame lamp and reach the other shrines at the same time as the main priest. The singers have the advantage in this because they are closest to Citti Viṇāyakar and the priest comes to those closest to him first. Not all people go to the individual shrines and not all go to all the shrines. People often go from shrine to shrine circumambulating at their own speed.

Some of the regular singers sing at the Pālacuppiramaṇiyar shrine and some singers (and perhaps others) also sing at the Cuntara Āñcanēyar shrine. Not all of the people at these two shrines sing.²⁹ Neither of these songs is from those sung during segment 2.

²⁹ This is perhaps in part because the song sung at Pālacuppiramaṇiyar shrine was sung very quickly and one would have to know the song in order to participate whereas the song sung at the Cuntara Āñcanēyar shrine consists of epithets and a regularly repeated phrase. See Appendix II, songs 15 and 16.

Segment 4: Singing and Pūcai at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple

A special *pūcai* is conducted at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple on all the days of *Mārkaḷi* month. Ideally this *pūcai* starts around 5:30 and concludes shortly after 6:15 AM. It also consists of *abhiṣekam*, *alaṅkāram*, *naivēttiyam* and *tīpārātaṅai*. The personal *pūcai* for the donors, *arccaṅai* and the *tīpārātaṅai* to the subsidiary deities are incorporated into the sequence of the *pūcai* generally after the *alaṅkāram* and before the *tīpārātaṅai*.³⁰ The general expectation is that the worshippers from the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple will join those at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple at least for the final *tīpārātaṅai*.³¹ Segment 4 consists

³⁰ There are some differences in the *pūcai*, such as at Citti Viṅāyakar Temple the priest tends to do the personal *pūcai* for the donors after *naivēttiyam* has been offered to the deities, whereas I observed it being done prior to *naivēttiyam* in the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple. Also the *tīpārātaṅai* to the subsidiary deities is done after it has been concluded to Citti Viṅāyakar, whereas at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ it is incorporated into the main *pūcai*, and is done before the final camphor *tīpam* to Murukaṅ, the climax of the *pūcai*. Generally the personal *pūcai* for the donor and the *naivēttiyam* were completed before the curtain was opened. The curtain is opened to reveal the adorned God, Nākamalai Murukaṅ and is immediately followed by the showing of the five layered lamp and a single camphor flame, *arccaṅai*, another single camphor to Murukaṅ, which is taken to the *Parivaram* or subsidiary deities then back to Murukaṅ, the priest chants, and finally shows the five flame camphor lamp. The showing of this lamp, as at the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple, is the climax of the *pūcai*. The people press and lean in to see the God. After the priest takes the five flame camphor lamp to the people, and the assistant and a second assistant brings *kuṅkumam* and ash respectively. This description is based on the 1993-94 *Mārkaḷi* season, as in the 1990-91 season the *Parivaram* deities had not yet been installed.

³¹ This statement is based on a number of observations, including: the fact that a regular singer and one committee member of the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple told me that the *pūcai* at Citti Viṅāyakar Temple should finish by 6:00 AM so that the people can come to the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple for the 6:15 *pūcai* (16 December 1993); the fact that the *pūcai* begins approximately half an hour later than the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple *pūcai*; that there is a time when the priest at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple is standing and talking to people and apparently not doing anything specifically related to *pūcai* as though he is waiting for the time to pass (12, 13 January 1994); and the general flow of the crowd after the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple *pūcai* is in fact to the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple. However, the *pūcai* at Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple will not wait indefinitely for the *pūcai* to finish at the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple, as on 16 December 1993 when the *pūcai* at Citti Viṅāyakar Temple finished at 6:30, after it had already been completed at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple.

of the portion of the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple *pūcai* for which the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple singers are present.

The stage in the *pūcai* of the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple at which the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple singers arrive varied because of the day to day variations in the *pūcais*. Generally the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple worshippers arrived after the *abhiṣekam*, *alaṅkāram* and *naivēttiyam*, but before *arccaṅai* and *tīpārātaṅai*.

The Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple also has its own group of *Mārkaḷi* singers, and therefore when the two groups join in the final stages of the *pūcai* at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple a consensus has to be reached about what will be sung. I did not record all the songs that were sung during this segment, but I noticed that leaders from the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple singers often initiated the singing of the same songs that had been written down for me. The core songs, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēlucci", "Tiruvempāvai" or "Tiruppāvai" are never sung during this segment, for they have already been completed separately by each group in their respective temples.

This segment is finished when the priest passes around the five flame camphor plate which completes the *pūcai* to Nākamalai Murukaṅ, and his assistants distribute *kuṅkumam* and sacred ash.

Segment 5: Concluding Worship Activities

The final segment consists of a final personal worship at the temple, collecting *piracātam*, and social activity.³² The personal worship consists of circumambulation and stopping at the various deities of one's choice for worship after receiving the five flame plate, the

³² The sequence of this last segment is based on what I observed of the routine of some regular singers at the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple.

kuṅkumam and sacred ash.³³ Most people did this, although like the preliminary worship, it is optional, and the feeling seems to be that one should do at least one or the other.³⁴

After the final personal worship, food *piracātam* is collected at both temples. The *piracātam*, in this case, is food that has been prepared at the temple. It is first offered to the deity and then passed out to the worshippers after the *pūcāi* has been completed. I was told that eating *piracātam*, and sharing it with others, brings benefit to the individual.³⁵ Collecting *piracātam* then is an important part of the event. The donors receive a large share of the temple's *piracātam* which they then distribute to others. The *piracātam* is often collected in a small containers and then shared with those at home.³⁶

This final segment is very sociable. I did not generally notice people socializing while they were actually completing the personal worship, but people would stand around and socialize while others would worship. The collection of *piracātam* at the Citti Viṅṇāyakar Temple was especially sociable. It was often distributed by one of the singers and so the ladies would tend to collect together briefly and chat.³⁷ This social period, however, was never very long.

³³ This also was different in the *Mārkaḷi* of 1990-91 as there were no *Parivaram* deities. Circumambulation still was done at that time (12 January 1991)

³⁴ This point was made to me once when one person had to leave quickly. They happened to say that they would not circumambulate that day but it was okay because they had done it at the beginning (3 January 1994).

³⁵ *Pāvai* Group Singer, conversation with the author, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, Madurai, 22 February 1994.

³⁶ In 1990-91 I declined *piracātam* as I had been extremely ill since day two of the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival and was reluctant to eat anything I had not cooked myself. This was simply incomprehensible and unacceptable. Every day that I went to the temple in the 1993-94 season I took *piracātam*. Sometimes when I was delayed for whatever reason someone made sure that I got *piracātam* from both of the temples. Frequently I was given an extra portion of *piracātam* from the donor's portion.

³⁷ In contrast the *piracātam* was distributed by two men at the Nākamalai Murukan Temple, and the singers, who are mostly ladies, do not gather there even briefly to chat.

This basic pattern was altered somewhat on certain days. Three of these occasions were *Tiruvātirai* day, days when a Citti Viṇāyakar Temple singer was a donor at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple, and the final day of *Mārkaḷi*.

On *Tiruvātirai* day the two groups of singers joined together and sang at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple in front of Cuntarēcuvarar. *Tiruvātirai* day of *Mārkaḷi* 1993 was the first time that this special day was celebrated in this temple, as no form of Śiva was in this temple prior to the installation of the Linga (Cuntarēcuvarar) less than a year before. On this day there was a special *pūcai* for the Linga which included a nine item *abhiṣekam*, a *pūcai* for a cow, and a special *tīpārātanaḷai* for Miṇāṭci, as well as the early morning *Mārkaḷi pūcai* to all the deities of the temple. The worship began with the *abhiṣekam* for the Linga at about 5:20 AM, and ended with the special *pūcai* for Miṇāṭci 6:50 AM. Woven in between was the early morning *Mārkaḷi* month *pūcai* and the special *abhiṣekam* for the cow.

The singing of the core songs of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppāvai" was not correlated with the *pūcai* on *Tiruvātirai* day as the singers had completed all of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", "Tiruvempāvai" and up to verse 12 of "Tiruppāvai" before the *abhiṣekam* of the Linga had begun. After completing "Tiruppāvai" the leaders of the two different groups initiated the singing of the songs, and it was possible to see differences between the group that sings at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple and those who usually sing at the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple. While the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple group wanted to sing *Tirumuṟai* songs, particularly in the order of the *Pañcapurāṇam*, the leader of the other group tended to initiate more informal songs such as response songs composed primarily of epithets. For the most part the people sang throughout the *pūcai*. The singers were predominantly women.

The crowd was very large for this special day. For the most part it was gathered around the Linga, but it was so large that it actually spread out all through the temple complex. The crowd later shifted and centered around Mīṇāṭci for her *tīpārāṭṇai* at the end of the ritual. In summary, one might say that on *Tiruvātirai* day, the usual sequence of the singing of the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple group was suspended. Segments 2, 3 and 4 were replaced by the singing in front of the Linga.

Another occasion on which there was a variation from the basic pattern of singing at the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple was when a member of the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple group was a donor for the *pūcai* at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple. The *abhiṣekam* at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple begins at about 5:30 so that the donor would leave the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple (the *abhiṣekam* for Citti Viṇāyakar would normally be finished by this time) and go to the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple. Other family members and friends also went to the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple, and there they joined in the singing of that group at that temple.³⁸ The ladies who stayed at the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple continued with their usual pattern of worship.

On the final day of *Mārkaḷi*, the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple singers hold a closing function. In 1993-94 this was conducted when the curtain was closed after the *abhiṣekam* which coincided with the conclusion of "Tiruvempāvai" and it was completed prior to the offering of *naivēttiyam* and the reopening of the curtain. When the ceremony was finished, the singing of "Tiruppāvai" began.

The first item in the closing ceremony was the handing out of *piracātam* to those who came regularly. The *piracātam* consisted of a package containing a comb, mirror,

³⁸ The singing of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppāvai" at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple starts at about 5:00 or a little bit later. Since the *pūcai* starts at about 5:30 the singing is not correlated to the *pūcai* as closely as it is in the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple singing.

green pan leaves, banana, jasmine flowers, a few tumeric lumps and a pot of *kuṅkumam*. The same lady provides this *piracātam* gift every year. This was followed by the distribution of prizes to those who had participated in the "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci"- "Tiruvempāvai" competition, and the "Tiruppāvai" competition held at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple.³⁹ The lady who provides the *piracātam* packages was then given a presentation in appreciation for her providing the *piracātam*. This was followed by a statement of the money collected in connection with the *Mārkaḷi* singing at Citti Viṅāyakar Temple and its distribution. Then the same lady who provided *piracātam* for the ladies presented some books to a few men.⁴⁰ The concluding activities finished with the reading of a "Vote of Thanks" which expressed appreciation to those who participated in the month's singing, and to those who performed various functions on behalf of the singers, as well as to the priests and other temple employees.

In spite of these twenty minutes of closing activities, the core songs, the verse in praise of Āṅṅāḷ, and the *Pañcapurāṇam* were all completed by the time of the final five flame camphor, but there was no time for other songs. This special event did not substantially alter the basic pattern of singing at all.

Summary

The Citti Viṅāyakar Temple and Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple of Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai are similar in structure and ritual pattern to the Mīṅāṅci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple in Madurai, but

³⁹ In 1993-94 two competitions were held at the temple. One was for singing "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" (sponsored by the Tirunakar Tirumurai Manram), and the other was for singing "Tiruppāvai" (sponsored by one of the lady singers). The competition was announced at the beginning of *Mārkaḷi* and was held a few days before the end of the month. Young boys and unmarried girls and ladies were eligible to participate.

⁴⁰ After this one of the men made an announcement about another matter which was not part of the scheduled events and was not, in my opinion, particularly well received.

they are much smaller in size and have a simpler ritual cycle. The simpler style of ritual is evident in the way in which "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" are sung. In the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, the awakening of the deity with "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", the singing of "Tiruvempāvai" and the special awakening of the gods in *Mārkaḷi* are separate events. In Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai they are one event, and the songs are all sung together in that one event. Furthermore, there are no temple employees to sing "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" in the Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai temples, and the singing is part of the people's worship. The Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple was built by kings and other wealthy people over a long period of time, and its rituals are to a large extent financed by endowments. The two temples in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai are primarily community temples. Although the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple is run by the state government, and even administered through the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Devasthanam office, it receives only the most basic funds from the Devasthanam, and relies on donors from the community for any special events,⁴¹ and the *Mārkaḷi pūcai* is paid for by local donors. The Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple is run entirely by a committee elected by a body of people who have donated a required sum to the temple and continue to make a monthly donation.⁴² The rapid growth and expansion of this temple attests to a certain amount of wealth in the community, but it does not match that available to the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple.

The initial differences between the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple and the two Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai temples provide quite different religious opportunities for the worshippers. In Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, the devotees can go before the presiding deities

⁴¹ The Devasthanam pays the salaries, electricity, and provides the *piracātam* for daily *pūcai*. The Devasthanam counts and controls the funds from the *uṇṇiyal* (collection box): Priest, interview with the author, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, December 1993.

⁴² Secretary of the Committee, Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple, interview with the author, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, Madurai, August 1994.

and perform their song before the deity in conjunction with the *pūcai*. In the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, that right and duty is assigned to a special individual, the *ōtuvār*. This leads to different types of "ritual texts", and different interpretations of those texts, as we shall see more clearly in the next chapter.

III: Chapter 11:

"Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" in First Person Biography

In contrast to the singing of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" at Mīnāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, the performers of the songs at the Citti Viṇāyakar and the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples are individual devotees. The "*Pāvai* Singing" is situated as an event in the first person biography of the singers themselves. The singers' perception about what they are doing and about the significance of the songs, indicate that they understand themselves to be singing in their own voice, and that this has benefit for themselves and for others. The significance of the event is stated in four ways: obtaining good husbands for girls; ensuring good rain for crops; obtaining blessings in general for oneself and others; and making requests for God's help to resolve specific problems or achieve specific goals. The structure of the ritual event reinforces the view that the voices heard singing the songs are those of individual devotees rather than a temple bard or an original poet.

This chapter will begin with a description of the "ritual text" of the event, providing a short description of the additional songs and a discussion of some of the characteristics of the text as a whole. It will then show how the singing of this "ritual text" is situated as an event in the lives of the singers by indicating how the singing is understood by some of the singers, and by considering the structure of the event spatially, ritually and in terms of singing styles.

The "Ritual Text"

The "ritual text" of the "*Pāvai* Singing" is considerably more complex than either of the "ritual texts" of the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* or the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival. It draws on more

source texts composed over a longer period of time. Like the other two "ritual texts" it has a stable component and a variable component.

The "ritual text" of the "*Pāvai* Singing" has a well defined structure. In segment 2, the group sang four invocatory songs, followed by the three essential groups of poems in a specific order ("Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppāvai"), the song in praise of Āṇṭāḷ, the *Pañcapurāṇam*, and finally the songs of choice. In segment 3 in the Citti Viṇāyakar complex "Centippatipurakkum" was sung at the Pālacuppiramaṇiyar Shrine, and then a poem in praise of Cuntara Āñcanēyar (called "Jeya Haṇumāṇ") was sung at the Cuntara Āñcanēyar complex. The additional songs, sung in segment 2, if there was time, and in segment 4 at the Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temple, were: "Nātavintu Kalāti", three poems provided to me under the title "Vāḷttu", "Song for Camphor Flame" (Karpūra Ārattip Pāḷal), "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ", and "Viṛal Māraṇaintu".

This presentation of the "ritual text" is necessarily composite, as the choice of additional songs varied somewhat from day to day. All the songs of this composite "ritual text", with the exception of the three essential songs, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci", "Tiruvempāvai", "Tiruppāvai", and the *Pañcapurāṇam* selections, are translated in Appendix II.¹ The additional songs cited here were the ones most frequently sung. The four invocatory songs and the additional songs, with the exception of the two songs sung in segment 3 (15 and 16), were handwritten especially for me by one of singers, without my asking. I refer to the songs by title if it was provided, and if not then by the traditional way of referring to the song, that is, by the first few words of the first line.

¹ "Tiruppāvai" has been translated by Norman Cutler, *Consider Our Vow: Translation of Tiruppāvai and Tiruvempāvai into English* (Madurai: Muttu Patippakam, 1979), 30-59 and by Vidya Dehejia, *Āṇṭāḷ and Her Path of Love: Poems of a Woman Saint from South India* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 41-72.

The first verse sung in praise of Viṇāyakar, "Maṅṅulakam Taṇil"(1), explains that the speaker worships Viṇāyakar in order to remove the suffering of this birth, and so that all desires will be fulfilled. The speaker is indicated by the first person plural verbal form (*paṇintu pōrruvōm*). The addressee is not indicated in the poem. The poem is found in the praise portion at the beginning of the *Kantapurāṇam* by Kacciyappacivācāriyar, who is tentatively dated by Zvelebil in the later half of the fourteenth century.²

The next poem, sung in praise of Viṇāyakar, "Piṭṭiyataṅ Urumai" (2), refers to Śiva and his consort who took the form of elephants, which resulted in the birth of Kaṇapati. There are no markers to indicate the speaker or the addressee. Both Śiva, as manifested in a particular place, and Viṇāyakar, referred to as Kaṇapati are talked about in the third person. The poem is the fifth verse of the 123rd *Patikam* of the first *Tirumuṭṭai*,³ composed by Tiruñāṇacampan̄tar who is generally dated in the seventh century.

The third and fourth invocatory poems, which are used to praise Murukaṅ are verses about Śiva which refer to his relationship to Murukaṅ. The third poem, "Naṅkaṭampaṇai" (3), indicates that Śiva's consort gave birth to Skanda (Murukaṅ). The content of this poem is that it is the duty of Śiva to support and protect the speaker, who is a devotee, and that it is the duty of the devotee to serve. The speaker is indicated by first person pronouns and markers (*nam, aṭiyēṇai, eṇ*) and the addressee is not indicated by markers. The fourth poem, "Camara Cūrapaṇmā" (4), refers to Śiva, the father of Kumāraṅ (Murukaṅ) who killed the demon, Cūrapaṇmā. The poem indicates that servants who love Śiva will rule in the world of the immortals. Neither the speaker nor the addressee are indicated in the poem by any explicit markers. Poem 3 is the ninth verse of

² K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, vol. 10 in *A History of Indian Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), 186.

³ *Tēvāram Paṇmuṭṭai: Hymnes Śivaïtes du Pays Tamoul*, ed. T. V. Gopal Iyer and François Gros, 2 vols. (Pondichéry: Institut Français D'Indologie, 1984-85), I:128.

the 132nd *Patikam* and the fourth poem is the tenth verse of the 177th *Patikam* of the fifth *Tirumuṛai*, composed by Tirunāvukkaracar⁴ who is also dated in the seventh century.

The third essential song, "Tiruppāvai" (7), if all the poems are taken as a sequence, tells about girls undertaking the *pāvai* vow in order to obtain prosperity, abundant rain, a land free from harm, and the removal of past and future karma.⁵ The poem begins with a description of the vow and the benefits which will be obtained. It then moves through a sequence of verses which awaken and summon girls to join them.⁶ After awakening the other girls, they proceed to Kṛṣṇa's house and proceed to awaken members of his household, including his wife.⁷ Then they awaken Kṛṣṇa and request the items they need to finish their vow.⁸ In the penultimate verse they say that what they really want is to serve only Kṛṣṇa forever. The final verse of "Tiruppāvai" is a signature verse which identifies the author and indicates that those who sing these songs will receive the grace of Tirumāl (Viṣṇu) and will live in joy forever.⁹ This is the only verse in the poem which provides any identity for a speaker. There are a number of different addressees in the thirty poems. As in "Tiruvempāvai", there is at least one dialogue poem.¹⁰ The poem is by Āṇṭāḷ, a Vaiṣṇava saint, who is dated in the ninth century.¹¹

The eighth song of the "ritual text", "Tiru Āṭippūratti", is the poem in praise of Āṇṭāḷ. The verse is twelve lines long, eight of which wish her long life. The remaining lines wish long life to other devotees, to the form of Viṣṇu at Śrīraṅkam Temple, to another

⁴ *Tēvāram*, ed. Gopal Iyer and Gros, II:130, 176.

⁵ Poems 3 and 5.

⁶ Poems 6 through 15.

⁷ Poems 16 through 20.

⁸ Poems 21 through 28.

⁹ See Dehejia's summary: Dehejia, *Āṇṭāḷ and Her Path of Love*, 62-4.

¹⁰ As is apparent in the interpretations of "Tiruvempāvai" given above, whether a verse is a dialogue or not is to some extent a matter of interpretation. In this case I am relying on Cutler's and Dehejia's interpretations of the verses.

¹¹ Dehejia, *Āṇṭāḷ and Her Path of Love*, 3.

great Ālvār poet, Nammālvār, to the world, and to Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇi, a fourteenth century scholar of one of the Śrīvaiṣṇava sects. The portion that wishes well-being contains no first or second person markers, and it is not addressed to anyone in particular. The portion addressed to Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇi also does not contain any first person markers. I was unable to obtain the identity of the author or source for this poem, either from the singers or from any other source. The poem mentions a fourteenth century Vaiṣṇava scholar, so its composition is no earlier than that.

Frequently the *Pañcapurāṇam* (9) was sung following the poem to Āṇṭāḷ (8). The same pamphlet was used each time, except on *Tiruvātirai* day. It generally seemed that the only people who knew these songs were the people with the booklet. Most people did not sing along, and consequently the singing usually lagged at this point. This particular pamphlet has a selection for each of the seven days of the week. The booklet was published in 1990 and this particular selection was first used in the *Mārkaḷi* of 1990-91. This particular *Pañcapurāṇam* selection in the "Pāvai Singing" is therefore relatively new in this "ritual text". These poems are taken from the *Tirumuṟai*, and are therefore composed by sixteen different authors whose dates range between the seventh century and the thirteen century.¹²

"Nātavintu Kalātī" (10) frequently followed the *Pañcapurāṇam* in segment 2 if there was time, and was also sung in segment 4, and sometimes in both segments on the same day. This was a popular song with a very pleasing melody. The poem consists primarily of various descriptions of the deity. The speaker is not indicated in the poem.

¹² I have chosen not to include a discussion of all the thirty-five songs because, as we will see below, while it is significant that the *Pañcapurāṇam* is sung, which particular verses are chosen to constitute the *Pañcapurāṇam* each day is not significant. The occurrence of any one selection of songs was at most four times in a month, and since the *Pañcapurāṇam* was not sung every day these songs would not have been sung even that often. The rest of the songs of the text were usually sung at least once a day.

The poem is addressed to Murukaṅ in his form at the temple in Paḷaṅi. This song is found in a collection of poems called *Tiruppukaḷ* composed by Aruṅakirinātar, dated by Zvelebil at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth century.¹³ The *Tiruppukaḷ* has six major divisions, each of which is comprised of songs about Murukaṅ at one of his six abodes: Tirupparaṅkuṅram, Tiruccentūr, Paḷaṅi, Cuvāmimalai, Tiruttaṅikai, and Paḷamutircōlai.

A group of three verses given to me under the title of "Vāḷttu" (11, 12, 13) were frequently sung as a unit following "Nātavintu Kalāti". All three are benedictions. The first (11) wishes long life to Murukaṅ, his emblem, his mount, his two consorts and his devotees. The second poem (12) asks for rain, for prosperity, good government, for a sufficient life for souls, and for religion to flourish, particularly the Vedic and Śaiva religion. The third verse (13) requests the well-being of brahmins, the celestials and cows, rain, the well-being of the king, that evil and misery in the world should perish and that all the world should know about Śiva. When the singers sing the three poems under the heading of "vāḷttu", they repeat three times the line "Let the excellent Śaiva way flourish throughout the world". This is the only line of the three songs which they repeat. All three poems have a similar structure in that all three are not addressed to anyone in particular, nor is the speaker explicitly indicated in the verses.¹⁴ Poems 11 and 12 are from the *Kantapurāṇam* by Kacciyappacivācāriyar who, as we have already mentioned, is dated in the fourteenth century. Poem 11 is from the chapter on the marriage of Vaḷḷi (Murukaṅ's consort)in the sixth book, *Takṣakāṇṭa*. Poem 12 is from the praise portion at the beginning of the *Kantapurāṇam*, as is the first invocatory verse. Poem 13 is the first verse of

¹³ Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (1974), 108.

¹⁴ The verse which wishes long life to Murukaṅ and so on, is not specifically addressed to him as would be indicated by vocatives or second person markers.

"Tiruppācuram", the 54th *Patikam* of the third *Tirumuṟai* composed by Tiruñānacampantar.¹⁵ "Tiruppācuram", according to tradition, is the collection of poems inscribed on a palm leaf which floated up the Vaikai River from Madurai to nearby Tiruvčatakam and thereby signalled the defeat of the Jains.¹⁶

The "Song for the Camphor Flame" was often song by some members of the group during the offering of the camphor flame to the deity, the ritual act which concludes the worship in segments 2 and 4. It is a single verse which says that the addressee is the unlimited light in the moon, the sun, the fire, in "us", in *Īsvara*, as well as in the camphor. There is a first person marker (*eṅkaḷ*) in the poem, and the addressee is indicated by a series of second person pronouns (*nī*). I asked several singers about the composer of "The Song for the Camphor Flame" and the song in praise of Haṇumāṇ, which will be discussed below, but was unable to get the author's name and thereby find the source for these songs. One lady told me that her aunt had instructed her to sing "The Song for the Camphor Flame", so she did.

In segment 3, two songs were frequently sung. The first (15), "Centippatipurakkum" was frequently sung by some of the regulars at the Pālacuppīramāṇiyar shrine in the Citti Viñāyakar Temple complex. This song makes a number of requests to Murukaṇ. The following is my paraphrase of the summary given to me by one of the singers of this song:

God is asked to protect the devotee from trouble, to shower blessings on the devotee, to make the devotee become a great poet, to make the devotee a great scholar in Tamil, to remove the devotee's bondage, to help the devotee curb pride of "I and mine", and to let the devotee keep company with other devotees.

¹⁵ *Tēvāram*, ed. Gopal Iyer and Gros, I:332.

¹⁶ See chapter 10 above.

The speaker is indicated in the poem by first person markers (*emmai*, *āṭiyēṟkum*) and the God, Murukaṅ, is addressed with a vocative (*Centippatipurakkuñcevvēḷē*). This selection is an excerpt from *Kantar Kalivenṇpā*, composed by Kumarakuruparar who is dated by Zvelebil in the seventeenth century.¹⁷ The work has 122 stanzas. The first 110 are a long description of Murukaṅ addressed to him. The remaining 12 are a variety of requests also addressed to Murukaṅ. The portion sung at the shrine consists of the last 13 stanzas and it actually begins in the middle of the one hundred and tenth stanza in order to include part of the vocative. Thus the selection consists of the request part of the work, retaining only one line of the address and description.

The second song usually sung in segment three, "Jeya Haṅumāṅ" (16), consists primarily of the phrase "Victory Haṅumāṅ" (*jeya haṅumāṅ*) with a few other descriptive epithets addressed directly to the deity. There are no first person markers. It appears in a small pamphlet of songs printed by a now disbanded organization of these village women. The source of the song is not provided in the publication.

The remaining two songs of this composite "ritual text", "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ", and "Viṟal Māraṅaintu", are addressed to Murukaṅ. They were frequently sung in segment 4 at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple. "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ" (17) is a short poem which consists of several descriptive addresses to Murukaṅ and a request that he please give the garland to the girl who has fallen in love with him. "Viṟal Māraṅaintu" (18) is a slightly longer poem

¹⁷ Kumarakuruparar is the founder of the Kāci *maṭam* (mentioned in Part II). He composed a song about the Goddess Mīṇāṭci at Madurai which he is said to have performed before Tirumalaināyakkar. He was from a *veḷḷāla* family at Śrīvaikuntam in the extreme south of India. He was born as the result of a boon bestowed upon his parents in response to a prayer to Murukaṅ of Tiruccentūr. The boy was apparently unable to speak, so his parents took him to the shrine of Tiruccentūr and prayed to Murukaṅ. The boy had a vision of Murukaṅ, and his response to this vision was to sing *Kantar Kalivenṇpā*. K. V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 229-30; and K. Sivaraman, trans. *Tiruchendur Kandar Kalivenba of Sri Athi Kumarakurupara Swamigal* (Tirupananadal: Kasi Mutt, 1968), 2-3.

which asks Murukaṅ to remove the want of a girl who is afflicted by love by giving the flower garland to her. It also contains several descriptive addresses to Murukaṅ. The speaker is not indicated in either poem, however in both poems the addressee is God who is indicated by several vocatives. Both poems are from *Tiruppukal*, composed by Aruṅakirinātar. "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ" is from a collection of songs which are not associated with a particular place, whereas "Viṛal Māraṅaintu" is from the section on Tiruccentūr.

Summary of the "Ritual Text"

The "ritual text" of the "*Pāvai* Singing" has a minimal component which is fairly stable, and another component which may vary. The minimal text consists of four invocatory poems, all ten poems of "*Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci*", all twenty poems of "*Tiruvempāvai*" and all thirty poems of "*Tiruppāvai*". As far as I have been able to discern, this minimal "ritual text" has been stable from year to year, for a number of years. The song in praise of Āṅṅāḷ and the *Pañcapurāṇam* songs are almost, but not quite, part of the minimal ritual text. The song in praise of Āṅṅāḷ was sung on every day that I was present, and it was added to the "ritual text" some years back, but only after the essential songs were already in place. The *Pañcapurāṇam* was sung on most days prior to the additional songs, but it seems that the singing of the *Pañcapurāṇam* depends on whether or not there is time in segment 2.

The variety in the "ritual text" lies with the "other" songs which are sung and their inclusion is determined by factors such as time, personal preference of group members and who is leading the singing.¹⁸ The songs which follow *Pañcapurāṇam* in Appendix II

¹⁸ Occasionally a man came and sang by himself after the essential songs had been sung. He usually sang one or two songs, and these changed from visit to visit. People did not join him, but his singing was appreciated by the singers and the leaders encouraged him to participate.

were almost always sung if any additional songs were sung in segment 2 or initiated in segment 4 by the ladies of the Citti Viṅāyakar Temple group.

The "ritual text" of the "*Pāvai* Singing" draws on a variety of source texts, composed over a long period of time by a variety of authors. If we omit the selections from the *Pañcapurāṇam*, the remaining songs of the composite "ritual text" including the essential songs were composed by ten different poets.¹⁹ If we include the *Pañcapurāṇam* selections, another thirteen possible poets are added to the list. The songs of this "ritual text" were composed over a period of approximately one thousand years, from the time of Tirunāvukkaracar (seventh century) until the time of Kumarakuruparar (seventeenth century). The selection of songs is not restricted to *Tirumuṟai* songs, because the *Kantapurāṇam*, "Tiruppāvai", the song in praise of Āṅṅāl, *Tiruppukal*, quite possibly the "Song for the Camphor Flame", *Kantar Kalivenpā*, and the song in praise of Haṇumāṇ are not *Tirumuṟai* songs. "Tiruppāvai", the song in praise of Āṅṅāl, and song in praise of Haṇumāṇ are associated with Vaiṣṇavism.

Interpretation: First Person Biography

In Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai the singing of the songs is an event in the lives of those who sing them, primarily local women. The singers sing in their own voices. The event in general is worshipping God with the expectation of receiving benefits. More specifically, the event is worshipping God through the singing of the *pāvai* songs, and this event is associated with specific benefits such as obtaining good husbands for girls, good rain, prosperity, and blessings for oneself and others. This understanding of the event is evident from the

¹⁹ Kacciyappacivācāriyar, Tiruñāṇacampan̄tar, Tirunāvukkaracar, Māṅikkavācakar, Āṅṅāl, an unknown author, Aruṅakirinātar, another unknown author, Kumarakuruparar, and another unknown author.

singers' own perceptions of what they are doing, and from their understanding of the significance of the essential songs and the additional songs. This perception is reinforced by features of the ritual context such as the spatial arrangement, the ritual activity and the singing style.

One singer explained the "*Pāvai* Singing" by referring to the following poem by the *Tirumurai* poet, Cuntarar, and emphasized particularly verse 1:

You can praise them,
tell them just
 what they want to hear,
cleave to them as servants,
but they will still give you nothing,
those fakes-

listen, you poets,
don't sing to them:
sing of our father's Pukalūr.

You will have in this world
 rice and clothes,
 a celebration,
 even an end to sorrow,

and in that other life
without a doubt
you will rule Śiva's world. (1/340)

Even if you call some weakling
'Bhīma'
or 'a mighty Vijaya with his bow,'
or praise a miser as a latter-day Pāri,
they will still give you nothing!

Sing, you poets,
about Pukalūr
 of our auspicious lord,
 his body covered in ash:

without doubt
you will rule the kingdom of the gods
which towers over other worlds
 piled upon worlds. (2/341)

'He owns great tracts of land:

he is learned,
 supports his kinfolk.
 He holds lavish feasts'--

you can describe them in these terms,
 but they will still give you nothing!

Sing, you poets,
 of cool Pukalūr
 where peasants plough with their bullocks
 while birds cry in song:

without a doubt
 you will be the linch-pin
 of the gods' own world. (3/342)

Even if you celebrate that old man,
 his body wrinkled, white,
 gone slack,
 all atremble when he stands,
 as a hero whose shoulders are firm as the hills--

he will still give you nothing.

Sing, you poets,
 about Pukalūr
 of the auspicious lord
 who rides the fine white bull:

without doubt
 you will reign like kings
 over the world of the gods. (4/343)

You can call him a saint--
 that deceitful liar,
 that fraud,
 that foul and faithless criminal--
 but he will still give you nothing.

Sing, you poets,
 about Pukalūr
 of the auspicious god
 with the matted hair red as gold:

without doubt
 you will cut away
 the anguish of the heart
 and be redeemed. (5/344)

Call a worthless man good,

a gray-beard youthful--
 give a man without family a fine lineage--

they will still give you nothing.

Sing, you poets,
 of lovely Pukalūr,
 its fields intoxicating
 with their sweet fragrance:

without doubt
 without confusion,
 you will rule the gods' world. (6/345)

You can proclaim that invalid
 a hero with mighty arms,
 or that vile man
 a mother munificent to all poets--

and they will still give you nothing.

don't wander this world, starving,
 with eyes sunk deep into their sockets:

sing, you poets,
 of our father's Pukalūr--

without doubt,
 without paying for it,
 you will rule the whole world. (7/346)

If a sesame seed falls to the ground,
 they will search for it everywhere
 but they wouldn't give anything even to a fly.

Even if you praise such people
 as great patrons and protectors,
 they will still give you nothing!

Sing, you poets,
 of lovely Pukalūr,
 where the birds take refuge:

without doubt,
 without sinking into the mire,
 you will go free. (8/347)

You may speak of some ignoramus
 as a fine, learned man,
 say he resembles the lord of love,

make someone wholly immature
into a paragon of wholeness--

and they will still give you nothing.

Sing, you poets,
of Pukalūr,
where the owls in the tree-hollows
never stop hooting:

without doubt,
as masters
you will rule the gods' world. (9/348)

'He is a veritable Kāma to women,
that handsome Lord.
He brandishes a spear in his hand'--

you may chatter on like this,
but they will still give you nothing!

Sing, you poets,
of Pukalūr,
where buffaloes plunge through the ponds and pools:

without doubt,
as lords
you will rule the gods' world. (10/349)

Ūraṇ, the harsh devotee,
son of Caṭaiyaṇ,
father of Vaṇappakai,
from Nāvalūr
with its flowering fields rich in honey,
sang these ten songs
to the wealthy lord who lives in southern Pukalūr
where dense pockets of lotus
rise high in the paddy-fields.

Those who can sing them
will doubtless
reach the feet of **dharmā**'s lord (11/350)²⁰

²⁰ From David Dean Shulman, trans. and comm., *Songs of the Harsh Devotee: The Tēvāram of Cuntaramūrttināyaṇār* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1990), 205-211. The numbers 1-11 are the *Patikam* numbers. The numbers 340-350 represent the position of these verses within the seventh *Tirumurai*.

The significance of Cuntarar's poem as explained to me was: why praise others, praise this God who will give benefits and release also. This is what the "*Pāvai Singing*" is: individual devotees praising God so that they will receive benefits.

The references that the women use with respect to themselves indicate that they regard the "*Pāvai Singing*" as an event in their lives. The following quote is a translation of part of the opening paragraph of the "Vote of Thanks" read out to the singers on the final day of *Mārkaḷi*:

I give thanks, on behalf of you, to the Lord who gives to us the greatest pleasure of gathering here to worship his foot, by bowing [our] heads, seeing [him] with [our] eyes, spreading his fame, extolling his names and beauty with [our] tongues while [our] hearts soften and melt; I place my head at his foot and worship.²¹

This excerpt indicates that the activity which the singers have been doing for the month of *Mārkaḷi* is praising and worshipping God. The use of inclusive first person plural (*nammāi, namakku*) indicates that the praising and worshipping of God has been done by all who are gathered.

Other references in the "Vote of Thanks" indicate that the specific act of worship is singing the *pāvai* songs. The speaker thanked one member of the group for leading the singing of the *pāvai* songs (*namakku ellām pāvai pāṭa aṭiyetuttuk koṭuttu*). Then she thanked those who came early to sing the *pāvai* songs (*pāvai pāṭa parantōṭi varum tāymārkaḷukkum*). Next she thanked the member of the group who collected and managed the money for the *pūcais* and gifts "under the auspices of those who sing the *pāvai* each year" (*āṇṭutōrum pāvai pāṭuvōr cārpil*). Afterwards she thanked the lady who gives the auspicious items to those who sing the *pāvai* songs each year (*āṇṭutōrum maṅkalac*

²¹ "avaṅ tāḷ vaṅaṅka nammāi ellām iṅku kūṭṭuvittu avaṅ pukaḷaiyum - nāmattaiyum aḷakaiyum talaiyāl vaṅaṅki kaṅkaḷāl kaṅṭu, nāvāl ēṭṭip paravi, nekiḷntu uḷḷam nekkuruki nīrkum paramāṅantattai namakku aḷitta epperumāṅukku uṅkaḷ aṅaivariṅ cārpāka naṅriyait terivittu avan tāḷ mītu eṅ ceṅṅiyai vaittu vaṅaṅkukirēṅ".

cinnaṅkaḷai pāvaiṇṇāvōrukku aḷittu). Although other songs were also sung, the activity for which these ladies are thanked is only connected with singing the *pāvai* songs. The perception conveyed by the "Vote of Thanks" is that the ladies have been singing the *pāvai* songs as an act of worship.

The meaning of the *pāvai* songs as situated as the event of "singing the *pāvai*" in the lives of these individual women is that benefits can be gained by singing these songs during *Mārkaḷi*. Several explanations were given by singers and by other members of the community for what is special about singing *pāvai* songs at this time: to gain worldly benefits, specific and general, and to attain *mutti*.

In my preliminary investigations in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, I asked what the significance of "Tiruvempāvai" and the *Mārkaḷi* festival were. I had thirteen respondents²²: four men and nine women. Some gave more than one answer. One man and five women (one of whom was his wife) said that the significance was so that young girls could get good husbands and so that there would be good rain. One of the same women and another responded that the meaning of "Tiruvempāvai" is the individual imagining themselves as the woman and God as the hero or lover. Another man said that singing these songs was something that women did and was for the benefit of themselves. Another man said that it was something that women and children do in order to obtain well-being. A gentleman who sang occasionally in 1993-94, provided this answer: "Because of our singing "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" blessings are available to us so that we

²² This is not a random sample. Six of the nine women sang both years and are leaders of the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple group. One of the remaining three was not able to come and sing in the early morning. The remaining woman frequently stays in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, and when there she conducts classes on *Tiruvācakam*. She was there in 1990-91 but did not sing due to old age. The last of the ladies was unmarried; I only really got to know her in 1993-94. Of the four men, one was one of the priests, another a husband of one of the woman respondents who I did not see singing, another I could not identify, and another came periodically throughout the month and sang some of the time.

may obtain release".²³ The other responses of the women were: for blessings in general (3 responses); it is a devotional song (1 response); by observing the *Mārkaḷi* activities at daybreak, the rest of life will go in an orderly manner (1 response); and it is a time for making particular requests to God (2 responses). These remaining reasons are really aspects of the same thing: it is a good time to worship God; for worshipping; for blessings in general; and for making requests to Him. This enumeration of benefits is similar to those listed in chapter 6 by authors who had placed "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppāḷiyelūcci" in the first person biography, with the exception that these authors mentioned in chapter 6 did not mention the purpose of getting good husbands for girls.

These benefits are actually mentioned in the two *pāvai* songs: "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppāvai". Poems 9 and 19 of "Tiruvempāvai" are regularly construed as the request by girls for Śaiva husbands. Poem 16 is addressed to the cloud requesting it to rain just like the Goddess bestows her grace. Poem 17 can be understood as a request for general well-being: "play, springing into the waters so that well-being will flourish". Poems 11, 12, 13 and 20 suggest that the cleansing activity and the life-style of devotees leads to *mutti*.²⁴ It has already been mentioned above that in "Tiruppāvai" the benefits to be obtained from the vow are prosperity, rain, a land free from harm and the removal of past and future karma which leads to *mutti*.

The significance of singing most of the "other" songs echoes the reasons for singing the *pāvai* songs. Generally the respondents to my questionnaires were the ones

²³ "nām tiruvempāvai, tiruppāḷiyelūccipāḷalkaḷ pāṭuvataṅ mūlamāka nām vīṭu pēru aṭaiya namakku āci kiṭaikkum".

²⁴ See the whole of poem 11. Poem 12: "He who is the holy water in whom we joyfully bathe to remove the suffering of binding birth". In poem 13 the pond is compared to Śiva and his consort, and the blemishes that are washed off are often understood to be physical and spiritual. Poem 20: "[Your] golden flowers graciously accept [us] so that we are redeemed".

who determined which additional songs were sung in the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple singing group. They shaped the ritual to some extent by their choice of song. I have relied for the most part on one of the leaders' interpretation in trying to understand the significance of these songs. The reasons for singing the additional songs reinforce the reasons given for singing the three essential songs: for good husbands for girls, and for well-being in general, including rain and prosperity for oneself and for others.

The singing of the *Pañcapurāṇam*, the "Nātavintu Kalātī" song, "Centippatipurakkum", and the three "Vālttu" poems can be understood as songs sung for general benefits, including rain and prosperity, either personally for the devotee who sings or on behalf of others.

The pamphlet of *Pañcapurāṇam* songs used in the "*Pāvai* Singing", says that if one sings them once a day there will be benefit.²⁵ In response to my query to one of the singers about what benefit would be gained, I was told that one's wishes would be fulfilled, God would give His blessing, and God would give one the energy to face any difficulty. She then said that this list was only an humble attempt to articulate the benefit, and in order to really understand, one would have to sing every day and realize the benefit for themselves.²⁶ "Nātavintu Kalātī" (9) is interpreted as a general request for grace (*aru! tārāy*). The fourth verse which specifically asks for grace is repeated at the end of the song when it was sung by the group. "Centippatipurakkum", as we saw in the earlier summary, is a request to God to give the speaker, who is a devotee, a life free from hardship, an education, and spiritual maturity. In the second and third of the three verses under the title

²⁵ The pamphlet says that the *Pañcapurāṇam* should be sung in the home as well as in temples. See the Introductory comments: *Tiruccirāmpalam Pañcapurāṇam* (Tirunakar: Tirumurai Maṅgam, 1990).

²⁶ *Pāvai* Group Singer, interview with the author, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, Madurai, 5 April 1994.

of "Vāḷttu" (Benedictions) we see a specific request for rain, a wish for a world which is prosperous and orderly, in which people, good government and religion flourish.

The last two poems of the composite "ritual text", "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ" and "Vīral Māraṅaintu" were frequently sung in segment 4 at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple in 1993-94 because one lady, who wanted to complete her daughter's marriage soon, had asked that it be sung at this time with this purpose in mind.²⁷ I was told that previously,

²⁷ The idea that mothers sing the *pāvai* songs so that their daughters will get married is a variation on the widespread idea that the *pāvai* songs are sung by unmarried girls to get good husbands. See Dehejia, *Āṅṅāl and Her Path of Love*, 4; C. J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (New Delhi: Viking, Penguin Books, 1992), 182, 197-8; Holly Baker Reynolds, "The Changing Nature of a Tamil Vow: The Challenge of Trans-Sectarian Bhakti in Contemporary South India" in *Boeings and Bullock-Carts: Studies in Change and Continuity in Indian Civilization*, vol. 4, ed. Bardwell L. Smith (Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1990), 64; and Cutler, *Consider Our Vow*, 1.

Yet in the two ritual events studied here in which "Tiruvempāvai" is sung (i.e. the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival in Mīṅāṅci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, and the "Pāvai Singing" in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai) unmarried girls have a low profile. In Mīṅāṅci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, where this festival is framed as an event in the life of the poet-saint Māṅikkavācakar, no young girls at all participated in the singing, and they had virtually no presence in the audience.

I have already noted that the group of singers in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai was usually at least two-thirds married women. Prior to *Mārkaḷi* in 1993-94, I obtained a list of names of the core group of singers in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai; and every woman on the list was married. During the *Mārkaḷi* of 1993-94 all of the core group were married women, and the women who included "getting good husbands" as one of the reasons for singing these songs in *Mārkaḷi* were married women. Clearly they were not singing in order to get good husbands for themselves. One of these women did say that before she was married she sang verses 9 and 19 of "Tiruvempāvai" for the purpose of getting a good husband, and she feels that her request was granted. Some of them may have sung these songs for good husbands, because many have been singing since childhood. The majority of the participants, and especially the leaders of the singing, are not doing what is commonly perceived that is done, singing for good husbands for themselves. One of the men said he sang specifically to get blessings and in order to attain *mutti*.

Some of those who came and joined the "Pāvai Singing" were unmarried. One of the singers who I interviewed was unmarried, and among the five things she was singing for in the 1993-94 *Mārkaḷi*, marriage was the last on the list. She mentioned that if she had been singing in particular for a good husband this year, she would have followed some of the restrictions practiced by those singing for marriage. In 1993-94 she did not follow those restrictions. This was not because she thought marriage was unimportant, rather it was because *this year* marriage was not a priority.

these songs had been sung so that the daughters of the women in the group would be married quickly, and both of the daughters in question are now married. The women believe these marriages were the result of their singing of the songs.²⁸

I asked what it was about "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ" and "Viṛal Māraṅaintu" that made them suitable to sing in order to complete the daughter's marriage. The response, in summary, is that the poems are understood to request the marriage of a girl. Both songs, in addition to praising Murukaṅ in various ways, request Murukaṅ to give a garland to a girl. To one singer, the garland in the poem represents both Murukaṅ's grace and the garlands exchanged by the couple in the marriage ceremony. The garland that Murukaṅ wears is a symbol of his grace. God should show his grace by giving the garland. If God

There is in fact variety in the way "Tiruvempāvai" is sung by Śaivas during *Mārkaḷi*. For several years in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai some men used to sing during *Mārkaḷi*. They would sing "Tiruppalliyelucci", "Tiruvempāvai", and the other songs while walking along the streets. They would leave from Citti Viṅṅayakar Temple and return there.

Members of the "Twelve Tirumuṛai Association" housed in the Mīṅṅāṅci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple circumambulate in the Mīṅṅāṅci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple singing *Tirumuṛai* and *Tiruppukaḷ* songs. In 1993 during the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival at Mīṅṅāṅci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, I saw them circumambulating in the Āḷi streets and the second *pirākāram*, and heard them singing "Tiruvempāvai". The members doing this were mostly men. I did not see any unmarried girls singing in the "The Twelve Tirumuṛai Association" circumambulation.

Another specific *Mārkaḷi* practice, which one lady recalled from her childhood, was the gathering of men, boys and girls into a group, and going to some devotees' houses and singing there. The people would then give the group something to drink and some *cunṅal*. The ladies sang at the local *maṅam*.

There is a strong perception that young girls sing the *pāvai* songs, and in the Tamil Śaiva context specifically, "Tiruvempāvai", in order to marry good husbands. In the examples cited here, however, there is no evidence to suggest that the singing of the *pāvai* songs is an activity undertaken particularly by unmarried girls in order to marry good husbands. Yet in Tamil society, securing a good marriage for a girl is thought to be a major concern for both the family and the girl. It would be interesting to pursue the question as to why there is such a strong association between the singing of the *pāvai* songs and unmarried girls, when there seems to be so little evidence of it in current practice.

²⁸ *Pāvai* Group Singer, interviews with the author, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, Madurai 25, 28 February and 17 March 1994.

gives the garland it means that the girl also will receive the garland from the husband, i.e., her marriage will be completed. The reference to "deficiency" in "Viṛal Māraṇaintu" is explained as the deficiency of not being married. Therefore the request to remove the deficiency of the girl is a request that she should be married soon. The line which expresses the desire that the deficiency of the girl should be removed is repeated by the ladies when they sing the poem. When concluding this explanation, I was told that the famous commentator on *Tiruppukal*, Kirupāṇantavāriyār, said that a girl should sing "Viṛal Māraṇaintu" in particular if she wanted to get married.

In Part II, we saw that the giving of the garland is a theme in *akam* poetry. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār invokes this theme when situating "Tiruvempāvai" in the *akam* narrative world. The hero came to the virgin girl and gave the garland making known to her his love for her. The heroine then undertook the *Tai* bath so that she would obtain him as her husband.²⁹ Two interpretations of "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ" and "Viṛal Māraṇaintu" understand them also in terms of the *akam* narrative world. In one interpretation the poems are a request to the hero on behalf of the heroine to accept the heroine's love.³⁰ In the other interpretation, "Viṛal Māraṇaintu" is understood to be about the suffering of the heroine who is in love with the hero, and "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ" is about the heroine wanting the

²⁹ Ka. Cu. Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār, commentator, *Śrī Maṇivācakapa Perumāṇ Tiruvāy Malarntaruḷiya Tiruvācakam Ārāyccip Pērurai* (Maviṭṭapum, Ilaṅkai: Patmā Patippakam, 1954), 463-4.

³⁰ In a discussion about these two poems, Ā. Āṇantarācaṅ also situated the poems in the *akam* narrative frame. According to him, the poems are addressed to Lord Murukaṅ by the stepmother or a friend. The girl is lovesick and so the stepmother asks Murukaṅ to give the garland to her as acceptance of her love. Interview with the author, Palkalainakar, Madurai, July 1994.

In Navanīta Kīruṣṇa Pāratīyār's use of the theme of the hero giving the garland when interpreting "Tiruvempāvai", the giving of the garland is the hero's revelation of his love to the heroine. In Ā. Āṇantarācaṅ's interpretation of these two songs, the same theme is used to indicate that the heroine has not yet received the hero's love and is therefore suffering.

flower garland in order to consummate her desire. In this second interpretation, the heroine represents the soul, and the hero represents God.³¹

In the ladies' usage of "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ" and "Vīral Māraṅaintu" in the "Pāvai Singing", the girl in the poem is either their own daughter or their friends' daughter, and Murukaṅ is the God who can make the union possible, but not the one to whom the daughter should be united. The two songs, when situated in the lives of at least some of the singers of the group, are not a request to the hero on behalf of the heroine for him to accept her love, nor a request that the Highest soul unite with the individual soul, but rather a request to God to make possible the marriage of a daughter.

Even though some of the women consciously sang these songs specifically for the benefit of a particular person's daughter, it does not mean that others participated for that purpose. Others, outside the immediate group, may not have known the specific reason for singing these songs this year. They perhaps sang for themselves or their own daughters or for someone else, or maybe they sang just to praise God.

³¹ Kirupāṅantavāriyār in his commentary on "Vīral Māraṅaintu", which includes a reference to "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ", casts the relationship portrayed in the poems in terms of the beloved-lover relationship (*nāyaki nāyaka pāvam*). He says about "Vīral Māraṅaintu": For the heroine (*talaivi*) who has love for the hero (*talaivaṅ*), the cool light of the moon is hot and the Tenral wind burns like fire. Here, putting the soul (*jīvāṅmā*) as the beloved (*nāyaki*) and the God (*paramāṅmā*) as the lover (*nāyakaṅ*), the soul, who is the beloved has love for the hero who is God, becomes increasingly anguished and becomes emaciated. In this way, there are many songs in the beloved-lover mode (*nāyaki nāyaka pāvam*).

The commentator cites two other examples and then makes the following comment regarding "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ": "In this way, the soul (*jīvāṅmā*), who desires God (*paramāṅmā*), desires the flower garland in order to consummate that desire." Kirupāṅantavāriyār, *Tiruppukal Virivurai Tirupparaṅkuṅaram Tiruccentūr (mutarpaṅaiṅṅum, irāṅṅam paṅaiṅṅum)* (Cennai: Vāṅati Patippakam, n.d.), 186.

The Structure of the Ritual and First Person Biography

Aspects of the ritual reinforce the view that the singing of the songs in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai is an activity of individual devotees, an event in their own lives. During the ritual, there is no absolute distinction between the singers and the audience. The audience and singers share the same space. The audience can receive any ritual honor that the singers receive, and anybody can participate in the singing. There are also no images or other legendary personalities whose voice is heard singing the songs.

In the ritual event of "*Pāvai* Singing" there is no spatial distance maintained between female singers and female audience members or between male singers and male audience members. During the "*Pāvai* Singing" the women who sing at the Citti Viṇāyakar Temple sit both in the center of and at the sides of the railings. Any woman or child could come and join the singers, to sing or to just sit there. The men generally sat or stood apart at the side usually occupied by men during worship, and any man could join in and sing.³² This is in sharp contrast the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* and the "*Tiruvempāvai*" Festival of the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple in which the singers, the *ōtuvārs*, have a special space in the ritual where audience members are not permitted.

There were also no ritual distinctions between audience and singers in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai. The special honor (*piracātam*) bestowed on the last day was given to anyone who participated regularly. The bestowing of the special honor happens yearly. If one wants to, one could come regularly and then receive that honor also. The *abhiṣekam* items (milk and ash) passed out at the end of the *abhiṣekam* were also shared with the audience. The lack of ritual distinction is emphasised during the final *tīpārāṭṭai* when the whole crowd merges in an effort to see the showing of the camphor flame to the deity and to

³² The spatial distance between women and men reflects the cultural custom that women generally should share space only with men from their own immediate families.

receive the flame, ash and *kuṅkumam*. The singers and the audience are indistinguishable at this point, and the priest made no special distinction between the singers and the audience when giving the camphor flame, *kuṅkumam* and ash at the end of the *pūcai*. This is unlike the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival in which the singers of the songs, the *ōtuvārs*, receive special ritual distinction in the form of temple honors.

The style of singing at the temples in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai was also uniform. All three songs, "Tiruppalliyelucci", "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppāvai" (and also the song in praise of Āṇṭāḷ) were sung in the same tune without any variation so that one could join in easily. Thus any devotee could become a singer by simply singing, thereby making the event one's own. This contrasts with the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival in which the singing style was generally individualized by the *ōtuvārs*, making it difficult to sing along.

In the Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai singing, there are also no images of saints or poets, and generally no special personalities who take over the voice of the poems. The ritual does not include any images of saints, poets or other personalities, unlike the continual presence of Māṇikkavācakar's image in the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival. Furthermore, the selections used in the *Mārkaḷi* month singing in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai are removed from their original context, as a part of a particular text composed by a particular author with a specific life story.³³ No information concerning the text, source or the author was made known during the singing of the hymns. Even when songs 1 to 5, 10 to 14 and 17 and 18 were hand copied by one of the ladies singing and given to me on the first few days of *Mārkaḷi* month, the selections contained no information about either the author or the title of the work. Only two of the selections had any headings: "The Song for the Camphor Flame"; and the songs thus collected under the heading "Vāḷttu". Whether or not the

³³ The exception to this is "Tiruppāvai" in which the author's identity is given. This situation is addressed in the following paragraph.

person who provided me with copies of the songs knew the sources and author I do not know. But it would seem that she did not think it was important for me to know such matters in order to participate in the singing. For her it was important that I have a copy of the songs and that I know certain details about how to sing them.

I have argued that the historical poet is absent for the most part in the Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai singing, but, in one case the historical author was present. That was in the singing of "Tiruppāvai" in which the last verse is a signature verse which identifies the author. The singing of this verse was immediately followed every day that I was there by the verse in praise of this poet. I was told that the reason for singing this song was to honor Āṇṭāḷ, who originally sang "Tiruppāvai", thereby setting her apart from them. I then asked why no song was sung in praise of Māṇikkavācakar who sang "Tiruppalliyelucci" and "Tiruvempāvai", and the answer seemed to be that until that moment nobody had thought to sing a song of praise of him.³⁴ I think the reason that Āṇṭāḷ is praised and not Māṇikkavācakar is because "Tiruppāvai" ends with a signature verse which brings her into the ritual, whereas "Tiruppalliyelucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" can be sung without ever knowing who composed them. The response to Āṇṭāḷ's presence in the ritual is to honor her, and then to continue with what they are doing, i.e. worshipping God through song in order to obtain benefits.

Summary

The singing of "Tiruppalliyelucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" at the Citti Viṇāyakar and the Nākamalai Murukan Temples in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai is set in first person biography.

³⁴ This question was posed to one singer who then posed it to some of the other singers. The answers were much the same. *Pāvai* Group Singer, interview with the author, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, Madurai, 21 February 1994.

The specific event is the "*Pāvai* Singing" in which the individuals sing songs as worship in order gain benefits. The "*Pāvai* Singing" like the singing in the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* and the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, is understood in a biographical narrative world which is a *puṇam* style of interpretation. In chapter 12, I will suggest that the pattern of behaviour exhibited by the singers in these three ritual events is also a *puṇam* style of behaviour.

III: Chapter 12: Pattern of Usage

In Part III we have considered the singing of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" in the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* and "Tiruvempāvai" in the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, at the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple in Madurai, as well as the singing of both of these collections in the "Pāvai Singing" at the Citti Viṇāyakar and the Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temples in nearby Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai. In each of these ritual events the significance of the poems is different because they are situated in different narrative worlds. In the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is part of an event of awakening the presiding deity of the temple by the deity's especially designated servant. The voice of the poem is that of a bard and the poem is situated as an event in the life of a specific hero and his wife, Cuntarēcuvarar and Mīṇāṭci. In the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival at the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, the singing of "Tiruvempāvai" is situated as an event in the life of the poet, Māṇikkavācakar. The significance of "Tiruvempāvai" in this narrative world is that singing "Tiruvempāvai" is Māṇikkavācakar's act of worship through which he attains the spiritual goal, *mutti*. In the Citti Viṇāyakar and the Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temples, both "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" are sung as part of the "Pāvai Singing", and are understood as an event in the first person biography. In this narrative world the songs are sung by individual devotees in order to obtain benefits.

These poems are, therefore, understood in three different biographical worlds in these three ritual events. I have argued in chapter 4 that understanding a text in a biography is a *puṇam* style of interpretation. I shall now suggest that the singers' pattern of behaviour in each ritual event is a pattern of behaviour implied in the classical *puṇam* poetry: going to the hero, singing praises, making petitions and receiving benefits. I will argue that this

behaviour pattern is noted specifically in the *puṛam* guide poems (*āṛruppaṭai*) of the classical era.

"Tiruppalliyelucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" are not the only poems that are sung in these rituals, although they have strong associations with the central meaning of the ritual events in which they are sung. Each event has its own distinctive "ritual text". I will try to show how both the composition of the "ritual text" and the coherence underlying the significance of the "ritual text" depends upon the narrative world in which it is situated.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the pattern of behaviour evident in the three ritual events. That will be followed by showing why this is a basic *puṛam* pattern of behaviour, and the chapter will close with a discussion of the concepts of "ritual text" and "coherence" as manifest in the way in which the poems are used in the three ritual events.

Model of Behaviour Evident in the Three Ritual Events

The singing in the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, the "*Pāvai* Singing", and, less clearly, the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* exhibit a similar pattern of behaviour, namely a going to the hero, singing his praises and receiving benefits. In each event, the singer receives back some of the deity's beneficence.

In the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*, the *ōtuvār* goes to the *paḷḷiyarai* and sings to the deity. Later on he also sings to the followers of the hero, the saints. So also in the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, Māṇikkavācakar is depicted as going before Naṭarācar, the most important form of Śiva for Māṇikkavācakar, to sing "Tiruvempāvai". He also sings before Mīṇāṭci and Cuntarēcuvarar, the presiding deities. In a similar way the ladies in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai go before Citti Viṇāyakar and Nākamalai Murukan, the presiding deities in their respective temples, and sing songs. In segment II.4 of the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, Māṇikkavācakar is depicted as performing various acts of worship before Viṇāyakar,

Mīṇāṭci and Murukaṇ. As part of his worship, he sings a poem from "Tiruvempāvai" for each of them. In a similar way, the ladies at Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai go before Pālaccupiramaṇiyar and Haṇumāṇ, and worship and sing a song before these deities as well.

In both the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival and in the "Pāvai Singing" the singers make requests to God through their songs. In segment II.5 of the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, Māṇikkavācakar is depicted as a supplicant, and the medium of this request is the song, "Tiruvempāvai". In a similar way, the ladies in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai also use songs to present their requests to God, with the clearest example of a request being for husbands for daughters through the singing of "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṇ" and "Viṛal Māraṇaintu" to Nākamalai Murukaṇ.

The singers in each of these events receive in return some of the deity's favour, *piracātam*. To receive *piracātam* is to receive God's grace. We have already noted in chapter 8 that the camphor flame, ash, *kuṅkumam*, and food distributed after *tīpārāṭṭai* transfers grace to the worshipper. Davis notes that many Hindu sects, including some Śaivas, view the distribution of the food after worship as a "form of divine 'favour'". This food is said to have great powers such as purifying, and destroying sin.¹ The various substances the devotee receives at the end of worship are one of the ways in which the deity gives to the devotee.

¹ Richard H. Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe: Worshipping Śiva in Medieval India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 155, 160. Davis goes on to quote the *Kāṁikāgama*, one of texts which are said to be the basis of ritual at the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple, in order to say that in a Śaiva Siddhānta temple food as *piracātam* is not distributed because humans cannot bear it. At the Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple today, however, food is distributed as *piracātam*. In *Mārkaḷi* month the line-ups for the milk at the end of *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* are very long, and one can purchase food *piracātam* at *piracātam* stalls. Also, clearly the ladies in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai place importance on receiving *piracātam*.

At the end of the *Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai*, the *ōtuvār* receives *piracātam*: the camphor flame, ash and milk, just before the other devotees. In the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, Māṅikkavācakar is depicted as receiving *piracātam* (camphor, milk and bananas) in segment II.4 when he is worshipping Viṅāyakar, Mīṅāṭci and Murukaṅ. The ladies receive *piracātam* several times during the "*Pāvai* Singing". They receive ash and milk that had been used in the *abhiṣekam*. At the end of the *pūcai* at both temples, they receive the camphor flame, *kuṅkumam* and ash. At the end of all segments they receive the *naivēttiyam* as *piracātam*.

Even though the pattern of behaviour is the same in these three rituals, there is an important difference in the status of Māṅikkavācakar in the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, the *ōtuvār* in the *Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai*, and the ladies in the "*Pāvai* Singing". The *ōtuvār* in the *Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai* and the ladies in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai are always treated as human. Māṅikkavācakar is treated as both human and divine. His human aspect is manifested ritually by the fact that he receives the *parivaṭṭam* or headscarf and is depicted in various human postures.² Over and over again, however, Māṅikkavācakar is treated as divine, and this is ritually expressed by offering him *tīpārāṭṭai*.

The difference is significant because the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival confirms ritually a pattern of behaviour that leads to *mutti*, and this is reinforced by Māṅikkavācakar's biography. In the Mīṅāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple festival, Māṅikkavācakar goes to Naṭarācar, sings his songs and then he is offered *tīpārāṭṭai* - a recognition of his divine nature. His human postures show how a human should behave, going to the deity and

² Māṅikkavācakar wears the *parivaṭṭam* throughout the festival (segment I, II, III). I was told that this is an honor given to humans, not to gods. Further, his pose as worshipper in segment II.4, and as supplicant in segment II.5, as interpreted by the priests and *ōtuvārs*, also stress his human aspect.

worshipping through song, and being offered *tīpārāṭṭai* indicates the result of behaving as Māṇikkavācakar did, and attaining *mutti*.

According to the biography, Śiva himself records Māṇikkavācakar's songs and thereby legitimizes them. The biography associates Māṇikkavācakar's attainment of *mutti* with the Naṭarācar form of Śiva and indicates that the occasion on which he attained *mutti* is directly related to the songs. The songs are recorded and Māṇikkavācakar has an opportunity to explain that Naṭarācar is the meaning, and then immediately he merges with Naṭarācar. The sequence of events suggests that through these songs one understands Naṭarācar and unites with him, attaining *mutti*.

The *Tirumuṟai* texts also construe the deity-devotee relationship in this way. The third invocatory poem, "Naṅkaṭampanai", sung by the ladies, composed by the *Tirumuṟai* poet Tirunāvukkaracar, describes the relationship between the God and devotee:

The duty of the Lord of Tirukkara temple of Southern Kaṭampai,
whose consort bore our Skanda,
is to support even me, a devotee;
my duty is to serve.³

God's duty is to support and protect the devotee,⁴ and the devotee's duty is to serve (*paṇi ceytu*). The *Tamil Lexicon* cites the last line of this poem when it gives the meaning for *paṇi* as "bowing, reverencing". Therefore, we may understand that service means also worshipping. Cēkkilār, the author of the twelfth *Tirumuṟai*, the *Periya Purāṇam*, while relating Cuntarar's biography indicates that Śiva prefers the offering of song to all other forms of worship. After Cuntarar had been claimed by Śiva and had been made to realize who the claimant was, Śiva said to him: "because singing in love is for us the finest form

³ My translation of "Naṅkaṭampanai" by Tirunāvukkaracar, fifth *Tirumuṟai*, 132:9.

⁴ The verb used to describe God's action with respect to the devotee is *tāṅkutaḷ*. The *Tamil Lexicon* gives as the primary meaning for this verb "uphold, bear up, support"; the secondary meaning "to protect, guard"; and as the third meaning "to give shelter, rest".

of worship, sing about us in Tamil words on earth."⁵ The devotee, then, should serve Śiva through song. Cuntarar's song, cited in full in chapter 11, indicates that by praising Śiva through song, one will receive worldly and other worldly benefits. According to this song, if one sings about Śiva, one will receive rice, clothes, the removal of suffering in this life (poem 1, 8), the attainment of a high status in another life (1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10), and *mutti* (5, 11). These three *Tirumurai* references depict the relationship between Śiva and the devotee as one in which the devotee serves Śiva through song and in turn Śiva supports and protects the devotee in this world by providing concrete benefits, and eternally by enabling the devotee to attain *mutti*.

Just as the structure of devotional text and interpretation described in Parts I and II has a counterpart in the classical context, so also the pattern of behaviour evident, particularly in the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival and the "Pāvai Singing", has its counterpart in the classical context. The pattern of behaviour of going to God, praising him, making requests and receiving benefits is implicit in the situation envisaged behind *puṣam* poetry.

The *Puṣam* Pattern

G. Subbiah has identified three interrelated concepts which he argues identify the world-view evident in the classical poetry and poetics. These are the "hero", "space" and "giving". Subbiah suggests that the Tamil concept of hero included both a human hero and a deity, and it is not necessary to see one concept evolving out of the other. According to

⁵ Excerpted from verse 70 of the "Taṭuttāṭkoṇṭa Purāṇam" in *Cēkkiḷār Perumāṇ Periya Purāṇam eṇa Vaḷaṅkum Tiruttoṇṭar Purāṇam* (Tiruvāṇṭuṭurai: Tirukkayilāya Paramparait Tiruvāṇṭuṭurai Ātīṇam, 1988), 27. I am thankful to Dr. Gomathi for this reference.

I am indebted to Dr. Gomathi for her guidance as a scholar and as a singer. Many of her insights were expressed as a singer. As I had originally conducted interviews under the condition of anonymity, I have not been able to specifically acknowledge all her valuable contributions.

Subbiah, the distinguishing characteristic of a hero is giving. Valour is necessary to be a hero, but a hero attains that most coveted achievement, fame, through giving.⁶ The ideal hero gives out of compassion, spontaneously, without distinction and without expectation of return. Two of the most famous donors in Tamil history are the classical heroes, Pāri and Pēkaṇ. Pāri is particularly remembered for spontaneously giving a chariot to a vine which had no support on which to grow. Pēkaṇ is remembered for giving a robe to a peacock which he thought was shivering in cold, because he was overwhelmed with compassion. Furthermore, the classical hero is accessible. He has a particular place on this earth where supplicants can approach him. According to Subbiah's argument, the classical Tamil world had heroes who were able and willing to help others. In the classical Tamil world view the ideal hero (human or divine) is found in this world, and all one has to do is go to his place and receive gifts from him.⁷

In the classical context, the heroes are primarily kings and chieftans, and the recipients are primarily poets, bards and other performers. The classical *puṇam āṟruppaṭai* poem in a sense encapsulates the relationship between hero and bard. In *āṟruppaṭai* poems one bard, performer or poet directs another to a benefactor. The following example is Ramanujan's translation of *Puṇanāṇūru* 69 by Ālattūr Kiḷār about Kiḷḷai Vaḷavaṇ.

Dear singer:

here you are,
a lute in your hand
that knows its grammar,

⁶ See also A. K. Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War: From the Eight Anthologies and the Ten Long Poems of Classical Tamil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 289.

⁷ G. Subbiah, "Patterns in Religious Thought in Early South India: A Study of Classical Tamil Texts" (Ph.D. diss., McMaster University, 1988). Subbiah develops this argument in chapters III (89-183), IV (183-224) and V (225-268). He summarizes it in the conclusion. This study has been published under the title, *Roots of Tamil Religious Thought* (Pondicherry: Pondicherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, 1991).

a hunger in your belly
 that no one heeds,
 clutching at your waist
 a cloth of patches
 with strange threads,
 damp with sweat,
 on a body aimless as a ruined man's,
 and your large family
 dulled by poverty.

You round the whole earth
 and you're here
 to ask
 in a small voice
 for help.
 So listen.

In bannered camps,
 his army slaughters
 the murderous elephants of enemy kings,
 leaves them wounded in pools of blood,
 makes a slaughterhouse of the battlefield.

He is at Uraiyūr.
 city of tall towers;
 he takes up spears only against enemies
 and he moves right into the heart of their country.

He is Kilḷai Vaḷavaṇ,
 he wears perfect garlands,
 his ornaments are flames
 of yellow gold.

Go to him,
 and you don't even have to stand
 at his great door.

Go, fill your eyes
 with the chariots he gives away
 in broad daylight.

Once you've seen him
 you'll wear lotuses of gold, flowers
 no bee will touch,

and you don't even have to stand

there, at that door.⁸

The speaker recognises the pitiable state of the singer and urges the singer to go to this hero who is mighty, generous and accessible.⁹ The speaker is a living example of the hero's generosity and by telling the pitiable singer to go to the same hero, he praises that hero also. The key elements of this poem are going to the hero, receiving benefits from the hero and then praising the hero.¹⁰

The basic elements of going to the hero, praising the hero, making requests, receiving benefits and then continuing to praise the hero occur as themes under the *puṛam* situation of praise (*pāṭāṇṭiṇai*) in the *Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram*:¹¹

"eulogising the giver and reviling the non-giver";
 "the kūttar, pānar, porunar and vīraliyar who have received presents directing those who have not received them and telling what they have received";
 "poets etc mentioning their wants and getting rewards";
 "eulogising the prosperous condition of the king after receiving the reward and [taking leave of the king] either on his own initiative or on the initiative of the king."

In addition, a number of poems in the two *puṛam* anthologies, *Puṛanāṇūru* and *Paṭiṇṇupattu*, have been assigned themes which indicate they are understood to be about

⁸ Ramanujan, *Poems of Love and War*, 127-8.

⁹ See Cuntarar's poem verse 7/346, in chapter 11 above.

¹⁰ Shulman identifies Cuntarar's poem cited in chapter 11 as a guide poem: David Dean Shulman, trans. and comm., *Songs of the Harsh Devotee: The Tēvāram of Cuntaramūrttināyaṇār* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1990), 210.

According to traditional accounts, Cuntarar needed money so that his wife Paravaiyāi could give charity on Paṅkuṇi Uttiram day. So Cuntarar went to Pukalūr, worshipped the form of Śiva there, and then lay down to sleep. When he awoke, the bricks that he had used as pillows had turned to gold. He then sang these poems to Śiva as the God of Pukalūr. See Ti. Cu. Cokkaliṅkam Ceṭṭiyār, *Paḷaṅ Taruṁ Tirumuṛaip Paṭikaṅkaḷuṁ Tutippāṭalkaḷuṁ (Varalāru-Palaṅ-Uraiyuṭaṅ)* (Maturai Valamapuri Accakam, 1977), 145.

¹¹ P.S. Subrahmanya Sastri, trans. and comm., *Tolkāppiyam: The Earliest Extant Tamil Grammar Text in Tamil, and Roman Scripts with a Critical Commentary in English: Tolkāppiyam Poruḷ Atikāram-Tamil Poetics* (Madras: The Kuppuswami Sastri Research Institute, 1949), 86, 87.

requests for gifts or presentations of needs to the hero. Subbiah identifies thirty-seven such poems, as well as fourteen guide poems.¹²

There is then implicit in the *puṛam* poetry and poetics the pattern of behaviour of going to the hero, making requests, receiving benefits and then praising the hero. It is an appropriate way to interact with the hero. If he is a true hero he responds generously. In a similar way, the three ritual events under study here show that the appropriate way to relate to Śiva is to go to him, and sing his praise. He will bestow benefits immediately in the form of *pirucātam*, and he will respond to requests, provide a good life and finally will give *mutti*, all because he is a true hero.

The presupposition that God is "other" is implicit in the *puṛam* pattern. In this pattern, God is encountered in a place, in time and space, rather than in mystical experience. One can go to that place, worship that manifestation of God, make requests to that God, and receive concrete evidence of God's beneficence in the form of *pirucātam*. The very presupposition of making a request is that there is a distinction between the one who makes the request and the one who has the ability to fulfill that request. I am suggesting that in the three rituals studied here, that the bard, poet or any individual devotee enjoys and interacts with God as "other".¹³

¹² Subbiah, "Patterns in Religious Thought in Early South India," 247.

¹³ I am differing from Cutler by suggesting that God remains as "other" in these three ritual uses of "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppalliyeḷucci". Cutler seems to suggest that the distinction between God, author-poet, professional singer and audience diminishes and is removed in the ritual use of Śrīvaiṣṇava and Śaiva poems. See Cutler, *Songs of Experience*, all of chapter 2, and also in particular 35, 37, 46-7, 52, 73, and 113.

In the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival only some of the identifications suggested by Cutler are plausible. The structure of the ritual suggests that the *ōtuvār*, particularly the *Stala Ōtuvār*, may identify with the poet, for the *Stala Ōtuvār* sings as though he is Māṇikkavācakar. Secondly, the act of showing Māṇikkavācakar *tīpārāṭṭai* indicates that he is divine, which suggests that the poet is identified with God. *Tīpārāṭṭai*, however, is not offered to the *ōtuvārs*, which suggests that some kind of distinction between *ōtuvārs* and the poet is maintained. The depiction of Māṇikkavācakar as a human supplicant in segment II.5, and also possibly in segment II.4, suggests that for part of the festival a

distinction is perceived between the one who requests and the one who is able to give. Certainly in the ritual performance there is no identification implied between the audience and the *ōtuvārs*, for there is a very sharp distinction made between the *ōtuvārs* who sing on the poet's behalf and the members of the audience, who are kept at a distance spatially, ritually and through singing styles (see chapter 9 above).

In the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*, the series of identifications also breaks down because the original poet has no specific presence at all in the ritual, and because the premise of the ritual maintains a distinction between the reciter and the deity. The presence of the poet as the important personality in the ritual reenactment of the poem would seem to be a necessity in Cutler's model, as it is the poet's experience which it seems is reenacted in the ritual recitation of the poem (see Cutler, *Songs of Experience*, 73, 113). I have argued earlier that Māṇikkavācakar is at no point specifically associated with his song throughout the ritual singing of the poem, and the fact that he is worshipped in a group with other saints at one point, almost confirms the fact that he is not the ritual speaker of the poem. Furthermore, the purpose of the ritual is to wake up God and return him to his daytime location. This assumes a distinction between the one who awakens and the one awakened, and one sees no indication that this distinction is negated in the ritual itself. What the ritual does underline is the respectful distance of the bard who calls on God as "other" in the particular manifestation as Cuntarēcuvavarar, with ties to the particular locale of Madurai.

In the "*Pāvai* Singing", it is doubtful that identification takes place because here identification with the poet is problematic for several reasons, and here the premise of the whole activity is very clearly based on a sharp distinction between God and the worshipper. There are three factors in the Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai singing which suggest that the poet's identity is not an essential part of the singing. One is that people sometimes do not know who the composer is. A second is that a large number of source texts are used to make up the "ritual text", and these are composed by many different authors. The third is factor that the poets have no presence in the ritual, except in "Tiruppāvai" which has a signature verse. The singing of this verse is immediately followed by a verse in praise of this poet, Āṇṭāḷ. This verse of praise, rather than enabling the singers to identify with Āṇṭāḷ, distances her from them by exalting her through song. (This potential irrelevance of the poet to the usage of the songs was highlighted to me in an interview. The individual was telling me her favourite devotional song. I asked who the author was. She did not know. Some time later, when we were at another person's house, she asked someone there who the author was and was told that the author's name is in the song itself. If the name made no sense to her, it is doubtful that the historicity of the author is relevant to the use of that song to that individual.)

Furthermore the ladies' own emphasis on making their own requests through the songs also undermines the notion that identity with the deity occurs in this ritual performance of the poems. There is the strong sense both among the singers and also among community members that the "*Pāvai* Singing" is done in order to obtain benefits. The most specific of these benefits is the ladies' request for husbands for their daughters. As we have already said, the act of making a request to someone, for something like the marriage of someone's daughter, implicitly maintains the distinction between the supplicator and the one to whom the request is made. Even if one sings for the purpose of obtaining *mutti* the implication is that *mutti*, and therefore identity, has not been obtained. The distinction between God and devotee is intact.

"Ritual text" and Coherence of Meaning

The definition of text given at the outset of this study was that the text is that which is interpreted by situating it in a narrative world which provides an identity for at least one of the speaker, addressee, or the hero, and which identifies the utterance of the text as an event in that narrative world. In Part I and Part II, we looked at two texts, the ten poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and the twenty poems of "Tiruvempāvai". In Part III, however, the text is neither the ten poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" nor the twenty poems of "Tiruvempāvai", but another text which I have called the "ritual text". The reason for utilising a special term, "ritual text", to refer to the text used in a ritual event is to shift the emphasis away from the variety of source texts, which may potentially be used, to a text that is actually used. In the three ritual events studied, it is the utterances which constitute the "ritual text" that is situated in the narrative world. The boundaries of the "ritual text" and the coherence of its meaning are determined by the narrative world in which it is situated and the particularities of the setting of the ritual event.

In Part I, we considered "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" as they lie in their canonical state. In that state ten poems are marked off as a unit and given the title, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci". Likewise, twenty poems are marked off as a unit and given the title, "Tiruvempāvai". They are associated with other units and all collectively are identified as being by one author, in this case, Māṇikkavācakar. Organization by author lends itself to interpretations such as Navaratnam's or Vannikanathan's which accept the poems in their canonical order as the markers of steps of spiritual development.

In Part II, we considered "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" as they are understood by various people who interpreted the poems by situating them in various narrative worlds, one of which was the poet's biography. The boundaries of the texts in these interpretations are still the ten poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and the twenty poems of

"Tiruvempāvai", but in Part II we saw great variation in how these texts are understood. In the interpretation presented in Part II, the internal relationship of the parts of the poems was perceived in various ways. Some parts were given priority over other parts when situating the poems, and there was no agreement on whether the poems constitute a sequence or a collection of poems.

In the ritual events described in Part III, the ten poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and the twenty poems of "Tiruvempāvai" are no longer the text. A new text is constructed whose composition, boundaries and coherence are all determined by the narrative world in which the poems are understood, and by the particularities of the ritual event itself. The selection of texts which make up the "ritual text" are connected to the particular biography in which the "ritual text" is interpreted. The length and shape of the "ritual text" are affected by the parameters of the ritual.

As we have already seen, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" are treated differently in these three different "ritual texts". In the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*, only one poem of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" is used. In the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival, all the twenty poems of "Tiruvempāvai" were used. They are repeated as a whole several times, and at other times specific poems from the collection were selected and sung. In the "*Pāvai* Singing", the ten poems of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and the twenty poems of "Tiruvempāvai" are sung in order once each day.

"Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" were only a portion of the texts in each of these ritual events; other poems also become part of the text. The "ritual texts" of these events are constructed out of parts and wholes of other texts.

I argued in chapter 8, that the "ritual text" of the *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai* is part of the event of awakening the presiding deity of the temple, Cuntarēcuvarar and honoring him and other members of his household. The selection of poems which comprise the "ritual text"

correspond to these awakening and honoring activities and are appropriate to the particular hero, Cuntarēcuvarar. "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci", which is often understood to be a song of awakening, is sung in order to awaken Cuntarēcuvarar and his wife. The "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" chosen is one in praise of Śiva, even though there are other "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci"s addressed to other (human and divine) figures available.¹⁴ In the world of Tamil Śaivism, honoring the devotees of Śiva is as important as honoring Śiva,¹⁵ and the second poem of the "ritual text" sung in the Tiruñānacampantar Maṇṭapam is sung in honor of devotees of Śiva who resides in this particular shrine. Only one poem is sung in each place because of time constraints; the portions of the ritual in which the poems are sung are only small parts of a very long ritual which moves quickly from location to location.

I argued in chapter 9 that the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival is an event in the life of Māṇikkavācakar and have said that the festival corresponds to the time frame in which "Tiruvempāvai" is given special attention in all rituals. The composition of the "ritual text", and its coherence, reflects the emphasis on "Tiruvempāvai" during a special time-frame and that the singing is portrayed as an event in Māṇikkavācakar life.

The "ritual text" begins and closes with the *Pañcapurāṇam*, the special selection of *Tirumuṇai* songs normally sung during the temple rituals. Māṇikkavācakar sings "Tiruvempāvai" (through the *ōtuvārs*) after the first singing of the *Pañcapurāṇam* and before the final singing of the *Pañcapurāṇam*. This selection and organization, and the fact that Māṇikkavācakar is depicted as singing the songs, reflects the shift from the normal

¹⁴ See chapter 2 above.

¹⁵ Some of the stories of the *Periya Purāṇam* provide some extreme examples of devotees who honor Śaiva devotees.

pattern of singing *Tirumurai* songs by the *ōtuvārs* (as bards), to the special time of singing "Tiruvempāvai" by Māṇikkavācakar.

The portion of the "ritual text" sung on the middle eight days of the festival focuses on the poem and its poet. The repeated singing of "Tiruvempāvai" by Māṇikkavācakar through the *ōtuvārs* as a whole and in selected verses, to the exclusion of any other poems by any other authors, except the poem in praise of Māṇikkavācakar, emphasises the poem, "Tiruvempāvai" and the singer, Māṇikkavācakar. The poem of praise sung to Māṇikkavācakar acknowledges and honors him as the author of the poem.

The boundaries of the "ritual text" reflect the time-frame of the festival. Days one and ten are the opening and closing of the festival. The *Pañcapurāṇam* and "Tiruvempāvai" are each sung once on those two days to open and close the festival. On the middle eight days the text, in its general pattern, is the same. The main full performance of "Tiruvempāvai" during these eight days is before Naṭarācar, a form of Śiva with whom Māṇikkavācakar has a special association. The worship in segment II.4a involves three short stops at Viṇāyakar's shrine, Mīṇāṭci's shrine and Murukaṇ's shrine. Only one verse of "Tiruvempāvai" is sung at each shrine, not the full text as is sung in front of Naṭarācar.

I have argued that the singing of "Tiruppalliyeḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" at the Citti Viṇāyakar and Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temples in Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai is part of the event of "*Pāvai* Singing" as framed by the lives of individual devotees. The selection of songs which make up the "ritual text" and its coherence reflect both the particularities of this event and the interests of the leaders of the singing.

The "*Pāvai* Singing", based on the accounts of these women, is undertaken in the month of *Mārkaḷi* in order to gain benefits. The essential songs of the "*Pāvai* Singing" are

"Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" and the *pāvai* songs, "Tiruvempāvai" and "Tiruppāvai".¹⁶

"Tiruvempāvai" is a Śaiva poem and "Tiruppāvai" is a Vaiṣṇava poem. As we have seen in chapter 11, the *pāvai* poems make requests or mention benefits which are understood by the singers to be attained by those who sing the songs. The event is singing the *pāvai*, and therefore these two *pāvai* songs must be sung, regardless of the sectarian associations of the songs.

Most of the remaining poems which constitute this "ritual text" reflect the interests of the leaders of the singers: their preference for Śaivism, the concern for obtaining benefits in general for themselves and others, and the concern that (at least) one women's daughter should be married soon.

The formal singing which begins in segment 2 starts with invocatory songs, moves to the essential songs and concludes with a variety of additional songs. The first four invocatory songs are sung because it is customary, I was told, for Śaivas to begin devotional singing with songs to Viṇāyakar and to Murukaṇ. These leaders reportedly sing these same four songs to begin all singing events. Three of the four songs are selected from the *Tirumurai*.¹⁷ Three of the four selections depict Viṇāyakar and Murukaṇ as the children of Śiva and his consort, and therefore situate the worship of Viṇāyakar and Murukaṇ within the larger framework of Śaiva worship. After the essential songs and the song to Āṇṭāḷ were sung, the singers invariably sang the *Pañcapurāṇam* if there was time prior to the singing of the other songs. Śaivas should sing the *Pañcapurāṇam* every day. When the singers sing the three poems under the heading of "vāḷttu", they repeat three

¹⁶ "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci" is usually grouped with "Tiruvempāvai" in this context, thus giving the Śaiva component thirty verses to match the thirty Vaiṣṇava poems.

¹⁷ *Pāvai* Group Singer, interview with the author, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai, Madurai, 22 February 1994. The leaders indicated that they prefer to sing songs from the *Tirumurai* or songs to Murukaṇ in their personal devotions.

times the line: "Let the excellent Śaiva way flourish throughout the world". This is the only line of the three songs which they repeat.

The selections of the additional songs also reflect the concern for obtaining benefits. Singing the *Pañcapurāṇam* will bring the singer general benefits. As we have seen in chapter 11, "Nātavintu Kalātī" and the three "Vāḷttu" songs are concerned with blessings in general. The song sung to Pālaccupiramaṇiyar also contains a request for a series of benefits the singer would like to receive. Finally, the last two songs, "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ" and "Viṛal Māraṇaintu" which were invariably sung at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ shrine, if the leaders of the group had a chance to sing, were specifically sung by the leaders so that one of the leader's daughter would get married.

The boundaries of the text are to some extent determined by the particularities of the ritual context. The invocatory and essential songs were always sung in the normal course of events. The singing of the additional songs varied according to the constraints of time and the presence of other devotees. If for example the singing started late, or as on the last day when there were the closing remarks and honors, there would not be so much time for singing additional songs. Also, sometimes in segment 2, a man would sing a song solo. This reduced time for the ladies to sing songs of their choice. When the ladies joined with the other group at the Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple, they had to adjust to the singing of that group, singing what the other group initiated. If they could initiate the singing, they would sing the songs of their choice, particularly "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ", and "Viṛal Māraṇaintu, but also "Nātavintu Kalātī", "Vāḷttu" and the "Song for Camphor Flame".

PART III: Summary

Part III began by examining two source texts, "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai", in three ritual contexts. The study shows that the source texts do not appear alone in their canonical state in these rituals, rather they become part of different texts, and in the process they are truncated, elongated, or incorporated in their canonical form. They are used in different rituals in different ways. The circumstances of the ritual, particularly whose voice is heard singing the songs and the particular ritual event in which poems are incorporated, determine the specific composition, boundaries and the meaning of the "ritual text".

The study of the use of "Tiruppaḷḷiyēḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" in these three ritual events suggests that in each ritual the poems were interpreted within a particular narrative world, and that in each case the narrative world was a biography: the biography of the hero, the poet or first person respectively. The use of biographies to interpret the poems, I have argued in Part II, is a *puṟam* style of interpretation. Furthermore, I have suggested that in the three rituals presented in Part III, the pattern of behaviour exhibited by those who assume the role of performer or speaker of the poems is a *puṟam* pattern of behaviour.

Just as the interpretations in Part II assume that the principle of coherence of the meaning of the poem is determined by the narrative world in which it is interpreted, so also in the ritual usage of the poems the principle of coherence of the "ritual text" lies in the narrative world in which it is interpreted and the particularities of the specific context in which the text is used. This principle of coherence, however, has a more radical effect in the context of ritual usage, than in the interpretations in Part II. It affects the composition or the boundary of the text in the ritual event, whereas in the interpretations in Part II it affects only the relations of the parts of the poems and their relative emphasis. In each of

the three ritual events, the selection of songs which make up the individual "ritual texts" reflects the interests of the particular biography in which the "ritual text" is interpreted, and the opportunities and constraints of the particular ritual context in which the "ritual text" is sung.

CONCLUSION

This study has been about the nature of two Tamil Śaiva poems, "Tiruppalliyeḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai", their structure as text, the style in which they are interpreted, and the way in which they are used in ritual events. There is a strong connection between the structure and interpretation of the classical Tamil poems, and the pattern of behaviour evident in the classical *puṛam* poems on the one hand, and the structure, interpretation and the pattern of behaviour exhibited in the ritual usage of these two devotional poems on the other.

"Tiruppalliyeḷucci" and "Tiruvempāvai" are collections of poems which are single episodic utterances in which neither the narrator nor the speaker is ever given a particular identity in the poem, and in which the addressee or hero is only sometimes given an identity. These poems are understood in commentarial literature by situating the utterance of them as events in different narrative worlds. The poems represent discrete moments rather than longer narrative sequences. This means that they can easily become incorporated into a narrative as a moment of that narrative. The speaker and the addressee or hero are given identities of characters in the narrative world in which the poems are situated. The poems considered in Part II were generally situated into one or more of five narrative worlds: the *akam* world of love, the *puṛam* world of heroism, the theological world of Śaiva Siddhānta, the world of the poet-saint's life, and the world viewed from the perspective of one's own life. In the three ritual events presented in Part III, three different biographical narrative worlds were used as frames of interpretation: the biography of Cuntarēcuvarar (the hero), the biography of Māṇikkavācakar (the source poet) and the biography of individual devotees (the first person biography).

The significance of a poem interpreted in this style is the significance of the poem when situated as an event in a particular narrative world. The meaning therefore changes from narrative world to narrative world, and even within the same narrative world, if the poem is situated as a number of different events. The coherence of the meaning of these poems depends upon the poems fitting coherently as an event in the narrative world in which they are situated. In commentarial interpretations, the assumption that the relationship between the internal parts of the poem is ambiguous allows flexibility for fitting a poem coherently into a narrative world. In the three examples of rituals provided here, I have suggested that the assumptions about coherence and textual ambiguity affect even the boundary and composition of the "ritual text". The process of constructing a "ritual text" involves combining, truncating, and elongating source texts. The composition and length of the "ritual texts" presented in this study reflect the particularities of the narrative worlds and the specific events in those worlds in which those "ritual texts" have been uttered.

The understanding of text and interpretation proposed here, and the pattern of usage evident in the use of these Śaiva poems in ritual, have precedents in the earliest Tamil literature, the classical *akam* and *puṛam* poetry. The structure of the devotional poems is the same as that of the classical poems. The strategies of interpretation have antecedents in those implicit in the colophons of the classical poems. The pattern of behaviour evident in the use of the poems in the three rituals studied here follows a pattern of behaviour implicit in *puṛam* poems and poetics.

Tamil Śaivas stress that it is important to sing the *Tirumuṛai* songs. In other words, in the terminology of this thesis, Tamil Śaivas believe that it is important to situate the poems in the first person narrative world. These poems can be combined or recombined to make different moments in different narrative worlds, as we saw in the ritual

usage of "Tiruppalliyelucci" and "Tiruvempāvai". Furthermore, the duration of the moment of the poem is the same as the duration of the event when the poem is sung or recited, which means one can live the moment of the poem by simply singing it. As neither the narrators nor the speakers in the poems are given specific identities, one can easily step into the role of narrator or speaker. The style of interpretation, specifically assuming the coherence of meaning is dependent upon the narrative world rather than in the poem itself, emphasises the importance of the poem as part of a narrative world. These factors lead me to reiterate a suggestion proposed to me, that the absence of a long tradition of written commentary on the *Tirumurai* poems is understandable precisely because the devotees' individual lives are the proper commentary.

I have suggested that the use of the poems in the three rituals studied here reflects a distinctive pattern of behaviour which is rooted in the classical *puṛam* poetry. Implicit in this pattern of behaviour is an assumption of and maintenance of God as different from the devotee. According to Śaiva Siddhānta theology, one can enjoy God also intimately, as inseparable from oneself. The intimate experience of God, I am suggesting, is the religious version of the Tamil concept of *akam*. The religious lives of the saints, particularly Tiruñānacampantar, Tirunāvukkaracar and Cuntarar, suggest that the enlightened soul has the option of experiencing God intimately, or, as enjoying him as "other". It is believed by the tradition that these saints were enlightened, yet their biographies also portray them as following the *puṛam* pattern of religious behaviour described in this thesis. It may be fruitful to explore this two-fold experience of God as complementary rather than hierarchical in the Tamil Śaiva devotional poetry. That is, rather than beginning with the assumption that the experience of God begins with God as "other", and evolves to an experience of God as immediate, it may be illuminating to explore the possibility that the

devotee has two modes in which he or she can experience God as "other" and as immediate.

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: Temple Diagrams

Diagram	Page
Diagram 1: <i>Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai</i> : Mīṇāṭci Shrine	315
Key for Diagram 1	316
Diagram 2: <i>Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai</i> : Cuntarēcuvarar Shrine	317
Key for Diagram 2	318
Diagram 3: Segments of "Tiruvempāvai" Festival: Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple	319
Diagram 4: Citti Viṇāyakar Temple, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai	320
Key for Diagram 4	321
Diagram 5: Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai	322
Key for Diagram 5	323

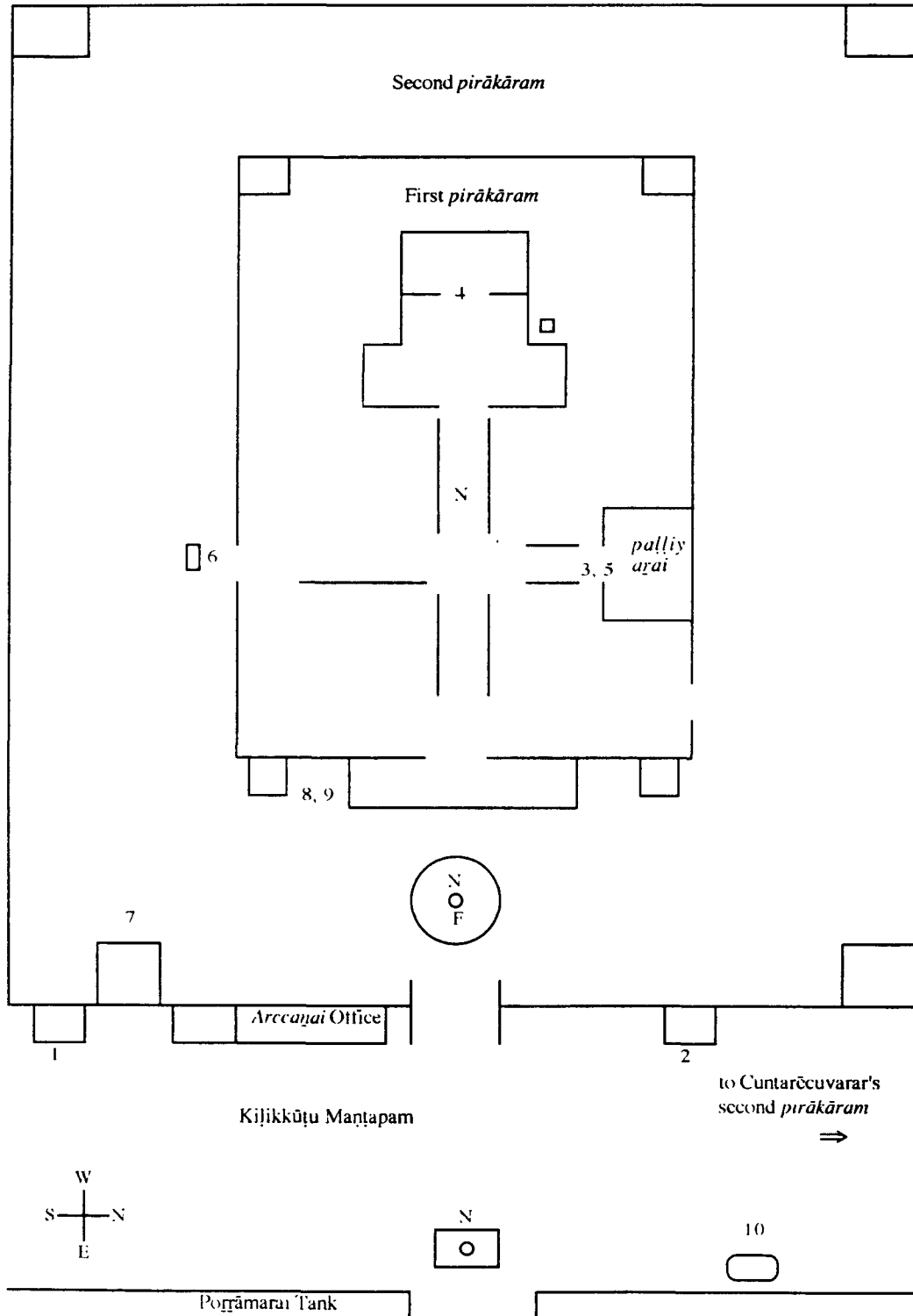
APPENDIX II: Composite "Ritual Text" for the "*Pāvai* Singing" at Citti Viṇāyakar and Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai

Common Title of Poem	Page
1. "Maṅṅulakam taṅil"	324
2. "Piṭiyataṅ urumai"	324
3. "Naṅkaṭampaṅai"	324
4. "Camaracūrapaṅmā"	325
5. "Tiruppaḷḷiyelucci"	36
6. "Tiruvempāvai"	19
7. "Tiruppāvai"	N/A ¹
8. "Tiru āṭip pūrattu"	325
9. "Pañcapurāṅam"	N/A ²
10. "Nātavintu kalāṭi"	326
11. "Vāḷttu"	327
12. "Vāḷttu"	328
13. "Vāḷttu"	328
14. "Song for Camphor Āratti"	328
15. "Centipatipurakkum"	329
16. "Jeya Haṅumāṅ"	330
17. "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ"	331
18. "Viṛal Māraṅaintu"	331

¹ See chapter 11, note 1, p. 266 for sources for the translation of "Tiruppāvai".

² Text of *Pañcapurāṅam* varies.

Diagram 1: *Tiruvāṅantal Pūcai*: Mīṇāṭci Shrine

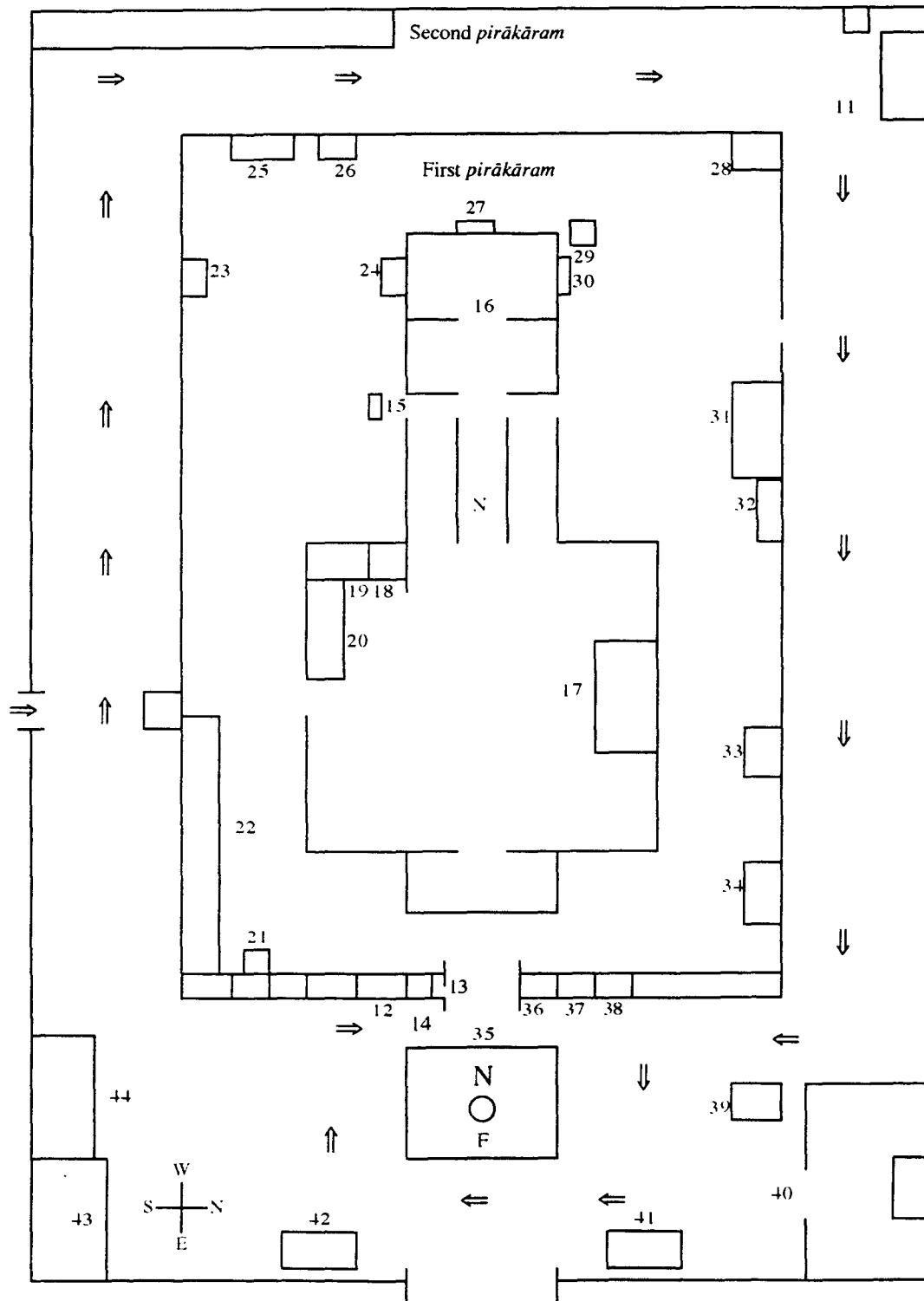


**Key for Diagram 1: *Tiruvaṅantal Pūcai*: Mīṇāṭci's Shrine
Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple¹**

Location	Deity Worshipped
Kiḷikkūṭu Maṅṭapam	1. Citti Viṇāyakar 2. Kumāraṅ (Murukaṅ)
Mīṇāṭci's 1st <i>pirākāram</i> <i>paḷḷiyarai</i>	3. Mīṇāṭci & Cuntarēcuvarar's feet
Mīṇāṭci's sanctum	4. Mīṇāṭci
Mīṇāṭci's 1st <i>pirākāram</i> <i>paḷḷiyarai</i>	5. (take feet from <i>paḷḷiyarai</i>)
Mīṇāṭci's 2nd <i>pirākāram</i> : near Tirumalaināyakkar statue between Viṇāyakar & Six-pillared hall between Viṇāyakar & Six-pillared hall	6. (take feet to palanquin) 7. feet of Cuntarēcuvarar (<i>kaṭṭalai</i>) 8. feet of Cuntarēcuvarar (<i>kaṭṭalai</i>) 9. feet of Cuntarēcuvarar (<i>kaṭṭalai</i>)
Kiḷikkūṭu Maṅṭapam- huge granite slab	10. feet of Cuntarēcuvarar (<i>kaṭṭalai</i>)
N. Nanti F. Flagpole	

¹ See C. J. Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess: The Priests of a South Indian Temple* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 168-70. See also Diagram 2 below. Fuller provides a list of deities worshipped in both Mīṇāṭci's and Cuntarēcuvarar's shrines during this *pūcai*. My list differs from his in that his list does not include the offerings provided for by the five individual *kaṭṭalais* in either shrine, nor the offering to Cēkkilār in Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine. Fuller includes Bhikṣātana in Cuntarēcuvarar's shrine whereas I have not.

Diagram 2: *Tiruvāṅṅal Pūcai*: Cuntarēcuvarar Shrine



**Key for Diagram 2: *Tiruvaṇantal Pūcai*: Cuntarēcuvarar's Shrine
Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple**

Location	Deity Worshipped
Cuntarēcuvarar's second <i>pirākāram</i> near Caṅkattār Shrine	11. 12. Aṇukkai Viṇāyakar
Between doorway of 1st & 2nd <i>pirākāram</i>	13. Atikārananti
Cuntarēcuvarar's second <i>pirākāram</i> temple guard	14. feet of Cuntarēcuvarar's (<i>kaṭṭalai</i>) 15. (remove feet from palanquin)
Cuntarēcuvarar's sanctum	16. Linga & Cuntarēcuvarar's feet
Cuntarēcuvarar's Makāmaṇṭapam	17. Naṭarācar in the Veḷḷiyampalam 18. Cantiracēkaraṇ 19. Urcavacittār 20. Nālvar
Cuntarēcuvarar's first <i>pirākāram</i>	21. Cēkkiḷār 22. 63 Nāyaṇmār 23. Caracuvati 24. Taṭciṇāmūrti 25. Processional deities 26. Kārttikēyaṇ 27. Iḷiṅkōrpavar 28. Kācivicuvanātaṇ 29. Cittar 30. Turkkai 31. (processional) Pañcacapai Naṭarācarkaḷ 32. Aṭcara Liṅkam 33. Makālaṭcumi 34. Irattiṇacapai Naṭarācar
Cuntarēcuvarar's second <i>pirākāram</i>	35. Nanti 36. Taṇṭayutavaṇ 37. Kaḷukumalai Kumāraṇ 38. Pālamurukaṇ 39. Navakkirakam 40. Naṭarācar in Hundred Pillared Hall 41. Akkiṇivīrapattiraṇ & Akōravīrapattiraṇ 42. Ūrttuvatāṇṭavar & Pattirakāḷi 43. Tiruñāṇacampantar Maṇṭapam 44. Distribution of <i>piracātam</i> (milk)
N. Nanti F. Flagpole	

**Diagram 3: Miṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple:
Segments of "Tiruvempāvai" Festival**

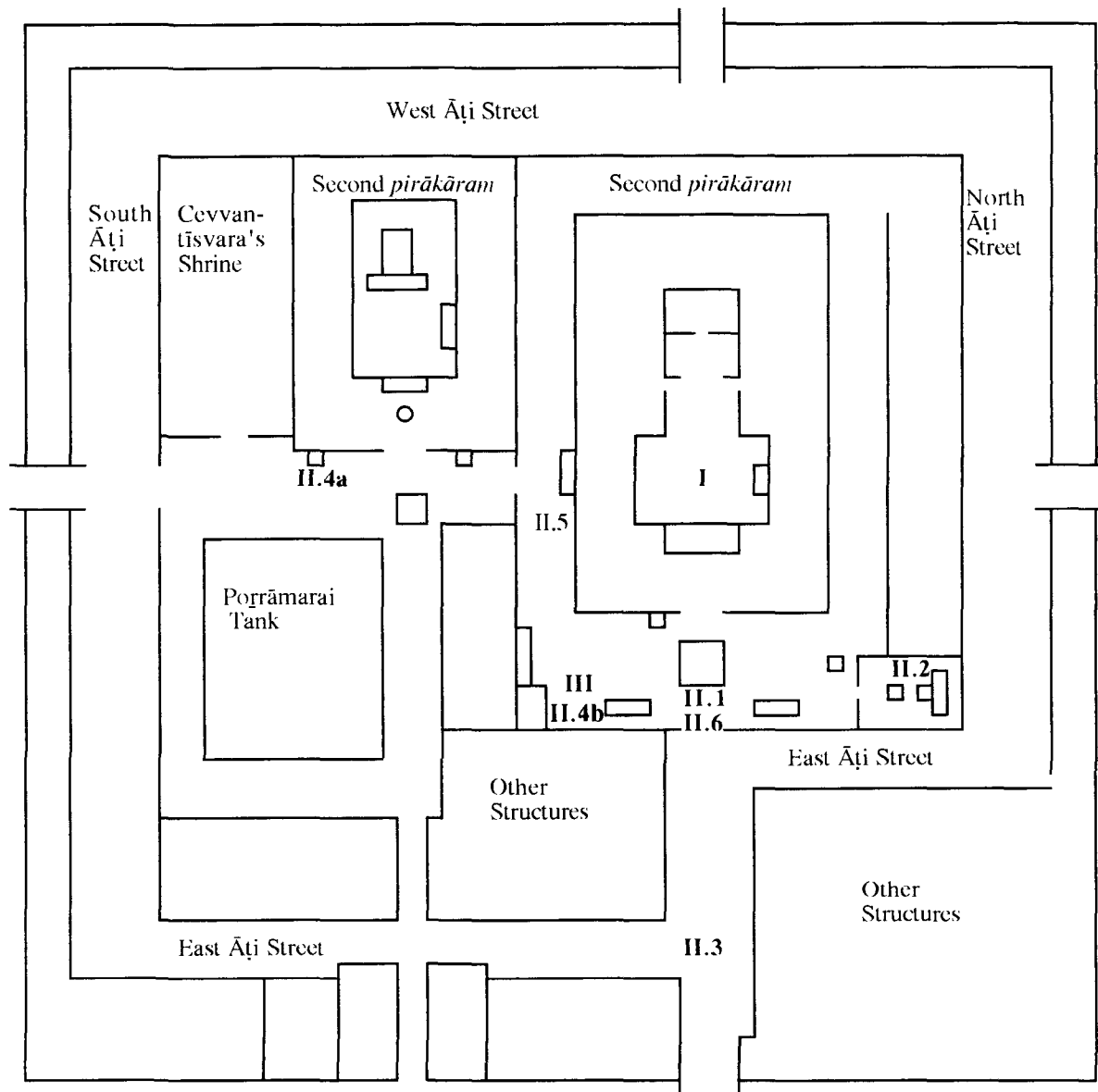
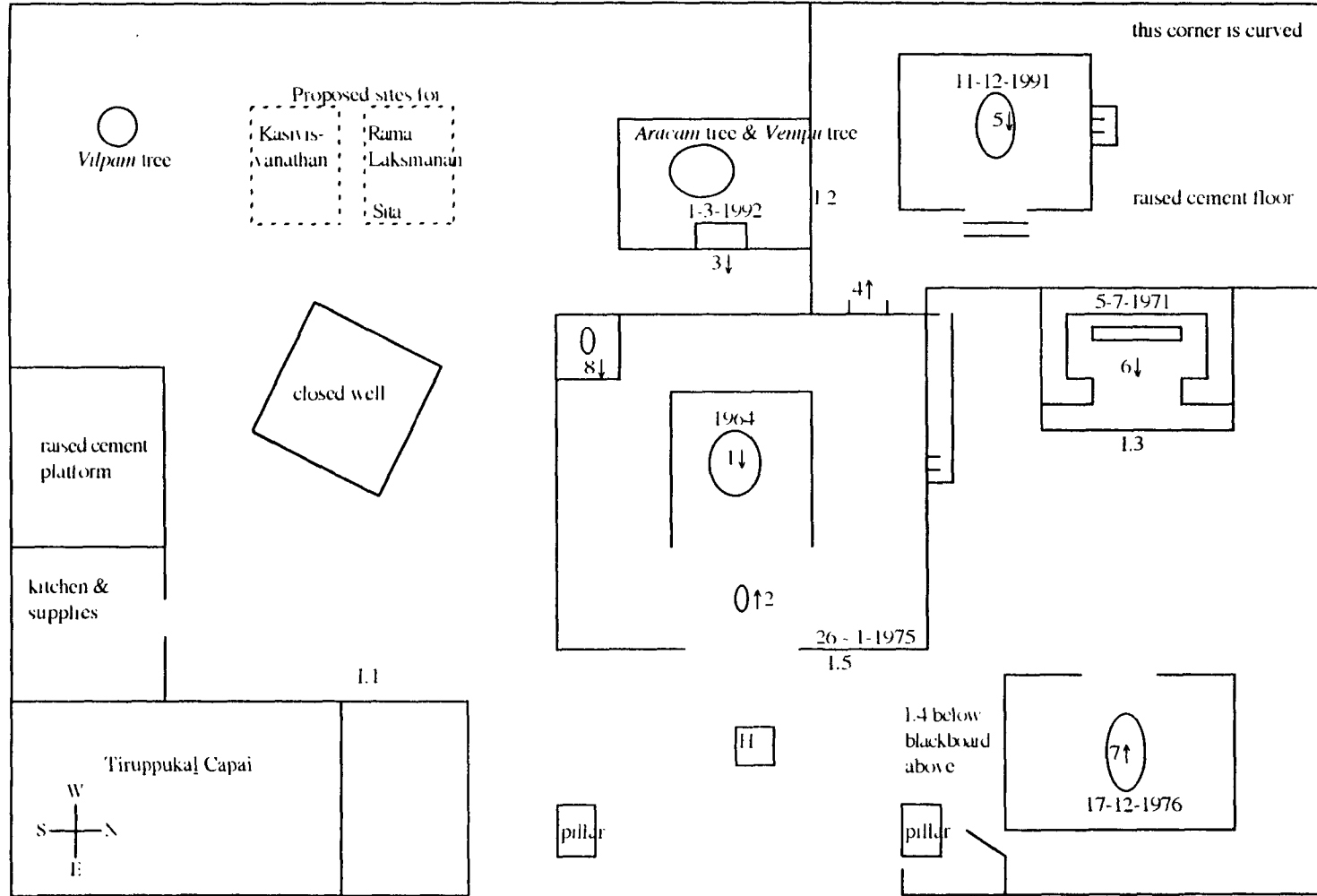


Diagram 4: Citti Vināyakar Temple, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai



**Key for Diagram 4: Citti Viṇāyakar¹ Temple,
Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai**

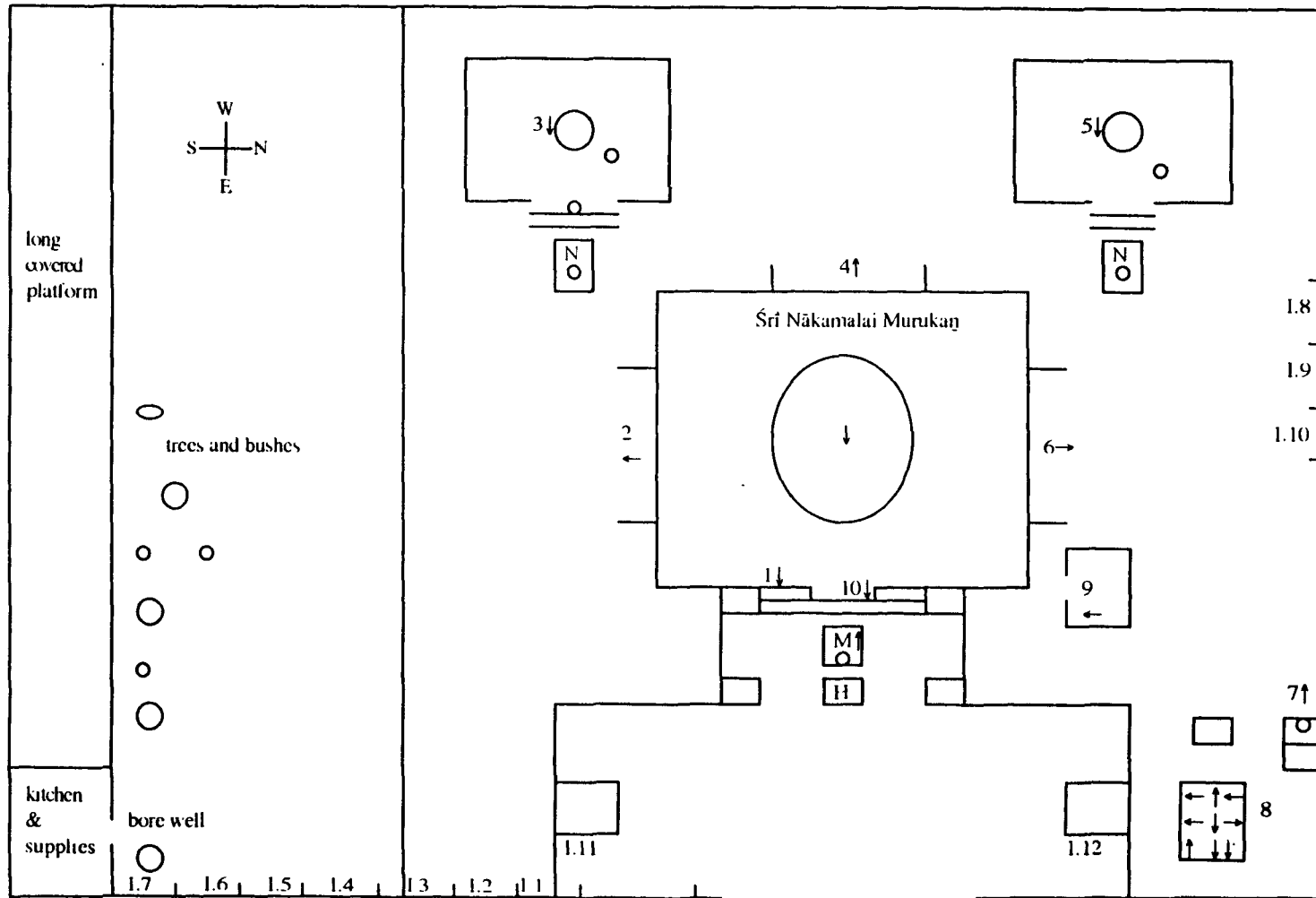
1. Citti Viṇāyakar
2. Mūñcūr (rat)
3. Civappirakācanātar
4. Ciṇṇa Piḷḷaiyār
5. Pālacuppiramaṇiyar
6. Cuntara Āñcanēya Cuvāmi
7. Cuntara Āñcanēyar
8. The festival image of Viṇāyakar
9. The festival image of Murukaṇ
- H. Uṇṇiyal (locked box for cash offerings)

Inscriptions

- I.1 Re: Pālacuppiramaṇiyar
- I.2 Re: Civappirakācanātar
- I.3 Re: Cuntara Āñcanēya Cuvāmi
- I.4 Re: Cuntara Āñcanēyar
- I.5 Re: Citti Viṇāyakar Ālayam

¹ The name of the god Viṇāyakar, is spelled in two ways: Viṇāyakar or Vināyakar I have spelled the name here to correspond with the spelling on the inscriptions.

Diagram 5: Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai



**Key for Diagram 5: Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temple,
Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai**

1. Viṇāyakar
2. Taṭcaṇāmūrtti
3. Cuntarēcuvarar
4. Mahāviṣṇu
5. Mīṇāṭci Ammaṅ
6. Turkkai
7. Nākarājar
8. Navakkiraham
9. Caṇṭikēsvarar
10. Kaṇḍalaṭcumi
- H. Uṇṭiyal (locked box for cash offerings)
- M. Mayil Vākaṇam
- N. Nanti

Inscriptions

- I.1 Re: Nākamalai Murukaṅ
- I.2 Re: Nākamalai Murukaṅ
- I.3 Re: Donors of the images of Viṇāyakar, Taṭcaṇāmūrtti, Mahāviṣṇu, Turkkai, Caṇṭikēsvarar, Mayil vākaṇam, Navakkiraham
- I.4 Re: Donors for the installation ceremonies of the subsidiary images and Navakkiraham
- I.5 Re: Donors for the installation ceremonies of the subsidiary images and Navakkiraham
- I.6 Re: Donors for the sanctification of the *vimāṇam*
- I.7 Re: Donors for bore well
- I.8 Re: Donors for installation of Mīṇāṭci and Cuntarēcuvarar
- I.9 Re: Donors for sanctification of *vimāṇam*
- I.10 Re: Donors to temple in general - no date
- I.11 Re: Donors of Mahāmaṇṭapam
- I.12 Re: Donors for Navakkiraha Maṇṭapam

APPENDIX II

Composite "Ritual Text" for the "Pāvai Singing" Citti Viṇāyakar and Nākamalai Murukaṅ Temples, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai¹

1. "Maṅṅulakam taṅil"

maṅṅulakam taṅil piṛavi mācāra
eṅṅiya porulelām eṭitil murrura
kaṅṅutal uṭaiyatōr kaṅṅirru māmukap
paṅṅavaṅ malarāṭi paṅintu pōṅṅuvōm

So that the stains of [this] birth on earth will cease
so that all things which are thought about will be easily fulfilled
We serve and praise the flower-feet of the great elephant faced God
with the eye on the forehead.

2. "Piṭiyataṅ urumai"

piṭiyataṅ uru umai koḷa miku kariyatu
vaṭi koṭu taṅataṭi valipaṭum avariṭar
kaṭi kaṅapaṭi vara aruḷiṅaṅ miku koṭai
vaṭiviṅar payil vali valamuṛai iraiyē

The Lord who gave grace
with Umai as a female elephant
[and he] as a male elephant
so that Kaṅapaṭi, who removes the affliction of those who worship his feet,
would appear,
is, indeed, the God of Valivalam, where generous people dwell!

3. "Naṅkaṭampaṅai"

naṅkaṭampaṅaip peṛravaḷ paṅkiṅaṅ
teṅ kaṭampait tirukkarak kōyilāṅ
taṅkaṭaṅ aṭiyēṅaiyum tāṅkutaḷ
eṅkaṭaṅ paṅi ceytu kiṭappatē

¹ The songs are arranged according to the order in which I recorded them as being sung. Songs 1 through 8 were always sung in this order. 9 usually followed 8. The order of 10 through 18 is approximate, as the order could change from day to day and some songs could be sung more than once. Songs 1 to 4, 10 to 14 and 17 to 18 were written and given to me by one of the singers. I have deliberately included only the information which she provided in the Tamil portion. Other information on the songs is provided in chapter 11 above. She did not provide translations. These poems have been transliterated from the hand written copy. Published versions of the songs are available for those songs whose source text has been identified in chapter 11 above. Songs 15 and 16 were given to me by another singer upon my request. Dr. Gomathi Sooriamoorthi and Dr. Ā. Āṅantarācaṅ helped me in these translations except where otherwise noted. However, any errors or omissions are my responsibility alone.

The duty of the Lord of Tirukkara Temple of Southern Kaṭampai
whose consort bore our Skanda
is to support even me, a devotee;
my duty is to serve.

4. "Camaracūrapaṇmā"

camara cūra paṇmāvait taṭinta vēl
kumaraṇ tātai narkōlampam mēviya
amarar kōviṇukkē aṇṇṇait toṇṭarkaḷ
amaralōkamatāḷuṭai yārkaḷē

The servants who love the King of the immortals
who dwells in good Kōlampam,
the father of Kumaraṇ
with the spear that killed Cūrapaṇmā in battle
indeed will be born in the world of the immortals.

5. "Tiruppaḷiyelucci"

6. "Tiruvempāvai"

7. "Tiruppāvai"

8. "Tiru āṭip pūrattu" (Song in Praise of Āṇṭaḷ)

tiru āṭippūrattu cekattutittāḷ vāliyē
tiruppāvai muppatum ceppināḷ vāliyē
periyālvār perretutta peṇṇillai vāliyē
perumpūtūr māmunikkū pinṇānāḷ vāliyē
orunūrru nārpatu mūnru uraittāḷ vāliyē
uyararaṅkarkē kaṇṇi ukanta aḷittāḷ vāliyē
maruvārum tirumalli vaḷanāṭi vāliyē
vaṇ putuvai nakar kōtai malarp pataṅkaḷ vāliyē
aṭiyārkaḷ vāḷa araṅka natar vāḷa
caṭakōpaṇ taṇ tamiḷ nūḷ vāḷa - kaṭalcūḷnta
maṇṇulakam vāḷa maṇavāḷa māmuniyē
iṇṇum oru nūṇṇāṇṭu irum
āṇṭāḷ tiruvaṭikaḷē caraṇam

Prosperity to the foot praised by the world during the Āṭipūram Festival!
Prosperity to She who spoke the 30 *pāvai* [poems]!
Prosperity to the girl child taken and raised by Periyālvār!
Prosperity to She who wove flowers in the great Pūtūr
Prosperity to she who said the 143 [poems]!
Prosperity to She who delighted the lofty Lord of Arankam with the flower garland!
Prosperity to the woman of the fertile country with the strongly fragrant jasmine!
Prosperity to the flower-like feet of Kōtai of bountiful Śrīvilliputtūr!
Long live the devotees! Long live Lord of Araṅkam!
Long live the cool Tamil works of Caṭakōpaṇ!

Long live the earth surrounded by ocean! O Maṇavālamūṇi
Live yet another century!

Refuge at the sacred feet of Āṇṭal

9. Pañcapurāṇam

10. "Nātavintu kalāti"²

nāta vintuka lātī namōnāma	
vēta mantracorūpā namōnāma	
nāṇa paṇṭita cuvāmi namōnāma	
	vekukōṭi
nāma campuku mārā namōnāma	
pōka antari pālā namōnāma	
nāka paṇṭama yūrā namōnāma	paracūrār
cēta taṇṭavi nōtā namōnāma	
kīta kiṅkiṇi pātā namōnāma	
tīra camprama vīrā namōnāma	kirirāja
tīpa maṅkaḷa jōti namōnāma	
tūya ampala līlā namōnāma	
tēva kuṅcari pākā namōnāma	aruḷtārāy
ītalum pala kōlāla pūjaiyum	
ōtalun kuṇa ācāra nītiyum	
īra muṅkuru cīrpāta cēvaiyu	maṇavāta
ēḷtaḷam pukaḷ kavēriyāl viḷai	
cōḷa maṇṭala mītē maṅkara	
rāja kempīra nāṭaḷu nāyaka vayalūrā	
ātarampayi lārūrār tōḷamai	
cērtal koṇṭavarōṭē muṇāḷiṇil	
āṭal vempārī mītērimākayī	laiyilēki
āti yantavu lāvācu pāṭiya	
cērar koṅkuvai kāvūr naṇāṭatil	
āviṇaṅkuṭi vālvāṇa tēvarkaḷ	perumāḷē

Repeat the three lines "tīpa maṅkaḷa...aruḷtārāy".

Obeisance O Source of *nāta*, *vintu* and *kaḷai*!
Obeisance O Form of the Vedic mantras!
Obeisance O Expert in *Ñāṇam*!

Obeisance O Kumārār of Lord Campu, possessor of innumerable names!
Obeisance O Son of Umā Tēvi, [the Catti] of experience!
Obeisance O Lord of the peacock whose legs are entwined with snakes!

² This translation is based on the *Patavurai* and *Polippurai* of Kirupāṇantavāri in *Tiruppukal* (*Virivuraiyutan*), *Mūṇṇam Tokuti*, *Paḷani* (Cenṇai: Tiruppukalāmirtam Kāriyālayam, 1967), 2-4.

Obeisance O Sporter who punished and destroyed the demon!
 " O One whose [ankleted] feet tinkle [like a] song!
 " O Bold One! O Excellent One! O Hero!
 O Lord of the Mountain!

Obeisance O auspicious Light of the lamp!
 " O Sporter in the pure space!
 " Lord with divine Kuñcari at [your] side! Give grace!

O Ruler of pleasant Rājakempīra land!
 in the Cōḷa region
 abundant because of the Kāvēri [river]
 praised [by the people of] the seven continents
 in which [people dwell who] do not forget
 service of the illustrious [lotus] feet of the guru
 compassion
 good qualities and conduct
 recitation
 many kinds of splendid *pūjai*
 and charity.

O Lord of Vayalūr!

O Lord of the gods who lives in Tiruvāṇaṅkuṭi!
 in the good area of Kāvūr in Koṅku of the Cērar
 who previously mounted a dancing fiesty horse
 and went to Kayilai with his close friend Ārūr (Cuntarar),
 and who extemporaneously sang the Kayilai Procession Poem.

11. "Vāḷttu"

āṛiru taṭan tōḷ vāḷka
 arumukam vāḷka verpaik
 kūru cey taṇi vēl vāḷka
 kukkuṭam vāḷka cevvēḷ
 ēṛiya mañṇai vāḷka
 yāṇai taṇ aṇaṅku vāḷka
 māṛilā vaḷḷi vāḷka
 vāḷka cīr aṭiyār ellām

Long live the Twelve wide shouldered One;
 Long live the Six faced One;
 Long live the Matchless spear which split [the mountain];
 Long live the [peacock] flag;
 Long live the peacock which [He with] the red spear mounted;
 Long live [Teyva]yāṇai;
 Long live the unchanging Vaḷḷi;
 Long live all the illustrious devotees.

12. "Vālttu"

vāṇ mukil vaḷātu peyka malivaḷaṅ curakka manṇaṅ
 kōṅ muṛai yaracu ceyka kuṛaivilātuyirkaḷ vāḷka
 nāṇmarai yaraṅka ḷōṅka naṛravam vēḷvi malka
 mēṇmai koḷ caivanīti viḷaṅkuka ulakamellām

(Repeat the last line three times)

Let the cloud in the sky rain without fail; Let the abundant fertility increase;
 Let the king rule in the approved way; let the souls live without want;
 Let the virtues of the Four Vedas grow; let good religious practice and sacrifice increase;
 Let the excellent Caiva Way flourish throughout the world.

13. "Vālttu"

vāḷka antaṅar vāṇava rāṇinam
 vīḷka taṅpuṅal vēntaṅu mōṅkuka
 āḷka tīyatu ellām araṅ nāmamē
 cūḷka vaiyakamum tuyar tīrkavē

Let brahmins, celestials and cows flourish;
 Let cool water fall; Let the king flourish;
 Let evil deeds drown; Let all know the names of Araṅ;
 Let the affliction of the world perish!

14. Kaṛpūra āratippāṭal – Song for Camphor Āratti

tīṅkaḷil jōti nī tinakara jōti nī
 aṅkiyil jōti nī aṅaittilum jōti nī
 eṅkaḷil jōti nī īsvara jōti nī
 kaṅkilā jōti nī kaṛpūra jōti nī

(Repeat the last line three times)

You are the light in the moon;	You are the light in the sun;
You are the light in the fire;	You are the light in other such things;
You are the light in us;	You are the light in Īsvara;
You are the light without limit;	You are the light in the camphor.

15. "Centippatipurakkum"³

centippatipurakkuñ cevvēlē—cantatamum
palkōṭi caṅṅap pakaiyu mavamiruttum
palkōṭi vikkiṅamum palpiṅiyum—palkōṭi
pātakamuñ ceyviṅaiyum pāmpum pacācumāṅar
pūtamuntī nīrum porupaṅaiyum—ṭitakalā
vevviṅamun tuṅṅa mirukamuta lāmevaiyum
evviṅamvan temmai yetirtālum avviṅattir
paccaimayil vākaṅamum paṅṅiraṅṅu tiṅṅōḷum
accamakaru mayilvēlum—kaccait
tiruvaraiyuñ cīraṅiyuñ ceṅkaiyu mīrā
raṅṅuṅṅiṅiyu māmuṅkaṅka lārum—virikiraṅam
cintap puṅainta tirumuṅṅika lōraṅum
entat ticaiyu metirtōṅra—vantiṅṅukkan
ellām poṅṅiṅṅuttu yevvaramun tantupukun
tullāca māka vuḷattiruntu—palvitamām
ācumuta nārkaṅiyu maṅṅāva tānamuñcīrp
pēcumiyaḷ palkāp piyattokaiyum—ōcai
eḷuttumuta lāmain tilakkaṅamun tōyṅṅu
paḷutta tamilppulamai pālīt—toḷukkamuṅṅaṅ
immaip piṅṅappi liruvātaṅaiyakarri
mummaip pērumalaṅkaṅ mōcittut—tammai viṅṅut
tāyum paḷaiya vaṅṅiyā ruṅṅankūṅṅit
tōyum parapōkan tuypittuc—cēya
kaṅṅiyērkuṅṅu puṅṅkamalak kālkaṅṅi yāṅṅoṅ
taṅṅiyērkuṅṅu muṅṅṅiṅṅu raṅṅuḷ.

O Lord Murukan who protects Tiruccentur!

If

many crores of hated births
untimely death
many crores of obstacles
many diseases
many crore heinous crimes
karma
snakes, devils, killing demons
fire and water

³ Translated with the aid of the following publications: Ku. Cuntaramūrṅṅi, *Kantar Kalivenṅpā (Mūlamum - uraiyum)* (Tiruppaṅṅantāl: Kāci Maṅṅam, n.d.); A. Mahātēva Ceṅṅṅiyār and Kō. Vaṅṅivēlu Ceṅṅṅiyār, *Kantar Kalivaṅṅpā Mūlamum, Uraiym* (Ceṅṅṅai Śrī Cātu Irattīṅṅa Caṅṅkuru Puttakacālai), 1926; and K. Sivaraman, trans. *Tiruchendur Kandar Kalivenba of sri Athi Kumaragurupara Swamigal* (Tirupanandal: Kasi Mutt, 1968). This English translation is preceded by a version of the Tamil text, however the page with the publication details was missing. I have used the Tamil text of this edition because it was the edition provided to me by the singer. There are some variations, as for example, in the first words: The Kasi Mutt Tamil version and the version by Ku. Cuntaramūrṅṅi has *centippati* where as the version by A. Mahātēva Ceṅṅṅiyār and Kō. Vaṅṅivēlu Ceṅṅṅiyār has *centirppati*.

weapons of war
 enduring sufferings
 severe poison
 ferocious animals
 come and appear before me,
 in that place wherever it may be
 on your green peacock
 with twelve strong shoulders
 the sharp spear which removes fear,
 the sacred waist with the belt
 little feet
 red hands
 twelve gracious eyes
 six beautiful faces
 and six crowns spreading light in all directions
 come and appear before [me]
 make all my extreme sufferings into dust,
 give all boons
 and gaily enter and be in my mind
 give me knowledge of Tamil in which [I] am trained and soaked in
 the many [poems] of four kinds of verse
 the art of doing eight things at one time
 the many beautifully spoken epic poems
 the five aspects of grammar beginning with the letter sounds
 remove the two kinds of dispositions in this birth through good behaviour
 remove the three great *malas*
 remove the ego
 join [me] with ancient devotees who investigate [you]
 make [me] experience the highest bliss in which [I] become soaked
 show me the feet like red scented lotuses,
 enslave [me],
 stand before me a devotee, and give grace.

16. "Jeya Haṇumāṇ"

jeya haṇumāṇ jeya haṇumāṇ
 mārutirāya jeya haṇumāṇ
 jeya haṇumāṇ jeya haṇumāṇ
 vāyukumārā jeya haṇumāṇ
 jeya haṇumāṇ jeya haṇumāṇ
 āncaviputra jeya haṇumāṇ
 jeya haṇumāṇ jeya haṇumāṇ
 śrī rāma tūtā jeya haṇumāṇ
 jeya haṇumāṇ jeya haṇumāṇ
 mākāṇupāva jeya haṇumāṇ

Victory Hanuman	Victory Hanuman
O King Maruti	Victory Hanuman
Victory Hanuman	Victory Hanuman
O Son of Vayu	Victory Hanuman

Victory Hanuman Victory Hanuman
 O Son with folded hands Victory Hanuman
 Victory Hanuman Victory Hanuman
 O Messenger of Sri Rama Victory Hanuman
 Victory Hanuman Victory Hanuman
 O Great One Victory Hanuman

17. "Nīlaṅkoḷ Mēkattiṅ"

nīlaṅkoḷ mēkattiṅ mayil mītē -
 nī vanta vāḷvaikkaṅ ṭataṅālē;
 māḷkoṅṭa pētaikkun maṅaṅārum -
 mār taṅku tāraittaṅ taruḷvāyē
 vēḷkoṅṭu vēḷaiṅṅaṅ ṭerivōṅē -
 vīraṅkoḷ cūrarkkuṅ kulakalā;
 nālanta vētattiṅ poruḷōṅē -
 nāṅeṅru mārtattiṅ perumālē

When [she] saw [your] majestic appearance
 when you came on the peacock like a blue cloud
 she fell in love,
 graciously give your scented breast garland to her.
 O Ancient One who throws the spear into the sea!
 O God of death to all demons!
 O He who is the essence of the Four Vedas!
 O Lord who proudly says "I [will help]"!

18. "Vīral Māraṅaintu"

vīralmāra ṅaintu malarvāḷi cinta	
mikavāṅi lintu	veyilkāya;
mitavāṅai vantu taḷalpōla voṅra	
viṅaimātar tantam	vacai kūra;
kuṅravāṅar kuṅri luṅrai pētai koṅṭa	
koṅṭi tāṅa tuṅpa	mayal tīra
kuḷirmālai yīṅka ṅaṅimālai tantu	
kuṅrai tīra vantu	kuṅrukāyō;
maṅimā ṅukanta iraiyōṅ makilntu	
vaḷipāṅu tanta	matiyāḷā -
malai māvu cinta alaivēlai yaṅca	
vaṅivē leṅrinta	atitīrā;
arivāla ṅintu ṅirutā ḷiṅraiṅcu	
maṅiyā ṅiṅaiṅcal	kaḷaiyōṅē -
aḷakāṅa cempon mayil mē lamarntu	
alaivā yukanta	perumālē.

Repeat "kuṅravāṅar...kuṅrukāyō".

When the heroic God of Love strews the five kinds of flowers,
 when the cool breeze touches [her] like a fire,

[and] the moon in the great sky becomes hot,
 when the gossiping women speak harsh words amongst themselves,
 in order to remove the unbearable afflicting infatuation
 of the girl living on the mountain among the Kuravars,
 come and draw near giving the cool evening flower garland which removes the want.

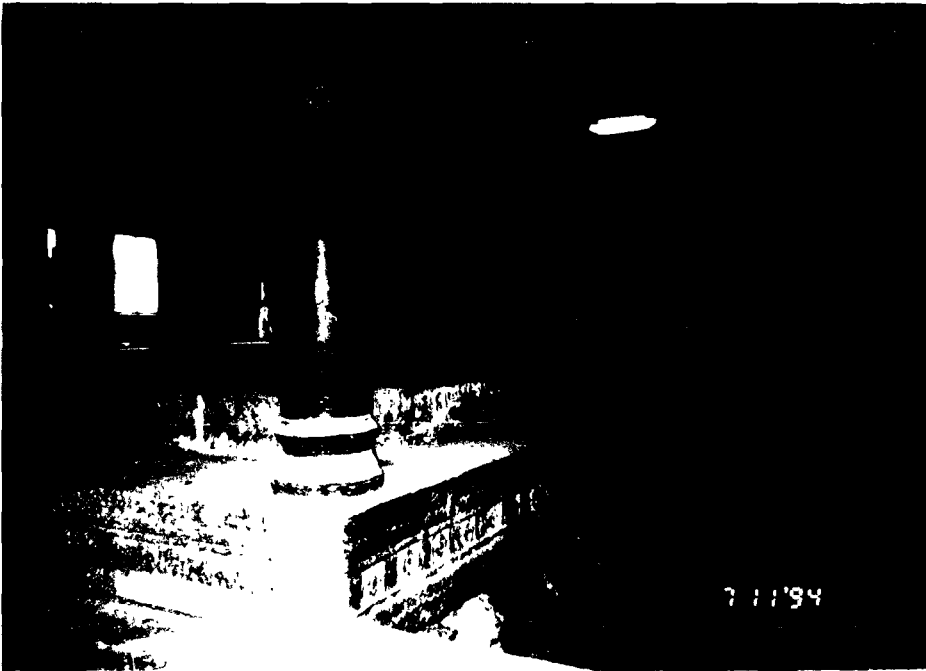
- Knowledgeable One whom the God holding the young deer rejoicingly worshipped.
- Great warrior who threw the spear in order to split the mountain
 while the wavy ocean was afraid!
- Remover of the trouble of knowledgeable devotees who worship your two feet!
- Lord who was pleased in Alaivāy reposing on the beautiful red golden peacock!

LIST OF PLATES

Plate No.:	Photo No.:	Description	Page
1:	Photo 1:	Hundred Pillared Hall, Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple	334
2:	Photo 2:	View of Citti Viṇāyakar Temple, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai	335
2:	Photo 3:	Main Deity, Citti Viṇāyakar Temple, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai	335
3:	Photo 4:	View of Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temple, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai	336
3:	Photo 5:	Main Deity, Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temple, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai	336
4:	Photo 6:	View of "Pāvai Singing", Citti Viṇāyakar Temple, From the Street	337
5:	Photo 7:	Close up of "Pāvai Singing", Citti Viṇāyakar Temple	338
5:	Photo 8:	Close up of "Pāvai Singing", Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temple	338

PLATE 1

Photo 1: Hundred Pillared Hall, Mīṇāṭci-Cuntarēcuvarar Temple



Note: Location of Segment II.2 of the "Tiruvempāvai" Festival:

During the festival, Māṇikkavācakar is placed on the raised stage in the foreground facing Naṭarācar. An image of Naṭarācar is visible in the background (centre, behind the tube light). The *ōtuvārs* stand on the raised platform extending out from the image of Naṭarācar. This photo was taken from the basic position of the female audience members (bottom right). Male audience members stand on the opposite side of this platform (far left). Audience members are not allowed to stand between the two platforms.

PLATE 2

Photo 2: View of Citti Viṇāyakar Temple, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai



Photo 3: Main Deity, Citti Viṇāyakar Temple, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai



PLATE 3

Photo 4: View of Nākamalai Murukan Temple, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai



Photo 5: Main Deity, Nākamalai Murukan Temple, Nākamalai Putukkōṭṭai



PLATE 4

Photo 6: View of "Pāvai Singing", Citti Viṇāyakar Temple, From the Street

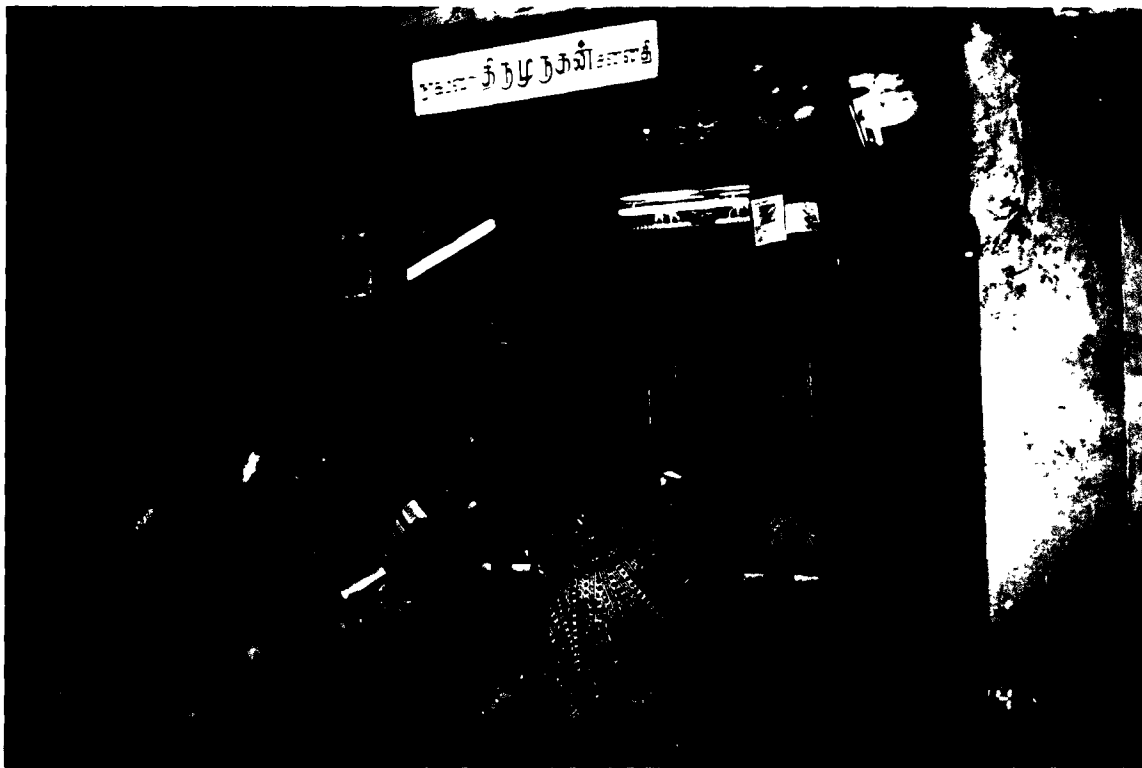


Note: This picture was taken during the *abhiṣekam* on the last day of *Mārkaḷi*. The sun has not yet arisen. The lady singers are sitting directly in front of Citti Viṇāyakar. The men, as usual, have positioned themselves apart from the female singers. The audience has not yet arrived in significant numbers, however the group of singers is a bit larger today because it is the last day of *Mārkaḷi*. By the time of the final *tīpārāṭṭai* the audience will extend along the specially installed bamboo railings far into the street. In photo 7, the priest can be seen performing the *abhiṣekam* in the background. Photo 8 of the Nākamaḷai Murukaṇ Temple was taken at approximately the same time as photos 6 and 7. The *abhiṣekam* has not yet started at the Nākamaḷai Murukaṇ Temple, however, the singers have begun singing. (The pictures show January 12 rather than 13 because the camera clock was set to North American time rather than Indian time).

Photo 7: Close up of "Pāvai Singing", Citti Viṇāyakar Temple



Photo 8: Close up of "Pāvai Singing", Nākamalai Murukaṇ Temple



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