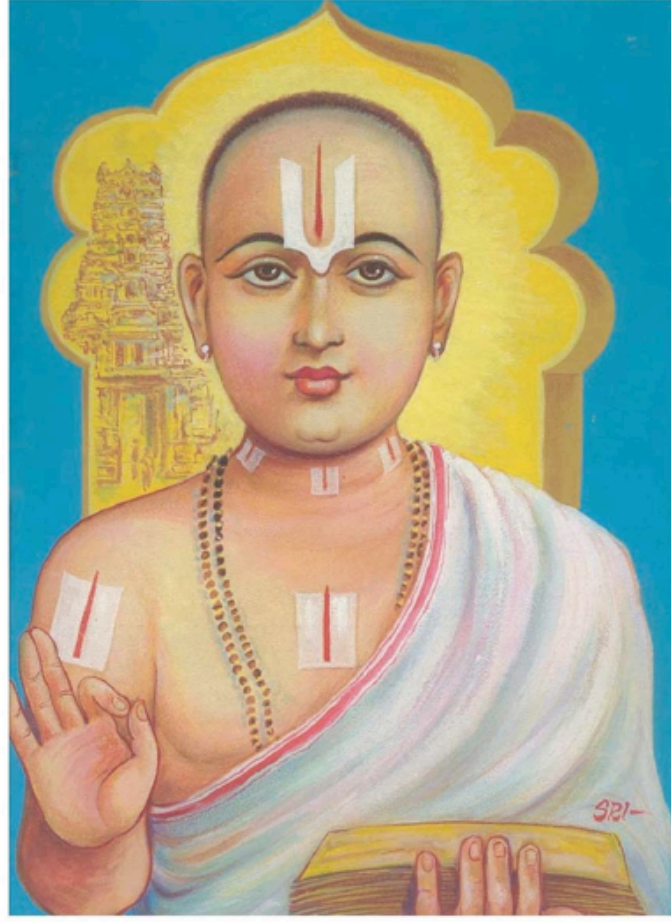


# ŚRĪVACANA BHŪṢANA

*The Ornament of Auspicious Teachings*



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# Introduction



## Pillai-lokācārya

[1264-1369 CE]

After the death of Srī Rāmānuja, Parāśara Bhaṭṭa (Born 1074 AD) continued the work of propagating Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy, and he was succeeded in turn by Nañjiyar. Nañjiyar's foremost disciple was Nam-piḷlai (Kali-vairi-dāsa) who was gifted with such deep erudition and expository skills, that he was given the title of 'Lokācārya'. Nam-piḷlai who was resident in Srīraṅgam had a very studious disciple by the name of Srī Kṛṣṇa-pāda who did not wish to get married, but his mother foiled his plans to remain a bachelor by arranging his marriage at a very early age to a girl named Sri-raṅga-nācchiyār. He was studying under Nam-piḷlai and was engaged in documenting all the teachings.

After a year of marriage, Srī Kṛṣṇa-pāda's mother complained to his Guru Nam-piḷlai that her son was not consummating the marriage and thus there was no progeny. Nam-piḷlai admonished his student to follow the dictates of his mother. After much procrastinating he finally did the deed and thus Pillai Lokācārya was born in the *Krodhana* year, Aippasi month under the constellation of Srāvaṇa-nakṣatra corresponding to 1264 AD. He is known to have lived for 105 years. He named his son after his own Guru — *Lokācārya*. After another three years, Kṛṣṇa-pāda had another son and named him after the Lord of Srīraṅgam — Ramya-jāmāṭṭ Deva (Aḷagiya Maṇavāla Perumāl Nāyanār). Both the boys also studied under Nam-piḷlai. One day a friend of Sri Kṛṣṇa-pāda happened to remark that had he not been forced to marry, he would never have had the great fortune of presenting to the world two genius sons for the propagation of the Srīvaiṣṇava Dharma. Srī Kṛṣṇa-pāda grudgingly agreed but affirmed that Hanumān and Bhīṣma — the eternal bachelors were still his ideal role-models and had he been given a choice, he would have chosen a celibate life. The two boys overheard this conversation, and they there and then resolved never to marry but to dedicate their lives to propagating the teachings of the Dharma to the common-folk with unswerving devotion, dedication and determination.

After the passing away of Nam-piḷlai and Sri Kṛṣṇa-pāda, the Vaiṣṇavas gathered around Pillai-lokācārya for instruction and guidance. Pillai-lokācārya who preferred a solitary and tranquil residence moved to a temple of Lord Narasiṃha in the outskirts of Srīraṅgam and it was here that he delivered discourses on Dharma to all who would listen. He taught in a very simple and skilful manner which is reflected in his writings.

Pillai-lokācārya opposed all differences based upon, caste, gender, nationality etc. He exemplified the doctrine that the universe was the body of the Lord and all beings are necessarily a part of Him. For the true Srīvaiṣṇava, the cosmos is one without any distinction whatsoever; Lord Nārāyaṇa is the Father, Lakṣmī the Mother — They are the Divine Parents and all sentient beings are their children. A Vaiṣṇava ought not to assess the faults of others, he should regard all with equal vision and seek the good of all beings (loka-saṅgraha) and be beneficent to all.

All this revolutionary Dharma activity did not go unresisted and there were many that complained to Lord Raṅga-nātha through the Arcakas (priests) that Pillai-lokācārya was doing immense harm to tradition by preaching the concepts of equality and fraternity and by writing down the Secret Doctrines. When called upon to explain their conduct, Aḷagiya Manavāla Perumāl Nāyanār appearing on behalf of his brother, stated that what they were doing was merely clarifying the Sacred Doctrines for the benefit of the less learned but competent disciples. Sri Raṅganātha is stated to have endorsed this explanation and confirmed the title 'Lokācārya' (World Teacher) for the ācārya. He also directed Nāyanār to compile all the

statements now made into a text called 'Acārya Hṛdayam' and that this text too should receive equal veneration to the works of his elder brother.

Piḷḷai-lokācārya wrote 18 treatises on the Secret Doctrines of Srīvaiṣṇavism, all of which are available; they are:—

1. *yādr̥cchikap-paḍi*
2. *mumukṣa-paḍi*
3. *paranda-paḍi*
4. *śriyaḥ-pati-paḍi* — these texts deal generally with the meaning of the three secret mantras.
5. *tani-dvayam* — deals in greater detail with the Dvaya-mantra.
6. *tani-caramam* — explicates the Carama-śloka.
7. *tani-praṇavam* — dilates upon the meaning of the sacred syllable AUM.
8. *sāra-saṅgraham* — another work on the Dvaya-mantra, relating it to 10 sections of the Tiru-vāi-moḷi of Nammāḷvār.
9. *nāva-vidha-sambandham* — in this work the ācārya attempts to relate the syllables of the Tiru-mantra to the ninefold relationship between the Supreme Being and the World of sentient and insentient entities.
10. *tattva-trayam* — a detailed explanation of the three eternal realities of the Lord, the World and the jīvas.
11. *artha-pañcakam* — A treatise on the five fundamental doctrines:— the essential nature of God, the nature of the jīva, means of liberation, nature of the actual goal of spiritual endeavour and the impediments in the path of its attainment.
12. *tattva-śekharam* — a point by point refutation of other schools of thought.
13. *prameya-śekharam* — a treatise on Divine Grace
14. *arcirādi*. — the journey of the jīva in its astral body into the world of light and beyond.
15. *saṁsāra-sāmrāḷyam* — deals with the turning point from the world of saṁsāra to the feet of the Lord.
16. *navaratna-mālā* — Deals with the nine things that an aspirant must understand: himself as a total entity, his body, his relatives, other beings, gods other than Lord Viṣṇu, Srīvaiṣṇavas, Preceptors, Lakṣmi and the Lord Himself.
17. *prapanna-paritrāṇam* — a treatise on the qualifications and way of unconditional surrender to the Lord.
18. *śrīvacana-bhūṣaṇam* — the crowning masterpiece dealing with all the fundamentals of Srīvaiṣṇavism.

Piḷḷai-lokācārya wrote in 'Maṇi-pravāḷa' which is a blend of Sanskrit and Tamil and adopted the literary device of short, cryptic and pithy sentences, popularly known as 'sūtras'. Thus we see that Piḷḷai-lokācārya not merely describes and annotates the doctrines of the Srīvaiṣṇava tradition, but greatly dilates and elaborates on them thus earning him the title of Lokācārya (World-Teacher) — who dedicated his life to the spiritual regeneration of humankind (*adhyātma-punar-ujjīvana*).

An ordinary individual caught up in worldly existence cannot protect and liberate himself. For this he needs the aid and assistance of an ācārya. A compassionate ācārya (*dayālu*) teaches the precepts and enlightens the disciples once a proper relationship has been established between the two (*ācārya-sambandha*). But a 'most compassionate' ācārya (*Parama-dayālu*) writes down the precepts and teachings for the benefit of all those who cannot obtain personal contact with

him because of the constraints of time and space; and for the use of future generations as well. Piḷḷai-lokācārya belongs to this class of 'Parama-dayālu' ācāryas.

When Muslims invaded the Temple at Sīraṅgam, Vedānta Deśikan undertook to protect the magnum opus of Sudarśan-suri — the *śruta-prakāśika*. Piḷḷai-lokācārya took upon himself the duty of protecting the sacred Icons. In spite of his advanced age and failing health he accompanied the temple priests who taking the icons under the cover of darkness headed for the safety of Tirupati. Overcome by the hardship of the journey he resolved to rest at a cross-road and to gain time for the refugees by mis-directing the Muslim soldiers that were pursuing them. After they had realised they had been misled the soldiers returned and skinned the venerable ācārya alive and left him to die in agony! He left his body on the twelfth day (Dvādaśi) of the dark fortnight (Kṛṣṇa-pakṣa) in the month of Jyeṣṭha — corresponding to the year 1369 AD. Vedānta Deśikan managed to escape with the text and the two sons of Ācārya Sudarśan Suri, who himself was murdered in the temple along with all the disciples to whom he was lecturing at the time.



## Subject Matter

The work is broadly divided into four Cantos (*Prakaraṇas*) covering 6 categories of knowledge:—

1. *puruṣākāra vaibhavam* (sūtras 5 — 22) elucidating the glory of the Mediatrix — the Divine Mother Mahā-lakṣmī, the intercessor between the Lord and the jīvas and the conduit of Grace.
2. *sādhanaśya-gauravam* (sūtras 23— 70) the glorification of spiritual practice; the taking of refuge.
3. *tad-adhikāri-kṛtyam* (sūtras 80 — 307) the code of conduct for one who takes refuge.
4. *asya-sat-gur-upasevanam* (sūtras 308 — 365) the relationship between the preceptor and the disciple.
5. *hari-dayām-ahetukīm* (sūtras 366 — 406) the spontaneous redemptive Grace of the Supreme Lord.
6. *guror-upāyatām* (sūtras 407 — 463) the role of the preceptor in helping the aspirant to cross samsāra.

Another method of classifying the subject matter is to group it under 9 headings:—

1. The magnitude of Mahālakṣmī's intercession (sūtras 5 — 22)
2. The path of surrender (sūtras 23 — 114)
3. The relativity of the other means of liberation (sūtras 115 — 141)
4. The absolute reliance upon the Lord (sūtras 141 — 242)
5. The code of conduct to be followed by the Prapanna, with an understanding of Vedic teachings. (sūtras 243 — 307)
6. The qualifications of the preceptor (sūtras 308 — 320)
7. Interacting with the preceptor (sūtras 321 — 365)
8. Spontaneous Grace (sūtras 366 — 406)
9. Liberation (sūtras 407 — 463)



śrīmate rāmānujāya namaḥ

## Srīvacana Bhūṣana

### *The Ornament of Auspicious Teachings*

#### 1. Scriptural Authority.

##### 1. *vedārtha maṛuti-yiṭuvatu smṛuti-itihāsa-purāṇaṅkaḷāle.*

1. The meaning of the Vedas is revealed by means of the Smṛtis, Itihāsas and Purāṇas.

Smṛtis are the law books and texts dealing with regulations.

Itihāsas are the two epics Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata.

Purāṇas are the 18 books which deal with mythology, legends, history and the specific worship of the Gods — Viṣṇu and Siva.

##### 2. *smṛutiyālē pūrva-bhāgattil-arttam aṛutiyaṭakkaṭavatu maṛṇai yirandālum uttara-bhāgattilararttam aṛutiyaṭakka ṭavatu.*

2. The meaning of the “earlier portion” [of the Vedas] is established by Smṛti the meaning of the “later portion” is established by the other two [Itihāsas and Purāṇas].

The subject matter of the Vedas is divided into two parts. The “prior portion” of the Vedas is the Karma-Kāṇḍa or the section dealing with rituals, their interpretation and their application; also known as Mimāṃsa. The “latter portion” is the Jñāna-kāṇḍa or Vedānta (Upaniṣads), the section dealing with wisdom and theology, Lokācārya in this treatise deals with the purport of the latter.

The Smṛtis aid the proper application of Karma-Kāṇḍa, whereas the Purāṇas and Itihāsas are more useful for comprehending the Brahma-Kāṇḍa.

##### 3. *ivai yirandālum vaittuk-koṇḍu itihāsam prabalam.*

3. Of the two [Itihāsas and Purāṇas], Itihāsas are more important.

“Important” means that they carry more weight in terms of their authority in matters of dharma when discrepancies arise.

##### 4. *attālē adu muṛpaṭṭadu.*

4. On account of this, they are placed first [in the compound].

The verse referred to is:—

*itihāsa-purāṇābhyām vedam upabhrumhayet (source unknown)*

The epics and the Purāṇas elucidate the teachings of the Vedas.

##### 5. *itihāsa-śreṣṭhamāṇa śrī-rāmāyaṇattāl ciṛaiy-irundavalēṛṇā collukiradu: mahābhārattatāl dūta-pōnavān ēṛṇā collukiradu.*

5. The best of the two epics, the Rāmāyaṇa, glorifies the “captive one”; the Mahābhārata glorifies the “one who acted as the mediator.”

The central protagonist of the Rāmāyaṇa is the Goddess Sīta who was abducted and imprisoned by Rāvana. It must be noted that Sīta accepted captivity out of her own free will in order to secure



the release of numerous celestial beauties that were kept imprisoned by Rāvana. Sīta is the Great Goddess who could have destroyed Rāvana merely by a divine command but chose not to in order to bestow her Grace in abundance.

The central protagonist of the Mahābharata is Kṛṣṇa who was sent as ambassador to Duryodhana on behalf of the Pāṇḍavas, to mediate a peaceful solution to their conflict and to avoid war. Again the Lord could have accomplished everything by His command but chose to play along with the drama unfolding in order to bestow His Grace and demonstrate His simplicity and accessibility.

## 2. Glory of the Mediatrix and the necessity for mediation.

6. *ivaīy-iraṇḍālum puruṣākāra vaibhavam-um upāya vaibhavam-um collirāyirru,*

6. These two [Itihāsas] establish the greatness of the *puruṣākāra* and the greatness of *upāya*.

*puruṣākāra* — literally means “the maker of the puruṣa”. It signifies the one who mediates between the jīva and the Lord. The doctrine of mediation is central to the theology of Sṛīvaiṣṇavism.

*upāya* — literally “the means” indicates the method which leads to mokṣa of liberation from suffering and rebirth.

7. *Puruṣākāramām-potu krupaiyum pāratantryamum ananyārhatvamum veṇum.*

7. [The traits] essential to the *puruṣākāra* (Lakṣmī) are:— compassion, total dependence [upon the Lord] and not being subservient to another [other than the Lord].

8. *Pirāṭṭi murpaṭap-pirindadu taṇṇudaiya krupaiyai veḷiyiṭukaikkāka. Naḍuvir pirindadu pāratantryattai veḷiyiṭukaikkāka. Anantaram pirindadu ananyārhatvattai veḷiyiṭukaikkāka.*

8. The Goddess’ first separation revealed her compassion. Her total dependence [on the Lord] is revealed in the second separation. The final separation revealed her non-subservience to another.

In the Rāmāyana Sīta is separated from Rāma three times:—

- (1) First she was abducted by Rāvana and imprisoned in śrī Lanka
- (2) After her liberation Rāma sent her to the forest to undergo, the fire-ordeal because his subjects doubted her chastity and
- (3) Finally she left the earth at the end of the avatāra.

She demonstrated her compassion by liberating the maidens held captive and by demonstrating her compassion unasked and unsolicited over the 700 odd demonesses that tormented her by protecting them from the wrath of Hanumān. She demonstrated dependence on her Lord by being obedient to Him without question when He suggests that she might have failed in her fidelity during the period of her imprisonment; she tolerated the second separation and underwent the fire ordeal. Finally, she demonstrates herself as not being subservient to anyone other than her Lord when she desires to leave the earth and Rāma when the purpose of her incarnation had been achieved.

9. *samśleṣa viśleṣaṅkaḷ-iraṇṭilum puruṣākāratvam tōrrum.*

9. Mediator-ship is manifested in both her union and separation.

Suffering in terms of human relationships only has relevance to mortals bound by Karma who have to endure the results of their actions. In the case of the Goddess who is untouched by Karma, her apparent sufferings are meant only to highlight her essential traits of mediatorship.

10. *sams̥leṣa daśaiyil īsvaraṛait-tiruttum: viśleṣa daśaiyil cetaṇait-tiruttum.*

10. In the state of union [of the Goddess with the Lord], there is rectification of the Lord, in the state of separation, there is rectification of sentient beings.

While in union with Her Lord, the Goddess exerts her influence on the Lord to bestow compassion and to be reconciled with the jīvas: while separate from the Lord She influences the jīva to return to the Lord.

11. *iruvariyaṁ tiruttuvatum upadeśattāle.*

11. The rectification of both [the Lord and the jīva] is effected by means of counsel.

The Goddess influences only through counsel, not by command. This is important for understanding that all of moral and ethical teachings in Indian spiritual systems are *counsel based* and not *command based* as per the Abrahamic religions.

12. *upadeśattālē iruvaruṭaiyavum karma-pāraṅtryaṅ kulaiyum.*

12. By counsel, the dependence on [law of] Karma by both the Lord and the jīva is annulled.

Without the mediation of the Goddess, the embodied jīva (jīvātman) believes it's welfare depends upon the rewards of it's good and bad deeds (karma-s) and the Lord is committed to the management and administration of the Karmic consequences of deeds. The good counsel of the Goddess assists both the jīva and the Lord in laying aside this karma-dependant relationship.

13. *upadeśattālē mīlāta-potu cetanaṅai aruḷālē tiruttum, īsvaraṅai aiḷkāle tiruttum.*

13. If not rectified by counsel, the jīva is rectified by Grace: the Lord is rectified by [the Goddess'] beguiling charms.

If the jīva is not convinced through the teachings of the Scriptures and the ācāryas then it will be reconciled to the Lord through Divine Grace. The Lord is so in love with Mother Lakṣmi that He does whatever she suggests.

14. *ariyāda varttaṅkalai-yaṭaiya arivittu ācārya krutyat-taiyū puruṣākāra krutyat-taiyū upāya krutyat-taiyū tāṅe yēriṭṭuk kolḷakaiyāle mahābhārata-ttil upāya vaibhavam-um collirṛāyirru.*

14. The greatness of *upāya* is demonstrated in the Mahābhārata by Kṛṣṇa's taking upon Himself the duty of ācārya, revealing completely the teachings which were unknown and [revealing Himself] both as *puruṣākāra* and *upāya*.

As ācārya, Kṛṣṇa is the teacher, mediator and the means to liberation for Arjuna. He gave him detailed teachings and instructions, removed all barriers standing between them, and revealed Himself to be the only means to ultimate well-being and liberation. And finally He suggests to Arjuna:— “consider well, all that I have taught you and then do as you please!” (Gita 18:63)

15. *Puruṣākārat-tukkum upāyat-tukkum vaibhavam-āvatu doṣattaiyū guṇahāni-yaiyū pārttu upekṣiyātavaḷa vaṅrikkē aṅgi-kārat-tukku avai taṅṅaiye paccaiyākkugai.*

15. The greatness of *puruṣākāra* (Mediation) and *upāya* (method) lies in [the Lord's] not merely disregarding [the jīva's] moral defects and lack of merit, but in actually making these the very basis for the acceptance of the jīva [by the Lord].

Moral defects or *doṣas* refer both to the transgressions of commission as well as those of omission — these become the very causes of Grace.



16. *iraṇḍu miraṇḍuṅ kulaiyaveṇum-eṅṅirukkil iraṇḍuk-kumiraṇḍum uṇḍāyirra-tām.*

16. If it be said that it is necessary [for salvation] to remove both of these [the moral defects and lack of merit], then both become [the Lord's].

If the Lord should refuse to be reconciled with the jīva because of its defects and lack of merit, then the Lord Himself could be accused of defect and lack of merit!

17. *iraṇḍuṅ kulaintat-eṅṅirukkil ittalaik-kiraṇḍum uṇḍāyirra-tām.*

17. If the jīva thinks that these two [moral defects and lack of merit] are to be removed [before reconciliation] then these [defects and lack of merit] are the jīva's indeed!

It is spiritual vandalism to consider that acceptance by the Lord necessitates the removal of one's defects and moral blemishes by the performance of various types of purificatory rites, religious practices such as the recitation of mantras: it is an indication of the lack of merit when one fails to contemplate one's own weaknesses and the greatness of the Lord.

18. *rākṣasikaḷ doṣam prasiddham.*

18. The faults of the demonesses are well-known.

Sīta, imprisoned in the Aśoka garden by Rāvana was cruelly tormented by the Rākshasis. Yet, she pleaded with Hanumān not to wreak revenge upon them, thus mediating for them on the very basis of their faults and without their having actually requested this.

19. *jitendriyaril talaivaṇāy āstika-agresaraṇāy “keśavasyātmā” eṅṅu kṛṣṇaṅukku tāraṇāy-irukkira arjunnukku doṣamē-teṅṅil bandhugaḷ pakkaḷ snehamum kāruṇyamum vadapīdiyum.*

19. The foibles of Arjuna, the sustainer of Kṛṣṇa, the “intimate friend of Kesava”, foremost of believers, Master of those who have conquered their senses, were, for example, sympathy for, and attachment to relatives and anxiety over killing them.

Even Arjuna had his personal and moral foibles, and these very foibles became the basis for Kṛṣṇa's acceptance of him. Arjuna had for example, demonstrated puritanical harshness in rejecting the advances of the love-struck Urvaśī.

20. *Draupadi-paripavaṅkaṅṅ-irundadu kṛṣṇāpi-prāyattālē pradhāna doṣam.*

20. In the opinion of Kṛṣṇa, the main fault of Arjuna was the fact that he was indifferent to the humiliation of Draupadi.

Arjuna and his four brothers sat silent while Draupadi was being humiliated by Duṣśāsana, who attempted to strip her naked in front of all the assembled people. She was saved by Kṛṣṇa who increased her sari length; Duṣśāsana was exhausted before the saris were!

21. *Pāṇḍavarkaḷaiyum nirasikka prāptamāy-irukka vaiṭ tatu, draupadi-yuḍaiya maṅgala-sūtrattukkāga.*

21. Even though the Pāṇḍavas deserved to be destroyed, they were permitted to live because of the sacred thread around the neck of Draupadi.

The sacred thread (maṅgala-sūtra or tāli) is the marriage token which signifies Draupadi's marriage to the Pāṇḍavas. Kṛṣṇa refrained from destroying the Pāṇḍavas for their lack of defensive action because He did not want to see Draupadi become a widow.

22. *Arjunaṅ-ukku dūtya-sāratyaṅkaḷ paṅṅiṅṅum prapatty-upadeśam paṅṅiṅṅum ivaḷukkāga.*

22. It was only for her [Draupadi's] sake of that Kṛṣṇa acted as an ambassador, drove the chariot for Arjuna and gave instruction on *Prapatti* (taking refuge).

### 3. Taking refuge

23. *prapattikku deśaniyamam-um kāla-niyamam-um prakāra-niyamam-um adhikāra-niyamam-um phala-niyamam-ilai*

23. There are no conditions of place, time, method, aptitude or any consideration of results in the act of taking refuge (*Prapatti*).

24. *viśaya niyamame yuḷḷadu.*

24. The only consideration is that of the ultimate object.

The Lord Himself is the only object of taking refuge — He is the means as well as the end to be obtained. Worldly people take refuge in all manner of insubstantial and equally impermanent things like, spouse, children, careers, social status, property, assets, goals, ideology etc. But the only object which is permanent, stable and substantial is the Lord Himself.

25. *karmat-tukkup-puṇya-kṣetram vasantādi-kālam śāstroka-aṅgaḷān atattat prakāraṅgaḷ traivarṇikar eṅṛivaiv-eḷḷām vyavasthaṅkaḷ-āyirukkum.*

25. For the performance of [Vedic] rituals one has to take into consideration the place which must be auspicious, an [auspicious] time like spring, various adjuncts prescribed in the different Scriptures, and one must also be a member of one of the three initiated castes (Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas)

26. *“sa eṣa deśaḥ kālaḥ” eṅṛaiyāle idukku deśakāla niyamam-illai.*

26. [For taking refuge] there is no limitation of time and place, as it was said:— “This is the place!”, “This is the time!”

The quotation is from the Rāmāyana with reference to Vibhīṣana's taking refuge in Rāma. The purport is that the place and time for taking refuge is appropriate whenever and wherever one is inspired to do so.

27. *ivvarttam mantra-ratnattil prathama-padattile su-spaṣṭham*

27. This purport is clearly affirmed in the first word of the jewel of mantras.

The reference to the Dvaya Mantra, the mantra of taking refuge:—

*śrīman nārāyaṇa, caranau śaranam prapadye śrīmate nārāyaṇāya namaḥ.*

The first word. “śrīman”, refers both to the Lord as the means (*upāya*) and the Goddess śrī (the *puruṣākāra*), in an eternal & immutable relationship. This eternal and immutable relationship transcending time and all limitations attests to the timeless and unconditional nature of taking refuge.

28. *prakāra niyati-yillai-yeṅṅum-iḍam eṅṅum kāṅalām.*

28. Everywhere [in the Scriptures] it can be verified that there are no stipulations whatsoever regarding the method of taking refuge.

29. *Draupadi snātaiyāy-aṅṅe prapatti paṅṅirru arjunaṅ naḍuvē-ire ivvardaṅ keṭṭadu.*

29. It was in an impure state that Draupadi took refuge. Arjuna listened to the teaching on this [doctrine of surrender] while in the midst of vile people.

Draupadi took refuge in Kṛṣṇa when Duṣṣāsana was attempting to disrobe her in the assembly hall. At that time, she was wearing only one cloth because she was menstruating. Kṛṣṇa gave Arjuna the teaching on Prapatti, (Bhagavad-Gita 18.6) on the battle-field, surrounded by malicious people.

30. *āgaiyāl śudhy-aśudhikaḷ-iraṇḍum teṭa-veṇḍā, irunda-paṭiye adhikāriyām iddaṇai.*

30. Therefore, it is not necessary to consider either purity or impurity:— whatever one’s condition be — it is an appropriate state.

31. *ilviḍattilē vēlveṭṭip-piḷḷaikkuṭ piḷḷai aruḷicceyda vārttaiyai smarippatu.*

31. One is reminded of the remarks of [Nam]Piḷḷai to [Velvetṭi]Piḷḷai in this matter.

Nampiḷḷai was the teacher of Piḷḷai Lokācārya’s father. He is reported to have said:—  
“For a pure person, impurity is irrelevant: for an impure person purity too is irrelevant.”

One day Velvetṭi Piḷḷai remarked that Rāma had observed some procedural formalities such as facing east etc., when taking refuge in Varuṇa before crossing the ocean — Nampiḷḷai replied that Rāma had done so, simply as a matter of protocol, given his rather orthodox background and not as something mandatory.

32. *adhikāri-niyamam iṅrikkē yoḷindapaḍi yeṅṅaṅṅil, dharmā-putrādi-galum draupadiyum kākam-um kāliyan-um śrī gajendrāḷvāṅ-um śrī vibhiṣaṅāḷvāṅ-um perumāḷum ilaiya- perumāḷum toṭakkamāṅ-avargaḷ śaraṅam pukurukaiyāḷe adhikāri-niyamam illai.*

32. That fact that there is no consideration of eligibility [in taking refuge] is demonstrated by these examples:— Yuddhiṣṭhira and his brothers [the five Pāṇḍavas], Draupadi, the demon-crow [Kākasura], Kāliyan (the dragon king), Gajendra [the elephant king], Vibhīṣana, the Lord [Rāma], the younger Lord [Lakṣmana] and others: as all these had taken refuge, there is no prerequisite conditions for it.

All of the above-mentioned took refuge at some stage, as follows:—

- Yuddhiṣṭhira and his brothers took refuge in śrī Kṛṣṇa before the commencement of the war.
- Draupadi took refuge in Kṛṣṇa during the episode of her attempted humiliation.
- The demon-crow attacked Sita and when Rāma was about to kill it, Sita interceded and its life was spared.
- The wives of the dragon Kāliyan took refuge in Kṛṣṇa on his behalf and his life was spared.
- Gajendra surrendered to Viṣṇu as he was about to be drowned by the crocodile.
- Vibhīṣana took refuge in Rāma before the assault on Laṅka.
- The Lord Rāma took refuge in Varuṇa the king of the sea before attempting to cross on the way to war.
- Lakṣmana took refuge in his elder brother Rāma on the eve of their departure to the forest.

33. *phala-niyamam-iṅrikkē yoḷintapaṭi yeṅṅiṅṅil: dharmā-putrādi-gaḷukkup phalam rājyam. Draupadi-kkup phalam vastram. Kākatukku-um kaḷiyaṅukkum phalam prāṅam. śrī gajendrāḷvāṅukkup phalam kaiṅkaryam: śrī vibhiṣaṅāḷvāṅukkup phalam rāma-prāṅti. Perumāḷukku phalam samudra-taraṅam ilaiya-perumāḷukku phalam rāmānuvṛtti.*

33. The absence of conditioning pertaining to results is illustrated by the following examples:— a Kingdom was obtained by Yuddhiṣṭhira and his brothers, [limitless] clothing was obtained by Draupadi: continued existence was obtained by the demon-crow and Kāḷiyan: service was obtained by Gajendra; Vibhīṣana obtained Rāma Himself; The Lord [Rāma] obtained permission to cross the ocean and the younger Lord [Lakṣmana] obtained constant attendance on Rāma.

Each of the above sought different fruits as the result of their *prapatti*. The Pandavas sought the aid of Kṛṣṇa in retrieving their kingdom. The Asura who, desiring to make love to Sita took the form a crow, although, he pecked at Sita's bread and caused bleeding was spared by Rāma when he took refuge with Him. Vibhīṣana surrendered to Rāma in order to obtain admission to His camp. Rāma Himself performed *prapatti* to Varuna, king of the ocean seeking his assistance in crossing the ocean to śrī Lanka.

34. *viśaya niyamam āvadu guṇa pūrṭi-yuḷḷa viṭame viśayam āgai pūrṭi-yuḷḷadam arcāvatāra-ttilē.*

34. The only consideration [for taking refuge] is the Person [in whom refuge is sought]; the Person should be one who is perfect in respect of qualities, and such perfection is found in the *arcāvatāra* (the iconic manifestation of the Lord).

According to the theology of the Pāñcarātra, the Lord, by dint of His power of omnipresence and compassion enters into an icon which has been made according to the Scriptural injunctions, and abides there to receive the worship of the devotees and to bestow Grace. In this form the Lord is accessible to all.

35. *āḷvārgaḷ pala viṭaṅgaḷilum prapatti paṅṅirrum arccāvatārattilē.*

35. The āḷvārs, in many places, took refuge in the iconic manifestation.

36. *“pūrṇam” eṅgaiyāle yellā guṇaṅgalum puṣkaḷaṅgal.*

36. “Fullness” [declared in the Upaniṣads], means possession of all positive qualities in plenitude.

The Upaniṣads declare:—

*pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idam pūrṇāt pūrṇam uducyate, pūrṇasya pūrṇam ādāya pūrṇam eva avasiṣyate.*

That is Perfect this is Perfect, from the Perfect, Perfection arises. Having subtracted Perfection from the Perfect, the Perfect alone remains.

#### 4. The theological manifestations.

37. *prapattikk-apekṣitaṅgalāṇa saulabhyātikaḷ iruṭṭaraiye viḷakkup-pōlē prakāśip-padiṅge.*

37. Requirements for taking refuge, [such as the qualities of] accessibility (*saulabhya*) and others (graciousness — *sauśīlya* and tender solicitude — *vātsalya*) are displayed here [in the holy icon] like a light [shining in the dark].

The “requirements” are the practical aspects of taking refuge. The Pāñcarātra Āgama declares:—

nirākāre tu deveśe nārcanam sambhave nṛṇām |  
na ca dhyānam na ca stotram tasmāt sākāram arcayet ||

*A Deity devoid of form cannot be worshipped by humans, It cannot be meditated upon nor praised. Therefore one should worship only God with Form. (Vishnu Samhita 3:5-8)*

38. *pūrttiyaiyum svāntryat-taiyum kuḷaittuk-koṇḍu taṇṇai anātarik-kiṟavargaḷait tāṇā-tarittu niṟkiraviṭam.*

38. Disregarding both [His] plenitude and [His] independence, He [the Lord] appears here [in the icon], out of great compassion even for those who are indifferent to Him.

39. *bhū-gata-jalam pōlē antaryāmitvam; āvaraṇa-jalam pōlē paratvam; pāṛkaḍal-pōlē vyuham; perukkāru pōlē vibhavaṅgal; atilē teṅkiṇamaṭukkaḷ pōlē arccāvatāram.*

39. The Lord dwelling within the heart (*antaryāmin*) is like the waters deep in the earth [not easily accessible]; the transcendent aspect of the Lord (*paratva*) is inaccessible like the oceans surrounding the earth; the fourfold hypostatic manifestation (*vyūhas*—*Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha*) is [as inaccessible] as the milk-ocean; the Divine Descent (*avatāra* — *vibhava*) is like rivers only periodically in flood [but generally dry], but the icon (*arca-avatāra*) is like the deep pools in such rivers, easily available for use at all times.

The doctrine of these five theological manifestations of the Supreme Godhead is central to the metaphysics of the Pañcarātra āgama.

### 5. Persons eligible to take refuge in the Icon.

40. *idutāṇ śāstraṅgaḷāl tiruttavoṇṇāte, viṣayāntaraṅgalilē maṇḍi vimukarāy-pōrum cētanarkku vaimukhyattai māṛri ruciyai vīlaikkak-kaṭavatāy, ruci piṟantāl upāyamāy, upāya parigraham paṇṇiṇāl bhogyamumāy irukkum.*

40. To one who is not rectified by the [teachings of the] Scriptures, distracted by the various sense-objects, and abiding in a state of antipathy, this [icon] indeed, produces a taste which converts one's antipathy. In producing a taste [for spiritual experience], it acts as a means (*upāya*), but after having [initially] been used as a means, it becomes an enjoyment in itself.

The iconic manifestation through its beauty and mystery succeeds where the vociferous Scriptures fail. Many people have been attracted to spiritual life by these icons and the temples and their festivities. Initially they serve to attract people and then they become an enjoyment in themselves. The taking of refuge is well served by the lord's presence in an easily accessible tangible object and arcāvatara provides such an object.

41. *itil prapatti-paṇṇum adhikāriḷ mūvar.*

41. Three [kinds of] persons are eligible to take refuge in the Icon.

42. *ajñārum, jñānātikarum, bhakti-paravaśarum.*

42. The uninformed, the well informed and those given to spontaneous devotion.

43. *ajñānttāle prapannar asmatātiḷ: jñānātik-yattāle prapannar pūrva-ācāryarḷ: bhakti-pāraśyattāle prapannar āḷvārḷ.*

43. The *uninformed* are like the generality of us: the former Preceptors took refuge on account of their being *well informed*: the āḷvārs are *Prapannas* by their being absorbed in the ecstasy of devotion.

The uninformed are the majority of people who do not understand the nature of the human condition and the means to happiness and in addition are ill-equipped to follow the other paths to liberation, they therefore, are eligible to take refuge in the Lord via the Icon. The previous great Preceptors such as Nāthamuni, Yāmunācārya and Rāmānuja were well-informed about the human

condition and all the means to liberation but discarded them all as being opposed to the quintessential nature of the jīva, preferring instead to take refuge. The āḷvārs were so overcome by spontaneous devotion and absorbed in ecstasy that they could not steady themselves to perform the formal rigmarole required for the other paths to Liberation.

44. *ippaṭic collukiratam ūrrattaip-parra.*

44. It is said thus by reference to the primary characteristic [of each].

All the three characteristics of ignorance, wisdom or spontaneous devotion may be present in Prapannas in varying degrees, but one is usually characterised by the predominant characteristic.

45. *im-mūṅṅum mūṅṅu tatvattaiyum parṛivarum.*

45. These three (kinds of Prapannas) are related to the three *tattva-s* (realities)

The three *tattva-s* are — *acit* (insentient matter), *cit* (sentient beings) and *īśvara* (the Lord), the characteristic of *acit* is ignorance, knowledge is the characteristic of *cit*, and devotion is principle characteristic related to *īśvara* from the individual's perspective.

46. *“eṅṅāṅ ceykēn” eṅkīra-ṅiṭattil immūṅṅum-uṅḍu.*

46. All these [three] are included in, “What can I do?”

The reference is to Nammāḷvār's Tiru-vāi-moḷi 5.8.3. —

“What can I do? Who is going to protect me? What are you doing to me? I don't have any desire for anyone except you, O Lord reclining in Kumbhakonam surrounded by a compound-wall beautifully embellished! Whatever days there are in my life-time, let them be spent at (your) feet. Please see that these days are spent clinging to your feet!”

Here Nammāḷvār at first expresses confusion and insecurity, he then recognises that the Lord has taught that He alone is the means and the end; and finally he allows himself to be overwhelmed by spontaneous and passionate devotion towards the Lord.

47. *aṅgu oṅraipparṛiy-irukkum.*

47. There [in that passage] it concerns one [characteristic] in particular [ie. devotion].

48. *mukhyam aduve.*

48. That is the most important one.

49. *“avidyātaḥ.....” eṅkīra ślokattilē immūṅṅum collirru.*

49. These three are mentioned in the verse beginning, “By ignorance .....

From a casual composition of Bhaṭṭar:— “The blessed sage Saunaka explained the inner meaning of the secret mantra called *Jitantā* as ‘Either by ignorance of the god, by complete knowledge of the god, or by the abundance of one's own devotion in the case of those who do not know any other means, for them Hari is both the means and the end’.

50. *“idam śaraṅam ajñāninām.”*

50. “This is the refuge of the ignorant”.

There is also this verse in the Lakṣmi Tantra (17.100):—

“This is the refuge for the ignorant, for the wise, for those who desire to cross (the ocean of Samsāra) and for those who desire immortality.”



## 6. Prapatti — Taking Refuge

51. *bhakti-taṇṇilē avastāpedam pīrandavāre idudāṇ kulaiyak kaṭavatāy-irukkum.*

51. When devotion reaches a certain stage, it [*Prapatti*] may become redundant.

52. *taṇṇaip pēṇavum paṇṇum tarikkavum paṇṇum.*

52. And it may also induce one to attempt to nourish and sustain oneself.

Out of extreme devotion, one may like the ālvārs, do things which are not compatible, with *Prapatti* such as striving to obtain the Lord or turning away from Him when He delays in appearing. Examples of this are Periyālvār Tiru-moḷi 3.7.8 and Tiru-vāi-moḷi 6.2.2. In the former, Periyālvār portrays a young woman who has lavishly beautified herself in the hope of attracting the Lord. In the latter, Nammālvār speaks as a lady hurt by her lover's delay in coming. When the lover (the Lord) does finally arrive she tells Him to go away, to go to his other ladies, so charming and enjoyable.

53. *inda svabhāva viśeṣaṅgaḷ kaḷyāṇa guṇaṅgaḷilum tiruc-caraṅgaḷilum tiru-nāmaṅgaḷilum, tiruk-kuḷa-locaiyiluṅ kāṇalām.*

53. These conflicting attitudes may be seen with regard to the impact of the auspicious attributes, the divine weapons, the divine names and the sound of the divine flute.

The Supreme Lord is the same at all times, but the attitudes of the God-lovers are always fluctuating. At one time the divine attributes soothe and console and at other times they torment. For example in Nacchiyār Tiru-moḷi 8:3 Aṇḍāl felt compelled to sustain herself in her cherished Lover's absence, by singing about His auspicious attributes. Whereas Nammālvār's mental agony is reflected in Tiru-vāi-moḷi 8-1-8 where he feels both tantalised and tormented by the Lord's attributes.

54. *idutaṇṇaip-pārttāl pitāvukkup putraṇḷuttuvāṅgumā pōlē yiruppatōṇru.*

54. When one looks at this, it appears to be like a son asking his father for a written undertaking of protection!

The essential relationship between jīva and Lord guarantees the lord's protection; thus, seeking assurances of protection from the Lord, is like a grown son asking his father for an insurance policy in regard to his upbringing, regardless of the fact that the father has already fulfilled his paternal duty without any prompting or compulsion. A Prapanna who tries to compel God to save him through his importuning is guilty of hubris in that he expects God to be at his beck and call. Bargaining with God is impious, disloyal and insolent.

55. *idu taṇṇakku svarūpam taṇṇaip porātolikai.*

55. The peculiarity of this [*Prapatti*] is in not tolerating its being regarded as a 'means'.

*Prapatti* is not to be taken as a means for attaining the Lord such as Bhakti, Jñāna or Karma Yogas.

56. *aṅgam taṇṇaiy-oḷintavarraip porātolikai.*

6. Its adjunct is not tolerating anything other than itself.

*Prapatti*, unlike other means, such as Bhakti Yoga, does not have any adjuncts (*anga*) such as the personal effort of the aspirant and Scriptural sanction for such practice.

57. *upāyam taṇṇaip porukkum.*

57. The upāya tolerates itself.

The Lord as the Ultimate Means and the End needs no assistance in Liberating sentient beings but has to tolerate these “indirect” means to His attainment such as Bhakti, Jñāna and Karma Yogas as well as the personal effort of the individual aspirants.

58. *upāyāntaram iraṇḍaiyum porukkum.*

58. The other upāyas tolerate both [a means and an end].

Bhakti Yoga etc. can accommodate both the theory of attainment and the practice of the aspirant.

59. *idu iraṇḍaiyum porādu.*

59. This one tolerates neither [a means nor an end].

In respect of the Lord who is the Ultimate Means, both the means and the end are the same. Prapatti is a mere conveyor and thus does not accommodate any other ancillary means nor does it consider itself as a means at all.

60. *phalattukku ātma-jñānamum apratiṣedhamumē vēṇḍuvadu.*

60. Only knowledge of Self and non-refusal are necessary to obtain the results.

The question may be raised as to whether the supplicant need not possess some degree of merit, granting that *Prapatti* is not a means. The answer is that only two conditions are required for *Prapatti*, these are; (1) a basic understanding and conviction that one is the sole servitor of the Lord, subject to His exclusive protection and (2) to then refrain from obstructing the influx of the Lord’s Grace by remaining in a state of passive quiescence (*apraṭiṣedha*).

61. *allātapōdu bandattukkum pūrtikkum kottaiyām.*

61. If this is not so, it would be a defect in the relationship [of the jīva to the Lord] and [the Lord’s] perfection.

Knowledge of the Self is knowledge of one’s being *śeṣa* to the Lord. A *śeṣa* is something that exists solely to serve the purposes of another, an adjunctive. Everything in the universe exists to serve the purposes of the Lord who is the substantive or *śeṣi*. Thus, the only requirement for Salvation is that the jīva resumes its natural disposition toward the Lord, any other requirement would be a fault and not a virtue.

62. *āpattaip pōkkikkollu-kiromēṇru pramittu attai vīlāittukollā toḷikaiyē vēṇḍuvadu.*

62. Under the erroneous impression of warding off calamity [through self-effort in achieving Salvation], one should not cause calamity by trying to avoid it.

Apprehending the enormity of the problem of Mokṣa on the one hand and the danger of re-immersion in the ocean of Samsāra on the other, one may out of desperation try to bolster one’s chances of Mokṣa by resorting to other means such as propitiation of the Lord. By doing this one will be courting a greater danger — the effacement of one’s true nature of exclusive dependence upon the Lord.

63. *rakṣanattuk-kapekṣitam rakṣyatvānumatiye.*

63. Protection simply requires submission to being protected.

64. *ellā vupāyattukkum poduvākaiyālum, caitanyakārya mākaiyālum, prāpti daśaiyilum anuvartikkaiyālum, — svarūpātirēkiy-allāmaiyaḷum acit-vyāvrutta veṣattai sādhanam-ākkavoṇṇādu.*

64. This activity [submission to protection], which is a conscious choice, cannot be considered a means since —

- (a) it is common to all means;
- (b) only sentient beings can undertake it
- (c) it is valid even in attainment and
- (d) it does not contradict the [jīva's] essential nature.

The Lord is said to await the desire of the subject for His protection — *rakṣyāpekṣam pratīkṣate* — the desire on the part of the individual struggling in Samsāra of course is nothing more than a realisation of the futility of one's efforts and simply surrendering to the Lord. This *modus operandi* is the most suitable because of the above reasons.

65. *acitvyāvruṭtikku prayōjanam, upāytil-upakāra smrutiyum upeyattilukappum.*

65. The reason why a sentient being is different from the insentient is that [the sentient being] may constantly be mindful of the assistance given by the *upāya* (the Lord), and the [awareness of] enjoyment in union [with the Lord].

66. *“uṇmaṇattāl eṇṇinaintiruntāy” eṅṅirapaṭiyē prāptikku upāyumu avaṅ niṇaivu.*

66. In the text — “What are you thinking of?....” His [the Lord's] thinking is the means of attainment.

The reference is to Tirumangai Aḷvār's Periya-Tiru-moḷi 2.7.1, wherein the āḷvār, playing the role of a mother, is pondering the helpless condition of her daughter, who is enraptured by the Lord:—

“A girl whose face is like the shining, brilliant moon, she who was born of the nectar of the lilies, a charming girl of the Koḷḷi hills, even though she knew that this Goddess (Lakṣmi) is seated on your chest, she became enamoured [of you], tell me, O Lord, what have you been thinking in your mind, about this girl who has made supplication at Your feet?”

67. *adu-tāṇep-pōdum uṇḍu.*

67. That, indeed, is at all times.

If neither surrender (*Prapatti*) nor personal merit (*punya*) is considered as a means to salvation then what is? The answer is that the Lord is eternally mindful of the jīva at all times and it is this very mindfulness that is the Divine Grace which bestows salvation.

68. *adu palippatu ivaṅṅiṇaivu māriṅāl.*

68. When one's attitude has changed, it becomes operative.

When the jīva finally gives up the idea of self-redemption and metaphysical struggling, then the Lord's Grace comes flooding down.

69. *“antima kālattukut taṅcam-ippōdu taṅcameṇen kira niṅṅivu kulaikai” enṛu jīyar-arūḷicceyvar.*

69. Naṅṅiyar has said:— “The refuge at the moment of death is to give up the concern about refuge!”

Once when Naṅṅiyar was visiting a sick Śrīvaiṣṇava on his death-bed, he was asked:— “What is our refuge at the time of dying?” The Jīyar responded that total cessation of concern about refuge would afford the requisite conditions for the operation of Salvific Grace! Sentient beings should be passively dependent toward the Lord, just like the insentient.

*70. prāptāyum prāpakaṇum prāptikkuḷukappāṇum avaṇe.*

70. He [the Lord] is the one who benefits, the one who causes the union and the one who enjoys upon unification.

The individual *cetana* is not the real beneficiary through the act of Salvation, it is the Lord who, as Proprietor of everything reaps the joy of reclamation and enjoyment of the lost property restored to Him.

### 7. Dependence on the Lord (*paratantrya*).

*71. svayatna nivrutti pāratantrya phalam, svaprayojana nivrutti śeṣatva phalam.*

71. The result of [the realisation of] dependence on the Lord (*paratantrya*) is the cessation of self-effort; the result of acknowledging one's being an attribute (*śeṣatva*) is the cessation of self-enjoyment.

Self-effort and self-enjoyment are inherent in the individual *jīva* fully capacitated by the lord for a career of activity, by virtue of its ability to act and to enjoy the rewards of its actions. These two can only be eliminated when one realises one's exclusive dependence upon the Lord (*paratantrya*) and that one exists solely to serve the purposes of the Lord (*ananyārha śeṣatva*). When these two characteristics are fully realised and actualised then the selfish imperatives of self-effort and self-enjoyment can be redirected into selfless service of the Lord and the world without any tinge of personal egoism and desire for reward.

*72. para-prayojana pravrutti prayatna phalam, tat viṣaya-prīti caitanya phalam.*

72. Then, the result of [the *cetana*'s] continued self-exertion is the working out of the Supreme one's purpose, the fruit of enlightenment is The Lord's pleasure.

It may be asked whether it is possible for the embodied *jīva* to give up all action? — the reply is that all actions performed should be done to further the Lord's own intentions (*loka-saṅgraha*), the enjoyment of attaining the Lord is His own enjoyment.

*te prāpnuvanti māmeva sarva bhūta hite ratāḥ — Gīta 12:4*  
Intent on the welfare of all beings — they come to Me alone.

### 8. Attributes of the *jīva*

*73. aham-arttat-tukku jñāna-ānandaṅgaḷ taṭastam-eṇṇumpaḍi dāsyamiṇe antaraṅga nīrūpakam.*

73. Knowledge and bliss are also attributes [of the *jīva*], but its singular distinguishing characteristic is servitude (*dāsyam*).

Consciousness or sentience distinguishes the *jīva* from insentient matter. Knowledge and bliss are characteristics common to both the *jīva* and the Lord. Servitude distinguishes the *jīva* from the Lord just as Lordship distinguishes the Lord from both the sentient and the insentient.

*74. idudāṇ vantēriyaṇru.*

74. This, indeed, is not imposed [upon the *jīva*] from the outside.

In other words it is natural to the conditioned entity. Every person in the world stands in the relationship of servitor to someone or something else. Parents to their children, politicians to their voters, workers to their bosses, shopkeepers to their customers, doctors to their patients, pet lovers to their pets, farmers to their animals etc.

75. *svāntryamum anya-śeṣatvamum vanterī.*

75. Independence and allegiance (*śeṣatva*), to another [other than the Lord] are antithetic [to the quintessential nature of the jīva].

The twin convictions of personal independence and the desire to seek self-fulfilment by serving another for personal gain is antithetic to the quintessential ontological nature of the jīva.

76. *śeṣatva-virodhi svāntryam tacceṣatva-virodhi tat-itara-śeṣatvam.*

76. Independence negates dependence [upon the Lord] allegiance to another obstructs servitude to That One [Kṛṣṇa].

As long as we are convinced that we are independent and capable of achieving success and happiness by our own efforts we will be incapable of taking refuge in Kṛṣṇa. And as long as we are convinced that happiness can be achieved by serving another we will never have the time to serve the Lord.

77. *ahamkāram-ākīra ārpaittuṭaitāl ātmāvuk-kāliyāta-pēr aḍiyāṅ-eṅṛire.*

77. When the bonds caused by the sense of individuality (*ahamkāra*) are broken, the eternal name of the jīva is “servant” (*aḍiyān*).

Seeing that it is impossible while living in the relative world to refrain from serving others, the skilful way to do this is to realise one’s ontological position and then adjust one’s perception:—

“He who sees Me everywhere and everything in Me;  
I am not separated from him and he is never separated from Me”. Gita 6 :30

So by seeing Kṛṣṇa in everything and everyone then our service to them will be transformed into service to God.

## 9. Self-identity

78. *grāma kulātikaḷāl varum pēr anārṭta hetu.*

78. Identifying with reference to one’s village, family and the like is cause for calamity.

Naming oneself with reference to one’s village, family, caste or profession is a mark of the *ahamkāra* — deluded sense of individuality and self-pride, and veils the essential attribute of the jīva which is servitude; hence after initiation all Vaiṣṇavas are given a name of the Lord with the suffix *dāsa* (m) or *dāsi* (f) — meaning “servant of God”.

79. *“ekānti vyapadestavyaḥ”*

79. “ekānti (one who is totally dedicated) should be defined”

There is a verse in the Pañcaratra Agama-s prohibiting the Prapanna from identifying in this way — to the supplicant the Lord Viṣṇu is everything, family village, clan and all else.

## 10. Upāya and self-effort.

80. *upāyattukku, pirāṭṭiyaiyum draupadiyaiyum tirukkaṅṅa-maṅgaiy-āṅḍānaiyum pōlē yirukka veṇum upeyattukku ilaiya perumālaiyum periya-vuḍaiyāraiyaum piḷḷai-tiru-naraiyūr-araiyaraiyaum cintayantiyaiyaum pōlē yirukka veṇum.*

80. As to *upāya* (method), one should be like the Goddess, (Sita) Draupadi and Tirukkanna-mangai-āṅḍān; as to the *upeya* (goal), one should be like the younger Lord (Lakṣmana), Periya-vudaiyār (Jatāyu), Piḷḷai Tiru-naraiyur Araiyar and Cintayanti.

81. *pirāṭṭikum draupadikkum vāci śaktiyum aśaktiyum.*

81. The difference between the Goddess Sītā and Draupadi [was that] one had power and the other was powerless.

Sita, being imprisoned by Rāvaṇa had the capability to liberate herself with her own extraordinary powers but she chose not to employ them. Instead she told Hanuman that it was befitting a warrior of the calibre of Rāma to come to Lanka to rescue her.

Draupadi on the other hand while being humiliated by Duṣśāsana was powerless to protect herself. She simply submitted to the Grace of śrī Kṛṣṇa who then extended her sari and prevented her from being stripped naked in the assembly hall.

82. *pirāṭṭi svaśaktiyai viṭṭāl, Draupadi lajjaiyai viṭṭāl tirukkaṇṇa-maṅgaiy-āṇḍān savyāpāratti viṭṭāl.*

82. The Goddess (Sītā) relinquished her power, Draupadi relinquished her modesty Tiru-kaṇṇa-maṅgai Aṇḍān relinquished his self-effort.

Aṇḍān one day observed two servants fighting over their dogs. The one man had struck the other man's dog after his own dog was injured in a dog-fight. The owner of the struck dog retaliated by killing the other servant and then himself committing suicide. Aṇḍān concluded that if an owner of a dog will go to that extent to protect his dog, there is no limit to what the Lord will do to protect the jīva. Thus, Aṇḍān forthwith renounced all self-effort toward salvation.

## 11. Selfless service.

83. *paciyarāyiruppār aṭṭacōru muṇṇa veṇum aṭukiṛa cōru muṇṇa veṇum eṇṇumā pōlē kāṭṭukkup pōgira pōdu ilaiya perumāḷ piriyaḷ tariyāmaiyaḷ muṇṇiṭṭu, āḍimai ceyya vēṇum ellāvāṭimaiyum ceyya vēṇum ēvikkoḷlavum vēṇum eṇṇār pataiviṭṭil pukunta-piṇṇu kāṭṭil taṇiyiṭṭil svayam pākattilē vayirraip-peruk-kiṇapiyāle oppuṇṇa māṭṭāde oru tirukkaiyāle tiru-veṅkoṛrak-kuṭaiyaiyum oru tirukkaiyāle tiru-veṅcāmarattaiyum darittu aḍimai ceytār.*

83. When Rama set out for the forest to fulfil the conditions of his exile, the Younger Lord (Lakṣmana), being unable to bear separation chose to accompany him and to serve him in every possible way applying himself selflessly without thought for his own needs. With none to compete with him for service, Lakshmana developed an insatiable appetite for service, like a person who cooks his own food with none to share it, eating all the food prepared — all the remnants as well as all the food currently prepared so as not to waste any, thus inflating his capacity to eat. After returning to the capital Ayodhya [after the period of exile had expired] he was incapable of sharing his food/service with others — Bharata and Satrugna each rendered a particular service but Lakshmana being insatiable took up the holy white umbrella in one blessed hand and the holy white fly-whisk in the other.

84. *periya-vuḍaiyārum piḷḷai-tirunaraiyūr-araiyarum uṭampaiy-upekṣittārkaḷ cintayantikku uḍampu taṇṇaiye pōyirru.*

84. Periya-vuḍaiyār and Piḷḷai Tiru-naraiyur Araiyaḷ disregarded their bodies; the body of Cintayanti perished of itself.

Periya-vuḍaiyār (the great vulture king, Jaṭāyu) was a friend of Rāma's. Sita called out to him as she was being transported in Rāvaṇa's vehicle. Jaṭāyu counselled Rāvaṇa to return Sita, however Rāvaṇa refused. Thereupon the aging Jaṭāyu decided to fight Rāvaṇa to the death in an attempt to



rescue Sita — knowing full well that he could not win. Jaṭāyu was mortally wounded in the ensuing combat.

Pillai Tiru-naraiyur Araiyaṛ was attending the worship of Veda-nārāyaṇa in Tiru-nārāyaṇa-puram. Some heretics set fire to the thatched roof of the temple, all the devotees fled the scene but Pillai and his family clung to the icon trying to dislodge it from its pedestal so that they could save it. They all died in the conflagration.

When śrī Kṛṣṇa played on his flute all the Gopis that could, would go to him, an unnamed Gopi, unable to do so simply expired upon hearing Kṛṣṇa's flute and thus was known as *Cintayanti* (the one who contemplates).

*85. upāyattukku śaktiyum lajjaiyum yatnamum kulaiya vēṇum upēyattukku prēmamum taṇṇaip pēṇāmaiyaṇu tariyāmaiyaṇu vēṇum.*

85. As to the Means (*upāya*), self-consciousness and self-effort must be renounced; as to the Goal (*upeya*), love, that is not directed to self-gratification and impatience [in the state of separation] are necessary.

Sita renounced her power of self-protection, Draupadi, her self-consciousness, Tiru-kanna-maṅgai Aṇḍān, his self-effort. Jaṭāyu demonstrates selfless love. Pillai Tiru-naraiyur Araiyaṛ, the lack of concern to nourish himself and Cintayanti reveals impatience.

## 12. Scriptural injunctions & spontaneous devotion.

*86. ivaṇukku vaitamāy varumatire tyajikkalāvadu, rāka-prāptamāy varumatu tyajikkavonṇātire.*

86. If something is enjoined upon one [by Scripture], it can be disregarded; if something results from love [of the Lord], it is impossible to disregard.

*87. upāyatva-anusandhānam nivarttakam; upeyatva-anusandhānam pravarttakam.*

87. Renunciation [of the body] as a means should be condemned, Renunciation [of the body] as the goal, should be condoned.

Giving up one's body in the service of the Divine is said to be a *means* for attaining liberation according to various Scriptures such as the Vāyu and Vāmana Pūrāṇas, the Mahābhārata etc. It can therefore be argued that it was improper for the Araiyaṛ as a Prapanna to have recourse to a means such as self-immolation. The rejoinder is that the Araiyaṛ did not give up his body as some means to attain the Lord — it was a spontaneous and irresistible act to rescue the Lord born of intense love for the Lord

*88. aprāpta viśayaṅkalilē saktāṇaṇa vaṇatu lapikka vēṇum eṇṇirāḷ prāpta-viśaya pravaṇaṇukkuc colla vēṇḍāvīrē.*

88 If one who is attached to unworthy objects strives wholeheartedly to obtain them, what is to be said of one who is devoted to worthy objects

*89. anuṣṭānamum an-anuṣṭānamum upāya koṭiyil anvaiyādu.*

89. In the practice [of renouncing the body] or the non-practice [of renouncing the body], there is no connection with *upāya*.

The point being discussed is whether a particular act is performed as an end in itself (*Puruṣārtha*) or as a Means (*Upāya*). If the former, then there is no objection even if it coincides with acts prescribed by the Scriptures as *upāya*, such as pilgrimages, vows, fasts, recitation of mantras etc. It is then categorised as *Upeya-anuṣṭhāna* (an act done as an end in itself), and not as *Upāya-anuṣṭhāna* (an act done as a means to attain a goal).

90. *ananyōpāyatvamum ananyōpeyatvamum ananya-daivatvamum kulaiyum paṭiyāṇa pravrutti kāṇā niṅrōmirē.*

90. Reactions prompted by love of the Lord cannot be criticised as contravening the principles of *ananya-upāyatva* (eschewing all other means than the Lord Himself), *ananya-upeyatva* (existing for the purpose of the Lord alone) and *ananya-daivatva* (not submitting to any other deity than Srīman Nārāyaṇa.)

All these three types of apparent transgressions are noticed in the hymns of the āḷvārs who are nevertheless the exemplars of *Prapatti*. The principle of *ananya-upāyatva* was violated by Aṇḍāl when she performed various votary rituals as means to obtain the Lord as her lover. Nammāḷvār also complained bitterly to the public about the unresponsiveness of the Lord in order to get Him to relent.

*Ananya-upeyatve* was flaunted when Tirumaṅgai āḷvār engaged in the worship of the Deity of Tiruppullani as a measure of self-delight. Nammāḷvār expresses a desire to personal enjoy the cool fragrance of the tulasi garland worn by the Lord.

*Ananya-daivatvam* was compromised when Aṇḍāl invoked the God of Love — Kāma and worshipped him along with his younger brother Sāman. The Gopis of Vrndāvan also invoked and worshipped Goddess Kātyāyāni (Dūrgā) in order to obtain Kṛṣṇa.

These apparent transgressions were committed in the exuberance of God-intoxication and therefore cannot be subjected to the same criteria for judging common transgressions.

91. *jñāna-vipāka kāryamāṇa ajñānattālē varum-avaiyellām aṭikkalaṅcu perum.*

91. Acts performed in [apparent] blissful ignorance arising from the maturation of wisdom should be cherished.

The āḷvārs were all endowed with the supreme divine knowledge by the Lord Himself. This knowledge ripened into wisdom and a profound love for God. In their exuberance of such ecstasy they became mentally disturbed and said and did things which would normally be considered as transgressions. But the omniscient Lord would not take umbrage at these expressions of ecstatic love for Himself.

92. *upāya phalamāy upeyāntarp-pītamāy irukkum adu upāya pratibandhakam-āgādu.*

92. The acts [in question] which result as the consequence of *upāya* and are within the domain of *upeya* cannot be an obstacle to *upāya*.

93. *sādhya samāṇam viḷambha-saham eṅṅirē sādhanattukkēṅṅam sādhya-prāvaṇya maḍiyākaviṅṅe sādhanattil-iḷikiraḍu.*

93. The superiority of [taking the Lord as] Means consists in the Means being identical to the Goal, and being impatient with delay, one engages with the Means on account of deep attachment to the Goal [the Lord Himself].

Herein lies the principle merit in seeking refuge in the Lord as the *Siddhopāya*. The harmonious blending within God of both the means and the end is like the drinking of milk which is both a medicine and food.

94. *ivaṅkukup piṅakkum ātma-guṅaṅgaḷ elāvārrukkum pradhāna hetu inda prāvaṇyam.*

94. This deep attachment [to Kṛṣṇa] is the most important source of all the positive qualities which are natural to the jīva.

When God-love is developed, all the dormant spiritual qualities begin to manifest and with the intensification of loving devotion these qualities shine forth displacing self-centredness and the craving for sense-gratification.

95. “*mārpāl maṇañ culippa.....*”, “*paramātmani yō raktah.....*”, “*kaṇḍu kēṭṭurum-ōndu.....*”

95. “Centring your thoughts on the Lord.....(1)”. “Whoever is impassioned with the Supreme ātman.....(2).”, “Seeing, bearing, touching, smelling.....(3).”.

1) Tiru Antāḍi 3. 14

“Centring your thoughts on the Lord, eschewing all contact with women, directing the mind toward the sacred text after humbling (yourself) at the Feet touched by the heads of the gods — those of the Lord of the hills, who is the Lord of the four Vedas, it is indeed easy.”

2) Source unknown

“Whoever is impassioned with the Supreme ātman and detached from things other than the Supreme ātman”.

3) Tiru-vāi-moḷi 4. 9. 10

“I avoid desiring gratification through the five sense-organs which wander about seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting and I avoid the pleasure of that rare knowledge, difficult to measure (the negligible bliss of Self-isolated liberation = *kaivalya*) seeing You standing in the delightful company of Your consort who has charming bangles, I have now obtained Your sacred feet.”

### 13. Equanimity (*sama*) & self-restraint (*dama*) the jīva qualities.

96. *ātma-guṇaṅgaḷil pradhānam śamamum damamum.*

96. Among the qualities of the Self, equanimity and self-restraint are the most important.

The revered teacher could here by “qualities of the self” be referring to the *ṣaṭ-sampat* of traditional Vedānta teaching:

- *Sama* — tranquillity or control of mind by withdrawing thought processes from worldly affairs.
- *Dama* — self-restraint or control of conduct, restraining the senses from externally directed action
- *Uparati* — tolerance and renunciation of all sectarian religious observances with the object of acquiring wisdom.
- *Titikṣa* — endurance, bearing heat and cold, fame and blame and all other pairs of opposites.
- *śraddha* — faith founded on logic and the conviction that the practice will lead to the goal.
- *Samādhāna* — balanced mental equipoise and attentiveness to the practice; freedom from torpor, laziness, and carelessness.

97. *ivai yiraṇḍum uṇṭāṇāl ācāryaṅgaḷi kaupukurum, ācāryaṅgaḷi kaupukuntavārē tiru-mantram kaupukurum, tiru-mantram kaupukuntavārē īśvaraṅgaḷi kaupukurum, īśvaraṅgaḷi kaupukuntavārē, “vaikuṇṭam-ānakar marṛatu-kaiyatuvē” eṅkīra paṭiyē prāpya bhūmi kaupukurum.*

97. When these two qualities are present, one meets the ācārya. From meeting the ācārya, one receives the holy mantra. From receiving the holy mantra, one is able to attain the Lord; from the attainment of the Lord, the Land of Perfection comes within one's reach as stated in “..... are assured of the other Great City, Vaikuṇṭha,”

The holy mantra is the aṣṭhākṣari (eight-syllabled) “om namo nārāyaṇāya”.

The quotation is from Tiru-vāi-moḷi 4.10.11. —

“Those capable of reciting these ten songs of the thousand sung with deep devotion by Satakopan of Kurukūr, wearing upon his breast the fragrant narcissus garland blessed by the Lord wielding the discus, to render Him great service, by turning unto Him the wayward samsāris, are assured of the Great City of Vaikuṅṭha”.

*98. prāpya lābham prāpakattālē, prāpaka lābham tiru-mantrattālē, tiru-mantra lābham, ācāryanālē, ācārya lābham atma-guṇaṅgattālē.*

98. Through the means is obtained the goal; from the holy mantra the means is obtained; the holy mantra is obtained from the ācārya who one meets by the development of [the two aforementioned] spiritual qualities.

*99. idu-tāṅ aiśvarya-kāmarkkum upasākarkkum prapannarkkum vēṇum.*

99. This [the development of *Sama* and *Dama*], indeed, is necessary for those who [also] seek material prosperity (*aiśvarya*), the ritual worshippers (*upāsaka-s*) and those who have taken refuge (*prapannas*).

The dual qualities of tranquillity (*sama*) and restraint (*dama*) are necessary for all those who are seeking to progress in materialism as well as to the ritualists who are doing spiritual practice for gaining special powers or spiritual achievement and they are also required by the Prapannas.

While lamenting over the corpse of Rāvaṇa, Mandodari recalled how Rāvaṇa had conquered all the three realms through his rigorous practice of self-restraint. So if great solipsists like Rāvaṇa could achieve so much through self-restraint how much more would one motivated by altruism achieve.

*100. mūvar-ilum vaittuk-koṇḍu miḡavum vēṇḍu-vatu prapannaṅukku.*

100. That which is enjoined for the three, is of particular importance for the Prapanna.

The Prapanna more than the other two types of practitioners needs to develop equanimity and restraint.

## 14. Abstention from sense-enjoyment

*101. marrai-yiruvarkkum niśidha viśaya nivruttiyē yamaiyum, prapannarukku vihita viśaya nivrutti taṅṅēṛram.*

101. For these others it is appropriate to abstain from that which is prohibited [by Scripture]; the peculiarity of the Prapanna, lies in abstaining from even that which is prescribed.

Even though sex, meat-eating and the pursuit of pleasure for example are sanctioned by the Scriptures, the Prapanna refrains from them, because they could lead to excessive attachment to sense gratification and a distraction from the love of God and His enjoyment (*ananya-bhogyatva*). Maṇavāḷa-māmuni wonders how many people have actually imbibed the teachings of the Śrīvachana Bhūṣana and how many of those would actually have put them into practice.

*102. idu-tāṅ cilarkk-aḷakālē piṛakkum; cilarkk-aruḷālē piṅakkum; cilarkku ācārattalē piṛakkum.*

102. This [abstention from sense-enjoyment] for some, arise from the beauty [of the Lord] for some it arises from Grace and for some it arises from established practice [following the practical example of the early ācāryas].

Sanctioned sex falls into two categories — sensual and functional. The former is simply indulged in for pleasure while the second category is for the purpose of raising offspring as is the duty of a householder. Even this later function is to be eschewed by the *Prapanna*, assuming that he is not already addicted to the former. The abstention from these two forms of permitted sex arises either through an attachment to the beauty and graciousness of the Lord, through Divine Grace — or through the resolute emulation of the chaste lives of the previous *ācāryas* and *āḷvārs*.

103. *pirakkum kramamen eṇṇil alaku ajñānattai vilaikkum arul aruciyai vilaikkum ācāram accattai vilaikkum.*

103. As to the mode of this arising it is as follows; beauty produces unawareness; Grace produces aversion; established practice produces fear.

Those *Prapannas* who are captivated by the beauty of the Lord become indifferent to all other aesthetic attractions. Those who are the recipients of the Divine Grace become disgusted with everything other than the Lord; and those who attempt to condition themselves by following established practice become anxious that there may be a fall from their practice.

104. *ivaiyum urṛattaip-parrac collukiradu.*

104. This is said with reference to the respective attachments of these [three types].

### 15. Aversion from sense gratification

105. *aruci pirakkum potaikku doṣa-darśanam apeṣitamāy-irukkum.*

105. When aversion [from sense gratification] arises, awareness of faults is to be expected.

When distaste and aversion for sense objects arises then one sees all the defects in them that were not previously perceived due to intense personal involvement with them.

106. *adu pradhāna hetu-vaṇṇu.*

106. [But] that [critical awareness] is not the chief incentive [for aversion].

107. *aprāptataiye pradhāna hetu.*

107. The main cause [of aversion] is incompatibility [with the quintessence of the *jīva*].

The most important element in transformation from sensuality to spirituality is the realisation of one's quintessence which includes *ananya-bhogyatva*, that is existing for the sole delight of the lord to the exclusion of all else.

108. *bhagavat viśayattil-ilikiratum guṇaṅgaṇṇu svarūpa prāptam eṇṇu.*

108. It is not by the perception of [His] qualities that one becomes involved with the Lord it is due to the quintessence [of the *jīva*].

109. *ippadi kullāta-podu, guna-hīnam eṇṇu ninaitta daśaiyil bhagavat-viśaya pravruttiyum, doṣa-anusandāna-daśaiyil sansārattil pravruttiyum kuḍādu.*

109. If you don't take it this way, then striving to obtain the Lord even when [the Lord] is considered to be imperfect and striving for sense gratification when one is aware of the defects are both incongruous.

If we were attracted to *Kṛṣṇa* solely by His aesthetic qualities, or to the world solely by its potential for sense-gratification, then the fact that we are attracted toward them in spite of their apparent defects would be unexplainable. The *āḷvārs* repeatedly lament in their hymns that the

Lord is harsh and unresponsive to their outpourings of love and devotion. Our own experience shows us that people are attached to their spouses, lovers, friends, and families in spite of repeated deception, rejection, misery and disillusion.

Our inherent attraction toward the Lord is due to our quintessence, ie. it is natural rather than being occasioned by the attributes of the Lord,

110. *“koṭiyav-eṇṇeñjam avaṅ eṇṇerē kiṭakkum.....”, “aḍiyēṇ nā piṇṇumuṅ cēvaḍi yaṅṅi nayavēṇ...” eṇṇā niṅṅār-kaḷirē.*

110. There are these passages — “My stubborn mind clings to Him alone.....” “I, your servant, will long for nothing but [your] lotus-red feet!.....”

The first quotation is from the Tiru-vāi-moḷi 5.3.5—

“Agile and alert or cruelly indifferent could be the Lord. Great beyond comprehension, He measured the worlds with His stride, His bewitching form has entrapped me and yet my stubborn mind clings to Him alone”.

The āḷvār, speaking to a friend, laments the fact that although the Lord is sometimes cruel and always difficult to comprehend, his heart has been stolen by that Lord.

The second quotation is from Periya Tiru-moḷi 11.8.7 —

“The worm in the Margosa tree will not eat anything other than the neem fruit (even though it’s bitter). Likewise, I, Your servant, will long for nothing but (Your) lotus-red feet. O Divine Light, sleeping on the five-mouthed couch [of Ananta Seśa], release from bondage this weary, young moon”.

## 16. Servitude

111. *guṇa-kruta dāsyattil-unḱāṭṭil svarūpa prayukta-māṇa dāsyamire pradhānam.*

111. Servitude occasioned by [the realisation of one's] quintessence is better than servitude arising from [perception of divine] beauty.

Service to the Lord by virtue of the realisation of one's quintessence, not conditioned by extraneous considerations or inducements, is of greater value than service which is motivated by divine aesthetics.

112. *anasuyaikkup pirāṭṭiy-arulicceyda vārttaiyai smarippat.*

112. Let us recall the words which the Goddess Sita spoke to Anasuya.

Congratulating Sita on her devotion to her husband Anasuya the wife of the sage Atri exhorted that the husband should be venerated like God Himself, be he in town or forest, ill or well. Sita with downcast eyes bashfully replied — “My love for Rāma is spontaneous and yet, people are likely to construe that I love him because of his excellence, both physical and mental. It is indeed difficult for me to prove that my fidelity has no strings attached to it and that it stands without external provocation or inducements, as Rāma can’t be separated from his excellences. My fidelity to Rāma will remain constant even if he were the reverse of what he is.

## 17. The spiritual quest

113. *bhagavad-viṣaya pravrutti piṇṇaic cērumō venṇil, atukkaṭi prāvāṅyam atukkaṭi sambandham atutāṅ aupādhikam aṅṅu sattā-prayuktam.*

113. If it be asked — “Is engaging in a spiritual quest appropriate?” We answer that such questing springs from over-whelming love; that [love] arises from the [quintessential] relationship [of the jīva to the Lord] *that* [relationship], indeed, is unconditional; it (questing) is appropriate to the very existence [of the jīva].



114. *anda sattai prāvaṇya-kāryamāṇa aṇubhavam illāda-pōdu kulaiyum; adu kulaiyām-aikkāka varum avaiy ellām avarjanīyaṅgaḷumāy prāptaṅkaḷumāy irukkum; āgaiyālē bhagavad viṣaya pravrutti cērum.*

114. The [realised] cetana would be unable to exist without the experience of irresistible [divine] love — all efforts to maintain this existence are inevitable and appropriate therefore, engaging in a spiritual quest is appropriate.

Once one realises one’s essential nature one is compelled to seek immersion in divine bliss of love and service to God, therefore all efforts directed at the fulfilment of this goal are appropriate.

## 18. Renouncing other means

115. *prāpakāntara parityāgattukkum ajñāna-aśaktigal-aṇru, svarūpa virodhamē pradhāna hetu.*

115. The primary reason for renouncing other means [to liberation — Jñāna, Karma and Bhakti Yogas] is not ignorance or lack of capability, but the fact that they negate the quintessence [of the jīva].

116. *prapakāntaram ajñarkku upāyam.*

116. The other means are intended for the ignorant.

The ‘ignorant’ being those who have not yet realised the quintessence of the jīva as being totally dependent upon the Lord.

117. *jñāni-kaḷukku apāyam.*

117. [Other means] are a threat to the wise.

118. *apāyamāyttatu svarūpa nāśakam-āgaiyālē.*

118. They are a threat because they negate the quintessence.

119. *“nerikāṭṭi nikkutiyo.....” eṇṇā-niṇṇatiṇē.*

119. It is said:— “Are you deflecting [me] from you by showing a means ?”

The reference is to Nammālvār’s Periya Tiruvantāḍi, 6  
“Do you deflect (me) from you by showing a means? Do you show me the bluish black form of yours O Kṛṣṇa, what are you thinking of doing with us who don’t know the days ahead? Please tell me what we should do to be liberated”

120. *“varttate me mahad bhayam.....” eṅkaiyālē bhaya-janakam.....; “..... ma sucah.” eṅkaiyālē śōka janakam.*

120. The arising of anxiety [from the pursuit of other means] is indicated by the saying:— “In myself there is a great fear.....” The arising of grief is shown by the pronouncement — “..... Do not grieve. “

When one attempts to follow the various conditions given for succeeding in the other upāyas, one frequently experiences great anxiety because of the fear of being unable or inadequate to achieve the goal. And likewise one who does fail experiences intense grief and disillusionment, and possibly self-loathing.

In the Jitanta Sotra. I. 9 it declares:—

*kalesvapi ca sarveṣu diḡṣu sarvasu cācyuta,  
śarīreca gathau cāpi vartate me mahat bhayam”*

In myself there is a great fear, in all times and in all places, O Acyuta, even in (my) body and movements.”

Likewise, Kṛṣṇa, after having taught all the other upāyas Bhakti Yoga, Jñāna Yoga and Karma yoga, concludes with the final teaching that He Himself is in fact the only means.

*sarva dharmam parityajya māmekam śaraṇam vraja  
aham tvā sarva pāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śuca*

“Having abandoned all Dharmas, take me alone as [your refuge; I will release you from all transgressions, do not grieve!” (18, 66).

### 121. *ippaḡi kollāda pōdu ētat pravruttiyil prāyaścitti-vidhi kuḡādu.*

121. If it is taken otherwise, then the injunction for those [accepting means other than the Lord] to atone would be inappropriate.

The Pañcaratra Agama-s prescribe ritual expiation for those Prapannas who have inadvertently adopted *upāyas* (*upāyantara*) other than relying upon the Lord Himself. The existence of this injunction supports the fact that adopting other upāya-s negates one's quintessence.

Lakṣmi Tantra says —

*apāya samplave sadhyaḡ prāyaścittam samācaret |  
prāyaścitteriyam satra yat punaḡ śaraṇam vrajet ||*

The prescribed atonement is to remind oneself of the Prapatti already performed and the implications thereof in a mood of repentance, and to resolve not to repeat a similar transgression. One need not repeat Prapatti, if one does it loses all its meaning and sanctity.

### 122. *tiruk-kurukaip-pirān piḡḡān paṇikkum-paḡi-matirā-pintu miśramāṇa cātakumbhamaya kumbhakata tīrtha salilam pōlē ahamkāra miśramāṇa upāyāntaram.*

122. There is this statement from Tiruk-kurukaip-pirān Piḡḡān:— Other upāya-s are mingled with egoism (*ahamkāra*) like holy water in a gold pot mixed with a drop of toddy.”

It is said that Tiruk-kurukaip-piran Piḡḡān, one of Rāmānuja’s disciples emphatically disparages the adoption of means other than the Lord as being egoistic self-effort.

### 123. *ratna-ttukkup phala-karai-pōlēyum rājya-ttukku elumiccam phaḡam pōlēyum phaḡattukku satrucam-aṇṇu.*

123. As a cowry shell is to a gem, as a lime is to a kingdom, the [means] can never be equal to the result.

In remote islands cowries are treasured for making ornaments and the gems are regarded as worthless. They are happy to trade the gems for cowries brought by foreign traders. Are the gems simply the equivalent of the cowries shells for which they are exchanged or not?

A simple subject who has offered the traditional gift to kings — a lime — to a munificent Emperor may receive a tract of land as a reward, but the lime can not be equated in value to the land received.

### 124. *tāṇ daridraṇākaiyālē taṇakkuk koḡukkalāvatoṇṇillai.*

124. As, indeed, there is destitution [on the part of the cetana], there is nothing to give to Him.

The cowry shells and the lime mentioned in the above example were actually the possessions of those who gave them, but the cetana on the other hand has nothing to call its own, since everything it has belongs to the Lord anyway.

125. *avaṅ tantattaik koṭukkumiṭtilē, aṭaivilē koṭukkil anupāyamām aṭaivukeṭak koṭukkil paḍum.*

125. Offering back [to the Lord] that which is *His*, and giving it in the proper manner, does not constitute a means, but by giving in the improper manner, theft is exposed.

When making a love-offering to the Lord it should be made abundantly clear that the object being given is already the Lord's. The act of giving is like the child who gives a gift bought by the mother to its father. Such a gift is not a gift in the true sense and therefore cannot be construed to be a means of attaining the favour of the Lord. Whereas if the offering is made ostensibly with the feeling that it rightfully belongs to the giver then it is like stealing the gem off the chest of Lord Ranga-natha at night and offering it back to him in public the next day.

126. *bhartru-bhogattai vayiru vaḷarkkaikku urup-pākkumā pōlē, iruvarkkum-avadyam.*

126. If [a wife] capitalises on conjugal enjoyment like a professional, both of them are at fault.

A person who asks payment from the Lord for giving the Lord what is due to Him by virtue of the quintessence of the *jīvātmā-paramātmā* relationship, is like a wife treating her marriage like a profession — a means for maintaining an accustomed style of living, requesting payment, like a prostitute, for sexual favours bestowed upon her husband.

## 19. Scriptures and their prescriptive injunctions.

127. *vedāntaṅkaḷ upāyamāka vitikkira-paḍiyē eṅṅil.*

127. It may be asked:— “Why do the Vedas enjoin means?”

It would be entirely appropriate at this stage of the teaching to question the propriety of the Vedic texts that prescribe various means to attain Mokṣa.

128. *auṣadha-sēvai paṅṅādavar-kaḷukku abhimata vastukkaḷilē attaikalaciyiṭuvāraippōlē īśvaranaik kalandu vitikkira vittāṅai.*

128. The injunction is tantamount to mixing the Lord [with the *upāya*] like those who mix medicine with something desirable, serving it to those who don't like medicine.

A mother out of tender solicitude for her child will mix bitter medicine with something sweet in order to get the child to take the medicine which will effect the cure. The Scriptures with the tender solicitude of a thousand mothers hold out various inducements to get people to follow the spiritual path and to escape from the malady of Samsāra.

129. *ittai pravarttip-pittatu para-himsaiyai nivarttip-pikkai-kāka.*

129. The prescription of this [upāya] is intended to prevent injury to others.

The methods offered by the Scripture are all intended to gradually discourage people from indulging in self-centered gratification and doing harm to the environment and other sentient beings through their pursuit of profit, greed and self-gratification

130. *idu-tāṅ pūrva-vihita-himsai pōlē vidhi-niṣēdhaṅgal-iraṅṅukkum kuṛai-yillai.*

130. This is like the killing enjoined in the earlier part [of Scripture, and prohibited in the later part]: — both prescription and prohibition are congruent.

The Scriptures cater to the needs of all classes of people with a view to their ultimate liberation. There are four types of persons; those characterised by a predominant of *Tamas* (Delusion), *Rajas* (Passion), *Sattva* (Virtuous), or *Parama-sattva* (Highly Virtuous). The Scripture enjoins the sacrificing of animals in certain Soma sacrifices and the performance of the Syena Yaga for annihilation of enemies for those dominated by Tamas and Rajas. For those who are established in Sattva these sacrifices are forbidden.

131. *Attai śāstra viśvāsa-ttukkāka vitittatu, ittai svarūpa viśvāsa-ttukkāka vitittatu.*

131. The prescription of that [violence as a means] was intended to produce faith in the Scriptures; the prescription of this [non-violence or no means] was in order to promote reliance on [one's] quintessence.

After realising the efficacy of these violent means and developing complete faith in the Scriptures, the practitioners would hopefully be attracted at some stage to the higher teachings. These very same Scriptures prescribed non-aggression to any sentient being for those dominated by Sattva and Parama-sattva in order to promote the unfolding of the quintessence of the jīva, which is openness, harmlessness & compassion to other sentient beings and reliance upon the Lord for one's protection.

Now one may also ask if various meditative techniques or Upāsanas prescribed by the Vedantic texts for attaining Mokṣa do not have an intrinsic value of their own.

132. *adu tōlpurayē pōm idu marma-sparśi.*

132. The effect of that [violence] is only superficial: this [resorting to means] affects the very core [of one's quintessence].

Engaging in occult practices for gaining material advantages, is the work of ignorant and deluded people who are completely identified with their bodies and possessions and hence their effect is only skin-deep — superficial with limited results. The Upāsanas on the other hand are indulged in by aspirants who know full well the difference between the body and the jīva and yet engage in self-effort which negates the quintessence of the jīva and hence is more harmful.

133. *idu-tāṇ karma-sāddhyam-ākaiyālē duṣ-karamum-āyirukkum.*

133. This [following the Upāsanas prescribed by Scripture], indeed is difficult as it must be accomplished through ritual.

The practice of the Upāsanas requires preparation through structured ritual and is encumbered by many rules and regulations and is therefore very difficult, physically arduous and not pleasurable. Failure also is accompanied by the mental symptoms of dejection, resentment, frustration anxiety etc.

## 20. The glory of Taking Refuge.

134. *prapatty-upāyattukku kuṟṟaṅgaḷ oṟṟum-illai.*

134. Going for refuge is free of all these deficiencies.

The only perceivable blemish is in regarding taking refuge as a means like the others.

135. *ātmayā-tātmya-jñāna-kāryam-ākaiyālē, svarūpattukku ucitamumāy, “ciṟṟa-venḍā.....” eṅkira-paṭiyē nivrutti sāddhyam ākaiyālē sukaramum-āyirukkum.*

135. [Prapatti] arises from the realisation of one's quintessence and conforms to it. It is [thus] easy, since it is accomplished by letting go alone, as in the hymn — “There is no need to be perplexed.....”.

Tiru-vāi-moḷi 9. 1, 7

“Let me tell you in brief, O people of this sprawling world! There is no means for you liberation except to learn and abide in contemplation of the flawless traits of Kṛṣṇa, our Lord, who in North Mathura was born; ‘tis indeed meritorious and would suffice, no need there is of practices tiresome and tedious”.

Granting that no effort is required on the part of the Prapanna does it not behove him, it may be asked, to at least make some token offering to please the Lord?

136. *pūrṇa viśayamākaiyāle perumaik-kiṭākap-paccaiyiṭa voṇṇādu.*

136. As the subject is the Perfect One, it is not possible to bring a tribute worthy of [His] greatness.

There is no offering or act of contrition which could do justice to the majesty and grandeur of the Lord.

137. *ābhimukhya sucaka-mātrattilē santoṣam vilaiyum.*

137. The Lord is delighted by the slightest gesture of returning [to Him].

The mere fact that the cetana which has been immersed in Samsāra for so many aeons has at last turned towards Him causes the Lord immeasurable delight.

138. *pūrṭti kaivāṅgāde mēlvilukaikku hetu vittanai.*

138. The [Lord's] perfection lies in seizing [the jīva] not in withdrawal [from the jīva].

Because the Lord is perfect and fulfilled in all respects, there is no question of Him desiring anything from the jīva. Simply the change of attitude in the errant jīva, is quite enough to cause Him to greedily pounce upon the jīva and Liberate it from Samsāra, grasping the long sought opportunity.

139. *“patram puṣpam.....”, “anyat purṇāt.....”. “purivatuvm pukai puve.....”*

139. “A leaf, a flower.....”, “other than [a Pot] full [of water] .....”, “incense and flowers suffice.....”

Bhagavad Gīta 9:26 —

“Whoever offers to Me, with devotion, a leaf, a flower, a fruit, water, I accept with joy this (offering) made with devotion by one who is pure-minded.”

Hearing that Kṛṣṇa was about to pay a visit, Dhritarāṣṭhra desiring to curry favour with him proposed to offer him gold, land etc. Sañjaya however disabused the old king by declaring —

“Janārdana desires nothing other than a pot full of water, the washing of (His) feet and an inquiry about (His) welfare.” Mahābhārata, Udyoga Parva, 86:16—

Tiru-vāi-moḷi 1:6:1

“O people who have the resolve to realise (your self-nature) in full measure by praising the Lord who is free from all miseries, if you want to avoid separation (from Him), sprinkling good water and offering incense and flowers will suffice.”

As God hates hypocrisy and values only the sincerity of the devotee, one could offer any flower or leaf and even burn garbage and offer the smoke as incense.

140. *pullaikkāṭṭiyalaittup pullaiyiṭu-vāraippōlē pala-sādhananṅalukku bhedam illai.*

140. Like showing grass [to a cow], having called [it], and when it comes, giving it the [same] grass there is no difference between the end and the means.

The disparity of the Means and the End was pointed out as one of the cardinal flaws of taking up other means (*upāyāntaras*). In the case of Surrender there is no such disparity between the Means and the End as they are coincidental, like beckoning a cow with the mere show of a hand holding a few blades of grass and then feeding it the same when it comes close.

141. *agaiyāle sukarupamāy irukkum.*

141. Therefore, [Surrender], itself, is enjoyable.

The Lord who was instrumental in weaning the cetana away from material nature by revealing His auspicious qualities and immaculate beauty, also becomes the object of enjoyment in the final state of Liberation. The process of Surrendering is therefore enjoyable throughout.

142. *ivaṅ avaṅaippēra ninaikkum-podu inda prapattiyum upāyam aṅru.*

142. When this [cetana] decides to return to Him [the Lord], Surrender is not a means.

Self-surrender or submission to the Lord's protection does not constitute a method of winning the Lord. It only means that the subject has ceased to struggle and fight and has submitted to the redemptive Grace instead of hampering it by self-effort at liberation. The jīvatman is the Lord's emanation (mode or *prākāra*) and He will certainly reclaim it. If the subject resorts to Prapatti thinking that obtaining the lord is his own personal gain (*svagata-svikāra*) then it is a misconceived sense of personal importance and all the merit of Prapatti will be lost.

## 21. The Lord & the defects of the jīva

143. *avaṅ ivaṅaip-pera niṅaikkum-podu pātakamum vilak-kaṅru.*

143. When He [the Lord] decides to reclaim this [jīva], the defects [of the jīva] are not an impediment.

The Lord loves the jīva and will reclaim it despite any superficial imperfections that there may be in the form of moral imperfection, sin and demerit. The Lord is the one that initiates and consummates reconciliation which is in fact His gain (*paragata-svikāra*) — this logic flows from the concept that God is the Swāmi — owner of the Jīva.

144. *ivaṅ-irandum śri bharatāḷvan pakkaḷilum śrī guhap-perumāḷ pakkaḷilum kānālām.*

144. These two [truths] are illustrated by scenarios of the blessed Bharata and the Lord Guha.

The two stances of *svagata-svikāra* — the individual seizing the Lord and *paragata-svikāra* — the descent of unconditional grace from Kṛṣṇa, are illustrated by the anecdotes of Bharata the brother of Lord Rāma and Guha the hunter chieftain. Bharata overcome by guilt and grief sought Rāma out, surrendered at his feet and implored him to return from exile in the forest, but Rāma rejected his request. On the other hand Guha made no effort to befriend Rāma, nevertheless Rāma actively courted him and befriended him inspite of the apparently insurmountable disparity between them. This anecdote also reinforces the idea that the Prapanna should never arrogantly *assume* that he/she is saved. Bharata assumed that as he was the Lord's brother his act of surrender would surely be accepted — yet he was rejected. The correct attitude is to surrender completely without any expectations whatsoever.



145. *śrī bharataḷvanukku naṅmaitāṇe tīmaiṅyāyṯtu, śrī guhap-perumāḷukku-tīmaitāṇe naṅmaiṅyāyṯtu.*

145. For the blessed Bharata, his very virtue was the hindrance — as for Lord Guha, his very flaw was an attraction.

If a person attempts to reach the Lord by using some means (*upāya*), that means itself obstructs the attainment of the goal. The ego seeks some pretence for reinforcing itself through the spiritual justification of attaining the Lord. On the other hand, the faults of a person do not hinder the movement of Grace as long as the ego does not obstruct it.

## 22. The performance of Prapatti as a means.

146. *sarva-aparādhaṅkaḷukkum prāyaścittamāṇa prapatti-tāṅum; aparādha koṭiyileyāy kṣāmanam paṅṅa-veṅḍum-paṭi nillānintratire.*

146. Prapatti (surrender), itself an expiation for all kinds of offences, is also an offence in need of pardon.

Prapatti, performed as a means — *svagata-svikāra*, although being an act of surrender to the Lord, betrays an element of ego and self-assertion. Whereas true Prapatti is simply a relinquishing of all effort at struggling for perfection and simply opening up a space to be filled by the descending Divine Grace. Thus Prapatti done as a means to an end requires pardon.

147. *neṅunāl anya-paraiyāy ponta pāryai lajjā-bhayaṅkaḷ iṅṅrikke bhartru-sakācattilē niṅṅru eṅṅiyangī-karika-veṅḍum eṅṅapekṣikkum pōlē yiruppam eṅṅire yivaṅ paṅṅum prapatti.*

147. The performance of Prapatti [as a means] is like a wife, who [having left her husband] spends a long time living with another man. [One day] she approaches her husband, without shame or fear, and says:— “Take me back”.

In this case, the husband may indeed take the wife back, inspite of her well-known misdemeanours; but it would be far better if the wife was taken back at the husband's own initiative. Likewise, it is better to be reconciled to the Lord on the Lord's independent initiative. All that is needed is for it to be made known that one is ready to be taken back.

## 23. Initiative of the Lord

148. *krupaiyāle varum pāratantryat-tirkāṅṅil svātantryattāle varum pāratantryam prabalam.*

148. Dependence upon another arising from independence is better than dependence upon another based upon mercy.

Although one of the Lord's traits is His absolute independence, yet He longs to serve His devotees and be dominated by them. Such dependence upon devotees can arise from two causes; the Lord's compassion for those who seek refuge and from His own free-will by spontaneously bestowing Grace on those whom he chooses; whether deserving or not from a worldly point of view.

149. *ivvartattai veda-puruṣān apekṣittān.*

149. This [truth], indeed, is referred to in the living corpus of the Veda.

The relevant text occurs in two Upaniṣads Kāṭhopeniṣad and Muṅḍakopeniṣad:—  
*na ayam ātma-pravacanena labhyo, na medhayā na bahunā śrutena,  
yam evaiṣa vṅṅute tena labhyas tasyaiṣa ātma vivṅṅute tanūm svom.*

“This Self cannot be obtained by much discoursing, by sacrifice and by much learning. Whomsoever this (Self) chooses, by him alone is He obtained.” — Kāṭha Upaniṣad 2.23

The passage is taken to emphasise the independent initiative of the Lord.

150. *apekṣa nir-apekṣamāgat tiru-vaḍikkum śrī guha perumālukkum idu uṇḍāyirru.*

150. Tiruvaḍi (Hanumān) and Lord Guha were spontaneously courted [by the Lord].

Hanumān is-known as *Ciriya Tiruvaḍi*, “the little one who serves at the feet of the Lord”. Garuḍa is the *Periya Tiruvaḍi*:— “the great one who serves at the feet of the Lord”.

151. *ivaṇ muṇṇiṭum avarkaḷai avaṇ muṇṇiṭam eṇṇumiṭam abhaya-pradhānattilum kāṇalām.*

151. Those whom He accepts are deployed by Him as mediators when another seeks Him — this can be deduced from [the episode of] giving assurance of safety.

Hanumān was sought out by Rāma using Lakṣmana as an intermediary. Rāma accepted Vibhīṣana's surrender after he was conducted into His presence by Sugrīva. Before he left Laṅka, Vibhīṣana had been blessed by Sita. Sugrīva was acting as proxy of the Goddess Sita — this is established by the fact that Sugrīva had found jewels that had been thrown down by Sita on her way to Laṅka — he was thus the specific recipient of her Grace and appointment as a proxy.

## 24. The importance of mediation and the greatness of Lakṣmi

152. *iruvar muṇṇiṭukiṇatum tantām kurraṅkaḷai camippikkaikkāka.*

152. Both [the jīva and the Lord] resort to mediation to resolve their estrangement.

One may ask why there is a need for a mediator in any case. The reply is that the jīva needs a mediator because it has been straying from Kṛṣṇa for so long and has been defiant and recalcitrant in assuming its independence. It is therefore understandably stressed at the thought of meeting an irascible master who may punish it. The need therefore exists for someone to act as a mediator to temper His justice with mercy.

The Lord on the other feels guilty that He has neglected the natural bond between Himself and the jīva and has not done enough to facilitate the reconciliation process, ruthlessly having kept the jīva away by contemplating only its transgressions. He therefore feels that the jīva may be terrified at His approach and take flight once again, hence His need for a mediator to reassure the jīva of His love.

153. *svarūpa-sidhiyumattālē.*

153. From that [mediation] the quintessences [of both the jīva and the Lord] are reinforced.

The instrumentality of the Mediatrix Lakṣmi also helps to reinforce and to make manifest the quintessences of both the jīva and the Lord.

154. *aupādhikam-umāy nityamumāṇa pāratantryam iruvarkkum uṇḍirē.*

154. The mutual inter-dependence of the two [the jīva and the Lord] is both conditioned and eternal.

The dependence of the jīva on the Lord is conditioned by the Karma factor. The jīva, over millions of life-times accumulates a huge store of Karma which binds it to Samsāra and thus to the originator and maintainer of that Samsāra. The dependence of the Lord on the jīva is also

conditioned by Karma in as much as the Lord cannot act except in accordance with the jīva's Karma. He is bound by a juridical responsibility to administer the Law of Karma in accordance with the Cosmic Laws or Rta. On the other hand, the quintessential relationship of *śeṣa-śeṣi* is natural, eternal and unconditioned.

155. *anityamāṇa-viruvār pāratantryamum kulaivatam attālē.*

155. By that [mediation] the mutual dependence factor which is non-eternal [conditioned] is mitigated.

Mediation by Mother Lakṣmi obviates the dependence upon the Karma factor which is non-eternal, by both the Lord and the jīva.

156. *sasākṣikam ākaiyālē ippantattai yiruvārālum-illai ceyyappōkādu.*

156. As the lord and jīva have a witness they cannot annul their mutual relationship of Protector-ward, and the generator of karma and the dispenser of its reward.

Mother Lakṣmi in the role of the *puruṣākāra* or Mediatrix is also the grand witness and therefore neither the Lord nor the jīva can either unilaterally or bilaterally annul the relationship obtaining between them.

157. *“eṇṇai nekilkkilum.....”, “kola-malarp-pāvaik-kaṇṇakiya.....”*

157. “Even if (He) should forsake me...”; You who love the lady of the beautiful lotus.....”

Tiru-vāi-moḷi 1.7.8 —

With His muscular shoulders nestled in lap of Nappinnai\*, the Joyous Lord Kṛṣṇa who is all in all to the gods, cannot for a moment separate from Himself my chastened mind, so well entwined, albeit that He loosens His grip on me and allows me to stray apart.

\*The Southern Vaishnava tradition does not know of Radha. Even in the Srimad Bhagavatam the “special” Gopi is not mentioned by name. In the Tamil country Nappinnai is considered to be the wife of Kṛṣṇa while he was still in Gokula.

Tiru-vāi-moḷi 10.10.7:—

“O my beloved, You who are dear to Your consort the one born of the beautiful lotus; as the unique Blissful Boar you did wrench the earth out on your tusks, O Lord, like a sapphire mountain rising up between two moons, the ocean blue did you churn, once having gained You shall I let you go?”

Here, Nammāḷvār, giving prominence to the Goddess, affirms that once the jīva and the Lord have discovered each other and have broken through the karma-relationship, neither can forsake the other.

158. *karmaṇi vyutpattiyil svarūpa guṇaṅglāl varukiṛa kartru-saṅkōcarāhityattai niṇ uppatu.*

158. The magnitude of [Her] position is to be understood from the quintessence and qualities indicated by the passive derivation.

The word *śrī* can be interpreted in four different ways in accordance with the four grammatical constructions. According to the passive construction (*vyutpati karmani*) *śrī* can be interpreted as *śrīyate iti śrīḥ* — She who is sought after. She is sought after by the jīvas due to their quintessence as eternal servitors of the Lord. She is also sought after by the Lord as His affectionate consort. In this way, she influences both jīva and Lord in her role as Mediatrix,

159. *adhikāri-trayattukkum puruṣakāram avarjanīyam.*

159. Mediation is indispensable for all the three categories [of people] who are qualified [for Prapatti] (vide aphorisms 41-43)

## 25. The love relationship between the Lord and the jīva.

160. *taṇukkuttāṇ tēṭum naṇmai tīmaiōpāti vilakkāy irukkum.*

160. Merit sought by this [jīva] is, indeed, to be eschewed just like demerit.

The venerable ācārya now begins a discussion of the love-relationship between the jīva and the Lord. *Merit* in this context refers to the sense of dependency (*śeṣatva*) of the jīva upon the Lord. *Demerit*, refers to the sense of independence (*svatantrya*) of the jīva from the Lord. When love develops between the jīva and Kṛṣṇa, the former *merit* becomes a hindrance, as much as the latter. When in an ecstatic state of union Kṛṣṇa deigns to reverse roles and delight Himself by serving the jīva, the latter should not shrink back from feelings of dependence and humility and thus hamper Kṛṣṇa's pleasure.

161. *aḷakukkiṭṭa caṭṭai aṇaikkaikku virōdiyāmāpōlē.*

161. As clothes worn for adornment are obstacles to intimacy.

The jīva's dependence (*śeṣatva*) is like decorative clothing worn by the beloved. It is indeed pleasing to the lover but hinders an intimate embrace, and thus must be discarded prior to conjugal union taking place.

162. *“hāro'pi.....”*

162. “Even a necklace.....”

A quotation from the Rāmāyaṇa in reference to Sita:—

“By her who was afraid of an impediment to contact, not even a necklace was worn around her neck.”

Typical of the conjugal bliss enjoyed by Rāma and Sita, it is said that Sita would divest herself of every article that would hamper total and complete union with her Lord, even a bangle, chain or necklace.

163. *puṇyam pōlē pāratantryamum parānubhavattukku vilakku.*

163. Dependence upon the other, like merit, hinder, enjoyment of the other.

The feeling of total dependence upon the Lord (*paratantrya*) is a virtue like *śeṣatva*, it negates ego, conceit and arrogance, but if it results in the jīva being unresponsive and totally passive it becomes an hindrance to pure transcendental enjoyment and the mystical experience of the Lord.

164. *guṇam-pōlē doṣa-nivṛtti.*

164. Like the virtues [of *śeṣatva* and *paratantrya*], [cognition of] defects are [also to be] relinquished.

The jīva should also abandon all cognition of physical, mental, emotional and behavioural defects pertaining to the body and its interaction with the environment, as also the desire to be liberated from the body. One should cease to disparage the body and its socio-economic states like the Gnostics who see material life as inherently flawed and evil.

165. *ābharaṇam anapimatamāy aḷukku abhimatamāyira niṇṛatiṛē.*

165. Adornment is disliked but dirt is liked.

Ornaments, apparel and cosmetics actually hinder the ecstatic making of love, but passionate lovers never seem to mind sweat, the natural smells of the body or even dirt on the body! Nor the fact that the body contains, pus, blood, mucous, faeces or urine!

The Jñānis think that the jīva in its pure and pristine state, devoid of all material contamination will enhance the pleasure of the Lord. Yet we see that even after attaining full enlightenment it is the Lord's will that the jīva remain on in the physical body (the Sṛvaiṣṇavas do not accept the concept of *jīvan-mukti* — liberation while embodied). The reason that the Lord is so attached to this physical body is that after countless births in myriads of bodies the jīva has finally been reconciled with Him and the fragrance of divine love emanating from this “body of attainment” is so sweet that the Lord wishes to savour it as long as possible.

166. *snānam roṣa-janakam enkiṛa vārttaiyai smarippatu.*

166. Remember the words—, “Taking a bath caused anger”

The reference is to an episode in the Rāmāyana. At the end of the great war, after the defeat of Rāvana and the overthrow of his regime, Rāma sends Vibhīṣana to bring Sita to him. Sita, however anxious to meet her beloved Rāma decides to take a refreshing bath and wearing clean clothes appears before him. Rāma is angered by the delay and frowns in rebuke.

167. “*vañcakkalyan .....*”, “*maṅkavoṭṭu.....*”

167. “The deceitful thief.....1.”, “Destroying.....2.”

1. Tiru-vāi-moḷi 10.7.1 —

“Beware ye poets, composing songs, sweet and chaste, better be attentive as you sing, else you can’t survive; The Lord of Tirumāl-iruñcolai is Mysterious, He practices deceit and stealth, He held on to me, ostensibly to hear these songs but into my heart and soul; secretly did He dissolve and consume them all, thus displacing me did He attain His stature full.”

2. Tiru-vāi-moḷi 10, 7, 10 —

“My Lord of Tirumāl-iruñcolai! You are my saviour great; Yourself becoming me disentangle and deliver me from these surging sensations, the five sensory-organs, the five organs of action, the *Prakrit* associated with this jīva in this world, the *Mahat* (cosmic Intelligence), the *Ahamkara* (Cosmic Ego-sense) and this *Manas* (mind)”.

These verses illustrate the point that although Nammāḷvār successfully argues the case for abandoning the material nature, the lord declines to comply with his request, demonstrating that He relishes the enlightened being along with the physical body. This teaching is important to establish the position that Sṛvaiṣṇavism is a life-affirming faith and not escapist. It shifts the focus from pie-in-the-sky to the here and now. Samsāra is Nirvāna.

168. *vērcūṭum avargaḷ maṅparṛuk kaḷarṛātāpōlē jñāniyai viḡrahattōḍē ādharikkum.*

168. As those who wear roots [for decoration], do not shake off the dirt attached to them, so in regard to the enlightened one (jñāni), the Lord accepts him with all the impurities of his mundane body.

Certain fragrant roots, worn by women in their hair, retain their scent as long as they are not washed. Similarly, the Lord prefers the enlightened jīva covered by its body.

169. *parama-arttaṅāṇo vivaṅuḍaiya śarira-sṭhitikku hētu kēvala bhagavat-iccaiyiṅē.*

169. It is again the will of Bhagavan that such a person hankering for Him continues to remain in this material world.

No matter how passionately devotees may love the Lord nor how desperate they may be to be united with the Lord, He continues to enjoy them through the medium of their physical bodies, and does not liberate them until their Prarābdha Karma has come to an end.

170. *“tirumāl-iruñcōlai malaiyē.....” enkiṛa-paṭiyē ukantarūḷiṇo nilaṅgaḷ ellāvārrilum paṇṇum viruppattai ivanoṭaiya śarīraika-deśattiolē paṇṇum.*

170. [The Lord’s] love for a single wise person is like [His special] love for “the mountain Tirumāl-iruñcolai”, while yet loving all his sacred shrines.

Tiru-vāi-moḷi 10.7.8 —

“The Lord Supreme, the first cause of all things, shall not bear being apart even for a moment from my head, equal to mount Tirumāl-iruñcolai, and the Causal Ocean, my physical frame. Coveted by Him like the High Heaven and Mount Tiru-veṅgaḍam. My self, badly mixed up with matter, my thought, word and deed.”

The Lord loves all jīvas but has special affection for the enlightened ones. This special affection does not constitute the establishment of an “elite” or “chosen few”.

171. *aṅguttai-vāsam sādhanam iṅguttai-vāsam sādhyam.*

171. Dwelling there [in Temples] is a means; dwelling here [in the heart chakra of the enlightened] is an end.

Kṛṣṇa condescends to take up abode in temples in the form of the arca-avatāra or Icon in order to shower His Grace upon mortals and to be available to them. It is thus not a end in itself but merely a means to be reunited with jīvas. His ultimate destination being the lotus of the heart of the enlightened and regenerated one.

172. *“kaḷlum kaṇaikaṭalum.....” enkiṛapaṭiyē idu siddhittāl avarṛilataram maṭṭamāy irukkum.*

172. When He has found a place in them [the heart chakras] he esteems them more than the other abodes; as it is said — “The sacred hills, the milk ocean.....”.

Periya Tiruvantāḍi —

“The sacred hills, the milk ocean and the divine Vaikuṅṭha, they’ve completely disappeared what a calamity! That lofty person of black colour, entering inside my mind, will never leave me.”

Again we are presented with the teaching that once the Lord has been realised, all the abstract Divine Abodes become irrelevant and only the present remains.

173. *“iḷaṅkōyil kaiviṭēl....” eṅṛu ivaṅ prārttikka vēṅḍum-paṭiyāy irukkum.*

173. It is such that one need request — “Do not leave the temporary residences!”

Second Tiruvantāḍi 54

“The mountain (Tirumāl-iruñcolai), which is also a park, the mountain Veṅkaṭa, these two are regarded as Your resting places. In the same graceful way, I visualise You sleeping in the temple of my mind as Your resting place and implore:— “Do not leave the temporary residences!”

Here, the ālvār, having captured the Lord in his mind, is afraid that He will forsake His temporary abode in the milk ocean and the mountain temples.

174. *prāpya prīti viṣayatvattālum krutajñtaiyālum piṅpu avai abhimataṅkaḷāy irukkum.*

174. His abodes like the Vaikuṅṭha, Milk Ocean and temples are cherished by Him only because of the love of the reclaimed jīvas that were drawn to Him through these shrines.

The Lord dwells within all these centres only as a temporary expedient for reclaiming His beloved subjects. He will thus never cease residing in these locations for these are the places through which He first makes contact with the jīvas and finally comes to rest in their hearts.

*175. āgaiyāle doṣa nivrutti-pōlē āntara-guṇamum virodhiyāy- irukkum.*

175. Therefore, just like relinquishing defects, the inherent attributes may also be an hindrance.

The Lord's pleasure is paramount, and thus any attempt on the part of the individual to enhance his virtue, might prove to be mischievous if he thereby hampers the pleasure of the Lord. Merit and demerit are only relative to the Lord's pleasure, and even that which is thought to be meritorious can be considered to be demerit if it interferes with the Lord's enjoyment of the jīva.

*176. doṣa-nivrutti-tāṇe doṣamāmiṛē.*

176. Indeed, the surmounting of defects is itself a defect.

All efforts directed at self-purification, and preparation for union with the Lord can obstruct the dawning of enlightenment and spontaneous flow of the Lord's Grace.

*177. “taṇṇāl varum naṇmai vilaiṇ-pāl pōlē: avaṇāl varum naṇmai mulaip-pāl-pōlē” — eṇru piḷḷān vārttai.*

177. There is Piḷḷān's teaching — “Good which comes from oneself is like milk purchased; good that comes from Him is like breast-milk.”

Wellbeing achieved through self-effort is unstable and therefore less nourishing like milk bought from a vendor with all kinds of additives. Wellbeing bestowed by the Lord is the best — like breast milk from the mother.

## 26. Self-reliance.

*178. avaṇaiyoḷiyat tāṇ taṇakku naṇmai tētukaiyāvadu-stanantaya prajaiyai mātā-pitākkaḷ kaiyil niṇrum vāṅki kātukaṇāṇa āṭṭuvāṇiyaṇ kaiyilē kāṭṭik koṭukkumā-pōlē yiruppatoṇru.*

178. Indeed, trying to ensure one's personal welfare without Him, [the Lord], is like wrenching a suckling child from its parents and handing it over to a murdering butcher.

*179. taṇṇaittāṇēyirē muṭippāṇ.*

179. Thereby [the jīva] destroys itself.

Seeking to achieve personal wellbeing by self-effort without reliance upon the Lord leads to self-destruction.

## 27. Self-destruction through conceit, arrogance and sensuality.

*180. taṇṇaittāṇē muṭikkaiyāvadu ahaṅkāra-ttaiyum viśayaṅkaḷaiyum virumpukai.*

180. [This] self-destruction occurs through conceit, arrogance and elusive sensuality.

To apply oneself to achieving wellbeing through various spiritual and self-improvement techniques without having overcome the ego leads to spiritual materialism and self-delusion. The ever subtle ego convinces itself that it has achieved high spiritual states and congratulates itself, it then evaluates and considers itself more enlightened and evolved than other beings whom it then disparages and discriminates against in delusive arrogance. It then indulges in sensuality masked as spiritual rewards.



181. *ahamkāram agni sparśam pōlē.*

181. [Expression] of Ego-consciousness is like touching fire.

Fire hurts, disfigures and destroys whatever comes in contact with it, similarly the Ego — which is the delusive conceptualisation of ‘self’ works havoc on the mind, disfiguring and destroying the clear perception of the jīva. The first task of any spiritual aspirant is to identify, observe and overcome the ego or idea of ‘self’.

182. *“na kāma-kaluṣam cittam.....1.”, “na hi me jivitena-arthaḥ...2.”, “na deham.....3.”, “emmā vīṭṭut tīramum....4.”*

182. “Mind not confused by selfish-desire .....” “For me there is no purpose in living.....” “Neither body..... “, “The great abode of liberation..... “.

1. Jitanta Stotra 1:13

“My mind, which always reposes at your feet is not confused by selfish-desire. In all my births, I desire only to be a Vaiṣṇava”.

2. Rāmāyaṇa 5.26.5 Sita speaks—

“For me there is no purpose in living, there is no purpose in wealth; living as I am, in the midst of these demonesses without Rāma, the great warrior. “

3. Yamunācārya’s Stotra Ratna 57

“O Lord, neither body, nor life, nor the happiness coveted by all, nor (even) the Self, nor anything else that is foreign to the glory of allegiance to You, can I, even for a moment, tolerate. Let them perish in a hundred ways. This is true, o slayer of Madhu! This is my entreaty.”

4. Tiru-vāi-moḷi 2, 9. 1

You relieved the distress of an elephant O Merciful Lord! If only You would soon set Your great lotus feet, so red upon my head, the topic of Vaikuṅṭha great I shall not raise, Sire this is all I pray for, nothing more do I want.

183. *pratikūla viśaya sparśam pōlē, anukūla viśaya sparśam viśa-miśra bhojanam pōlē.*

183. Indulgence in proscribed sense-gratification is like taking poison [directly], indulgence in proscribed sense-gratification is like [taking] food mixed with poison.

Succumbing to the glamour of the senses and indulging in forbidden activities leads one to suffering, lower births and to hell. Engaging in permitted pleasures will not lead to negative states of being but is in actual fact more harmful. All pleasures are mixed with suffering — this is the fundamental human experience, and all indulgences ultimately end in separation from object or state of enjoyment and to subsequent suffering. Permitted indulgences are only more subtle in their effect.

This teaching is also important in terms of the modern socio-religious politics of sexuality in the west where sexuality is characterised by a sliding scale — heterosexuality on one hand and homosexuality on the other with the resulting moral and social tensions and conflict. From the point of view of spirituality – ALL forms of sexuality/sensuality (*viśaya sparśam*) are hindrances.

184. *agni-jvālaiyai viḷuṅki viṭāy-keṭa niṅaik-kumā-pōlēyum ātukira pāmpiṅṅitalilē yotuṅka niṅaik-kumā- pōlēyum viśaya pravaṇaṇāy sukikka niṅaik-kai.*

184. Seeking [abiding] happiness through sense-gratification is like attempting to quench thirst by swallowing burning fire or trying to find shelter [from the sun] under the shadow of [the hood] a dancing cobra.

The basic human problem is suffering (Duḥkha) and all forms of sense gratification directed at resolving this problem are ephemeral, transient and insubstantial. By investigating the nature of these pleasures one sees their illusory basis and then eschews them for the real and abiding happiness found in the experience of the Lord.

185. *acuṇamā muṭiyumā-pōlē bhagavat-anubhavaika paraṇāy mrutu-prakrutiyaṅ yirukkumavaṅ viśaya darśanat-tāle muṭiyumpaḍi.*

185. One who experiences the lord, dies to the world of sensory objects, Just as the Asunamā bird perishes [at a loud noise].

The Asunamā bird is easily captivated by sweet gentle music but drops dead when it hears a sudden loud noise. So the hunter plays gentle music and then sudden makes a tremendous din and thus achieves his object. One who has experienced the beauty of the Lord dies as it were, upon again receiving input from sense-objects.

186. *“kāṭṭippaṭuppāyo.....” eṇṇak-kaṭavatiṛē.*

186. Thus it is said — “Would You destroy (me).”

Tiru-vāi-moḷi 6;9;9

“My Lord won’t you shorten the interval and bind me in Paramapada to you lotus feet so large that measured the world; Or do you intend to confound my mind and destroy me completely by keeping me exposed to petty pleasures of the five senses.”

187. *ajñāṇaṅ viśaya pravaṇaṅ kevala nāstikaṅaip-pōlē jñānavāṇaṅ viśaya pravaṇaṅ āstika nāstikaṅaip-pōlē.*

187. The ignorant one obsessed with sense-objects is like a non-believer [*nāstika*] the intelligent one, thus obsessed with sensory objects is like an agnostic [*āstika-nāstika*].

A *nāstika* or ‘non-believer’ is one who rejects the authority of the Veda. The agnostic in this context is one who is indifferent to the authority of the Vedas at best or one who pays lip service to them by accepting them but failing to implement the teachings at worst.

188. *kevala nāstikaṅait tiruttalām, āstika-nāstikaṅai yorunāḷum tiruttavoṇṇādu.*

188. The simple non-believer can be reformed but the agnostic can never be reformed.

The simple non-believer can be brought around through convincing argument and proper instruction, the agnostic on the other hand who is basically a hypocrite, does not need any instruction nor is open to argument.

189. *ivaṅ-iraṇḍum svarūpeṅa muṭikkumaḷvaṅrikkē bhāgavata virodattaiyum viḷaittu muṭikkum.*

189. These two [conceit and sensuality] not only destroy through their essential nature but also destroy by producing hostility toward the Bhāgavatas.

The nature of conceit and sensuality is that they both negate the quintessence of the ātman. They further obscure the natural radiance of the ātman by producing active hostility directed towards those who have taken to the spiritual path — other spiritual aspirants.

## 28. Offences against the Sangha

190. *nāma-rūpaṅgalaiy-uḍaiyarāy bhāgavata virodam paṅṅip porum avargal dagdha paṭam pōlē.*

190. Those who having name and form go about obstructing the Bhāgavatas, are like burnt cloth.

Having *name* and *form* (*nāma-rūpa*) can be interpreted as those who are spiritual aspirants in name and appearance only but are in fact obstructive of true spiritual development and service, or it can mean simply ostentatious people who are preoccupied with external appearance and status.

191. *maṭi-puḍavai ventāl uḍaiyum pāvumottuk kiṭakkum kāṛṛāṭittavāre parantu pōm.*

191. When a folded sari is burnt, it appears to be whole but it is [easily] scattered by the wind.

192. *īśvaran-avattittup paṅṅina ānaittoḷil-kaḷellām bhāgavata-apacāram porāmai eṅṅu jīyar-aruḷicceyyar.*

192. The Jiyar (Naṅṅiyar) said:— All the mighty tasks performed by the Incarnations of the Lord demonstrate intolerance for offence to Bhāgavatas.

Naṅṅiyar's saying is part of the oral tradition. He is reported to have declared that although the Lord could destroy all evil by mere will, He actually manifested Himself in this material realm and performed mighty tasks such as engaging in dual combat with Rāvaṇa, Hiraṅyakaśipu et al, simply to demonstrate His inability to tolerate any offence towards those who have taken refuge in Him.

193. *“avamāṅa kriyā .....”.*

193. “Act of contempt.....”

Mahābhārata, Aśva-medha Parva:—

Kṛṣṇa speaking to Yudhiṣṭhira — “Whatever affection you have developed toward Me, let that be always be directed towards my devotees. Any act of contempt toward them negates all accumulated merit”

194. *bhāgavata-apacarān-tāṅ aneka vidham.*

194. Offences against devotees are of many kinds.

195. *atilē yoṅṅu avargal pakkaḷ janma nirūpaṅam.*

195. One of these is inquiry about their birth,

Inquiring about the socio-demographic background of a person who has taken refuge with a view to readjusting one's attitude towards him/her on the basis of being high-born or low-born, wealthy or poor, educated or uneducated etc is considered by Piḷḷai-lokācārya to be a heinous crime. All members of the spiritual family (*kūṭam*) are to be treated on an equal basis.

196. *idutāṅ arccāvatārtittil upādāna smṛutiyilun kāṭṭil krūram.*

196. This indeed, is more vile than reflecting about the material composition of the arca-avatāra.

The arca-avatāra is a sacred icon in which the Lord resides with the temple. Accepting the principle of transubstantiation in which the icon is transformed through the Lord's grace into His

living manifestation, one should not then reflect upon the composition of the icon, whether it is gold, silver, stone, wood clay etc. with a view to being judgemental.

*197. attai mātru-yoni parikṣaiy-oṭokkum eṅṟu śāstram collum.*

197. It is said in the Scriptures that [inquiring about the social status of a *Prapanna*] is like scrutinising one's mother's reproductive organs.

Both types of investigations are equally reprehensible and one who does so instantly becomes a *karma caṇḍāla* — an outcaste through misdeeds. (This quote cannot be traced to any known śāstra).

*198. triśaṅkuvaip-pōlē karma-caṇḍālaṇāy mārviḷiṭṭa yajñopavītantāṇē vārāy-viṭum.*

198. Like Triśaṅku, who became a caṇḍāla through his deeds and the very sacred thread he wore became a leather strap.

Triśaṅku, was a king who commanded his preceptor to perform a sacrifice whereby he could physically ascend into heaven. He was scorned by his preceptor and his preceptor's sons. The king in anger declared that he would seek out some other preceptor who would obey his command. His preceptor enraged at this display of infidelity cursed him and consequently he immediately became a caṇḍāla or outcaste.

*199. jāti-caṇḍālaṇukku kālāntarattilē bhāgavataṇākaikku yogyataiy-uṇḍu aduvum illai yīvaṇukku.*

199. A caṇḍāla by birth is the eligible to become a Bhāgavata at some time — such is not the case for this [type of person].

One who is born an outcaste can at some stage become eligible to take refuge in the Lord, but one who has been outcaste due to malfeasance can never be so eligible.

*200. āruḍa-patitaṇ āgaiyāle.*

200. For indeed, he has fallen after rising,

A caṇḍāla by birth has hopes of attaining liberation in this lifetime but a karma-caṇḍāla has willingly descended into the depths of depravity and therefore has no hope of salvation in this birth.

*201. idu taṇakku adhikāri niyamam illai.*

201. There is no exemption from that.

No one is excluded or exempt from punishment for such an offence. Whoever gives affront to a ward of the Lord of whatever social order or status he/she may be; advanced or backward, intellectual superior or intellectually challenged; receives the punishment as described above.

## 29. Caste

*202. “tamarkaḷil talaivarāya jātiyan-taṇarkaḷēlum.....” eṅkaiyālē.*

202. It was said:— “Though they be of the brāhmin caste, highest among folk.....”

Tiru-mālai 43:

“O Thou who resides in the great city of śrīraṅgam! Even those of the brāhmin caste, highest among folk, though knowing the four Vedas and the six sub-sections, will it seem, become outcastes instantly the moment they scorn Your wards.”

203. *ivviṭattilē vainateya vruttāntattaiyum piḷḷaip piḷḷaiālvāṇukku ālvān paṇitta vārttaiyaiyum smarippatu.*

203. The story of Vainateya (1) and the words Aḷvān spoke to Piḷḷai Piḷḷai-ālvān (2) should be recalled in this connection.

1. Mahābhārata, Udyoga Parva.

Once a brāhmin student named Galva having finished his course of instruction under the sage Viśvamisra inquired what the *dakṣina* (honorarium) should be. Viśvamisra replied that he needed nothing and that the teaching had been imparted out of love and in appreciation for the service that Galva had rendered during his studentship. Galva kept on insisting and at last in exasperation Viśvamisra demanded 800 white horses, each with one green ear. In dismay Galva beseeched Lord Viṣṇu to come to his aid. Garuḍa was sent to aid him and taking him on his back he began flying all over the world in search of the specified steeds. In the course of their wandering they came to a remote hilltop where a female Rṣikā Sāndilyā was residing. After receiving her hospitality Garuḍa reflected how such an exalted person could live in such a godforsaken and remote place. Immediately he lost all his plumage and only after begging her forgiveness for thinking ill of her abode could he regain his plumage and fly.

2. Piḷḷai Piḷḷai-Aḷvān, though a man of great intelligence, erudition and high birth, was constant in his arrogance and offence against other Vaiṣṇavas. His preceptor, Kurattālvān, approached him on an auspicious day on which gifts are made for expiation of sins and requested a gift. P.P. Aḷvān protested that he had nothing to give and upon being pressed made the formal promise that he would never again offend any Vaiṣṇava in word, deed or thought. A short time later he, nonetheless, thought ill of a particular Vaiṣṇava, feeling great shame at his inability to fulfil his promise to his preceptor Kurattālvān he hid himself. His preceptor being unable to bear the separation sought him out and told him that he should hide no longer since his attitude indicated that he had indeed experienced sincere regret and had relented.

204. *jñāna-anuṣṭāṅgalai yoḷintālum pēṟṟukku avargaḷ pakkaḷ sambandhamo yamaikirāppōlē avai-yuṇṭāṇālu miḷavukkavarkaḷ pakkaḷ apacārame porum.*

204. Association is enough to lead one to liberation despite the deficiency or even total absence of spiritual learning and religious observances.

Association with like-minded peers in the pursuit of spiritual development is more important than either learning or observance of religious rituals and practices.

205. *itil jaṇma vruttādi niyamam illai.*

205. There are no conditions as to descent, deed and so forth in this matter.

In the matter of establishing association with a *tiru-kūṭam* (sacred family) one does not need to consider that only association with those of a higher caste, or those more observant in their ritual obligations or those who are more erudite will be more beneficial in leading one to Liberation — all association with spiritual aspirants of any social standing or intelligence will provide benefit.

206. *ivvarttam kaiśika vruttāntattilum uparicara-vasu vruttāntattilum, kāṇalām.*

206. This fact is illustrated by the anecdotes of Kaiśiki and Upari-cara-vasu.

In the Kaiśiki Purāṇa we are told of the anecdote of Nampāḍuvān, an outcaste singer, who gave a song, called Kaiśika to a hungry ghost who threatened to eat him. By learning the outcaste's song, the ghost, who was in fact a learned brāhmin under a curse, regained his original form. This illustrates the idea that the brahmin benefited from association with an outcaste.

Upari-cara-vasu, was a king who by his intensive spiritual practice gained the power to fly through the sky with all his retinue. He was asked to arbitrate in a dispute between the gods and the Rṣis over a matter of ritual. Having decided in favour of the gods, he was cursed by the Rṣis

and lost his power of astral travel. This is an example of a highly learned man siding with the gods instead of the spiritual aspirants.

207. *brāhmaṇyam vilaic-cellu-kiradu vedādhyayanādi mukartālē bhagavallāpa hetu veṅṅu: atutāṅe yilavuk-kuruppākil tyājayam-āmirē.*

207. The price of Brāhmanism is acceptable if as a result of the study of the Vedas and the other Scriptures is the attainment of the Lord: if that is not the result, then it is to be rejected.

Brāhmanism is not being denied the eminence due to it. The point being emphasised here by the learned ācārya is that Brāhmanism should result in devotion to Viṣṇu and the welfare of all beings, particularly those who have surrendered to the Lord. All devotees are equal and caste restrictions no longer apply to them. If Brāhmanism only serves to increase arrogance, casteism and hostility towards Vaiṣṇavas of lower castes then it does not serve any useful purpose.

208. *janma vruttan̄kaḷ in uḍaiya utkarśamum apakarśamum peṅṅukkum-ilavukkum aprayojanam.*

208. One's descent and ritual observances do not influence spiritual development or decline.

209. *prayojakam bhagavat sambandhamum tat-asambandhamum.*

209. The cause [of spiritual development] is relationship to the Bhagavan or lack thereof.

We have many incidents of people from all strata of society having achieved enlightenment and liberation. Therefore, one's birth in a high caste or observance of prescribed rites do not guarantee spiritual development or Liberation. The only thing that can influence our spiritual development and Liberation is association with or disassociation from śrīman Nārāyaṇa.

210. *bhāgavat sambandham uṅṅānāl iraṅḍum-okkumō eṅṅil.*

210. If it be asked — “Is there caste equality amongst those who are in relationship with the Lord?”

211. *ovvādu.*

211. [The answer is] there is not!

212. *utkrūṣṭamāka pramitta jaṅmam bhramśa sambhāvanaiyālē “śarire ca.....” eṅkira paṭiye bhaya janakam.*

212. The superior birth gives rise to anxiety since there is the possibility of fall, as in, “Even in [my] body.....”

The quotation is from Jitanta Stotram see note on 120.

The exalted status of the high born is dependant upon many socio-religious factors. There is always the possibility of a fall from status occurring due to transgressions of commission or omission. High born persons may also consider themselves eligible for following some other means (upayāntara) and effecting their own personal liberation from Samsāra through yoga or austerities etc. and this path too is uncertain of success and liable to setbacks and failures.

### 30. The benefit of birth in a lower caste

213. *adukku svarūpa prāptamāna naicyam bhāvikka veṇum.*

213. In order to realise one's true nature there needs to be a humble disposition.

The true and essential nature of a jīva is enveloped and obscured by the 6 hindrances known as *ṣaḍari*; *kāma* – self-referent desires, *krodha* – anger, *moha* – delusion or identification with the body-mind complex, *mada* – arrogance or hubris, *lobha* – not sharing resources with others and *mātsarya* – malicious envy. All of these have their basis in the delusive identification with the mind/body complex.

214. *apakruṣṭamāka pramitta urkruṣṭa janmattukku iraṇḍu doṣamum illai.*

214. Birth in the lower castes is really better as it does not entail the two defects.

The two defects are:—

- 1) fear of falling from one's caste status and
- 2) the constant need to impose a false notion of oneself — projecting that image which does not belong to the jīva by nature.

215. *naicyam janma siddham.*

215. [For the low-born] abjection is consistent with birth.

The *ahaṅkāra* (ego-sense) is the greatest obstacle in spiritual progress and the realisation of one's true nature. Those who are high born are more likely to have an over-developed and reinforced ego whereas those who are born in the low castes have a less developed ego. They are also used to being exploited and discriminated against and thus have a more pervasive sense of helplessness and humiliation. This feeling of abjection is the only pre-requisite for Taking Refuge.

In the modern context in the West, where caste is not an issue, this teaching can be applied to those on the perimeters of society, those following alternative life-styles, gays and other groups that are the target of vilification and social discrimination.

216. *āgaiyālē utkruṣṭa janmamē śreṣṭham.*

216. Therefore, birth in a lower caste is better.

In order to take refuge and to practice the virtues of unconditional friendliness and compassion, humility and service it is better to be born an outcaste, than in a family of great learning, wealth and status/caste-consciousness. A person who is used to being discriminated against will, after having taken refuge be able to empathise with the plight of those who are less fortunate and will hopefully be more ready to assist and to serve without self-reference. Whereas for one who has been a member of the “in-group” or mainstream and has always found acceptance and support will generally be less sensitive to the sufferings of others — never having personally experienced vilification and discrimination.

217. *“śvapaco’pi mahīpāla”*

217. Even one who cooks dogs, O king!”

Bhāgavata Purāṇa:—

“Even one who cooks dogs (a caṇḍāla), O king, who has devotion to Lord Viṣṇu, is higher than a twice-born one; a brāhmin without devotion to Viṣṇu is lower than one who cooks dogs,”

However low be the parentage and social status of a Vaiṣṇava he is nevertheless superior to a mere caste brāhmin who is devoid of the love of God.



Śāstra reiterates again and again that everyone is born a śūdra, one earns the right to the status of twice-born (*dvijatva*) through the samskāras or sacraments and through study of the Vedas. All study of the Vedas should rightly culminate in the love of God (*bhakti*) and the service of all sentient beings (*loka-saṅgraha*). If this is not the result then *dvijatva* is useless.

### 31. Social blemishes are mitigated through Right Association.

218. *nikruṣṭa jaṅmattāl vanda doṣam camippatu vilakṣaṇa sambandhattālē.*

218. The blemishes associated with an inferior birth are mitigated through association with distinguished persons.

Distinguished people are those enlightened Śrīvaiṣṇavas who are free from conceit, selfishness and deception and are steeped in love of God and compassion for all beings, and who strive for the welfare of the entire world (*loka-saṅgraha*).

219. *sambandhattukku yogyatai yuṅṭām-podu jaṅmak-kottai pōga veṇum.*

219. Once one develops suitability for entering into a relationship [with God] then all blemishes associated with one's social circumstances should be eliminated.

220. *jaṅmattukkuk kottaiyum atukkup parihāramum “paḷutilā voḷukaḷ” eṅgira pāṭṭilē yarūḷicceytār.*

220. Social blemishes and their mitigation are stated in the text — “The path of faultless good conduct.....”

Tiru-mālai 42.

“O you who are well-versed in the Vedas, and follow the path of faultless good conduct, you should worship together with, and give and take on a par with people of low caste if they are His devotees. O Resident of walled-śrīrangam, you have graced them to worship on equal footing !”

221. *vedakaḷ ponpōlē yivarkaḷottai sambandham.*

221. Association with these [*prapannas*] is like iron in relationship with refined gold.

An expert alchemist can turn iron into gold through the mere touch of highly refined gold: in the same way the contact with practicing vaiṣṇavas can bring about a transmutation of being and turn one into a *dvija*.

### 32. Equality in the Sangha

222. *ivargaḷ pakkaḷ sāmya-buddhiyum-ātikya-buddhiyum naṭakka vēṇum.*

222. It is essential that these [other *prapannas*] be regarded as equal and indeed superior.

223. *adāvadu-ācārya-tulyar-eṅṅum samsārikaḷiḷum taṅṅilum īśvaraṅilum adhikar eṅṅum niṅaikkai.*

223. That is to say — considering them as equal to the ācārya and superior to worldly persons, to oneself and even to the Lord.

All those who belong to the *tiru-kūṭam*, regardless of caste, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation etc. and who have taken refuge in Kṛṣṇa should be considered as superior to all other worldly people, to oneself and even superior to the Lord Himself!

*224. ācārya sām̐yattukkaṭi ācārya vacaṇam.*

224. Equality with the ācārya is [confirmed] by the ācārya’s directive.

Rāmānuja himself and all the former ācāryas have insisted that by having received the same sacred mantras all Vaiṣṇavas are equal and therefore all should be treated with the same veneration due to one’s own ācārya.

*225. ippaḍi niṇaiyātoḷikaiyum apacāram.*

225. It is an offence to think otherwise.

*226. ivvarttam itihāsa purāṇaṅgaḷilum — (1). payiluṅcuṭaroḷi..... (2). neḍumār-kaṭimaiyilum....., (3). kaṇcora veṅkurutiyilum....., (4). naṇṇāda vāḷavuṇarilum....., (5). tēṭṭaruntirarṇēṇilum....., (6). mēmporuḷukku mēlil pāṭṭuk-kaḷilum vicatamākak-kāṇalām.*

226. This is clearly verified by the Itihāsa and Purāṇas and in the verses beginning with:—

1. “Him whose brightness is ever sung.....”
2. “Service to Him whose love is unbounded.....”
3. “Shed tears till blood streamed from the eyes.....”
4. “Hate-loving fiends equipped with swords.....”
5. “One who has reached a status rarely gained..... and in, the excellent verses following:—
6. “Most precious being.....”

The references are to Tiru-vāi-moḷi 3.7. 1—10 and 8.10. 1—10. Periya Tiru-moḷi 7.4, 1—10 and 2.6. 1—10; Perumāḷ Tirumoḷi 2:1—10 and Tiru-mālai 36—42.

In all of these verses of the Prabandham the emphasis is upon giving due respect to all members of the Vaiṣṇava family, and serving them irrespective of their caste and other incidental social constraints.

*227. kṣatriya ṇāṇā viśvāmitraṇ brahma-riṣiyāṇāṇ.*

227. Viśvāmitra, a Kṣatriya, became a Brahma-ṛṣi.

There are a number of examples of individuals who have achieved great spiritual heights and were honoured as such in spite of being born in castes other than the brāhmin.

*228. vibhīṣaṇai Rāvaṇaṇ kulapāmsanaṇ eṇṇāṇ perumāḷ iḱṣvāku vamaśyaṇāka niṇaittu vārttai yarulicceytār.*

228. Rāvana called Vibhīṣana a disgrace to his tribe the Lord [Rāma] graciously spoke [to him], regarding him as one of the Iḱṣvaku [his own clan].

Rāma addresses Vibhīṣana asking him to tell him about the military strength of “them” — the Rākṣasas thus making it clear that he did not consider Vibhīṣana to be one of them.

229. *periyā vuḍaiyārkkup-perumāḷ brahma-medha samskāram paṇṇiyaruḷiṅṅan.*

229. The Lord [Rāma] graciously performed the *brahma-medha* sacrament for Jaṭāyu.

The *brahma-medha* sacrament is a Vedic funeral rite performed only for the highest and most respected Brahmins. The Rāmāyaṇa tells us that the Lord Rāma lovingly cremated the corpse of Jaṭāyu the vulture who fought Rāvaṇa in an attempt to rescue Sītā during her abduction, with these honours.

230. *dharmā-putrar aśarīri vākyattaiyum jñānāti-kyattaiyum koṇḍu śrī vidurarai brahma-medhattālē samskarittār.*

230. Yuddhiṣṭhira performed the *brahma-medha* sacrament for Vidura, on account of the astral voice and his [Vidura's] great wisdom.

Since the greatly learned Vidura was born a śūdra, Yuddhiṣṭhira hesitated to perform brāhmin funeral rites for him, a voice from the sky exhorted him to do so.

231. *riṣigaḷ dharmā-vyādhan vācalilē tuvaṇḍu, dharmā sandehaṅkaḷai camippittuk koṇḍārkaḷ.*

231. Sages, waiting at the door of Dharma-vyādha, had their doubts about dharma resolved.

The story of Dharma Vyādha is found in the Mahābhārata. Dharma-vyādha was a hunter/butcher and thus of low caste, but had attained perfect enlightenment through devoted service to his parents. Thus even great sages were seen to wait patiently at his door to have him clarify abstruse points of Dharma for them.

232. *kṛṣṇan bhīṣma droṇa ādikaḷ gruhaṅgalai viṭṭu śrī vidurar tirumāḷikaiyilē amudu ceytāṅ.*

232. Kṛṣṇa, passing by the houses of Bhīṣma, Droṇa, and others, took food in the blessed house of śrī Vidura.

When Kṛṣṇa came to Duryodhana's kingdom as an envoy for the Pāṇḍavas, elaborate preparations were made for his reception, but ignoring all the other high-born kṣatriyas like Bhīṣma and Brahmins like Droṇa, he went to eat with the learned Śūdra Vidura. The expression used is “*amudu ceytāṅ*” which means to take nectar (amrita).

233. *perumāḷ śrī śabari kaiyālē yamutu ceytaruḷiṅṅār.*

233. The Lord [Rāma] graciously accepted food from the hand of śrī Sabari.

Sabari, a low-caste woman, would pick berries everyday and taste them, setting aside the sweetest ones for Rāma in the event of his arrival. When he finally did arrive he ate them all with great relish.

### 33. Rejection of all differences.

234. *māranēri-nambi viṣayamākap periyā-nambi uḍaiyavarkku aruḷicceyda vārttaiyai smarippatu.*

234. Let us recall that which was spoken to Rāmānuja by Periyā Nambi concerning Māraneri Nambi.

Māraneri Nambi was a low caste disciple of Alavandār (Yamunācārya) and a man of great learning and devotion. On his deathbed, he asked Periyā Nambi, a brāhmin co-disciple of

Yamunācārya to perform his funeral rites. He reasoned that this vehicle of a body had been regarded with great affection by Yāmunācārya and thus he felt that it should not be handled by his own people after he had left it. Periya Nambi did as requested, but some onlookers complained to Rāmānuja. Rāmānuja summoned Periya Nambi and requested an explanation as to why he had not followed the social convention and allowed Māraneri's body to be cremated by his own people — further suggesting that by flaunting social convention he was setting a bad example and earning public obloquy. Periya Nambi's rejoinder was based on the following points:—

1. There was no choice in the matter as he could not deputise someone else to do it for him, just as the daily rite of Sandhya-vandana cannot be done by proxy — in other words he had been given the task by the dying Māraneri Nambi and therefore was under an obligation which could not be out-sourced to someone else.
2. He (Periya Nambi) was by no means superior to Rāma who performed the brahma-medha sacrament for a vulture, nor was Māraneri-nambi in anyway inferior to Jaṭāyus.
3. Nammālvar's glorification of the service of all devotees irrespective of caste (Tiru-vāimoli 3:7 and 8;10) was not a mere poetic figure of speech but an injunction that should be realised in practice.

235. *“prādurbhāvaiḥ.....” — ityādi.*

235. Also, there is — “Through manifestation..... “

“The God of gods, through various manifestations, assumes the forms of gods and humans. His devotees are born in different bodies and castes and according to their conduct (karma). They (the Lord and His devotees) take forms like all other sentient beings, but this is not a cause for contumely, on the contrary, both appear as sentient beings for the welfare of all beings (*loka-saṅgraha*) alone. The so-called eminence of non-devotees due to learning, wealth and conduct is no better than the dressing up of a widow — to no avail.” (Source unknown)

236. *bhāgavataṅ aṅṛikkē vedārta jñānādigaḷ-aiyuḍaiyavaṅ kuṅkumam cumanta kaḷudaiyopāti yeṅru collā niṅṛatirē.*

236. It has been said that [a brāhmin] who has mastered the Vedas in their entirety, devoid of devotion to the Lord is like a saffron-loaded donkey.

A brāhmin scholar no matter how learned he may be in all the six branches of Vedic knowledge, if he does not have love of God he is like a donkey carrying a burden of saffron — able to appreciate the weight but not the fragrance or value.

237. *rājā-vāṇa śrī Kulaśekharap-perumāl tiryak stāvāra jaṅmaṅgalai yācaipoṭṭār.*

237. Though a king, the Lord Kulaśekhara expressed a desire to be born as an animal and even an inanimate object.

Kulaśekhara āḷvār in his poems expressed the ardent desire to be reborn as a bird or a tree in order to be near the Lord Śrīnivāsa in the temple at Tiruveṅgaḍam.

238. *brahmaṇottar-āṇa periyālvārum tiru-makaḷārum gopa-jaṅmattai yāstāṇam paṅṇiṅārgaḷ.*

238. Periyālvār, chief of Brahmins, and his blessed daughter [Aṅḍāl] transposed themselves as cowherds.

Because of their great love for Kṛṣṇa, Periyālvār and Āṅḍāl easily and naturally transposed themselves and identified completely with the lowly cowherders in their attitude towards devotional service.

239. *kantal kaḷintāl sarvarkkum nārīnām uttamaiyuḍaiya avastai varakkavaṭā yirkkum.*

239. When rags are removed all will take on the nature of the best of women.

When ‘rags’ in the form of the afflictive emotions of selfish-desire, anger, delusion, arrogance, greed, and envy are eradicated then the true nature of the jīva will shine through and one becomes like the gem of all women — śrī Mahālakṣmi herself.

### 34. Similarities between jīvas & Lakṣmi.

240. *āru prakāratālē pariśuddhātma-svarūpattukku tat sāmīyam uṇḍāy-irukkum.*

240. There are six similarities between purified jīvas and that one [Lakṣmi] in quintessence.

These six are:—

- (1) having allegiance to no other (than Nārāyaṇa) — *ananyārha śeṣatvam*
- (2) taking refuge in no other — *ananya-śaraṇatvam*
- (3) being enjoyed by no other — *ananya-bhogyatvam*
- (4) tranquil in union (with the Lord)— *samsṣṣattil āriyirukkai*
- (5) distressed in separation — *viśṣṣattil āriyirāmai*
- (6) being controlled solely by God — *tadeka-nirvāhyatvam.*

### 35. Egocentric impulse

241. *druṣṣattil utkarṣam ahaṅkāratālē; adruṣṣattil utkarṣam ahaṅkāra-rāhityattālē.*

241. Superiority here in this world derives from egocentric impulse; superiority hereafter derives from being liberated from egocentric impulse.

Worldly success is based upon competition and the egocentric desire for achievement and recognition in the eyes of others. Most people live the lives that they think will bring them acceptance from others. Viśvāmītra's ego drove him into a personal struggle which led to the change of social status and universal recognition as a Brahma-rṣi. Kulaśekhara on the other hand rejected all such social-status & worldly achievements and would have been happy to have exchanged places with flora and fauna!

242. *brahmāvā-yiḷandu potāl iṭaicciyāyp peṛru viḍudal ceyyum-patīyāy-irukkum.*

242. Brahma experienced failure; whereas a milk-maid achieved success.

Although Brahma arises from the lotus sprung from Viṣṇu's navel, he is unable because of his ego to see the lotus-feet of the Lord; on the other hand, Cintayanti the simple Gopi unable to go out to meet Kṛṣṇa immediately abandons her body and attains him. (Vide aphorism 80).

### 36. Program for Spiritual development

243. *ippaṭi sarva prakārat-tālum nāca-hetu-vāṇav-ahaṅkāratukkum atiṇuḍaiya kāryamāṇa viśaya prāvanyattukkum viḷai-nilam tāṇākaiyālē taṇṇaik-kaṇḍāl śatruvaik-kaṇḍār-pōlēyum avarṛukku varitta-kāraṇa samsārikaḷaik kaṇḍāl sarppatraik kaṇḍār-pōlēyum avarṛukku nivartta- kāraṇa śrīvaiṣṇavarkaḷaik kaṇḍāl bandhukkaḷaik kaṇḍār-pōlēyum iśvaraṇaik kaṇḍāl pitāvaik kaṇḍār-pōlēyum, gcāryaṇaik kaṇḍāl, paciyan corṛaik kaṇḍār-pōlēyum, siśyaṇaik kaṇḍāl abhimata viśayattaik kaṇḍār-pōlēyum niṇaittu, ahaṅkāratā kāmāṅkaḷ mūṇṇum anukūlar pakkal anātarattaiyum pratikūlar*

*pakkaḷ prāvanyattaiyum upekṣikkum avarkaḷ pakkal apekṣaiyaiyum piṛappikku meṇṛāñci, ātma-guṇaṅkaḷ nammālum piṛarālum piṛappittuk koḷlavonṇātu, sat-ācārya prasādamaṭiyāka varukiṛa bhakavad prasādattālē piṛakumattanai yeṇṛu tuṇintu dehayāttiraiyil-upekṣaiyum ātmayāttiraiyil-apekṣaiyum prākṛuta vastukkaḷil bhogyatābudhi nivruttiyum deha-tāraṇam paramātma samārādhaṇa samāpti prasāda pratipatti yeṅkiṛa budhi viśeṣamum taṅakkoru kleśam-uṅṭānāl karma-phala meṇṛātal krupāpala meṇṛātal piṛakkum prītiyum, svānuṣṭāṇattil sādhanatva budhi nivruttiyum; vilakṣaṇaruṭaiya jñānānusandānaṅgaḷil vañcaiyum, ukantaruliṇa nilaṅkaḷil ātarāticayamum, maṅkaḷāśāsanamum, itara viśayāṅkaḷil aruciyum, ārtiium anuvarttana niyatiyum āhāra niyatiyum; anukūla saha-vāsamum, pratikula saha-vāsa nivruttiyum sat-ācārya prasādattālē varttikumpāḍi paṇṇik-koṇḍu pōrakkatavaṇ.*

243. One should keep oneself under constant surveillance — considering oneself as the ground in which solipsism produces desire for sense-gratification which is the cause of ruin in every way. One should avoid like a snake, worldly people (*Samsāris*) who are promoters of self-centeredness and sense-gratification. One should treat śrī Vaiṣṇavas who are concerned with renouncing these [sense-pleasures & self-centredness], as kinsmen. One should treat the deity with all the awe and reverence due to a father. The ācārya should be relished like a starving person relishes food. A disciple should be treated like the beloved. Realising that conceit, wealth and sensuality, these three, are the causes of [respectively] disrespect toward the virtuous, attachment for bad company, and a passion for those who are indifferent — one should take care to renounce them. One must realise that the spiritual qualities [*sama* — control of the mind and *dama* — control of one's reactions] cannot occur spontaneously or be inculcated by others, but can only arise from Divine Grace which is mediated by the grace of the true ācārya. One should, by the ācārya's grace continue making progress in overcoming the lower nature and developing the spiritual nature. One should renounce the desire to enjoy sense-objects and cultivate the clear perception that the maintenance of the body is accomplished by using the remnants of things offered to the Lord. One should welcome suffering and affliction, whether arising from karma or as a result of Grace. One should repudiate the idea that this code of conduct is a means for attaining the Lord. One should cultivate the desire for knowledge, the emulation of distinguished persons and intense love [for God]. One should offer prayers of benediction towards the Lord, and His Sacred Abodes and cultivate aversion for worldly objectives. One should remain disciplined in matters of service, abiding with the well-disposed and avoiding the ill-disposed.

In this sūtra our mentor proposes a program for spiritual development thus stabilising the potentially hazardous path of destructive passivity inherent in the Teṅgalai theology.

1. Mindfulness — the Prapanna should constantly be watching the mind and the thoughts that arise. The desire for sense-gratification which arises from self-centeredness should be gradually eradicated.
2. Association — we are greatly influenced by our peers and therefore the company that we keep should be that which will benefit us and should be a support network for our spiritual practice.
3. The Deity should be treated with awe and reverence. The majority of people are incapable of *rāga-bhakti* — spontaneous and passionate love of God, therefore they should cultivate *vaidhi-bhakti* — an attitude of awe and reverence.
4. The spiritual preceptor should always be cherished and never taken for granted.
5. A disciple should be treated with all the affection and attention that one would shower upon the great love of one's life.

6. Conceit, the pursuit of wealth as an end in itself, and sensuality should be avoided.
7. Await the opportunity by the preceptor's grace and guidance to develop mental equanimity and self-control.
8. With the grace of the preceptor one should strive to overcome the 6 afflictive emotions and to develop the positive qualities of acceptance, loving kindness, friendliness, compassion etc.
9. The body should be maintained by offering everything first to the Lord and then taken as left-overs (*prasāda*).
10. Develop a more positive attitude towards suffering. There are two recommended ways of regarding suffering, which is endemic to the human condition —
  - Suffering is inescapable because it is the fruition of previous karma and is in fact due and condign recompense for past offences. It is therefore good that one's liabilities are being liquidated and debts being repaid, thus bringing one closer to God each time.
  - Suffering is due to the Grace of the Lord and is being administered in order to foster distaste (*vairāgya*) for continued embodiment, possessions, relationships and the world in general.
11. This spiritual development program should not be regarded as a means to win the favour of the Lord but should be performed as one's duty alone.
12. Strive to increase your learning by every means possible.
13. Follow the lead of the distinguished and venerable spiritual aspirants.
14. Work on developing intense love of God.
15. Bless the Lord and His sacred temples rather than requesting Him to serve you and assist you in the fulfilment of your happiness projects.
16. Reflect upon the futility of material objectives.
17. Be mindful and disciplined in all those matters relating to one's service to God.
18. Live and mix with people that are amicable to you and will benefit you.
19. Avoid the company of those that are inimical and will not promote your spiritual development.

### 37. Benediction of the Lord (*maṅgalāsāsanam*)

244. *maṅgalāsāsanam svarūpa viruttamaṅṛō veṅṅil: jñāna-daśaiyil rakṣya-rakṣaka-bhāvam taṅkappilē kiṭakkum prema-daśaiyil taṭṭumārik kiṭakkum.*

244. If it be argued that the benediction of the Lord (*maṅgalāsāsanam*) is contrary to [the jīva's] quintessence, [it is answered that], in the rational state the relationship is that of protected and protector; but in the state of love this relationship is reversed.

The controversial topic of *maṅgalāsāsanam* which is a benediction for the welfare of the Lord is now taken up for discussion. On the normative rational level the jīva is totally dependant upon the Lord for its protection, survival and edification. On this level a blessing by an inferior to a superior would be inappropriate, but when rational thinking gives way to spontaneous love, such a blessing is quite appropriate as the roles are reversed in that the lover seeks the welfare of the beloved more than one's own.

245. *avaṅ svarūpattaiy anusandhittāl avaṅaik kaṭakākak koṇḍu taṅṅai nōkkum, saukumāryattai anusandittāl taṅṅaik kaṭakākak koṇḍu avaṅai nōkkum.*

245. From the point of view of the Lord's quintessence, [as supporter] it [the jīva] seeks His protection; but from the point of view of the Lord's tenderness it [the jīva] seeks to protect Him.



The quintessence of the Lord is omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience etc. thus the jīva naturally looks to Him for protection; but in the love-relationship, the jīva sees the Lord's exquisite beauty, gentleness and tenderness and naturally desires to protect these in support of a continuing relationship.

246. *ivvarttam cakravartti śrī janaka rājaṅ tirumakaḷ viśvāmitraṅ śrī daṇḍaka-araṅya vāsikaḷāṅ ruṣikaḷ tiruvaḍi mahārājar śrī nanda gopar śrī vidurar piḷḷaiy-uraṅgavilli-dāsar toṭakkamāṅ avargaḷ pakkalilē kāṅalām.*

246. This fact is illustrated in the case of the emperor (Dasaratha), Janaka's divine daughter (Sita), Viśvāmītra, the Rishis who dwelt in the blessed Daṇḍaka forest, Tiruvaḍi (Hanuman), the Mahārāja (Sugriva), the blessed cowherd Nanda, the blessed Vidura, Piḷḷai Uraṅgāvilli Dāsa and others.

All these individuals had occasion to protect the Lord, except Piḷḷai Uraṅgāvilli Dāsa (Dhanurdāsa) who spent his time protecting Rāmānuja.

247. *iḷaiya-perumālai śrī guhap-perumāḷ atiśaṅkai paṅṅa iruvaiyum atiśaṅkaipaṅṅi śrī guhap-perumāḷ parikaram perumālai nōkkirirē.*

247. The blessed Lord Guha, suspecting the younger Lord (Lakṣmana), and Guha's servants suspecting them both, they [all] protected the Lord (Rāma).

When Lord Rāma spent the night in the hamlet of Guha, Lakṣmana as usual, armed himself and stood guard over Rāma. Guha suspecting that Lakṣmana might try to assassinate Rāma during the night also armed himself to keep watch over Lakṣmana. The subjects seeing their chieftain taking up arms along with Lakṣmana and wandering about in the middle of the night suspected his intentions and they too armed themselves to watch over both of them!

248. *oru nāl mukattilē viḷittavarkaḷai vaṭṭivaḷaku paṭuttum pāṭāyirritu.*

248. By only once seeing the beauty of [Rāma's] form, [Guha's people] made a great effort [to protect Rāma].

249. *ivargaḷ nammudaiya koṭiyilē yeṅṅum paṭiyāyirru āḷvārkoḷ nilai.*

249. The āḷvārs are outstanding in this matter [of blessing the Lord].

250. *āḷvargaḷ ellāraiyaṅ pōlallar periyāḷvār.*

250. [And], Periy-āḷvār excels all the other āḷvārs in this [matter].

Periyāḷvār is the author of the hymn Paḷḷāṅḍu which is the classical example of a benediction of the Lord.

*paḷḷāṅḍu paḷḷāṅḍu pallāyira tāṅḍu palkōṭi nūṅāyiram  
mallāṅḍā tiṅḍōḷ maṅivaṅṅā un cevvaḍi cevvit-tiruk kāppu ||*

“For many years, for everlasting years, for thousands of years; may the beauty of Thy red feet be blessed! O Lord Kṛṣṇa of emerald-hue, with the shoulders that vanquished the wrestlers.”

251. *avargaḷuk-kitu kādācitkam; ivarkkitu nityam.*

251. For the others, [making benedictions to protect the Lord] was occasional; for him [Periy-āḷvār] it was constant.

252. *avargaḷudaiya āḷaṅkāl-tāṇe ivarkku mēṭāy-irukkum.*

252. Indeed, the depths for the others was for him the shallows.

The other āḷvārs were only attracted by the beauty of the Lord; but Periyāḷvār, was constantly apprehending danger to the Lord's person and thus constantly blessing Him.

253. *avargaḷukku upāya śeṣatvattaiyum alittu svarūpattaik kumiḷ nīrunṇap paṇṇum adu, ivarkku upāya vruttikkum hētuvāy svarūpattaik karaiyēṛrum.*

253. For the others, the diving into ecstasy [of mystic union] compromised their dependency (*śeṣa*) relationship to both [the Lord and the *tiru-kūṭam*]; for him (Periyāḷvār) this [perception of transcendental beauty] is the cause of reinforcing [the *śeṣa*-relationship], augmenting thereby the quintessence.

The other Aḷvārs seem not to have been able to control themselves and gave themselves up to ecstasy and merged themselves completely with the Lord, thereby negating the dependency-relationship known as *śeṣa-śeṣi bhāva*. Whereas Periyāḷvār, having a vision of the Lord's transcendental beauty instead of becoming absorbed in it, steadied himself and further deepened the relationship of dependency by his benediction for the protection of that rare, exquisite and fragile beauty.

254. *bhaya-nivarttakaṅkaḷukku bhayap-paṭuvadu pratikūlaraiyum anukūlarākkikkolluvadu, atīta kālaṅgaḷil apatāṇaṅgaḷukku uttara-kāḷattilē vayiṛer-ivadu prāpti-phalamum iduvē yeṅpadu animiṣaraip-pārttu urakalurakaḷ eṅpatāyk koṇḍu idu tāṇē yātraiyāy naṭakkum.*

254. This [benediction], indeed, was a preoccupation [for Periyāḷvār], which took the form of anxiety on account of reassuring factors, changing enemies into friends, feeling pangs over some dangers of former times, or saying — “This [benediction] is the fruit of attainment”, or when seeing the vigilant ones [the guardians of the Lord in Vaikuṅṭha] exhorting them:— “Don't sleep!”

The several facets of Periyāḷvār's Maṅgaḷāsāsanam are:—

1. Even though the strong muscular arms of the Lord and his weapons — discus, sword and bow should have reassured Periyāḷvār of the Lord's capacity to defend himself, nevertheless he feared lest some misfortune befall even these factors.
2. He would enlist others who were seeking even mundane gains such as wealth to bless the Lord.
3. He would feel that distant encounters with adversaries such as Rāvaṇa and Hiranyakasipu, were contemporary events about to take place and would feel acute anxiety for the Lord's well-being.
4. He intended to maintain his vigilance and protection of the Lord even in Vaikuntha — exhorting all the attendants of the Lord to remain ever vigilant. (Periyāḷvār Tiru-moḷi 5;2;9)

“May no rift ever come between Thee and Thy inseparable servants. All hail to Sri who, like an ornament adorns Thy chest. May Thy radiant, sharp blazing discus in Thy right hand, which is capable of annihilating foes be blessed for everlasting years! May Thy conch whose sound pierces through the clanging din of weapons in battle be blessed for everlasting years.”  
(Pallāṇḍu verse 2.)

255. *allātavarkaḷaip pōlē kēṭkiṛavarkaḷ uḍaiyavum collukiṛavarkaḷ uḍaiyavum taṇimaiyait tavirkkai yaṅrikkē ālumālār-eṅkīraṇaṅ uḍaiya taṇimaiyait tavirkkaikkāka vāyirru bhāṣyakārarum ivarum upadēśippatu.*

255. Bhāṣyakāra (Rāmānuja) and he (Periy-ālvār), unlike other teachers who perceived only their own loneliness and that of others, have the unique distinction of feeling that the Lord is lonely. When imparting teaching they sought to remove His loneliness.

Rāmānuja and Periyālvār had compassion on the Lord who was strong for everyone else but with whom there was no one to sympathise. Their teaching was therefore service orientated, in order to surround the Lord with well-wishes and supporters. Other ālvārs and ācāryas saw themselves as lonely beings, considering their limited numbers compared to the millions of Samsāris. They also considered the Samsāris as lonely beings in that they had strayed away from the Lord and would be subjected to repeated births and deaths.

256. *allātārkkku sadā samruddhikaḷ darśanānubhava kainkaryañkaḷālē ivarkku maṅgalāsāsanattālē.*

256. The existence and sustenance of the other [ālvārs] were from seeing, enjoying and serving [the Lord]; his [Periy-ālvār's] was from making the benediction.

257. *ukantaruḷiṇa nilaṅkaḷai yanusantittāl ūṇum urakka-mumiṇṇrikkē ivaruḍaiya yātraiyē namak-kellārkkum yātraiyāga vēṇum.*

257. He was [completely] preoccupied with thinking about the Sacred Places, disregarding food or sleep, and this should be an example to be followed by all of us.

258. *agaiyālē maṅgalāsāsnam svarūpa-anuḡaṇam.*

258. Therefore the prayer of benediction [indeed] fully accords with [jīva's] essential nature.

The venerable teacher now begins to expatiate on some of the other aspects of the Prapanna's conduct mentioned in Aphorism 243.

### 38. The conduct of the Prapanna

259. *anukūlar-ākīraṇ jñāna bhakti vairāgyaṅgaḷ iṭṭumārīnār pōlē, vaṭivilē toṭai koḷḷalām-paṭi yirukkum paramārttar.*

259. The well-disposed ones (*anukūlan*) are those who are disgruntled [with Samsāra], and in whom wisdom, devotion and dispassion are prominent and whose actions confirm the existence [of these qualities].

The definition of an *anukūlan* or one who is a worthy spiritual friend (*kalyāna-mitra*) is given. He or she has realised the unsatisfactory and ephemeral nature of Samsāra and has the spontaneous arising of wisdom, devotion and dispassion (or even one of these qualities) and who actually manifests them in daily life.

260. *oru cēy nirampa nīr niṇṇāl acal cēy pocintu kāṭṭumā pōlē ivaiyillātārkkum ivarkaḷōṭṭai sambhandattālē urāvudal tīrakkaṭavatāy irukkum.*

260. Just as from a flooded field, water seeps into a neighbouring field, so from association with these persons by those who are lacking these [wisdom, devotion and dispassion], grief born of deficiency will vanish.

Again the importance of right association or *sat-sangha* is stressed. By befriending and associating with those who have wisdom, devotion and dispassion one will be influenced in a like manner.

261. *āru-nīr varavaṇittāṇāl atukkīṭāna aṭaiyālaṅgaluṇḍamā pōlē prāpti yaṇittāṇa-vārē inda svabhāva viśeṣaṅgal taṇṇaṭaiyē viḷaiyakkatavatāy- irukkum.*

261. These characteristics of self-nature will arise spontaneously when attainment is near, as the sands of the river-bed produce oozing before the approaching flood.

### 39. Wisdom, devotion & dispassion.

262. *ivarraik-koṇḍu carama śarīram eṇṇu taṇakkut-tāṇē arutiyaṭāy-irukkum.*

262. These signs [wisdom, devotion and dispassion] are indicative that this is certainly the last incarnation for the one [in whom they appear].

### 40. Those who should be avoided.

263. *pratikūlar-ākiṛār dēhātmābhimānikaḷum sva-tantrarum anya-śeṣa-putarum upāyāntara niṣṭarum sva-prayōjana pararum.*

263. The ill-disposed (*pratikūlas*) are those who identify the Self with the body/mind complex, those who act according to their whims, those who show allegiance to others, (rather than the Lord), those who are attached to other means (*upāya*), and who are self-seeking.

The venerable teacher here enumerates five types of people who should be avoided:—

1. Those who confuse the body/mind complex as being the Self.
2. Those who know that the Self is different from the body, and yet still think that they are their own masters, declining to be of mindfull service to anyone else.
3. Those who are inclined to serve but serve other sentient beings for their own personal gain rather than the Lord and His embodiment which is the world.
4. Those who are engaged in service to the Lord and His Creation but resort to various means in order to obtain liberation rather than simply relying on the Lord alone.
5. Those who render service to the Lord and the devotees but out of self-interest.

264. *ivargaḷukku uddheśyarum upāyopeyaṅgaḷum bhedhit-irukkum.*

264. With such varying ideals and agendas, each [of the above categories] have their own particular preferences, means and objectives.

265. *dēhātmābhimāniḷukku uddēśyar dēha-varṭta-karāṇa maṇṣyargaḷ, upāyam-arttam, upēyam-aiḥika-pōkam svatantranukku uddēśyar svarkkāti-pōkapratar, upāyam karma-anuṣṭānam, upēyam svarkkāti-pōkam, anya-śeṣa bhūtarkku uddēśyar brahma-rudrātiḷ upāyam tat samāśrayaṇam, upēyam tat sāyujyam: upāyāntara niṣṭarkku uddēśyaṇ devatāṇṭaryamiyāṇa sarveśvaraṇ, upāyam karma-jñāna-bhaktiḷ, upēyam bhagavat-anubhavam sva-prayōjana-pararkku uddēśyaṇ neṅjiṇāl niṇaiṇṇāṇ yavaṇ-eṅkiravaṇ; upāyam svakīya svikāram, upēyam svārṭta kaiṅkaryam.*

265. For those who identify the jīva with the body, their preference is for others who also foster the body, their means is money and their objective is worldly enjoyment. For those [of the second category] who act through independence their preference is for [worshipping] those [deities] who give enjoyment in heaven, their means is the performance of rituals and their goal is attainment of heaven. For those [of the 3rd category] whose allegiance is to others, they prefer [to worship] Brahma, Siva and the like, their means is surrendering to them, and their goal is union with them. For those

[of the 4th category] devoted to other means, their preference is for [Nārāyaṇa] the Lord of all as Indweller of the gods, their means is [the practice of] Karma Yoga, Jñāna Yoga and Bhakti Yoga and their goal is the experience of the Lord. For those [of the last category] who are self-seeking, their preference is for [Nārāyaṇa] described in — “He who thinks [of Him] in whatever form.....\*”, their means are various and their ultimate objective is self-delight [rather than the pleasure of the Lord].

The self-seeking (*sva-prayojana-para*) are devotees who are oriented towards the Lord but their service always has a self-seeking element to it.

\*The quotation is from Tiru-vāi-moḷi 3.6.9:—

“O people of this world, don’t be confused regarding the Primeval One the foremost of the Trinity, the Lord of the gods, He is the father capable of affording protection and also the mother; and much more besides, you see. Be not confused that He is different from this one in Iconic form. Whatever form [of God] you contemplate upon, that form is assumed by the Great Lord, the hue of the expansive ocean”.

266. *mudal coṅṇa mūvarum nigrhattuk-kilakku. Maṛṛaiyiruvarum anugrahat-tuk-kilakku.*

266. The first three [categories] mentioned above, are subjected to rectification, for the other two [categories] there is Grace.

267. *mūvaruṭaiyavum karmam anubhava vināśyam, nālāmati-kārikku prāyaścitta vināśyam, aṅjāmatik-kārikkup puruṣākāra vināśyam.*

267. The Karma of the [first] three is [only] destroyed by [running its full course of] experience; that of the fourth subject is destroyed by atonement and that of the fifth subject is destroyed by the Mediatrix Lakṣmi.

The subjects of the first three categories enumerated above alienate themselves from the Lord and their salvation occurs only after many many rebirths and untold Karmic suffering. The only way they can extricate themselves from the wheel of rebirth is to increase their merit and decrease their demerit.

For those of the fourth category who engage in means other than the Lord, their salvation lies in Divine Grace which treats the upāya as a kind of atonement and is disregarded in the general amnesty.

Those who serve the Lord for their own interest are forgiven for the sake of Mahālakṣmi, who as the Mediatrix was instrumental in introducing them to the spiritual path through the medium of the ācārya, and in whose presence they played the courtier.

The venerable teacher now takes up some anticipated objections to the teaching and refutes them.

268. *upāyam svīkāra-kālattil puruṣa-sāpēkṣamumāy puruṣākāra-sāpēkṣamumāy irukkum; kārya- kālattil upāya nirapēkṣamāy irukkum.*

268. Choosing a means depends both upon the individual (*puruṣa*) and the Mediatrix (*puruṣākāra*) — at the time of accomplishment [of the goal] these two become redundant.

The Lord is the *Siddhopāya* — the perfect means. He does not brook any other means and this is known as *nirapekṣa-upāyatva*. The question arises as to why should He need the services of Mahālakṣmi as a Mediatrix? The answer is that at the time of surrendering, the cetana (sentient) subject (*puruṣa*) courts the Lord, and Mahālakṣmi is instrumental in ushering the cetana into the Lord's presence with a recommendation. After the act of *śaraṅāgati* and the acceptance by the Lord, He needs neither the assistance of the cetana nor of Mahālakṣmi. He Himself takes complete responsibility for the liberation of the cetana.

269. *sva-prayojana-parar ellāraiṣum pratikūlarāka niṅaikkaḷām-ōveṅṅil ?*

269. It may be asked:— “Is it proper to consider all those who are self-seeking as ill-disposed?”

One may also ask if the ācārya is not being excessively puritanical by declaring that even the friendship and association of self-seeking devotees should be avoided.

270. *iṅgu sva-prayojanam eṅkiradu āśraya-doṣa janya-māṅattai.*

270. [The answer is that] that which is referred to as self-seeking arises from the faulty reliance [on the aesthetic form of the Lord].

The self-seeking one is misguided because he simply reacts to the beautiful external form of the Lord in His *arca-avatāra* (Iconic manifestation). He is wrapt up in the enjoyment of the Form, the personal ‘feel-good’ experience and possibly the auxiliary socio-economic factors, atmosphere, good food etc. and does not truly surrender completely to the Lord.

271. *agaiyālē doṣam-illai.*

271. Therefore, there is no fault [in saying that the self-purposed one is ill-disposed].

Therefore it would be better not to associate with these people as it may lead to disturbance of one’s sādhana by engaging in disputation with them.

## 41. Positive qualities to be developed.

272. *viśaya doṣattāl varum avaiyellām duṣṭyajamāy iruppatu.*

272. It is obvious that it is difficult to renounce everything that proceeds from the object of enjoyment.

It can be seen from some of the Hymns of the ālvārs that they could also have been classified as self-seekers, having given themselves over totally to the enjoyment of the rapture of ecstatic union with the Lord. Sometimes going so far as to publicly impeach the Lord for his lack of response. But their apparent impropriety was due to advanced God-realisation and enlightenment, not due to immaturity and ignorance. So therefore we should not judge them from a mundane human point of view. It is natural for sentient beings to seek pleasure and aesthetics and therefore they cannot be condemned if they do so.

273. *“umaiyaroḍu cevīṭar vāttai.....”, “katham-anyad iccheti.....”*

273. “Conversation between the deaf and the dumb.....(1).”, How can it desire anything else.....(2).”

1. Nacciṃyār Tiru-moḷi 12:1 Aṅḍāl speaking to her friends:—

“To me who has developed an infatuation with Kṛṣṇa that cannot be understood by you; whose desires are quite different from mine— your prattle is like conversation between the deaf and the dumb. Please take me to a place near Mathura [the place of Kṛṣṇa], who reached the arena even before the wrestlers arrived there and who was raised in the house of a different mother after leaving His birth- mother.”

2. Stotra-ratna 37

“How can my mind, which is firmly set upon Your nectar-shedding lotus-feet, ever desire anything else. It is well known that when there is a lotus full of pollen, the bee does not even look at the [thorny, pollenless] iḷṣuraka flower.”

274. *ippaḍi yivai yittaṇaiyum sat-ācārya prasādattālē varttikku pōtaiḱku vastavyam-ācārya sannidhyum bhagavat sannidhyum vaktavyam-ācārya vaibhavamum svanikarṣamum; japtavyam guru-paramparaiyum dvayamum; parigrāhyam pūrva-ācāryargaḷ uḍaiya vacanamum anuṣṭānamum: parityājyam avaiṣṇava saha-vāsamum abhimāṇamum; karttavyam ācārya kaiṅkaryamum bhagavat kaiṅkaryamum.*

274. When these [positive characteristic] increase by the grace of the true ācārya, the enlightened one dwells in the presence of the ācārya and in the presence of the Lord; he speaks of the ācārya's greatness and his own inferiority; his prayers are the recitation of the spiritual lineage (*guru-parampara*) and the *Dvayam* (mantra); he imbibes the teaching and emulates the conduct of the former ācāryas and avoids association with non Vaiṣṇavas and their attachments; he renders service to the ācārya and to the Lord.

In this passage the venerable teacher picks up from 259-261, the positive characteristics being eulogised are wisdom, devotion and dispassion. He elaborates upon the ideal conduct of the enlightened one. The Prapanna is further enjoined to:—

1. Reside only with the ācārya or near temples.
2. He should only ever praise the greatness of the ācārya, and express his own inferiority.
3. He should constantly be mindful of the succession of spiritual masters, pay them reverence and constantly repeat the Dvaya mantra — *śrīman nārāyaṇa caranau śaraṇam prapadye; śrīmate nārāyaṇāya namaḥ.*
4. He should spend his free time studying and memorising the teachings of the previous ācāryas, and practice applying them in his daily life.
5. He should shun the company of non-Vaiṣṇavas and all the favours extended by them.
6. He should dedicate himself to the support and service of his ācārya and to serving the Lord residing in the temple.

## 42. Service (*Kaiṅkaryam*)

275. *kīlccoṇṇa bhagavat kaiṅkaryam aṛivatu śāstra-mukattālē; ācārya kaiṅkaryam aṛivatu śāstra-mukattālum ācārya vacanattālum.*

275. The service to the Lord, referred to above, is to be learned from the Scriptures; service of the ācārya is to be learned from the Scriptures as well as from instruction.

The Lord in His arca-form does not make clear His requirements, therefore one should learn the proper method of service by studying the appropriate Scriptures such as the Pañcarātra Āgama and Purāṇas.

The method of serving the teacher is learned from the Dharma śāstras as well as simply by following the instructions of the teacher.

276. *kaiṅkaryam-tāṅ-irandu.*

276. There are two kinds of service.

277. *adāvadu iṣṭam ceykaiyum aniṣṭam taviru-kaiyum.*

277. Namely, doing what is pleasing and avoiding what is displeasing.

278. *iṣṭāniṣṭāṅgaḷ varṇāśramaṅkaḷaiyum ātma-svarūpataiyum avalambit-tirukkum.*

278. That which pleases and that which displeases depends upon varṇa and āśrama and the jīva's quintessence.



The first of the two stages of *śaraṅāgati* are acting in harmony with the Divine Will (*ānukūlasya saṅkalpaḥ*) and avoiding disharmony (*pratikūlasya varjanam*). According to the Dharma-śāstra there is no absolute standard of what pleases and displeases the Lord — these factors are all dependant upon one's profession as brahmin (intelligentsia), kṣatriya (administrator), vaiśya (entrepreneur) or śūdra (worker); and status as bachelor, householder, retiree or monk. What a worker does to please the Lord is not always the same as what a priest should do and visa-versa. Likewise the acceptable conduct of a bachelor differs from that of a householder or a monk. The duties and prohibitions appropriate to each should be learnt from the Dharma-śāstras. But this code of conduct should be followed simply as service and never be regarded as leading to some merit. And ultimately all personal conduct and service should accord with the inherent quintessential nature of the Self and its relationship to the Lord and to others.

*279. puṇyattuk kañcukiravaṇ pāpattaip paṇṇānire.*

279. One who shirks from acts of merit (*puṇya*) would certainly not perform acts of demerit (*pāpa*).

One who hesitates to perform acts of merit as enumerated in the Dharma-śāstras because they smack of *upāyāntara* — being a means to an end, and thus in fact jeopardise Mokṣa, would certainly not perform any acts prohibited by the Scriptures.

In fact the Veda (Muṇḍaka-upaniṣad) declares that in order to reach the highest Goal both merit and demerit must be transcended.

*280. ivaṇ puṇyattaip pāpam eṅṛi-rukkum; avaṇ papattaip puṇyam eṅṛi-rukkum. avaṇukkadu kiṭaiyādu; ivaṇādu ceyyān.*

280. The [Prapanna] regards merit as demerit. The [Lord] regards demerit as merit; but the [Lord] will get none [demerit] because the [Prapanna] does not occasion any.

The true Prapanna eschews the accumulation of merit as being an obstacle on the spiritual path whereas the Lord out of His boundless affection actually regards demerit favourably — as a reason to bestow ever more love and compassion upon the Prapanna! This is a rather tricky doctrine that can lead to serious heresies, so the wise ācārya tempers it by declaring that this remains a theoretical proposition only because no true Prapanna, following strictly the prescribed code of conduct would ever give the Lord the opportunity to relish his demerit as he would certainly not accumulate any!

*281. kairkaryan-tāṇ bhakti-mūlam allāda-podu bhīti-mūlamāy vara-veṇum.*

281. Service, indeed, should be motivated by fear [of loss of dependence on the Lord] if it does not spring from loving devotion.

The best form of service is that which arises from pure sincere loving devotion, but if this is not spontaneously present then it would better be prompted by fear of the obscuration of one's quintessential attribute of eternal *śeṣatva* — dependence.

*282. aduvum illāda podu adhikāratillum upāyopeyaṅkaḷ-ilum anvayam-iṅṛikke yoḷiyum.*

282. If this [service] does not eventuate, qualification for Prapatti together with the means [the Lord] and the end [the pleasure of the Lord] will be lost.

If unfortunately, service is not performed from either of these two reasons then one loses the very fundamental qualification for Prapatti which is the realisation of one's inherent and intimate relationship to the Lord, as well as the Grace of the Lord and the result of service which is the delectation of the Lord.

*283. kairkaryan-taṇṇai phala-sāadhanāmākkāde phalamākka veṇum.*

283. Service [to the Lord] should be [regarded] as a fruit, not as the means to fruit.

Service is indispensable to the Spiritual Path but it should be self-less. The opportunity to serve should always be regarded as a blessing in itself, and never be used in order to elicit some favour from the Lord.

*284. adāvadu-tāṅ kaiyelāde avaṅaik kaiyerkap paṅṅukai.*

284. That is to say, instead of reaching out to take from Him. One should rather give to Him.

Instead of using the Lord to further our own agendas we should always be thinking of ways in which we can return the blessings that we have received from Him. Supplicatory prayer for our own self-fulfillment should be avoided by all means.

*285. koṭuttuk koḷḷāde koṅḍattukku kaikkuli koṭukka veṅum.*

285. Not [even] accepting [gratitude] by giving, one should reward the acceptance [of oneself by the Lord].

Aṅḍāl's Nacchiyār Tiru-moḷi 9:7 is highly instructive in this regard, instead of regarding service as a matter of *quid pro quo* — she submits to the Lord of Tirumāl-irun-śolai that if he would only deign to accept her offerings she would go on multiplying them a thousandfold!

*286. śrī viduraraiyum śrī mālākāra-raiyum guṇiyaiyum pōlē kiñcit-karittāl svarūpam niram peruvadu.*

286. If one gives something, one's quintessence expands in luminosity, as with Vidura, Mālākāra and the hunch-backed woman.

*adrohaḥ sarvabhūteṣu karmanā manasā girā |  
anugrahaśca dānaṁ ca stām dharma sanātanaḥ ||*

The Eternal Duty (Sanātana Dharma) towards all creatures is the absence of malevolence towards them in thought, deed or word, and to practice compassion and charity towards them. MB Vana Parva 297;35

*287. maṭita-ṭavāda corum curunārāda puvum cuṅṅāmpu paṭāda cāntumire yivarkaḷ koḍuttadu.*

287. These gave:— food without searching the pocket (ie without asking payment), flowers without bad smell and sandal-paste without lime.

1. Vidura fed Kṛṣṇa out of sincere and deep love without the thought of gaining anything. Unlike the Kauravas who sought to invite him to dinner in order to curry favour and gain some influence.
2. Mālākāra offered flower garlands to Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma free from the obnoxious whiff of any self-interest.
3. Kubja the hunch-back maid of Kamsa was accosted by Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma while carry a vessel full of fragrant sandal paste meant for Kamsa. She being entranced by their beauty gave it all to them, indifferent to the wrath or punishment she may have incurred from her master.

### 43. Stages of Spiritual Unfoldment

*288. kainkarya daśai-pōlē munpuḷḷa daśai-kaḷilum svarūpattai ujjvalamākka veṅum.*

288. As in the state of service, so also in stages prior [to that] the quintessence of the self should be allowed to shine forth.

289. *munpenālu daśai yuṇḍu.*

289. There are four prior stages:

290. *adāvadu jñāna-daśaiyum, varaṇa-daśaiyum, prāpti-daśaiyum, prāpyānubhava-daśaiyum.*

290. These are:— 1) the stage of knowledge, 2) the stage of choice, 3) the stage of attainment and 4) the stage of experiencing the goal.

1. The stage of knowledge occurs when one receives spiritual teaching from a qualified preceptor.
2. the stage of choice occurs when one decides to take the Lord as one's sole refuge and to perform śaraṇāgati.
3. the stage of attainment is that of surrendering at the Lord's lotus feet and opening up to His spontaneous Grace.
4. the stage of experiencing occurs when one reaches the goal of proximity and eternal service to the Lord in Paramapada.

291. *jñāna-daśaiyil ajñānattai muṇṇiṭum varaṇa-daśaiyil apurttiyai muṇṇiṭum; prāpti-daśaiyil ārttiyai muṇṇiṭum; prāpyānubhava-daśaiyil abhinivēśattai muṇṇiṭum.*

291. In the stage of knowledge, one is mindful of ignorance; in the stage of choice one is mindful of imperfection; in the stage of attainment one is mindful of eager expectancy; in the stage of experiencing the goal one is mindful of insatiable longing.

In the first stage, in order to learn anything from the teacher one must first acknowledge one's ignorance and should strive as hard as possible to gain as much knowledge as one can about *Tattva* (Truth), *Hita* (the Way) and *Puruṣārtha* (Goal).

In the second stage, Going for Refuge becomes possible only when one acknowledges one's utter inability to bring about one's own liberation through any means whatsoever. One is mindful that one is completely destitute of any merit or ability to overcome the burden of Karma accumulated over thousands of birth.

In the third stage one does not remain passive, but should be anxious to engage completely in the practice of Dharma.

In the fourth stage one is mindful only of *abhiniveśa* — complete absorption in the divine or insatiable longing for unification with the Lord.

292. *ajñānam povadu ācārya-jñānattāle; apūrṭti povadu īśvara pūrṭtiyāle; ārtti povadu aruḷāle; abhiniveśam povadu anubhavatāle.*

292. Ignorance is dispelled by the ācārya's wisdom; imperfection is resolved by the perfection of the Lord; restlessness is stilled by the Lord's Grace; insatiable longing is extinguished by the experience [of the Divine].

293. *ajñānattukkaṭi aparādham, apūrṭtikaṭi jñāna-pūrṭti, ārttikaṭi alābham, abhiniveśattukkaṭi aḷagu.*

293. Transgression gives rise to ignorance; the perfection of knowledge gives rise to [awareness of] imperfection; non-attainment gives rise to eager expectancy; the rapturous beauty (of the Lord) gives rise to insatiable longing.

Nescience (Spiritual ignorance) is caused by negative Karma that has been accumulated over thousands of births. In spite of the lack of merit the dawning of wisdom occurs by some good

fortune through meeting the ācārya. Wisdom reveals how totally incapable one is of achieving Liberation through one's own petty efforts and micro-advancements. This realisation gives rise to eager expectation to surrender to and serve the Lord, and the beatific vision of the rapturous beauty of Kṛṣṇa gives rise to insatiable longing to be united with Him.

294. *ārttiyum abhiniveśamum irukkum-paḍi arccirādi-kadiyilē coṇṇôm.*

294. The eager expectancy and the insatiable longing mentioned here are discussed [in extenso] in the Arccirādi-gati (another treatise by Pīlḷai Lokācārya).

#### 44. The four attributes of the Prapanna.

295. *ivaṇ taṇakku nālu daśai-pōlē nālu guṇamum uṇḍu.*

295. Like these four stages the Prapanna has four attributes.

296. *adāvadu jñānamum ajñānamum śaktiyum aśaktiyum.*

296. Namely; knowledge and ignorance, capacity and incapacity.

297. *idu tāṇ avaṇukkum uṇḍu.*

297. This indeed is true also of the Lord.

298. *avaṇuḍaiya jñānattuk-kilakku ivaṇuḍaiya guṇam ajñānattuk-kilakku ivaṇuḍaiya dōṣam śaktik-kilakku ivaṇuḍaiya rakṣaṇam aśakti-kilakku parityāgam.*

298. His knowledge is of the merit of the jīva, His ignorance is of the demerit of the jīva; His capacity is to protect the jīva and incapacity is the inability to abandon it.

Kṛṣṇa completely disregards all the imperfections, demerit and transgressions of the individual and focuses only on their positive characteristics however small they may be. He will never abandon the cetana and can do nothing but protect it.

299. *ivaṇuḍaiya jñānattuk-kilakku ācārya-guṇam ajñānattuk-kilakku ācārya-dōṣam; saktik-kilakku ācārya kainkaryam; aśaktik-kilakku niṣidha-anuṣṭānam.*

299. The cetana's knowledge is of the merit of the ācārya; and his ignorance is of the ācārya's defects; its capacity lies in the service of the ācārya and its incapacity is in doing what is forbidden.

The cetana too should disregard the ācārya's defects and only focus on his good qualities, he should serve the ācārya and strenuously avoid all acts which are against Dharma.

#### 45. The four categories of forbidden acts.

300. *niṣidha-anuṣṭānam nālu-paḍiyay irukkum.*

300. There are four categories of forbidden acts.

301. *adāvadu akrutya-karaṇamum bhagavat-apacāramum bhāgavat-apacāramum asahya-apacāramum.*

301. 1. Doing proscribed acts; 2. Offending the Lord and 3. Committing offence to the Lord's wards (devotees), and 4. the intolerable offence.

302. *akrutya-karaṇam-āvadu — para-himsai para-stotram para-dāra parigraham para-dravya-apahāram asatya-katanam abhakṣya-bhakṣaṇam toṭakkamāṇavai.*

302. Proscribed acts are those that cause pain to other sentient beings, sycophancy, adultery with the wives of others, appropriating what belongs to others, telling untruths, eating forbidden items and the like.

303. *bhagavat-apacāramum āvadu — devatāntarṅgaḷ-ōṭokka īsvaraṇai niṇaikkaiyum rāma-kruṣādyā-avatāraṅgaḷil manuṣya sajātīyathā budhiyum, varṇāśrama viparītamāṇa vupacāramum, arccāvatārattil upādhāna nirūpaṇamum ātmāpahāramum bhagavat-dravya-apahāramum toṭakkamāṇavai.*

303. Affront to the Lord is as follows; considering that Perumāḷ is simply another god, thinking that the Avatāras Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are simply ordinary men; practising rituals which are unsuitable to one's social status (varṇa and āśrama); speculating about the material of which icons are made; considering the Self to be separate from the Godhead; and taking property dedicated to the Lord.

304. *bhagavat-dravyattait tāṇ apaharikkaiyum apaharik-kīravargaḷukku saharikkaiyum avargaḷ pakkalilē yācitam-āgavum āyācitam-āgavum pari-grahikkaiyum bhagavāṇukku aniṣtamāy irukkum.*

304. Stealing the Lord's property oneself, aiding others to steal it, receiving these stolen articles from others, whether solicited or unsolicited, are acts which cause great displeasure to the Lord.

305. *bhagavat-apacāram āvadu ahamkārārta kāmāṅgaḷ aḍiyāga srīvaiṣṇavargaḷukkup paṇṇum virodham.*

305. Affront to the Lord's own is showing hostility toward Srīvaiṣṇavas occasioned by egotism, selfish desires and sensuality.

306. *asahya-apacāram-āvadu nirribandhanamāka bhagavat bhāgavata viśayam eṇṇāl asahamāṇanāy irukkaiyum, ācārya-apacāramum tat-bhakta-apacāramum.*

306. The intolerable offence is; unprovoked malice towards the Lord, devotees, the ācārya and his disciples.

307. *ivai yoṇṇruk-koṇṇru krūraṅgaḷumāy upāya virodhi-gaḷumāy upēya virōdhi-gaḷumāy irukkum.*

307. These in comparison excel each other in reprehensibility, and alienate one from both the means and the end.

Offence against those who have surrendered to the Lord is more serious than offending the Lord Himself. The ācārya, his disciples and the Lord's wards have dedicated their lives to the welfare of all sentient beings and are dedicated to selfless service therefore any offence against them is pernicious beyond compare.

The venerable teacher now embarks upon a discussion about the disciple-teacher relationship.

#### 46. Teacher — disciple relationship.

308. *taṇ hitōpadēṣam paṇṇum-pōdu taṇṇaiyum śiṣyaṇaiyum phalattaiyum mārrāṭi niṇaikkai krūra niṣidham.*

308. Indeed when imparting teaching, the ācārya must at all costs avoid the reprehensible delusions regarding the position of a preceptor, the role of the disciple and the results of the instruction.

If a person, duly eligible to receive initiation and instruction seeks the good office of the ācārya — the ācārya would be committing an offence more reprehensible than those listed above if he suffers from the distorted perceptions of himself, the role of the disciple and the results of the teaching.

309. *taṇṇai mārāḍi niṇaikkaiyāvadu taṇṇai ācāryaṇ eṇru niṇaikkai; śiṣyaṇai mārāḍi niṇaikkaiyāvadu taṇakku śiṣyaṇ eṇru niṇaikkai, phalattai mārāḍi niṇaikkaiyāvadu druṣṭa prayōjaṇattaiyum śiṣyaṇuḍaiya ujjīvaṇattaiyum bhagavat-kaiṅkaryattaiyum sahavāsattaiyum phalamāka niṇaikkai.*

309. Having self-delusions about preceptorship means thinking of himself as being *the* ācārya; having delusions about the role of disciple means thinking of a disciple as being *his* disciple; having delusions about the results [of initiating & instructing the proselyte] means being motivated by some kind of material benefit, the salvation of the disciple, assisting the Lord or companionship with the disciple.

The ācārya should never think of himself as being a “teacher of sacred lore” but rather as the conduit of his own ācārya's grace. The disciple should not be regarded as one's personal disciple but rather as a *co-disciple* of the same ācārya. Then there are four self-delusions arising from the imparting of instruction:

1. Monetary gain from the disciple's tuition fees,
2. the delusion that one is actually assisting in the salvation of the disciple,
3. the delusion that one is actually assisting the Lord in His work of reclaiming jīvas and
4. the expectation of some social companionship from living with and socialising with a particular disciple who meets with one's personal approval.

310. *niṇaiyātirukka innālu phalamum siddhik-kīrapaṭi yeṇṇeṇṇil śeṣa-pūtaṇāṇa śiṣyaṇ ninaivālē druṣṭa-phalam siddhikkum īśvaraṇ ninaivālē ujjīvanam siddhikkum ācāryaṇ ninaivālē Bhagavat kaiṅkaryam siddhikkum upakāra samruddhiyālē sahavāsam siddhikkum,*

310. If the ācārya does not delude himself about [being the prime cause of] these four results [of instruction] how are they accomplished? 1. Material benefit flows from the disciple's devoted [and spontaneous] care. 2. Salvation is the result of the Lord's devoted care. 3. Service to the Lord comes from the ācārya's instruction, companionship results from remembering the assistance of the ācārya.

The disciple whose bounden duty it is to serve the ācārya will automatically see to the preceptor's needs and therefore there is no particular necessity for him to expect it or demand it. The disciple's salvation occurs through the Lord's Grace and not through anything that the ācārya can or does do. The *hitopadeśa* (sound instruction) imparted to the disciple will guide him in the service of the Lord, companionship will naturally result if the relationship is a mutually beneficial one and the ācārya has fulfilled his duty of being a competent and good teacher. But neither should he expect companionship nor should he try to manipulate such things.

311. *sākṣāt-phalamum ācāryatvamum siddhik-kīrapaṭ yeṇṇeṇṇil taṇ niṇaivālum īśvaran niṇaivālum siddhikkum.*

311. It may be asked; “How are the direct results obtained and what is the accomplishment of preceptorship?” — These [results] are accomplished due to the ācārya's and the Lord's good-intention (*niṇaivu*).

312. *ippaḍi yoḷiya upadēśikkil iruvarkkum svarūpa siddhi-yillai.*

312. If the ācārya does not follow these precepts then he confounds the very principle [of their relationship].

The function of the preceptor is to impart instruction to educate the disciple to become a selfless and devoted person, if this process is successful then the devotee will blossom as such. In turn the preceptor who has the good intention to deploy this course of action is blessed with the preceptorship by the Lord. He acquires the required skills for imparting teaching. If on the other hand he does not follow these precepts and becomes self-deluded then he is unworthy of the preceptorship and loses the ability to impart instruction effectively. His instruction then will be of no avail and the disciples will not respond to the teachings.

313. *ācāryanukku śiṣyan-pakkal krupaiyum svācāryaṅ-pakkal pāratantriyamum vēṇum.*

313. The ācārya should show compassion to the disciple and dependence upon his own teacher.

The ācārya should extend full compassion and skilful means in caring for the disciple's spiritual instruction, being constantly mindful that he is but a conduit for his own ācārya's grace and nothing more.

314. *kruppaiyālē śiṣyan svarūpam siddhikkum pāratantriyālē taṅ svarūpam siddhikkum.*

314. Through compassion the quintessence of the disciple is reinforced and by dependence upon his own teacher his own quintessence is reinforced.

The quintessence of the disciple is one with that of the ācārya both being related to each other as jīvas and to the Lord in an eternal and indissoluble bond. Therefore compassion which is a limitless openness and a complete and total acceptance of the other is the only emotion to have. The disciple regards his teacher with the same dependence and veneration that one would have to Sriman Nārāyaṇa and thus reinforces the natural *śeṣa-śeṣi* relationship of the enlightened jīva.

315. *nērē ācāryan enpadu samsāra nivartakamāṇa periya tiru-mantrattai yupadeśittavaṇai*

315. The direct meaning of the term “ācārya” is one who teaches the sacred Mahā-mantra (*aṣṭhākṣari*) which liberates one from Samsāra.

316. *samsāra varttkaṅgalumāy kṣutraṅkalumāṇa bhagavan-mantraṅgalai yupadeśittavargalukku ācāryatva pūrṭti yillai.*

316. Preceptorship is not consummated by one who teaches lesser, petty mantras — even though they are in propitiation of the Lord; fostering [continued existence in] Samsāra.

317. *bhagavan mantraṅgalai kṣudraṅgaḷ eṅkiṛadu phala dvāra.*

317. The Lord's mantras are referred to as being petty in respect of the results obtained [from their recitation].

318. *samsāra varttakaṅgaḷ eṅkiṛatum attālē*

318. For the same reason they are said to foster [continued existence in] Samsāra.

319. *idu taṅ aupadhikam.*

319. This [fruit] indeed is limited to certain conditions.

320. *cētanaṅ uḍaiya ruciyālē varukaiyālē.*

320. They arise from one's personal desires.



The recitation of the Santāna Gopāla mantra for example results in the attainment of progeny, Lakṣmi mantras may produce wealth and Hayagriva mantras learning, Sudarśana mantras ensure protection from competitors and enemies and ensures success in undertakings etc. But all these results are worldly and limited, and they only serve to perpetuate one's sojourn in Samsāra.

*321. śiṣyaṅ eṅpadu sāyāntara nivruttiyū phala-sādhana śuśruṣaiyū, ārttiyū, ādaramū anasuyaiyū uḍaiyavaṇai.*

321. The worthy disciple is one who rejects anything other than the Goal, desires only to hear [teachings] about the means to the Goal; is restive in Samsāra, affectionate to the preceptor and unenvious.

The perfect disciple is one who is only concerned with pursuing the goal to unification with God, craves only to listen to teachings on this subject and is eager to be liberated from Samsāra. He bears inordinate affection for the preceptor and is unenvious of the prosperity and happiness of others.

*322. mantramū dēvatayū phalamū palānubandhikaḷū phala sādhanamū aihika pōkamū ellām ācāryanē yeṅṅu niṅaikkakkaṭavaṅ.*

322. The disciple should consider his preceptor as the Mantra, the Deity, the result, and all those things connected with the result, the means to attain the result, and the source of joy in Samsāra.

*323. “mātā pitā yuvatayaḷ.....” eṅkiṅa ślokattilē ivvarttattaiṅ paramācāryarū aruḷiccēydār.*

323. Our Great Teacher (Yamunācārya) revealed this teaching:— “Mother, father, women.....”

Stotra Ratna 5:

I reverently bow my head to the blessed feet of the first Master of our lineage (Nammāḷvār), whose feet are decorated with bakula flowers, and which are alone the mother, father, women, children and wealth to every one of our lineage.”

*324. idukkaṭi upakāra smṛti.*

324. The basis of this attitude is mindfulness of a sense of gratitude.

This sense of gratitude is a quality which characterises genuine spirituality. It is a deep and sincere sense of gratitude for every one and every thing in our lives. Nothing should ever be taken for granted and wherever possible this gratitude should be shown and expressed.

*325. upakāra smṛtikku mutalaṭi ācāryan-pakkal krutajñatai muṭin-tanilam īśvaran-pakkal krutajñatai.*

325. The sense of gratitude is firstly directed towards the ācārya and secondly towards the Lord.

The disciple at first feels immensely grateful to the ācārya for linking him up with the Lord and for revealing his true nature as jīva. He then feels inordinately grateful to the Lord for having bestowed upon him sufficient grace to have established contact with the ācārya in the first place.

*326. śiṣyanū ācāryanū anyōnyam priya-hitāṅkaḷai naṭattak kaṭavārkaḷ.*

326. The disciple and the ācārya should demonstrate a mutual beneficial and affectionate relationship.

327. *śiṣyan taṇ priyattai naṭattak kaṭavaṇ; īśvaraṇaik koṇḍu hitattai naṭattak kaṭavaṇ; ācāryan mārāḍi naṭattak kaṭavaṇ.*

327. The disciple should [always] attend to the ācārya's welfare and pray to the Lord to ensure the preceptor's well-being.

328. *śiṣyan ukappilē yūnrippōrum ācāryaṇ ujjīvaṇattilē yūnrippōrum.*

328. The disciple becomes committed to satisfying (the ācārya) the ācārya becomes committed to uplifting (the disciple).

329. *agaiyāl śiṣyan-ācāryaṇ-uḍaiya harṣattukku ilakkākai yoḷiya roṣattuk kilakkākaik kavakācam iḷḷai.*

329. Because it follows that the disciple is the recipient of the ācārya's love, there is no place for [the ācārya's] anger [toward the disciple].

In a genuine open and sincere spiritual relationship the ācārya and the disciple as like lovers. Mutual love, respect and affection should override any feelings of frustration that may arise between them in terms of the teaching and learning dynamic. Anger, which is the result of a frustrated personal desire has no place here.

330. *nigrahattukkup pātramām-pōdu adu hita rūpamākaiyālē yiruvarkkum upādēyam.*

330. Neither of them should avoid reprimanding at any time, as it is beneficial [to both].

The Dharma śāstras enjoin the disciple to test the guru prior to accepting him and to constantly observe the guru's behaviour. If the guru strays from the path, as is indeed human, then the disciple has a right to remind him of his duty, without criticising him to others or revealing the errant behaviour to any one else. The teacher wishing only for the welfare of the disciple should always be ready to constructively reprimand an errant disciple. Neither reprimanding nor being reprimanded in a constructive manner should be a cause of disquietude for either, as theirs is a mutually beneficial relationship and in order for this to be so there must be an essential element of candid, sincere and mutually beneficial criticism.

331. *śiṣyanukku nigraha kāraṇam tyājyam.*

331. The disciple should avoid any cause for being reprimanded.

The disciple who is dedicated to his/her spiritual practice should always act to please the ācārya and thus avoid any cause for being reprimanded.

332. *nigrahantān bhagavan-nigraham pōlē prāpyāntargatam.*

332. Reprimand [by the preceptor], like the reprimand of the Lord, is part of the results [of the Lord's active Grace].

But when the disciple does err then the ācārya's reprimand should be graciously accepted just as if it was Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself scolding him/her.

333. *ācārya śiṣyanuḍaiya svarūpattaip pīṇakkaṭavaṇ śiṣyan ācāryanuḍaiya dehattaip pīṇakkaṭavaṇ.*

333. The ācārya should foster the [realisation of the] essential-nature of the disciple; the disciple should attend to the ācārya's physical needs.

334. *iraṇḍum iruvarkkum svarūpamūy bhagavat-kaiṅkaryamū-āyirukkum.*

334. Both of these [goals] are the proper [attitudes] of the two and are service to the Lord.

335. *ācāryanukku deha-rakṣaṇam svarūpa-hāni śiṣyanukku ātma rakṣaṇam svarūpa-hāni.*

335. For the ācārya, protecting [his own] body obscures his essential character [as ācārya]; for the disciple, protecting [his own] Self obscures his Self-nature [of being dependant].

An ācārya should not be required to go out and earn a living for himself and his family in order to maintain house and hearth. The ācārya's duty is to teach and guide the community and they should therefore ensure that all his material needs are taken care of. The ācārya working for a living therefore negates his essential character as preceptor. The disciple who strives to liberate him/herself from samsāra negates the essential characteristic of being dependant upon the ācārya.

336. *ācāryaṅ ātma-rakṣaṇam paṇṇum iṭattil ahaṅkāram virodhi; śiṣyan dēha-rakṣaṇam paṇṇum iṭattil mama kāram virodhi.*

336. The ācārya [who thinks he is personally] responsible for [disciple's] Salvation, is destroyed by pride; the disciple [who thinks he/she is personally] responsible for [the ācārya's] livelihood, is destroyed by self-interest.

The preceptor should be free of any egoistical idea that somehow his activities are contributing to the salvation of the disciple; and the disciple should avoid any possessive consideration that the ācārya's livelihood is somehow dependant upon his material contribution and that without his charity the preceptor would be at a loss. All material support that is given to the ācārya should be given out of a sense of duty and obligation not out of self-interest or for self-promotion. It is best that all support be given anonymously.

337. *ācāryaṅ tannuḍaiya deha-rakṣaṇam taṅ vastuvaik-koṇḍu paṇṇakkaṭavaṅ śiṣyan sva-deha-rakṣaṇam ācāryaṅ vastuvaik-koṇḍu paṇṇakkaṭavaṅ.*

337. The ācārya should regard the contribution [given] for his livelihood as his own [property]; the disciple should regard the means for his own livelihood as the ācārya's [property].

Upon taking initiation the disciple should figuratively surrender everything he has to the guru; the guru then "loans" it all back to him. Therefore whatever the disciple subsequently gives to the ācārya for his personal maintenance is nothing but an instalment upon a loan and should be regarded as such by both parties. The ācārya thus becomes primarily responsible for the livelihood of both of them.

338. *ācāryaṅ śiṣya vastuvaik-kollak kaṭavaṅallaṅ. śiṣya taṅ vastuvaik-koḍukkak kaṭavaṅallaṅ.*

338. The ācārya should not take the [personal] property of the disciple and the disciple should not give such property to him.

The ācārya should never accept or request anything from the disciple which the latter considers as his own personal property or which is intended for personal and exclusive use. For example if the disciple appears before the ācārya with a rolex watch — the ācārya should not hint that it be given to him nor should the disciple offer it.

339. *koḷḷil miṭṭiyanām, koṭukkil kaḷḷanām.*

339. Receiving [such property] makes [the ācārya] appear destitute: giving makes [the disciple] appear like a thief.

The ācārya should not actually need anything as he is already complete and self-satisfied — relying completely upon the Grace of the Lord for everything; the disciple does not own anything to give, since everything already belongs to the ācārya.

340. *koḷ koṭaiyuṅṅānāl sambandham kulaiyum.*

340. When taking and giving arise, the [spiritual] relationship ceases.

The moment the ācārya deludes himself that he is taking from the disciple and the disciple considers that he is a donor — their spontaneous and natural spiritual relationship dissolves into a mundane business transaction.

341. *ivaṅ miṭṭiyanākaiyālē koṭāṅ, avaṅ purnan-āgaiyālē koḷḷāṅ.*

341. The [disciple] cannot give since he is destitute; the [ācārya] cannot receive since he is replete.

342. *avaṅkukku purttiyālē svarūpam jīvittatu. ivaṅukku miṭṭiyālē svarūpam jīvittatu.*

342. The [ācārya's] position is justified by repletion; the [disciple's] position is justified by emptiness.

The disciple has theoretically surrendered everything she/he owns to the ācārya and is therefore totally destitute and is not in a position to *give* anything. The ācārya does not need anything since he has putatively overcome all his selfish desires and needs nothing, being completely and totally dependant upon the Lord..

343. *ānāl śiṣyan ācāryaṅkukku paṅṅum upakāram oṅṅrum iḷḷaiyōvēṅṅil.*

343. Then, it may be asked:— “Can the disciple therefore do no favour to the ācārya?”

344. *ācāryan niṅaival yutu.*

344. The ācārya, considers only [the progress of the disciple].

Seeing the intellectual progress and spiritual unfoldment of the disciple is the only thing that can gratify the preceptor, there is nothing else but sincere work at personal development which will be a favour for the ācārya. In fact the greatest joy of the ācārya would be to see the disciple excel even him in spiritual advancement!

345. *adāvadu jñāna vyavasāya prema samācāraṅgal.*

345. [The results are] namely, knowledge, firm resolve, universal love and good conduct.

The only gratification that the ācārya derives from their relationship is the development of the qualities of increased knowledge and wisdom, conviction and resolute pursuance of the Ultimate Goal, the development of universal loving kindness and compassion to all beings and good conduct which means doing the appropriate act at the appropriate time with the benefit of all beings in mind (*loka-saṅgraha*). Vide Bhagavad Gita chap 12.

346. *ācārya prītyarttamāka ivaṇukku tavira vēṇḍuvatu bhagavat dravyattai yapahārikkaiyum bhagavat bhojanattai vilakkukaiyum guru mantra devatā paripavamum.*

346. For the purpose of pleasing the ācārya the [disciple] should abstain from appropriating anything belonging to the Lord, obstructing the enjoyment of the Lord, and any display of contumely for the teacher, the mantra and God.

347. *bhagavat dravyāpahāran āvadu svātantriyamum anyaśeṣatvamum; bhagavat bhōjanattai vilakkukai āvadu avaṇḍaiya rakṣakatvattai vilakkukai.*

347. The appropriation of the Lord's property is the disciple's [sense of] independence; and [his] dependence on another [other than the Lord]; obstructing the enjoyment of the Lord is [consciously] obstructing His Salvific act.

The jīva belongs to Perumāḷ, to think that one is an independent and free individual or on the other hand, developing a dependant relationship with another being is tantamount to appropriating the Lord's property. To attempt to protect and liberate oneself from Samsāra through the practice of various sādhanas is tantamount to obstructing the pleasure of the Lord which is to bring about a reunion with all the jīvas entrapped in Samsāra.

348. *avaṇḍaiya rakṣakatva kramam prapanna paritrāṇattilē coṇṇom. guru-paripavam āvadu kēṭta varttattiṇpaḍi yaṇuṣṭiyātoḷikaiyum anadhikāriḡaḷukku upadeśikkaiyum; mantra paripavam āvadu arttattil vismrutiyum viparītārta pratipattiyum devata paripavam āvadu karaṇa-trayattaiyum aprāpta viśayaṅkaḷilē pravaṇam-ākkukaiyum, tat-viśayattil pravaṇam ākkātoḷikaiyum.*

348. His Salvific methods are set forth in the Prapanna Paritrāṇām<sup>1</sup>. An affront to the teacher consists in not practising what is prescribed by him and passing on those teachings to others who are not qualified; affront to the mantra consists in forgetting its correct meaning or [knowingly] distorting it's meaning; affront to God consists in devoting the three causative instruments [mind, speech and action] to unworthy objects and failing to devote these to [the Lord].

349. *ivaṇukku śarīra-avasānattaḷavum ācārya viśayattil “eṇṇait tīmaṇam keṭuttāy....1.”, “maruvittoḷum maṇamē tantāy....2.” eṇru upakāra smruti naṭakka vēṇum.*

349. With regard to the ācārya, [the disciple] should, until departing from the body, [always] behave in such a way as to continually be mindful of the ācārya's favour—“you restored my errant mind.....” and “you conferred upon me a mind that will always serve.....”

1. Tiru-vāi-moḷi 2,7.8

“O Sridhara my Lord, you restored my errant mind and rid me of life's sorrows, and now with a pure mind I worship Your feet, sing and adore You as the sire of cupid. Your complexion is that of an emerald! O Vamana my lotus-eyed Lord, for this favour so great what can I do to you in return?”

2. Tiru-vāi-moḷi 2.7.7

“O my Lord, how clever You are! My lotus-eyed Master, with sparkling teeth! You conferred on me a mind that will always be riveted to Your lotus-feet, days pass meditating upon You. O my Lord Vāmana! You who became Trivikrama! and measured the universe in three strides.”

<sup>1</sup> The Prapanna Paritrāṇām is another work by Pillai Lokācārya.

## 47. Mental turpitude

350. *manassukkut tūmaiyāvadu sva-guṇattaiyum bhagavat bhāgavata doṣattaiyum niṇaikkai.*

350. The turpitude of mind consists in contemplation on one's own virtue and on the defects of the Lord and the *tiru-kūṭam*.

The greatest mental misdemeanour consists of contemplating and rejoicing in one's own virtue and achievements and thinking negatively about Kṛṣṇa or the spiritual company that we associate with.

351. *dōṣām niṇaiyā toḷikiradu guṇam pōlē yuṇḍāy irukka vaṇṇu, illāmaiylē.*

351. One should give up thinking critically [about the Lord and the *tiru-kūṭam*], not because [fault] is there — like his own [putative] virtue, but because it does not exist.

One should not think of oneself as the perfectly virtuous and others who have surrendered as having faults. One should cultivate the conviction that the Lord and His wards are essentially free of all faults.

352. *doṣam uṇḍeṇṇu niṇaikkil atu para-doṣam-aṇṇu sva-doṣam.*

352. In thinking negatively of others, it is one's own negativity that is demonstrated, not that of the other.

353. *sva-doṣam ānapaṭṭi yeṇṇēṇil?*

353. If it be asked, “How is personal negativity demonstrated”?

354. *sva-doṣattālum bandhattālum.*

354. It is from personal defect and from relationships.

One tends to externalise one's cherished standards and ideals and thus to project one's own faults onto others. In doing this one continues the futile battle to bolster one's own ego and self-delusion. Everybody wants to establish group ties and feel part of a herd with defined characteristics and structure. A common mechanism to deal with our faults and inadequacies which disqualify us from belonging to the group, is to point them out in others and thus reassure ourselves and those with whom we are trying to bond that we are free of them.

355. *sva-doṣam-iḷḷaiyākil guṇa pratipatti naḍakkum.*

355. If personal defects were not [present], then there would be ascertainment of virtue [in the Lord and His own].

Seeing that the judgemental process is generally one of externalisation, we can only externalise that which is within. Duryodhana was asked to find a good man in the world, he searched and saw that everyone had faults and none was good. Yudhiṣṭhira was asked to find an evil person, he too searched and found that all were good and none was evil.

356. *naṭanta-tiḷḷaiyākil doṣa-jñāname doṣamām.*

356. In the absence [of this ascertainment of virtue] the perception of defect is itself [a sign of] defect.

The inability to see the good in others and a focussing on their flaws indicates the presence of a negative self image which contradicts the spirit of self-realisation.

## 48. Being Critical

357. *Itutanakku avasaram-iḷḷai.*

357. There is [really] no opportunity for this [thinking critically].

358. *sva-doṣattukkum bhagavat bhāgavata guṇāṅkaḷukkume kālam pōrukaiyāle.*

358. For there is only time sufficient enough [to examine] one's own defects and the virtues of the Lord and the other devotees.

Life is so short that one only has enough time to examine one's own mind and motivations, and to admire the beauty and compassion of the Lord and to reflect upon the good fortune of others who have had the opportunity to seeking refuge in the Lord and whose company we now enjoy. There is simply not enough time to spend on contemplating the flaws and defects of others.

359. *samsārika doṣam sva-doṣam eṅru niṅaikkak-kaṭavaṅ.*

359. One should rather identify one's own faults with those who are entrapped in Samsāra.

Far from critically examining, judging and rejecting our fellow beings for their perceived faults, we should rather develop a feeling of acceptance and empathy with them as they are suffering as much as we are; all beings share the same basic hopes and aspirations and suffer from the same losses and disappointments, and all all mired in the same samsāra.

360. *adukku hetu bandha-jñānam.*

360. This [identification] arises from awareness of kinship [with other Samsāra beings].

We should be mindful that all sentient beings including us, are suffering, deluded, confused and unenlightened and should thus have compassion on them since we are all sparks of the same divine Light and thus intimately interconnected with each other and Srīman Nārāyaṇa.

361. *“iraip-poḷutum-eṅṅōm.....” eṅkaiyāle atutān tōnrādu.*

361. The [concept] does not even arise, from the saying — “We think not a moment.”

Periya Tiru-moḷi 2. 6. 1

“The Lord is staying at Kaṭalmallai which being so cool is conducive to an interesting sojourn, He took the form of a damsel, and entered into the midst of the pernicious demons offering nectar to the gods only — we will not think even for a moment of those who do not contemplate such a Lord.”

In other words the defects of others should not even arise in the mind of a prapanna which is totally occupied with contemplating the Divine.

362. *tōṅruvadu nivarattanārttan āka.*

362. The purpose of reflecting on defects is their removal.

The only valid reason to reflect on defects, one's own and those of others, is to rectify them and therefore it follows that one should only ever think about one's own faults and never those of others. If one does contemplate about the faults of others it should be with a view to bringing it to their attention and helping them to overcome them, not simply to disparage them with a view of boosting one's own self-esteem.

#### 49. Forbearance & tolerance.

363. *pirāṭṭi rākṣasiḷaḷ kuṅṅam perumālukkum tiru-vaḍikkum aṅṅiviyādāp pōlē, taṅukkup piṅar-ceyda kuṅṅaḅaḷai bhagavat bhāgavata viṣayaḅaḷil aṅṅivikkak kaṭavaṅallaṅ.*



363. One should not reveal to the Lord and other devotees, offences committed against oneself by others; just as the Goddess (Sita) did not inform the Lord or Hanumān about the offences of the demonesses.

Using the example of mother Sīta we should avoid complaining about any ill-treatment that we may receive from others. Even having suffered terribly at the hands of her captors, whose function it was to torment her day and night, Sita did not reveal her suffering to either Rāma or Hanuman or request them to redress the wrongs. In fact it was Hanuman who saw the atrocities of the demonesses and offered to avenge their wickedness but was restrained by Sita.

364. *aṛivikka vuriyavaṇakappaṭa vāy tīravādē sarvajña viṣayaṅgaḷukkum maṛaikkum eṇṇabāniṇṇatirē.*

364. Has it not been said that even the all-knowing One [the Lord], who has the right to make known [faults], does not open His mouth but conceals all things.

The Supreme Lord incarnates periodically to liberate sentient beings, and even during these periodic descents into the material world, there are those who are outright hostile towards Him and oppose Him in everyway, even waging war against Him. Yet still He returns to Vaikuṅṭha and never complains for a moment even to His consorts and Eternal Associates about the stupidity, hostility and obstinacy of His recalcitrant subjects.

365. *kuṛram ceydavargaḷ-pakkaḷ, poraiyum krupaiyum cirippum ukappum upakāra smrutiyum naṭakka vēṇum.*

365. One should respond to those who offend, with tolerance, compassion, a smile, joy and gratitude.

*Tolerance* to such an extent as not to bear any ill-will or malice or grudge against the offender.

*Compassion* as an act of openness and acceptance for one who is deluded by the forces of ignorance and bound by the law of Karma.

A *smile* for the foolishness of the doer who is contemplating hurting one who is beyond all bodily conceptions, and for whom all suffering is perceived only as recondite Karmic reaction.

*Joy* at receiving the quota of pain that is due for past unskilful actions done and knowing that another debt has been settled.

*Gratitude* for being reminded of one's failings and faults, the keeping under constant review of which is one's personal duty.

## 50. Self-analysis.

366. *sva-doṣa-anusandhānam bhaya hetu bhagavat guṇa-anusandhānam abhaya hetu.*

366. Reflecting on one's own faults causes anxiety, contemplating on the virtues of the Lord gives rise to a feeling of security.

In sutra 358 & 362 the venerable teacher stated that we should reflect upon our own faults and shortcomings and upon the glory of the lord. Now we are told that contemplating upon our own faults gives rise to anxiety. The term used here is *doṣa anusandhānam* which means making an obsession of researching one's own faults. One can become so obsessed with thinking negatively on oneself that guilt (in westerners) and anxiety arise, which then cloud the clarity of the mind and obstruct the seeing of one's true nature and relationship to the Lord, the world and other sentient beings. The anxiety is based upon hopelessness, feelings of worthlessness and inability to achieve an hypothetical ideal standard of perfection. On the other hand changing the focus of the mind from one's imperfect ego to the qualities of the Divine gives rise to positive feelings of love, joy, compassion, enthusiasm etc.

The guiding principle is *yad bhāvati tad bhavati* — what one contemplates upon one becomes!

367. *bhaya-abhayaṅgaḷ iraṇḍum mārātil ajñātaiye siddhikkum.*

367. If the cause of fear and the cause of fearlessness were reversed it would only perpetuate ignorance.

If one avoids contemplating upon the Lord for fear of punishment for past sins by way of Karma and continued bondage in Samsāra, or attempts to resolve this anxiety by concentrating one's efforts on self-salvation it would be a folly that would only serve to perpetuate the cycle.

368. *āṇāl “nalivāṇ inṇam ennukiṇṇāy.....”, “ āṇṇaraivāḷ maram pōlaṅcukiṇṇēn.....” eṅkīra pācurāṅkaḷukku aḍiyēṇṇ-eṇṇil.*

368. If it be objected — “What then is the basis for the following utterances ?”— “Do you cause me distress.....1.? “I am always full of fear like a tree growing on the bank of a river.....2.”

1. Tiru-vāi-moḷi 7.1.1

“O my sweet Lord, great benefactor adored by the gods, You have Maya immeasurable at Your disposal! O Lord, on whom the three worlds are dependent! Why do You cause me distress, tormenting me still, by not giving me access to Your lotus-like feet and by exposing me to the five unruly senses, so as to stay permanently bound?”

2. Periya Tiru-moḷi 11. 8. 1

“O God who is perceived by smell, taste, touch and sound! Even if you can say many things to me, I will tell You only one! I am always terrified like a tree on the bank of a river, thinking that You may cause me future human births.”

The question is, why do the āḷvārs express anxiety then — if they were indeed absorbed in the contemplation of Perumāḷ?

369. *bandha-anusandhānam,*

369. They are totally mindful of [their] relationship [to the Lord].

The anxiety of insecurity that is expressed by the āḷvārs stems from their total awareness of their relationship with the Lord and does not contradict it.

370. *prajai teruvilē yiṭarit tāy mutukilē kuttumā pōlē, nirupādhika bandhuvāy śaktaṅāy irukkīraṅgaḷ vilakkā toḷintāl appaṭic-collalāmiṇē.*

370. As a child, stumbling in the street, beats its mother [for failing to prevent the fall], so one can speak that way to one whose kinship is unconditional [the Lord] and who has the power [to prevent suffering] but does not prevent it.

371. *prajaiyaiḱ kiṅarriṅ karaiyiṅṇum vāṅkā toḷintāl tāyē talliṅṇāḷ eṇṇak kaṭavatiṇē.*

371. If [a mother] does not prevent her child from straying to the edge of a well and the child falls in, others will say that the mother herself is to blame.

If the mother's failure to remove the child from the edge of the well can be construed as permission for it to stay there, and therefore implicates the mother in any misadventure, then one could argue that the failure of the Lord to remove the Prapanna from Samsāra is permission for one to remain in Samsāra and therefore implicates the Lord in one's continued suffering.

372. *ivaṇḍaiya aṇumati pēṟṟukku hetu-vallātāp pōlē avaṇḍaiya aṇumatiyum iḷavukku hetu-vaṇṟu.*

372. As the assent of this one [the jīva] is not the cause of gain, so also the assent of Him [the Lord] is not the cause of loss.

By surrendering one does not bring about one's salvation, because salvation comes from the Lord's Grace alone and not through anything that the jīva could do. And likewise the assent of the Lord for the jīva to remain in Samsāra is not the cause of the jīva's suffering.

373. *iraṇḍum iruvarkkum svarūpam.*

373. The two [assents] are natural to both.

The assent of the Self to be liberated by the Lord and the assent of the Lord for the cetana to stay awhile in Samsāra are perfectly in accordance with their respective natures and thus are not the causes of the consequences.

## 51. Karma & Grace

374. *iḷavukkaṭi karmam pēṟṟukkaṭi krupai.*

374. Karma results in suffering, Grace brings about liberation.

Although the Lord gives permission for the jīva to remain in Samsāra He also expects the jīva to obey the dictates of the Scriptures and to follow Dharma and thus accumulate merit which leads one back to Godhead, but the cetanas become totally immersed in Samsāra (*abhiniveśa*) and give themselves up to craving (*rāga*) and aversion (*dveṣa*) which are the causes of more Karma and thus perpetual rebirth. In spite of this the Lord still bestows His Grace upon the undeserving cetanas and eventually extricates them out of the ocean of Samsāra.

375. *marraippaḍi collil iḷavuk-kuruppām.*

375. Speaking otherwise is detrimental.

To put it the other way round — to accuse the Lord of being despotic by keeping the jīvas bound in Samsāra, and declaring that any spiritual advancement is due to their efforts is to alienate oneself from the Lord.

Pillai Lokācārya uses another similitude to describe this paradoxical dynamic. Two persons jointly own a property. The one is an expert in real estate investment, the other is a novice. The novice decides to sell the property in order to speculate — the senior partner knows that it is a bad idea but decides to give his consent in order to enable the junior partner to learn from his mistakes. The venture fails miserably. Who is to blame? It was the junior partner that conceived of the project, planned it and executed it. The senior partner merely gave his assent but in fact had no direct involvement. The cetana initiates the karma but the Lord as the over-self simply gives His consent. The karma and its fruit are the cetana's alone.

376. *eḍukka niṇaikiravaṇait taḷḷināyeṅkai eḍāmaik-kuruppirē*

376. Who wants to rescue a person who stood near him at a well and fell in and who then complains that he was pushed in ?

As the Lord out of compassion reaches out His hand to save the jīva, the jīva should not then accuse Him of causing bondage in the first place but accept the causes which led to his bondage as his own.

377. *ciṟṟamuḷa veṅṟa vanantarattilē yivvarttattait tāmē yaruḷiceytātirē.*

377. This idea is conveyed by the āḷvār after saying — “That would anger.....”

Periya Tiru-moḷi 11. 8. 2 Tirumaṅgai-āḷvār shows awareness that the Lord is angry with his complaining —

“O God, skilful wielder of the discus, even if I have committed offences that would anger you, let me tell you one thing — I stand trembling, like the mind of the navigators caught in a storm, with the fear that you may make me take birth in human forms.”

378. *cīrṛam uṇḍeṇṛarintāl collum-paḍi yeṇṇeṇṇil, arulum ārttiyum ananya-gatitvamum collap paṇṇum*

378. If it he said — “if he [Tiru-maṅgai-ālvār] was aware of anger [on the part of the Lord], then how is it that he expressed the previous anxiety over again? [The answer is that] the Grace [of the Lord] and the restlessness and helplessness [of the jīva] give occasion to such expression.

379. *cīrinālum kālaikkaṭṭik kollalām-paḍi yiruppān oruvaṇaip peṇṇāl ellām collalāmirē.*

379. Even though He may be angry, all these things are said [by the ālvār] since [he knows that] there is a way out by embracing [His] feet.

The ālvār knew that the Lord's anger could easily be overcome by His boundless compassion elicited by grasping His feet, thus he could not restrain himself from crying out in anguish at separation from the beloved and thus risking His anger.

380. *“krupayā paryapālayat.....”, “aticinattāl.....”*

380. “Pardoned by grace.....1.” “By extreme anger.....2.”

1. Rāmāyana 5.38.34,

“The descendant of Kakutstha, the protector, out of grace, pardoned the crow that fell on the ground seeking refuge, though it deserved to be killed.”

The reference is to the crow — a form assumed by Jayanta who, desiring to make love to Sita, pecked at her breast and made her bleed. Rāma shot an arrow at it and wounded it, but then, responding to its plea for mercy, pardoned it.

2. Kulaśekhara's Perumāḷ Tiru-moḷi 5. 1

“Even if you don't prevent the grief which I must endure, there is no refuge except your feet. O mother, living at Vittuvakotu surrounded by a garden of flowers with fragrance everywhere; if in a fit of extreme anger, the mother casts aside the child that she brought forth; yet will the child cry, thinking of her grace only — I was like that.”

**52. Unintentional good deeds (*yādṛcchika sukṛta*) as the basis of the Lord's Grace.**

381. *tripāda vibhūtiyilē paripūrṇānubhavam naḍavā nirka, adu uṇḍadu urukkāṭṭādē, dēśāntara-kataṇāṇa putraṇ pakkaḷilē pitru hrudayam kiṭakkuma-pōlē, samsārikaḷ pakkaḷilē tiruvuḷlam kuṭipōy, ivarkaḷaip pirintāl āṛramāṭṭātē, ivargaḷōḍē kaḷandu parimāṛukaikkuk karaṇakaleparaṅgalaik koṭuttu, avarraikkonḍu vyāparikkaikkīṭāṇa śakti viśēṣaṅgaḷaiyum koṭuttu, kaṅkāṇanīrkil āṇaiyiṭṭu vilakkuvarkaḷ eṇṇu kaṇṇukkuṭ tōṛṛāta-paḍi uraṅgukira prajaiyai tāy mudukilē yaṇaittukkoṇḍu kiṭakkumā-pōlē, tāṇarinta sambandamē hētuvāka viṭamāṭṭātē, akavāyilē aṇaittukkoṇḍu, aṭciyil toḍarci naṇṇeṇṇu viṭātē, sattaiyai nōkkiyuṭaṅkēṭāṇāy, ivarkaḷ asatkarmaṅgaḷilē pravartikkum pōdu mītkamāṭṭātē, anumati tāṇattaip paṇṇi udāsnaṇaip pōlē yirundu mītkaik kiḍam pārṭtu, naṇṇmai eṇṇu pēṇṭalāvatoru tīmai eṇṇu kāṇātē nerriyaik kottip pārṭtāl oruvaliyālum pacaikāṇā toḷintāl aprāpyam eṇṇu kaṇṇa nīrōṭē mīḷuvadu; taṅakkēra iḍam peṇṇa vaḷavilē, eṇṇuraic conṇāy eṇṇeraic conṇāy eṇṇaṭiyārai nōkkiṇāy avarkaḷ*

*vitāyait tīrtāy avarkaḷuk koṭuṅga niḷalaik koṭuttāy eṅṅāp pōlē cila varṅrai yēriṭṭu, maṭimāṅkāyīṭṭu, poṅvāṅiyaṅ poṅṅai uraikallilē yuraittu meḷukālē yetuttuk kāl kaḷañjeṅru tirattumā pōlē, janma paramparaikaḷ tōrum, yādrucikam ānuṣaṅgikam eṅkiṅra sukṛta viṣeṣaṅgalaik karpittuk koṅḍu tāṅē yavarṅrai oṅrupattākki naḍatti koṅḍu pōrum.*

381. In the splendour of the three-fourths<sup>2</sup> [Vaikuntha], with the potential of perfect beatitude, [the Lord] does not indulge [Himself] since the divine mind is focussed upon those in bondage, like a sleepless father, remembering a son who is in another country. As if abandoning [His] home, the divine will, lingering at the side of those [trapped] in Samsāra, being unable to bear the separation [from them and in order to facilitate their return], grants them bodies along with their sense-organs and empowers them to live according to the śāstras. Apprehending outright rejection if He appeared directly to them — He stealthily enters [into their hearts] and dwells within as their “inner Self” — like a mother fondly hugging her sleeping child unbeknown to it. Sharing their sorrows, protecting their being, not preventing their continued transgressions, giving permission, standing as if indifferent, He searches for an excuse to rescue them. If He fails to find even one [minor] defect that can be exaggerated into a virtue, He sheds tears just like a physician scratching the forehead [of a patient] to see if there is any bleeding and losing all hope when no blood is seen. He is such a robust optimist that He will make any excuse [to liberate the malefactors], imagining that:— “You mentioned the name of My sacred place, “You spoke My name”, “you protected My devotee!”, “You assuaged their thirst”, “You gave them shelter”, then He instils these qualities in them like a goldsmith testing gold on a touchstone and with the aid of wax, collecting a gram of gold from what is rubbed off. He imagines distinctions of merit, however incidental and unintentional, over a series of births, and multiplies them ten-fold.

The central teaching of this passage is that unintentional good deeds (*yādrucchika sukṛta*) form the basis of the Lord’s Grace. He never loses heart at the transgressions of the jīva but will always be vigilant for the slightest even unintentional good deed, that he could take as an excuse to liberate the jīva from Samsāra.

Some of the examples given are:

A person wishing to journey to a certain place mentions the name of the city in which there happens to be one of the 108 sacred Viṣṇu temples. The Lord would then reward that person as though he were actually speaking of the temple as an act of praise.

In the Srimad Bhagavatam there is the story of Ajamila who though a dissolute man, had named his son Narayana – on his death bed he called for his son with the result that the Lord came to claim him as if he had purposefully pronounced the sacred name.

A party of pilgrims is about to be attacked by robbers, a couple of policemen pass by unaware of what is about to transpire, and scare the robbers off. The Lord would then reward them as if they had done it intentionally.

A group of exhausted devotees pass by an irrigation canal and quench their thirst from its waters. The Lord would then reward the landowner as if he had intentionally dug the canal for the use of pilgrims instead of simply to irrigate his fields.

The same group of pilgrims then take shelter for the night on the veranda of a gambling den. The owner of the den would receive merit for having provided shelter to the pilgrims.

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<sup>2</sup> The entire manifest universe is said to comprise only one quarter of the totality of possible Being, the other ¾’s comprise the realm of Vaikuṅṭa.

382. *lalitā caritātikaḷilē ivvarttam curukka moḷiyak kāḷalām.*

382. This message is reinforced in the story of Lalita and in other places.

Queen Lalita of Vidarbha, was the most favoured among all the 300 wives of the king of Varanasi, but far from being conceited spent most of her time tending the lamps in the various shrines attached to the Palace. She explained her favoured position to her co-wives by reference to the events of a former birth which she could remember well. She had been born as a rat that lived in a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu by Maitreya a royal priest. One night during the month of Kārttik she was attempting to steal and eat the wick of a ghee lamp when she heard the mewing of a cat. She had a heart attack from terror and while she lay dying her head happened to raise the wick of the lamp and re-kindled it. For this act of unintentional merit she was reborn in her exalted position. (From the Viṣṇu Dharmottara Purāṇa)

383. *ajñārāna manuṣyarkaḷ vāḷā tantāṅ-eṅṛirup-pārkaḷ.*

383. The ignorant take it for granted that [the Lord] simply blesses [them].

384. *jñāṅavaṅgal “iṅrenṅaip poruḷākkitt taṅṅai yeṅṅul vaittu ..... !”, “eṅṅunṅri ceytēno veṅṅeṅṅil tikaḷvatuvē.....1.”, naṅuvē vantuyyak koikiṅṅa nātaṅ.....2.”, “aṅṅiyādana vaṅṅivittavātā nīceyṅṅaṅvaṅṅi yeṅ aṅṅiyēṅṅē.....3.”, “poruḷallāta veṅṅaip poruḷākki yaṅṅimai koṅṅṅāi.....4.”, “eṅṅait tīmaṅṅaṅ keṅṅuttāy.....5.”, “maruvitoḷum maṅṅamē tantāy.....6.” eṅṅirupaṅṅiṅ-parkaḷ.*

384. The wise [like Nammāḷvār], mindful [of the Lord’s magnanimity], exclaim [in gratitude]:—

“This god placed Himself inside my mind, after considering me worthy enough — why did He neglect me for so long before? I pray that the Lord of Tiruper surrounded by hill-like buildings, should be kind enough to tell me the reason..... “

1. Tiru-vāi-moḷi 10.6.8

“On the basis of what good deed does the Lord of Tiru-vāṅṅār illumine my mind — that Lord whose form is comparable to deep water, collyrium and an emerald mountain, who possesses the discus that returns to His hand after combat whenever need be, and whose head is perfumed by the sacred basil forever present on His body that gives forth fragrance”.

2. Tiru-vāi-moḷi 1.7.5

“How can I relinquish that Lord Kṛṣṇa who looks so sweet after doing some mischief, looking into the eyes of the young milk-maids, the mischief maker, who happens to be my Lord, who happens to be my life and who is like a lamp (illuminating all), He suddenly, one day, raised me up!”

3. Tiru-vāi-moḷi 2.3.2

“O Lord who possesses exalted and enigmatic qualities and has neither equal nor superior, O Lord, born like all things of this earth, O Lord, You assisted me by being a teacher, a father, a mother who gave me birth, and by being the life of all — lowly that I am, I cannot recount all your favours”.

4. Tiru-vāi-moḷi 5.7.3

“O Lord, Vaikuntha is Your kingdom, the discus is Your weapon and the eagle is the emblem on Your banner, O Lord, the colour of black clouds, dwelling in the city of Siri-vara-maṅgalam where, by Your grace many learned in the four Vedas reside! You accepted me as one worthy, even though I was worthless before; You accepted my servitude — I do not know how I should repay You!”

5. “You corrected my perverse mind,.” (Tiru-vāi-moḷi 2.7.8, quoted at number 349)

6. “You conferred on me a mind that will always serve,.” (Tiru-vāi-moḷi 2,7.7 quoted at number 349)

385. *bhaṣyakārar kālattilē oru nāl perumāḷ purappaṭṭaruḷ untaṇaiyum pārttup periya tiru-maṇḍapattukkuk kīlāka mudalikaḷ ellārum tiraḷa-virunta-vaḷāvilē invarttam prastutamāka, piṇpu piṇanda vārttaikalai smarippatu.*

385. Let us recall the discussion which took place on this subject one day in the time of the Commentator (Rāmānujācārya), when all the learned teachers had met in the assembly on the eastern side of the great hall [as Srirangam], awaiting the start of the procession.

As they waited patiently one of them remarked in an outburst of self-congratulation:— “having cooled our heels waiting on all and sundry, all these days, it is indeed our good fortune (*sukṛita*) that today we are awaiting at the door of our Lord where we all rightly belong!” This evoked a query by another:— “What is it that impels a person immersed in Samsāra towards God?” Some attributed it to unintentional merit (*yadṛścika sukṛtam*). śrī Kidāmbi Perumāḷ mused whether they had to propitiate another god known as *sukṛta* deva. It was finally clarified by Piḷḷai Tirunarāyur araiyar that the term *sukṛta* itself refers to the Lord only, and by this means He accelerates the progress of His subjects and that was all.

386. *āgaiyāl ajñātamāṇa naṇmaikaḷaiyē parrācākak-koṇḍu kaṭākṣiyān irkum.*

386. Therefore, it is seen that good works done unintentionally are taken as a qualification.

Now following this it may be suggested that *ajñāta sukṛta* — adventitious merit assumes the form of co-operative Grace instead of spontaneous Grace. The ācārya replies:—

387. *ivaiyunkūṭa ivanukku vīlaiyumpaṭiyirē ivantaṇṇai mudalilē avaṇ sruṣṭittatu.*

387. Even these [unintentional deeds] are initiated by the Lord through the bestowal of a body and sense-organs upon the jīva.

If the Lord had originally not permitted the jīva to enter into a physical body it would not have been capable of performing any unintentional good deeds. Therefore the mere fact of allowing embodiment and facilitating the conditioned circumstances which led to the act are a sign of Grace.

### 53. The futility of Self-effort

388. *adutaṇṇai nirūpittāl ivāṇ taṇakku oṇṇum ceyya vēṇḍāta-paṭiyāy irukkum.*

388. From pondering this, one concludes that it is not necessary to do anything.

Considering all these factors one should give up the reliance upon any form of self-effort to achieve freedom from Karma as well as anxiety about liberation from Samsāra.

389. *paḷaiya-tāka uḷuvadu naḍuvadu vīlavatāyp pōrum kṣetrattilē utirimuḷaittu phala-paryantam-āmā pōlē, ivaitāṇ taṇṇatāiyē vīlaiyum-paḍiyāyirru pattiyaḷavaṇ phalam puṇattai sruṣṭitta kaṭṭalai.*

389. In the ancient farm [of Samsāra], the Lord as the cultivator has been raising crops of Bhakti from time immemorial, regularly ploughing, sowing and reaping. Some grains having fallen during the harvesting process, grow spontaneously to maturity, yielding fruits without any assistance from the farmer, so it is with these [unintentional good deeds].

390. *avaitānevai yeṇṇāl.*

390. You may ask:— “What are these [fruits that are yielded]”?

391. *pūrva-kruta puṇya-apuṇya phalaṅkaḷai cila kālam pūjittu, uttara kālattil vāsanai koṇḍu pravarttikumattanai yeṇṇum paḍi kaiyoḷinta daśaiyilē, ‘nāmār ?, nām niṇṇa*



*nilai yēdu? namakk-iṇimēl pōkkati yēdu?’ eṇṟu piṟappaṇa cila nirupaṇa viśeṣaṅkaḷ uṇḍu; avaiyātal munṟu coṇṇa-vaiyātal.*

391. Having experienced repeatedly the results of good and bad deeds done in former births and becoming weary [of Karma and its results] understanding that life just continues on the basis of habitual pattern formations [created by subliminal activators - *samskāras*] there comes a stage when some serious introspection begins:— “Who am I?”, “What was my original position?”, “Where am I going?”— these are the [fruits] referred to earlier.

Such philosophical introspection and inquiry are the result of seeds sown by the Lord and are the first indications of the jīva turning back to Godhead.

*392. “yathā-hi mokṣakāḥ pānthe.....” eṇṟu toṭaṅki itiṇḍaiya kramattai Bhagavac śāstrattilē collirru.*

392. The manner of this is explained in the Sacred Scripture beginning with:— “As thieves in the case of a traveller.....”

Ahīrbudhnya Samhita 14:34

“As thieves in the case of a traveller who has gone away, leaving his belongings, will cease at all efforts at stealing when he comes back”.

A traveller [the Lord] leaves his baggage [the jīva] unattended — thieves [*puṇya* — merit and *pāpa* — demerit] are about to steal it, when the traveller is seen returning, the thieves run away at the very sight of the traveller.

*393. “veritēyarul ceyvar.....” eṇṟu vartattai spaṣṭamāka aruḷicceytāriṇē.*

393. Is not this clearly stated in the words:— “Gives Grace without any expectation.....”

Tiru-vāi-moḷi 8. 7. 8

“I do not know any other favour! The Lord who controls me thoroughly gives grace without any expectation to those whom He gives (it). He, retaining the three worlds in His stomach, in a manner not affecting their routine, has taken a place in my mind, even though I am infinitesimally small”.

*394. “ceyvārkaṭku eṇṟu aruḷukku hētu sukruta meṇṇāniṇṟādē yeṇṇil appōdu “veritē eṅkiṟa viṭam cērādu.*

394. If it be asked:— “Are good deeds not [indicated to be] the cause of Grace by the words, 'to those who do'?” [The answer is] that [superficially] there is a contradiction with the words: 'Without expectation'.

The hypothetical querist takes *ceyvārkaṭku* to mean, “to those who do (good deeds)”, rather than, “to those whom He gives (it).”

*395. bhagavad-abhimukhyam sukrutattālaṇṟikke bhagavat-krupaiyālē piṟakkiradu adveṣam sukrutattālē yeṇṇil inda phala viśeṣattukku attai sādhanamākka voṇṇātu.*

395. If it be said that attraction to the Lord arises from Grace and not from good deeds, but the lack of animosity [towards the Lord] arises from good deeds, then, it is answered, that this specific result cannot arise from those [general good deeds].

Before one begins to be attracted to the Lord one should be free of any animosity towards Him. Some say that the lack of animosity springs from the aforementioned *ajñāta-sukṛita* and that

attraction to God (*abhimukhyam*) comes from Grace. The rejoinder to this is that the absence of animosity is the prime factor in the development of self-realisation and it can hardly be attributed to such a paltry thing as *ajñāta sukrita*. Merit (*sukrita*) refers to those deeds which the Scriptures enjoin in their injunctive sections and which one strives to perform.

396. *śāstramum vitiyādē nāmum-aṛiyādē yirukkīra vittai sukrutam eṇṇu nām pēṛiṭu-kīra-paḍi yenṇenṇil, nāmanru, īsvaraṇ eṇṇu kēṭṭirukkaiyāy irukkum.*

396. If it be said:— “How can we call those actions meritorious which are not enjoined by the Scriptures and are unknown to us?” The answer is:— “we don’t, but the Lord does.”

The Lord has been striving from time immemorial to liberate us from the bondage of Samsāra and He is ever searching for any excuse to Liberate us. Thus adventitious good deeds are accepted by Him as meritorious so that He can then facilitate our spiritual advancement.

397. *ivvartta viśayamāka ālvārkaḷ pāsuraṅkaḷil paraspara virudham pōlē tōṛṛum avarril collukiṇa parihāramum, marṛum uṇḍāṇa vaktavyaṅkaḷum vistara-bhayattālē collukirilōm.*

397. As to this, there seem to be some contradictory statements in the hymns of the ālvārs, but we abstain from discussing these from fear of becoming too prolix.

Sometimes the ālvārs appear to declare works to be the cause of Grace, and at other times they speak of Grace without cause. Acknowledging this to be matter for further discussion and clarification the ācārya refrains from dilating on the subject any more.

398. *agaiyāl ivan vimuka ṇāṇa daśaiyilūṅkūṭa ujjivikkaikku kruṣi paṇṇiṇa īsvaraṇai yanusantittāl eppōtum nirpparaṇāyē yirukkum ittaṇai.*

398. Therefore, if one merely thinks of the Lord who strove for one’s upliftment even when one was in a state of indifference, one can be free from anxiety.

399. *“edir cuḷal pukku.....”*

399. “In none but Madhusūdhana do I take refuge. On and on I sing, as an end in itself, hymns of His glory. This is because of Trivikraman’s extraordinary grace, who took births along side me, to set me aright throughout the ages.” (Tiru-vāi-moli 2. 7 6)

#### 54. The Lord’s enthusiastic attempts to reclaim the jīvas

400. *oruvaṇaip-piṭikka niṇaittu uraivalai-vāraip-pōlē vyāptiyum.*

400. In order to catch one person, a search party spreads out throughout the whole village, likewise the Lord pervades the universe just to catch one jīva.

The wise ones are so grateful that they even consider that the Lord’s omnipresence is effected simply to catch one single straying jīva.

401. *sruṣṭy-avatārātigalaip-pōlē svārttamāka veṇṇire jñānātikar anusandhippatu.*

401. The wise consider this to be the intention behind [the Lord’s] projection of the universe and the taking of incarnations (avatārs).

#### 55. Grace, Karma & compassion.

402. *karma phalam-pōlē krupā-phalamum anubhavittē yaṛa-vēṇum.*

402. Like the results of Karma, the results of Grace are also terminated only through direct experience.

Grace which causes reunion like the karma which causes separation, cannot be resisted but must be allowed to take its natural course to its ultimate climax which is liberation from Samsāra and unification with the Lord.

403. *krupai perukappukkāl iruvar svāntaryattalum takaiya vonṇādapaṭi yirukaraiyumaḷiyap perukum.*

403. When the [river of] the Lord's Grace begins to inundate, overflowing both banks, none can stop it.

404. *bhaya hetu karmam: abhaya hetu kāruṇyam.*

404. Karma is the cause of anxiety: compassion is the cause of confidence.

### 56. Anxiety & confidence

405. *bhaya-abhayaṅkaḷ iraṇḍum mārimāṛip prāptiyaḷavum naḍakkum.*

405. Anxiety and confidence will continue to alternate until attainment [of liberation].

When one reflects upon the enormity of Karma and its reactions one becomes despondent of ever being liberated from Samsāra, but contemplation upon the compassion and saving Grace of the lord makes one confident. This oscillating between anxiety and confidence is natural and will continue as long as one is embodied.

406. *nivartya jñānam bhaya hetu, nivarttaka jñānam abhaya hetu.*

406. Knowledge of that which is to be overcome (Karma) results in anxiety; knowledge of the solution (Grace) gives rise to confidence.

407. *svatantraṅgai upāyamākattāṅ parrīṅa-pōdirē ipprasaṅgan tāṅuḷḷadu.*

407. This situation prevails only when one is attached to liberating oneself.

### 57. Importance of taking refuge in a Preceptor.

408. *unṇḍa pōtoru-vārttaiyum unṇāta- pōtoru-vārttaiyum colluvār pattup-pēruṅṭirē, avarkaḷ pāsuraṅ koṇḍaṅṅu ivvarttamaṛutiṅṭuvadu.*

408. Indeed, there are ten persons whose exclamations have one meaning after they have enjoyed and another if they have not. The purport of their hymns cannot be ascertained [without reference to] their state of being.

Now Piḷḷai-lokācārya begins teaching about the importance of the spiritual preceptor as the only suitable one in whom to take refuge. One cannot always rely completely on the utterances of anyone of the ten āḷvārs as they sometimes speak from a point of view of their mystical union with the Lord and sometimes from anguish at separation; their statements therefore have to be understood with reference to their emotional state at the time of composing the poem.

409. *avargaḷaic cirittirup-pāroruvaruṅṭirē avarpācuraṅ koṇḍu ivvarttamaṛutiṅṭak-kaṭavōm.*

409. One āḷvār [Madhura-kavi] often laughed at the other ten; we should study the import of his verses.

Madhurakavi often sneered at the other āḷvārs because they had no ācārya and were reliant entirely upon the Lord, whereas he himself was dedicated totally to his ācārya Nammāḷvār.

410. *svarūpattukkum prāpyattukkum cēntirukkavēṇumirē prāpakam.*

410. The means [adopted] should be in harmony with the quintessence [of the jīva] and to the goal [the Lord] — the ācārya [as a medium] is in harmony.

411. *vaḍuka-nambi ālvāṇaiyum āṇḍāṇaiyum irukaraiyareṇpar.*

411. Vaḍuka-Nambi says that Aļvān (Kurattāļvān) and Aṇḍān (Mudaliyāṇḍān), are duplicitous men.

Kuļatāļvān and Mudaliyāṇḍān were the two chief disciples of Rāmānuja, and were known respectively as the master's staff and pennant. Vaḍuka Nambi was like Madhurakavi in his total devotion to the ācārya and he would sometimes chide the other two for being two-faced in surrendering both to the Lord and to the ācārya.

412. *prāpyattukku pratama parvam ācārya kaiṅkaryam madhyama parvam Bhagavat kaiṅkaryam carama parvam bhāgavata kaiṅkaryam.*

412. The first stage towards the attainment of the goal is service of the ācārya, the middle stage is service to the Lord the last stage is service to the Lord's own.

Some ācāryas interpret the concept of service to the "Lord's own" to mean that one's service should be limited to other Srivaishnavas and all other beings should be ignored at best and neglected at worst. But Naṅjiyar was of the opinion that the true Vaishnava is one who personally empathises with the suffering of **all** sentient beings regardless of their sectarian affiliation. In the narrow sense *bhāgavata* refers to other vaishnavas but in its broader connotation everything in the world belongs to the Bhagavan and is therefore *Bhāgavata* — the Lord's own! Thus the culmination of the path is dedication to the welfare of all beings.

413. *svarūpa prāptiyai sāstram puruṣārttamākac collāṇirka prāpti phalamāyk-koṇḍu kaiṅkaryam varukiṇṇāp-pōlē sātya-vivruttiyāyk koṇḍu carama parvam varakka ṭavadu.*

413. Scripture teaches the attainment of self-realisation as the ultimate goal of human life, since service is the result of this realisation, the last stage comes as an extension of the ultimate goal.

Service to the Lord's own is a corollary of understanding that the Lord dwells within all creatures, as taught in the Gita (chapter 6:30). All jīvas are related to each other in terms of their quintessence and all are sparks of the Divine, therefore the practice of altruism is the ultimate goal of the spiritual life. Most teachings are best taught and implemented with reference from the specific to the general. Therefore service to other members of the spiritual community is recommended. Just as charity begins at home to one's own immediate family and then extends to others outside one's own circle. As one unfolds in spiritual development one gradually includes all sentient beings in one's practice.

414. *idu tāṇ durlabham.*

414. This (the last stage), indeed, is difficult to achieve.

Because of our conditioning and natural propensities and striving for self-preservation and preserving those individuals that contribute to our sense of self, it is difficult to see the Lord in everything and everything in the Lord, even more difficult is serving other sentient beings unconditionally.

415. *viṣaya-pravaṇaṇukku attaiviṭṭu bhagavat viṣayattilē varukaikkulḷa arumai pōlanṇu, prathama-parvattai-viṭṭu carama parvattilē varukaik-kulḷa arumai.*

415. Leaving the first stage and reaching the last stage is more difficult than relinquishing attachment to sensory objects and surrendering to the Lord.

Going from service to the ācārya to service of one's spiritual family and then others is more difficult than abandoning material preoccupations in order to surrender completely to the Lord.

416. *aṅgu doṣa-darśanat-tālē mīḷalām iṅgatu ceyyavoṇṇātu.*

416. In the latter case, the perception of inadequacies can give rise to dispassion; but in the former case, there are no defects to make it so.

With some insight and introspection one can clearly see the defects in things and individuals we use to bolster our sense of identity and to give us pleasure. When the realisation dawns that nothing in this material realm is capable of giving unalloyed joy one can then go for refuge to the Lord. But the ācārya being the paragon of altruism has no defects to speak of, whereas others have many character defects which may put us off our intended service. For this reason it is so much harder to substitute service to the ācārya for service to all beings.

417. *dōṣam uṇḍāṇālum guṇam-pōlē upādhēyam āyirukkum.*

417. Even if inadequacies are imputed [in the Lord], they are acceptable as virtue.

Even though the lord can be blamed for withholding His presence and not immediately granting release to the Prapanna, still these apparent defects can be considered as positive actions in that they serve to increase the ardour of the Prapanna.

418. *lōka viparītamāyirē iruppadu.*

418. In the world it is the opposite.

The defects that a person of discriminating wisdom finds in the world, act as repellents — but with the Lord this is not the case.

419. *guṇam upādhēyam ākaikkīrtāṇa hetu doṣattukkuḷ muṇṭirē.*

419. The same reason why one imputes virtues applies also to the imputation of defects.

The jīva's relationship to the Lord is a natural and irrevocable one, rather than one based on the Lord's attributes, therefore one accepts whatever the Lord does, whether it appears as skilful or as unskilful.

420. *nir-karuṇaṅ eṅru vāy mūḍuvataṅku muṇṇē karuṇavāṅ eṅru collum paḍiyāy irunda-tirē.*

420. There is the exclamation that He is cruel and before the mouth is closed [the exclamation] that He is merciful.

Tiru-vāi-moḷi 5:3:5 — Where the āḷvār complains about the heartlessness of the lord and the moment the mother agrees in empathy, he declares the Lord to be indeed merciful.

421. *ippaḍi collumpaḍi paṇṇirru krupaiyālēyeṅru snehamum upakāra-smrutiyum naḍantatirē.*

421. They have expressed love and gratitude that out of Grace this teaching [concerning Liberation] has been given.

422. *nir-karuṇaṅ-āka śaṅkittuc collum avastaiyilum kāraṇattai svaḡatamākaviṅē collirru.*

422. Even when they impute callousness [to the Lord], they admit that they are [also] at fault.

At fault for not overcoming all the afflictive emotions such as selfishness, greed, anger etc. which cloud the mind and hinder one's receptivity to the Lord's Grace.

423. *guṇa-doṣaṅgaḷ iraṇḍum kṣudra puruṣārttattaiyum puruṣārta kāṣṭaiyaiyum kulaikkum.*

423. [Imputation of] virtue and defect [to the Lord], these two discourage not only petty aims, but even the highest aim [altruistic service].

Sometimes divine love so overwhelms the ālvārs that they lose sight of service to the spiritual community or *sat-sanga*.

424. *nitya śatru vāyirē yiruppatu.*

424. [The attraction of the Lord] is a perpetual enemy.

For one who strives for altruistic service the attraction to serve the Lord Himself because of His compelling charm is a perpetual hindrance. Satrugna (Rāma's younger brother) embodies this sentiment in that he is known as the *nitya satrugna* the killer of the perpetual enemy. He was only able to serve Bharata unflinchingly because he never looked at Rāma and was thus never captivated by his irresistible charm.

425. *ippaḍi prāpyattai yaruti-yiṭṭāl adukku satru-śamāka vēnumirē prāpakam.*

425. If the goal is to be accomplished in this way (see 412), the means should be appropriate.

If the ultimate goal of altruistic service is to be achieved then the means adopted should be commensurate with that goal.

426. *allāta-pōtu prāpya prāpakaṅgalukku aikyam-illai.*

426. Otherwise, there is no connection between the goal and means.

In other words the ācārya should be taken as the most appropriate means and not the Lord. Taking the Lord as the means results in Liberation not altruistic service.

427. *īśvaraṇaip-parru-kai kaiyaip-piṭittuk kāriyaṅ-kollumō-pādi; ācāryaṇaip parru-kai kalaip-piṭittuk kāriyaṅ-kollumō-pādi.*

427. Courting the Lord is like [importuning by] grasping the hand; courting the ācārya is like [importuning by] grasping the foot.

If you importune by grasping someone's hand he may break free and run ahead, but if you importune by grasping the feet the person is immobilised.

428. *ācāryaṇ iruvarkkum upakāraṅ.*

428. The ācārya is a benefactor to both [the jīva and the Lord].

429. *īśvaraṅukku śeṣa-vastuvai yupakarittāṅ, cētanaṅukku śeṣiyai yupakarittāṅ.*

429. To the Lord he reveals the possession, (*śeṣa*) to the sentient he reveals the possessor (*śeṣi*).

430. *īśvaraṅ tāṅum ācāryatvattai ācaippaṭṭirukkum.*

430. The Lord Himself covets the [function of] preceptorship.

This is the reason that he once incarnated as the two sages Nara and Nārāyaṇa – Nara being the disciple and Nārāyaṇa the preceptor. It was at this time that he first revealed the aṣṭākṣari mantra. In the epics these two are the emanations of Vishnu born as the sons of Dharma by Murti or Ahimsa. Arjuna is later identified with Nara and Kṛṣṇa with Nārāyaṇa.

431. *āgaiyirē guru-paramparaiyil anvayittatum, śrī-gītaiyum abhaya-pradānamum arulicceytatum.*

431. Hence His [personal] association with the line of preceptors, the teaching of the Gita and of the imparting of [the teaching of] assurance.

In Vaikuṅṭha the Lord first took on the role of preceptor when He imparted the Dvaya Mantra to Lakṣmi, and thus became the first in the lineage of preceptors. He then took on human birth as Kṛṣṇa so that he could impart the teachings to Arjuna on the field of battle and thus earned the title Gītācārya. In the earlier incarnation of Rāma He imparted the instruction of assurance and freedom from fear to Vibhīṣana on the seashore.

432. *ācāryanukku sadṛśa praty-upakāram paṇṇalāvadu vibhūti catuṣṭayamum īśvara dvayamum uṇḍākil.*

432. If there is to be suitable remuneration for the service of the ācārya, there must be four realms and two Lords.

In order to recompense the ācārya for his beneficence there would have to be four realms instead of the two (material world and spiritual world) and two Gods. And since this is an impossibility, it illustrates how priceless the service of the ācārya actually is,

433. *īśvara sambandham bandha-mokṣaṅgal iraṇḍukkum potuvāy irukkum, ācārya sambandham mokṣattukkē hetuvāy irukkum.*

433. A relationship to the Lord is common to both bondage [to Samsāra] and liberation [mukti]. The relationship to the ācārya is related only to mukti.

434. *bhagavallābham ācāryaṇālē.*

434. The Lord is attained through [the mediation of] the ācārya.

435. *ācārya-lābham bhagavaṇālē.*

435. The ācārya is encountered through the [Grace of the] Lord.

436. *upakārya-vastu gauravattālē ācāryaṇil kāṭṭilē migavum upakāraṇ īśvaraṇ.*

436. The Lord is more exalted than the ācārya because of the magnitude of the gift.

Because the Lord fosters the meeting with the ācārya He is therefore considered as greater than the ācārya from this respect.

437. *ācārya sambandham kulaiyātē kiḍantāl jñāna-bhakti vairāgyaṅgal uṇḍākkik koḷḷalām. ācārya sambandham kulaintāl avai yuṇḍāṇāllum prayōjanam illai.*

437. From fostering association with the ācārya, knowledge, devotion and renunciation may arise: after relinquishing the connection with ācārya, there is no purpose for these, even if they do arise.

From preserving a connection and association with the ācārya one is certain to obtain wisdom, devotion and dispassion to some extent, but if this link is severed then even if they do spontaneously develop there is no point in having them as they will lead nowhere.

438. *tāli kiṭantāl bhūṣaṅgal punṇipūṇalām; tāli pōṇāl bhūṣaṅgal ellām avatyattai vīlaikkum.*

438. With the *Tāli* being present, [a woman] may obtain and wear [other] jewellery; once the *Tāli* is removed, [the wearing of] jewels gives rise only to disgrace.

The *Tāli* or token of marriage is the sacred thread with a gold ornament that is worn by a married woman, a symbol of her commitment to marriage. While she wears the *Tāli* she may also wear all sorts of other jewels and adornments. When the husband dies the *Tāli* is removed and according to the social customs a widow should avoid wearing any form of adornment. The wearing of jewels by a widow would have caused a scandal in traditional society.

439. *tāmaraiyai alarttakkaṭava ādityantāṇē niraip-pirintāl attai yularttumāpōlē, svarūpa vikāsattaip paṇṇum īśvaraṇ tāṇē, ācārya sambandham kulaintāl attai vāṭap-paṇṇum.*

439. The very sun which causes the lotus to blossom, dries it up when it is taken out of the water, likewise the Lord who causes the blossoming of self-realisation causes it to fade when the relationship with the ācārya has been severed.



440. *ittaiyoḷiya bhagavat sambandham durlabham.*

440. Without this [relationship to the ācārya], it is difficult to attain a relationship to the Lord.

441. *iraṇḍum amaiyādō, naḍuvil peruṅkuṭi yenṇēṇṇil.*

441. The two [the ācārya and the lord] are appropriate, but why the intervening Noble Family?

The link between the Lord and the preceptor is quite obvious but what is the necessity for a connection with a spiritual community?

## 58. Importance of Saṅgha.

442. *koṭiyaik-koḷ-kompilē tuvakkum-pōdu cuḷikkāl vēṇḍumā-pōlē, ācāryaṅ-vayattukum idu vēṇum.*

442. When [a farmer] raises creepers he uses frail sticks to guide them to their props; likewise for establishing a link with the ācārya this [Noble Family] is necessary.

The purpose of the *tiru-kūṭam* (Noble Family) is to provide a secure framework in which to practice spiritual development. Every member of the Kula is responsible for the spiritual and material well-being of every other member. Thus one's fundamental need for clothing, shelter and food are taken care of by the Kula, also the Kula provides one with the association of like-minded people and circumstances for learning and practicing Dharma.

## 59. Devotion to the ācārya (*ācārya-abhimāna*)

443. *svābhimānattālē īśvara-abhimānattaik kulaittuk-koṇḍu vivaṇukku, ācārya-abhimānam-oḷiya katiyillaiy eṇṇu piḷḷai palakālum arulicceyyak-kēṭṭ-irukkaiyāy irukkum.*

443. (Vaṭak-kuttir-vīti) Piḷḷai was often heard to say:— “There is no way [to liberation] apart from devotion to the ācārya (*ācārya-abhimāna*) for one whose concept of self blocks the affection of the Lord.”

Vaṭak-kuttir-vīti Piḷḷai (Lokācārya's father) heard the above exposition from his guru Nam-Piḷḷai.

444. *sva svātantrya bhayattālē bhakti naḷuvirru.*

444. Bhakti is obscured from anxiety arising from [the concept of] independence.

One who strives to follow the path of Bhakti as defined by Rāmānuja; developing concentration and meditating and relying on personal effort is likely to reinforce the ego and the idea of self-achievement. The rise in the development of the ego or fear thereof leads to the decline in devotion and subsequent fall from the spiritual path.

445. *bhagavat svātantrya bhayattālē prapatti naḷuvirru.*

445. Prapatti is obscured by the fear that arises from the Lord's independence.

Since Kṛṣṇa is perfectly independent and under no contractual obligation to the jīva, one may become anxious as to what He will do — whether He will indeed fulfil His promise given to Arjuna to liberate the jīva or not. One may therefore hesitate to surrender, or only surrender provisionally — keeping other options open.

446. *ācāryaṇaiyum tāṇ paṛṛum-paṛṛu ahamkāra karpam āgaiyālē, kālaṇ-koṇḍu mōtiram iḍumō-pādi.*

446. Since [even] attachment to the ācārya itself could occasion [the development of] ego, it is like wearing a ring consecrated to Yama the god of death.

To regard the ācārya simply as another means and to allow any self-assertion or feelings of pride and independence to arise would negate true surrender and would be like wearing a ring consecrated to the god of death thus wilfully inviting destruction. Therefore it would be better for the ācārya, who is free of pride, to initiate the relationship.

447. *ācāryābhimāṇamēy uddārakam.*

447. Devotion to the ācārya alone is the means for deliverance.

448. *kaippaṭṭa poruḷaik kaiviṭṭu putaitta poruḷaik kaṇicikkak kaṭavaṇallaṇ.*

448. One should not cast aside a treasure that is in the hand desiring treasure that is in the earth.

The ācārya is easily accessible and therefore should not be disregarded in preference for the pursuit of God who is inaccessible and unknowable.

449. *viṭṭay piṛanta pōdu karastamāna udakattai upēkṣittu, jīmūta jalattaiyum sāgara salilattaiyum sarita-salilattaiyum vāpī-kūpa-payas-sukkaḷaiyum vāñcikkak kaṭavaṇallaṇ.*

449. When one is thirsty, one should not disregard the water lying in the hand, in preference for the water of clouds, the ocean, the river, tanks or wells.

450. *pāṭṭuk-kēṭkum-iḍamum, kūppituk kēṭkum-iḍamum, kutitta-viḍamum, vaḷaitta viḍamum, uṭṭum-iḍamum ellām vakutta-viḍamē yeṇṇirukkak-kaṭavaṇ.*

450. The place where songs are heard, the place where calls [for help] are heard, the place of the step, the enclosed place, the place of feeding: one ought consider all these as abiding [in the presence of the ācārya].

These “places” are the five realms of the Lord's theological manifestations. The place where songs are heard is Vaikuṇṭha where the liberated ones sing the Sāma songs.

The place where calls [for help] are heard is the Ocean of Milk where the Lord reclines upon Ananta śeṣa. Hearing the calls for help from the gods the Lord condescends to incarnate as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in order to alleviate the distress of the gods and the devotees being overcome by the antigods.

“The place of the step”, refers to the creation of the physical realm through the agency of the four Vyūhas.

The enclosed place refers to the iconic manifestation that is surrounded by the walls of the temple.

The place of feeding is the inner sanctum of the heart where the Lord nourishes the jīva who meditates upon Him.

## 58. Enemies, friends & neutrals.

451. *ivaṇukku pratikūlar sva-tantrarum devatāntara-paraum, anukūlar ācārya paratantrar; upekṣaṇīyar īśvara paratantrar.*

451. Those who [consider themselves] independent and those who worship other gods are unsympathetic; those who are dependent on the ācārya are friends and those who are dedicated to the Lord are neutrals.

One who regards the ācārya as the abode of all the five theological aspects of the Godhead regards those who are self-serving materialists as unsympathetic (*pratikulan*); others who are

dedicated to the preceptor are considered as spiritual friends (*anukūlan*) and those who are dedicated to God alone are neutrals (*upekṣan*) in that they are not going about their spiritual development in the right way.

## 59. Right Knowledge and Right Practice

452. *jñāna-anuṣṭānaṅgaḥ iraṇḍum allātārkku upāyāṅgamāy irukkum ivaṇukku upēyaṅgamāy irukkum.*

452. The two, Right Knowledge (*jñānam*) and Right Practice (*anuṣṭānam*), are necessary adjuncts to the means for those [who do not have an ācārya]; to these [who have an ācārya], they are accessories to goal.

What is a necessary adjunct to the means for others, is part of the result of having attained the Lord for one who has dedicated himself to an ācārya. It is important to note that both are still required – before the meeting of an ācārya and thereafter — the pursuit of knowledge and right practice of the teachings and their direct realisation in one’s life are never abandoned — it is only their categorisation that changes.

## 60. Offences

453. *ivaṇukku niṣidha-anuṣṭānam taṇṇaiyum piṛaraiyum nacippikkaiyālē tyājyam.*

453. [The Prapanna] should relinquish forbidden practices, lest he destroy himself and others.

The term *anuṣṭāna* primarily refers to religious practices performed for some goal — either *Dharma*, *Artha* – power and prosperity, *Kāma* – enjoyment or *Mokṣa* – liberation.

454. *tāṇ nacikkīratu mūṇṇa apacārattilum anvayik-kaiyālē piṛar nacikkīratu taṇṇai yanādarittum taṇṇ-anuṣṭānattai yaṅki-karittum.*

454. From committing the three faults [offending the ācārya, the Lord and the Noble Family], one is destroyed; indifference to [the offender] or following the same offensive practices would cause others to be lost.

## 61. Sexuality

455. *vihitta-bhogam niṣidha-bhogam pōlē loka-virudham emaṇṇu, naraka hētu vumaṇṇu; āyirukkac ceytā svarūpa-virudham umāy vedānta-virudham-umāy prāpya-pratibandhakam-umāy irukkaiyālē tyājyam.*

455. Unlike forbidden pleasures; sanctioned enjoyment is not condemned by the society nor leads to hell; even so both of these are to be renounced as opposed to the quintessence of the jīva, opposed to Vedānta and a hindrance to liberation.

Sense gratification done within the bounds of Dharma is not wrong or sinful but still Piḷḷai-lokācārya gives three reasons why they should be relinquished:—

1. Sense indulgence negates the quintessence of the jīva which exists for the pleasure of the Lord and thus self-gratification is opposed to God-gratification.
2. When sense pleasures are analysed by using the rational methodology of Vedānta they are observed to be transitory, insubstantial and insatiable and therefore indulgence in them does not bring relief or satisfaction but only increases craving.
3. Increased craving leads to attachment and this hinders our spiritual progress and unfoldment, delaying the attainment of Liberation.

456. *bhogyatā-puttu-kulaiyindu dharma-budhyā pravartittālum svarūpam kulaiyum.*

456. Even by relinquishing sex as a means of enjoyment and doing it only as a conjugal duty the quintessence is obscured.

The Dharma śāstras lay down the duty of having sex with one's wife every month after her period. The wife can approach the husband in due course and demand her conjugal rights with the formula — *ṛtum dehi!* One could argue that sex could be done in the discharge of one's conjugal obligations should be retained. But the ācārya retorts that all sexual indulgence of whatever sort should be eschewed, even as a conjugal duty. Sexuality obscures the quintessence of the jīva which is *ananya-bhogyatva* — being the sole object of the Lord's enjoyment and *ananya-upāyatva* — resorting to the Lord as the sole means of one's own enjoyment.

457. *“kṣetrāṇi mitrāṇi.....” eṅkiṛa ślokattil-avastai piṛakka vēṇum svarūpam kulaiyāmaikku.*

457. In order not to obscure the quintessence it is necessary to live in the state [indicated in] “Fields, friends..... “

Hasta-giri Mahatmyam

“Whether fields, friends, wealth, children, spouse, animals or real estate, O Lord, for those who are drawn to (Your) lotus-feet, all these become impediments [to the attainment of the goal]”

## 62. Adjuncts to the four upāyas.

458. *prāpya-bhūmiyil prāvaṇyamum, tyājya bhūmiyil jihāsaiyum anubhavālā-pattil ātma-tāraṇa-ayogyataiyum, upāya catuṣṭayattukkum vēṇum.*

458. An irresistible urge to reach [the Lord], an ardent desire to abandon this state of separation and being unable to remain in the body without the experience [of God]; these are necessary [adjuncts] to the four upāyas.

The four *upāyas* are *Bhakti*, *Prapatti*, *ācārya-niṣṭha* in either of its two forms as *svagata-svikāra* — eliciting the grace of the ācārya or *para-gata-svikāra* — being a passive recipient of the ācārya's grace. One may attain Liberation either by the self-effort of cultivating Devotion (*Bhakti*) or through going for refuge (*Prapatti*) relying on the preceptor or simply on the grace of the Lord, but for all of these to be effective the three conditions must be present: (1) an ardent desire to be united with God, (2) complete disenchantment with material life, and (3) an inability to bear further rebirth without God-experience.

## 63. Dedication to a preceptor.

459. *“paḷutā-kātoṅṛarindē.....” eṅṛapāṭṭai pūrvōpāyattukku pramāṇamāka anusandhip-patu.*

459. The words; “I have realised an infallible means: .....,” are to be considered as endorsement for the former upāya [actively eliciting the preceptor's grace].

Fourth Tiru-vantādi, 89

“I have realised an infallible means: worshipping those who resort to the Lord, meditating on the feet of the Lord of the milk ocean, without any distraction — whoever endures this life with humility will destroy accumulated sins, will open the doors of Vaikuṅṭha and remain there with glory.”

460. “*nallaveṇ toḷi.....*”, “*mārāya tāṇavaṇai.....*” *eṅgiṛa pāṭṭuk-kaṇaiyum stotrattil mudinda ślokattaiyum “paśur manuṣyaḥ ..... “eṅgiṛa ślokattaiyum idukku pramānamāga anusandhip-patu.*

460. “O my good maid!.....1.”, “Will themselves vanquish those.....2.” — these stanzas and the śloka at the end of the Stotra (Ratna) 3, and the śloka:— “Animals or humans.....4.” — should be considered authority for this ācārya-abhimāna.

These verses endorse the passive receiving of the preceptor's grace.

1. Nacchiyār Tiru-moḷi 10:10

“O my good maid! The supreme Lord, our supreme One, elevated on the serpent-couch is wealthy, great Lord we are insignificant humans what can we do? Vishnu-citta (Periyālvār) of śrīvilliputhur, if he is able to obtain a suitable prize from their god, let me see that!”

(Aṇḍāl is languishing — the Lord is such a great personage, perhaps He doesn't care — her father, Periyālvār, will help her out.)

2. Fourth Tiruvantādi, 18:

“The merits of these who praise those that praise in a special way the man-lion that ripped open the chest of the inimical demon, with sharp nails, will themselves vanquish those of the latter (the merits of those who praise the Lord directly).”

(The point seems to be that the merits of praising the members of the Noble Family are greater than those who praise the Lord without the good offices of an ācārya,)

3. Stotra Ratna 65—

“Grant me your grace regardless of my own conduct, having in view my grand-father, Nāthamuni, the self-realised one who is the paragon of devotion to your lotus-feet.”

4. Source unknown

“Those creatures who even associate with Vaiṣṇavas be they animals or humans or birds, will enjoy that highest place of Viṣṇu.”

461. *ācārya-abhimānaṅ tāṅ, prapatti pōlē upāyāntaraṅgaḷukku aṅgamumāy svatantramumāy irukkum.*

461. Surrendering to a preceptor, like going for refuge to the Lord, can be an accessory to other means as well as an end in itself.

The other means taught in the Gita are Bhakti-yoga, Jñāna-yoga and Karma-yoga. *Śaranāgati* or taking refuge in either the Lord or an ācārya can either serve as an auxiliary means to the other 3 paths or be an end in itself.

462. *bhaktiyil aśataṅkku prapatti; prapattiyil aśaktaṅkku idu.*

462. Going for refuge is for those who are unable to practice Devotion (*Bhakti*) this [surrendering to a preceptor] is for those incapable of going for refuge.

But the taking of refuge in the Lord is for those who cannot practice Bhakti, and for those who are even incapable of surrendering to Kṛṣṇa, then submission to an ācārya is the recommended path.

463. *idu prathamam svarūpattaip palla-vitamākkum, piṅpu puṣpitaṅkku anantaram phala paryantam ākkum.*

463. At first this [*ācārya-abhimāna* — submission to a teacher] makes the [latent] quintessence sprout, then flower and finally, produce the full fruit.