

**THE CONCEPT OF LIVING LIBERATION
IN THE TIRUMANTIRAM**

by

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines the concept of living liberation in the Tirumantiram, a work recognised as one of the Tamil Śaiva canonical texts composed around the ninth century. Modern scholarship has thus far attempted to comprehend the Tirumantiram in terms of the post-Tirumantiram traditions that developed after the thirteenth century: Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta and Tamil Siddha. Consequently, the unity and coherence of the text are subjected to question, and the dual literary and cultural roots of the Tirumantiram remain largely uninvestigated. Besides, the significance of the Tirumantiram as one of the earliest vernacular works directly dealing with the question of soteriology for Tamil speaking populace, most of whom are not qualified for liberation and preceptorhood according to the Śaivāgamas with which the text identifies itself, is not fully recognised. This dissertation argues that the concept of living liberation constitutes the unifying theme of the Tirumantiram, which is an outcome of the synthesis of Tamil and Sanskrit traditions, and demonstrates that the *Tirumantiram*—which does not apparently promote the ideology of temple cult around which the Tamil *bhakti* movement and *Śaivāgamas* of Southern Śaivism developed—exemplifies an alternative religious vision centred on the human body. This dissertation consists of four chapters. The first chapter examines the Tamil legacy to the concept of living liberation. The second examines the ambiguous relations between the Sanskrit traditions and the Tirumantiram. How the Tamil and Sanskrit traditions are fused together to produce a unique version of yoga, the means to attain

living liberation, is the concern of the third chapter. The final chapter establishes through an analysis of sexual symbolism expressed in connotative language that the Tirumantiratm is an esoteric text. Thus, the Tirumantiram reflects the blending of an esoteric tantric sect with the leading mainstream bhakti religion, probably to win approval of and recognition in the Tamil Śaiva community during the medieval period.

To

Chelva Kanaganayakam

viṅṅinriḷintu viṅaikkīṭāy meykōṇṭu
“Descending from Heaven clothed in body”

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ABBREVIATIONS

Aka.	Akanānūru
Aiṅk.	Aiṅkurunūru
Cīru.	Cīrupāṅārūppaṭai
Kali.	Kalittokai
Kuṛi.	Kuṛiṅcippāṭṭu
Kuṛu.	Kuṛuntokai
Ku.	Kulārṇavatāntra
Maturai.	Maturaikkāñci
Malai.	Malaipaṭukaṭām
Makuta	Makutāgama
Manu	Manusmṛti
Naṛ.	Naṛṇai
Pari.	Paripāṭal
Pati.	Patirūppattu
Perum.	Perumpāṅārūppaṭai
Puṛa.	Puṛanānūru
Tiru.	Tirumurukārūppaṭai
TM	Tirumantiram

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The names of figures, concepts, and places occurring exclusively in Tamil sources have been transliterated according to the scheme provided in the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon: e.g. anpu, Tirumūlan, Tiruvāvaṭuturai. The standard transliteration for Sanskrit is mostly adopted for Sanskrit terms whenever they occur in Tamil sources: e.g. jñāna for ñānam, yoga for yōkam, guru for kuru, Śiva for Civa.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is directed towards a discussion of living liberation in the *Tirumantiram*, one of the Tamil Śaiva canonical literature known as the *Tirumuṟai*.¹ The concept of living liberation constitutes the central theme of the *Tirumantiram* which is the outcome of the synthesis of Tamil and Sanskrit traditions. The analysis of the concept of living liberation demonstrates that the *Tirumantiram* - which does not apparently promote the ideology of temple cult around which the Tamil *bhakti* movement² and Śaiva

All translations in this dissertation are mine unless stated otherwise.

¹ Though the term *muṟai* has several meanings in Tamil, it denotes, in this context, a body of religious texts arranged in a certain order or an individual text placed in that order. “*Tiru*” means divine, sacred or auspicious. Śaiva works are grouped into 12 classes known as *Tirumuṟai*. Though the whole Tamil Śaiva canon is in metrical form, a distinctive terminology is used for individual components of the canon. The first seven *Tirumuṟai* are known as *Tēvāram*, the eighth comprises *Tiruvācakam* and *Tirukkōvaiyār*. The ninth *Tirumuṟai* includes two texts *Tiruvicaippā* and *Tiruppallāṅṅu* and the *Tirumantiram* is known as the tenth *Tirumuṟai*. Whereas various compositions are included in the eleventh *Tirumuṟai*, a single text called *Periyapurāṇam* constitutes the twelfth *Tirumuṟai*. The Śaiva canonical works cover approximately a period of 700 years. See Kamil Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1973), 185-87.

² The *Tirumantiram* belonged to the *bhakti* era that began in the Tamil linguistic –cultural area in the 6th century C.E. The region lying south of the Vēṅkaṭa hills was recognised as the Tamil country during the *bhakti* period, as in the Caṅkam age. Two or three centuries immediately following the Caṅkam period is designated as Kalabhra interregnum in the history of Tamil literature, during which “the zenith of Jaina and Buddhist influence in South India was achieved.” Stein notes, “these cults [Jainism and Buddhism] co-existed peacefully with each other and with indigenous forms of religion.” The late classical works *Paripāṭal*, and *Kalittokai*, several didactic works and the twin epics *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkai* were composed during this period. This period of relative peace in the religious arena was followed by the *bhakti* period which was marked by religious acrimony and violence spurred by the conversion of kings to Śaivism by saints. The Tamil *bhakti* movement that was spearheaded by the three “*Tēvāram*” saints was centered on temple and pilgrimage, and Śiva, the presiding deity of the temple constituted the theme of devotional hymns. Poet-saints called upon all members of Tamil society to participate in the worship of Śiva envisioning the formation of devotional communities irrespective of gender and caste distinctions. Thus, the object of the movement was to unite the Tamil society under the banner of temple-based Śaivism, thereby to enervate Jainism and Buddhism that had wielded influence in the Tamil country from long before the Common Era. See *Peasant state and society in Medieval South India* (Delhi :Oxford University Press, 1980), 78; Indira Peterson, *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints* (Delhi:Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1991, 2001), 9-10.

Siddhānta *āgamas* of Southern Śaivism developed– exemplifies an alternative religious vision centred on the human body.³

Medieval Tamil Śaivism was shaped and nurtured by the synthesis and amalgamation of two literary cultures springing from separate language texts: Sanskrit and Tamil. It is generally argued that its ritual, theological or philosophical, and mythical content is derived from the Vedic, *āgamic/tantric* and *purāṇic* literature in Sanskrit whereas its emotive content can be traced to the Tamil Caṅkam literature. By creating an intimate link between these two distinct conceptual universes that are claimed by the text to be equal in value, the *Tirumantiram* emerges as a foundational treatise in Tamil dealing with the subject of soteriology. The primary concern of the dissertation is to illuminate the nature of the synthesis between the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions undertaken by the text, thereby demonstrating how the path to and nature of living liberation are influenced by it.

Living liberation, which is the ultimate goal of *sanmārga* path is characterized by the *turīya samādhi*, the fourth and the final stage of consciousness in which polarities are transcended. The highest state of *yoga* is interpreted both as self-realization and as non-dualistic union with Śiva (*śivayoga*) marked by both the blissful vision of the pervasiveness of Śiva, and the acquisition of power (*siddhi*). One who attains this state is known as a *cittar* (Siddha). Living liberation is intimately associated with the concept of bodily immortality or deathlessness, because the Siddha becomes free of change by transcending all elements (*tattvas*)⁴ in the *turīya samādhi*. Thus, he succeeds in

³ “Realization emanates from [Tiru] mantiram that gives rise to the consciousness of the body.” (TM 85).

⁴ Reality comprises a number of principles or elements called *tattvas*. The *Tirumantiram* mentions five *Śiva-tattvas*, seven *vidyā-tattvas* and twenty-four *ātma-tattvas*. See verses 2190, 2191, 1714, 1737. Another

conquering death, or in reversing the natural process of aging. Since a changeless state is sought in the world that perpetually changes, living liberation is described in paradoxical terms in the *Tirumantiram*.

Different Readings of the *Tirumantiram*:

The question of textual unity and coherence is, in general, disregarded or inadequately dealt with in commentaries and secondary works on the *Tirumantiram*. The Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta scholarship considers the *Tirumantiram* to be the earliest source of the tradition,⁵ the canonical works of which are known as Meykaṅṭa Śāstras.⁶ The

verse (2179) states that *tattvas* are ninety-six in total. Śaivas reckon 36 *tattvas* whereas Vedāntins, and Māyāvādins recognize 28, 24, and 25 *tattvas* respectively.

⁵ To understand the various dimensions of controversy surrounding the *Tirumantiram*, it is necessary to have a rudimentary knowledge of Śaiva Siddhānta, which is described “as the central tantric Śaiva tradition” enshrined in the corpus of revealed texts known as *āgamas* or tantras. The three entities-God, soul and bondage- are held to be true and eternal. Liberation is explained in terms of the soul being rid of its bonds. The Śaiva Siddhānta privileges ritual over knowledge and maintains the ontological distinction between the soul and God even in the state of release (dualism). The *āgamas* deal with the two types of ritual: ritual performed for the sake of others (*parārthapūjā*), the prime example of which is the *pūjā* held in public places like temples, and ritual performed for one’s own benefit (*ātmārathapūjā*). See Gavin Flood, *The tantric body: the secret tradition of Hindu religion* (B. Tauris, 2006), 120; Helene Brunner, “Jñāna and Kriyā: Relation between Theory and Practice in the Śaivāgamas,” in *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism*, ed. Teun Goudriaan (New York: State University New York Press, 1992), 1-59.

A regional school called Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta emerged in the period spanning the 13-15th centuries, and its cardinal doctrines are found in the fourteen Meykaṅṭa cāttiraṅkaḷ (śāstras) composed by three of the four *cantāṅa kuravars* (*saṃtānācārya*) and two authors preceding them. Prentiss states that the endeavours by the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta school to canonize the devotional literature and compose philosophical works in Tamil were motivated by the desire to create a Tamil lineage for the school and to distance itself from the Sanskrit Śaiva Siddhānta school that flourished in the Tamil country. The Sanskrit Śaiva Siddhānta school is a temple-based tradition that underscores the primacy of ritual (*kriyā*) for attainment of liberation. As opposed to the pan-Indic, ritualistic school of Śaiva Siddhānta, the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta school developed as a regional tradition finding its inspiration in Tamil medieval *bhakti* literature and privileging knowledge (*jñāna*) over ritual as a means of liberation. Prentiss notes that by means of underplaying the role of ritual in the realm of soteriology, the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta tradition is seen to be more on the path of identifying itself with *advaita* Vedānta. See Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 134-135. The Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta embraces the doctrine of *śuddhādvaita*, and thus distinguishes itself from the *advaita* Vedānta. The *śuddhādvaita mukti* is characterised by the union of the soul with God, which is beyond description. In the state of liberation the soul is indistinguishable from God; at the same time, the soul maintains its own identity. The merging of the soul with Śiva is compared to the coalescing of two words *tāḷ* and *talai* as *tāḷalai*. See *Tiruvārūṭpayan* 8: 4-5. Indigenous scholars have Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta in their mind when they discuss the *Tirumantiram*.

origin of this perspective lies in political debates about the question of Tamil national identity held in Tamil Nadu during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Tamil/Śaivite revivalist movement that emerged in the late nineteenth century was influenced by Dravidian ideology⁷ advocated by the Madras school of Orientalist scholarship (anti-Brahman missionary Orientalism), which proposed a pristine Tamil past unsullied by Brāhmaṇical elements.⁸ This regional movement was born of the fear of marginalization and of degradation harboured in the minds of elite non-Brahmans in relation to their political and social future in predominantly Aryan, Sanskritic and Brāhmaṇical Hindu India. The fear was created by colonialists who disparaged Dravidian beliefs, and by neo-Hindu writings that “reduced ‘India’ to a Hinduism whose pure and authentic manifestations were limited to the Sanskritic scriptural tradition characterized as “Aryan”....”⁹ The Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta was identified as the original religion of Tamils and was used to combat the growing influence of Neo-Vedānta which was “considered by many Christian missionaries and Dravidian ideologues as the new liberal face of a resurgent Brahmanism in India.”¹⁰ Non-Brahman scholars constructed a purely Tamil lineage for Śaivism and Śaiva Siddhānta in their writings and celebrated the *Tirumantiram* as the earliest Tamil work embodying the Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta

⁶ T.B. Siddalingaiah goes as far as to say that almost all concepts found in Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta literature could be traced to the *Tirumantiram*. See *Origin and Development of Śaiva Siddhānta up to 14th century* (Madurai:Madurai Kamaraj University, 1979), 70.

⁷ The foundation of Dravidian ideology was laid by R. Caldwell’s in his monumental work, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages*. Caldwell uses the term Dravidian to denote south Indian languages and the speakers of these languages, who are non-Brahman people of South India.

⁸ R. Vaitheespara, “Caste, Hybridity, and the Construction of Cultural Identity in Colonial India: Maraimalai Adigal and the Intellectual Genealogy of Dravidian Nationalism 1800-1950” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 1999, 28-29.)

⁹ Sumathi Ramaswamy, *Passions of the Tongue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 25-27.

¹⁰ V. Ravindiran [R. Vaitheespara], “Discourses of Empowerment : Missionary Orientalism in the Development of Dravidian Nationalism,” in *Nation Work: Asian Elites and National Identities*, ed. Timothy Brook and Andre Schmid (Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press, 2000), 54.

doctrines.¹¹ Writings on the *Tirumantiram* were inspired by this perspective during this period. The fundamental principles underlying living liberation were conveniently overlooked or misconstrued.¹²

The view that gained momentum since the late 1960s holds that the *Tirumantiram* constitutes the fountainhead of Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta as well as Tamil Siddha tradition.¹³

Two seminal works on Tamil Siddhas, one by A.V. Subramanya Aiyar (1969) and one by Kamil Zvelebil (1973) were responsible for setting a new direction in the studies of *Tirumantiram*.¹⁴ Aiyar underlines both the Siddha nature of the author Tirumūlar and the

¹¹ R. Vaitheespara, “Caste, Hybridity, and the construction of Cultural Identity in Colonial India,” 118.

¹² Scholars have shown at the expense of fundamental esoteric principles how the *Tirumantiram* has influenced the Meykaṇṭa śāstras of the 12-14th century. Their writings identify the following doctrines common to both the *Tirumantiram* and Meykaṇṭa śāstras: nature of the eternal entities -God, the soul and bondage, the role of grace and guru in the soul’s pursuit of liberation, significance of the *pañcākṣara* mantra and the four-fold hierarchized paths: *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yoga* and *jñāna*. Nonetheless, they usually ignore or do not adequately explain the following aspects of Śaivism professed by the *Tirumantiram*: the human body being privileged in the text, twin goals of immortality and liberation, the interrelationship of yoga and *jñāna* or attainment of *jñāna* through yoga, temple worship being relegated to the margin of religious life, and recognition of sexual intercourse without emission as a means to living liberation. See K. Veḷḷaivāraṇaṅ, *Paṇṇiru Tirumuṛai varalāru*, Part II (Cidambaram, Tamil Nadu: Aṅṅāmalai University, 1997), *The Tirumantiram* edited and commented by P. Irāmaṇāta piḷḷai (Tirunelvēli Caiva Cittānta Nūṛpatippuk Kaḷakam, 2007 [1942]).

¹³ Tamil Śaivism consists of two streams: one is Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta and other is Tamil Siddhism, also known as Tamil Siddha tradition or Tamil Siddha cult. Zvelebil regards Tamil Siddhas “as an integral part of a pan-Indian movement and tradition.” See *The Siddha Quest for Immortality* (Oxford: Mandrake of Oxford, 2003), 6. However, R. Venkataraman recognizes the contribution of indigenous culture to the origin of the Tamil Siddha cult.

The Tamil Siddha cult, like any other, is the product of an evolution and a fruit deriving from different roots. The period of evolution would go back to Tamil proto-historic times. The roots are diverse and belong to different soils, and so, the nourishment has been qualitatively different, producing what has cropped up as the sanmārga siddha school in the 10th -11th centuries, and after a pause, settled down as the Tamil Siddha cult around the 15th-16th centuries.¹³ Of these different roots, four are important and identifiable (a) The proto-historic native beginnings (b) the kāpālika cult (3) the Tantric Buddhism (4) the Nātha siddha cult. See *A History of the Tamil Siddha Cult* (Madurai: N Ennes Publications, 1990), 23.

The highest goals of siddhas are “freedom, perfect health and immortality-all gained in this life.” (Kamil Zvelebil, *The Poets of the Powers*, 9.) The Tamil Siddhas have authored works on yoga, medicine, alchemy and astrology. They observe various types of yoga and meditational practices and tantric ritualism. Most of their poetry contains symbolism which is comprehensible only to the initiated.

¹⁴ The interest in Tamil Siddhas was kindled in Tamil Nadu following the emergence of two movements focussing on the task of creating a new Tamil identity bereft of Brahmanical elements. Both E.V.R Periyār who headed the self-respect movement, and Maṛaimalai Aṭikaḷ of the Tamil revivalist movement regarded rationality to be the central quality of Tamils and attributed the downfall of “rational” Tamil culture to

differences between the *Tirumantiram* and other devotional poetry included in the Śaiva canon. According to Aiyar, Tirumūlar, along with Civavākkīyar and Paṭṭiṇattār, form “the great Siddha triad of the hymnal period.”¹⁵ Zvelebil who appears to be the first scholar to employ the term tradition¹⁶ in connection with Tamil Siddhas, considers it as an offshoot of the pan-Indian tantric-*yoga* movement¹⁷ inspired by the new revelation that emerged between the seventh and the eleventh centuries by way of re-interpreting and synthesizing “the elements of Vajrayāna and Śivaist tantrism, magic, alchemy, and *haṭha yoga*.”¹⁸ The aforementioned period coincided with the development of Siddha tradition in South India with Tirumūlar being the first Tamil preceptor of “that new

Brahmans and Sanskrit. However, their ideological differences lie in their views about religion. While Periyār thought ancient Tamils to be atheists, Aṭṭaḷ projected them to be followers of the strictly monotheistic religion of Śaiva Siddhānta. Tamil Siddha poetry and the Tamil Siddha medical system were celebrated as the creations of the Tamil rationalist mind and attempts were made to find modern scientific facts in Tamil Siddha writings. The *Tirumantiram* is considered one of the earliest Tamil Siddha works. See Richard Weiss, “The Reformulation of a Holy Science: Siddha Medicine and Tradition in South India” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2003), 124-165.

¹⁵ *Poetry and Philosophy of the Tamil Siddhas: An Essay in Criticism* (Cidambaram: Manivasakar Noolakam, 1969), 7.

¹⁶I agree with the use of the term “tradition” in regard to Tamil Siddhas. By tradition is meant *paramparā* in Sanskrit or *paramparai* in Tamil. The Tamil Siddha tradition lacked a strong institutional basis in the formal sense. However, its teachings were handed down from guru to disciple in informal settings. Hence it is through and through a guru-centered tradition. Without the intervention of the guru, one cannot be enlightened. Initiation by the guru is followed by a rigorous spiritual practice or *sādhana* as directed by him. Paṭṭiṇattār distinguishes other religious paths from that of the Siddhas in terms of the spiritual preceptor, guru.

I identified myself with the blind
whose path was not guru-centred
Following the path leading to birth
I was ruined; my intent was defeated (Aruḷ Pulampal)

See A. Ramanathan, ed., *Cittar Pāṭalkaḷ* (Chennai: Prēmā piracuram, 2005 [1959]), 95.

Almost all Siddhas have referred to a guru, either by name or by title. Jñānasiddhas do not mention their guru by name. But with regard to kāyasiddhas, Venkataraman has constructed a genealogy based on their writings. According to the *Tirumantiram*, Nandi had eight disciples including Tirumūlar who in turn, had seven students. Though individual variations among Siddhas are discernible in Siddha poetry, three elements - common goals, means to achieve them and the mediatory role played by the guru - enable us to speak of Siddhas as belonging to a single tradition. See R. Venkataraman, *A History of the Tamil Siddha Cult*, 42-165.

¹⁷ *The Poets of the Powers*, 16.

¹⁸ M. Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1969), 304.

revelation reinterpreting the timeless doctrines within the framework of Tamil language, culture and literature.”¹⁹ Zvelebil describes the author of the text, Tirumūlar, “as the true forerunner of the Tamil Siddhas” and his work “contains all or almost all the typical features of the Tamil Siddha movement”.²⁰ At the same time he acknowledges that “the Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy springs from this marvellous text as from its direct source.”²¹

The survey of secondary literature on the *Tirumantiram* since the publication of Zvelebil’s work shows that even those who wanted to examine the text from the perspective of later Tamil Siddha tradition have conceded that it is basically a Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta classic.²² More than half of the work (5-9 Tantras) is proclaimed to be dealing with Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy whereas the first four Tantras are linked to the Tamil Siddha tradition.²³

These studies are based on the premise that Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta and Tamil Siddha doctrines are incompatible with each other. Yet, they do not propose an explanation as to how the text came to reflect two divergent religious traditions. Besides, they tacitly imply that the *Tirumantiram* lacks fundamental unity and coherence in its structure and content. Some scholars are critical and outspoken in their comments. Aiyar argues that the *Tirumantiram* does not have “cogent reasoning for the development of a theme, creed or philosophy.” Rather, he suggests that it is “a compilation of certain

¹⁹ *The Poets of the Powers*, 73.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 74

²¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

²² “Though the Tirumandiram is treated basically a Śaiva Siddhānta classic, i.e. a classic of Tamil Śaiva philosophical tradition, it has the unique privilege of being called a pioneer work on the Tamil Siddha tradition as well.” See T.N Ganapathy and K.R. Arumugam, *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumūlar: Essays on the Tirumandiram* (Quebec: Babaji’s Kriya Yoga Publications, 2006), xvi-xvii.

²³ R. Māṅikkavācakam, *Tirumantira āṛāycci* (Chennai: Apirāmi Aruḷ, 1982), 35.

prevailing ideas” about ethics, doctrines of *Śaivāgamas*, and yoga.²⁴ Zvelebil concurs with this view by describing the *Tirumantiram* as an “encyclopaedia of authentic spiritual experience on almost all levels.”²⁵ However, he observes that three integrated paths to liberation (knowledge, *yoga* and *bhakti*) yield a fundamental unity in the otherwise loosely connected work.²⁶ Judith Martin counters Zvelebil’s suggestion that the *Tirumantiram* is a “mere compilation of solitary verses”, stating that Tirumūlar’s efforts to mediate between the Sanskrit Vedic and *āgamic* traditions, and the Tamil *bhakti* tradition, shape the unified vision of the text.²⁷

Martin’s excellent study on the *Tirumantiram* does not find the co-existence in a single text of seemingly contradictory Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta and Tamil Siddha ideologies problematic, or as one that needs further consideration. Nonetheless, it has been an important issue to indigenous scholars because the *Tirumantiram* does not fully conform to the characteristic worldview of Tamil Siddhas represented in Tamil Siddha poetry that emerged from after the 15th century onwards. Since the Tamil Siddhas are portrayed as opposed to scriptures²⁸ and *bhakti mārga*,²⁹ the presence of these elements in

²⁴ *Poetry and Philosophy of the Tamil Siddhars: An Essay in Criticism*, 11.

²⁵ *Lexicon of Tamil Literature*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995), 675.

²⁶ *The Poets of the Powers*, 74.

²⁷ “The function of mythic figures in *Tirumantiram*” (PhD diss., McMaster University, 1983).

²⁸ The four Vedas, the six Vedāngas,
 Numerous tantras the purāṇas, the āgamas
 And various kinds of other works –
 They are all vain treatises indeed, dance O snake! (Pāmpāṭṭic cittar, 98)
 The one who consigns the scriptures to flame is a real Siddha
 cāttirattaic cuttu eṛintāl avanē cittaṅ (Akattiyar nāṇam 2:5)

See A. Ramanathan, ed., *Cittar Pāṭalkaḷ*, 226, 343.

²⁹ “In the history of Indian thought there has always been a tension among the adherents of the path of devotion (*bhakti*), those of the path of knowledge (*jñāna*), and those of *yoga*. The Siddhas are antagonistic towards *bhakti*; they accept *yoga* as the only method of final realization. The Tamil Siddhas have developed an openly iconoclastic attitude toward the worship of divine images (*arcā*), which is important to the path of devotion (*bhakti*). This naturally makes them critical of *bhakti* as a mode of final realization.”

the *Tirumantiram* is uncharacteristic of the Siddha tradition.³⁰ Karu. Ārumukattamiḷaṅ's work grapples with the issue of the identity of the author of *Tirumantiram*:

“ The question is if Tirumūlar was a Siddha or a Śaiva Siddhāntin. The Siddhas are negatively defined as those who condemned and denounced scriptures, religion and *bhakti*. However, it appears that Tirumūlar who is acknowledged to be a Siddha does not conform to these definitions...³¹

To resolve the issue pertaining to the nature of the *Tirumantiram*, it is imperative to recognize the textual unity of the *Tirumantiram*, to be cognizant of the complex cultural process involved in the making of the text and to appreciate the dichotomy of esoteric/exoteric content embedded in the text. This is undertaken in the four chapters that follow. The remainder of this chapter deals with authorship, structure, and general content of the text.

Authorship:

According to autobiographical verses in the prologue (73-94), the *Tirumantiram* is based on the spiritual experience of the Siddha Tirumūlar. He represents himself in these verses as a yogi who has attained embodied liberation and as an ardent seeker of true knowledge. He claimed to be conversant with the Sanskrit *āgamic* literature and the three facets of Tamil: *iyal* (literary Tamil), *icai* (verses set to music) and *nāṭakam* (literature pertaining to dances or to dramatic representation of stories). My reconstruction of the

T.N. Ganapathy, “The Way of the Siddhas,” in *Hindu Spirituality: Postclassical and Modern* ed. K. Sundararajan and Bithika Mukerji (New York : Crossroad Publishing, 1997),239. Also see T.N. Ganapathy, *The Philosophy of the Tamil Siddhas* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1993), 69-70.

³⁰ The *Tirumantiram* does not reject religious scriptures: “The Vedas and the *āgamas* are revealed texts having general and special authority.” (vētamōṭu ākamam meyyām iṅraivaṅ nūl oṭum potuvum ciṅappum enru uḷḷaṅa 2397:1-2). Karu. Ārumukattamiḷaṅ shows in his work that *bhakti* (he interprets *bhakti* as *aṅṅpu*) is an integral aspect of *Tirumūlar*'s religion. See *Kālattiṅ Kural* (Chennai: Tamiḷiṅi, 2004), 21-28.

³¹ *Tirumūlar: Kālattiṅ Kural*, 112.

author's biography differs in certain details from the one found in the *Periyapurāṇam* of the twelfth century. (See fn. 56)

Two verses –one in the prologue and the other at the end of the text- apparently refer to the author as Mūlaṅ.³² Two more verses in the text quote Mūlaṅ as the authority on the subject they deal with.³³ Mūlaṅ appears to be a popular name among Caṅkam poets.³⁴ According to the autobiographical verses, the author, who was born of the mind (*cittacaṅ*), was previously a religious personage called *civamuṇi* or *muṇivar* endowed with all-conquering wisdom; both terms are evocative of the body-energating penance he had undertaken. To become a disciple of Nandi was a great turning point in his life. Being initiated into a tantric tradition, he was given the title of Nātha.³⁵ He received instructions in *āgamic* literature,³⁶ and through the practice of *yoga*³⁷ he became *catācivaṅ*³⁸ himself.³⁹ It was only then that he declared himself to have had attained true knowledge.⁴⁰ Having abandoned his previous all-conquering wisdom (*velkiṅra ṅāṅam*), he resorted to true knowledge (*meṅṅāṅam*). His yogic experience is expressed in terms

³² mūlaṅ uraiceyta mūvāyirant tamiḷ (TM 99:1; 3046:1).

³³ atta ṅavaṅfirra māṅum paricu kēḷ
otta meṅṅ ṅāṅattuyarntār patattaic
cuttama tāka viḷakkitt telikkavē
muttiyā meṅṅrunam mūlaṅ moḷintatē (TM 1829)

vittaka mākiya vēṅattar uṅṅavūṅ
attaṅ ayaṅmāl aruntiya vaṅṅamām
cittam telintavar cēṅam parukiṅṅ
muttiyā meṅṅrunam mūlaṅ moḷintatē (TM 1866)

³⁴ The word *mūla* is found in the names of the following Caṅkam poets: Āvūr mūlaṅkiḷār (PN 38, 40, 166, 177, 178, 196, 261, 301), Aiyūr mūlaṅkiḷār (PN 21), Māmūlaṅār (PN 14, 75), Mūlaṅkīraṅār (Nat.73). According to *Periyapurāṇam*, an unnamed Śivayogi from the Kailāsa entered the body of the cowherd Mūlaṅ to redress the distress of the cows and assumed his name.

³⁵ nanti aruḷālē nāṅaṅam pēṅpeṅṅōm (68:1)

³⁶ TM 84.

³⁷ nanti aruḷālē mūlaṅai nāṅi (TM 92:1)

³⁸ Sadāśiva is worshipped in the form of linga. The significance of Sadāśiva is explained in chapter III.

³⁹ nanti aruḷālē catācivaṅāyiyēṅ (TM 92:2)

⁴⁰ nantiaruḷāl meṅṅṅāṅattuḷ naṅṅiṅēṅ (TM 92:3)

of witnessing the dance of Śiva in the *sabhā*, after which he claims to have lived for millions of years.⁴¹ He also indicates that this dance constitutes the theme of his work.⁴² Several verses in the prologue capture his remorse for his misspent life. In verse 76, he regrets his dismal ignorance of *sadāśiva tattvam* (alternatively known as *linga tattvam*), and of the knowledge of the three types of Tamil (*muttamiḷ vētam*) at the time he tormented the body through fasting.⁴³ In Tantra one he repents the neglect of his physical body.⁴⁴ However, he takes comfort in the thought that he was liberated from that disillusioned life, and that he was able to appreciate the new knowledge he came to possess. This prompted him to embark on an evangelical mission of spreading the word about the teachings he received from Nandi.⁴⁵ Since Tirumūlar portrays himself as a *jīvanmukta*, his work probably came to be known as mantra (Tiru+ mantiram). The utterances of a *jīvanmukta* are generally deemed mantra.⁴⁶

The Text

The *Tirumantiram* consists of a prologue and nine Tantras (Tantirams) of unequal length dealing with diverse subjects. Of the nine Tantras, the sixth Tantra is the shortest (131 verses), and the fourth Tantra is the longest (535 verses). The total number of verses, according to the text itself, is 3000.⁴⁷ The *Tirumantiram*, as it is available to us

⁴¹ tappillā maṅṅil taṅikkūttuk kaṅṅaiṅ
oppil ēḷukōṭi yukam iruntēṅē (TM 74: 3-4)

⁴² TM 77.

⁴³ TM 76.

⁴⁴ uṅṅaiṅ muṅṅam iḷukkeṅṅiruntēṅuṅṅaiṅ yāṅiruntōmpukiṅṅēṅē (TM 725:1-4)

⁴⁵ TM 85.

⁴⁶ Paul Muller-Ortego, “Aspects of Jīvanmukti in the Tantric Śaivism of Kashmir,” in *Living Liberation in Hindu Thought*, ed. Andrew O Fort and Patricia Y Mumme (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 196.

⁴⁷ mūḷaṅ urai ceyta mūvāyirant tamiḷ (99:1; 3046:1)
mutti muṅṅivitu mūvāyirattilē (100:20)
Tantraṅṅpatu cāṅṅu mūvāyiram (101:3)

now, has a little more than three thousand verses composed in *kaliviruttam* metre. This study does not take up the question of whether the text exists in its original form or not.⁴⁸

There are three identifiable stages in the textual history of the *Tirumantiram*:

(a) The period of composition:

The dating of the *Tirumantiram* is still a matter of unsettled controversy in scholarly writings. Most Indian scholars place the *Tirumantiram* after the Caṅkam age (after 300 A.D.), but prior to the saint Tiruñāṇacampantar, who is believed to have lived in the mid-7th century. One of the main reasons for this early dating by Indian scholars is the conviction that *Tēvāram* hymns were influenced by the *Tirumantiram*.⁴⁹ However, this has not been established beyond doubt.⁵⁰ Probably it was the author of the *Tirumantiram* who was conversant with *Tēvāram* hymns, as evidenced by his referring to them as the *muttamiḷ vētam*.⁵¹ Zvelebil and Vaiyapuripillai date the work to the early seventh and the first quarter of the eighth century respectively. However, Venkataraman believes it to be of a much later date: a period after the 10th century but before the 12th century.

⁴⁸ Indian scholarship is of the opinion that the text has come down to us in a very corrupt form and that a good number of *Tirumantiram* verses are interpolations. Several verses occur twice or thrice in the text verbatim. There are 52 such recurring verses. Recurrence of verses, according to Nāṇacampantaṅ is a strange phenomenon that is not found in any other Tamil literary work. Secondly, there are broken links in the *antāti* structure of the text. The self-reference of the text as *Tirumantiramālai* (TM 86:3) implies that it was composed in *antāti* style like a tightly-woven garland. In *antāti*, the last word or words of a verse constitute the first word or words of the subsequent verse. Nonetheless, only 590 out of the three thousand odd verses are found to be in *antāti* style. These verses are scattered among all Tantras except five and six. Thirdly, the text contains words of late origin. See A.S. Nāṇacampantaṅ, *Tirumantiram* (Chennai: Kaṅkai puttaka nilaiyam, 2002), xx. *Vaiyapuripillai's History of Tamil language and literature : from the beginning to 1000 A.D.* (Madras : New Century Book House, 1988. 2nd rev. ed.), 77; Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India*, 74.

⁴⁹ Siddalingaiah, *Origin and Development of Śaiva Siddhānta up to 14th century*, 51.

K. Veḷḷaivāraṇaṅ merely provides a list of common or similar phrases occurring in the *Tirumantiram* and other Tirumuṇai compositions including *Tēvāram*. See *Paṇṇiru tirumuṇai varalāru*, Volume II.

⁵⁰ J. Martin, "The Function of mythic figures in *Tirumantiram*," 25.

⁵¹ TM 76.

The earliest possible date for the *Tirumantiram* may be the ninth century. Cuntarar, one of the *Tēvāram* saints who is placed in the ninth century, pays homage to one Mūlaṅ, saying “I am the slave of slaves of my master Tirumūlaṅ”⁵² in the *Tiruttoṅṭattokai*, but fails to provide any hint of Mūlaṅ’s authorship of *Tirumantiram*. Venkataraman is, therefore, of opinion that the saint mentioned in the hymn of Cuntarar is different from the purported author of the *Tirumantiram*.⁵³ This suggestion was also made previously by Vaiyapuripillai.⁵⁴ However, it does not constitute a cogent reason to place Mūlaṅ after the 9th century.

Mūlaṅ is again mentioned in a composition called *Tiruttoṅṭar Tiruvantāti*, composed by Nampiyāṅṭār Nampi of the tenth century. Nampi was the first to mythologize the life of Tirumūlaṅ, mentioned in Cuntarar’s *Tiruttoṅṭattokai*. Nampi’s work represents an intermediary stage in the development of the Tamil hagiographical tradition which attains full maturity and perfection in Cēkkiḷār’s *Periyapurāṇam*. His verse on Mūlaṅ reads:

Having entered the body of the cow-herd
Of *Cāttāṅūr* of good citizenry
and extolled in pure Tamil
the One bearing the crescent moon on his head
in harmony with the eternal Vedas
he who planted his feet on my head,
was my master Mūlaṅ, who was gracious-eyed. (36)⁵⁵

⁵² nampirāṅ tirumūlaṅ aṭiyārkkum aṭiyēṅ, 7:39:5.

The term *pirāṅ* usually refers to Śiva in Cuntarar’s *Tēvāram* : entai pirāṅ (7:21:1) ; eṅkaḷ pirāṅ (7:22:1); piramaṅ kumpirāṅ maṅṅaimāṅ kumpirāṅ (7:4:9). However, he makes an exception in the case of Campantaṅ and Tirumūlaṅ in his *Tiruttoṅṭattokai*.

⁵³ *History of Tamil Siddha Cult*, 47-48.

⁵⁴ *Vaiyapuripillai's history of Tamil language and literature: from the beginning to 1000 A.D.*, 103.

⁵⁵ kuṭimaṅṅu cāttāṅūr kōkkula mēyppōṅ kurampai pukku
muṭimaṅṅu kūṅṅaṅ piṅṅaiyāḷaṅ taṅṅai muḷuttamiḷiṅ
paṭimaṅṅu vētattiṅ coṅṅpaṭiyē paraviṭṭeṅucci
aṭimaṅṅa vaitta pirāṅ mūlaṅākiya aṅkaṅṅē (36)

The first work that explicitly links the *Tirumantiram* with Tirumūlaṅ is the *Tiruttoṅṅar purāṇam* (popularly known as *Periyapurāṇam*) composed by Cēkkiḷār of the twelfth century. Cēkkiḷār belonged to the *Vēḷāḷa* caste in Toṅṅai country and functioned as a minister in the court of Kulōttuṅkaṅ II (1130-1150). His hagiography is based on the works of two of his predecessors: Cuntarar and Nampi. Twenty-eight verses in the *Periyapurāṇam* provide a detailed hagiographical account of Tirumūlaṅ's life (3564-3591).⁵⁶

(b) The date of canonization:

According to the *Tirumuṛaikaṅṅa purāṇam* of questionable date and authorship, Nampiyāṅṅar Nampi of the tenth century was responsible for compiling and classifying *Tēvāram* (1-7 *Tirumuṛai*) on the basis of melody (*paṅ*) and for adding four more books (8-11 *Tirumuṛai*) to it. The *Tirumuṛaikaṅṅa purāṇam* is attributed to Umāpati Śivācārya of the fourteenth century.⁵⁷ Karen Prentiss argues that the desire of Tamil Śaiva

⁵⁶ Twenty-eight verses in Cēkkiḷār's *Periyapurāṇam* provide a detailed hagiographical account of Tirumūlaṅ's life. He is portrayed as an ambiguous figure, representative of both the hegemonic Brahman caste and the marginalised cowherd caste. The story begins with a description of a yogi who was one of the disciples of Nandi on the Mount *Kailāsa*. He was well-versed in the four Vedas and endowed with the eight types of *siddhi*. The *Periyapurāṇam* refrains from mentioning the yogi's name or caste. However, the caste of the yogi could be conjectured as that of the Brahman from the subtle allusion to the yogi's proficiency in the four Vedas. One day, this unnamed yogi wanted to pay a visit to his friend Agastya, supposedly a Brahman hermit and the father of Tamil grammar, who took up residence on the Potiyam mountain in the South. The yogi's journey to the south is described in the *Periyapurāṇam* as a pilgrimage in accordance with the Tamil *bhakti* tradition. Having visited several sacred places on his way, the yogi arrived at the banks of the river *Kāviri* and in the vicinity of *Tiruvāvaṅṅur*, his journey was interrupted as he witnessed in the nearby grove a herd of cows, grief-stricken due to the untimely demise of their master *Mūlaṅ*, a native of *Cāṅṅūr*. *Mūlaṅ* belonged to the family of cowherds. The yogi took compassion on the lamenting animals, and through his power/siddhi entered the dead body of *Mūlaṅ* and became *Tirumūlar*. Here *Tiru* is an honorific title and the proper noun *Mūlaṅ* has been changed to *Mūlar*. *Mūlaṅ* had been metamorphosed into a person of good standing. Seeing their master rising from the ground, the cows became jubilant. When *Tirumūlar* looked for the body he left, he found it missing. He realized it was God's intention that he be unable to recover his body. Thereafter, *Tirumūlar* practised Śivayoga at *Tiruvāvaṅṅur* and composed the *Tirumantiram* comprising 3000 verses at the rate of one verse per year. Thus, *Tirumūlar* is believed to have lived for three thousand years.

⁵⁷ The *Tirumuṛaikaṅṅapurāṇam* composed by Umāpati Śivācārya speaks about the canonization of the first eleven books. It narrates dramatically how *Tēvāram* was discovered, canonized and set to music. The *Periyapurāṇam* must have been added to the sacred canon later. *Ñānacampantaṅ*, however, doubts the

Siddhāntins to create a Tamil lineage for their philosophy had resulted in the canonization of Tamil devotional hymns. She is of the opinion that Umāpati Śivācārya assembled the entire Tamil *bhakti* canon as it exists today.⁵⁸ Hence, the *Tirumantiram* must have attained canonical status around the 14th century. Though the *Tirumantiram* contains theological expositions, it was made part of the *bhakti* canon *Tirumuṟai* and not of the Śaiva Siddhānta canon *Meykaṇṭa cāttiraṅkaḷ*. Also, the author Tirumūlar does not find a place in the preceptorial lineage (*cantāna kuravar*) established by the Tamil Śaiva Siddhāntins. These facts suggest that the medieval Tamil Śaiva Siddhāntins considered the *Tirumantiram* only as an exemplary work of *bhakti* towards Guru who is none other than Śiva himself.

(c) Preparation of modern editions and commentaries:

It is probable that Śaiva *Vēḷāḷa maṭhas* that were established since the 16th century, in particular, the Tiruvāvaṭuṭuṟai Ādhīṇam,⁵⁹ functioned as the custodians of the *Tirumantiram*.⁶⁰ Yet, there are no indications that these *maṭhas* were engaged in preparing exegesis on the *Tirumantiram*. Their interest primarily lay in *Meykaṇṭa cāttiraṅkaḷ* in Tamil and Śaivāgamic literature in Sanskrit.⁶¹ It is not known as to what extent the *Tirumantiram* was held authoritative pertaining to religious matters. The study of the text seemed to have fallen into disuse long ago. No medieval exegetical literature was

authorship of the *Tirumuṟaikaṇṭapurāṇam*. He believes that the anonymous works *Tirumuṟaikaṇṭapurāṇam* and *Cekkiḷār purāṇam* were ascribed to Umāpati by later editors of the *Periyapurāṇam*. Hence, he dismisses the discussion of *tirumuṟai* on the basis of the *Tirumuṟaikaṇṭapurāṇam*. See A.S. Nānacampantaṅ, ed. *Tirumantiram*, i.

⁵⁸ *The Embodiment of Bhakti*, 1996, 231-257.

⁵⁹ Tirumūlar's *camāti* is found at Tiruvāvaṭuṭuṟai. It is a solitary structure located to the north-west of the Mācilāmaṇi temple. See Kathleen Koppedrayar, "The Sacred Presence of the Guru: The Velala Lineage of Tiruvavaduturai, Dharmapuram and Tiruppanantal," (PhD.diss., McMaster University, 1991).

⁶⁰ Iirāmanāta Piḷḷai blames the Tiruvāvaṭuṭuṟai Ādhīṇam for not taking interest in publishing the work which was in its custody. See his commentary on the *Tirumantiram*.

⁶¹ Kathleen Koppedrayar, "The Sacred Presence of the Guru," 164.

available for the *Tirumantiram* save for the gloss written only for a hundred verses by Kaṇṇaṭiyar Kampaḷiccattai Kailāya Cittar sometime in the eighteenth century. Since the commentary was found unsatisfactory, Cērrur R. Cuppiramaṇiyak Kavirāyar⁶² produced a new commentary for those hundred verses in 1913. A number of modern commentaries are available now.

The *Tirumantiram* was first published by Ṣaṇmuka Cuntara Mutaliyār in 1869 and subsequently in 1887. V. Vicuvanāta Piḷḷai⁶³ who allegedly embarked on the project due to the paucity of reliable versions of the text, published the *Tirumantiram* with short notes in 1912. Other authoritative editions are those published by Chennai Śaiva Siddhānta Mahāsamājam (1933),⁶⁴ Teṇṇintiya Caiva Cittānta Nūrpatippuk Kaḷakam, Tirunelvēli with commentatorial notes by Tuṭicaikilār A. Citamparaṇār (1942), and with a commentary of P. Irāmanāta Piḷḷai (1957), and Tiruppaṇantāḷ Kāci Maṭam with a commentary of Taṇikaimaṇi Rāvpatatūr va. cu. Ceṅkalvarāya piḷḷai (1951).

The following works were consulted for translation and interpretation of the *Tirumantiram* :

(a) The *Tirumantiram* edited by Professor A. S. Nāṇacampantaṇ in 2002. It is based on the text published by Chennai Śaiva Siddhānta Mahāsamājam in 1933.

⁶² He was a Tamil Pandit at the Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai Ādhīṇam and an examiner of Śaiva works at Madurai Tamil Caṅkam.

⁶³ V. Vicuvanāta Piḷḷai was the disciple of Capāpati Nāvalar of Vaṭakōvai, Jaffna who was attached to the Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai Ādhīṇam.

⁶⁴ According to the secretary of Chennai Śaiva Siddhānta Mahāsamājam, five manuscripts were used for publishing the *Tirumantiram* in addition to five printed versions of *Tirumantiram*. These were a manuscript found in the Department of Government Archives and manuscripts sent by Āḷvār Kuṛicci M.P.S. Turaicāmi, BA, B.L., Late Tamil Professor Ti.Ta. Kaṇakacuntaram Piḷḷai and two manuscripts submitted by S. Aṇavaratam Piḷḷai. He mentions only the Vicuvanataha Pillai edition of the *Tirumantiram* in his foreword. (A.S. Nāṇacampantaṇ, ed. *Tirumantiram*, xxvii-xxix).

(b) *Tirumantiram: A Tamil Scriptural Classic* translated into English by B.Natarajan (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1991).

(c) *The Tirumantiram* with a commentary by G. Varatarājan (Three Volumes) (Palaniyappa Brothers, Chennai, 1978, 1983, 1985)

(d) The *Tirumantiram* edited by Tirunelvely Caiva Cittānta Nūrpatippuk Kaḷakam with the commentary of P. Irāmanāta Piḷḷai and with notes by A. Citamparaṅār in 2007 [1957].

This edition differs from the preceding three works in respect of the total number of verses and of the re-ordering of stanzas in the preface. The reason for this is that the editor has attempted to solve two textual controversies surrounding the *Tirumantiram*. One is related to the number of verses it contains. Though the work references itself to have 3000 verses, a slightly larger number is available now. The other issue is related to the authenticity of the 112 verses in the preface. The idea for recovering the original text was first conceived by Ramana Sastri who claimed the *Tirumantiram* to be a translation of the Sanskrit text *Śri Mantramālikā* and it was executed by his ideological opponent Irāmanāta Piḷḷai, a Tamil/ Śaiva Siddhānta revivalist.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Dravidian ideology as well as an anti-Dravidian stance has an impact on the studies on the *Tirumantiram* in the first half of the twentieth century. In the preface to the *Tirumantiram* edited by V. Vicuvanāta Piḷḷai in 1911, R.Ramana Sastri asserts that the *Tirumantiram* is a translation of the Sanskrit work *Śri Mantramālikā* and cites two verses from the *Tirumantiram* in evidence of his claim. He notes that according to these stanzas, theoretical works were not plentiful in Tamil at that time and this prompted Tirumūlar to translate the Sanskrit text into Tamil. Sastri, whose intent was to recover the original three thousand verses of the *Tirumantiram* out of 3047 in the edition of Vicuvanāta Piḷḷai, dismisses the verses including the ones that equate Tamil with Sanskrit in section *The Greatness of the Āgamas* and the verse that begins with the expression *muttamiḷ vētam* (the Vedas of the three-fold Tamil) in the preface (pāyiram) of the text, as interpolations. The reason for the suggestion to eliminate these verses is obvious; they do not corroborate his stance that Tamil was indebted to Sanskrit intellectualism.

We find a contrary position in the preface written by Irāmanāta Piḷḷai to his edition on the *Tirumantiram*. Irāmanāta Piḷḷai, who was also interested in finding the original three thousand verses like Sastri, deleted from his edition the same verses that speak of parity between Tamil and Sanskrit. He reduces the total number of verses to three thousand and re-arranges them according to logical sequence, and omits the same

The *Tirumantiram* - General Content

The classification of the text into nine Tantras and into further internal chapter sections is attributed to Tirumūlar's students.⁶⁶ Each Tantra deals with a number of topics.⁶⁷ A summary of each Tantra is presented here:

Prologue: This section opens with an invocation to Śiva and is followed by descriptions of Vedas and *āgamas*, recognised by the *Tirumantiram* as general and special texts, respectfully, for *sanmārga* Śaivism. Then, the author recounts his autobiography, the preceptorial lineage to which he belongs and the establishment of seven *gurumaṭhas* including *Mūlaṅ maṭha*.

Tantra One: Since the *sanmārga* Śaiva tradition is a guru –centered tradition, the Tantra begins with section titled “Divine instruction” (113-142) which provides an elaborate description of *śivasiddhas* who have attained liberation while living in this

three verses in his edition as interpolations among others. Irāmanāta Piḷḷai, who opposes the notions perpetuated by Brahman scholars that Tamil language was born of Sanskrit, that the Vedas exist only in Sanskrit and that Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta works are translations of Sanskrit texts, considers only Tamil as the sacred language. See J. Martin, “The Function of mythic figures in *Tirumantiram*,” 137-147; Irāmanāta Piḷḷai's commentary on the *Tirumantiram*.

⁶⁶ T.N. Ganapathy, and K.R. Arumugam, *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumūlar:Essays on the Tirumandiram*, 10-11.

⁶⁷

Classification	Verses	No. of Verses	No. of themes discussed
Invocation to Ganeśa		01	
Prologue	1-112	112	09
Tantra I	113-336	224	24
Tantra II	337-548	212	25
Tantra III	549-883	335	21
Tantra IV	884-1418	535	13
Tantra V	1419-1572	154	20
Tantra VI	1573-1703	131	14
Tantra VII	1704-2121	418	38
Tantra VIII	2122-2648	527	43
Tantra IX	2649-3046	399	22
Total		3048	229

Source: The *Tirumantiram* edited by G. Varatarājan.

world and the role of *śivaguru* in the attainment of their spiritual goal. Verse 115 speaks of the three entities- *pati*, *paśu* and *pāśa*- and the succeeding verse identifies the preceptor as Śiva, who is a dweller in the body and a remover of bondage. The first step to siddhahood is to realize the fleeting nature of worldly life. Hence, sections dealing with the impermanence of body, wealth, youth and life are found in this Tantra. Fundamental ethical principles to be observed by aspirants of siddhahood are laid down next: non-violence, abstinence from eating meat and consuming intoxicating drinks, and not committing adultery. Highly cryptic verses reinterpret sacrificial act performed by Brahmins and the virtues such as *aṅṅpu*, (love), *aṅṅam* (dharma), *naṅṅuvunilaimai* (impartiality) and *kalvi* (learning).

Tantra Two: The first section of this Tantra is devoted to recounting Śaiva myths that extol the greatness of Śiva. These verses can also be subjected to esoteric interpretation. Having established the supremacy of Śiva, the text proceeds to expound the doctrine of *pañcakṛtya*, the five cosmic functions of Śiva: creation, maintenance, destruction, obscuration and granting salvation. This is followed by a description of how human embryo is formed. The remaining sections deal with the classification of souls into three groups based on the number of bonds they are bound with, identifying *śivajñāni* as eligible persons to receive gifts, denouncement of pilgrimage in favour of internal worship, the connection between the institution of temple and kingship, the vision of the downward-looking face of Śiva, condemnation of those who slight Śiva, guru and devotees, and reinterpretation of the virtue of patience, and the necessity to associate with the great who seek after god.

Tantra Three : This Tantra is solely devoted to the subject of *yoga*. Three types of *yoga* are elaborated in this chapter: (a) *aṣṭāṅga yoga* (eight limbs of *yoga*, the fruits of *yoga*, and the eight great *siddhis*) (b) *paryāṅga yoga* (sexual intercourse without emission), and (c) *candra yoga*, the purpose of which is to unite the *kalās* of the sun and fire with the *kalās* of the moon. Other subjects discussed include *Khecarī yoga*, the acme of the practice of *yoga*, *amuridhāraṇā*, a rejuvenating technique that involves imbibing semen or urine, benefits accruing to the body from the practice of *yoga*, how to conquer time (*kālacakra*), techniques relating to the reckoning of longevity and checking the movement of *prāṇa* within the body.

Tantra Four: This is the longest Tantra, mainly focussed on mantras, and *yantras* referred to as *cakras* in the text. It begins with an exposition of *ajapa* mantra (*haṃsa* mantra) which is followed by a description of a *yantra* called *Tiru-ampala-cakra*. The term *ampalam* is a tamilicized form of the Sanskrit word *aṃbara* meaning sky (*ākāśa*) or ether. Mystical meaning of Sanskrit alphabets, *praṇava* mantra, *pañcākṣara* mantra and the six-lettered mantra *om -namaḥ-Śivāya* are elucidated. The next section privileges internal worship over external worship and relates sacrificial fire to the *kuṇḍalinī* within the body. In sections that follow, Śakti is worshipped as *Tripurā*, *pūrṇaśakti* and Śivaśakti. The Tantra ends with an account of various *yantras* with their *bīja* mantras: *ēr-oḷi- cakra*, *bhairava cakra*, *śāmbhavī-maṇḍala -cakra*, *bhuvanpati cakra* (*puvaṇāpati cakkaram*) and *navakkari cakra* (the nine-lettered *yantra*). The worship of these *yantras* is undertaken to obtain *siddhis*.

Tantra Five: This Tantra, an exposé on Śaiva *sāadhanā*, celebrates the path of *sanmārga*. It deals with the four types of Śaivism-*śuddha*, *aśuddha*, *mārga*, and *kaṭum*

śuddha, the four *pādas*- *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yoga* and *jñāna*, their corresponding *mārgas*- *sanmārga*, *sahamārga*, *satputramārga*, and *dāsamārga* - and the four types of release - *sāyujya*, *sārūpa*, *sāmīpa*, and *sāloka* - that result from adhering to them. It also discusses four types of descent of Śiva's grace: *manda*, *mandaratara*, *tīvra*, and *tīvratara*. The section ends with the condemnation of faiths that fail to realise God within the body.

Tantra Six: This Tantra mainly deals with monastic asceticism. Knowledge (*jñāna*) is attained through the grace of Guru, whose greatness is expressed in several verses. The one who is endowed with knowledge embraces renunciation and practises penance. The insignia of ascetics and *jñānis*, and the fit and unfit disciples for the receipt of knowledge, are discussed. Men of false robes are vehemently condemned.

Tantra Seven: This Tantra can be considered a continuation of the sixth Tantra, mostly focussing on the practical aspects of *sanmārga* Śaivism. After dwelling on the six *ādhāras*, six *lingas*, and Siva's grace, the Tantra discusses *śivapūjā*, *gurupūjā*, *māheśvarapūjā* to be held at *maṭhas* as well as *samādhi* rituals for yogis and *jñānis*. The Tantra ends with the description of true Guru, which is preceded by esoteric instructions on sublimation of semen and subduing of the senses.

Tantra Eight: This is the second longest Tantra providing theological support to the concept of liberation. The first two sections discuss the nature of human body: gross and subtle. This is followed by an exposition on various states of awareness (*avasthās*). In the *turīya* state, the soul becomes *civam* and is freed of the three impurities (*nirmala-avasthā*). By interpreting the nature of liberation through Upaniṣadic *mahāvākyas*, the differing Siddhānta and Vedānta doctrines are reconciled. The final sections of this Tantra stress the importance of *bhakti* and giving up attachment.

Tantra Nine: The mystical vision of God and the resultant bliss constitute the themes of this Tantra. The vision of God is experienced in two ways: in the form of light and in the form of sound. Several representations of visionary experience are mentioned: Guru, his monastery and *praṇava samādhi* are connected to the visualization of God in the form of light whereas the five lettered mantra and the dance of the Lord represent Śiva in the form of sound. These visionary experiences give rise to the dawn of *jñāna*, and to the state of *sat-cit- ānanda*- the realization of one's own blissful nature. This destroys fate and confers liberation. The section called *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai*, which may be considered key to the esoteric teachings of the *Tirumantiram* is found here.

Chapter Outline

The *Tirumantiram* is the earliest Tamil text that is concerned with both theoretical and practical aspects of living liberation, the theme that lends unity and coherence to the seemingly disparate topics addressed by the text in each of the Tantras. This dissertation is divided into four chapters, each of which deals with aspects of the central concern of the dissertation, living liberation. The notion of Tamil-Sanskrit opposition, an inalienable, integral aspect of Tamil thought, plays a key role in the conceptualization of the *Tirumantiram*.⁶⁸ This dissertation argues that the *Tirumantiram* is the outcome of the synthesis of Tamil and Sanskrit traditions. The text affirms the excellence of both languages by stating that the *āgamas* were also revealed in Tamil and that Tamil is also

⁶⁸ “The contrast of the ‘Northern speech’ (*vaṭamoli*) as against the ‘Southern speech’ (*teṇmoli*) which can probably be basically reduced to [a contrast between Sanskrit and Tamil]...has indisputably been present in Tamil cultural consciousness since the earliest times; and, although not always antagonistic, it has always been an ever-present opposition, frequently explicitly formulated..” K. Zvelebil, *Companion studies*, (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1992)), 255.

an excellent medium to realize God.⁶⁹ However, the *Tirumantiram* displays a highly ambivalent attitude towards Sanskrit scriptures. Efficacy of ritualism and the hierarchical *varṇa* system are rejected and a Brahman is redefined as Siddha. Selective absorption and reinterpretation are the strategies the text adopts to deal with the Sanskrit texts.

The first chapter traces the antecedents of living liberation to the Tamil Caṅkam literature. The primary argument of this chapter is that the notion of the sacred and its relation to humanity as conceptualized by ancient Tamils, and their yearning for immortality in the form of fame contributed to the formulation of living liberation in the *Tirumantiram*. The earliest Tamil literary works known as Caṅkam corpus constitute the primary sources for this chapter. Though the Caṅkam works display the influence of Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism, autochthonous elements of Tamil thought are discernible in older layers of the corpus.

The second chapter explores the ambiguous relationship between the *Tirumantiram* and revealed texts. This chapter has three parts. The first part argues that the objective of the *Tirumantiram* was to challenge certain *āgamic* traditions⁷⁰ that do not consider the majority of indigenous Tamil-speaking populace, identified as *śūdras*, eligible for liberation, preceptorhood or standing in close proximity to God in temples. The second part analyzes the conceptual framework of the *Tirumantiram* that was borrowed from Sanskrit *āgamas*. Two significant concepts on which the *āgamas* stand

⁶⁹ William Davis discusses three perceptions pertaining to the relationship between Tamil language and Tamil culture and Sanskrit and Sanskritic culture as reflected in the Agastya cycle of myths: (a) Affirmation of excellence of both Sanskrit and Tamil. Sanskrit functions here primarily “as a benchmark to measure the greatness of Tamil”(b) claim of superiority of Tamil (c) an outright rejection of the contribution of Sanskrit. See “Agastya: The Southern sage from the North” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2000), 316.

⁷⁰ Each *āgama* should be treated as representing a distinct tradition. For instance, the *Kāmikāgama* warns against *tantra-saṃkara* (mixing different *āgamic* injunctions) which brings about ruin to the king and his country (1:113).

are a cycle of births and deaths (*saṃsāra*) and liberation (*mukti*); both are conspicuously absent in the autochthonous layers of Caṅkam poetry. Living liberation is discussed within the parameters of Śaiva theology found in the *āgamas*. The final part of the chapter argues that the Vedic sacrificial theology is revised in the light of living liberation to conclude that the Vedic tradition differs little from the essence of the *Tirumantiram*.

The third chapter illustrates the synthesis of Tamil and Sanskrit cultural traditions, or more specifically the synthesis of a tantric sect with the *bhakti* tradition. This chapter is devoted to examining the underlying reasons for the Tirumantiram privileging *aṅṅpu* over *bhakti* in connection with yoga. It argues that despite the fact that the term *aṅṅpu* is an autonomous and a focal concept in Tamil culture, it is generally subsumed under *bhakti*. The chapter traces the origin of the themes of *bhakti* - pilgrimage, praise and service - to the puṛam literature, and points out that the relationship between Śiva/guru and devotee/disciple is modelled on the relationship between patron and bard in the Caṅkam literature. The second part of the chapter, which is an exposition of *aṅṅpu* as reflected in Caṅkam literature clarifies that *aṅṅpu* is an emotional disposition that exists only in a relationship and is common to both *akam* and *puṛam* genres. The final section elucidates the meaning of yoga in the Tirumantiram. It is argued that dualistic *bhakti* (Śiva/guru and devotee/disciple) does not accord with the theology of *yoga* that aims at non-dualistic union with God. Hence, “love in union” is chosen among many representations of *aṅṅpu*, and substituted for *bhakti* in the discourse connected to *yoga*. The chapter highlights the fact that the concept of *aṅṅpu* expands the parameters of *yoga*, which results in the transformation of the meaning of *civam*.

The final chapter argues that connotative language is a vehicle of esoteric knowledge, and deals with three concepts connected to esoteric knowledge: secrecy, symbolism and subversion. Though connotative language is closely allied to *sandhābhāṣā* found in Sanskrit Tantras, this chapter also points out that the *Tirumantiram* is indebted to the classical Caṅkam literature in this respect. Through the analysis of symbols, double entendres and extended metaphors drawn from Sanskrit myths and ordinary life scenarios in rural Tamil Nadu, the chapter argues that the essence of yoga is sublimation of semen, fundamental to living liberation.

CHAPTER ONE

LIVING LIBERATION–TAMIL LEGACY

Living liberation is the central doctrine of the *Tirumantiram* that emerged out of the confluence of two different linguistic and literary traditions: Tamil and Sanskrit. This chapter argues that the fundamental aspects of living liberation expounded by the *Tirumantiram* could be traced to the notion of the sacred and its relation to humanity, and the concept of immortality as conceptualised by ancient Tamils. The earliest Tamil literary works designated as Caṅkam¹ corpus, alternatively called *cāṅṅōr ceyyuḷ* by medieval commentators constitute the primary sources for this chapter. The Caṅkam

¹ A detailed reference to the *caṅkam* is found in Nakkīrar's commentary on the grammar of love before marriage known as *kaḷaviyal enṛa Iraiyaṅār Akapporuḷ*. According to the legend narrated by Nakkīrar of the ninth century, the three caṅkams were instituted by Pāṅṅiya kings: the premier (*mutal*) caṅkam, the middle (*iṅṅai*) caṅkam and the final (*kaṅṅai*) caṅkam. The premier caṅkam consisting of 549 members including sage Akattiyar, Śiva and Murukaṅ met for 4440 years at Maturai until the sea destroyed the city. *Akattiyam* was the reference work for the premier caṅkam. The middle caṅkam comprising 59 members including Akattiyar and Tolkāppiyar lasted for 3700 years. *Tolkāppiyam*, *Icainuṅṅukkam*, *Māpurāṅṅam* and *Pūta purāṅṅam* served as reference works for this caṅkam, in addition to *Akattiyam*. Kapātapuram where the middle caṅkam flourished was also claimed by the sea. The final caṅkam consisting of 49 members remained in session for 1850 years in the city of upper Maturai. *Tolkāppiyam* and *Akattiyam* were its reference works. Hart, however, dismisses the legend as devoid of any historical credibility citing reasons that none of the early literary works mentions the caṅkam or the large body of literature supposed to be composed there. He is of opinion that the legend was fabricated on the historical Jain caṅkam, established in Maturai in 604 A.D. Zvelebil states that the legend must have been based on some historical academy that existed at some point in time, probably in the pre-Pallavan era (before the sixth century). It could be the Tirāviṅṅa caṅkam founded by a Jain named by Vajranandi in the year 470 A.D. One of the Śaivite poet-saints Appar mentions Śiva as one of the Caṅkam poets: *naṅṅpāṅṅup pulavaṅṅāyc caṅkam ēri* (6:76:3). Vaiṅṅṅava saint Āṅṅṅāḷ also refers to her composition *Tiruppāvai* as a garland of *caṅkattamiḷ*: *paṅṅṅarpirāṅṅ kōtai coṅṅṅa caṅkattamiḷ mālai muppatum* (Tiruppāvai 30:4-5). A pāṅṅṅiya king is eulogised in the Ciṅṅṅamaṅṅūr plate of the 10 th century C.E. for setting up a caṅkam at Maturai and for getting the Makāpāratam translated into Tamil. The Caṅkam legend is now accepted by some scholars to be an allusion to the codification of Caṅkam poetry. Kailasapathy is of opinion that an academy of Tamil poets that existed under the royal patronage in Maturai, is responsible for the collection and compilation of earlier Caṅkam poetry. See David C. Buck and K. Paramasivam, trans. *The Study of Stolen Love* (Atlanta, Georgia: Scholar's Press, 1997), 4-6; George Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 9-10; Kamil Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India*, 48; and *Tamil Literature*, (Leiden:E.J. Brill, 1975), 60 ; K. Kailasapathy, *Heroic Poetry* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), 3.

works are a “product of a mixed and composite culture,” and bear unmistakable evidence of the influence of Brāhmanical religion, Jainism and Buddhism; yet they do possess distinctive characteristics that could be reckoned as autochthonous.² Zvelebil describes the earliest literature in Tamil as “a model unto itself-it is absolutely unique in the sense that, in subject-matter, thought-content, language and form, it is entirely and fully indigenous, that is, Tamil....”³

This Chapter is divided into three sections. The first contains a justification of the study of classical Tamil sources for the *Tirumantiram*, a text modelled on the Sanskrit *āgamic* literature, and a brief exposition of the concept of living liberation. The second part dealing with the issues of the identification of autochthonous layers and the presence of religious elements in the Caṅkam corpus, serves as a prelude to the final section. The final section considers the following elements of indigenous Tamil culture as possible antecedents to the concept of living liberation: this worldly orientation, the concept of immanence of the sacred, interpenetration of humanity and divinity, divinization of human priest, conception of the sacred as heat, and immortality conceptualised in the form of fame.

I

The magnitude of the Caṅkam Poetry for succeeding periods cannot be over-emphasised. Dubianski observes,

The significance of the early Tamil poetry for the Tamil literature of later periods is enormous. Its canon of themes, its imagery, its style exercised a profound influence on medieval didactic poetry and contributed to develop in court poetry. Its ideas were later modified to be adopted by the

² See Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 120-121; Kamil Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India*, 1-22.

³ Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan*, 4.

bhakta poets and strongly influenced the specific character of the devotional *bhakti* poetry. Thus, there are reasons to view ancient Tamil poetry as a cornerstone of Tamil verbal culture in general.⁴

Medieval Tamil devotionalism is described as the result of the marriage between the secular Tamil tradition and the Sanskritic religion and mythology. Scholars have made a note of how secular themes and motifs have been appropriated by poet-saints in their devotional poetry. Ramanujan acknowledges that the dual genre of Tamil poetry, *akam* (love poetry) and *puram* (heroic poetry) set precedence to the Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* literature of the medieval period.⁵ He also notes that the munificence and heroism of warrior chiefs of the Caṅkam age were later attributed to Viṣṇu, and that their chaste wife came to be regarded as a personification of Viṣṇu's consort Lakṣmī. He points out the striking parallels between the poetic genre called *ārruppaṭai*, and the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* poems.

It is significant that the first long *bhakti* poem is an *ārruppaṭai*, a "guide poem." Just as the classical Tamil bard wandered, visited, and praised patrons, the saints, too, wandered to the holy places and sang of them and the gods there.⁶

The influence of the classical Tamil Tradition on the *Tirumantiram* is, however, not as evident and pronounced as that of Sanskrit traditions. The *Tirumantiram* is the first Śaiva theological work that was composed in Tamil. It is, therefore, a scripture (*śāstra*) rather than a devotional hymn meant to be recited at public worship.⁷ In the

⁴ Alexander M. Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry* (the Netherlands: Egbert Forsten Groningen, 2000), xii.

⁵ A.K. Ramanujan, *Hymns for the Drowning : Poems for Viṣṇu by Nammālvār* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 111-112.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁷ However, Śaiva Siddhānta scholar Civappirakāca Tēcikar remarks that the twelve *Tirumuṟai* which take the form of twelve mantras are recited at Śaiva temples on the occasions of daily and special worship. Of the twelve mantras, the *Tirumantiram* is an embodiment of the tenth mantra known as *the netra* mantra. The *netras* of Śiva which are three thousand in number, represent the omniscience of Śiva. Although all *Tirumuṟai* are in the form of mantra, only this particular work takes the *mantra* in its title, thus subtly indicating that what precedes and what follows in the sequential order of *Tirumuṟai* are mantras

preface (*cirappup pāyiram*), it designates itself as an *ākamam* (*āgama*)⁸, *civākamam* (*Śivāgama*)⁹, and *mantiramālai* (*mantramālā*/the garland of sacred syllables).¹⁰ The nine internal divisions of the work are known as *tantra*, a synonym for *āgama*. These facts suggest that the work is emulative of Sanskrit *āgamas* in form, content and spirit. Hence, one is tempted to look for its precedence in Sanskrit *āgamic* literature, as opposed to Tamil Caṅkam literature. In other words, the possibility that the *Tirumantiram* looked for precedence in the classical Tamil literature seems rather remote and slender.

Nevertheless, the question of influence of the Caṅkam literature cannot be altogether dismissed as the *Tirumantiram* does make a serious effort to relate itself to the Tamil tradition. Tirumūlar,¹¹ the author of the text, declares that he was born to sing about God in Tamil,¹² which is glorified as *centtamiḷ*¹³ and *muttamiḷ*¹⁴ in the text. The

themselves. See G. Varatarājaṅ, *Tirumantiram* Vol. I (Chennai: Palaniyappa Brothers, 2006 Seventh edition), viii-ix.

⁸ *cintaicey tākamañ ceppaluṟ rēṇē* (TM 73:4)

⁹ *ceppuñ civākamam eṇṇumap pērperrum* (TM 74:1)

¹⁰ *maṟappilar neñciṇuḷ mantira mālai* (TM 86:3)

¹¹ The motif of transmigration plays a key role in ensuring an intimate relationship between Sanskrit and Tamil in the hagiographies of Tirumūlar found in *Tiruttoṅṭar Tiruvantāti* and *Periyapurāṇam*. In *Periyapurāṇam* the author of the *Tirumantiram* was originally a yogi from North proficient in the four Vedas. But his association with Northern India and Sanskrit is balanced by his act of transmigration into the body of indigenous Tamil personage called Mūlaṅ and of composing the garland of mantras in sweet Tamil. He is thus portrayed as a Vedic scholar and an expert in Tamil. The same notion was already expressed by Nampiyāṅṭār Nampi who states that Mūlaṅ, having transmigrated into the body of a cowherd of Cāttaṅūr composed Tamil poetry in praise of Śiva in consonance with the spirit of the Vedas. See “General Introduction.”

¹² “God created me so that I could make exquisite works about him in Tamil.” This is an approximate rendering of the following lines:

eṇṇainaṅ rāka iṟaiṅ paṭaittaṅgaṅ
taṅṅaina nṟākat tamiḷceyyu māṟē (TM 81)

¹³ *centtamiḷāti* (TM 1089)

The earliest occurrence of the term *centtamiḷ* is found in *Tolkāppiyam*. *Centtamiḷ* is the “the standard, ‘correct’, ‘polished’ language sanctioned by the norm of *ilakkaṇam* and used in *ilakkiyam* as the linguistic vehicle of high literary culture... in contrast to *koṅṇuttamiḷ*.. lit. ‘crooked’ (in contrast to ‘straight’) language, the unpolished, non-standard, non-literary language obviously exhibiting features of regional/local (horizontal) and social (vertical) dialects.” See Kamil Zvelebil, *Companion Studies to the History of Tamil literature* (Leiden:E.J.Brill, 1992), 135.

¹⁴ *muttamiḷ vētam* (TM 76:1); *muttamiḷ ōcaiṅ* (TM 2115:1)

Tirumantiram itself is styled as *mūvāyiram tamīl* (three thousand verses in Tamil).¹⁵ It places Tamil on equal footing with *devavāṇi* Sanskrit. The divinity of Tamil is suggested by linking it to both Śiva and his consort. Śiva is the embodiment of the sound of the three-fold Tamil (*muttamiḷ*)¹⁶ and the goddess is identified as the source of refined Tamil (*centtamiḷ*).¹⁷ Besides, the text claims that God can be realised through both Tamil and Sanskrit.¹⁸ It asserts that Tamil, too, is in possession of revealed texts. The prologue of the text contains a mythological allusion to the creation of *āgamas* by Śiva both in Sanskrit and Tamil.¹⁹ Finally, the knowledge of the three -fold Tamil (*muttamiḷ*) is denoted by the term Veda, symbolic of sacred knowledge, and is juxtaposed with the theology of Sadāśiva: *catācivan tattuvam muttamiḷ vētam* (TM 76).²⁰ Similar utterances which are, of course, observable in *Tēvāram*²¹ evidence the heightened Tamil

¹⁵ *mūlaṇurai ceyta mūvāyiran tamīl* (TM 99:1, 3046:1); *taṅkimikāmai vaittāṇ tamīlccāttiram* (TM 87:3)

¹⁶ *muttiyai nāṇattai muttamiḷ ōcayai* (TM 2115:1)

He is emancipation, gnosis, and the sound of the three-fold Tamil.

¹⁷ *centamiḷāti teḷintu vaḷipaṭu* (TM 1089:3)

¹⁸ *tamiḷccol vaṭacol eṇumiv viraṇṭum*

uṇarttum avaṇai uṇaralu māṁē (TM 66:3-4)

¹⁹ *āriya muntami ḷumuṭa ṇēcollik*

kārikai yārkkuk karuṇaicey tāṇē (TM 65:3-4)

To date, however, we have no other *āgamas* in Tamil, save for the self-proclaimed Śivāgama.

‘*Tirumantiram*.’ The 12th century hagiographical work *Periyapurāṇam* also confirms the fact that not a single Tamil *āgama* existed prior to the *Tirumantiram*. According to the *Periyapurāṇam*, Śiva wanted Tirumūlar to systematically expound in Tamil the substance of the *āgamas*, revealed by Him.

taṇṇilavār caṭaiyār tāmtanta ākamapporuḷai

maṇṇimicait tirumūlar vākkiṇāl tamīl vakuppa (3586)

²⁰ *catācivan tattuvam muttamiḷ vētam* (TM 76:1)

In this particular verse (76) the author regrets his ignorance of Sadāśiva theology and of the three-fold Tamil. However, the commentators assume that the above line refers to the three types of knowledge: theology of Sadāśiva, *muttamiḷ* and the Vedas. My reading differs from them on the following grounds: Verse 83 in the prologue portrays the author as a mind-born (parthenogenic) sage of all –conquering wisdom performing severe penance. Hence, it is unlikely that the author who describes himself as Śivamuni (TM 83) remained ignorant of the Vedas. Secondly, though the *muttamiḷ vētam* is a queer phrase, the expression *tamiḷ vētam* is found in the *Periyapurāṇam* denoting the *Tēvāram* hymns of Campantar (...*tamiḷ vētam pāṭiṇār tāḷam perṛār* 2158:4).

²¹ *āri yanntami ḷōṭicai yāṇavaṇ* (5:18:3); *āriyaṇ kaṇṭāy tamiḷaṇ kaṇṭāy*(6:23:5); *muttamiḷum nāṇmaraiyu māṇāṇ kaṇṭāy* (6:23:9); *centamiḷōṭāriyaṇaice cīriyāṇai* (6:46.10) *vaṭamoliyum tenṇamiḷum maṇaikaḷ nāṅkum āṇavaṇ kāṇ* (6:87:1).

consciousness that was the hallmark of the *Bhakti* era (6th -9th centuries C.E.).²² I, however, contend that these statements also imply an underlying nexus between Tamil religious thought and the *Tirumantiram*, which constitutes the central theme of this chapter.

This chapter is based on the premise that the cardinal principles underlying the doctrine of living liberation are traceable to the classical Tamil tradition whereas Śaiva Siddhānta concepts expounded by the text are appropriated from Sanskrit *āgamas*. As we see shortly, esotericism in the *Tirumantiram* is a privileged form of practical knowledge whereas Śaiva Siddhānta theology constitutes exoteric knowledge. Two verses from the prologue of the text illustrates this point: In the first, Tirumūlar proclaims that the goal of his work is to enable the world to enjoy the bliss he has experienced. In the latter, he mentions the major theological concepts he has covered in the text.

May the world attain the bliss I have experienced.
Let me speak of the esoteric knowledge that leads to heaven/ambrosia.²³
If one steadfastly clings to [practises repeatedly]
The mantra, tied to the consciousness of the body,
It [knowledge] would gradually dawn.²⁴

I have explained in full what is to be known [the object of knowledge]
Knowledge and the knower,
Māyā²⁵, parai āyam²⁶ that arises from māmāyai²⁷,
Śiva and akōcara vīyam²⁸ (TM 90)²⁹

²² The Tamil *bhakti* movement is generally described as signifying “a revival , a reassertion of distinctively Tamil elements, which may have been suppressed during a period of Jain and Buddhist cultural and political hegemony.” See Glenn Yocum, “Buddhism through Hindu Eyes: Śaivas and Buddhists in Medieval Tamilnad,” in *Traditions in Contact and Change*, ed. Peter Slater and Donald Wiebe (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1983), 157.

²³ The term *vāṇ* signifies both liberation and immortality. It also stands for the preceptor without whom living liberation cannot become a reality.

²⁴ yāṇperṛa iṇpam peruka iv vaiyakam
vāṇparṛi niṇṛa maṛaipporuḷ collitṭiṇ
ūṇparṛi niṇṛa uṇarvuṛu mantiram
tāṇparṛap parṛat talaippaṭuntāṇē (TM 85)

²⁵ Māyā is one of the three impurities (mala).

²⁶ Parai āyam (parāyaya) refers to the five evolutes from śuddhamāyā: parā, ādi, icchā, jñāna and kriyā.

²⁷ Māyā is of two kinds: śuddhamāyā and aśuddhamāyā. Māmāyai refers to śuddhamāyā.

²⁸ Agochara veeya stands for Siva’s splendour.

²⁹ ṇēyattai ṇāṇattai ṇāṭuru vattiṇai

The former verse could be taken as a direct reference to the personal experience of living liberation of the author, while the second represents his attempt to situate the theme within the theological framework of Śaiva Siddhānta. If the preceding verse is contrasted with the latter, the following would be evident. In the former, all the terms except one (*mantiram*, Skt. *mantra*) are Tamil whereas the latter contains only theological concepts found in Sanskrit *āgamas*. While the first verse mentions a hidden knowledge (*maṛaiṭṭē*), the second states that the knowledge has been made explicit (*murruṁ viḷakkīyṭṭē*). Besides, the concepts occurring in the preceding verse cannot be said to be compatible with those specified in the latter. For instance, the body (*ūṇ*) cannot be equated to the knower (*ñāṭuru*). The term *ñāṇam* (Skt. *jñāna*-knowledge) in the second is rather vague; in the first it is clearly stated that knowledge is aimed at attaining heaven (immortality) and that it arises from the body (*ūṇpaṛṛi niṇra uṇarvu*). The preceding verse also emphasises that knowledge does not dawn all of a sudden, but emerges slowly and gradually depending on how resolute and determined a practitioner is, whereas the latter does not concern itself with practical aspects of religious instruction, and the concepts it mentions belong to the theoretical domain alone. Thus, the *Tirumantiram* deals with two types of knowledge: exoteric and esoteric, and prioritizes knowledge from the body (esoteric) over logical or rational knowledge. The rest of this chapter examines the doctrine of living liberation hinted at in the first verse and traces its fundamental elements to the Caṅkam literature.

Living Liberation

In *Tēvāram*³⁰ liberation is counted among the merits accruing from its recitation, as spelt out in its last verse.³¹ It is spoken of in terms of the attainment of *Śivaloka* (the world of Śiva).³²

They [who recite the *patikam*] will attain *civalōkam* (*Śivaloka*).³³

They will reach *civalōkam*.³⁴

It is certain they will reside in *civalōkam*.³⁵

There is no misgiving for them to attain *civalōkam* in next life.³⁶

Liberation is also described in terms of reaching the feet of God.³⁷ Since it is characterized by the absence of miseries,³⁸ cessation of birth and absolute bliss³⁹, Dorai Rangaswamy interprets it as the union with God.

“It is clear that the final goal is in God being in final communion or attaining identity with him – “*paraṇḍōtu kūṭutal*.” It is also clear that this spiritual experience is spoken of in terms of a spatial simile as abode, or city or world. The idea of its being the supreme goal is expressed in terms of height or vertical ascension.⁴⁰

No cogent reason however, exists to suppose that *Śivaloka* connotes living liberation in *Tēvāram*. The terms *immai* (this life or present birth) and *ammai* (future

³⁰ The devotional hymns sung in praise of Śiva by Campantar, Appar and Cuntarar are collectively known as *Tēvāram*. A devotional hymn is usually made up of ten stanzas. Hence it is called *patikam*. Some *patikams* have eleven stanzas. The final stanza in a *patikam* is called *Tirukkaṭaikkāppu*, which mentions the rewards (*phalaśruti*) for reciting or listening to the *patikam*.

³¹ Other merits from the recitation of *Tēvāram* include kingship over celestials (*vāṇōrkkumōr kōvumāki ...viṇmuṭutālpavarē* 7:2:11); cessation of confusion (*taṭumārīlarē* 7:4:10); eradication of sins (*paraṇiyum tām ceṭta pāvantāṇē* 7:5:10); attainment of heaven (*vāṇuḷārē* 7:6:10) severance of the bonds of karma (*tamviṇai kaṭṭarumē* 7:17:11) etc.

³² *Tēvāram* also employs other terms to denote the highest state attainable from the worship of Śiva. *paralokam* (*ēttuvār cērparalōkamē* 7:12:11); *amaralōkam* (*ārūraṇṇaṭi nāyurai vallār amara lōkattiruppavar tāmē* 7:59:11); *parakati* (*parakati tiṇṇam naṇṇuvar tāmē* 7:54:10); *naṇṇeri ulaku* (*naṇṇamiḷivai īraintum vallār naṇṇeri ulakeyuvār tāmē* 7:61: 11); *tavalōkam* (*vāṇōr ulakiṇ cāla nal iṇṇameyit tavalōkattiruppavarē* 7:97:10); *mutti* (*pattarāy mutti tām peṇuvārē* 7:56:11).

³³ *civalōkam eytupavarē* ((7:9:11).

³⁴ *civalōkam cērvārē* (7:21:10).

³⁵ *civalōkattiruppatu tiṇṇamaṇṇē* (7:42:10).

³⁶ *ammaiyē civalōkmālvataṅku yātumaiyuravillaiyē* (7:34:1).

³⁷ *pāṭal pattuṇṇi iṇṇicai pāṭuvār umaikēlvaṇ cēvaṭi cērvārē* (7:36:11).

³⁸ *toṇṇaṇ ūraṇ collivai colluvārkillai tuṇṇamē* (7:48:10).

³⁹ *pōkkillai varavillai yāki iṇṇa vellattuḷ irupparkaḷ iṇitē* (7:68:10).

⁴⁰ *The Religion and Philosophy of Tēvāram* (University of Madras, 1990, 2nd edition), 1256.

birth or heaven) occurring in *Tēvāram* that are antithetical in meaning, suggest that liberation is attainable only after the soul disengages itself from the body.

One who confers heaven when (we) worship (Him) in this life.
immai ētta ammai namakkaruḷum (7:7:6)

(He) gives food and clothing. Let us praise. Distress will vanish.
There is no misgiving about possessing the world of Śiva in the next birth.
immaiyētarum cōḡumkūraiḡum ēttalāmiṭar keṭalumām
ammaiyēciva lōkamāḷvatar kiyātumaiyuṛa villaiyē (7:34:1)

In contrast, the *Tirumantiram* speaks of Siddhas,⁴¹ who are also known as Śivayogi⁴² and Śivasiddha,⁴³ perceive this very world as *Śivaloka*.

Siddhas envision the *Śivaloka* here [on earth].
cittar civalōkam inḡkē tericcittōr (TM 125:1)

They do not seek liberation from the world; instead, they attain emancipation while living in the world.

They attained the great salvation of non-separation from the world.
perṛār ulakiṛ piriyāp perunerī⁴⁴(TM 132:1)

Hence human birth is described as joyful.⁴⁵ The Siddhas do not disparage the human body because it is the instrument through which they accomplish their goal, becoming immune to the debilitating, inevitable natural factors such as old age, disease, and death.

They [Siddhas] are eternal, pure (rid of the triple impurities), diseaseless and liberated.
nittar nimalar nirāmayar nīḷpara muttar (TM 125:3)

⁴¹ The term Siddha is derived from the Sanskrit root *sidh* to accomplish. Hence Siddha in Sanskrit or cittan in Tamil means one who is accomplished, enlightened or perfected. Nevertheless, Tamil scholars interpret the term cittan differently. They consider it as a derivative of the Sanskrit term *cit* meaning intellect or consciousness or *citta*, the heart or the mind. One of the medieval commentators translates the term as *arivar* (wise or knowledgeable). The mythical personage Agastya who is connected to both Tamil grammatical tradition and to Tamil Siddha tradition is considered an *arivar*. See R. Venkataraman, *A history of the Tamil Siddha Cult*, 1-5.

⁴² civayōki yārkaḷē (TM 121:4)

⁴³ civacittar (TM 124:4). Both civayōki and civacittar are used interchangeably in the text.

⁴⁴ One of the meanings of the term *neri* is salvation. See the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon.

⁴⁵ inṡpappiravi (TM 281;432) inṡpappirappu (TM 287; 1586; 1629)

The *Tirumantiram* is the first Tamil work that places a high premium on the human body. The supreme reality which the Siddhas yearn to identify with, does not lie outside the body, but within it. Hence the body should not be loathed, but treasured.

If the body perishes, the soul will perish too.
True knowledge cannot then be attained.
I ascertained the technique of cherishing the body.
I preserved the body, so the soul was preserved too. ⁴⁶

Once I regarded the body with disfavour
But I perceived the One within
He has taken up residence in my body
Hence, I keep preserving it with diligence. ⁴⁷

The discourse on liberation is characterized by paradoxes and contradictions in the text because Siddhahood is based on the principle of reversal of nature. Siddhahood symbolises an immutable body in the world governed by the law of change. The body becomes imperishable when the Siddhas effectively stop the outward flow of energy in the form of breath or semen and reverse their course upward in the body. This also enables them to enter the fourth and the highest state of consciousness called *turīya*⁴⁸ while they are in the first state of waking consciousness. The *turīya samādhi* leads to *Śivayoga* which is characterized by the transcendence of polarities and opposites⁴⁹ or by the union of Śiva and Śakti. The distinctions between *cit* and *acit* fade away, and the Siddhas see only *civam* –symbolic of the union of Śiva and Śakti- in the *turīya samādhi*,

⁴⁶ uṭampār aḷiyil uyirār aḷivar
tiṭampaṭa meyññāṇaṅ cēravu māṭṭār
uṭampai vaḷarkkum upāyam aṅintē
uṭampai vaḷarttēṅ uyir vaḷarttēṅē (TM 724)

⁴⁷ uṭampinai muṇṇam ilukkeṅ riruntēṅ
uṭampinuk kuḷḷē uruporuḷ kaṇṭēṅ
uṭampulē uttamaṅ kōyilkoṅ tāṅeṅru
uṭampinai yāṅirun tōmpukiṅ rēṅē (TM 725)

⁴⁸ viyākkirattē mikac cuttat turiyam piṅantu” (TM 121:1-2).

⁴⁹ civayōkamāvatu cittacitteṅru (TM 122:1).

and in turn, become *civam* themselves, and envision *civam* everywhere.⁵⁰ The state of *jīvanmukti* (identification with Śiva while living in this world) is characterized by both the blissful vision of the pervasiveness of Śiva, and the acquisition of power (*siddhi*).⁵¹

Everywhere is His sacred form, everywhere is Śiva-Śakti
Everywhere is Cidambaram, everywhere is His sacred dance
Everywhere is *civam*; hence, everywhere is present
The sport of the grace [*aruḷ*] of Śiva.⁵²

The Siddhas, despite their continued, ambiguous association with *śuddha* and *aśuddha māyās*, are liberated, and partake of the nature of Sadāśiva. The thirty six *tattvas* constitute a ladder which the Siddhas ascend in pursuit of their goal and at the end of the upward ascension they see the light which is pure joy itself.⁵³

Siddhas are those who have seen *civam*.
Though coming into contact with *śuddha –aśuddha (māyās)*
They are not subjected to their influence.
They are liberated; they are also the source of liberation
They are an embodiment of energy residing in the *mūlādhāra*
They partake of the nature of Sadāśiva.⁵⁴

The transcendental state of consciousness is also referred to pure space (*cutta veḷi*), characterised by inactivity. Siddhas, seated in pure space, experience neither day nor night.⁵⁵ They merely look on the *pañcakṛtya* performed by Śiva, and thus become a

⁵⁰ ceppariya civam kaṇṭu tāṇ telintu
appariçāka amarntirunttārē (TM 126:3-4)
iruntār civamāki eṅkum tāmāki (TM 127:1)
eṅkum civamāy iruttalāl (TM 2722)

⁵¹ TM 2722, TM 1584.

⁵² eṅkum tirumēṇi eṅkum civacakti
eṅkum citamparam eṅkum tirunaṭṭam
eṅkum civamāy iruttalāl eṅku eṅkum
taṅkum civaṇ aruḷ taṇ viḷaiyāṭṭu atē (TM 2722)

⁵³ muppattu ārum paṭi mutti eṇiyāy
oppillā āṇantattu ulḷoli pukku (TM 126:1-2)

⁵⁴ cittar civattaik kaṇṭavar cīruṭaṇ
cuttācut tattutaṇ tōyntumtō yātavar
muttaram muttikku mūlattar mūlattuc
cattar catācivat taṇmaiyar tāmē. (TM 2526)

⁵⁵ irāppakal arṛa iṭam (TM 80:2).

witness to the happenings of the past, present and future.⁵⁶ Their inactivity is denoted by the term *cōmpu*; hence, the Siddhas are called *cōmpar*.⁵⁷ Abstinence from action (*ceyal ar̥iruttal*) leads to the bliss of Śiva.⁵⁸ There is a synchronous rhythm between the breath and the functioning senses.⁵⁹ As the breath slows down, the senses loose contact with their objects. Hence, Siddhas appear dead to the world while they are alive.⁶⁰ The expression *tūñkik kaṇṭār* (seeing while asleep) in verse 129 refers to *yoga-nidrā*.⁶¹ In that state, the Siddhas envision *Śivayoga*, *Śivabhoga* and *Śivaloka* within themselves.

While asleep, they (Siddhas) saw Śivaloka within themselves
 While asleep, they saw Śivayoga within themselves
 While asleep they saw Śivabhoga within themselves
 How to describe the state of those who saw while asleep⁶²

Several yogic techniques are discussed in the work. In the final limb of *Aṣṭāṅgayoga* known as *samādhi*, the practitioner raises the *kuṇḍalinī śakti* dormant in his *mūlādhāra*, and unites her with Śiva in the mystic sphere known as the *sahasrāra*. Immortality is attained as he partakes of the ambrosia that flows from the *sahasrāra* by means of *khecarī mudrā*. The second method called *paryāṅgayoga* refers to a passionate sexual intercourse lasting for two and a half hours, in which seminal emission is retained through breath control (825-844). The third method is called *candra yoga* in which the *kalās* of the fire and the *kalās* of the sun merge with the *kalās* of the moon (851-883). By means of yogic and meditational practices, and the initiation granted by Guru a

⁵⁶ TM 127:2-3

⁵⁷ TM 127:4

⁵⁸ *ceyal ar̥irukkac civa āṇantam ākum* (TM 219:1)

⁵⁹ *ottup pulāṇuyir oṇrāy* (TM 121:3)

⁶⁰ *uṭampotu cettiṭṭiruppar civayōkiyārkaḷē* (TM 121:4).

⁶¹ See Varatarājan's commentary.

⁶² *tūñkik kaṇṭār civalōkamum tammullē*
tūñkik kaṇṭār civayōkamum tammullē
tūñkik kaṇṭār civapōkamum tammullē
tūñkik kaṇṭār nilai colvatevvārē (TM 129)

practitioner (*sādhaka*) becomes a Siddha, one who has attained freedom from bondage and realised union with Śiva, while alive.

Jīva and Śiva are not separate
 Jīva does not know Śiva
 When Jīva knows Śiva
 He becomes Śiva himself (2017)

The *Tirumantiram* speaks of *jñāna*, but is rooted in the yogic realization of oneness with Śiva. This is also known as self-knowledge and *Śiva-jñāna*,⁶³ which is the key to eternal bliss. Tirumūlar who came to possess this knowledge through the grace of his Guru and the practice of yoga sings “I knew myself and bliss am I” (*eṇṇai ariyalurru inpurravārē* TM 2288:4). The emancipated Siddha is an embodiment of love because *civam* is understood as love (*aṅpu*).⁶⁴ Thus, the *Tirumantiram* manifests a religious tradition that is this worldly- oriented and body-centred.

From the above brief exposé of living liberation, the following become evident:

- (a) According to the ideology of the *Tirumantiram*, this world is the sole locus of experience. The human and the divine occupy the same space.
- (b) Liberation does not involve abandoning the body, because the body is a medium through which the divine is experienced.
- (c) Since the divine is immanent in the body, it is vain to seek IT outside the body. This implies that external worship of images and other ritualistic practices are of little value as far as embodied liberation is concerned.
- (d) The highest state of realization proceeds from the mingling of two converse principles: the male principle of Śiva and the female principle of *kuṇḍalinī*

⁶³ *cittar civañānam ceṅru eytuvōrkaḷē* (TM 1446:4)

⁶⁴ *aṅpum civamum iraṅṅepar aṅivilār*
aṅpē civamāvatu ārum aṅkilār
aṅpē civamāva tārum aṅrintapiṅ
aṅpē civamāy amarntirun tārē (TM 270)

śakti. The union of the opposite principles based on love (*anpu*) result in an ecstatic state (*inṣam*).

II

The Caṅkam Corpus

In the preceding section I argued that despite the fact that the *Tirumantiram* identifies itself with Sanskrit *āgamas*, its explicit references to Tamil can be construed as alluding to its indebtedness to indigenous Tamil worldview, as represented in the Caṅkam corpus. The significant difference between the Tamil sources and Sanskrit sources is that the former is generally considered secular literature whereas the latter is through and through religious in character. Besides, the classical Tamil texts are not independent of the influence of Sanskrit traditions. Hence, this section aims at clarifying two issues prior to discussing Tamil legacy to living liberation: the possibility of tracing autochthonous layers of the Caṅkam literary corpus and the presence of religious elements in the overtly secular literature.

The sources for this chapter belong to two literary collections known as *Eṭṭuttokai* (eight anthologies)⁶⁵ and *Pattuppāṭṭu* (ten different lays).⁶⁶ The internal chronology of these texts is far from settled. Various chronological levels are traceable in the Caṅkam poetry. For instance, Hardy detects four chronological strata in *Eṭṭuttokai* and *Pattuppāṭṭu*. According to the dates he proposed for various works, the classical Caṅkam poetry was composed between the period from the first century to the sixth century C.E. However, he assigns a much later date to *Paripāṭal* and *Kalittokai* (5th to 7th centuries),

⁶⁵ The eight anthologies included *Narriṇai*, *Kuṟuntokai*, *Aiṅkuṟunūru*, *Patirruppattu*, *Paripāṭal*, *Kalittokai*, *Akanāṅūru*, and *Puṟanāṅūru*.

⁶⁶ The ten lays are *Murukārruppaṭai*, *Porunarārruppaṭai*, *Ciṟupāṅārruppaṭai*, *Perumpāṅārruppaṭai*, *Mullaippāṭṭu*, *Maturaikkāñci*, *Neṭunalvāṭai*, *Kuṟiṅcippāṭṭu*, *Paṭṭiṅappālai* and *Malaipaṭukaṭām*.

and *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* (7th to 9th century).⁶⁷ He assumes that these later works belong to a “renaissance” period of the Caṅkam poetry, associated with Maturai.⁶⁸ Tieken who establishes that the Caṅkam poetry is a ‘relatively late offshoot of the Sanskrit Kāvya tradition,’ dates the Caṅkam corpus in the 9th or 10th century.⁶⁹ Hart, however, repudiates his arguments stating that none of his contentions with regard to the dating of the classical texts can be corroborated.⁷⁰ The dating of Caṅkam texts is beyond the scope of the dissertation. This dissertation rather follows the periodization of the Caṅkam corpus suggested by Zvelebil who defines the classical period to range from 150 B.C. E. to 400 C.E.⁷¹ Zvelebil’s dating of the Caṅkam texts appears reasonable in terms of subject-matter, language and spirit of the poetry. Three later works (*Paripāṭal*, *Kalittokai* and *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*) may be placed at the end of the classical Caṅkam period, as they differ in content and form from the earlier Caṅkam works and also manifest signs of Brāhmanical religious tradition. Dating these texts beyond the fifth century is less convincing in light of the fact that the native tradition always regards them as belonging to the Caṅkam corpus. Zvelebil observes,

It may ultimately appear that the indigenous tradition regarding the Par. [Paripāṭal] and the TMP [Tirumurukārruppaṭai] as genuinely belonging to the corpus of ancient bardic poetry will prove correct, and the positivistic, history-oriented, empirico-critical attitude will prove inappropriate.⁷²

It is inevitable that one has to draw on works on Tamil poetics as the Caṅkam corpus cannot be understood on its own terms. It displays highly conventionalised poetic

⁶⁷ Hardy, *Viraha-bhakti: The early history of Kṛṣṇa devotion in South India*, 125.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 124-25.

⁶⁹ Herman Tieken, *Kāvya in South India: Old Tamil Caṅkam Poetry* (Groningen : Egbert Forsten, 2001), 235.

⁷⁰ George Hart, “Review on Kāvya in South India: Old Tamil Caṅkam Poetry by Herman Tieken”, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 124, No. 1, (Jan. - Mar., 2004), 180 -184.

⁷¹ Kamil Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 107.

⁷² Ibid.

features that entail a de-personalized, formal literary style. Though the relationship between Caṅkam poetry and the works on Tamil poetics remains a complex issue, the classical poetry is mostly appreciated through the texts on Tamil poetics and commentaries written on them during the medieval period. Caṅkam poets were restricted in their choice of themes and imagery due to rigid poetic conventions; yet, inconsistencies between their literary compositions and the treatises on poetics heavily influenced by Sanskritic sources are discernible.⁷³ There are three fundamental works on Tamil poetics: *Irāiyanār Akapporuḷ* or *Kaḷaviyal*, *Puṛapporuḷ Venṇāmālai* and the third part of *Tolkāppiyam* known as *Poruḷatikāram*. Though *Irāiyanār Akapporuḷ* is the first treatise on the grammar of Tamil love according to Nakkīrar's commentary of the eighth century, *Tolkāppiyam* is celebrated as “the first literary expression of the indigenous, pre-Aryan Indian civilization” and “the essence and summary of classical Tamil literature.”⁷⁴

The question as to what extent highly conventionalized Caṅkam poetry would reflect socio-religious conditions seems fair and valid. It is assumed that the relation between literature and society is not totally imagined even in highly idealized literary forms. The Caṅkam corpus does not have anything that would disprove the data drawn from archaeological findings or ancient European writings.⁷⁵ Besides, the corpus appears to give a fair amount of material to reconstruct the past, despite the fact that certain concepts (war and love) are valorised in the poetry.

⁷³ Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, xii.

⁷⁴ Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan*, 131.

⁷⁵ Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, 1.

Tracing autochthonous layers of Caṅkam corpus

The worldview of ancient Tamils represented by the classical literature was complex and multi-layered.⁷⁶ The Caṅkam works attest to the fact that the ritualistic Vedic tradition gained momentum in the Tamil region at a time Buddhism and Jainism had already taken roots in the soil.⁷⁷ In a poem addressed to Pāṇṭiyaṅ Neṭuñceḷiyaṅ, the poet Māṅkuṭi Marutaṅār makes reference to two types of sacrifice the king performs. The first is war sacrifice in which crowned head serves as a hearth; blood is poured into pots and the flesh of the warriors is stirred with ladles made of severed arms adorned with bracelets. Thereafter, the king performs a Vedic sacrifice surrounded by Brahmans well-versed in the four Vedas while his vassals wait on him.⁷⁸ Another poet Karuṅkuḷal Ātaṅār says that Coḷaṅ Karikārperuvaḷattāṅ successfully executed Vedic sacrifices involving sacrificial posts.⁷⁹ Two verses, classified as *pārppaṇa vākai*⁸⁰ in *Puṛaṇāṅūru* (166, 305) reflect the role played by Brahmans in the ancient Tamil society. Verse 166 is addressed to *pārppāṅ* called Viṅṇantāyaṅ of Kaṇṇiya *gotra*, a resident of Pūñcārrūr in the Cōḷa country, who is eulogised as a performer of countless sacrifices. His ancestors are credited with perfect execution of twenty-one sacrifices and with countering the influence

⁷⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁷ Thennilapuram Mahadevan discusses two waves of migration of Brahmans into the ancient Tamil country, belonging to separate *śrauta* traditions. The beginnings of the Christian era saw the first wave of Brahman migrants from North India, whose distinctive mark of appearance was the hair tuft worn in the front of the head (*pūṛvasīkhā*). Subsequent migration of Brahmans with the hair tied at the back (*aparasiikhā*) took place around the 5th century and continued for several centuries. See “The Southern Recension of the Mahabharata: Brahman Migrations and Brāhmī Palaeography” *Electronic Journal of Vedic Studies*, Vol. 15:2 (July, 2008).

⁷⁸ muṭṭitalai aṭuppākap puṇal kuruti ulaik koḷi ik toṭittōḷi tuṭuppiṅ tuḷanta valciyiṅ aṭukaḷam vēṭṭa aṭupōrceḷiya āṅṛa kēḷvi aṭaṅkiya koḷkai nāṅmaṅrai mutalvar curramāka maṅṅar ēval ceyya maṅṅiya vēḷvi murriya vāy vāḷ vēntē. (PN 9-15)

⁷⁹ yūpa neṭuntūṅ vēta vēḷvit toḷil muṭṭittatū um (PN 224: 8-9)

⁸⁰ *Pārppaṇavākai* refers to the theme describing the greatness of a learned Brahmin, attained through the performance of sacrifices (See University of Madras Tamil Lexicon).

of Buddhism and Jainism.⁸¹ Verse 305 succinctly refers to the success of a Brahman youth in dissuading the king from undertaking a war against his enemy, through verbal means. All these show that the Brahmans exerted considerable influence on Tamil society during the classical period.

The influence of Jainism and Buddhism is also discernible in the Caṅkam literature despite the absence of explicit references to them. The Tamil Brahmi inscriptions evidence the penetration of these religions into the Tamil country by the second century B.C.E, probably before the Brāhmaṇical ideology took hold in *Tamiḷakam*. Zvelebil, therefore, considers the poems, demonstrative of the influence of Buddhism and Jainism as chronologically earlier than the ones influenced by Brāhmaṇical notions.⁸² Verses classified under *kāñcittiṇai*, especially those under *peruñkāñci* that discuss the ephemeral nature of worldly existence, seem to have been inspired by these religions. In short, the ancient Tamil society, mirrored in the literature was a complex society subjected to the influence of pan-indic religious ideologies, Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism.

Doubts are, therefore, expressed as to the possibility of tracing indigenous concepts in the Caṅkam literature as it already exhibits signs of heterogeneous culture. Nilakanta Sastri states, “the most striking feature in the pictures is its composite character; it is the unmistakable result of the blend of two originally distinct cultures, best described as Tamilian and the Aryan; but it is by no means easy to distinguish the

⁸¹ *nanru āynta nīl nimircaṭai mutumutalvaṅ vāy pōkātu onru purinta īr iraṇṭiṅ āru uṇarnta oru mutu nūl ikal kaṇṭōr mikal cāymār mey aṇṇa poy uṇarntu poy ōrātu mey koḷi i mū ēl tuṟaiyum muttiṅru pōkiya uraicāl ciṟappiṅ uravōr maruka* (PN 1-9)

⁸² Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan*, 118.

original elements in their purity.”⁸³ Burton Stein also declares that Tamil never represented a culture that was free of Sanskritic influence.

“..the Sanskrit language and ideas derived from its texts were balanced by non-Sanskritic cultural elements in South India...To state the matter in this way is to suggest two independent traditions – Sanskrit and Dravidian-which is a false conception, for even in classical Tamil culture the two are so inextricably interwoven as to defy disaggregation into autochthonous, interacting phenomena.”⁸⁴

I, however, agree with Hart’s position that despite the fact that Northern elements found their way into the ancient classical Tamil literature, they could be still identified as alien elements and that the literature shows that the fusion of cultures is not yet complete.⁸⁵ Dubianski also concedes that the nucleus of the Tamil worldview as identified in the Caṅkam literature remains unaffected and untouched.⁸⁶ According to Zvelebil who traces the development of thought-content in the classical poetry, the poems that contain “straightforward descriptions of fighting, mating nature etc.” are probably the oldest ones.⁸⁷ He is emphatic that diagnostic features of Tamil culture predate the advent of Sanskrit into the Tamil country:

“... there are some sharply contrasting features which are typical for Tamil classical culture alone, for the Tamil cultural and literary traditions as opposed to the non-Tamil tradition-in this respect, the Tamil cultural tradition is independent, not derived, not imitative; it is pre-Sanskritic, and from this point of view Tamil alone stands apart when compared with all other major languages and literatures of India.”⁸⁸

It may be noted that politically, the ancient Tamil society retained a strong sense of Tamil identity in terms of language and the land in which it lived. The land where the

⁸³ *A History of South India from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, 3rd.edition (London, 1966), 129.

⁸⁴ Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Delhi:Oxford University Press, 1980), 51.

⁸⁵ Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts*, 12.

⁸⁶ Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, 4.

⁸⁷ *The Smile of Murugan: On Tamil Literature of South India*, 118.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

Caṅkam corpus was composed was known as *Tamiḷakam*⁸⁹ or *taṅ tamiḷ varaippu akam*⁹⁰ bounded by Cape Comorin in the south, the Vēṅkaṭa hills in the north and the sea to its east and west.⁹¹ Rulers of the three South Indian kingdoms -Cēra, Cōḷa, and Pāṅṅiya- are identified as speakers of Tamil language.⁹² The capital of Pāṅṅiya kingdom Kūṭal (Maturai) and the river Vaiyai (Vaikai) are especially associated with Tamil.⁹³ Thus, a spirit of unity based on language, and the clearly demarcated region where Tamil reigned supreme possibly contributed to the cherishment of indigenous thought in the Tamil works, despite the continuing influx of alien cultural elements.

Presence of religious elements in Caṅkam poetry:

The other issue connected to the study is how religious notions could be traced to the Caṅkam corpus, which is regarded as the perfect “example of *Indian secular literature* dating from some ancient period.”⁹⁴ In comparison to later Tamil literature, the Caṅkam literary works are described as devoid of religious sentiment. Zvelebil observes,

Let me mention another and very typical and characteristic feature of the pre-Aryan Tamil literature –its predominantly secular inspiration, the absence of any “religious” sentiment. The earliest extant poetry is emphatically not ritualistic at all....The original secularism and the absence of almost any religious inspiration is the one feature that later disappears from Tamil literature, and Tamil becomes what has been called “the language of devotion” and of religious philosophy.⁹⁵

Both Western and indigenous scholars treat the Caṅkam literature as secular in character as it revolves around the thematic bifurcations of love and war. On one hand,

⁸⁹ vaiyaka varaippil tamiḷakam kēṭpa (PN 168:18)

⁹⁰ PN 198 : 12

⁹¹ teṅkumari vaṭaperuṅkal kuṅa kuṭa kaṭalā vellai (PN 17:1-2) vaṭavayiṅ vēṅkaṭam (AN 6-7)

⁹² tamiḷkeḷu mūvar (AN 31:14) taṅ tamiḷk kiḷavar (PN. 35:3)

⁹³ tamiḷkeḷu kūṭal (PN 58:13) tamiḷ vaiyai (Pari. 6:60)

⁹⁴ Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, 81-82. (Emphasis is his.)

⁹⁵ Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan*, 20-21.

Western scholars highlight the continuity of classical Tamil thought into the medieval *bhakti* poetry stating that the early medieval *bhakti* poetry drew inspiration from the secular Caṅkam literature. For instance, Karen Prentiss observes,

The Caṅkam poems are fairly clear-cut examples of sources that the hymnists were likely to have quoted in their *bhakti* hymns. Their use by the *bhakti* poets is uncontroversial, not only because the connections between their structures and contents are a good match but also because the Caṅkam poems are not religious texts, and thus it is relatively straightforward to suggest that the *mūvar* contributed a religious perspective to known poetic conventions. The early Caṅkam poetry, like the early Tamil grammar, the *Tolkappiyam*, does mention gods, but it does not focus on them; the gods are part of a constellation of characteristics that signify particular landscapes.⁹⁶

On the other, the majority of indigenous Tamil scholarship sees a rupture between classical Tamil anthologies and medieval *bhakti* literature dominated by Sanskritic religious notions and ideals. It is worthy of mention that a section of the indigenous Tamil scholars of the twentieth century attempted to demonstrate the superiority of Dravidian culture by interpreting secular conventions of the Caṅkam works in terms of anti-ritualism and rationalism as opposed to Aryan, Sanskritic sacerdotal religiosity.⁹⁷

Only two works in the Caṅkam corpus, *Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai* and *Paripāṭal*, are recognized as religious poetry. *Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai* is a devotional poem composed by Nakkīrar. It is a guide-poem (*āṛruppaṭai*), directing the devotee to various shrines associated with Murugaṅ. It is one of the devotional works signifying the end of the

⁹⁶ Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 54.

⁹⁷ It should also be mentioned that socio-political factors in the twentieth century did play a role in strengthening the notion that the Caṅkam literature is secular in character. Bishop R. Caldwell's *A comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* marks a watershed in the history of South Indian Studies. His thesis that Dravidian languages constitute a distinct language group had momentous implications for Tamils politically, socially and culturally. The discovery of the caṅkam texts and their publication in the latter part of the nineteenth century as well as the emergence of the Tamil Resurgence Movement in the twentieth century gave impetus to Tamil nationalism. Subbiah notes that "a neat, but historically questionable set of equations gained currency among South Indian Academics: Brahman=Aryan=Sanskrit=North and Non-Brahman=Dravidian=Tamil=South." One of the consequences of the socio-political movements was that religion was narrowly interpreted as one, represented in Sanskrit sources. Since Brāhmanical influence is minimal in the Caṅkam corpus, it came to be opposed to Sanskrit texts as secular literature and was celebrated to be a representation of Tamil rationalist mind. See Subbiah, *Roots of Tamil Religious Thought* (Pondicherry: Institute of Linguistics and Culture, 1991), 13.

classical period and the beginning of the *bhakti* era. The other work *Paripāṭal* is considered “probably the earliest testimony of the *Bhakti* movement in south India.”⁹⁸ Only 24 out of its seventy poems have survived and they are addressed to Tirumāl (6), Cevvēḷ (8) and Vaikai (8). They abound in mythological allusions and references to temples and shrines. The principal reason for *Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai* and *Paripāṭal* being recognised as religious poetry is that they represent the devotion to personal deity which is the dominant characteristic of medieval Tamil *bhakti* movement.

Though the Caṅkam literature is not outwardly as religious as medieval *bhakti* poetry, there is ample evidence to suggest that religious beliefs played a major role in the worldview of ancient Tamils. Foundational religious elements that are central to our understanding of Caṅkam poetry are discussed by Hart,⁹⁹ Dubianski¹⁰⁰ and Subbiah.¹⁰¹ I summarize them as follows: The ancient Tamil religion was concerned with the supernatural, often considered malevolent, which I refer to as “the sacred.” The sacred

⁹⁸ Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, 101.

⁹⁹ According to George Hart, central to our understanding of the Caṅkam poetry is the concept of *aṇaṅku*, the sacred force. See *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 2, (Feb., 1973). 233. V. S. Rajam who analysed the usage of the term *aṇaṅku* more extensively makes the following conclusions: “*Aṇaṅku* was not necessarily an inherent quality of entities, but could be acquired.... *Aṇaṅku* did not necessarily make an entity dangerous or sacred...chastity (*karpu*) was not mandatory for a woman to have *aṇaṅku*,” She reinterprets the term *aṇaṅku* as an “an anxiety producing source/agent.” See “*Aṇaṅku*:A notion semantically reduced to signify female power,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol.106, No.2 (1986), 257-272.

¹⁰⁰ Alexander Dubianski attempts to link the genesis of ancient Tamil poetry to myth and ritual in his book *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry* (2000). He contends that despite the fact the Caṅkam literature is governed by a well –established system of conventions, “it is permeated with a deeply archaic and a very distinct ritual meaning that has not been eroded in the process of its use by professional or semi-professional performers.” Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, xvi.

¹⁰¹ Subbiah attempts to establish in his work *Roots of Ancient Tamil Religious Thought* that there was continuity between Classical Caṅkam literature and medieval *bhakti* works. He argues that the Caṅkam corpus is classified as secular literature since it demonstrates a positive attitude towards the world. However, this classification is based on the misconceived notion that the essence or norm of Indian religions lies in renunciation. He specifically criticises Louis Dumont, who contrasts in his classic essay “World Renunciation in Indian Religions (1957)” the two modes of life: man-in-the-world vs. renunciant. Subbiah attempts to establish that three inter-related themes - space and place, hero, and gift - constitute the foundation of religious life of ancient Tamils.

which was regarded dangerous had to be kept in control; otherwise, it would spell disaster to the holder and others. The sacred, well-guarded or propitiated, would render immense good. Though it was immanent in the universe, it was not equally concentrated in all places. Humans too possessed this sacred force. As the nature of the place had certain effects on its residents, the sacredness of the place enhanced when it became related to a hero or a king. The sacred immanent in the king was propitiated through panegyric performance that involved recitation of verses, music and dance. The dance was also an effective medium not only to placate but also to identify with the sacred force immanent in the cosmos.

III

Antecedents to the Concept of Living Liberation

Apart from identifying the textual sources for the study of Tamil religion during the pre-*bhakti* era, the preceding section conceded the possibility of detecting the autochthonous layers of the Cankam corpus, despite the penetration of alien religious and cultural elements into the Tamil country as early as the beginnings of the Common Era, and provided some indications of the religious nature of the classical poetry. This section is devoted to the discussion of the following indigenous religious aspects that could be considered as antecedents to the concept of living liberation in the *Tirumantiram*: (a) This worldly orientation (b) immanence of the sacred (c) interpenetration of divinity and humanity (d) identification with the divine through ritual dance (e) the sacred in the form of heat (f) immortality in the form of fame. The sacred

denotes in this context malevolent, supernatural powers immanent in nature as well as in humans, which ancient Tamils sought to placate or keep under check.¹⁰²

The concept of transcendental, distant deity is almost absent in the indigenous layers of the corpus. Two allied notions, namely, the immanence of the sacred and its close physical relation with humanity establish the fundamental character of the classical Tamil religion. A strong relationship existed among the sacred, space and humanity in ancient Tamil religion. The *Tirumantiram* relies on this classical model to describe the relationship between the deity, the body and the Siddha. The first element I discuss is “This worldly orientation of the literary corpus”. As I indicated earlier, the classical literature is interpreted through the works on Tamil poetics and this sub-section embodies the literary conventions laid down in them.

This worldly orientation of Caṅkam Poetry:

Ancient Tamil culture and ethos were oriented towards this world alone. According to the classical theory of literary discourse the ancient Tamil society was intently focussed on two worldly functions, war and love. The functional space is divided into five physiographic regions: *kuṛiñci* (hills), *neytal* (the seacoast), *mullai* (forests), *marutam* (cultivated lands) and *pālai* (wastelands) and the human life is classified into *akam* and *puṭam*. According to the Dravidian etymological dictionary, *akam* means inside, house, place, agricultural tract, breast, mind. But, in the context of classical Tamil literature it encompasses all aspects of love between a man and a woman. *Akam* divides into *kaḷavu* and *karpu*. *Kaḷavu* denotes premarital love and *karpu* deals

¹⁰² The terms “the sacred” and “the divine” are almost used interchangeably to denote abstract powers as well as anthropomorphic gods, eg. Murukan.

with love situations within the institution of marriage. *Puram* means outside, exterior, or that which is foreign. *Puram* poetry is mainly concerned with life outside home and deals with the themes of war and bounty.

The following table shows that *akam* and *puram* have seven poetic situations each; of them, five correspond to landscape. The association of human feelings and heroic action to different landscapes led to the both being dubbed as *tiṇai*. Thus, *tiṇai* that originally meant land or region came to denote conventional rules of conduct associated with a particular landscape. Three elements integral to love poetry (*akam*) are: *mutal* (first things: region and time), *karu* (native things), *uri* (human situations and feelings). They differ according to the *tiṇai* of the poetry.

The sacred plays a minor role in the classification of the subject-matter. Specific manifestations of the sacred allocated to each region are as follows:

Tiṇai

kuṛiñci
neytal
marutam
mullai
pālai

Deity

Murukaṇ
Varuṇaṇ
Intiraṇ
Māyōṇ
Korravai

Table I

Correspondence of Akam- *Puṛam* to various landscapes of Tamil country

Landscape	<i>Akam</i> : phases in love correspondence to the landscape	<i>Puṛam</i>
Kuṛiñci (hills)	punartala (union of lovers)	veṭci (cattle –lifting, prelude to war)
Neytal (The sea coast)	iraṅkal (A woman bemoans separation from her lover.)	tumpai (battle)
Mullai (forests)	iruttal (patient waiting-A woman bears patiently separation from her husband.)	vañci (preparation for war)
Marutam (cultivated lands)	ūṭal (sulking- quarrel between husband and wife, mainly arising from husband's infidelity and wife's jealousy)	uḷiñai (siege)
Pālai (wasteland)	pirital (elopement, separation from lover, lady –love or parents)	vāikai (victory)
No landscape assigned	peruntiṇai (mismatched love)	Kāñci (struggle for excellence and endurance)
No landscape assigned	kaikkiḷai (unrequited love)	pāṭāṇ (elegy, asking for gifts, praise)

The above classification of *tiṇai* exemplifies the fundamental worldview of Tamils who maintained close connection with the land they lived in. Self-identity of a person was intertwined with the place he or she resided in and the space/land determined the conduct and types of activities one could engage in, whereas in a migrant Brāhmanical society the *varṇa* in which one was born determined one's *svadharmā*. The concepts of bondage and liberation found in Sanskrit Tantric literature are contrary to the spirit of ancient Tamil society which was grounded in the positive worldview that valorized violence and liberality as the means to remain immortal on earth. Only later

layers of the classical literature contain poetry dealing with the ephemeral nature of worldly life that is evidently influenced by Buddhism and Jainism.

The basic binary classification of *akam* and *puram* reflect the two incompatible worlds the hero has to mediate.¹⁰³ Abandoning one or the other realm is never a possibility. One is obligated to find a fine balance between his duties outside home and conjugal, marital duties at home.¹⁰⁴ In a similar strain, the *Tirumantiram* mediates through the concept of living liberation the two mutually exclusive notions: being in the world (*saṃsāra*) and being outside of it (*mukti*). Impartiality (*naṭuvu nilai*/the middle path) is consequently celebrated as the foremost of virtues in the text that confers knowledge (*jnāna*)¹⁰⁵ and immortality.¹⁰⁶

Unlike the devotional lyrics of *Tēvāram* that reflect the pain of separation,¹⁰⁷ the *Tirumantiram* gives expression to the unbounded joy resulting from the union with God, founded on love (*aṅṅpu*). Hence, it is said that “in bhakti the heart weeps for what is lost whereas in *jñāna* the spirit delights in what it has found.”¹⁰⁸ The concept of *puṅṅarcci* (union) related to the landscape of *kuṅṅiñci* is used to describe the theistic *yoga* advocated by the text. This theme is extensively dealt with in Chapter III of the dissertation.

¹⁰³ Kailasapathy states that *akam* and *puram* “were not mutually exclusive. For heroic poetry is normally ‘concerned with persons of princely rank-their exploits, adventure and experiences.’the love situations and themes in the Anthology poems, too, concerns the heroes and heroines of that age, thus dealing with the experiences of the persons of princely rank. That this was felt by some at least of the medieval glossators is evidenced by an analogy they used of their inner palm of the hand and its back, namely that these are two but two sides of the same coin.” (*Tamil Heroic Poetry*, 5).

¹⁰⁴ Equity (*naṭuvunilai*) is one of the virtues celebrated in the classical Tamil literature. The explicit reference to equity is found in *Paripāṭal* in which Tirumāl is depicted as being partial to *devas* when allocating *amṛta*: “naṭuvunilai tiṅṅampiya nayamil oru kai” (3:34)

¹⁰⁵ naṭuvu niṅṅārkkāṅṅri ṅṅāṅṅamum illai (TM 320:1)

¹⁰⁶ naṭuvu niṅṅār nalla tēvarumāvar (TM 320:3)

See also Appar *Tēvāram* 4:30:7 *ṅṅāṅṅamum naṭuvum vaittār*

¹⁰⁷ See the hymns composed in the *akam* tradition: caṭaiyāy eṅṅumāl (2:18:1), ciṅṅaiyārum maṭakkilīyē (1:60:10).

¹⁰⁸ T.N. Ganapathy and K.R. Arumugam, *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular*, 148.

Immanence of the sacred:

The concept of immanence of the sacred connotes that the same space is shared by divinity and humanity. Of several terms denoting the divine in the Caṅkam literature, *kaṭavuḷ* and *aṇaṅku* are important as they signify immanent sacred powers. There is little consensus among scholars about the exact meaning and nature of these concepts. Hardy rightly points out that they “appear to be generic, denoting a category, not an individual.”¹⁰⁹ *Murukaṅ*, *Koṛṛavai* and *Māyōṅ* are specific individual manifestations of the sacred, celebrated in the Caṅkam corpus.

Kaṭavuḷ is represented as inhabiting the mountain, water reservoirs and trees in the Tamil country.¹¹⁰ It is not clear about the identity of the god referred to in fn. 108. When *kaṭavuḷ* is related to the mountain, it might be taken as a reference to *Murukaṅ*. However, it is certain that these examples illustrate the concept of “the localised conception of the supernatural.”¹¹¹ The sacred was felt to be manifest and present in particular areas and natural phenomena in ancient Tamiḷakam.

There are several interpretations regarding the etymology of the term *kaṭavuḷ*. *Kaṭa* is a verbal root meaning to traverse, or to transcend. *Uḷ* is a base of the verb meaning to be inside, interior of a place. Hence, the roots *kaṭa* (to transcend) + *uḷ* (to be inside of a place) signify the paradoxical qualities of immanence and transcendence of

¹⁰⁹ Hardy, *Viraha-bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India*, 133.

¹¹⁰ *kaṭavuḷ oṅku varaikku ōkki* (Aka. 348:8) *kaṭavuḷ oṅku varai* (Naṅ. 165:4):

Making oblations to the mountain in which resides the *kaṭavuḷ*

nilaittuṛaiikkaṭavuḷ (Aka. 156:15) : *kaṭavuḷ* established in a reservoir of water

kaṭavuḷ mutumarattu (Naṅ. 83:2): An old tree where *kaṭavuḷ* dwells

veṅkaik kaṭavuḷ (Naṅ. 216:6): *kaṭavuḷ* who resides in the Venkai tree

tonṇuṛai kaṭavuḷ cērnta parārai maṇṇap peṇṇai (Naṅ. 303:3): The old *kaṭavuḷ* who lies in the large trunk of the Palmyrah palm.

netuvīḷ viṭṭa kaṭavuḷ ālattu (Naṅ. 343:4): *kaṭavuḷ* who is located in the banyan tree with aerial roots

āḷamar kaṭavuḷ (Puṛa. 198:9): *kaṭavuḷ* who rests on the banyan tree

kaḷḷi nīḷaṅ kaṭavuḷ (Puṛa. PN 260:5): *kaṭavuḷ* who is in the shadow of a prickly pear

illuṛai kaṭavuḷ (Aka. 282:18): *kaṭavuḷ* who resides in the house

¹¹¹ Hardy, *Viraha-bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India*, 135.

God.¹¹² According to another explanation noted by Hart, *kaṭavuḷ* is interpreted as “that which transcends mind.”¹¹³ When considering the evidence provided by the Caṅkam corpus, Hart is right in his assertion that the term *kaṭavuḷ* does not denote a transcendent deity, comparable to Śiva and Viṣṇu of the medieval *Bhakti* literature. He, therefore, offers a new interpretation of the term citing a reference from Kuṟun. 218 in which *kaṭaṇ* is used in the sense of sacrifice:¹¹⁴ “*Kaṭavuḷ* would mean that to which sacrifice or debt pertains, a meaning well in accord with the character of the ancient Tamil deities”¹¹⁵ Thus, *kaṭavuḷ* is made up of the noun *kaṭaṇ* followed by the suffix *uḷ*, which is often used to make a noun from a root.¹¹⁶ But Dubianski points out the grammatical flaw in the coalescence of the words, *kaṭaṇ* and *uḷ*. They would be conjoined as *kaṭaṇuḷ*, not as *kaṭavuḷ*, as Hart claims. Hence, he suggests that *kaṭavuḷ* denotes the dual nature of Tamil divinities and spirits: staying within a circumscribed place (*uḷ*); and leaving the designated boundaries of the place (*kaṭa*).¹¹⁷

However, I contend that the term *kaṭavuḷ* signifies an immanent deity. Since *kaṭavu* means a path or a way, *kaṭavuḷ* may be interpreted as something one encounters on the road. Thus, the term *kaṭavuḷ* denotes a sacred force confined to a particular space, which people encounter when they move about in their daily activities. The same thing could be said of the term *iyavuḷ* meaning God. *Iyavu* also means a path or a road.¹¹⁸

¹¹² This type of construction expressing paradoxical qualities is rather common in Tamil. For instance, *cuṭu taṇṇīr*, warm (cold) water; *aṟituṇṇil*, conscious sleep (a state of sleep in which the person is conscious of outer world).

¹¹³ Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts*, 26-27.

¹¹⁴viṟalkeḷu cūlikkuk

kaṭaṇum pūṇātu (Kuṟu. 218:1-2)

¹¹⁵ Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts*, 27.

¹¹⁶ He cites two examples: āṟ (to be full) + uḷ = aruḷ ; poru (to put together) + uḷ = poruḷ. See *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts*, 27.

¹¹⁷ Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, 8-9.

¹¹⁸ Aka. 218:10, Pari. 6:37, Malai. 20: 323.

(*kaṭavu + uḷ* and *iyavu + uḷ*). These two are related to the expression *valīpaṭal* that stems from the compound noun *valīpāṭu* meaning ‘worship’.¹¹⁹ *Vali* has the same meaning as that of *kaṭavu* and *iyavu*. Hence *valīpāṭu* means paying obeisance to the sacred that one happens to experience on his way. Hence, the Tamil terms - *kaṭavuḷ* and *iyavuḷ* - denote sacred powers immanent in natural habitat, frequently encountered on the way.

Thus, the literary genre *ārruppaṭai* is connected to the Tamil ideology of *kaṭavuḷ* and *valīpaṭal*. *Āru* means a path. In *ārruppaṭai* the bard directs a fellow bard to a generous patron from whom he received gifts. The *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*, one of the latest of the Caṅkam corpus, reveals “the intimate connection between particular place of worship and the god’s “local” manifestation.”¹²⁰ The work has six parts of disproportionate lengths dealing with six places of worship: Tirupparaṅkuṅṅam (1-77), Tiruccūr (78- 125), Tiruvāviṅṅaṅkuṭi (126-176), Tiruvērakam (177-189), Kuṅṅrutōrāṭal (190-217) and Paḷamutirccōlai (218-317).¹²¹

It may be noted that Sanskrit terms are also used to denote an immanent sacred force in the classical Tamil texts. The term *teivam*, derived from the Sanskrit term *deva* (from *div* to shine),¹²² does not refer to a resplendent or transcendent god in the Caṅkam literature.¹²³ Instead, it signifies a god located in a natural habitat. For instance, Verse 309 in *Akanāṅṅūru* describes an animal sacrifice being performed to a *teivam* inhabiting the neem tree:

¹¹⁹ Subbiah, *Roots of Tamil Religious Thought*, 70

¹²⁰ Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugaṅ*, 125.

¹²¹ Ganapathy is of opinion that the *Ārruppaṭai* concept possibly inspired the composition of the *Tirumantiram*. The author of *Tirumantiram* who reveals to Tamil audience for the first time the means of realization of god within one’s own body, claims that his object is to enable the world to enjoy the bliss he has experienced. See *The Philosophy of the Tamil Siddhas* (New Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1993), 190.

¹²² Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts*, 26.

¹²³ Hence the term might have derived from the verbal root *tikai* to be taken aback, confused, perplexed, bewildered, be astonished, amazed or the noun *tikal*, *tikir* fright, terror

The dwellers of the Pālai region sacrificed a corpulent cow to the *teivam* occupying the neem tree with a large trunk, worshipped it sprinkling the blood and ate the raw meat scorched in the fire.¹²⁴

Another term denoting the sacred is *aṇaṅku* which is highly polysemous.¹²⁵ It also denotes an indwelling power in consonance with the Tamil conceptualization of the sacred. It is mentioned in connection with the bodies of water and mountains. For instance, in *Aiṅkurunūru* (28), mother considers *aṇaṅku* presiding over springs or streams from which people take their drinking water, as the cause of her daughter's affliction.¹²⁶ Verse 241 in *Akanānūru* refers to the mother and female attendants paying obeisance to *aṇaṅku* located at a body of water.¹²⁷ The hero asks the bashful beloved who waits for him in the grove on the sea-shore if she were the *aṇaṅku* who overlords the great sea.¹²⁸ The mountains are also controlled by *aṇaṅku*, as the bodies of water. That "the mountain in which *aṇaṅku* is domiciled" is a recurrent phrase in several Caṅkam works.¹²⁹ *Aṇaṅku* is also inherent in heroine's breasts¹³⁰ and shoulders,¹³¹ warrior's big

¹²⁴maṅavar
.....

teyvañ cērnta parārai vēmpir
koḷuppā eṇintu kuruti tūuyy
pūlavup puḷukkuṅṅa (Aka. 309:2-6)

¹²⁵ The University of Madras Tamil Lexicon provides fifteen meanings for the term *aṇaṅku*: (1) Pain, affliction, suffering (2) disease (3) fear (4) lust (5) killing (6) deity (7) celestial damsel (8) demoness that takes away one's life by awakening lust or by other means (9) beautiful woman as resembling a celestial damsel (10) devil (11) dancing under religious excitement, esp. possession by Skanda (12) Low-caste person (13) beauty (14) form (15) young offspring.

¹²⁶ uṅ tuṅai aṇaṅku ivaḷ uṅai nōyāyiṅ (Aiṅk. 28:1)

¹²⁷ aṇaṅkuṅai paṅittuṅai kaitoḷutu ētti yāyum āyamoṅu ayaṅum (Aka. 240:8-9)

¹²⁸ teṅ tiraip peruṅkaṅai parappiṅ amarntuṅai aṇaṅkō (Naṅ. 155: 5-6)

aṇaṅkuṅai munnīr (Aka. 207:1)

¹²⁹ aṇaṅkuṅai neṅuṅkōṅṅai (Naṅ. 288:1; Aka. 272 :3; Puṅa.52:1)

aṇaṅkuṅai neṅuvarai ucciyiṅ (Aka. 22:1-2)

aṇaṅkuṅaik kavāṅ (Aka. 72:11)

aṇaṅkuṅai uyar nilaip poruppiṅ kavāṅ (Aka. 338: 6)

aṇaṅkuṅaic cilampil (Aka. 198:14)

aṇaṅkuṅai varaippakam (Aka. 266: 19)

aṇaṅkuṅai varaippil (Aka. 372:3)

aṇaṅkucāl aṅukkam (Puṅa. 151:11)

¹³⁰ aṇaṅkuṅai vaṅamulai (Aka. 177:19)

¹³¹ karumpuṅait tōḷum uṅaiyavāl aṇaṅkē (Naṅ. 39:11)

hands (Pati 62:11), gods Murukaṅ (Pura. 299:6), and Indra (Kali.105:15), elephant's head (Kuru. 308:2), snake's hood (Aka 108:13), and strong bow (Aka. 159:6).

Zvelebil sums up the notion of *aṅaṅku* thus:

The sacred was thought of as a force immanent in certain places, objects and beings, and not as the property of well-defined transcendent gods. The term used for the sacred was *aṅaṅku*, originally conceived of as an impersonal, anonymous power, an awe-inspiring supernatural force inherent in a number of phenomena but not identified or confused with any one of them in particular. The sacred power was so completely independent of particular objects and persons in which it was believed to dwell or inhere that it might have preceded or survived them. It was impersonal, capricious, dangerous, neither auspicious or inauspicious in itself; among the various places, it was found to inhere in awe-inspiring localities-mountain tops, the sea, the battlefield, the threshing floor used as the place where orgiastic and sacred dances were performed; among objects, it was thought to dwell in dangerous and exceptional things like weapons and musical instruments; it also inhaled in certain fear-inspiring animals (lion, tiger, snake), and in certain (probably totemic, sacred) trees. Among the early gods, it was connected most frequently with Murukaṅ; also with Māl and Indra.¹³²

The important characteristic of *aṅaṅku* noted by Dubianski is that that it could move in space. For instance, in *Narriṅai* midnight is represented as a time of distressing darkness during which *aṅaṅku* wanders.¹³³ The power of mobility is attributed to *kaṭavuḷ* as well: “*kaṭavuḷ* leaving the pillars”¹³⁴ “a gloomy night when *kaṭavuḷ* is abroad.”¹³⁵ Dubianski states that in these instances, *kaṭavuḷ* could be considered a synonym for *aṅaṅku*.¹³⁶ The notion of mobility of the divine is also found in the *Tirumantiram*: “If they know the art of fixing breath below the navel region the lord enters the body shouting in joy.”¹³⁷ “As one entered the mother's home, he entered my body”¹³⁸ (TM 1728).

¹³² Zvelebil, *Literary conventions in Akam Poetry* (Madras : Institute of Asian Studies, 1986), 190.

¹³³ *aṅaṅkukāl kiḷarum mayaṅkiru naṅunāl* (Nar. 319:6)

¹³⁴ *kaṭavuḷ pōkiya karuntāṭ kantattu* (Aka. 307:12)

¹³⁵ Malai. 651.

¹³⁶ Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, 9.

¹³⁷ *tāpikku mantirant taṅṅai aṅintapiṅ*
kūvikkoṅ ṭiṅcaṅ kuṭiyirun tāṅē (TM 579:3-4).

¹³⁸ *tāyil koṅṭārpōl talaivaṅ enṅuṭpuka* (TM 1728:3).

The dichotomy of localization vs. movement is central to the understanding of the sacred in the *Tirumantiram*. The localization of god in a particular space is a distinctively Tamil notion. Comparing Vedic divinities with ancient Tamil gods, Hart observes,

...the gods of the ancient Tamils were not transcendent beings, but rather immanent powers, present in objects encountered everyday and involved in every aspect of ordinary life. They are to be distinguished from the gods of the early Aryans in that their potential danger was stressed more than their benevolent aspect, and their transcendent character is far less important.¹³⁹

Hardy too agrees that the Caṅkam sources do not attest to a fully developed concept of transcendence of the divine.¹⁴⁰

On the contrary, Vedic sacrifice and transcendence are strongly inter-related and the object of sacrifice is “to mediate between the human and the transcendent world.”¹⁴¹

Brain explains how this transcendental sacred realm is constructed in the Vedic sacrificial system:

According to the Veda, the ritual realm is to be spatially and conceptually set apart from the nonritual realm. Spatially, this is achieved by the de-marcation of a distinct space for the ritual (a science that was developed in those appendices to the Veda called the Śulba Sūtras), thereby creating a visually recognizable enclosure for the ritual activity. The ritual arena is thus made to be a world unto itself, a delimited realm where activities are focused and controlled.¹⁴²

Everything to be used in the sacred realm has to be separated from the profane world and the human is transformed into the divine to take part in ritual functions.

Conceptually, the ritual is distinguished from the sphere of ordinary activity by a series of acts also designed to mark the yajña, or sacrifice-and all the things and beings that participate in the yajña- as clearly distinguished from the extraritual sphere. Participants undergo preparatory consecration rites that bestow special standing on them.Most important, the sacrificer is said to take on a new identity as a divine rather than human being: He passes from

¹³⁹ George L. Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their milieu and their Sanskrit*, 26.

¹⁴⁰ Hardy, *Viraha-bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India*, 135.

¹⁴¹ J.C. Heesterman, *The inner conflict of tradition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 81.

¹⁴² Brian K Smith, “Ritual Perfection and Ritual Sabotage in the Veda”, *History of Religions*, Vol. 35, No. 4, (May, 1996), 287.

the world of men to the world of gods” when he is consecrated for his ritual duties (SA 1.1.1.4).¹⁴³

Besides, there is no idea of a fixed sacred site in the Vedic ideology. Every time *śrauta* ritual is performed, a new sacred space is constructed and demolished at the conclusion of the ritual. Hence, the Tamil conception of the relatively permanent abode of the divine is antithetical to the Vedic notion of constantly changing sacred realms.¹⁴⁴ Ramanujan links the concept of immanence of god to the development of temples: “the Tamil sense of the sacred, immanent in particular things and places, led soon to the building of temples.”¹⁴⁵ However, in the *Tirumantiram*, the body is treated as the temple, the abode of god.

The heart is the sanctum sanctorum; the fleshy body is the temple
The mouth is the tower- door to the bountiful god.
To those who have understood very clearly, the soul represents Śivalinga
The delusive five senses are lovely lamps [studded with] precious stones.¹⁴⁶

The *Tirumantiram* critiques the six faiths “as a pit of illusion” (*māyakkūḷi*) for their failure to get a glimpse of the god¹⁴⁷ who dwells in the body –temple, like the rising spark that stays within a bamboo.¹⁴⁸ Tirumūlar claims that he caught sight of the god in the shining body-land.¹⁴⁹ Another verse designates the divine as the ruler of the body-land –“*kāyananṇāṭan*” (2550/2071), as a hero in the *akam* poetry is spoken of as *kunra*

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ David Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Marriage in South Indian Śaivism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 48.

¹⁴⁵ Ramanujan, A.K., *Poems of Love and War from Eight Anthologies and Ten Long Poems of Classical Tamil* (New York: Columbia Press, 1985), 295.

¹⁴⁶ uḷḷam peruṅ kōyil ūṇṭampu ālayam
vaḷḷal pirāṇārkkku vāy kōpuravācal
teḷḷat teḷintārkkuc cīvaṅ civaliṅkam
kaḷḷap puḷaṅ aintum kāḷāmaṅi viḷakkē (TM 1823)

¹⁴⁷ āyattuḷ niṅṅa arucamayaṅkaḷum
kāyattuḷ niṅṅa kaṭavuḷaik kāṅkilar
māyakkūḷiyil vīḷvar (TM 1530:1-3)

¹⁴⁸ vēyiṅ eḷumkaṅal pōlēim meyyeṅum
kōyil iruntu kuṭikoṅṭa kōṅ nanti (TM 116:1-2)

¹⁴⁹eṅkaḷ celvaṅaik
kāyaminnāṭṭiṭaik kaṅṭukoṅṭēṅē (TM 2982:3-4)

nāṭaṅ (36:2, 38:3, 74:2 90:6, 241:7), ōṅkumalai nāṭaṅ (88:1, 217:5), cūrmalai nāṭaṅ (105:5), malaikeḷu nāṭaṅ (170:4), and peruṅkal nāṭaṅ (288:2) in Kuṟuntokai.

In the Tamil worldview, space does not have an intrinsic value of its own. It becomes hallowed and worthy of worship as a result of its identification with the divine.

The *Tirumantiram* illustrates the idea when it says:

Once I regarded the body with disfavour
But I perceived the One within
The supreme being made my body his temple
Hence, I keep preserving it with diligence.¹⁵⁰

Thus, the indigenous conception of immanence of the sacred is one of the fundamental principles on which the doctrine of liberation is based. I show below how the poetic expression “kaṭavuḷ domiciled in the house” *illurai kaṭavuḷ* (Aka. 282:18) is appropriated by the *Tirumantiram* to communicate this notion. *Il* and *illam* are synonyms meaning domicile in classical Tamil as well as in medieval Tamil.

That One does not have another abode there except This One’s [body]
Let [them] ascertain if That One has any other abode.
Even after [they] determine that This One’s [body] is That One’s abode
They keep on blabbering “That One is extrinsic [to This One’s body]”¹⁵¹

In this verse, demonstrative, proximate/remote masculine pronouns *avaṅ* (that one) and *ivaṅ* (this one) are used to indicate Śiva and the soul respectively. I interpret the term *illam* (abode) as the human body, in keeping with the fundamentals on which living liberation is founded. However, Varatarājan takes it to mean the heart or the mind, which is evocative of bhakti ideology.

¹⁵⁰ uṭampinaṅai muṇṇam iḷukkeṅ riruntēṅ
uṭampinu kkuḷē uruporuḷ kaṇṭēṅ
uṭampuḷē uttamaṅ kōyil koṇṭāṅ
uṭampinaṅai yāṇṇirun tōmpukiṅ rēṇē (TM 725)

¹⁵¹ ivaṅilla malla tavaṅukkaṅ killai
avaṅukkum vēṇillam uṇṭā aṟiyiṅ
avaṅuk kivaṅilla meṇṇēṅ raṟintum
avaṅaip puṟampeṅ raṟaṟru kiṇṇārē (TM 2650)

The *Tirumantiram* reflects the centrality of the human body in the conceptual scheme of ancient Tamils. The significance of the body cannot be overemphasised in ancient Tamil society that valorized the ideals of love and war. The body is variously referred to as *uṭampu*, *uṭal*, *mey* and *yākkai* in the texts. It is perceived as the primary medium for expressing emotions. In *Akam* poetry the tight embrace of the lovers is often mentioned: “They embraced each other as if their bodies would enter each other’s.” *meypukuvanna kaikavar muyakkam* (Aka. 11:10; 305:6; 379:15). Sensual pleasure is referred to as *meyvāl uppu* (Aka. 390-11). Emotions are linked to the body: Joy pervades the body: *meymmalintu āṇā uvakaiyēm āyiṇem* (Aka. 262:12), *meymmalī uvakai* (Aka. 56:13); anger that fills the frame *uṭarciṇam* (Kuṛi. 159). When there is a conflict between the heart and intellect, the body that is caught between the two suffers. (Naṛ. 284:11). Classical Tamil poetics discusses an element of poetry *meypṭāṭu* (physical manifestation of emotions)¹⁵² and the legend in *Iraiyāṇār Akapporuḷ Urai* shows that the body plays a vital role in determining the quality of poetry.¹⁵³

¹⁵² See Martha Ann Selby, “Rasa and Mey-P-Pātu in Sanskrit and Tamil Poetics” *Journal of Oriental Research*, LXVIII (1998):15-40. Norman Cutler, *Songs of Experience: The Poetics of Tamil Devotion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

¹⁵³ There was a famine in the Pāṇṭiya kingdom for twelve years. The king summoned the poets and said that he was no longer able to support them and asked them to go somewhere else and return to the country when it is fertile again. When the rains fell, the country flourished once again and the scholars returned. But the king was saddened to find no scholar among those returnees, who was versed in the field of subject-matter (poruḷ). The God at the Maturai decided to remove the distress of the king by composing the work called *Kaḷaviyal*. The jubilant king appealed to the scholars in his court to comment on the work. But the scholars could not find consensus on the interpretation of the work. Again the God at the Maturai temple helped the scholars find an arbitrator who would decide on the best commentary. They heard a voice saying: “In this city there lives a five –year-old boy with innocent eyes and thin hair; he is Uruttiracāṇmaṇ, the son of Uppūri Kuṭi Kīlār, and he is a mute. Do not deprecate him for that, but bring him here and cause him to sit upon this seat. Then, when beneath him you utter the true meaning of a verse, tears will come to his eyes, and his body hair will bristle; when he hears a commentary that is not the true meaning, he will simply sit quietly. He is really the God Kumāraṇ, who has been made to appear here through a curse.” (David C. Buck and K. Paramasivam, trans. *The Study of Stolen Love*, 8). Accordingly, Uruttiracāṇmaṇ was brought and seated on the dais. The boy sat unmoved as scholars read their commentaries. When Maturai Marutaṇiḷa Nākaṇār gave his interpretation of the work, at certain points the boy showed some bodily changes. But when Kaṇakkāyaṇār’s son Nakkīraṇār started his interpretation of

Interpenetration of Divinity and Humanity: The King and God

The notion that the king and woman are considered as bearers of the sacred in the classical Tamil literature exemplifies the close connection between humanity and divinity. Let me focus on the king first. The following verse illustrates the predominant position occupied by the king in Tamil society.

Neither paddy nor water
 But the king is the life of vast earth
 Hence, to understand that "I am the life"
 Is the duty of the king, possessor of spear-wielding army
 nellum uyir aṅṅē nīrum uyir aṅṅē
 maṅṅaṅ uyirttē malartalai ulakam
 ataṅṅāl yāṅ uyir eṅṅpatu aṅṅikai
 vēṅmiku tāṅṅai vēṅtaṅṅkuk kaṅṅaṅē (PN 186)

Dubianski points out the differences in the conceptualisation of kingship in Vedic tradition and Tamil tradition, despite the fact that in both traditions the king is bearer of the sacred force.¹⁵⁴ The king derives his sacred force from the boundless energies of the cosmos in the Vedic tradition; thus, he is a representation of cosmic power, that is, the cosmic overlord (Prajāpati), and accordingly, the ritual symbolism of the *rājasūya* sacrifice is cosmic in character. The king's relation with the cosmic force is mediated by the Brahman. On the contrary, the king in the Tamil tradition draws his sacred force from within:

For an ancient Tamil the sacred force *aṅṅku* is devoid of a cosmic dimension; it is close at hand, is inherent in humans and in certain objects surrounding them and can be perceived by the senses as something very domestic. Hence concrete and down-to-earth symbolism employed in the ritual. A Tamil king is very much alive, too: a character who represents the sacred force directly and personally. He somehow embodies this sacred force, personifies it thus becoming an active participant in the ritual, for example, by performing a victory dance with his warriors. At the same time –it should be borne in mind- his status, in accordance with the ancient Tamil concept of the sacred, is not essentially different from the status of the divinity[Hart 1975:12].¹⁵⁵

the work, his eyes watered throughout the session and his body hair stood on end. Thus the scholars readily accepted Nakkīraṅṅār's commentary as the one that carries true meaning of the work.

¹⁵⁴ Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, 60.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 61.

As *kaṭavuḷ* and *aṇaṅku*, the king embodying the sacred force is also linked to a place or a landscape. For instance, the heroine expresses her mental anguish due to separation from her lover whom she refers to as chief of the four types of landscape:

O evening that breaks heart!
 You appear with more intense heat than before
 As the lover
 -whose land abounds in forests streaked with a host of streams
 -Whose land is dotted with small hills
 -Whose land is surrounded by paddy fields
 -Whose land borders on the sea
 Has separated from us.¹⁵⁶

In one of the *Puranānūru* poems, the bard wonders how he would sing his patron.

All epithets that figure in the poem relate the king to various landscapes.

Will I address *Kothai* as chief of hilly tract
 Or the head of agricultural tract
 Or the maritime tract
 pāṭimiḷ paṇikkaṭaṭ cēppaṇ eṅkō
 yāṅkaṇam moḷikō ōṅkuvāḷ kōtaiyai¹⁵⁷

The expressions frequently occurring in the *akam* poetry-as *malaikēḷu nāṭaṇ* (Pura.135:13) *naḷimalai nāṭaṇ* (Pura.150:28) *peruṅkal nāṭaṇ* (Pura.157:13) *vaṅpulanāṭaṇ* (Pura.172:8) *vaḷamalai nāṭaṇ* (Naṭ. 25:5)- suggest that as the divine, the king is always seen in relation to the region he rules.

The identity between divinity and humanity is enhanced by human ideals being projected on to the divine plane. Murukaṇ is represented as *cāṅrōṇ* (the best of men, the

¹⁵⁶ kaṇaṅkoḷ aruvik kāṅkeḷu nāṭaṇ
 kuṟumpoṟai nāṭaṇ nalvayal ūraṇ
 taṅkaṭaṭ cēppaṇ pirinteṇap paṅtaiyiṭ
 kaṭumpakal varuti kaiyaṟu mālai
 koṭuṅkaḷi neytalum kūmpak
 kālai variṇum kaḷaiṅarō ilarē
 (Aṅk. 183)

¹⁵⁷ nāṭaṇ eṅkō ūraṇ eṅkō
 pāṭimiḷ paṇikkaṭaṭ cēppaṇ eṅkō
 yāṅkaṇam moḷikō ōṅkuvāḷ kōtaiyai (Pura. 49)

hero or *talaivaṇ*) in the Caṅkam literature.¹⁵⁸ The abstract generic concepts occurring in the texts—youth, beauty, love, vigour, and heroism—are applicable to both Murukaṇ and *cāṇrōṇ*. Murukaṇ is also depicted as having embraced the Tamil ideal of premarital union (*kaḷavu maṇam*). One of the *Paripāṭal* verses (9) speaks of his marriage with Vaḷḷi as superior to his marriage with Devasenā.

...and it is no exaggeration to speak of him as the Tamil “god” *par excellence*, in whom the Tamils of the classical Caṅkam age envisaged the divine in a personalised form, and who at the same time represented their human ideals on a divine plane. Thus it would not seem to be correct to label Caṅkam society secular; awareness of supernatural forces may have been more typical of the common people, while the *cāṇrōṇ* would add a humanistic accent to those forces, but a certain interpenetration (particularly in the figure of Murukaṇ) can be detected.¹⁵⁹

Subbiah claims that no other notion reflects the interpenetration of humanity and divinity than the notion of *talaivaṇ* that is expounded in the works on Tamil poetics.¹⁶⁰ “In a sense, the notion of *talaivaṇ* was a point of convergence that enabled the Tamils to identify and define the intersecting dimensions of the divine and the human....it was (and is) a notion that remained the bedrock for expressing the experiential relationship with the “other” in Tamil culture.”¹⁶¹ That *talaivaṇ* (patron of bards) could be human as in *Perumpāṇāṇṟruppaṭai* or divine as in *Tirumurukāṇṟruppaṭai*, reflects the deep-lying belief of early Tamils that dimensions of humanity and divinity are interconnected. Subbiah notes that “it is one of those seminal notions in which the Tamils sought and achieved a synthesis of particular (*puṟam* hero), the universal (*akam* hero), and that which is neither or both (the divine).”¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ The term *cāṇrōṇ* (plural of *cāṇrōṇ*) originally referred to warriors and heroes. The primary sense of the term is “capability, endurance and sufficiency.” There was a shift in the meaning of the word during the medieval period. It came to denote the learned and the noble. The poets of the Caṅkam anthologies are called *cāṇrōṇ*. See K. Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, 229-230.

¹⁵⁹ Hardy, *Viraha-bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India*, 134.

¹⁶⁰ Subbiah, *Roots of Tamil Religious Thought*, 111.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

The interpenetration of humanity and divinity may also be observed in the following verses: Referring to *Kalittokai* verses 103-106, Hardy points out that *kuravai* is performed in praise of the god and the king at the end of the ceremony of bull-fight.¹⁶³ Subbiah provides an example of *vallāippāṭṭu* (pestle song) from *Kalittokai* (43) in which the heroine and her friend praise the hero on the pretext of extolling Murukan.¹⁶⁴ He explains how humanity and divinity converge in the concept of *talaivaṅ* in the multi-layered classical poetry.

It is noteworthy, however, that it is the colophon that suggests the narrative frame and turns it into a love poem. Concurrently, it is a religious poem too, and, as the girl friend says, it is meant to be a poem in praise of Murukan to the unsuspecting listeners. The poem could well have been rendered a *puram* one if the hero had been identified in the colophon, if not in the poem itself. What is more significant from our point of view is that the poem not only affords a good example of the multivalent character of the poem itself as it puts 'frame within frame', but also shows how the concept of *talaivaṅ* was a multi-layered one that encompassed both the human and the divine.¹⁶⁵

The concept of interpenetration of humanity and divinity suggests a fundamental unity between the two, which is one of the central presuppositions of the *Tirumantiram* and which is expressed in several ways. On one hand, the divine Śiva is considered as indwelling in the human body. On the other, the human who experiences the truth (Siddha) attains the state of divinity (*civam*) and is worshipped as the divine.¹⁶⁶ Besides, the human preceptor who confers knowledge is none other than Śiva who is immanent in the body. At times, this identification is very confusing to a point at which one cannot recognize if reference is made to the deity or the preceptor. Tirumūlar uses the same term Nandi to refer both to his preceptor and Śiva.

¹⁶³ Hardy, *Viraha-bhakti: The Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India*, 188.

¹⁶⁴ Subbiah, *Roots of Tamil Religious Thought*, 112-114.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹⁶⁶ pōyvaṅkaṅkum poruḷāyiruntaṅamē (TM 2674).

Identification with the Divine

Another concept that explains the close relation between the human and the divine is *veri*.¹⁶⁷ Ramanujan defines *veri* as a frenzied mood that characterised Tamil war poems and *bhakti* poems.¹⁶⁸ Yet, *veri* has several connotations in the Caṅkam literature; of them two are significant to our discussion. One is possession and the other is frenzied dance of *Vēlaṅ*. In the following examples, the term *veri* is used in the sense of possession. *Vēlaṅ* (mis)diagnoses the lovesickness of the heroine as the state of being spirit-possessed: *veriyēṇa vēlaṅ uraikkuṁ* (Naṟ. 273:4) *veriyēṇa uṇarnta vēlaṅ nōy maruntu ariyāṅ* (Kuṟu..360:1-2). In order to cure her of possession, *Vēlaṅ* performs a dance called *veri*. Thus, the malady and remedy are denoted by the same term (*veri*).

The events that lead to *Vēlaṅ*'s dance is vividly described in the Caṅkam works. Following separation from her lover, there appear visible changes in the body of the heroine. The love-sickness called *pacalai* destroys the beauty of her forehead.¹⁶⁹ Bracelets slip from her arms; the eyes lose their lustre.¹⁷⁰ Malicious tongued women utter slander about the physical state of the heroine.¹⁷¹ The heroine's mother is perturbed over the emaciated body of her daughter.¹⁷² Unfortunately she is not aware that the

¹⁶⁷ The University of Madras Tamil Lexicon attributes eighteen meanings to this term: toddy, intoxication, giddiness, bewilderment, insanity, frenzy, anger, hastiness, fragrance, dance of a priest possessed by god *Murukaṅ*, song sung in *veri-y-āṭṭu*, wildness, devil, deity, sheep, ignorance, fear, and disease.

¹⁶⁸ A.K. Ramanujan, *Hymns for the Drowning: Poems for Viṣṇu by Nammālvār*, 117.

¹⁶⁹ *nutarkaviṅ alikkum pacalai* (Naṟ. 73:10)

¹⁷⁰ *tōlē toṭikotpu āṇā kaṇṇē*
vāḷir vaṭiyiṅ vaṭiviḷantaṅavē (Naṟ. 133:1-2)

¹⁷¹ *vevvāyp peṅṭir kavvai tūrra* (Naṟ. 133:6)

¹⁷² ...*vārkōl*
ceṟintilaṅku elvaḷai nekiḷntamai nōkkik
kaiyaṟu neṅciṅaḷ (Aka. 98:6-8)

disease was caused by the lover¹⁷³ and that the union with him would bring an end to her daughter's suffering.¹⁷⁴ She therefore, consults female soothsayers:

The women of traditional wisdom
Adept in lying
Shake the rice and divine
“This disease is caused by Murukan”¹⁷⁵

Sometimes the mother would invite a male priest and a diviner Vēlan̄ to diagnose as to what ails her daughter. He uses kaḷanku (Molucca beans) to diagnose the distress of the girl.¹⁷⁶ He tells the mother that the disease has been caused by the deity and he knows the cure for it.¹⁷⁷ Then, the place for Vēlan̄'s dance (*kaḷam*) is prepared; a large *pantal* is constructed where the frenzied dance (*veṛi*) takes place.¹⁷⁸ The mother worships the arena where Vēlan̄'s dance takes place by sacrificing a lamb;¹⁷⁹ the millet mixed with blood is strewn across the sacrificial ground. Vēlan̄ wears the garland of *kadampu* and dances to the beat of drums reciting the names of Murukan̄.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷³aru nōy

kātaḷaṅ tantamai aṛiyātu (Naṛ.3-4)

¹⁷⁴ muṇitaka niṛutta nalkal evvam

cūruṛai verpaṅ mārpuraṭ taṇital

aṛintaṅaḷ allaḷ aṅṅai (Aka. 98:5-6)

¹⁷⁵mutuvāyp

poyval peṅṭir pirappuḷarpu iri i

murukaṅ āṛ aṅṅaku eṅṛaliṅ (Aka. 98:9-10)

¹⁷⁶ aṅṅakuṛu kaḷaṅkiṅ mutuvāy vēlan̄ (Naṛ. 282:5)

¹⁷⁷ emmiṛai aṅṅkaliṅ vantaṅṛu innōy

taṅimaruntu aṛival (Aka. 388:20-21)

¹⁷⁸ veṛi ayar viyaṅkaḷam (Aka. 98: 19; 182 :17; 242:11)

vēlan̄ veṛi ayar kaḷattu (Aka. 114:2)

vēlan̄ puṅainta veṛiyayar kaḷantorum (Kuru. 53:3)

veṛiyayar kaḷattiṅiḷ tōṅṛum (Kuru...318:3)

vēlan̄ taiiya veṛiyayar kaḷaṅum (Tiru. 222)

¹⁷⁹aṅṅai

veṛiyayar viyaṅkaḷam poliya ētti

maṛiyuyir vaḷaṅkā aḷavai (Aka. 242: 10-12)

...tōḷi vēṛuṅarntu

aṅṅakaṛi kaḷaṅkiṅ kōṭṭam kāṭṭi

veṛiyēṅa uṅarnta uḷḷamoṭu maṛiyaruttup (Naṛ. 47:9)

¹⁸⁰ veṛipuri ētil vēlan̄ (Aka. 292:4-5)

Both in possession and dance, the human comes into contact with the divine. The heroine's misdiagnosed state of sickness known as *veṛi* is rooted in the belief that young girls are susceptible to the influence of malevolent gods or spirits and that the involuntary possession by these spirits produces symptoms in the girls' body. On the other hand, the priest *Vēlaṅ* voluntarily decides to deal with the spirit/god in order to remove the suffering of the girl. Dressed like *Murukaṅ* who is supposed to have caused the disease, he performs *veṛi*. In that frenzied state the deity is deemed to have descended on him. (*vēlaṅ vēṅṅa veṛi maṅai vantōy* - Naṅ. 37:9). The priest *Vēlaṅ* is supposed to have the power to cure the disease in the state of possession. It is notable that the one who causes the disease and the one who seeks to cure it bear the same name *Vēlaṅ*.

Possession is related to the indigenous cult and worship of *Murukaṅ*. Ramanujan explains the state of the priest being possessed by *Murukaṅ* as depicted in lines 190-209 of the late classical poem *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* (A Guide to Lord *Murukaṅ*). In the section *kunrutōrāṭal* (dancing on each and every hill) from *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*, the priest *Vēlaṅ* is first described.

The One with a spear (*Vēlaṅ*)
wears a chaplet made of
a beautiful cluster of tailed pepper,
fragrant wild jasmine, and
white three-lobed nightshade,
strung on the tender creeper
interspersed with nutmegs (190-192)

Ramanujan introduces him as a possessed shaman who bears the name of his deity (*Vēlaṅ*). The initial ambiguity that originates from the name pervades the remaining section of the poem. Following the descriptions of tribal men drinking toddy and

performing *kuravai*, and of women dancing in leaf-skirt,¹⁸¹ a meticulous portrayal of the deity is given. Here Ramanujan brings out the notion of identification of the priest with the deity, which is latent in the poem.

the shaman
is the Red One himself,
is in red robes;¹⁸²

The section ends with a reference to the women with whom the god/priest dances embracing their tender shoulders on the hills.

He dances the god's dance, he wears the Red One's robes and insignia, carries His lance (vēl) imitating the god till he becomes Him, simulating him until he is assimilated. The words of Murukan and Vēlan (the one with the lance) mean both the god and the shamanic priest who is his devotee.¹⁸³

As Ramanujan observes, “when the poem ends, the chief dancer and the god have become one. The dancer does not simply worship or adore the god; he invokes the god by representing him.”¹⁸⁴ Thus, the ritual dance of Vēlan reflects the religious experience in which the priest totally identifies himself with the deity. This is not much different from the ultimate goal sought by Siddhas in the *Tirumantiram* through the practice of yoga.

Nature of the sacred : Heat

Ancient Tamils conceived the sacred as a malevolent power inherent in various objects found in Tamil country. Since it was dangerous, it had to be kept under control ; otherwise it would bring about disaster. Objects and persons, invested with *aṇaṅku* were

¹⁸¹ The hill-tribe men
of brightly-hued chests smeared with fragrant sandal,
given to the cruel practice of hunting with strong bows.
drink the sweet, clarified toddy fermented in long bamboos
in the company of their kindred from a hilly hamlet
And perform *kuravai* to the beat of small drum *tonṭakam* (193-197)

¹⁸² Ramanujan's translation.

¹⁸³ A.K. Ramanujan, *Hymns for the Drowning: Poems for Viṣṇu* by Nammālvārā, 115.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

regarded spiritually significant. Certain categories of persons imbued with *aṇaṅku* had the ability to manipulate it. The two most concentrations of *aṇaṅku* were the king and woman. Low caste bards played a key role in controlling the sacred powers of the king. Except the king, other persons and objects infused with *aṇaṅku* were considered dangerous to anyone above their status. Hart compares this sacred power to Polynesian *mana* –a sacred impersonal force concentrated in persons, animals and inanimate objects. However, Dubianski treats *aṇaṅku* as a natural power rather than a supernatural force. He interprets *aṇaṅku* as natural heat and links it to fire and fiery nature. Thus, dry land (*pālai*), sexual passion, death, blood, and suffering are associated with *aṇaṅku*.¹⁸⁵ Dubianski finds support for his theory in Brenda Beck’s anthropological research on South Indian ritual.

According to Brenda Beck, “Heat is associated with life and fertility. The energy that can both activate and nullify life is a kind of heat. The heat, when taken alone, however, can be highly dangerous. It must be focussed and controlled in order to become a source of power which humans and superhumans can utilize.”¹⁸⁶ Heat is also related to illness, suffering and sexual passion. Whereas impurity is related to heat, for instance, menses and child-birth, recovering from pain or impure state is interpreted as channelling and controlling heat. Thus, sexual intercourse is deemed cooling as it controls the passions of fire.¹⁸⁷ Beck also points out that a colour scheme is used for a symbolic expression of heat related conditions: fire is associated with the colour red, while coolness –with the white colour. Accordingly, the structure of a typical ritual may be

¹⁸⁵ George L. Hart, III, Some Related Literary Conventions in Tamil and Indo-Aryan and Their Significance Author(s), *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 94, No. 2, (Apr. - Jun., 1974), 157-167; Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, 10-11.

¹⁸⁶ Brenda Beck, “Colour and Heat in South Indian Ritual” *Man* 4 (1969), 553.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 562.

presented as “the progression from an inferior condition (white) through a point of transition (red) to a new superior condition also white.”¹⁸⁸

The Tirumaniram often refers to the power of fiery nature inherent in the body: “the red flame emerging from below the navel.”¹⁸⁹ This power is denoted as *kaṇal* –fire (1949), *mūlattu aḷal* “the fire at the base” (1962). Though this fiery power could be identified as *kuṇḍalinī*, it is not mentioned by name in the text. The term *kuṇṭali* occurs in verse 580, pointing to the seat of the fiery power.

As we see in the *Tirumantiram*, the Siddha is the one who has complete mastery over this fiery power in the body. As the king’s sacred power is tended by panegyric performance accompanied by music and dance, or as the woman’s sexual power is regulated within marriage, this fiery power is brought under control by uniting it with Śiva in the head. This is compared to sexual union (*puṇarcci*) between man and woman based on love (*aṇpu*).

Becoming immortal: conquering time

The singlemost phenomenon that defines and distinguishes divinity from humanity is deathlessness. In this section I argue that the concept of immortality forms part of the worldview of the ancient Tamil society. I define the term immortality as “unending life on earth”, which is an integral aspect of the doctrine of living liberation. Primary objectives of *yoga* enunciated in the *Tirumantiram* include immortality which is highlighted in the third *Tantra*: Those who practise *yoga* will spurn the God of death,¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 557.

¹⁸⁹ *kōlitta kuṇṭaliyuḷḷē eḷum ceñcuṭar* (TM 580)

¹⁹⁰ *kūrṟai utaikkum kuṟiyatu vāmē*. (TM 571:4)

vanquish death,¹⁹¹ exist in eternity (they will experience neither day nor night),¹⁹² conquer time,¹⁹³ stay young forever,¹⁹⁴ and live for an aeon.¹⁹⁵ Their body will be imperishable.¹⁹⁶ They will not hear the word *death* even in their dream.¹⁹⁷

Desire for unending life on earth is quite strong among Tamils as evidenced by the Caṅkam literature and is expressed in three ways. Firstly, the Caṅkam works contain mythological references to *amṛta*, the nectar of immortality that was churned out of the milky ocean by gods. For instance, *Paripāṭal* (2:69-71) mentions Tirumāl as the bestower of immortality to gods. By means of *amṛta*, the gods attained non-senility, eternal vigour and the state of immortality.

Six different forms of the term *amṛta* are found in the classical literature without a pronounced change in their meaning: *amirtam*,¹⁹⁸ *amirtu*,¹⁹⁹ *amiḷtam*,²⁰⁰ *amiḷtu*,²⁰¹ *amutam*,²⁰² and *amutu*.²⁰³ They are mostly used in connection with sweetness or longevity in the Caṅkam works. Usage of the term does not seem to differ from that of *amṛta* in Sanskrit. Since it is connected to Sanskrit mythology, it falls outside the purview of the indigenous notion of immortality.

¹⁹¹ namaṇillaṭṭāṇē (TM 574:4)

¹⁹² pakaliravillaiyē (TM 577:4)

¹⁹³ kālattai vellum karuttitu tāṇē (TM 583:4)

¹⁹⁴ pālaṇum āvāṇ (TM 590:4)

¹⁹⁵ ūḷi irukkalumāmē (TM 591:4)

¹⁹⁶ tēkattukkeṇṇum citaivillaiyāmē (TM 581: 4)

¹⁹⁷ mēlai vācal veḷiyuṛak kaṇṭapiṇ

kālaṇ vārttai kaṇāvilum illaiyē (TM 622)

¹⁹⁸ Pari. 8:120; 2:69

¹⁹⁹ Pari. 3:33; 8:121; 12:57; Maturai.532; Pati. 16:12

²⁰⁰ Aka. 207:2; 332:13; 335:25; Kali. 81:14; Kuṛu.83:1;201:1; 206:1; 286:2; Puṛa. 182:2; 392:20

²⁰¹ Aka. 169:6; 170:5; 213:18; Kali. 4:13; 20:11; Kuṛu. 14:1; Ciṛu. 101,227; Naṛ. 230:3; Pati. 17:11; 51:21; Pari. 3:15; Puṛa. 10:7; 125:8; 150:14; 361:19; 390:17; Maturai. 197.

²⁰² Naṛ.65:1; 88:4 ;Maturai.601

²⁰³ Puṛa.399:21; Perum.475

Secondly, it was believed that certain edibles would confer immortality. For instance, Auvaīyār praises her patron Atiyamāṇ Neṭumāṇ Añci for being unselfish in gifting her a myrobolan fruit that might rescue her from death.

In the fissure of the ancient great mountain
Grew a small-leaved myrobolan plant, hard to reach
Without thinking to eat its delicious fruit yourself
And suppressing the desire in your heart
You gave it to us so that we might conquer death (Pura.91:7-11)

Thirdly, immortality is sought by heroes (*talaivan*) in the form of fame. This subject needs to be discussed within the framework of the relations between patron and bard as immortality could be found only in the words of bards. The panegyric poetry constitutes the bardic function of regulating the sacred powers of the king. Immortality is interpreted as acquisition of fame which is highly valued by heroes. Though fame is one of the highly desirable qualities in many societies, the degree of importance placed on this concept by ancient Tamils made it a distinctive mark of their culture.²⁰⁴

Puraṇānūru attributes two types of existence to heroes: one is physical or material existence, and the other is conceptual existence, rooted in fame. Several words connote fame in Caṅkam corpus: *pukaḷ*, *icai*, *urai*, *perumpeyar*, and *cīrtti*. The term *pukaḷ* stems from the root *pukaḷ* meaning to state or to sound. Hence, *pukaḷ* connotes an existence in the laudatory words of bards. The poet Peruṅkaṭuṅkō speaks about a warrior thus:

If you ask
Where is the one of great deeds,
Who fulfilled his duty towards his country?
.....
.....
He has established his good fame in all directions
He is alive in the words of oral bards²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts*, 67.

²⁰⁵ cēṇ viḷaṅku nallicai niṭṭi
nānavil pulavar vāy uḷḷāṇē (Pura.282:12-13).

Pukaḷ is achieved through deeds difficult to accomplish, specifically through unregrettable acts,²⁰⁶ valour,²⁰⁷ wealth,²⁰⁸ magnanimity,²⁰⁹ vanquishing enemies,²¹⁰ fulfilling one's arduous duty²¹¹ and victory.²¹² The heroes establish their fame on earth by means of these feats.²¹³

Fame is eternal and everlasting. It defies the limitations of space and time. The fame of the valiant ruler of *Vañci* reaches the heavens (*viṇ poru pukaḷ viṛal vañci* Pura. 11: 6). It is spread far and wide on earth (*cēṇ viḷaṅku pukaḷ* Pura.10:11). Thus, it transcends all limitations of physical world and is linked to natural phenomena: the sun and the earth. (Pura.6). Poetess Auvaīyār grieves over the death of her friend Atiyamāṇ Neṭumāṇ Añci in Verse 231 in which she acknowledges inevitability of death, and at the same time asserts that his fame defies death.

The fame of the one who is analogous to the bright Sun, will not die.²¹⁴

The conceptual existence of heroes has a religious dimension that often gets overlooked. The reason for the words of a bard being highly valued is that he is also a possessor of the sacred. The poets are described as those who possess lofty words,²¹⁵ true words,²¹⁶ and subtle wisdom to choose beautiful words.²¹⁷ The poet Kapilan who orally

²⁰⁶ Pura.10-11

²⁰⁷ Pura.:32

²⁰⁸ Pura.47:9

²⁰⁹ Pura.39:4;127:9; 151:5; 159:20.

²¹⁰ Pura.39:7

²¹¹ Pura.282: 2

²¹² PN.63:3;159:26

²¹³ tam pukaḷ niṛṭi, Pura.18:3

²¹⁴ oṇ ṇāyīru aṇṇōṇ pukaḷ māyalavē (Pura. 231:6)

āṇṭu nī peyarnta piṇṇum iṇṭu nīṭu viḷaṅkum nī eytiya pukaḷē (Pura.359: 17-18)

oru tām ākiya perumaiyōrum tam pukaḷ niṛṭic ceṇru māyntaṇarē (Pura.366:4-5).

²¹⁵ uyar moḷip pulavīr (Pura.394:5)

²¹⁶ vāymoḷippulavīr (Pura.221:10)

²¹⁷ aṅcol nuṇ tērcip pulavar nā (Pura.235:13)

composes poetry on many subjects and who possesses abundant knowledge²¹⁸ is celebrated as the one whose tongue never lies.²¹⁹ In this context, another epithet *mutuvāy*²²⁰ (possessor of ancient wisdom) is significant as it links the bards with the power of divination. The term *mutuvāy* is used as an adjective of elderly women priestess, Vēlaṅ priest, and a lizard to denote possession and prophesy. When the same epithet is used for bards, it can be construed that bards are also considered prophetic and possessed.²²¹ Kailasapathy rightly points out that the bards were engaged in some mantic activity that conferred them a state of divinity.

We have seen that the epithet ‘ancient wisdom’ is used for bards and minstrels. ...The natural and perhaps the obvious inference one can make is that a poetic tradition with a pre-dominant or very considerable mantic element stood behind the usage of the epithet. This association of possession and prophesy with the bards, which thereby ascribed a touch of divinity to them, vestigial though it might be in later times as in the Heroic Age, had still enough sanction to make them considered sacred.²²²

Because of the state of divinity inhered in them, the bards were able to channel the sacred force of the king through their panegyric performance and also to curse and caste spells. For instance, for gifting her a myrobolan fruit Auvaiyār glorifies Atiyamāṅ Neṭumāṅ Añci as a hero who garners victory by destroying his enemies with his sword on the battle field and blesses him with long life : “May you live as long as He who has the resplendent crescent moon on his head lives.”²²³ On the other hand, the poet Kapilar indirectly curses king Iruṅkōvēḷ for his failure in meeting the obligations towards him by reminding him of the calamity that befell on the long-established city Araiyaṁ because one of his ancestors offended the bard Kaḷāttalai, author of renowned poetry.²²⁴ The poet

²¹⁸ ceṛutta ceyyuḷ ceycen nāviṅ verutta kēḷvi viḷaṅkupukaḷk kapilaṅ (Puṛa.53: 11-12)

²¹⁹ poyyā nāviṅ kapilaṅ (Puṛa.174:10)

²²⁰ mutuvāy iravala (Puṛa.48:6; 70:5; 180:9)

²²¹ Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, 63-65.

²²² Ibid.,67.

²²³ Puṛa.91: 5-7.

²²⁴ nīṭunilai araiyattuk kēṭum kēḷ

The next chapter evaluates the contribution of Sanskrit traditions to the making of the *Tirumantiram* and locates living liberation in the overall conceptual framework borrowed from *āgamic* texts.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TIRUMANTIRAM AND REVEALED TRADITIONS

This chapter analyzes the relationship between Sanskrit traditions¹ and the *Tirumantiram*,² which has not been hitherto dealt with adequately in secondary literature.³ By Sanskrit traditions, I refer primarily to the revealed textual traditions in Sanskrit. Kullūkabhatta of the fifteenth century states in his commentary on *Manusmṛti* 2:1 that there are two types of revelation (*śruti*): *vedic* and *tantric*.⁴ The Vedic tradition is centred on sacrificial ritual, the ideologies of which are embedded in the orally transmitted repositories of mantras or liturgical formulae (*saṃhitās*), ritual instructions and expositions (*brāhṃaṇas*), and esoteric sections explicating hidden meanings of liturgical acts and terms, and philosophical speculations (*āranyakas* and *upaniṣads*). On the other hand, the Hindu *Tantra* is a theistic tradition which is

¹ Sanskrit represents a spectrum of pan-indic traditions such as the Vedic, purāṇic, tantric and yogic. Sanskrit traditions came under the influence of indigenous cultures since very early times. “Whatever tradition one studies in the classical Sanskrit sources, almost always there are indications of popular cults, local usages, and little traditions.” (J.F. Frits Staal, “Sanskrit and Sanskritization” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 22, No. 3, (1963): 268). Hence, the composite character of Sanskrit traditions is an indisputable fact. Sanskritization is now explained as a two-way process in which there has been a continual interaction between indigenous and Sanskrit elements. One cannot, therefore, speak of a transcendental, elitistic Sanskrit cultural register unaffected by vernacular traditions. (V. Raghavan “Variety and integration in the pattern of Indian culture” *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 15 (1956) : 497-505).

² It is not that all scholars acknowledge the role played by Sanskrit in the conceptualization and presentation of the *Tirumantiram*. For instance, in the commentary of Irāmanāta Piḷḷai, one of the ardent advocates of Neo-Śaivism, who subscribed to the vision of a glorious and independent Tamil past, all references to the Vedas and *āgamas* occurring in the *Tirumantiram* are taken to denote those composed in Tamil.

³ Only brief statements about the relationship between the *Tirumantiram* and the *āgamas* are found in secondary works. Narayana Ayyar states, “What Tirumūlar did was to render into Tamil the Śaiva doctrines as they were found in the Sanskrit Śaiva *āgamas* which were current both in Northern and Southern India for several centuries past.” See *Origin and Early History of Śaivism in South India* (University of Madras, 1974), 205. The view that the nine Tantras of the *Tirumantiram* represent the nine *āgamas* mentioned in Verse 63 is not based on any concrete evidence. Hence, Veḷḷaiivāraṇaṇ suggests that the *Tirumantiram* be considered as the essence of the *āgamas* in general. He treats the *Tirumantiram* as a primary text that was composed to convey the subject-matter of the *āgamas* in Tamil. See *Paṇṇiru Tirumuṛai varalāru*, Part II, 553-559. Three types of treatises are mentioned in Tamil: original treatise (*mutal nūl*), secondary treatise (*vaḷi nūl*) and *cārupu nūl* (supportive treatise). Arumugam considers the *Tirumantiram* an original/primary work, “very much influenced by the *āgamas*.” See “Introduction” in *Yoga of Siddha Tirumūlar* (Quebec: Babaji’s Kriya Yoga and Publications, Inc., 2004), 17. None of the scholars has, however, examined in detail how the *Tirumantiram* was influenced by the *āgamic* tradition.

⁴ *vaidikī tāntrikī caiva dvividhā kīrtitā śrutiḥ*.

A *tāntrika* (a follower of the tantric tradition) is distinct from a follower of the Vedas who is known as a *vaidika*.

mainly focused on the cult of deities and is categorised into three groups: Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Śākta. While Śākta *tantras* retain the generic title *tantra* for their scriptures, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *tantras* are known as *āgamas*⁵ and *saṃhitās* respectively. Though the term Śaiva means ‘relating to the deity Śiva’, it does not preclude the worship of Goddess (Śakti), who is regarded as an inherent power of Śiva. *Tantra* and *āgama* are held synonyms⁶; however, the *āgamas* relating to Southern Śaivism⁷ are rarely called a *tantra*.⁸

This chapter is confined to the revealed textual traditions which exist only in Sanskrit. Tamil has divinely inspired poetic compositions,⁹ and legends that ascribe the authorship of certain literary/grammatical works to Śiva.¹⁰ Yet, it never claims to possess a religious tradition that developed from the textual sources, which are believed to be revealed.¹¹

⁵ The term *āgama* is explained in several ways: *āgama* means “something that has come forth.” Since it emanates from Śiva, it is called an *agama*. A Sanskrit verse explains the meaning of the term *āgama* as follows: “The *āgamas* originated from the faces of Śiva, fell on the ears of Parāśakti, and spread in the world as the *mata* (religion) of the Śivabhaktas.”

āgatam śivavaktrebhyaḥ gatam ca girijāmukhe
matam ca śivabhaktānām āgamam ceti kathyate ||

See M. Arunachalam, *The Śaivāgamas* (Mayuram, Tamil Nadu: Gandhi Vidyalayam, 1983), 12.

⁶ *Tantra* and *āgama* are used interchangeably in this dissertation.

⁷ I borrow this term from Brunner who mentions the two branches of Āgamic Śaivism : Southern Śaivism and Northern Śaivism. “These convenient appellations do not indicate the birthplace of the two schools, but the country where they finally took root.” See “Jñāna and Kriyā: Relation between Theory and Practice in the Śaivāgamas” in *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism*, ed. Teun Goudriaan (New York: State University New York Press, 1992), 38.

⁸ Hélène Brunner, “Importance de la littérature āgamique pour l’étude des religions vivantes de l’Inde.” *Indologica Taurinensia* Vols.3-4 (1975-76):108.

⁹ The devotional hymns are generally believed to have been inspired by Śiva or Murugaṅ, creators of the Tamil language. (Kamil Zvelebil, *Companion Studies to the Tamil Literature*, 251) For instance, one of the *Tēvāram* saints Cuntarar is dumbfounded when he is commanded by Śiva to sing to him. Śiva, then suggests that he begin the composition with a word *pittā* (the insane) as Cuntarar has berated him as *pittā* at the time Śiva intervened at his wedding. Thus, Cuntarar’s first hymn is *pittā piraicūṭi* (O the insane! One who wears the moon on his head!). See *Periyapurāṇam*, Verses 216-220.

¹⁰ For instance, according to Nakkīrār’s commentary on the *Iraiyāṅār’s Kaḷaviyal*, the Lord of Ālavāy himself composed the treatise on the subject matter of *Akattiṅai* (Tamil love-poetry). In addition, three metrical compositions are attributed to Śiva: (a) a verse beginning with *konkutērvāḷkkai* in *Kuṟuntokai* (b) Tiruvālavāy uṭaiyār aruḷic ceyta *Tirumukap pācuram* incorporated in the eleventh *tirumurai*. (c) A solitary stanza *aṭiyārkkku eḷiyaṅ* commanding Umāpati, the last of the *cantāṅa kuravar*, to perform *nirvāṇadīkṣā* on Perrāṅ Cāmpāṅ.

¹¹ Āriya mumtami lumuṭa ṅēcollik

kārikai yārkkuk karuṇaicey tāṅē (TM 65:1-2)

The above lines from the *Tirumantiram* claim that the *āgamas* were also revealed in Tamil. However, we do not have any evidence to substantiate it.

The *Tirumantiram* is a medieval Tamil text that explicitly identifies with the *āgamic* tradition by designating itself as an *āgama*, and its internal divisions as *tantra*. In one of the autobiographical verses found in the prologue of the text, Tirumūlar states that having daily contemplated Śiva wearing a crescent moon, he began to compose the *āgama*.¹² He also maintains that he was renowned for his capabilities for enunciating a *Śivāgama*.¹³ This is supported by Verse 101 which states that Mūlan delivered a beautiful (Ta. *cuntara*, Skt.*sundara*) *āgamic* discourse in three thousand verses, grouped into nine *tantras*.¹⁴ However, the text distances itself from the establishment of temple and temple ritual, the focal points of the *āgamas* of Southern Śaivism.

In this chapter, I argue that the *Tirumantiram* betrays an ambiguous attitude towards the *āgamas* by recognizing their authority and appropriating their conceptual framework for the exposition of living liberation on one hand, and challenging the fundamental presuppositions of Śaivāgamic culture on the other: the primacy of ritual, unequal access to God and liberation dictated by class/caste (*varṇa/jāti*) considerations. According to the *āgamas* of Southern Śaivism, *kriyā* constitutes the primary means of liberation after death.¹⁵ Though ordinary initiation (*dīkṣā*)

¹² tanti matipuṇai aranaṭi nāṭorum

cintaicey tākamam ceppaluṛ rēṇē (TM 73:3-4)

¹³ ceppum civākamam eṇumap pērpeṛṛum (TM 74:1)

¹⁴mūlaṇ...

tantiram oṇpatu cārvu āyiram

cuntara ākamac col moḷintāṇē (TM 101:2-4)

Nonetheless, the *Tirumantiram* seems to suggest in the following lines that the *Vedāgamas* are the primary texts and any work that emerges to interpret them is a *tantra*. Hence, each Tantra of the Tirumantiram may be considered an illumination of the primary text. The Vedas and the *āgamas* are spoken of together because the Tirumantiram maintains that there exists no distinction between them.

ākum aṇāti kalaiyā kamavētam

ākumat tantira mannūḷ vaḷinirraḷ (TM 2379: 1-2)

Beginngless are the treatises the *āgamas* and the Vedas

Tantra is to act in accordance with them.

¹⁵ *Kriyā* is privileged in *āgamic* Śaivism whereas *jñāna* is celebrated by the Tamil school of Śaiva Siddhānta. A more balanced view is observable in the Kashmir Śaivism “which, although giving Jñāna a certain superiority over Kriyā at Śiva’s level, sees no divorce between reflection and action, and whose highest speculations were always

is granted to all four *varṇas*, and mixed castes, the *āgamas* are divided on the issue of accessibility of liberation to the majority of non-*dvijas*, who are debarred from the *nirvāṇadīkṣā* and the *ācāryābhiṣeka*. Besides, public worship done in temples (*parārthakriyā*) is the exclusive domain of Śivabrāhmaṇas or Ādiśaivas and the rules regarding proximity to God are governed by class/caste considerations. By foregrounding the classical Tamil concept of immanence of the sacred in the body-space and by establishing the dual path of yoga and *jñāna* to realize the divine within and become divine, the *Tirumantiram* sets forth a new theory of liberation that eliminates caste elitism and that shatters the primacy of ritual in the soteriological domain.

Another important aspect connected to its ideology of liberation is the propagation of monastic Śaivism. Richard Davis observes, “Emission and reabsorption are ubiquitous principles of the manifest cosmos and so may be observed in many different domains.”¹⁶ In the ritual domain, he continues, “the householder and the renouncer mirror, by their own actions and the purposes with which they undertake them, Śiva’s activities of emission and reabsorption, respectively.”¹⁷ The *Tirumantiram* identifies yoga with the path of reabsorption, and lays down ascetic values as a pre-requisite to the attainment of living liberation. By inculcating the ideals of renunciation and penance in the indigenous population of Tamil Nadu, generally classified as *sūdras* whose intent is enjoyment (*bhoga*) alone, the *Tirumantiram* paved a way for non-Brahman (Vēḷāḷa) dominated Śaiva monasteries (*maṭhas*) to emerge later in the Tamil country.

nourished by a sustained practice.” See Helene Brunner, “Jñāna and Kriyā: Relation between Theory and Practice in the Śaivāgamas”, 38.

¹⁶ “Becoming a Śiva, an Acting as One in Śaiva worship” in *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism*, ed. Teun Goudriaan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 109.

¹⁷ *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe: Worshipping Śiva in Medieval India* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 47.

At the same time, *Śivayoga* (one of the terms in the text denoting liberation), as conceptualized by the *Tirumantiram* is not at all devoid of *bhoga*.¹⁸

The *Tirumantiram*'s relationship with Vedic revelation is also highly complex and ambiguous. The text does not reject Vedic revelation, but assigns a lower position to it. It reconceptualises Vedic sacrificial liturgy, intended to sustain the universe, as a yogic means to personal salvation, and interprets liberation in terms of its own *Vedānta-Siddhānta* doctrine. This is generally interpreted as an attempt by the text to reconcile the differing Vedic and āgamic traditions by introducing a fresh soteriological exposition "*Vedānta-Siddhānta*" in Tamil. However, by adopting the basic stance of inclusivism, the *Tirumantiram* asserts the superiority of the *āgamas*, with which it identifies itself, over the Vedas. The *Tirumantiram*'s efforts in this direction have to be understood in the background of a far more complex relationship between the *āgamas* and the Vedas. The *tantric* revelation is seen "in contrast to the ancient, orthodox Brahmanical revelation of the Veda that the Tantras reject completely or accept as a lower level of scriptural authority."¹⁹ For instance, the *Mṛgendrāgama* begins with a discussion of "how the old Vedic forms of worship became superseded by the Śaiva cult."²⁰ The more esoteric a cult is, less it sees itself in line with the Vedic revelation. The purity rules of Brahmans are contravened

¹⁸ The monastic life envisaged by the *Tirumantiram* is not devoid of sexual elements as *paryaṅgayoga* is recognized as one of the primary forms of yoga. This antinomian practice might have been one of the reasons for "Siddha" Tirumūlar or his colleagues not being accorded recognition in the preceptorial lineage of orthodox Śaiva Vēlāḷa maṭhas that were established in the sixteenth century or later. Though Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai and Dharmapuram *ādhīnam*s (Ta. *ātīṇam*) claim to be belonging to the Kailāsa lineage as Tirumūlar does, and trace their preceptorial line to Nandī, the guru of Tirumūlar, they do not include Tirumūlar in their spiritual lineage. This is in spite of the strong connections Tirumūlar has with Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai where he is said to have performed yoga according to the Periyapurāṇam. His *samādhi* is also located at Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai. "They know [those at the Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai *ādhīnam*] the present institution was founded by the sixteenth century Namaciivaya, and they are willing to take his lineage back through the legends of the earlier lineage preceptors (santanacarya) to Parmaesvara Himself, but when it comes to historical or quasi-historical figures, they draw the line at Meykantar ..." The Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai *ādhīnam* betrays the same kind of ambiguity towards another Śaiva saint Tirumālikaittēvar, connected to the the *ādhīnam*, who was also recognized as one of the Siddhas. See Kathleen Koppedrayar, "The Sacred Presence of the Guru: The Velala Lineage of Tiruvavaduturai, Dharmapuram and Tiruppanantal," 167-68, 157-208.

¹⁹ Gavin Flood, *The Tantric Body*, 8.

²⁰ Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1954), 21.

in some of the *tantric* cults. Sometimes the Vedas are condemned as false teachings.²¹ In contrast, the Saiddhāntika *tantras* proclaim that they are the essence of the Vedas.²²

This chapter is divided into three sections: In the first I demonstrate that the *Tirumantiram* differs in content and form from temple –centered *āgamas* of Southern Śaivism,²³ that are generally deemed to have been divided into the four *pādas*. This is followed by a discussion in which I suggest that the concept of living liberation, as articulated by the *Tirumantiram*, can be considered a reaction to the application of the Vedic system of social hierarchy (*varṇa*) by the *āgamas* to determine the eligibility for having access to God in the temple, and for liberation and preceptorhood. In the second, I explain the four elements that constitute the *āgamic* conceptual framework adopted by the Tirumantiram. The final section is devoted to the discussion on the treatment of Vedic revelation in the *Tirumantiram*. Through the strategy of reinterpretation, the text illustrates that no fundamental differences exist between the two divine revelations, the Vedic and *āgamic*.

²¹ For instance, see the following excerpts from the Kulārṇavatāntra:

vedaśāstrārṇave ghore tāḍyamānā itastataḥ
 kālormigrāhagrastāśca tiṣṭhanti hi kutārkikāḥ (Ku.1:88)
 vedādyanekaśāstrāṇi svalpāyurvighnakoṭaya (1:102a)
 na vedādhyayanānmuktirna śāstrapaṭhanādapi (1:104a)

²² vedasāramidaṃ tantraṃ tasmād vaidika ācaret |

Vedāntāryamidaṃ jñānaṃ siddhāntaṃ paramaṃ śubham ||Makuṭa 1-22 ||

ūrdhvaśrodbhavaṃ śreṣṭhamaṣṭāvimsati tantrakam |

vedasārārhadaṃ jñeyam.....

Makuṭa || 1-23 ||

²³ The primary ritualistic form of *āgamic* worship is *pūjā*, which is of two types: *ātmārthapūjā* (worship undertaken to attain personal ends) *parārtha pūjā* (worship done for the benefits of others). Brunner defines them as follows: “The *ātmārthapūjā* is the cult one performs in private, on one’s personal image of Śiva, which is usually the moveable linga one has received from the guru on the day of the *dīkṣā*; *parārthapūjā* is the cult performed in a temple, on the steady image of Śiva sheltered in the inner sanctuary, by an officiating priest (gurukkal in Tamil Nadu).” Though Brunner points to the difficulties in classifying *pūjā* on the basis of moveable and immovable images, she agrees that *ātmārthapūjā* and *parārthapūjā* largely correspond to private worship and temple worship respectively. See Helene Brunner, “*Ātmārthapūjā* versus *parārthapūjā* in the Śaiva Tradition” in *The Sanskrit Tradition and Tantrism*, ed. Teun Gaudriaan (Leiden:E.J. Brill, 1990),6-7. The expression “temple-centered” *āgamas* of Southern Śaivism refer to those that deal with *parārthapūjā*.

I

The Tirumantiram and the Śaivāgamas

This section explores the relation between the *Tirumantiram* and the Śaivāgamas. Hence, the structure and the content of the text are the foci of discussion. Though the *āgamas* and the *Tirumantiram* were composed for different categories of audience, both of them share a common conceptual framework. I shall first show by undertaking a comparative study of the text with the *Suprabhedha*- one of the nine *āgamas* mentioned in the prologue of the text- that the *Tirumantiram* differs in structure, content and spirit from the temple-centred *āgamas* of Southern Śaivism and that the *Tirumantiram* shifts focus away from temple and ritual to the human body, *yoga* and *jñāna*. Secondly, whereas the Sanskrit *āgamas* adopt the *varṇa* classification of the Vedic tradition to decide which categories are eligible for liberation and preceptorhood, and contain contradictory statements on the eligibility of the indigenous Tamil populace for liberation and preceptorhood, the vernacular *āgama Tirumantiram* pronounces that its message is for all who inhabit the five Tamil *maṅṭalams* or regions.²⁴ Thus, the *Tirumantiram* embraces the whole Tamil community disregarding the concept of *varṇa* in its discussion on liberation and preceptorhood.

The *Tirumantiram* emerged during the period in which the Śaivāgamic culture had taken roots in Tamil soil. It is evident that the *āgamas* had existed before the *Tirumanitiam* was composed. Dasgupta is of the opinion that most of the *āgamas* were completed around the ninth century,²⁵ though they cannot be dated before the sixth century C.E. Brunner endorses this view by stating that the *āgamas* of Śaiva Siddhānta School were redacted between the 6th or 7th and the

²⁴ Tirumūlar states “ Let this world enjoy the bliss I attained” (*nāṇ perṛa iṅṇam peruka iv vaiyakam* TM 85:1) I take the expression *iv vaiyakam* (this world) as referring to the five Tamil *maṅṭalams* (tamiḷ maṅṭalam aintum tāviya ṅāṇam 1646:1). According to Narayana Ayyar, they are Cēra maṅṭalam, Cōḷa maṅṭalam, Pāṅṭiya maṅṭalam Toṅṭai maṅṭalam (Pallava) and Koṅku maṅṭalam (Origin and Early History of Śaivism in South India, 218).

²⁵ Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, 16.

9th centuries.²⁶ Epigraphic evidence suggests that many *āgamas* existed as early as 700 C.E.²⁷ The inscription on the Kailāsanātha temple at Kanchipuram refers to the Pallava king Mahendravarman II (695-728) as the one who got rid of all his impurities abiding by the path of Śaiva Siddhānta. The king calls himself as an adherent of Śaiva Siddhānta and the one who is knowledgeable in the *āgamas*. Rajasimha Pallava (686- 705 A.D.) refers to himself as *āgamapriya*.²⁸ A proliferation of the *āgamas* by the tenth century is attested by a wealth of references drawn from the *āgamic* corpus, found in the works of Abhinavagupta.

The *Tirumantiram* contains direct references to the *āgamas*.²⁹ It regards them as revealed texts³⁰ that deal with the three eternal entities: God, the bound soul, and bondage.³¹ Sadāśiva is held to be the provenance of these texts.³² The expression *añcāmukam*³³ occurring in verse 57 identifies the fifth face *īśāna* of the Śivalinga as the source of the *āgamas*. The total number of

²⁶ Helene Brunner, “Ātmārthapūjā versus Parārthapūjā in the Śaiva Tradition”, 5.

²⁷ Richard Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe*, 12.

²⁸ M. Arunachalam, *The Saivāgamas*, 5.

²⁹ Tēvāram attests to the fact that the *āgamas* were in vogue even before the period of the *Tirumantiram*. Śiva created both the Vedas and the *āgamas*: *tokuttavaṇ arumaṇai aṅkam ākamam vakuttavaṇ* (3: 23:6). In this hymn the verbs *toku* and *vaku* occur in the sense of making or creating. Śiva taught the *āgamas* to Umā: *iṇaiyilā iṭai māmarutilleḷu paṇaiyilākamam colluntaṇ pānkikkē* (5: 15:4). Śiva favours *ākamacīlar* (*āgamaśīla*) with his grace: *ammāṇē ākamacīlar karuḷ nalkum pemmāṇē* (7:96:6). The Vedic recitation is mingled with the singing of devotional hymns by those who are knowledgeable in *āgamas*: *ākamaṅkaḷaṇi vāraṇi tōttiraṅkaḷ viraviya vētaoli* (7:100:8).

³⁰ *attaṇ civaṇconṇa ākama nūlneṇi* (TM 247:2)

aṅṅal aruḷāl aruḷum civākamam (58:1; 64:1)

aṅṅal aruḷāl aruḷum tivyaḷkamam (60:1)

cf. “śāstram śivamukhodgatam” (Kāmikāgama. 1:10); *ajitam nāma yattantram śivātprāptam* (Ajitāgama 1:11)

³¹ *patipacu pācaṅkaḷ ākamam* (TM 895)

³² *vāṇē catāciva māṇilā ākamam* (TM 894)

³³ There is little consensus among the *āgamas* as to which *āgamas* were emitted from which face of Sadāśiva. Usually the commentators of the *Tirumantiram* interpret the *añcāmukam* as *īśāna* from which the *āgamas* originated. This reading accords with the information found in the Kāmikāgama :

īśānavaktrādūrdhvasthājñānaṅ yatkāmikādikam | (Tantrāvatara Paṭala, 1:22:1).

However, according to the Ajitāgama, the Vedas and the *āgamas* were emitted from the five faces of Sadāśiva (a) *īśāna* : Kāmikam, Yogajam, Cintyam, kāraṅam. Ajitam, Dīptam, Sūkṣmam, Sahasrākhyam, Amśumat, Suprabhedakam and the four Vedas with their aṅgas

(b) Sadyojāta: Vijayam, Pārameśam, Niśvāsam, Prodgītam, and Mukhabimbam

(c) Vāmadeva: Siddham, Santānam, Nṛsimham, Candrabhāsakam, and Vimalam

(d) Aghora : Svāyam̐bhuvam, Vīram, Rauravam, Makuṭam, and Kiraṅam

(e) Tatpuruṣa : Lalitam, Āgneyam, and Vātulam

(Ajitāgama, 1:106-113).

āgamas known to the *Tirumantiram* is twenty-eight.³⁴ A gradual development of the *āgamic* tradition is suggested in verse 1429 of Tantra five, which states that the primary *āgamas* were nine in number and they expanded into twenty-eight over the course of time.³⁵ The nine *āgamas* mentioned in the *Tirumantiram* (*Kāraṇa*, *Kāmika*, *Vīra*, *Cintya*, *Vātula*, *Yāmala* (Ta.Vyāmalam), *Kālottara*, *Suprabheda*, and *Makuṭa*)³⁶ are considered the basic texts of Śuddha Śaivism, the religion represented in the *Tirumantiram* that envisions the unity of the Vedānta and Siddhānta.³⁷

The Structure of Śaivāgamas

The Periyapurāṇam identifies the subject-matter of the *Tirumantiram* to be related to the four-fold structural classifications of the *āgamas*.³⁸ Richard Davis states, “A proper Śaivāgama should stand on four feet (*pāda*): the feet of knowledge (*jñāna*), ritual action (*kriyā*), proper conduct (*caryā*), and disciplinary practice (*yoga*).”³⁹ Nevertheless, the statement that the *āgamas* are made up of four sections is not always true or valid. Among the Śaivāgamas available to us

³⁴ aṅcaṇamēṇi arivaiyōr pākattaṅ
aṅco ṭirupattu mūṅṅruḷa ākamam
aṅcali kūppi aruṇpat taruvarum
aṅcā mukattiḷ arumporuḷ kēṭṭatē (TM 57)

³⁵ In addition to the number of *āgamas*, the *Tirumantiram* also speaks of the total number of letters inscribed in the *āgamic* corpus.

aṅṅal aruḷāl aruḷum civākamam
eṅṅil irupattēṅ kōṭi nūrāyiram (TM 58:1-2)

aṅṅal aruḷāl aruḷum tivvākamam
viṅṅil amarar tamakkum viḷaṅkaritu
eṅṅil eḷupatu kōṭi nūrāyiram (TM 60:1-3)

This aspect is also found in Sanskrit *āgamas*. For instance, the *Ajitāgama* (1:61-105) speaks of a total number of letters contained (*granthasamkyā*) in each of the *āgamas*.

³⁶ perranal ākamaṅ kāraṇaṅ kāmikam
urranal vīram uyarcintam vātuḷam
marraṅṅ viyāmaḷa mākuṅkā lōttaran
turraṅṅaṅ cuppiraiṅ collu makuṅtamē (TM 63)

³⁷ TM 1429

³⁸ ṅṅam mutal nāṅku malar nal tirumantira mālai (3589:2)

nalām ciṅanta ṅṅa yōkak kiriyā cariyai yelām
malarnta moḷit tirumūlat tēvar kaḷal vaṅaṅki (3589:2)

³⁹ “Becoming a Śiva, and Acting as One, in Śaiva worship” in Teun Gaudrian, ed. *Ritual and Speculation in early Tantrism* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 107.

The *Āgamas* also speak of the four-fold knowledge: *kriyācaryāsamopetaṅ yogajñānānvitam param* (Kāmikāgama 1:13)

now, only two *mūlāgamas* (primary *āgamas*), the *Kiraṇa* and the *Suprabheda*, and two *upāgamas* (subsidiary *āgamas*), the *Mṛgendra* and the *Matāṅgapārameśvara*, have all four sections intact. This quadripartition of text is absent even in unpublished primary or subsidiary *āgamas*.⁴⁰ Brunner is, therefore, of the opinion that the majority of the *āgamas* dealing with temple Śaivism had only sections called *paṭalas* of ritualistic material interspersed with sections, mainly concerned with knowledge.⁴¹

That the *Tirumantiram* differs from the temple-centred *āgamas* will be evident if we compare the text with one of them, the *Suprabheda*, mentioned in the prologue of the *Tirumantiram*. The *Tirumantiram* is divided into nine *tantras* whereas the *Suprabheda* is classified into the four *pādas*. The largest section in the *Suprabheda* is the *kriyāpāda* containing 54 *paṭalas*. It is mainly concerned with temple ritual, that can be classified into three groups: (a) rituals relating to the construction of temples and consecration of images, dealt with in the following *paṭalas*: *grāmādi lakṣaṇa*, *kārṣaṇa* (ploughing the site), *prāsāda-vāstu lakṣaṇa*, *ādyeṣṭaka*, *garbhanyāsa*, *prāsāda lakṣaṇa*, *linga lakṣaṇa*, *sakala lakṣaṇa*, *aṅkurārpaṇa*, *linga pratiṣṭhā*, *sakala pratiṣṭhā*, *śakti pratiṣṭhā*. (b) daily rites: After the installation and consecration of deities, daily *pūjā* is performed according to the rules laid down in Section 13 titled *nitya-utsava vidhi* (c) Annual festivals: *Śiva utsavavidhi*, *Kṛttikādīpavidhi*, *āṣāḍhapūrakarmavidhi* deal with special festivals. On the other hand, the *Tirumantiram* does not discuss *parārthapūjā* though it is not antagonistic to it.⁴²

⁴⁰ Helene Brunner, "The Four pādas of Saivāgamas," 262.

⁴¹ Ibid., 273-74.

⁴² Five verses in Tantra Two (515-519) discuss temple worship. Verse 515 speaks about the dangers of uprooting the permanent *linga* in the shrine. The next says that removal of even a stone from the temple wall will spell disaster to the kingdom. Verses 517 and 518 warn of dire consequences (famine, epidemic, loss of king's valour) of the failure to perform *pūjas* regularly or abandoning them in entirety. The last verse alerts to the dangers of unqualified Brahmins as priests in the temple .

The *caryāpāda* is a less clearly defined section in the Suprabhedha. It more or less resembles the *kriyā* section in content and contains descriptions of rituals such as *dīkṣā*, *ṣoḍaśakriyā*, *vratacāra*, and *pavitārōhana*, and funerary rites such as *pitryajña* and *sapiṇḍīkaraṇa*. However, these rituals are not always found in the *caryā* section of *āgamas*. Brunner points out that though the *Kiraṇāgama* includes *dīkṣā* and related rituals in the *kriyāpāda*, it describes rituals connected to the establishment of images (*pratiṣṭhā*) in the *caryāpāda*. She also notes that the *yogapāda* of the Kiraṇa incorporates mortuary rites as well as *liṅgoddhāra* rites that allow a non-Śaiva entry into the sect, along with *dīkṣā*. Variability of content in the *kriyā* section is one of the grounds on which she decides that the four-fold division of the *āgamas* was a late innovation. Considering the fact that eighty percent of extant *āgamas*, both published and unpublished, deal with ritual, she arrives at a conclusion that the *āgamas* were, in the first instance, composed to lay down rules relating to ritual, both private and temple.⁴³

However, this cannot be true of the *Tirumantiram*, which may be aptly described as a text, primarily composed to elucidate the concept of living liberation and the means to attain it. The fourth *Tantra*, despite the fact that it mainly deals with *kriyā* in the form of *cakrapūjā* reveals that *kriyā* alone would not lead to liberation unless it is associated with yoga and *jñāna*.⁴⁴ It may be noted that yoga and *jñāna pādas* in the Suprabhedha are very small and insignificant compared to its bulky *kriyā pāda*.

The absence of material on *parārthakriyā* in the *Tirumantiram* is very conspicuous when considering the power and influence wielded by temples in the early medieval period between 700-1200 A.D. “Pallava, Calukya, Rāṣṭtrakuta, Paramara, Kalacuri, Candella, and Cōḷa kings all

⁴³ Helene Brunner, “The Four pādas of Saivāgamas,” 260-78.

⁴⁴ TM 1008-1014.

constructed imperial-scale temples for the worship of Śiva, under the guidance of Śaiva rājagurus” and the Śaivāgamas “articulated detailed, complex systems of ritual centered around pūjā offerings made in their grandest forms in temples.”⁴⁵ The temple remained to be the expression of the divine power with which the king was invested. Karen Prentiss states, “There was a presumed homology between the king and God. Just as the imperial temple system manifested the overlordship of the king, the defined space of the temple itself manifested the overlordship of God.”⁴⁶ Though the *Tirumantiram* acknowledges the relation between the temple and kingship and stresses the importance of performance of pūjā without interruption, it does not advocate temple worship as Tēvāram saints do. This may be interpreted that in the Śaiva religion envisioned by the *Tirumantiram*, the Śivabrāhmaṇa loses his privileged position conferred by the āgamas and is replaced by the jñānācārya (the preceptor who confers knowledge), probably presiding a maṭha.⁴⁷

The Śivabrāhmaṇas became a prominent religious category in the medieval period due to the emergence of public worship held in temples in accordance with Śaiva Siddhānta principles. They were brought into the Tamil country from various parts of India. The āgamas distinguish them from other Brahmans and categorically state that only the Śivabrāhmaṇas⁴⁸ could perform

⁴⁵ Richard Davis, “Cremation and Liberation” in *History of Religions* Vol. 28, No. 1 (Aug., 1988), 40-41.

⁴⁶ *The Embodiment of bhakti*, 120.

⁴⁷ The āgamas speak of two types of ācārya. The description of the first category is usually found at the end of the chapter on ācāryābhīṣeka in the āgamas that are concerned with ātmārthapūjā. *Dīkṣā* (granting initiation), *pratiṣṭhā* (installation of the image of Śiva for those who seek it and *vyākhyāna* (interpretation of Scriptures- āgamas) constitute his three primary duties. Brunner identifies him as “the guru of a limited community of disciples centered round a maṭha, each occupied with his or her own sādhanā. Often likened to a king, whose majesty and authority he must have had, the ācārya is nevertheless, above all, a highly respectable spiritual and religious teacher, into whom Śiva descends at the time of giving *dīkṣā*.” The second category of ācāryas are those who perform *parārthapūjā* in temples and they must be Ādiśaiva brāhmaṇas by birth. (See “Ātmārthapūjā versus parārthapūjā in the Śaiva tradition,” 15-16).

⁴⁸ ādau śivastavamastīti ādiśaiva udīritāḥ

śivena dīkṣitāścaite te śivabrāhmaṇā smṛtāḥ (Suprabhedāgama, caryāpāda 1:43)

public worship in temples. Prentiss explains their prominence in reference to liturgical service of the temple:

The *ādiśaivas* are a privileged group, for they are the ones who are pure enough to be priests by virtue of their birth in one of five *gotras* (lineages). As priests, they have the authority and capacity to perform *āgamic* rituals in temples for the benefit of all other categories of Śaivas. The *āgamas* make the specific point that this category ritually encompasses all other categories of Śaiva worshippers: “Worship on behalf of others must always be done by a Śaivabrāhmaṇa. A pious *ādiśaiva*, best among the brahmins, does worship regularly, but if others should perform worship other than for their own behalf alone, the worshippers will be destroyed.” Thus, the Śaivāgamas invest a certain category of brahmins with the pre-eminent role of worship in the temple, where they perform *pūjā* to Śiva on behalf of a public audience.⁴⁹

Prentiss also notes that proximity to God in the temple is determined by the factor of *varṇa*/caste. Śaivas are classified into five groups in the *āgamas*: *anādiśaiva* (Śiva), *ādiśaiva*, *mahāśaiva* (Vedic brahmins), *anuśaiva* (kṣatriyas and vaiśyas) and *antara śaiva* (śūdras). Only the *ādiśaivas* have access to the *garbhagr̥ha*, the most sacred part of the temple. Other categories of Śaivas take their place away from the *sanctum sanctorum* in the less sacred parts of the temple.

In āgamic understanding, the closer one is to Śiva, the source of emission, the closer one is to salvation. The *ādiśaivas* are with Śiva in the *sanctum*, and they recite *āgamic* mantras. The *mahāśaivas*, “who have gone on the other hand [of the ocean] of the Vedas, must praise and make a mental representation of the God, avid for a view of Him.” The *anuśaivas* stand out at the forefront of the *mahāmaṇḍapa*, able to view the *lingam* directly. And the *śūdras*, who sing the Tamil hymns (*draviḍastotra*), stand at the back of the *mahāmaṇḍapa*, able to view Śambhu (the source of happiness, a name for Śiva) : “In the *mahāmaṇḍapa*, in the farthest region up to Nandi, the *avantara sat-śūdras* [the highest category of *śūdras*] are able to sing the Tamil hymns while looking at Śambhu, consistent with good practice.⁵⁰

Those who transgress the rules related to spatial hierarchy in temple are threatened with serious consequences. “The one who, out of perversity, leaves his own place and goes [too far into the temple], although he has been told not to, will certainly go to hell, tossed there by Śiva. And even if one goes too far out of ignorance, there will nevertheless be some disturbance in the kingdom.”⁵¹

⁴⁹ *The Embodiment of bhakti*, 123.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵¹ Richard Davis, *Worshipping Śiva in Medieval India*, 70.

However, the *Tirumantiram*'s restrained approach towards the institution of temple and the absence of material pertaining to *parāarthakriyā* mask an opposition to the centrality given to the temple and to the privileged position enjoyed by the Śivabrāhmaṇas or *ādiśaivas* who claim ownership to the revealed knowledge enshrined in the *āgamas*. The *Tirumantiram* implicitly questions the fundamental criterion of a Śaiva priest that he should be born of one of the *ādiśaiva* lineages.

This is what the great Nandi declared:
 Epidemics multiply in the war-torn country
 Famine stalks the land
 If the Brahman only in name [devoid of any other qualities]
 Worships the Lord [in the temple]⁵²

Furthermore, the *Tirumantiram* does not endorse the view of Śaiva Siddhānta that the human body “represents that which is farthest from the true and pure nature of Śiva.”⁵³ The two principles - emission (creation) and absorption (destruction) - represent converse paths of movement: Emission denotes the path from unity and purity to differentiation and impurity, whereas re-absorption represents the inverse. According to the principle of emission, the human body remains at the farthest end of impurity on the purity-impurity continuum. However, the *Tirumantiram* disagrees stating that by realizing God's presence within the body, one could attain embodied liberation.

He who mingles in the body
 Lord of the excellent country called the body
 He who emits fragrance within the body
 He, the Nandi,
 They seek him in land all
 Not knowing the truth that he is within the body.⁵⁴

⁵² pērkoṇṭa pārppāṇ pirāṇ taṇṇai arccittāl
 pērkoṇṭa nāṭṭukkup pollā viyātiyām
 pārkoṇṭa nāṭṭukkup pañcamumām eṇṇē
 cīrkoṇṭa nantī terintu uraittāṇē (TM 519).

⁵³ Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti* 121.

⁵⁴ kāyak kuḷappaṇaik kāyaṇaṇ nāṭṭaṇaik
 kāyattiṇuḷḷē kamaḷkiṇṇa nantiyait
 tēyattulē eṅkum tēṭṭirivarkaḷ

The *Tirumantiram* categorically states that only the ignorant talk about impurity (*ācūcam*)⁵⁵, and that there is no point in categorizing people as pure and impure because human birth itself is impure.⁵⁶ The concept of *ācūcam* is not applicable to those who observe the paths of *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yoga* and *jñāna*.⁵⁷

Social categories and Liberation

Class/caste (*varṇa/jāti*) considerations remain so influential in the *āgamic* religion⁵⁸ that social classification of four *varṇas*, initially mentioned in the Vedas is used to frame the discourse on initiation, preceptorhood and spatial hierarchy in temples. According to the *puruṣasūkta* of the Ṛg Veda (10:90), various elements of the universe, including the four *varṇas* emerged from the dismembered body of the *puruṣa* who was sacrificed by devas. This is reproduced in the *jātibhedavidhi* section of the *Suprabhedā*.⁵⁹ The duties (dharma) of each *varṇa* are also enumerated in the *Āgama* in conformity with the Dharmaśāstras.⁶⁰

kāyattuḷ ninṇa karutta riṇyārē (TM 2550, 2071)

⁵⁵ TM 2551.

⁵⁶ TM 2551.

⁵⁷ TM 2552. The four categories mentioned in the verses *-niyamattaṅ*, *araṅgai arccippavaṅ*, *aṅki vaḷarppōr*, *ñāṅi-* are interpreted as the followers of *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yoga* and *jñāna* respectively.

⁵⁸ Even in the bhakti religion of Tēvāram separate modes of worship are adopted by people of different classes: Brahmans worship Śiva with milk, curd, and ghee (3:1:1) whereas non-brahman Tamil bhaktas adore him with water and flower (1:5:7). Everyone is invited to venerate Śiva, but in keeping with their social stations. However, liberation after death is guaranteed to Tamil devotees in Tēvāram.

Clear you mind of all doubts

If you strew the blossom of devotion to Śiva at Ārūr

It will result in liberation.

cittam telivīrkāḷ attāṅ ārūraip

patti malar tūva mutti yācumē (1:91:1)

⁵⁹ mukheṣu brāhmaṇājātāstat bāhvoḥ kṣatriyāstathā || 2-2 ||
vaiśyā ūruśca vijñeyāḥ pādayoḥ śūdrajātayaḥ |
caturvarṇasya saṃyogāt pratiḷomānulomataḥ || 2-3 ||

⁶⁰

.....
laukikācāramārgeṇa sarveṣāṃ vartanaṃ śṛṇu || 2-8 ||

addhyanañcāddhyāpanaṃ yajanaṃyājanaṃ tathā |

dānaṃ pratigrahañcaiva teṣāṃ karmāṇi cocyate || 2-9 ||

It should be mentioned that the tantric tradition, in general, confers the right to study the Scriptures and to execute ritual to all, irrespective of class or caste distinctions.

One's secular social standing is of no consequence whatsoever within the sphere of truly spiritual hierarchy. Moreover, women as well as men are eligible not only to receive the highest initiation but also to confer it in the role of guru. ...In striking contrast to the Vedic texts, wherein even the hearing of the Veda is forbidden to a Śūdra, and wherein women are consigned to a secondary (though highly praised and sentimentalized) sphere of spiritual competency and aspiration, the Tantras transcend the limits of social and biological differentiation.⁶¹

The *Kulārṇava Tantra* categorically states that initiation destroys caste identities, and hence, caste distinctions do not exist among the initiated.⁶² The *Kāmikāgama* too agrees that the initiated, irrespective of caste, have access to *āgamic* knowledge.

dīkṣāvihīnaviprādyāstrivarṇāśśūdrajātayaḥ
savarṇādyanlomāśca śilpinaḥ kārūkādayaḥ
pathanti śivaśāstrañcettatpāpānṛparāṣṭrayoḥ
acireṇa vināśaḥ syāttasmādrājā nivārayet (kāmikāgama 1.111-112)

The king and his country will be quickly destroyed because of the sin resulting from the study of Śaiva scriptures by uninitiated members of the first three classes starting with Brahman, śūdras, people born of mixed parentage, architects and carpenters and the like. Hence, the king must forbid them [from reading the scriptures].

Initiation is the most important religious act as far as liberation is concerned. Surdam

Wayne thus explains:

It is not an exaggeration to describe the *dīkṣā* as the central religious act in the life of a Śaivasiddhāntin. All of a devotee's religious actions make sense in terms of his initiation, since it is through the initiation that he gains the potential for liberation. All of his devotion, all his rites of worship have as their goal the fruition of the process of liberation set in motion by the *dīkṣā*. Without initiation, liberation is impossible."⁶³

jāyante brahmabāhvośca kṣatriyāstu mahāmate |
..... || 2-10 ||

jagataḥ pālananteṣāṃ svadharmaparipālanam || 2-11 ||
brahmāṇa ūrvorvaiśyānāñjananantu vidhīyate |

..... || 2-12 ||

..... |
..... || 2-13

pādayostvaṃ srjat śūdrān strīvarṇānāmupāsakān |
śuśrūṣāntu dvijānāñca śūdrānām vṛttirucyate || 2-14 ||

⁶¹ Heinrich Robert Zimmer, *Philosophies of India*, ed. Joseph Campbell (572-73).

⁶² gataṃ śūdrasya śūdratvaṃ viprasāyāpi ca vipratā |
dīkṣāsaṃskārasampanne jātibhedo na vidyate || 14:91

⁶³ *South Indian Śaiva Rites of Initiation: The Dīkṣāvidhi of Aghoraśivācārya's Kriyākramadyotikā* (PhD diss., University of California, 1984), Lxviii-lxix.

Since *sūdras* are eligible for initiation, they are entitled to perform *ātmārthapūjā* and to study Śaiva Siddhānta.

Unlike the Vedas, which exclude *sūdras* from learning or participating in the sacrificial program, the *āgamas* insist that *sūdras* also are eligible to receive initiation and thereby become “twice-borns” according to Śaiva reckoning. As such, they may-indeed, must-study the *śivajñāna* and perform the round of daily rituals prescribed as the common code of conduct for initiated Śaivas.⁶⁴

Three categories of initiation are mentioned in the *āgamas*: *samayadīkṣā*, *viśeṣadīkṣā* and *nirvāṇadīkṣā*,⁶⁵ and the first two could be conferred to all without consideration of social classes. *Samyadīkṣā* is a general initiation into the sect and the initiate is given a new name and the right to perform *ātmārthapūjā* except *agnikārya*.⁶⁶ *Viśeṣadīkṣā* is a continuation of the ordinary initiation and the initiate who is reborn “from the womb of Śakti established in the fire” is entitled to execute *agnikārya*, but not *parārthapūjā*.⁶⁷ *Samyadīkṣā* and *viśeṣadīkṣā* are seen “as preparatory to *nirvāṇadīkṣā*,” and one who undergoes it is designated as *dīkṣita* or *putraka* (Śiva’s son).⁶⁸ In *nirvāṇadīkṣā*, the bonds of the initiated are severed with the power of mantras and the soul, cleansed of its impurities, is elevated to the realm of Śiva.⁶⁹ The *nirvāṇadīkṣā* is followed by *ācāryābhīṣeka*, which grants one the right to perform *parārthapūjā* and to grant initiation to others.

The *āgamas* hold divergent views on the eligibility of the *sūdras* for the third level initiation called *nirvāṇadīkṣā* and for the *ācāryābhīṣeka*.⁷⁰ The *Kāmikāgama* categorically states that only the first three castes can undergo *nirvāṇadīkṣā* and that the Brahman who extends it to a

⁶⁴ Richard Davis, *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe*, 41.

⁶⁵ “The use of the term *nirvāṇa* alongside of its equivalent, *mokṣa*, or *mukti*, is suggestive of a Buddhist or more precisely the *Vajrayāna* context and its impact on the Śaivaite tantric literature.” V.N. Drabu, *Śaivagāmas*, A study in the socio-economic ideas and institutions of Kashmir (200 B.C. to A.D. 700) (New Delhi : Indus Pub. Co., 1990), 70-71.

⁶⁶ Surdam Wayne, *South Indian Śaiva Rites of Initiation*, lxvii.

⁶⁷ Ibid, lxvii-viii.

⁶⁸ Ibid., lxviii.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Koppedryer notes “Not all Agamic texts raise the question, and not all texts agree on the sudra’s rights” (See *The Sacred Presence of the Guru*, 313). The āgamic texts *Kāmika* and *Suprabheda* I take up for discussion are mentioned in the Tirumantiram (TM 63).

śūdra degenerates into the *śūdra* varṇa.⁷¹ The Suprabheda permits only *satsūdras* to undergo *nirvāṇadīkṣā*. A *Satsūdra* is defined as one who is not a drunkard (*amadyapa*) and who is born of good family (*kulīna*) and is deemed equal to a vaiśya.⁷² The *śūdra* who is denied *nirvāṇadīkṣā* is not qualified to receive *ācāryābhiṣeka* and become a preceptor.⁷³ The fact that the *Kāmikāgama* does not envisage a *śūdra* as preceptor is clear when it debar him from taking the *gotra* of his guru at the time of initiation.⁷⁴ One of the main considerations for the eligibility of a guru is the lineage to which he is attached. The *Kulārṇavatantra* states that lineage is received at the time of initiation and that no preceptorial lineage could exist without initiation. Deities too favour the preceptor coming in a succession of teachers (*pārampariyapravarttakam*).⁷⁵

The unsettled position of the Śaivāgamas on the eligibility of *śūdras* for the *nirvāṇadīkṣā* violates the general spirit of the Tantric tradition. Wayne remarks that no levels existed in *dīkṣā* initially. Had that been the case, the *nirvāṇadīkṣā* must have become the prerogative of *dvijas* only at some later period. Yet, it continued to be a controversial issue in later medieval period.⁷⁶

⁷¹ tato nirvāṇadīkṣāyāmadhikāri bhaveddvijaḥ
śūdraṃ hi dīkṣayitvā tu vidhānevāgrājanmanah
so'pi śūdratvamāpnoti dīkṣādānāna saṃśayaḥ (20:91)|

⁷² caryāpāde,

kathitaścāthaśūdrastu satsūdraṃ vaiśyavat smaret |
amadyapāḥ kulīnāstu satsūdrāste prakīrtitāḥ || 2-16 ||

⁷³ “More importantly, the *nirvāṇadīkṣā* qualifies the initiate to undergo either the *ācārya* or *sādhaka* abhiṣeka, special ceremonies that confer the status of *ācārya* or *sādhaka* upon the initiate.” (Surdam Wayne, South *Indian Śaiva Rites of Initiation*, lxxiv).

⁷⁴ kṣatriyāṇāṃ tu vaiśyāṇāṃ gotramācāryajaṃ tu vā
naiva śūdrasya gotraṃ syādevaṃ gotraavidhau matam (25:6)

⁷⁵ vinā dīkṣāṃ na mokṣaḥ syāttaduktam śivaśāsane
sā ca na syādvīnācāryamityācāryaparamparā (14:3)
devāstameva śamsanti pārampariyapravarttakam
gurum..... (14:5)

⁷⁶ Even in the bhakti tradition the concept of universal liberation has been a contentious issue in the Tamil country. In the Periyapurāṇam, Śiva himself finds a solution for the issue of caste that prevents his devotee Nantaṅ, pulaiyaṅ (outcaste), from entering the sacred city of Cidambaram, where Śiva is worshipped by Brahmins (dīkṣita) instead of ādiśaiva brahmins. Śiva wants his devotee Nantaṅ to visit him at the temple; at the same time, He does not want him to break the rules relating to purity-pollution, strictly adhered to by Brahmins. Hence, his proposal that Nantaṅ should sanctify himself in the fire prior to the entry into the sacred city is accepted by both Brahmins and Nantaṅ. Accordingly, the outcaste Nantaṅ enters the fire made by Brahmins and emerges as a Brahman sage. Thereafter, the re-born Nantaṅ enters the temple and mingles with God. (See Periyapurāṇam, 1046-1082)

According to a legend connected to Umāpati Śivācārya of the 14th century- the fourth and the last of the Tamil Śaiva Siddhanta preceptors (*cantāṇa kuravar*), a person of lower birth named Perrāṇ Cāmpāṇ, was given the *nirvāṇadīkṣā* at the behest of Śiva himself. Śiva is said to have dispatched a letter through Perrāṇ Cāmpāṇ directing Umāpati, the fallen Brahman who accepted the Vēlāḷa Maṛaiṇānacampantar as his preceptor, to confer liberation to bearer, a letter to which Umāpati complied. The letter written by Śiva reads thus:

[This is] the letter written to [Umāpati] of Korraṅkuṭi by Cittambalavan who is easily accessible to devotees. It is in order on earth to confer liberation on Perrāṇ Cāmpāṇ by performing initiation on him that would remove all differences.⁷⁷

Besides, the text *Varṇāśramacandrikā* of the eighteenth century which argues for the eligibility of sūdras for all levels of initiations reveal that liberation and preceptorhood for non-*dvijas* remained as unsettled issues in the Tamil country even after the emergence Śaiva *vēlāḷa* maṭhas in the sixteenth century.⁷⁸

There is hardly any evidence to suggest that the Tirumantiram too espouses the category of *varṇa* as a criterion of eligibility for liberation.⁷⁹ On the contrary, it may be concluded that the *Tirumantiram* advanced the concept of living liberation to counter the *āgamic* injunctions that deny *sūdras* the *nirvāṇadīkṣā* and preceptorhood. Hence, the object of the presentation of this

⁷⁷ aṭiyārkkku eḷiyaṅ ciṅṅampalavan korraṅ
kuṭiyārkkku eḷutiya kaiccīṭṭu-paṭiyiṅ micaip
perrāṇ cāmpāṇukku pētamaṛat tikkai ceytu
mutti koṭukka muṛai.

⁷⁸ Kathleen Koppedrayar, "The 'Varṇāśramacandrikā' and the Śūdra's' Right to Preceptorhood: The Social Background of a Philosophical Debate in Late Medieval South India," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 19:3 (1991:Sept.):297-314.

⁷⁹ Though verse 1721 in the text mentions different types of linga for private worship of the four varṇas, it is immediately followed by an esoteric verse that speaks of Śiva taking up abode in the body of the author. The homology between the body and the universe is stressed. "Having identified the eight worlds with my body, HE took up abode there." (...puvaṇaṅkaḷ eṭṭum itu uṇarntu eṅṅuṭal kōyil koṭṭāṇē 1722:3-4). The verse also suggests that God is inscrutable to those who seek him only through external worship of linga. (atu uṇarntōṅ oru taṅṅamaiyai nāṭi etu uṇarāvakai niṅṅraṅṅ iṅṅaṅ 1722:1-2).

doctrine was to remove the inequities and biases created by certain *āgamas* in the religious sphere of the indigenous population through *jñānadīkṣā* in place of *kriyādīkṣā*.

Asceticism and *Maṭha* (monastery)

In the Tirumantiram that glorifies the guru-centered *sanmārga* tradition, temple is replaced by *maṭha* and Śivacārya by *jñānacārya*. In other words, *maṭha* emerges as an important institution that enables the indigenous population to make liberation the final goal, work for it, and instruct others on it. It was previously noted that the entitlement of *sūdras* to these activities is severely restricted by the Śaivāgamas.

The Tirumantiram discusses the establishment of *maṭhas*, lineage, and renunciation in the prologue and sixth Tantra. The expression *Mūlaṅ maṭam* (Skt. *maṭha*) in Verse 101 could be taken as a reference to the ancient monastery headed by Mūlaṅ.⁸⁰ Verse 102 mentions the following as heads of seven *maṭhas*: Kālāṅkar, Akōrar, Tirumālikait Tēvar, Nātāntar, Paramāṅantar, Pōkatēvar, and Mūlar. The *maṭha* in this instance should be interpreted as an institution “based on a teacher-disciple relationship whose tradition can be traced back several centuries, and whose lineage defines the authority that governs the institution.”⁸¹ Tirumūlar refers to his lineage as Kailāsa paraṃparā.⁸² His guru Nandi, who received instructions in nine *Āgamas* had eight students including Tirumūlar,⁸³ who in turn, had seven disciples.⁸⁴ Since preceptorial lineages are connected to particular sites, *Mūlaṅ maṭam* might have been located at

⁸⁰ vanta maṭamēlum maṅṅuñcaṅ mārkattin
munti utikkiṅṅa mūlaṅ maṭavarai
tantiram oṅṅpatu cārvu āyiram
cuntara ākamac colmoḷintāṅē (TM 102)

⁸¹ Koppedreyer, *The Sacred Presence of the Guru*, 2.

⁸² vaḷappil kayilai vaḷiyil vantēṅē (TM 91:4)

⁸³ The eight disciples of Nandi are Sanantikaḷ nālvar (Caṅakar, Caṅantaṅar, Caṅātaṅar, Caṅarkumārar), Civayōka māmuṅi, maṅṅru toḷuta Patañcali, Viyākramar and Mular. (TM 67)

⁸⁴ Tirumūlar’s seven disciples are Mālāṅkaṅ, Intiraṅ, Cōmaṅ, Piramaṅ, Uruttiraṅ, Kanturuk Kālāṅki, and Kaṅcamalaiyaṅ (TM 69).

Tiruvāṇṭuṭṭurai where Tirumūlar’s *camāti* is now found.⁸⁵ There exists no indication in the text that the *maṭhas* maintained strong links with temples, though this had been the case in the medieval period.

The *Tirumantiram* lays down *tuṛavu* (renunciation) as fundamental to the pursuit of liberation.⁸⁶ The text reminds that Śiva himself exemplifies the concept of renunciation:

He is virtuous, unborn, and an orphan
 He resides in burial ground and lives by alms.
 Know him to be a renunciant himself,
 Know him also as demented
 who sunders the bonds of
 those who thus renounce.⁸⁷

The expression *tuṛakkum tavam* in Verse 1614 identifies renunciation with penance, which is a pre-requisite to acquisition of knowledge.⁸⁸ When Śivajñāna dispels the darkness of *māyā*, the renunciant becomes a *jīvanmukta*, who is described as “*uṭaluṛu ṇāṇat tuṛaviyaṇ* “ (Living renunciant -jñānin).⁸⁹

The notion of renunciation found in the *Tirumantiram* is significant in two ways. Firstly, the renunciation of *sūdras* is generally considered an illegitimate act by Dharmaśāstras, and the epics. Śūdra renunciants are coupled together with monks belonging to heretical sects, and both groups are deemed to have acted in violation of śāstric injunctions.⁹⁰ Secondly, renunciation in the *Tirumantiram* is a highly ambivalent topic. Though the text advocates renunciation and non–

⁸⁵ The *Tirumantiram* spells out in 13 verses (1910-1922) the rules relating to where and how the body of a jnani should be buried and how his *camāti* should be maintained and worshipped.

⁸⁶ *irappum piṛappum irumaiyum nīṅkic*

tuṛakkum tavam kaṇṭa cōtippirāṇ (TM 1614: 1-2)

The luminous lord who revealed the penance of renunciation in order to transcend death, birth, and twofold karma [merit and sin, consequences of good and bad karma].

⁸⁷ *aṛavaṇ piṛappili yārumilātāṇ*

uṛaivatu kāṭṭakam uṇpatu piccai

tuṛavaṇuṅ kaṇṭir tuṛantavar tammaip

piṛaviyaṛuttitūṃ pittāṇ kaṇṭirē (TM 1616)

⁸⁸ *tavam vēṇṭum ṇāṇam talaippaṭa vēṇṭil* (TM 1632)

⁸⁹ TM 2694.

⁹⁰ Patrick Olivelle, *Collected Essays II: Ascetics and Brahmins: Studies in Ideologies and Institutions* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2008), 277-278.

attachment (*parruvīṭal*, *ācai aruttal*), it should not be interpreted as saying that the senses and their objects should be abandoned completely. This aspect is discussed in detail in chapter three.

[Only] the ignorant say “Curb, curb the five senses.”
 No immortals are to be found there [in heaven] who have their senses in restraint
 One becomes only insentient if the senses are reined in
 I came to possess the knowledge of how not to control the senses.⁹¹

The *Tirumantiram* also reveals that conflict, competition and rivalry marked its relations with other religious renunciant groups, in particular, with Brahmans. The text directs its criticism at those who are devoid of the liberating knowledge the *Tirumantiram* speaks of, but wear the insignia of renunciation to delude the world. Their purpose of donning ascetic garb, the *Tirumantiram* says, is to fill the belly.⁹² Their false ways of living harm others. The *Tirumantiram* warns that the pretentious behaviour of pseudo-ascetics bring upon ruin to the entire country. Dearth of rain and drought experienced by the country are direct results of the ascetics who falsely claim higher knowledge. Hence, the *Tirumantiram* is persistent in its call that these pseudo-renunciants be de-robed.⁹³ Not all groups of pseudo-ascetics are mentioned by

⁹¹ añcum aṭakku aṭakku eṅpar arivilār
 añcum aṭakkum amararum aṅkillai
 añcum aṭakkil acētaṅamām eṅriṭṭu
 añcum aṭakkā arivu arintēṅē (TM 2033).

⁹² poyvētam pūṅpar pocittal payaṅāka (TM 1659:1)
 āṭamparam koṅṭu aṭicil uṅpāṅ payaṅ
 vēṭaṅkaḷ koṅṭu veruṭṭiṭum pēṭaikāḷ (TM 1655:1-2)

⁹³ TM 1656

name except that of Brahmins.⁹⁴ One of the foremost duties of a king, according to the text, is to punish the hypocritical ascetics.⁹⁵

The text's seemingly harsh attitude towards other renunciants stem from the conviction that redemption is only possible through unflinching adherence to the divine Śaivite path enunciated by Nandi.⁹⁶ The text proclaims "There exists nothing except Śiva and there is no tapas except that is for him."⁹⁷ It also declares that even if you search, there is no deity that proves a match for Śiva and there is none at all here to equal him.⁹⁸ It dismisses other religions as inadequate and ineffective. The text in particular mentions the six religions (*āru camayam*) as a group and states that they would not lead to the goals they boast of⁹⁹ as they are nothing but a waste.¹⁰⁰ These six religions might be a reference to six systems of philosophy: *sāṃkhya*, *yoga*, *nyāya*, *vaiśeṣika*, *pūrvamīmāṃsā* and *uttaramīmāṃsā*. The text also berates the learned, devoid

⁹⁴ If Brahmins, from folly unredeemed, flaunt the tuft and thread
That land drops and fades, its ruler's glory runs to waste
So, scanning deep in wisdom's light, the king shall clip
The thread and tuft for empty show kept and possessed (TM 241)
The senseless fools donning sacred thread and matted locks
And with chanting phrases pretend to wisdom unprocessed
Them the ruler of state shall, with wise men's help take and test
And, for the country's good, impart words in wisdom rest. (TM 242)
(Translated by Natarajan)

⁹⁵ TM 247.

⁹⁶ The peerless master Nandi
Of Saivam honoured high
He showed us a holy path
For souls' redemption true
It is Śiva's divine path, Sanmarga's path
For all world to tread
And for ever be free (TM 1478)
Do seek Nandi of mighty penance
You shall indeed be redeemed truly. (TM 1534:4)
(translated by B. Natarajan)

⁹⁷ civamallatillai aṛaiyē civamān
tavamallatillai talaippaṭuvārkkīnku (TM 1534:1-2)

⁹⁸ civaṇoṭokkum teyvam tēṭṭumillai
avaṇoṭoppār inku yāvarumillai (TM 5:1-2)

⁹⁹ TM 1537

¹⁰⁰ avamallatillai aṛucamayaṅkaḷ (TM 1534:3)

of *śivajñāna* as scoundrels: *karrum civaññamillāk kalatikaḷ*.¹⁰¹ The *Tirumantiram* believes in the possibility of transferring the divine knowledge through the medium of guru and in the necessity of replacing inferior knowledge produced by other religions. Thus, it denies the proposition, vital to a thriving pluralistic religious environment, that knowledge is diverse in character.

The mighty live in pursuit of the one only path
Others say knowledge is diverse.¹⁰²

The *Tirumantiram* also claims sustenance for Śivajñāni or Śivayogi from lay householders, pronouncing that those who have realised the divine within their body are worthy of veneration; they, not gods, are an object of worship.¹⁰³

If one donates to the deity in the storied temple with a banner
It does not benefit the perfect souls [Siddhas] who are walking-temples.
If one offers to the perfect souls [Siddhas] who are walking-temples
It is fit to be an offering to the deity in the storied temple with a banner.¹⁰⁴

The text, therefore, urges the householders not to perform separate sacrifices to gods and ancestors because whatever is offered to the śivajñāni is counted as an oblation to the above two categories.¹⁰⁵ Thus, the act of feeding devotees of Śiva (*māheśvara pūjā*) is deemed higher than

¹⁰¹ TM 318:1

¹⁰² vallārkaḷ eṅrum vaḷiyonri vāḷkiṅrār
allātavarkaḷ aṅivu palaenpār (TM 311:1-2)

¹⁰³ kōvaṇaṅ kumpaṭi kōvaṇa mākippiṅ
nāvaṇaṅ kumpaṭi nanti aruḷ ceytāṅ
tēvaṇaṅkōm iṅic cittam teḷintaṅam
pōyvaṇaṅ kumporu ḷāyirun tōmē (TM 2674)

¹⁰⁴ paṭamāṭak kōyil pakavaṅku oṅru ṭyil
naṭamāṭak kōyil namparkku aṅku ākā
naṭamāṭak kōyil namparkku oṅru ṭyil
paṭamāṭak kōyil pakavaṅku atu āmē (TM 1857)

¹⁰⁵ TM 1858, 1859

devayajña, *pitryajña* or *śrāddha*¹⁰⁶ prescribed by Brahmans for householders. The text also deprecates making donations to temples and Brahmans, and constructing temples.¹⁰⁷

Of what use is to gift Brahmans abodes in thousands
Of what use is to erect towering temples in thousands
It is beyond doubt these [acts] do not equal
The merits of feeding a *jñāni* at noon.¹⁰⁸

The Tirumantiram claims that feeding the devotees of Śiva and partaking of left-overs of their meals would result in liberation and elimination of sins.¹⁰⁹ The section titled *māheśvara pūjā*, as a whole, constitutes an appeal to the indigenous population to abandon Brahmanical religious practices and support the activities of vernacular *maṭha*, instead.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the religious tradition represented in the *Tirumantiram* was a monastic tradition that sought protection from the kings and received maintenance from the laity. The treatise was probably in circulation within a monastic community for their own use. As we see later, the text deals with only personal *sādhanā*, privileging yoga. Brunner mentions some texts that arose around the eighth century within monastic communities, having yoga as an element of ritual.¹¹⁰ This is clearly seen in the fourth Tantra, concerned with the worship of Śakti, which combines ritual with yoga. However, in the overall conceptual structure, yoga is given pre-eminence as a means of liberation whereas ritual is relegated to a subordinate position. The *Tirumantiram* might have been used as an instructional manual at *maṭhas* as the object of the treatise is professed to share the author's experiential knowledge of liberation with others.

¹⁰⁶ It is a religious ceremony observed for the benefit of dead relatives.

¹⁰⁷ TM 1857, 1860, 1861.

¹⁰⁸ akaram āyiram antaṅarkku īyil eṅ
cikaram āyiram ceytu muṭikkil eṅ
pakaru nāṇi pakal ūṅ palattukku
nikarilai eṅpatu niccayam tāṅē (TM 1860)

¹⁰⁹ TM 1866

¹¹⁰ Helene Brunner, "The Four pādas of Saivāgamas", 274.

II Conceptual framework of the Tirumantiram

Despite the fact that the *Tirumantiram* does not follow the four-fold *āgamic* structure, it subscribes to their general conceptual framework which is rooted in the concepts of bondage and liberation, concepts that are uncharacteristic of indigenous Tamil thought. The four elements of the conceptual framework are identified as follows: (a) A pessimistic outlook on worldly life (b) bondage (c) liberation (d) paths leading to liberation. While they are reminiscent of the four Great Truths of Buddhism, the text also shows evidence of influence of Buddhism, which may be summed up as follows: As Siddhārtha Gautama attained enlightenment under the bodhi (fig) tree, Tirumūlar claims to have achieved the highest state of consciousness under the Śivabodhi.¹¹¹ Nirvāṇa is used to denote liberation in one of the esoteric verses of the text.¹¹² As in Tantric Buddhism,¹¹³ the male and female principles are sometimes identified with the dynamic and static aspects respectively.¹¹⁴ A section in *Tantra* Two called *adhomukhadarśana* refers to the

¹¹¹ cērttiruntēṅ civapōtiyīṅ nīlālil (TM 79:3).

¹¹² TM 2864

¹¹³ "...the Hindus assigned the static aspect to the male principle, the dynamic aspect to the male female principle....The Indian and Tibetan Buddhists did the opposite of the Brahman panditas: they assigned the dynamic aspect to the male, the static to the female principle." See Agehananda Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition*, pp.200-201.

¹¹⁴ Though the term *kuṇḍalinī* does not figure in the text, reference is often made to the dynamic female energy in the *mūlādhāra*. At times, Śiva is connected to the *mūlādhāra*. For instance,

She belongs to the region of *sahasrāra*
[She is] the damsel of refined gold
He awakes in the land of *mūlādhāra*.
Rouse him well and let him meet her
See [The aged] become young [again]
[I] avow on Nandi

mēlai nilattiṅāḷ vētakap penpiḷḷai
mūla nilattil eḷukiṅṅa mūrttiyai
ēla eḷuppi ivaluṅṅa canttikkap
pālaṅum āvāṅ pār nanti āṇaiyē (TM 590)

downward-looking face of Śīva. Natarajan notes, “The term *adhomukha* corresponds in function and purpose to the Avalokiteśvara of Mahāyāna Buddhism where he is the Lord of Great Compassion.”¹¹⁵ The affinities between Avalokiteśvara and Śīva have been already noted by scholars.¹¹⁶ Besides, the Periyapurāṇam claims that the cowherd Mūlaṅ in whose body the Śīvayogi from the North entered hailed from Cāttaṅūr. Cāttaṅ is a Tamilized form of the Sanskrit term *śāstā* (śāstr) meaning a teacher. Paul Dundas states that the word is of Jain and Buddhist origin.¹¹⁷ It “has been a synonym of the Buddha from ever since its origin.”¹¹⁸ Later Cāttaṅūr came to be known as Tiruvāvaṭuṭurai (Tiru +ā (cow/soul)+ aṭu (to resort to) +tuṭurai (the place near a body of water which is frequented by cows) and as Navakoṭi Siddhapuram (the abode of ninety million Siddhas).

(a) A negative perspective on worldly life:

Fundamental to the teachings of *Tantras* is the notion that the world is misery. In the *Kulārṇavatantra* Pārvatī deplores the inevitable fate of all living beings: birth and death in an unbroken succession.

Taking various forms
Innumerable clusters of living beings
Are born and die.
No path exists for them
To secure release from this miserable state.

¹¹⁵ *Tirumantiram: A Tamil Scriptuaral Classic*, 81.

¹¹⁶ “There is undoubtedly an iconographical and quite possibly an historical connection of Avalokiteśvara with the Hindu God Śīva. We have seen already that Avalokiteśvara bestows upon Śīva his place in the Hindu pantheon. Nevertheless, Avalokiteśvara himself is also called Maheśvara in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*- Great Lord, a standard epithet of Śīva. He is described as a beautiful man ‘wearing a diadem on his matted hair, his mind filled with the highest friendliness, and looking like a disc of gold.’ This could be a description of Śīva, for whom the matted hair is a symbol of as Lord of the Yogins. In a lovely Kashmiri brass sculpture from c.1000 CE, Avalokiteśvara is shown seated on Potalaka, his mountain home, with matted hair and deer. Behind is what initially looks very much like Śīva’s trident. Śīva too dwells in the mountains as a *yogin*, and is associated with animals in his role of Lord of the Animals. Elsewhere Avalokiteśvara is described as ‘blue-throated’, a term for Śīva embedded in Śaivaite mythology. Śīva too could find himself worshipped as a Bodhisattva as indeed can Viṣṇu.... ” See Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The doctrinal foundations* (London: Routledge, 1989), 222.

¹¹⁷ *The Jains* (London: Routledge, 1992), 126.

¹¹⁸ S.N. Sadasivan, *A Social History of India* (New Delhi : APH Pub. Corp., 2000), 121.

O God!
 They are always afflicted with sorrow
 Nowhere is seen a happy soul among them
 O lord of gods! My master!
 Tell me by what means
 They may be liberated ¹¹⁹

The cycle of births is referred to as *saṃsāra*,¹²⁰ which is said to be the source of sorrow (*duḥkhamūlo hi saṃsāraḥ*). One who clings to the *saṃsāra* becomes dejected; but the one who abandons it finds happiness.¹²¹

Saṃsāra
 The source of all misery
 The seat of all misfortunes
 The receptacle of all sins
 Hence, saṃsāra should be abandoned, my dear! (KU.1 :60)

The Tirumantiram that identifies itself with the *āgamic* tradition also holds a gloomy outlook on worldly life. Fifty- four verses in the first Tantra (143-196) deal with the ephemeral nature of the body, wealth, youth, and the life. The body is compared to a fragile clay vessel,¹²² a rotten roof,¹²³ a temple with strong compound walls,¹²⁴ a leather bag,¹²⁵ and a mud drum.¹²⁶ These verses discuss the inevitability of death, indifference to the memory of the dead, the solitary journey of the soul after death, the necessity to undertake acts that would be helpful in the next life, and the disintegration of bodily elements at death.

¹¹⁹ nānāvidhaśarīrasthā anantā jīvarāśayaḥ |
 jāyante ca mriyante ca teṣāṃ mokṣo na vidyate || (KU.1:4)

sadā duḥkhāturā deva na sukhī vidyate kvacit |
 kenopāyena deveśa mucyate vada me prabho || (KU. 1:5)

¹²⁰ tasya śravaṇamātreṇa saṃsārāt mucyate naraḥ || (KU. 1:6)

¹²¹ duḥkhamūlo hi saṃsāraḥ sa yasyāsti sa duḥkhitaḥ |
 tasya tyāgaḥ kṛto yena sa sukhī nāparaḥ priye || (Ku. 1:60)

¹²² maṅṅoru kaṅṅir iruvakaippāttiram
 The body is a clay pot made up of good and bad karma. (TM 143:1)

¹²³ kūrai paḷaki viḷuntakkāl
 When the roof falls to pieces (TM 144:1)
 kūrai piriyum

The roof gives way (TM 146:3)

¹²⁴ ceppa maṭiḷuṭaik kōyil (TM 154:2, 3)

¹²⁵ tōr pai (TM 167:3)

¹²⁶ mattali (TM 189:4)

The whole village came together wailing aloud
 Denied his name, called him corpse
 Carried him to the burning ground and cremated him
 After taking a ritual bath they ceased thinking of him¹²⁷

They made refreshments, ate the cooked food
 Had secret [dalliance] with beautiful creeper-like maidens
 Said “The left side aches a little”
 Spread the bedding to lie down and lay for ever¹²⁸

The thirty and thirty and thirty six [ninety -six tattvas)
 Dwelt within a temple of sturdy compound walls
 When the temple with strong compound walls crumbled
 All of them took to their heels [the *tattvas* left the body]¹²⁹

One’s own shadow is of no use to the self
 Still knowing that, the ignorant claim “The wealth is mine”
 The soul leaves the body in which it was born.
 Perceive the light by which the eye sees.¹³⁰

The sun that rises in the east sets in the west
 Even though the unwise see it, they do not understand
 The young calf matures into a bull and dies in a few days
 Though men on the vast earth see it, they do not understand [the truth]¹³¹

Doubts have been expressed as to whether the verses dealing with the impermanence of worldly life originally formed part of the text.¹³² In fact, these verses resonate with the general

¹²⁷ ūr elām kūṭi olikka aḷutiṭṭu
 pēriṇai nikkip piṇam eṇru pēriṭṭu
 cūrai aṅkāṭṭiṭaiḱ koṇṭu pōyc cuṭṭiṭṭu
 nīriṇil mūlki niṇaiṭṭu oḷintārkaḷē (TM 145)

¹²⁸ aṭappanni vaittār aṭicilai uṇṭār
 maṭakkotiṭyāroṭu mantaṇam koṇṭār
 iṭappakkamē iṅrai nontatē eṇṇār
 kiṭakkap paṭuttār kiṭantu oḷintārē (TM 148)

¹²⁹ muppatum muppatum muppattu aṅruvarum
 ceppa maṭiḷ uṭaiḱ kōyiluḷ vāḷpavar
 ceppa maṭiḷ uṭaiḱ kōyil citaintapiṇ
 oppa aṇaivarum oṭṭeṭuttārkaḷē (TM 154)

¹³⁰ taṇṇatu cāyai taṇakku utavātu kaṇṭu
 eṇṇatu māṭu eṇru irupparkaḷ ēḷaikaḷ
 uṇ uyir pōm uṭal okkap piṇantatu
 kaṇṇatu kāṇ oḷi kaṇṭu koḷiṇē (TM 170)

¹³¹ kiḷakku eḷuntu oṭiya nāyiru mērkē
 viḷak kaṇṭum tēṅār viḷi ilā māntar
 kuḷakkaṅru mūttu erutāyc cila nāḷil
 viḷak kaṇṭum tēṅār viyaṇ ulakōrē (TM 177)

¹³² A.S. Nāṇacampantaṅ *Tirumantiram*, xxii.

spirit of the *āgamas* that were revealed by Śiva “for the sake of suffering souls.”¹³³ The *Tirumantiram* often mentions that those who do not know the correct path undergo untold agony.¹³⁴ The text was composed to relieve the human suffering by sharing the knowledge of the means to attain eternal bliss: *yān perra inṅpam peruka ivvaiyakam*.¹³⁵ Hence, it is appropriate that the text incorporate the sections that speak of impermanence and misery of earthly life.

(b) The causes of human misery

The *Tirumantiram* conceives reality in terms of the three distinct, permanent entities: *pati* (god), *pacu* /*paśu* (bound soul) and *pācam*/*pāśa* (bondage).¹³⁶

Three entities *pati*, *pacu* and *pācam* are spoken of.
Of them, *pacu* and *pācam* are beginningless like *pati*
Pati is separate from *pacu* and *pācam*
If *pati* approaches [*pacu*], *pācam* cannot stay [with *pacu*].¹³⁷

The cause for a miserable existence of souls is identified as *pāśa* in Śaiva Siddhānta.¹³⁸

The commentary on the Mṛgendrāgama refers to the bondage of the soul as *pāśajāla* (a snare of cords).¹³⁹ The term *pāśa* has several meanings in Sanskrit: cord, fetters, snare, noose, trap, net,

¹³³ Gavin Flood, *The Tantric Body*, 64.

¹³⁴ [The adherents of] the six faiths, rooted in suffering,
Do not see God immanent in the body.
[Consequently] they fall into the pit of illusion.
Fettered by the attachment to wife and children
They suffer intensely.

āyattuḷ niṅṅa aru camayaṅkaḷum
kāyattuḷ niṅṅa kaṭavuḷaik kāṅkilar
māyak kuḷiyil viḷuvar maṅaimakkaḷ
pācattil urrup pataikkaṅṅa vāṅṅē (TM 1530)

¹³⁵ TM 85:1

¹³⁶ The theology of the *Tirumantiram* is deemed pluralistic by Indian scholars whose commentaries I follow in this dissertation, whereas Kauvai Hindu monastery in Hawaii established in 1970 by Satguru Sivaya Subramaiyaswami, a disciple of Jaffna Yogar swami assumes it to be monistic.

¹³⁷ patiyacu pācam eṅappakar mūṅṅiṅṅi
patiyiṅṅaiṅ pōṅpacu pācam aṅṅāti
patiyiṅṅaiṅ ceṅṅaṅu kāppacu pācam
patiyaṅu kiṅpacu pācanil lāvē (TM 114).

¹³⁸ The term *siddhānta* refers to the school represented by Śaivāgamas.

¹³⁹ “pāśajālamapohati ” Mrgendrāgama, .198.
Pāśabandha Makuṅṅagama 1:75

the edge and the border of anything woven.¹⁴⁰ It is generally translated to bondage in English and is used in two senses in the *Tirumantiram*: one is fetters and the other is devotion.¹⁴¹ *Pācam* (*pāśa*) is also known as *malam* (impurity),¹⁴² and *kaḷimpu*.¹⁴³ The *Tirumantiram* also attributes the cause of misery to *pāśa* (bondage).¹⁴⁴ The body is referred to as the sorrow –house of vexing *pāśa*.¹⁴⁵ The three impurities¹⁴⁶ mentioned in the text are: *karma* or *viñai*,¹⁴⁷ *āṇavam*¹⁴⁸ or *mūlamalam* and *māyāmalam*.¹⁴⁹ Sometimes impurities are counted as five in the *Tirumantiram*.¹⁵⁰ Commentators add *māyēyam* and *tirōtāyi* to the existing three impurities. The *Tirumantiram* classifies souls into the three classes, *viññānar*, *piraḷayākalar* and *cakalar*, based on their association with the impurities.¹⁵¹

(c) Liberation (mokṣa)

The supreme goal of the *āgamic* tradition is *mokṣa* or *mukti* (liberation from bondage), the concept which is entirely absent in classical Tamil literature.¹⁵² Of the two types of release

¹⁴⁰ See Vaman Śivaram Apte, *The Student's Sanskrit –English Dictionary*.

¹⁴¹ *īcaṇ aṇiyum irāppaka luntanṇai*
pācattul vaittup parivucey vārkaḷai (TM 288:1-2)

¹⁴² TM 117, 118, 1432 (*paḷamala*), 1598, 1817, 1985, 2052, 2053, 2062, 2066, 2192, 2241 (The impurities are named), 2230, 2233, 2234, 2244, 2245, 2247, 2254, 2259, 2262

¹⁴³ TM 113-115.

¹⁴⁴ *pantañcey pācattu* (354:3)
māyañcey pācattum (405:2)
tuṇpañcey pācattuyar (432: 2)
paḷipala ceykiṇṇa pācakkaruvai (463;3)
oṭṭiya pāca uṇarvenṇuṇ kāyappai (473:2)
tuṇpuṇu pācattil (487:2)
pācac cuṭarppāmpu (908:3)
tuṇpak kuḷampil tuyaruṇuṇ pāca (1128:3)

¹⁴⁵ *tuṇpuṇu pācattuyar maṇai* (TM 453:2) *maṇ tuṇpak kalacam* (TM 468:1-2)

¹⁴⁶ TM 116, 496, 930, 1527 (*tirimalam*), 1907 (*tirimalam*), 2054 (*tirimalam*), *mummalam māṇṇi* (TM 116: 3)

¹⁴⁷ TM 113.

¹⁴⁸ TM 2183

¹⁴⁹ TM 2007

¹⁵⁰ TM 118, 1481, 1689, 2021, 2059, 2060, 2160, 2166, 2177, 2182, 2183, 2207, 2211, 2213, 2236, 2253, 2257, 2293, 2710.

¹⁵¹ TM 498

¹⁵² The classical Tamil literature mentions Heroes' heaven (Valhalla) which is the final destination of warriors who die in battle. It was also believed that the spirits of departed warriors reside in the memorial stone built in their memory. The Brhmanical tradition also initially recognised only three ideals of life, *dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* (*trivarga*). The final goal of liberation was added to it later.

available to souls, *videhamukti* is deemed higher than *jīvanmukti* except in a few tantric traditions. André Padoux explains,

.. liberation in a Tantric context is not necessarily *jīvanmukti*. Even in such a completely Tantric work as Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka*, the best and highest adept, who benefits from the most intense grace of Śiva (*tīvrasaktipāta*), is instantly liberated and dies: a condition higher than *jīvanmukti*. The typical Tantric *jīvanmukta*, totally free of a world he dominates and transcends, is to be found in some tantras only-for example, in the Bhairava or Kālī Tantras, in Sahajīya Vaiṣṇavism or in Buddhism too- that can be viewed as "hardcore"Tantrism. In the more staid Saiddhāntika Āgamas where the term *jīvanmukti* seldom occurs, the liberated adept acquires *śivatva*, the condition of Śiva, a condition of similarity (*sāmantā*¹⁵³) with Śiva, not one of total fusion (*ekatva*)¹⁵⁴

On the other hand, the *Tirumantiram* is concerned with living liberation alone and does not discuss *videhamukti*. Two significant factors that could have influenced the *Tirumantiram*'s preference of *jīvanmukti* over *videhamukti* are this worldly orientation of classical Tamil thought, and the immanence of the sacred in the world and the human body. As explained in the previous section, the concept of living liberation was introduced by the text to serve the stereological needs of indigenous population, most of whom were not qualified for liberation in terms of the criteria determined by the *āgamas*.

Freedom from bondage (*pāśa*) and suffering is called *mokṣa*. Richard Davis notes that not all humans aspire to *mokṣa* in this life time. Accordingly, Śaiva ritualists are divided into *bubhukṣu* (seeker of earthly pleasures) and *mumukṣu* (seeker of liberation).¹⁵⁵ In contrast, a *jīvanmukta* in the *Tirumantiram*, who is liberated while living in this world, does not shun *bhoga*. He experiences Śivaloka, Śivayoga and Śivabhoga within himself in the state of *turīya samādhi* (TM 128).

In order to attain liberation, it is necessary that a living being is human. Only after human birth is the soul aware of its bondage and capable of making efforts to sunder the bonds.

¹⁵³ I am unable to trace the term *sāmantā* in the Sanskrit dictionaries. I assume that this is a typographical error and the correct term is *sāmyatā*.

¹⁵⁴ The Roots of Tantra, 20.

¹⁵⁵ *Ritual in an Oscillating Universe*, 170.

Fourteen ślokas in the first *ullāsa* of the *Kulārṇava Tantra* speak about the significance of the human body in relation to liberation. The human birth is highly valued among eighty-four lakhs of births,¹⁵⁶ as it is deemed a ladder to liberation.¹⁵⁷ The *Tirumantiram* refers to human birth as “joyous birth” (*inṅpap piṛavi*, TM 281; *inṅpap piṛappu* TM 287). Liberation becomes a reality only if one realises God residing in the human body. It, therefore, devotes a separate section to the creation of body in *Tantra* two (451-491), which follows the delineation of macrocosmic creation.

The expression “becoming *civam*” (*civamātal*) refers to the soul in a state of being rid of the three impurities by means of *dīkṣā* or initiation. However, the state of “becoming *civam*” through initiation is short-lived. The *sādhaka* permanently attains that state only through the practice of yoga. Hence, the expression “becoming *civam*” denotes the process as well as the final goal of liberation. This final state is also known as *cāyucciyam* (Skt. *sāyujya*). The text asserts, “*cāyucciyam* is to become *civam*” (*cāyucciyam civamātal*, TM 1513:3).

The ultimate end as conceptualised by the *Tirumantiram* – “to become *civam*”¹⁵⁸ -should be distinguished from the final goal of the Śaiva ritualistic tradition enshrined in the *āgamas*, “to become a Śiva.”

The Śaivas define *mokṣa* precisely as the process by which the soul is released from its bondage and becomes a Śiva. When one attains liberation, they say, the soul becomes completely equal to Śiva. It acquires a form identical to that of Śiva. A liberated soul does not merge into the divinity or become united with him, as some other systems of Hindu philosophy assert. Nor does it enter again into the manifest

¹⁵⁶ Ku. 1:14

¹⁵⁷ Sopānabhūtam mokṣasya (Ku.1:16)

¹⁵⁸ tirimalam tīrntu civaṅavaṅāmē (2659:4)

tēṭṭamum illai civaṅavaṅāmē (604:4)

cittant tirintu civamayamākiyē (652:1)

teruḷ vanta civaṅār ceṅru ivarṛālē

aruḷ taṅki accivamam āvatu vīṭē. (979:3-4)

pavamatu akanṅru paracivaṅāmē 2711 :4

pettamaṅac civamāki 2833 :3

civāmāy avamāṅa mummalam tīra 2834:1

tāṅē civamāṅa taṅmai talaippaṭa 2314:1

tāṅ avāṅākum camāti kaikūṭiṅṅāl 2320:1

cosmos. Rather, it remains as an autonomous theomorphic entity, separate from Śiva but with all his powers and qualities. In this sense, the end point of the soul's 'career', its final and most desirable destination, is to become a Śiva.¹⁵⁹

The Tirumantiram itself explains the difference between the two goals: “to become a Śiva” and “to become civam.”

There are dual realities- the Self and the other (He)
Having perceived both of them in your own self
If [you] offer the flower of yourself to Him
[Then] it is not correct to speak “you” and “He.”¹⁶⁰

The concept of “becoming civam” is likened to space intermingling with space, nectar drowning in nectar, and light dissolving in light. This doctrine of liberation is designated as Vedānta-Siddhānta in the text. The following verses speak of the merging of the soul into cosmic consciousness. One of the synonyms of the soul is *arivu*.

Space intermingles with space
Nectar drowns in nectar
Light dissolves in light
The Śiva-Siddhas are those who
Perceives the highest state as such.¹⁶¹

The fierce rays of the Sun beating upon the water
The dissolved salt does in crystal shape emerge
That salt in the water dissolved becomes liquid again
So does Jīva in Śiva get dissolved.¹⁶²

I did not know that my form is *arivu* (consciousness or knowledge)
Compassionate Nandi taught me that my [natural] form is none other than *arivu* itself
I realized through His grace that my true form is *arivu*
Then I remained established in *arivu*, my own true form.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Richard Davis, *Worshipping Śiva in Medieval India*, 83.

¹⁶⁰ tāṅ enṛu avan enṛu iraṅṭākum tattuvam
tāṅ enṛu avan enṛu iraṅṭum taṅṛ kaṅṭu
tāṅ enṛa pūvai avanāṭi cāttiṅāḷ
tāṅ enṛu avan enṛkai nallatu onṛu aṅṛē (TM 1607)

¹⁶¹ veḷiyiṅ veḷi pōy viraviya vāṛum
aḷiyiṅ aḷi pōy aṭaṅkiya vāṛum
oḷiyiṅ oḷi pōy oṭuṅkiya vāṛum
teḷiyum avarē civa cittaṅ tāmē. (TM 124)

¹⁶² TM 136 –the translation by Natarjan

¹⁶³ arivu vaṭivu enṛu aṅiyāta enṅai
arivu vaṭivu enṛu aruḷ ceytāṅ nanti
arivu vaṭivu enṛu aruḷāl aṅintē
arivu vaṭivu enṛu aṅintu iruntēṅē (TM 2357)

Aṛivu (consciousness) is neither destroyed nor created
 Aṛivu [the soul] has no other mainstay but *aṛivu*
 Aṛivu itself [the soul] knows *aṛivu*
 Thus say the Upaniṣads.¹⁶⁴

According to the āgamic tradition, *dīkṣā* or initiation plays a key role in liberation as it unveils the true nature of the soul. The soul's failure to realise its innate omniscience and omnipotence is caused by an imperceptible impurity *āṇava*, which is a substance (*dravya*). Hence action alone in the form initiation will eliminate it. As the power of poison is destroyed either through mantra or drugs, the bonds are instantly shattered by a guru who is knowledgeable in mantra.¹⁶⁵ Hence the *Kulārṇava Tantra* proclaims that there is no liberation without initiation.¹⁶⁶ The one who receives initiation becomes united with Śiva; nonetheless his liberation occurs only after death.¹⁶⁷

The *Tirumantiram*, however, prescribes *jñāna dīkṣā* in place of *kriyā dīkṣā*. The first verse in the first *Tantra* discusses the removal of bondage (*kaḷimpu*) by God who descends to earth taking human form.¹⁶⁸ Knowledge which is bestowed through *dīkṣā* is often compared to the light of the Sun.¹⁶⁹ The *Tirumantiram* also agrees that in order for the bonds to be sundered, Śiva's Śakti should be first established (*śaktinipāta /sattinipātam*).¹⁷⁰ *Śaktinipāta* is homologised

¹⁶⁴ aṛivukku aḷivillai ākkamum illai
 aṛivukku aṛivu allatu ātāramum illai
 aṛivē aṛivai aṛikinṛatu eṇṛiṭṭu
 aṛaikinṛaṇa maṛai iṛukaḷ tāmē (TM 2358)

¹⁶⁵ mantrauṣḍhairiyathā hanyādviṣaśaktim kuleśvari
 paśupāśam tathā chindyāddīkṣayā mantravit kṣaṇāt (Ku. 14:83)

¹⁶⁶ vinā dīkṣām na mokṣaḥ syāttaduktam śivaśāsane (Ku. 14:3:1)

¹⁶⁷ tasyārpitādhikārasya yogaḥ sāksāt pare śive
 dehānte śāśvatī muktiriti śaṅkarabhāṣitam (Ku. 14: 7)

¹⁶⁸ TM 113

¹⁶⁹ Śiva is also compared to the Sun. Nandi is described as the Sun rising from the sea of compassion or love: tayāeṇṇum tōyama tāyeḷum cūriyaṇāmē (TM 116: 3-4). Hence it is apposite to compare the knowledge of Śiva to the Sun.

¹⁷⁰ kaḷimpaṛuttāṇ aruṭkaṇ viḷippittu (TM 114:2)

to a marriage between an old blind man (the soul) and a young maiden (Śakti),¹⁷¹ which destroys karma and *āṇava* malas and grants pleasure and knowledge.¹⁷² At times, the guru who grants initiation is identified with Śakti. Equanimity towards meritorious and sinful deeds is a prerequisite to *śaktinipāta* in its highest form.

When one is neutral to good and bad karmas
The sweet Śakti of compassion
Comes in the form of Guru,
Eliminates many a quality, [which are an impediment to salvation]
And bestows knowledge.
[Because of that knowledge,] if one abandons egoistic deeds
He will be Śiva, being rid of the three impurities.¹⁷³

The initiation is said to be leading to a transformation of the self. It may be recalled that the womb and gestation symbolism employed in Vedic initiation, denotes a new birth for the initiate. The preceptor symbolically carries the disciple in his womb for three days and gives a new birth to him. In contrast, the Tirumantiram states that the soul approached by Guru attains *śivatvam* as iron that comes into contact with mercury becomes gold.¹⁷⁴

All that the alchemist touches
Turns into gold, likewise
The whole world, touched [blessed] by guru
Attains the state of Śiva [*śivatvam* or *śivagati*]
Being rid of the triple impurities.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ TM 1514

¹⁷² TM 1518

¹⁷³ iruviṇai nēr oppil iṇ aruḷ cakti
kuruveṇa vantu kuṇam pala nīkkit
tarum eṇu nāṇattāl taṇ ceyal arṛāl
tirimalam tīrtu civaṇ avaṇāmē (TM 1527).

¹⁷⁴ rasendreṇa yathā viddhamayaḥ suvarṇatām vrajet
dīksāviddhastathā hyātmā śivatvam labhate priye (Ku. 14:89)

¹⁷⁵ paricaṇa vēti paricitta tellām
varicai tarum poṇ vakaiyākumāpōḷ
kuruparicitta kuvalayamellām
tirimalam tīrtu civakatiyāmē (TM 2054)

(d) Paths leading to the removal of human misery

Ritual and knowledge are recognised as the twin paths to liberation in the *āgamas*. Dualistic Śaiva Siddhāntins hold that liberation is not attainable without recourse to ritual. Kashmir Śaivism “which, although giving Jñāna a certain superiority over Kriyā at Śiva’s level, sees no divorce between reflection and action, and whose highest speculations were always nourished by a sustained practice.”¹⁷⁶ Though the Tirumantiram discusses the four paths- *caryā* (dāsamārga), *kriyā* (satputramārga), yoga (sakhamārga), and *jñāna* (sanmārga), only the last two are acknowledged to be leading to living liberation. Yoga and *jñāna* are often mentioned together and at times, the path of *jñāna* is evidently identified with that of yoga. Also the last of the eight –limbed yoga, *samādhi*, leads to knowledge:

Sanmārga [*jñāna*] itself is Sakhamārga [yoga].¹⁷⁷

The clear vision of truth in Sanmārga [*jñāna*] is
Is to be united with Śakti [kuṇḍalini] in Sakhamārga [yoga].¹⁷⁸

sārūpa goal [related to yoga] is achievable in the eighth step of *samādhi*
But it cannot be attained except by those who stand on the path of *jñāna*.¹⁷⁹

Without vacillating between this way or that way
Proceed on the path of eight-limbed yoga and remain in *samādhi*
This is the good path that leads to knowledge [*jñāna*].¹⁸⁰

The role of *caryā* and *kriyā* in the spiritual practice towards liberation is not quite clear in the *āgamas*. According to Brunner, the *āgamas* are primarily ritualistic manuals. Discipline, yoga and meditation and theology hold a subordinate position to ritual. In other words, they form

¹⁷⁶ Helene Brunner, “Jñāna and Kriyā: Relation between Theory and Practice in the Śaivāgamas”, 38

¹⁷⁷ caṇmārkkantāṇē cakamārkkā māṇatu (TM 1488:1)

¹⁷⁸cakamārkkat

tēviyōṭṭṇal caṇmārkkat teḷivatē (TM 1495: 3-4)

¹⁷⁹ TM 1510.

¹⁸⁰ anneṇi inneṇi eṇṇātaṭ ṭāṅkat

tanneṇi ceṇṇu camāṭiyi lēṇiṇmiṇ

nanṇeri celvārkkū ṇāṇatti lēkalām (TM 551:1-3)

part of the elaborate ritualistic system elucidated in the *āgamas*. They are meaningful only if they are perceived in relation to ritual. In contrast, the four *pādas* are clearly defined and hierarchized in the fifth *Tantra* of the *Tirumantiram*. The bhakta begins with the practice of *caryā* and *kriyā* and through Śiva's grace, embarks on the path of yoga and in the end attains unity with Śiva.¹⁸¹ The notion that these four *pādas* are graded steps is absent in the *Śaivāgamas*.¹⁸² This is an attempt made by the text to bring devotees and ritualists into the fold of Śuddha Śaivism, a new religion formulated by the Tirumantiram.

The four paths are thus defined in the text: Those who follow the path of *caryā* are called bhaktas.¹⁸³ They adore Śiva in love¹⁸⁴ and undertake pilgrimage. It is declared as the most fundamental to Śuddha Śaiva.¹⁸⁵ *Kriyā* is characterised by activities like investing an image with spirituality,¹⁸⁶ and worshipping an image of Śiva.¹⁸⁷ It is a path of filial piety¹⁸⁸ Yogis are those who practise *kuṇḍalinī* yoga with single mindedness and sit immobile like a wooden stake.¹⁸⁹ *Jñāna* is the realization that "I am Śiva"; thus a *jñāni* becomes Śiva, i.e united with Śiva.¹⁹⁰ Transcending the polarities is characteristic of *jñāna*,¹⁹¹ which is alternatively known as *sanmārga* and *gurumārga*.¹⁹² Jñānis are practitioners of Śivayoga and known as Siddhas.¹⁹³ Devotion to guru is characteristic of this path.¹⁹⁴

One becomes Śiva, gets rid of the five impurities
Becomes liberated observing silence

¹⁸¹ TM 1448, 1455, 1469.

¹⁸² Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti*, 134.

¹⁸³ TM 1446:1

¹⁸⁴ TM 1444:2; TM 1448:4

¹⁸⁵ TM 1443

¹⁸⁶ TM 1444:3

¹⁸⁷ TM 1448:1

¹⁸⁸ TM 1445:1

¹⁸⁹ TM 1457

¹⁹⁰ TM 1469

¹⁹¹ TM 1474:2

¹⁹² TM 1478

¹⁹³ TM 1477

¹⁹⁴ TM 1479

Bliss in the experience of knowledge blemishless
This is the *sanmārga* in which one is completely identified with Śiva.¹⁹⁵

The Tirumantiram expounds the concepts, generally considered as the four types of release - *sāloka*, *sāmīpa*, *sārūpa* and *sājuḡya*- attainable from observance of the four paths, in terms of the transformation of knowledge: In *sāloka*, *pāsajñāna* becomes *paśujñāna*, which turns into *aruḷjñāna* in *sāmīpa*. This is transformed into *patijñāna* in *sārūpa*, and in *sājuḡya* it becomes dissolved in Śiva.¹⁹⁶ The final *mukti* is celebrated in the *Tirumantiram* as living liberation and is inseparably linked to the concept of immortality.

As noted earlier, the one who is a follower of caryā path is called bhakta, whereas the one who adopts the paths of kriyā and yoga are known as sādḡhaka. The one who has attained jñāna is called a Siddha. The term *sādḡhaka*, especially, denotes the one who has undergone *sādḡhakābhiṣeka*. The *āgamas* dealing with *parārthapūḷjā* are temple liturgical texts, primarily meant for temple ritualists Śivācāryas, whereas the *āgamas* that focus on private worship offer guidance to *sādḡhakas*.¹⁹⁷ Brunner furnishes an elaborate description of the *sādḡhaka*, his goal and his activities.

...on this particular initiate, the sādḡhaka,... He is the one who, after his dīkṣā, attaches himself to a definitive divinity (his “chosen deity”, iṣṡadevatā), devoting all his time and energy to win over this God or Goddess, by means of meditation (dhyāna), cults (pūḷjās), fire sacrifices (homas), and especially lengthy recitations of His or Her mantras (japas). This practice (sādḡhana) sometimes of a kind better known from extreme marginal sects, often implies severe asceticism. It is done in a secluded place and must be pursued up to the advent of what is called success (siddhi or mantrasiddhi), which consists in the complete mastering of the mass of Energy represented by the chosen deity. The *sādḡhaka*, henceforth is to free to make use of his power at will, but the kind of siddhi thus acquired varies according to the intensity of the sādḡhana and the nature of the divinity involved, ranging from the possession of some supernatural powers to a total divinization.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁵ TM 1481

¹⁹⁶ TM 1509

¹⁹⁷ Brunner, “Jñāna and Kriyā: Relation between Theory and Practice in the Śaivāgamas,” 28.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

The vernacular *āgama Tirumantiram* was composed for the sake of Tamil *sādhakas* who inhabited the five Tamil *maṅṭalams* or regions.¹⁹⁹ In the *Tirumantiram* the *sādhaka* (*cātakaṇ*) is connected to *kriyā*, and *yoga*. The above description of *sādhaka* almost perfectly fits the *kriyāsādhaka* who is chiefly a worshipper of Śakti in the fourth *Tantra* of the *Tirumantiram*, which is described as “a practical exposition of the Mantra Śāstra or the Upāsanā Mārga.”²⁰⁰ Venkataraman is of the opinion that the origin of Tamil kāyasiddha school of later period that deals with mantras and yantras could be traced to this tantra.²⁰¹ Though Śakti is praised as supreme Goddess in her own right, the text emphasizes that she be perceived as consort of Śiva, sharing half his body (*pākam parācatti* TM 1217:1). Moreover, the path of *kriyā* is deemed inferior to that of *yoga* and *aṅṇu* in the text.

Those who have becomes slaves
of the One who is [eternally] devoid of the impurities
Do not seek *kriyā*
Those who are not [naturally] inclined towards [*kriyā*]
Do not seek *kriyā*
They who are great Śiva Yogis
Do not seek *kriyā*
Those who have great aṅṇu for Śiva
Do not seek *kriyā*.²⁰²

The *sādhaka* in the *Tirumantiram* is more interested in becoming *civam* than in attaining worldly powers. Having his bonds burnt through initiation by the preceptor, the *sādhaka* works towards becoming *civam* through a sustained practice of *yoga*.²⁰³ He is explicitly connected with

¹⁹⁹ According to Narayana Ayyar, they are Cēra maṅṭalam, Cōḷa maṅṭalam, Pāṇṭiya maṅṭalam Toṅṭai maṅṭalam (Pallava) and Koṅku maṅṭalam.

²⁰⁰ C. V. Narayana Ayyar, *Origin and early history of Śaivism in South India*, 231

²⁰¹ *A History of the Tamil Siddha Cult*, 90-93.

²⁰² vēṅṭārkaḷ kaṅmam vimalaṅṅukku āṭpaṭṭōr
vēṅṭārkaḷ kaṅmam atil iccai arṅṅa pēr
vēṅṭārkaḷ kaṅmam miku caiva yōkikaḷ
vēṅṭārkaḷ kaṅmam mikutiyoṅṅ āytaṅṅpē (TM 1008)

²⁰³ taṅṅpara mēvuvōr cātakarāmē (TM 2059:4)

the practice of the eight-fold yoga and *haṭha* yoga in the text.²⁰⁴ Another verse defines *sādhaka* as the one who stays in *samādhi*:

He is not conscious of the times that pass by
 He [merely] looks at [sits through]
 Great [the timeless] moments that continue to expand
 He directs the breath
 Through the channel *suṣumnā*
 To the space in cranium
 He is the *sādhaka* who
 Remains there absorbed with his ego destroyed.²⁰⁵

Religion of the Tirumantiram:

We have thus far noted that though the concept of Living liberation is expounded within the *āgamic* conceptual framework, it is greatly influenced by Upaniṣads called Vedanta. The religion of the *Tirumantiram* is known as Śuddha Śaivism which is explained in terms of the four *pādas*. Based on the sub-headings found in Tantra Five, it is argued that verses 1420-1442 deal with the four forms of Śaivism: Śuddha Śaivism, Aśuddha Śaivism, Mārga Śaivism and Rigorous (*kaṭum*) Śuddha Śaivism.²⁰⁶ However, the descriptions in respect of these forms of Śaivism, especially those in respect of Mārga Śaivism and Rigorous (*kaṭum*) Śuddha Śaivism are vague and incomplete. Of the twenty three verses dealing with the four-fold Śaivism, only one verse mentions Rigorous Śuddha Śaivism (1425). Of the eleven verses given under the title of Mārga Śaivism, the term *mārga* appears only in verse 1427; one verse describes Aśuddha Śaivism (1435) and the rest is concerned with Śuddha Śaivism. Only Aśuddha Śaivism and Śuddha Śaivism are clearly presented in the text.

²⁰⁴ *cutta viyamāti cātakar tūyōkar* (TM 1446:3); TM 1140.

²⁰⁵ *irukkiṅṅa kālaṅkaḷ ētum aṅiyār*
perukkiṅṅa kālap perumaiyai nōkki
orukkiṅṅavāyu oḷi pera niṅkat
tarukkoṅṅi niṅṅiṅṅum cātaṅṅāmē (TM 716)

²⁰⁶ The expression “*nālvakaic caivamumāmē*” (TM 1419:4) does not mention the four types of cults by name.

According to verses 1423 and 1424, followers of Aśuddha Śaivism adopt the paths of caryā and kriyā. The text identifies them as devotees and ritualists respectively,²⁰⁷ who give prominence to religious insignia. They wear twin golden ear rings, ornaments, twin colourful garlands, and a double string of rudrākṣa. In addition, they have a rudrākṣa on the heads and holy ashes besmeared on their bodies. Upon initiation, they recite sacred scriptures. Their Siddhānta (philosophy) does not show any sign of influence by Vedānta.²⁰⁸ Hence, they are considered inferior to adherents of Śuddha Śaivism and are also referred to as ordinary Śaivas: *vētāntamallāta cittāntam kaṇṭulōr cātāraṇamaṇṇa caivar upāyamē* (TM 1435:3-4).

In contrast, Śuddha Śaivism is associated with the paths of yoga and jñāna. Its philosophy is called Śuddha Siddhānta which is heavily influenced by Vedānta. Followers of Śuddha Śaivism seek the transcendental state of Śivoham in which distinctions of polarities disappear.

Śuddha Śaivas distinguish between *cat*, *acat* and *catacat*
 They transcend the binaries of *cit* and *acit*
 Though living in the world they are not associated with *śuddha* and *aśuddha* māyā
 Eternal Para is dear to them. (1420)

The Tirumantiram also reinterprets the means and the goal of āgamic Śaiva Siddhānta. Ritual is replaced by yoga and *jñāna* and the goal of ‘becoming a Śiva’ is substituted with that of ‘becoming civam.’ Besides, the philosophy of Śuddha Siddhānta is claimed to be Vedānta itself.

Adherents of Śaiva Siddhānta,
 Having studied all that must be learnt,
 practised Śivayoga that deals with the kalās of the moon,
 secured the knowledge of *bindu* and *nāda* in due manner,
 reached the *kalā* made known by *praṇava*,
 and got rid of impurities,
 Realise the state of *civam* (1421)

Vedānta is Śuddha Siddhānta itself
 Those who adopt this path are those who
 Have a vision of *civam*, that is *nādānta*. (1422)

²⁰⁷ TM 1446; TM 1444 and TM 1448

²⁰⁸ The term *vedānta* refers to the Upaniṣads here, in particular, the *mahāvākyas*.

Both *caryā* and *kriyā* are connected to temple worship which is not held in high esteem by the text. In this classificatory system, Aśuddha Śaivas practising *caryā* and *kriyā* are opposed to Śuddha Śaivas who are practitioners of yoga and seekers of knowledge. The Siddhānta of Aśuddha Śaivas is dualistic whereas Śuddha Śaiva description could be considered as non-dualism. In the verses under consideration, liberation is denoted by different expressions: *tarparam kāṇal* (1421:3), *civōkam* (1431), *civamātal* (1434,1437, 1440), *cāyucciyaṃ* (1442). All may be taken to denote the identical goal of Śuddha Śaivism.

III

The Tirumantiram and Vedic Revelation

The Vedas and the *āgamas* are referred to as *Vētākamam* in the text²⁰⁹. Only in one instance are the *āgamas* placed before the Vedas.²¹⁰ The path shown by these two revelations is known as *Vētākama neṛi*.²¹¹ Their divine origin is affirmed by the *Tirumantiram*.²¹² These scriptures are held authoritative as they are revealed by Śiva. Compared to the Vedas, the *āgamas*, however, exercise a far greater authority in Śuddha Śaivism. It is decreed that the Vedas and the *āgamas* have general and special authority respectively in the religious domain.²¹³ The text considers the *āgamic* revelation exhaustive, perfect, and superior to Vedic revelation. While

²⁰⁹ vētākamam (TM 2755) pāṭi eḷukiṅṅa vētākamaṅkaḷum (TM 2317) vētākamam kūṟum (TM 2057) vētamey ākamam ellām (TM 1335:2)

²¹⁰ ākama vētam (TM 2379:1)

²¹¹ TM 2044:2.

²¹² mutalākum vēta muḷutā kamamap
patiyāṅa icaṅ pakarṁta tiraṅṅu (TM 2404:1-2)

The primal Vedas and the perfect *āgamas*
The texts revealed by the lord of souls are, thus two.
vētamoṭākamam meyyāṅ iṟaivaṅ nūl (TM 2397a)

Both the Vedas and the *āgamas* are deemed divine revelations. However, in Tantra four Parāśakti is referred to as the creator of the Vedas and Vedāṅgas: vaittaṅṅaḷ āraṅka nāluṅṅaṅ tāṅvētam (TM 1180:2). Parāśakti, the mother of tattvas (tattuva nāyaki ,TM 679:1), shares Śiva's form (TM 1217:1) and renders support to those who seek knowledge (TM 1057). She is capable of leading devotees to the state of Śivatvam (TM 1066). She comes in the form of guru (kurācatti kōlam TM 1169:4). She dispels the darkness of the mind caused by āṅavam (TM 1246), and confers mukti and siddhi (TM 1309:2)

²¹³ vētamoṭu ākamam meyyāṅ iṟaivaṅnūl oṭum potuvum ciṟappumeṅṅu uḷḷaṅa (TM 2397:1-2)

attaching a lower position to the Vedas, the *Tirumantiram* claims that the Vedas are not contrary to the general spirit and tenor of the text. By interpreting the Vedas in the light of its own doctrines, it shows that its conclusions are those of the Vedas.

In order to bridge the doctrinal gap between the Vedas²¹⁴ and the *Tirumantiram*, the following notions are declared common to both texts: (a) Śiva constitutes the epitome of the Vedas (b) The Vedas confer liberation (c) Vedic sacrifice is identified with yoga (d) The path to liberation elucidated by the *Tirumantiram* is none other than the one expounded by Upaniṣads (Vedānta). Thus, the Vedas are reinterpreted as soteriological texts.

The Vedas and Śiva

The *Tirumantiram* declares that Vedic revelation has dual purposes. One is a practical purpose to be used in sacrifices; the ultimate purpose, however, is to unveil the true essence (*meyporuḷ*).²¹⁵ The expression *meyporuḷ* refers to Śiva in verse 52.²¹⁶ The Vedas are represented as a sectarian literature having Śiva as the supreme deity. Śiva has stable links with the Vedic tradition.²¹⁷ He is the creator as well as the reciter of the Vedas.²¹⁸ Sometimes his consort is associated with the Vedas.²¹⁹ Since Śiva is consciousness itself, the Vedas are nothing other than the expression of this consciousness in the form of *nāda*.

²¹⁴ The Vedic literature can be classified into karmakāṇḍa and jñānakāṇḍa. The karmakāṇḍa is concerned with sacrificial ritual and the Upaniṣads are known as jñānakāṇḍa. The *Tirumantiram* refers to the Upaniṣads as Vedānta.

²¹⁵ vētam uraittāṇum vētiyar vēlvikkāy vētam uraittāṇum meyporuḷ kāṭṭavē (TM 52 :3-4)

²¹⁶ The expression *meyporuḷ* appears in verses 52, 675, 676, 689, 952, 1354, 160, and 1822. In most instances, it denotes Śiva, but in 1360 it refers to Śakti.

²¹⁷ vētattil āṭi (TM 2756:2) Śiva dances in the Vedas.

vētattiṅ antamum ...civanaṭamāmē (TM 2792) The end of the Vedas signifies the dance of Śiva.

vētakkaṅ ṇāṭiyil vēṟē vēḷippaṭu (TM 2986) Śiva appears in the glass of Vedic knowledge.

vēta mutalvaṅ (TM 2604:2; 2994) Śiva is the primal one of the Vedas.

vētappakavaṅ (TM 2447:3) The Lord of the Vedas.

civa vētattiri (TM 2578:2-3) the Vedic torch of Śiva.

²¹⁸ āraṅka māyvaru māmaṟai ōṭiyai (TM 55a).

²¹⁹ vēta mutalvi (TM 1161:3) Śakti is also referred to as chief of the Vedas kūttāṇaik kaṅṭa ak kōmaḷak kaṅṇiṅaḷ ...pārttaṅaḷ vētaṅkaḷ pāṭiṅaḷ tāṅē (TM 2800) Śiva dances while his consort sings the Vedas.

In the beautiful Vedas of metrical form
 The three-eyed god rises
 As melting Consciousness.
 He is the essence embodied
 In the mantras chanted by the Brahmans.
 His form instills awe.²²⁰

By establishing the links between the Vedas and Śiva, the text emphasizes the fact the Brahmans whose prerogative is the study of the Vedas are not extraneous to the path of Śaivism. However, the author deplors the fact that the Brahmans are apathetic to the concepts embodied in Śiva's *ardhanārīśvara* form or the aniconic form of *linga*.²²¹ Both are symbolic of the highest state of consciousness the Siddha attains in yoga.

The Vedas and Liberation:

Having established Śiva as the true object of the Vedas, the text reinterprets them as Scriptures of liberation. The following verse distinguishes Vedic religion from other creeds that place an emphasis on logical reasoning, and declares that liberation is attainable through the study of the Vedas.

There is no higher wisdom (*aṛam*) than the Vedas
 The Vedas contain all knowledge (*aṛam*) that should be recited
 Turning away from the science of reasoning
 The wise secured release through the recitation of the Vedas²²²

The term *aṛam* has several meanings including wisdom or knowledge according to the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon.²²³ Both Natarajan and Varatarājan interpret the term as *dharma* and

²²⁰ irukkuru vāyeḷil vētatti nullē
 urukkuṇar vāyuṇar vētattuḷ ṅṅki
 verukkuru vākiya vētiyar collum
 karukkuru vāyṅṅra kaṅṅaṅumāmē (TM 53)

The inner or esoteric meaning of the Vedas is denoted by the term *marai* (the hidden) in the poem addressed to Tirumāl: vētattu marai nī –You are the essence or the hidden meaning of the Vedas (Pari.3:66).

²²¹ āraṅka māyvaru māmaṅai ṅtiyaik
 kūraṅka mākak kuṅampayil vārillai (TM 55:1-2)

²²² vētattai viṅṅa aṅamillai vētattiṅ
 ṅtat takumaṅam ellam uḷa tarkka
 vātattai viṅṅu matiṅar vaḷamurra
 vētattai ṅtiyē viṅṅu perṅrarkaḷē (TM 51)

nīti respectively.²²⁴ Thus, they seem to suggest that the verse is evocative of the classical notion “*The root of the whole of dharma is the Vedas*” found in the *Manusmṛti* 2:6. Yet, *aṛam* in this instance needs to be reinterpreted as knowledge or wisdom revealed by Śiva, through which alone liberation is attainable.

Reconceptualization of Vedic Sacrifice as Yoga:

As pointed out earlier, one of the purposes of the Vedas is to be used in sacrifice. The *Tirumantiram* acknowledges the fundamental belief underlying the sacrificial ritual, i.e. the cosmos is upheld by Vedic sacrifice.²²⁵

The sky and the earth
all directions and
the gods who hold sway there
will flourish
if sinless Brahmans offer oblations into the fire
as per the Vedas, the flawless sublime truth.²²⁶

Nonetheless, the limitation of the Vedic sacrificial tradition is that it is not concerned with liberation from *saṃsāra*. The one who executes the sacrifice is elevated to heaven through the merit acquired from the sacrifice. However, he is constrained to descend back to earth upon the exhaustion of his merits. Performance of sacrifice cannot secure the performer release from *saṃsāra*. The only way for an individual to determine his own fate is to seek self-knowledge, and thereby extricate him from the web of rites. The text states,

The Brahmans proficient in the Vedas
offer oblations and give others before they eat²²⁷

²²³ Moral or religious duty, virtue, performance of good works according to the Śāstras, duties to be practised by each caste, merit, that which is fitting, excellent, religious faith, wisdom, feeding house, fasting, letters or words in a verse which cause harm, Goddess of virtue, and Yama.

²²⁴ See Natarajan’s translation on p. 9 and Varatarājan’s commentary on p.27.

²²⁵ My interpretation of verses 214 and 215 are based on Varatarājan’s commentary.

²²⁶ vacaiyil viḷupporuḷ vāṇum nilaṇum
ticaiyum ticaiperu tēvar kuḷāmum
vicaiyam perukiya vēta mutalām
acaivilā antaṇar ākuti vēṭkilē (TM 214)

²²⁷ *puṛam koṭuttu uṇṇal* is interpreted by Varatarājan as making *dāna* before eating. I suppose that this phrase is connected to the concept of pañcayajña: braḥmayajña (Study and teaching of the Vedas), pitṛyajña (offering of oblations to the manes, daivayajña (fire ritual), bhūtayajña (offering of food to beast and birds) and nṛyajña

in pursuit of heaven (where the stay is transitory).
 Yet, the true path that determines their own fate
 Is achieved only through knowledge ²²⁸

The above verse speaks of the inadequacy of *pañcayajña*²²⁹ for the attainment of liberation. The expressions *ākuti vēṭkum* and *arumaṟai antaṇar* refer to daivayajña (fire ritual) and braḥmayajña (Study and teaching of the Vedas) respectively. The phrase *puṛam koṭuttu uṇṇal* is interpreted by Varatarājan as making *dāna* before eating. However, it can also be taken to refer to the remaining three *yajñas*: *pitṛyajña* (offering of oblations to the manes), *bhūtajajña* (offering of food to beast and birds) and *nṛyajña* (hospitality). One cannot attain release through the performance of the five sacrifices, the goal of which is heaven. Hence, the text advocates self-knowledge as the means to liberation.

If one knows himself, no evil befalls him
 But one is ruined without self-knowledge
 Once self-knowledge dawns on him
 He remains venerated by himself ²³⁰

Yoga is the only true and correct path that confers self-knowledge. One of the esoteric verses containing the theme of fire-ritual is interpreted by Varatarājan as advocating paryaṅga yoga:²³¹ “The Brahmans who are house-holders, having realized the principle of external fire worship, engage in the ritual of sexual intercourse at night treating their wives as the consort of Śiva.”²³² Though sexual intercourse (*maithuna*) is one of the *pañcamakāras* in left-handed tantra, it is designated as one of the yogas (*paryaṅga yoga*) in the *Tirumantiram*, in which sexual

(hospitality) Manu III:67, 70; V.169. Accordingly, the phrase may be taken as a reference to *bhūtajajña* and *nṛyajña*.

²²⁸ ākuti vēṭkum arumaṟai antaṇar
 pōkati nāṭip puṛam koṭuttu uṇṇuvar
 tām viti vēṇṭit talaippaṭu meynneri
 tāmaṟivālē talaippaṭṭa vāṟē (TM 215)

²²⁹ Manu III:67, 70, V.169.

²³⁰ taṇṇai aṟiyat taṇakkoru kēṭillai
 taṇṇai aṟiyāmal tāṇē keṭukinṛāṇ
 taṇṇai aṟiyum aṟivai aṟintapiṇ
 taṇṇaiyē arccikkat tāṇiruntāṇē (TM 2355)

²³¹ Paryaṅga means bed.

²³² See Varatarājan’s commentary in Book I, p.114.

emission is suspended. Thus, the notion of fire ritual is redefined as one in which the person kindles the fire of *mūlādhāra* in his body by engaging in sexual coitus with his spouse.²³³

Gurumārga is Vedic

The term Vedānta refers to the Upaniṣads that are placed at the end of the Vedic books²³⁴ and the school of Vedānta²³⁵ (the last of the six darśanas or systems of philosophy). Firstly, the *Tirumantiram* declares that the *upaniṣads* recognize only one path that leads to liberation. It is the Great Śaiva path identified as the Gurumārga (*kuruneṛi*).

[Let me explain] what the divine path is.
Having transcended [the dualities] of *cit* and *acit*
Contemplating the Lord who is great salvation itself²³⁶
[one] follows the Great Śaiva path called Guru-*mārga* (*kuruneṛi*)
This is the one and only path recognised by the Vedānta.²³⁷

Secondly, the *Tirumantiram* asserts that doctrinal differences do not exist between Vedānta and Siddhānta (conclusions of *āgamas*) because their goals are identical, that is, to become *civam*.²³⁸ In the following verse, the text ascribes to the *upaniṣads* its own formulation of the doctrine of liberation.

The beginning-less soul,
Rid of the five impurities
Transcends the knowledge of *māyā*,
Realises Itself, and
Becomes Śiva,
When the eternal impurity, *āṇava*,
Becomes [completely] extinct, and
When tattvas are transcended.
The water [the ātman] mixed with milk (brahman) becomes milk²³⁹
This is the truth of the Vedānta.²⁴⁰

²³³ TM 216

²³⁴ The *Tirumantiram* denotes the *upaniṣads* by the term Vedānta, but does not mention any of them by name.

²³⁵ TM 2172, 2179

²³⁶ Neṛi also means salvation. Hence *peruneṛi* is translated as great salvation.

²³⁷ *tiruneṛi yāvatu cittacit taṇṇip*

peruneṛi yāya pirāṇai niṇaintu

kuruneṛi yāmciva māneṛi kūṭum

oruneṛi oṇṛāka vēṭāntam oṭumē (TM 54)

²³⁸ *civamātal vēṭānta cittāntamākum* (TM 2393:1)

cittānta vēṭāntam cemporuḷātalār

cittānta vēṭāntam kāṭṭum civaṇaiyē (TM2394:3-4)

²³⁹ See Varadarajan's commentary.

The ideological consonance between Vedānta and Siddhānta is further suggested by alluding to the “Great Statements” found in the Upaniṣads: *tat tvam asi (tont tat tacī)* and *so`ham (cōkam)*. The Śivayoga (becoming *civam*) is said to have been originally conceived by great Vedic Brahmans who intone *Ī am He*.

This is Śivayoga
The pre-eminent [principle of]
Those who follow the established Great Vedas
That intone “soham”
Such [principle] is the Great secret of the Siddhānta,
That appears in the āgamic scriptures laden with [Vedic] meaning.²⁴¹

Thus, the text is emphatic that the unequal status assigned to the Vedic and āgamic revelations should not be construed that they are of separate goals.

Those who examine the scriptures revealed by the Lord say
that the ends of these works are diverse.
Yet the truly learned see no difference between them.²⁴²

Conclusion: The objective of this Chapter was to evaluate the influence of the Sanskrit traditions on the *Tirumantiram*. The study was confined to the Vedic and the āgamic traditions. It was first shown that the *Tirumantiram* is not oriented towards public worship; but it provides instructions for one to realise the truth and become *civam*. Hence, its teachings are restricted to initiates alone, known as *sādhaka*. The *Tirumantiram* was composed for the benefit of *sādhakas* who were proficient only in Tamil. The text also amply suggests that that these *sādhakas* were attached to some monastery.

²⁴⁰ aṇāti cīvaṇ aimmalam aru appālāy
aṇāti aṭakkit taṇaikkaṇṭu araṇāyt
taṇ ātimalam keṭat tattuva aṭitam
viṇāvu nīr pālātal vētānta uṇmaiye (TM 2401)

²⁴¹ maṇṇiya cōkamā māmaṇaiyāḷartaṇ
ceṇṇiyatāṇa civayōkamām iṇeṇṇa
aṇṇatu cittānta māmaṇaiyāyp
poruḷ tuṇṇiya ākama nūleṇat tōṇṇumē ((TM 2403)

²⁴² nātaṇ uraiyavai nāṭil iraṇṭantam
pētamatu eṇṇpar periyōrkku apētamē (TM 2397 3-4)

It was also demonstrated that the *Tirumantiram*, which designates itself as an *āgama*, embraces the conceptual framework of the *āgamas*, but does not adopt its fourfold classification. The following fundamental distinctions are observed between the texts in terms of content. According to dualistic *āgamas*, the soul regains its original nature once it is rid of triple impurities, and becomes a Śiva. Even in the state of liberation, the soul does not lose its individuality, but maintains an identity separate from Śiva. This is achieved purely through ritual. The *Tirumantiram* conceptualizes liberation different from the *āgamic* videhamukti. The ultimate aim of the sādḥaka is to transcend dualities and become *civam*. The knowledge the *Tirumantiram* speaks of is self-knowledge that is derived from the practice of yoga and from the grace of Guru. Hence, yoga and *jñāna* are the inseparable means to liberation. However, the *Tirumantiram* admits that the soul can be freed of impurities by means of *dīkṣā*, though this confers only partial divinization. In order to attain full divinization and merge with Śiva, one needs to practice Śivayoga that will lead to liberating knowledge. Those who are united with Śiva are called Siddhas.

Another distinction between the *Tirumantiram* and the dualistic *āgamas* is that the four steps (caryā, kriyā, yoga and jñāna) are considered graded paths in the *Tirumantiram*, whereas in the *āgamas*, caryā, yoga and jñāna are integrated into the ritualistic path. By means of the notion of hierarchized religious paths, the *Tirumantiram* enhanced its ability to embrace almost all members of Tamil society, who possess differing psychological attitudes and capabilities for religious instructions. *Varṇa* or *jāti* is not considered a criterion to be admitted to higher paths or to become a preceptor.

The Vedas, especially the Upaniṣads, have contributed to the fine tuning of the doctrine of liberation in the *Tirumantiram*. The text does not accept the stance of the dualistic *āgamas*, that

in the state of liberation the soul and Śiva remain apart. It insists that there is a total identification of the soul with Śiva which is illustrated through the Upaniṣadic Great Statements *tat tvam asi* (You are That) and *so'ham asmi* (I am He). These Great Statements identify the Ātman with the Braḥman, the ultimate essence of the universe. By designating the liberation as Vedānta-siddhānta, the *Tirumantiram* underscores the fundamental and common nature between Śiva and the soul, i.e. consciousness, and the nature of the soul's identification with Śiva. The term *advaita* is absent in the text, but several verses express the idea very clearly. The Vedānta–Siddhānta is a descriptive term of the state of liberation in which the soul loses its separate identity in Śiva.

Nonetheless, the text holds a disparaging attitude towards the Vedas, especially to the sacrificial portion. They are subordinated to the *āgamic* scriptures, and the Vedic prescriptions are superseded by *āgamic* injunctions. At the same time, the text also reinterprets the Vedic sacrificial system as Śivayoga, and attempts to show that the Vedas are a Śaivaite sectarian literature by identifying Śiva as the meaning and essence of Vedic revelation.

Yoga occupies an insignificant place in the overall conceptual scheme of liberation devised by Śaivāgamas. Given the facts that yoga is an independent religious tradition capable of securing release for the souls, and that the *Tirumantiram* is a text dealing with various types of yoga, it is essential to look at fundamental principles governing yoga. Anṇu constitutes the basis of yoga enunciated by the text. Thus, the next chapter is concerned with how Tamil and Sanskrit traditions interact with each other through emotional and sensual love during the bhakti era.

CHAPTER THREE

The Synthesis of Tamil and Sanskrit : Bhakti, Anpu and Yoga

This Chapter is devoted to defining and elucidating yoga, the sole means of attaining living liberation, and its relation to *bhakti* and *anpu* as represented in the *Tirumantiram*. Despite the fact that Tirumūlar seems to have based his exposition of yoga on Patañjali's Yogasūtras and other Sanskrit texts, his treatise was, to a greater extent, influenced by the Tamil literary tradition, notably by the notion of *anpu*. In other words, his work is not merely a translation of yogic techniques discussed in Sanskrit texts, but a sequel to the synthesis of two divergent traditions: Sanskrit and Tamil. Hence, Tirumūlar's conceptualization of yoga is, as he claims, fresh, new, and hitherto unheard of (*navayoga*). (In fact, he attributes it to his preceptor Nandi).¹ The question I examine in this chapter is why the concept of yoga is connected to the notion of *anpu* instead of that of *bhakti*, as evidenced by the text. In other words, why does the author privilege the use of the term *anpu* in connection with yoga? Does he imply that these two terms (*bhakti* and *anpu*) have different connotations as far as yoga is concerned?

Zvelebil is of the opinion that the *Tirumantiram* celebrates a triple path (knowledge, yoga and *bhakti*) to liberation, which confers the text fundamental unity in content.² *Bhakti* that embraces a dualistic theology is understood to be service to God or to take part in the experience of God through serving him.³ It is rooted in the hierarchical patterns of relations between God and the devotee and is deemed a gratuitous gift of God.⁴ Besides, one who

¹ TM 122.

² Kamil V Zvelebil, *The Poets of the Powers*, 74.

³īcaṅ
patipaṇi ceyvatu pattimai kāṅē (TM 1454:3-4).

⁴ pattiyum nātaṅ aruḷiṅ payilumē (TM 1575:4).

observes *bhakti*, said to be the chief characteristic of *caryā* path,⁵ is not destined to attain union with Śiva, but only *sāloka* mukti.⁶ On the contrary, yoga is non-dualistic both in essence and in outlook. Its goal is to identify with Śiva, having risen above the polarities. In *bhakti* the object of focus is externalised and seen as different from the self, whereas in yoga the centre of focus is the self itself. Detachment from external stimuli is one of the integral elements of yoga. Thus, the fundamentals of yoga are at variance with those of *bhakti*. I, therefore, argue that in view of the incompatibility of ideologies of *bhakti* and yoga, the *Tirumantiram* chooses to associate yoga with a classical Tamil concept called *aṅṅpu*, the general meaning of which is love. Hence, this Chapter examines how this secular concept of *aṅṅpu* is used and interpreted in the theistic text *Tirumantiram* and how it adds a new dimension to the ideology of yoga found in Sanskrit texts. I argue that the concept of yoga in the *Tirumantiram* should be interpreted as *uṅṅarcciyuḷ oṅṅukkam* (TM 283), meaning to be absorbed in the emotion of *aṅṅpu*, and that the ultimate goal of yoga is to become *civam*, an embodiment of two contradictory principles: knowledge/aṅṅivu and emotion/uṅṅarcci (*aṅṅpu* or love).

Aṅṅpu and *bhakti* are intertwined concepts and it is not possible to discuss one without referring to the other. *Aṅṅpu* is an overarching secular concept that embraces both *akam* and *puṅṅam* poetry of the Caṅkam literature. It is erroneous to identify *aṅṅpu* with *akam* genre alone. Tamil Śiva *bhakti* that took definite shape in the medieval devotional poetry Tēvāram has its roots in *aṅṅpu*, which is represented in both classical *akam* and *puṅṅam* poetry. The hierarchical relationship between patron and bard based on *aṅṅpu* in the *puṅṅam* poetry, constitutes a model for the relationship between Śiva and his devotees in Tēvāram. *Aṅṅpu* in the public *puṅṅam*

⁵ pattar caritai paṅṅuvōr (TM 1446:1).

⁶ cālōka māti cariyāti yirpeṅṅum (TM 1507:1).

Sāloka mukti is described in terms of the transformation of consciousness, that is, realizing that one is distinct from the material world and its objects with which one is in constant contact.

poetry assumes the appellation of *bhakti* in the religious setting of the early medieval period. Thus, the concept of *bhakti* in Tēvāram and the Tirumantiram may be interpreted as reverential devotion or affectionate regard expressed by a person of a lower rank (devotee/disciple) towards one of higher rank (Śiva/guru) in a hierarchical, formalistic relationship characterized by pilgrimage, praise, and service. It should not, however, be interpreted that *bhakti* in Tēvāram and the Tirumantiram lacks representations of *anpu* belonging to the *akam* genre. The feelings of love related to the five landscapes are dubbed as *anpin aintiṇai* and may be subsumed under the two headings: love in separation and love in union. Whereas Tēvāram expresses the pain arising from separation in which lurks the desire to be united with Śiva, the Tirumantiram completely disregards this mode of love and speaks of the joy arising from the union with Śiva. Since love in union results in bliss, *anpu* is deemed appropriate to be associated with yoga. Thus, the yoga that is enunciated by the Tirumantiram is a theistic one steeped in *anpu*.

Bhakti (Tamilicized as *patti*), that appears for the first time in *Tēvāram*, is a very complex and ambiguous concept, despite the fact it has been subjected to scrutiny in Western scholarship since the latter part of the nineteenth century. The ambiguity of the term may be ascribed to the fact that it was influenced by a number of factors. As Ramanujan states, “Early *bhakti* movements, whether devoted to Śiva or Viṣṇu, used whatever they found at hand, and changed whatever they used. Vedic and Upaniṣadic notions, Buddhist and Jaina concepts, conventions of Tamil and Sanskrit poetry, early Tamil conceptions of love, service, women, and kings, mythology or folk religion and folksong, the play of contrasts between Sanskrit and the mother tongue: all these developments were reworked and transformed in *bhakti*.”⁷ While

⁷ A.K, Ramanujan, *Hymns for the Drowning*, 104.

not denying the influence of the diverse elements on bhakti, I trace its origin to the Tamil classical poetry.⁸ In this chapter, my focus solely lies on the *Tirumantiram* and the Tamil sources preceding it, i.e. the classical Caṅkam works⁹ and *Tēvāram*. Tamil works belonging to Jainism and Buddhism¹⁰ are beyond the scope of this study.¹¹

Most definitions of *bhakti* emphasize its emotional content. For instance, Krishna Sharma defines *bhakti* as “a generic term meaning loving devotion and attachment. It signifies a feeling and a sentiment, i.e., an emotive state of mind.”¹² Zvelebil defines Tamil Śaiva *bhakti* of the medieval period in parallel terms: “*Bhakti* is a personal and emotional approach to God; the individual character of such contact with the Divine means that it occurs outside of any corporation which has a specialized and privileged knowledge of sacred texts and ritual.”¹³ Zvelebil thus distinguishes Tamil Śaiva *bhakti* from the ritualistic *bhakti* of Śivabrāhmaṇas who are entitled to perform *śivapūjā* in temples according to *āgamic* injunctions. Contrary to Zvelebil’s characterization of medieval Śaiva *bhakti* as an emotional approach to Śiva, François Gross conceives love in *Tēvāram* as service and respect. He states,

“..the exegesis of bhakti lyricism, as well as its emotional content.. essentially rests on an analysis of Vaiṣṇavite literature while the Śaivite texts are almost always victims of an analogical reading whose Vaiṣṇavite presuppositions,.. referred to as .. “lyric temptation” are to be discounted....the most apposite example, the chapter entitled Bridal Mysticism” in Dorai Rangaswamy’s thesis devoted to the work of Cuntarar, *The Religion and Philosophy of Tēvāram* of Cuntaramūrti Nāyaṇār, a chapter built

⁸ See A.K. Ramanujan and Norman Cutler, “From Classism to Bhakti” in *The collected essays of AK Ramanujan*, 232-259; Indira Peterson *Poems to Siva*, 33; Karen Prentice, *Embodiment of Bhakti*, 53; A.M. Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, Chapter II.

⁹ The traces of heterodox religions can be found in the classical Caṅkam works. However, I take into account the poems that reflect the Tamil ideals: love, heroism and liberality.

¹⁰ Tirukkuraḷ, Cilappatikāram, Maṇimēkalai etc.

¹¹ In Tirukkuraḷ that was composed around the 4th century, the eighth chapter is completely devoted to *anpu*, one of the virtues laid down for the householder who is the mainstay of renunciants, the indigent and the dead (42). *Anpu* is prerequisite to practice *pāttūṇ* (sharing one’s food/fruits of one’s labour with others), the notion on which the householder ethics is based in Tirukkuraḷ.

¹² *Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement: A Study in the History of Ideas* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1987), 5-6.

¹³ *The Smile of Murugan*, 195.

entirely upon Vaiṣṇavite quotations....we should not lose sight of the specificity of Tamil lyricism in which love is service and respect rather than the mystic union of being....¹⁴.

I accord with the observations made by Gross and emphasize that we should not lose sight of the particularities of Tamil Śaiva *bhakti* in order to make it conform to its general definition.

In this Chapter, I treat *bhakti* and *aṅṅpu* as separate, but inter-related concepts. I contend that the term *bhakti* found in *Tēvāram* and the *Tirumantiram* is a technical term that reflects a dualistic, hierarchical relationship between the deity (or any authority figure) and the devotee (or a dependent) in an institutionalized setting, characterized by panegyric, pilgrimage and service. At the same time I do not, however, deny that Tamil Śaiva *bhakti* reflects the fundamental principles of *aṅṅpu*.

I also trace the term *bhakti* to its origins in the classical Tamil literature. I presume that though *bhakti* is a loaned term from Sanskrit, usage and interpretation of the term were considerably influenced by the indigenous literary tradition. It is worthy of note that Hart maintains separate origins of Sanskrit and Tamil *bhakti*:

An outstanding of the difference in meaning between Sanskrit *bhakti* (loving devotion or worship) and Tamil *aṅṅpu* (affectionate love for those with whom one is familiar) gives much insight into the different approach of the two traditions. A careful exegetical analysis would show that Tamil devotion to God was an extension of love within the family, which was for the early Tamil the chief locus of the sacred, while Sanskrit *bhakti* developed from an impersonal concept of participation, in keeping with the transcendent nature of the sacred in the Sanskrit tradition.¹⁵

While I endorse the role of *aṅṅpu* in the development of Tamil *bhakti*, I would highlight the contribution of bardic tradition to some of the formalistic aspects of *bhakti*.

¹⁴ T.V. Gopal Iyer (ed.) with an introduction by François Gross, *Tēvāram* (Pondichéry: Institut Français d'Indologie, 1984), xxxviii.

¹⁵ "Love of God according to Śaiva Siddhānta : A Study in the Mysticism and Theology of Śaivism" by Mariasusai Dhavamony (Review) *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 31 No.1 (Nov., 1971),211.

The fact that the common term *bhakti* is found in two different language texts does not mean that its representations are identical, because different languages texts emerge to fulfill different purposes in different cultures in different historical contexts. Though it seems paradoxical, one can bring more insight into the thesis of *bhakti* if indigenous literary texts are consulted. In other words, it is more appropriate to trace the origin of *bhakti* to classical Tamil literature, rather than to the Bhagavad-Gītā, as the central issue of the Gītā - the observance of *svadharma* - is not compatible with the spirit of the ancient Tamil culture.¹⁶

This Chapter is divided into three sections. The first section is devoted to the discussion of *bhakti* in *Tēvāram* and the *Tirumantiram*, which is preceded by a sketch of the contribution of Tamil bardic tradition to the emergence of Tamil *bhakti*. The second presents a brief analysis of *aṅpu* found in the Caṅkam literature, *Tēvāram* and the *Tirumantiram*, and the final section explores the relation between *aṅpu* and yoga.

I

Bhakti

Pāṭaṅ Poetry of the Caṅkam period:

¹⁶ Karen Prentiss explains that *bhakti* is presented in the saints' poetry *Tēvāram*, as a theology of embodiment, the essence of which is that "engagement with (or participation in) God should inform all of one's activities in worldly life." She traces the origin of the notion of embodiment in the Bhagavad-Gītā that defines *bhakti* "as a religious perspective that can inform all actions at any time and in any place." (*The Embodiment of Bhakti*, 5). My contention is that karma in the Gītā should be understood in its own context and in the light of the overall objective of the text. Karma does not mean any action in the Gītā; it has a very specific meaning of *varṇadharmā*. Hence, the definition of *bhakti*, derived from the Gītā cannot be applicable to Tamil *bhakti* which is based on *aṅpu*. *Bhakti* is introduced into the Gītā to reconcile the mutually exclusive domains, *pravṛtti* (life as a member of society ruled by *varṇa-āśrama-dharmas*) and *nivṛtti* (ceasing to be part of the society renouncing *varṇa-āśrama-dharmas* in search of a higher goal of liberation from a cycle of birth and death). This dyadic perspective on life is quite foreign to the indigenous Tamil worldview. Nicholas Sutton explains, "By drawing the conflicting views of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* into its own value system, *bhakti* places itself in a position from which a reconciliation of the two becomes possible, and the key passage in which this synthesis is attempted is the Bhagavad-Gītā. Actions based on *sva-dharma* are judged as non-binding in the sense of generating future karma so long as they are performed as without desire for material gain. Such actions are placed on the same footing as the Yoga techniques of *mokṣa-dharma*, for the acts demanded by *svadharma* are to be understood as expressions of devotion to the deity and hence a path towards ultimate salvation." (*Religious Doctrines in the Mahabharata* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000), 14).

Texts interpret *bhakti* in diverse ways and each text's interpretation needs to be considered a distinct representation of *bhakti*.¹⁷ However, the ideologies of *bhakti* represented in the medieval Tamil *bhakti* literature share some common elements, the root of which can be traced to the classical Caṅkam literature. I argue that the public poetry called *puṛam* of the Caṅkam literature serves as the primary model for the medieval devotional literature, and that the relationship between the devotee and Śiva in *Tēvāram* and in the *Tirumantiram* is modelled on a hierarchical relationship, one that existed between a bard and his patron-chieftain as represented in the Caṅkam literature. Thus I seek to distinguish Tamil *bhakti* from Sanskrit *bhakti*, which Biardeau claims to have emanated from the Yajur Vedic ritualistic tradition.¹⁸

My attempt to trace the model of Tamil Śaiva *bhakti* to the classical Tamil works is not intended to give the impression that it is free of the influence of Sanskrit tradition. *Bhakti* in the medieval Śaiva literature is directed towards the pan-Indic deity Śiva,¹⁹ the descriptions of whose form and deed draw on a number of Sanskritic purāṇic legends.²⁰ Nonetheless, knowledge of how the saints attempt to relate Śiva to Tamil cultural milieu can be gathered only through the study of Tamil literary sources. It has been pointed out that Śiva is conceptualised as a local Tamil heroic chieftain who through his munificence, endears himself

¹⁷ Karen Prentiss, *The Embodiment of Bhakti*, 4.

¹⁸ According to Biardeau, *bhakti* structures are incomprehensible unless they are seen connected to Vedic revelation. She regards the Yajurveda as the fountainhead of *bhakti* (*Hinduism : the Anthropology of a Civilization*, Oxford University Press, 1989, 28).

¹⁹ A very few references to Śiva are found in the Caṅkam literature. All epithets attributed to Śiva save one, are based on Sanskrit purāṇic mythology. However, the epithet *āḷamar celvaṅ* stems from the Tamil concept of immanence of the sacred. Cuntarar mentions a few Śiva temples of banyan tree : tirukkaccūr āḷakkōyil (7:41) ālak kōyil ammāṇē tiruvāḷaṅkāṭu (7:52) ālan niḷalil amarntāy amarā (7:3:6).

²⁰ A hermeneutical devised by A.M. Pyatigorsky is applied to Tamil Śaiva poetry by Zvelebil in his work *The Smile of Murugan* (199-206). Zvelebil shows that each stanza in a patikam contains the following classifiable information: S₁ –the interior state of the subject[saint]; S₂ the external actions of the subject; O₁ the object's reaction to the particular object [Śiva]; O₂ the state, qualities, or actions of the object irrespective of the relation to the object. O₂ is mainly derived from Sanskrit Purāṇas.

to loyal bands of bards, who are proficient in verse-making, singing and dancing.²¹ Thus, the concept of *bhakti* is understood and applied by the saints in a way that is unique to Tamil culture, represented in the autochthonous layers of the Caṅkam literature. Hence, the classical Caṅkam literature holds as much importance for the understanding of medieval Tamil *bhakti* literature as Vedic revelation holds for the understanding of epics and purāṇas, which are considered *bhakti* works.

I do not look into the etymological meanings of the term *bhakti* because etymological exegesis²² is of little help in comprehending the nature of Tamil *bhakti*. As John Cort observes, “*Bhakti* is a highly complex, multiform cultural category, which is differently understood and practised in different times, places and texts.”²³ Thus, cultural variations account for the uniqueness of Tamil Śaiva *bhakti*.

I contend that the genesis of Tamil *bhakti* can be found in *Pāṭāṇ* poetry of the classical *Caṅkam* literature. The Caṅkam period covers roughly the first three centuries of the Common Era. The poetry that emerged during this period is classified into *akam* (inner) and *puram* (outer). These terms are defined by Iḷampūraṇar, a medieval commentator on *Tolkāppiyam*, as follows: “The author [Tolkāppiyar] called it *Akam* (the Inner) since its content is the enjoyment of sexual union, and its results realized by only two persons concerned; He called it *Puram* (the Outer) since its content is indulgence in acts of war and acts of virtue and its results

²¹ Indira Peterson, *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Śaiva Saints*, 33 -36.

²² The term *bhakti* is Tamilized as *patti* or *pattimai* in the Tirumantiram. See verses 75 and 98.

According to the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon the term *patti* means devotion to God, guru, king; service; worship; moral conduct.

√*bhaj* has a number of meanings according to the M.Monier Williams’ Sanskrit –English Dictionary: to divide , distribute ; to grant , bestow; partake of , enjoy (also carnally); experience, undergo; to pursue, practise , cultivate; to fall to the lot or share of; to declare for , prefer , choose (e.g. as a servant) ; to serve, honour, revere, love , adore.

²³ John E. Cort, “*Bhakti* in the Early Jain Tradition: Understanding Devotional Religions in South Asia” in *History of Religions* 42:1 (Aug., 2002), 62.

comprehensible to the others.”²⁴ *Akam* poetry represents idealised characters in different landscape settings rather than historical personages in specific places. No proper names are assigned to them. These idealised characters are only identified by their roles, i.e. *talaivi* (heroine), *talaivan* (hero), *tōli* (female friend). The speaker in *Akam* poetry is not the poet herself, but a character whose persona the poet assumes. On the contrary, “*puram*, the so-called ‘public poetry’ is allowed names, places, expression of personal circumstances in a real society, a real history, and freedom from the necessities of poetic convention both in *uḷḷurai* (implicit metaphor) and in the landscapes. Thus it is the ‘public’ *puram* poetry that becomes the vehicle of personal expression and celebration of historical personages.”²⁵

The classical poetry is highly structured and conventional in character. Its composition was based on pre-determined poetic themes. As Kailasapathy points out, “the entire corpus had come into being on the basis of definite themes. For in all the collections of bardic poems that have come down to us, each poem has a colophon which, among other information, gives the theme of the poem. This reinforces the contention that that they were originally composed on the basis of themes.”²⁶ Tolkāppiyam identifies the following poetic situations (*tiṇai*) and themes (*turai*) in *puram* poetry.²⁷

Poetic Situation (<i>tiṇai</i>)	Number of Themes (<i>turai</i>)
veṭci (cattle-raid, recovery of cattle)	14 21
vañci (invasion)	13
uḷiṇai (siege, defence of fort)	08 12
tumpai (pitched battle)	12
vākai (victory)	18

²⁴ K. Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry* (London: Oxford University Press), 4.

²⁵ A.K. Ramanujan, “Form in Classical Tamil Poetry” in *Symposium on Dravidian Civilization*, ed. Andree F. Sjoberg (New York: Jenkins, 1971), 97.

²⁶ *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, 192.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 194.

kāñci (transience)	20
<i>pāṭāṇ</i> (praise)	20
Total	138

Of all the seven poetic situations mentioned above, the most relevant to our discussion and the most popular among classical poets is *pāṭāṇṭiṇai* (praise poems). For instance, more than one-third (35 percent) of *Puranānūru* (four hundred poems in the *puram* genre) belongs to *pāṭāṇṭiṇai* and is devoted to the praise of a hero. *Ārruppaṭai* is also one of the themes (*turai*) of *pāṭāṇ* poetry. “*Ārruppaṭai* is a guidance poem in which a bard directs his fellow professional to the generous patron from whom he had earlier received gifts.”²⁸ There are altogether twenty-one *ārruppaṭai* poems: fourteen in *Puranānūru*²⁹ and seven in *Patirruppattu*.³⁰ Apart from these individual short poems, there are five long poems belonging to the *ārruppaṭai* genre in *Pattuppāṭtu*.³¹ Subbiah notes that the objective of *ārruppaṭai* poetry is to extol the king or the hero in a ritualistic or a ceremonial setting.³² To support this claim he reproduces the thematic situations suitable for *pāṭāṇ* poems from *Tolkāppiyam* (poruḷatikāram, purattiṇai nūrpā 30:1-12).³³ Subbiah distinguishes *pāṭāṇṭiṇai* from the praise poetry found in other poetic situations in *Puram*, stating that *pāṭāṇṭiṇai* is concerned with the hero’s entire personality, whereas other

²⁸ G.Subbiah, *Roots of Tamil Religious Thought*, 34-5.

²⁹ *Puranānūru* contains three types of *ārruppaṭai* poems: *pānārruppaṭai* (68,69,70,138,141,155,180) *pulavarārruppaṭai* (48,49,141), and *viṛaliyārruppaṭai* (64,103,105,133).

³⁰ *Patirruppattu* has only two *ārruppaṭai* genres: *pānārruppaṭai* (67) and *viṛaliyārruppaṭai* (40,49,57,60,78,87).

³¹ *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* or *pulavarārruppaṭai*, *porunarārruppaṭai*, *perumpānārruppaṭai*, *ciṛupānārruppaṭai*, *malaipaṭukaṭām* or *kūttarārruppaṭai*

³² *Roots of Tamil Religious Thought*, 40.

³³“Songs sung by *sūta*(s) to awaken sleeping kings, wishing them unblemished fame; situations when actors, bards, war-bards, or female dancers, while returning from a patron, meet fellow –professionals who suffer from poverty, and suggest to them how they may also obtain the riches as they themselves have; the occasion of the birthday of the king, festive days when avoids anger; the occasion of annual coronation ceremony; praising the protective powers of king’s umbrella; praising the sword that is aimed at the enemies; the occasion of ritual bath that kings take after destroying the enemy’s fort...52” (Subbiah, *Roots of Tamil Religious Thought*, 40).

praise poems discuss only a specific act of the hero.³⁴ “As the focus is on the total personality, it is not only a hero’s physical prowess, but every quality that makes him special and marks him off from others can form the theme of *pāṭāṇ* poem.”³⁵ This *pāṭāṇ* poetry appears to be a precedent to medieval devotional poetry. In the following pages, I will briefly discuss the main thematic elements of *pāṭāṇ* poetry- pilgrimage, praise, and mutual obligations- as they figure as prominent features of Tamil bhakti.³⁶

It was noted in the first chapter that the sacred was considered immanent in ancient Tamiḷakam and not transcendent as in the case of Vedic divinities.³⁷ Gods and spirits haunted mountains, stones, bodies of water, trees, forests, battlefields and cemeteries. The concept of immanence of the sacred implies that places and objects are not inherently sacred; rather they become suffused with sacredness due to their association with some sacred power. The king is the “central embodiment of the sacred powers that had to be present under control for the proper functioning of the society”.³⁸ The bards keep the sacred powers of the king in check. This leads Dubianski to consider the bards’ acts of glorifying kings as being ritualistic, the aim of which is to “render support to the king’s vital breath of life, or in other words, to cool or channel the king’s sacred force.”³⁹ Fertility and prosperity of the land are emblematic of the king’s sacred powers.⁴⁰ Irrespective of the size of his kingdom, the king is deemed to be the

³⁴ Ibid., 117.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ A.M. Dubianski deals with these three aspects in detail in chapter II of his work *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*

³⁷ George L. Hart III, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil : Their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts*, 26.

³⁸ Ibid., 13.

³⁹ A.M. Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, 61.

⁴⁰ The following is a description of country ruled by Vāṭṭārru Eḷiṇi, a Tamil chieftain:

Lord ! He rules vaṭṭāru
Of the rich waters where they frighten the birds with drums
Sharply beaten in the growing fields
That are circled by the tidal pools
Where the fish dart under the water

soul of the world as he is responsible for its prosperity. The earth under his rule is considered to be his body.⁴¹ Another poem in the *Puṛaṇānūru* reiterates the notion that the fecundity of the country relies on her male inhabitants, or rather, her rulers.⁴² The king is primarily identified with reference to the land under his dominion.⁴³

The king belongs to the category called *cāṇṛōr* (the noble),⁴⁴ a politically, economically and socially powerful elite group, that was well-known for its magnanimity. Common epithets such as *kiḷavan*,⁴⁵ *kiḷavōṇ*,⁴⁶ *kiḷāṇ*,⁴⁷ *kō*,⁴⁸ and *kōṇ*⁴⁹ are used to refer to him. He is addressed as

And the flowers blossom on the surface
Like so many eyes and from the sand
Heaped by the great waters, birds
Fly off on soft wings in cool wind. (Puṛa.396-translated by Hart)

⁴¹ Food [rice] is not life; neither water is
This boundless world has king as its life
Hence, understand that I am the life
This is the duty of the king

Possessing men wielding spears (Puṛa.186)
⁴² Let you be a country or a wild tract
Let you be a mound or a hollow
By which means men are good
You too become good by the same means
Long live the land! (Puṛa.187)

⁴³ yāṇar vaippiṇ naṇṇāṭṭup poruna (Puṛa. 2:11)
aṅu toḷil antaṇar aṅam purinteṭutta t̄yoṭu viḷaṅkum nāṭaṇ (Puṛa.397:20-21)
kāviri aṇaiyum tāḷnīrp paṭappai
nel viḷai kaḷaṇi ampar kiḷavōṇ (Puṛa.385: 8-9)
karumpaṇ ūraṇ kiṇaiyēm (Puṛa. 384: 10)
kuṇṛu pala kelīya kāṇ kelu nāṭaṇ kaṭunttēr aviyaṇ (Puṛa.383: 22-23)
oli veḷ aruvi vēṅkaṭa nāṭaṇ (Puṛa. 381: 22)
t̄iṇ cuḷaip palaviṇ nāñciṛ porunaṇ Puṛa.380:9)

⁴⁴ The classical Caṅkam works are known as “*cāṇṛōr ceyyul*” in medieval commentaries. Kailasapathy notes that the term “*cāṇṛōr*” came to denote the authors of the poems only in the post-heroic period (*Tamil Heroic Poetry*, 92, 229-30). In the Caṅkam corpus the term denotes valiant kings or chieftains. For instance,

All *Cāṇṛōr* who rode the chariot died
Their eyes were covered with shields
tēr tara vanta cāṇṛōrellām tōl kaṇ
maṛaiṇṇa oruṅku māyntaṇarē (Puṛa.63:5-6).

⁴⁵ koṇperuṇ kāṇattuk kiḷavaṇ (Puṛa.155:7)

⁴⁶ nāṭu kiḷavōṇē (Puṛa. 400:23)

⁴⁷ koṅkāṇaṇ kiḷāṇ (Puṛa. 155)

⁴⁸ tōṇṛik kōvē (PN 399:4) paṛai icai aruvip pāyal kōvē (Puṛa. 398:30)

⁴⁹ viruntu iṛai nalkum nāṭaṇ eṅkōṇ (Puṛa. 374:15)

entai,⁵⁰ *peruma*,⁵¹ and *poruna*.⁵² Munificence is the single most important act that distinguishes a *cāṅrōṅ* from others in society. Thus, he receives the epithet *puravalaṅ*.⁵³

In contrast to the prosperous patron who is inextricably associated with the land, the bard of no fixed abode⁵⁴ is represented as an impoverished wanderer who makes an arduous journey to the country of his patron in the hope of ending his misery.⁵⁵ The poet Muṭamōciyār says that he went in search of patrons inquiring :

....who were *cāṅrōr* who might
be willing to take upon themselves the weight of supporting
this miserable life I live of begging and of eating⁵⁶

Dubianski observes that the humble status of the bard “is made of interwoven motifs of extreme poverty, misery, hunger, and exhaustion brought about by a long and tiresome journey.”⁵⁷

The mutual obligations of the king and the bard towards each other are denoted by the term *kaṭaṅ*.⁵⁸ The king’s duty towards the bard is known as *pāṅkaṭaṅ*.⁵⁹ The king is supposed to fulfill the bard’s plea to feed and clothe him and remove his poverty with generous gifts.⁶⁰

The bard is also conscious of his own obligation towards the patron.

⁵⁰ Puṛa. 396:24, 400:8

⁵¹ Puṛa. 393:19, 395:21, 396:4

⁵² Puṛa. 375:10

⁵³ naṭukal āyiṅaṅ puravalaṅ (Puṛa. 221:13)

⁵⁴ Several types of bards are mentioned in the Caṅkam literature: *pāṅaṅ*, *virali*, *kōṭiyar*, *vayiriyar*, *kāṅṅaṅ*, *akavunar*, *kiṅaiyar* and *tūṭiyar*. The term *porunaṅ* denotes the bard who has forged intimate ties with his patron. See A.M.Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, Chapter Two.

⁵⁵ Poverty is known as *ilampāṭu uḷanta eṅ irum pēr okkal* (Puṛa.378:14)

⁵⁶ *ūḷ irantu uṅṅum uyaval vāḷvaip puravu etirntu koḷḷum cāṅrōr yār* (Puṛa.375:7-8)

⁵⁷ A.M. Dubianski, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, 62

⁵⁸ Hart observes that *kaṭaṅ*, the primary meaning of which is debt, denotes sacrifice in *Kuṛunttokai* 218. See *The Poems of Ancient Tamil: Their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts*, 27.

⁵⁹ *pāṅ kaṭaṅ āriya oliyar kāṅṅip pulikaṭi mā al!* Puṛa.201:14;

pāṅ kaṭaṅ irukkum vaḷḷiyōy (Puṛa. 203:11) ; 106

⁶⁰ You should tear juicy, fat meat into pieces and offer them those chunks
White with fat like the cotton of summer carded and packed into dense
Bundles! And you strip me of my old ragged garments that is split
Like the tongue of a serpent that has laid its eggs at its time to breed
And you should clothe me then in a broad garment with folds like the petals
Of newly blossoming *pakannarai* flowers that have sprung upon their bids!
And you should give away wealth without holding anything back, (Puṛa.393:11-19, Hart’s translation)

In the pond the flower bud bloomed
The bard, conscious of his duty, played
Lute called ... with his hand⁶¹

In appreciation of the bounty made by the king, the bards bless him and sing his praise.⁶² They affirm an emotional allegiance to the patron, proudly declaring that they belong to him.⁶³ They vow that they would neither forget their patron, nor seek refuge with other kings.

Having thought of Killivalavan of undying fame
The lord of Kāviri, [we] would resort to him.
[I] would not go to others.
[I] would not [even] look at their faces.⁶⁴

Showing [me] to his wife,
the maiden resembling Lakṣmi
He told[her] “Treat him as she would me.”
Hence [I] will not forget him
[I] will not also think of others [other patrons]⁶⁵

It is also noteworthy that in the Caṅkam poetry, the term *tāl* (feet) emerges as a striking symbol of protection offered by the king.⁶⁶

May I gain a life shaded by his feet
May he receive, from my tongue, the accounting of his glory⁶⁷

Giving abundantly to those who reach his feet⁶⁸

Long live the feet [of the king] who knows what we need [without us telling him]⁶⁹

⁶¹ poykaip pūmukai malarap pānar kaival cīri yāl kaṭaṅ aṟintu iyakka (Puṛa. 398:4-5)

⁶² “chant, “Long life to Vaḷavaṅ whose sword never fails”
And again and again we will sing of your great and strenuous achievements (Puṛa.393: 23-25)

⁶³ Lord ,We are Cāṭṭaṅ’s drummers.
He who is famous for righteousness hails
From Piṭavūr, ruled by his father. (Puṛa.395: 20-21)

⁶⁴ kāvirik kiḷavaṅ māyā nal icaik
kiḷli vaḷavaṅ ulli avaṛ paṭartum
cellēṅ cellēṅ piṛarmukam nōkkēṅ (Puṛa. 399:12-14)

⁶⁵ taṅmaṅaip
poṅpōl maṭantaiyaik kāṭṭi ivāṅai
eṅpōl pōṛru eṅṛōṅē atarḱoṅṭu
avaṅ maṛavalēṅē piṛar ullalēṅē (Puṛa.395: 29-32)

⁶⁶ We rest in the cool shade of his mighty feet with their handsome anklets. Long live his feet (Puṛa. 395:40; 386:25).

⁶⁷ Hart’s translation of the lines *yāṅē peruka avaṅ tāl niḷal vāḷkkai avaṅē peruka eṅ nā icai nuvaṛal* (Puṛa. 379:1-2); mutual obligation is mentioned here.

⁶⁸ tāl cērunarkku iṅitu ittum (Puṛa. 362:10)

⁶⁹ yām vēṅṭiyatu uṅarntōṅ tāl vāḷiyavē (Puṛa. 386:24-25)

The term *tāl* also signals the end of wandering life for bards. For instance, the bard sings “We rest in the cool shade of his mighty feet with their handsome anklets.”⁷⁰ Sometimes *tāl* is a metonym for the king: *Long live his feet*.⁷¹ The bard would often indicate his carefree life enjoyed at the feet of his patron through a motif of his studied indifference to the movement of the planets or the Sun in the sky.⁷²

Tēvāram⁷³

After the Caṅkam age, the notion of the king invested with sacred powers was transferred to the deity in the temple, bringing forth a flood of devotional poetry called *Tēvāram*.⁷⁴ *Tēvāram* treats the pan-indic Śiva as a king celebrated in the classical *puram* poetry.⁷⁵ Hence the relations between Śiva and his devotees in *Tēvāram* mirror the hierarchical relations between the king and his bards. Like a heroic, magnanimous king of the *puram* poetry, Śiva is identified with the places in which he resides.⁷⁶ Descriptions of his sacred

⁷⁰ *avan tiruntu kaḷal nōṅ tāḷ taṇṇilālēmē* (Puṛa. 397:26-27)

⁷¹ *vāḷka avan tāḷē* (Puṛa. 395:40)

⁷² Let the Silver Planet rise in the east and then move westward
Or let it rise in the west and then move toward the east
Or let it appear in the north and then move toward the south
Or let it rise in the south and remain there without moving
Let the Silver Planet stand anywhere it wishes! (Puṛa. 386:20-24, Hart’s translation)

Even if the end should dawn of the great sea
Heaving with its waves or the sun of blazing rays appears in the sky
Of the south, we will not fear and wonder what to do! He has power
To win victories with his conquering spear in hard battle
We rest in the cool shade of his mighty feet with their handsome anklets (Puṛa. 397: 23-27, Hart’s translation)

⁷³ The 1-7 *Tirumuṛai* called *Tēvāram* comprises a total of 796 hymns composed by Campantar (383 hymns), Appar (313) and Cuntarar (100).

⁷⁴ Hart notes, “Many Tamil terms for the North Indian god first meant king or still can mean either king or god; the temple is constructed like a palace; and the deity is treated like a king, being awakened in the morning by auspicious music, getting married, and receiving many of the same ceremonies as the human king.” See “The Nature of Tamil Devotion,” 13.

⁷⁵ Indira Peterson, *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Śaiva Saints*, 33

⁷⁶ *neyyāṭiya perumāṇiṭam neyttāṇam eṇiṇṇīrē* 1.15.1
attaṅṅ namai yālvāṇiṭam ālantuṅṅai yatuvē 1.16.5
māṭa māmatil cūlvāṇṇi yūrarē 5.26.1

localities constitute an integral part of *Tēvāram*. As the bard guides his colleague to the wealthy patron whose bounty he has already enjoyed, so the saint-poets direct fellow devotees to Śiva who has a number of abodes all over the Tamil country.⁷⁷ Hence, Śiva- *bhakti* in *Tēvāram* cannot be appreciated unless it is associated with the concept of temple. Saints publicly acknowledge their loyalty and allegiance to Śiva, as well as their commitment to and steadfastness in his worship, and discourse on where to find him, how to serve him, and how to remember him.

As the rendering of a panegyric by the bard is public performance, so too the eulogising of Śiva by saints constitutes a public act. Hence, “*Tēvāram* fulfills the specific function of praise, more ceremonial than doctrinaire.”⁷⁸ Christian Novetzke argues that “all manifestations of *bhakti* are performances and, more to the point, public ones, that is, performances that are part of, or help form, publics of receptions.”⁷⁹ Norman Cutler who acknowledges the public nature of the devotional poetry states, “The prevailing intent of many *bhakti* poems is to establish contact or “communion” between the poet and an addressee, who in many instances is the god who inspires the poet’s devotion, but who may be also an audience of devotees or potential devotees.”⁸⁰ He also explains the structure of *Tēvāram* in terms of a triangular communication linking the poet with the deity and the audience.⁸¹ “The saint speaks not to a

tonṭark keḷiyar aiyārarē 5.27.5

tirupparāyṭṭuṟai mēviya celvarē 5.30.1

aruḷkoṭṭuṭṭiṭum āṇaikkā aṇṇalē 5.31.8

eṇṇārūr iṟaiṇaiyē 7.51.1

āṇṭā ālaṅkāṭāvun aṭiyārka kaṭiyēṇ āvēṇē 7.52.3

⁷⁷ Āri yantṭamiḷ ṭṭicai yāṇavaṇ

Kūri yakunaṭ tārkūṭi niṇṇavaṇ

Kāri kaiyuṭai yāṅkaṭam pantuṟaic

Cīri yal attar ceṇṇaṭai miṅkaḷē (5.18.3)

⁷⁸ Gros, *Tēvāram*, xxxvii.

⁷⁹ “*Bhakti* and its Public”, *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol.11:3, December 2007, 255.

⁸⁰ *Songs of Experience: The Poetics of Tamil Devotion*, 19.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

fictive or implied listener but to a god and/or audience that inhabits the real world.”⁸² Cutler shows the following variations in the triangular communication⁸³: (a) The poet speaks to the deity. In this variety, the audience is sidelined but overhears the poet’s speech. (b) The poet speaks to the audience. Second person pronouns and verbs are used in this type of verse. (c) The poet speaks to his own heart. The deity and the audience overhear the words addressed to the heart of the poet. (d) The poet speaks to an unspecified addressee. (e) Neither the speaker nor the addressee is specified in the poem. Cutler’s conclusion is that (a), (b) and (c), in which the audience is clearly identified, are used by Tamil Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava audiences “as a standard for interpretation of poems” because these three varieties “could be interpreted as a confessional document of the poet’s quest to obtain the lord’s grace or as a sermon in which the poet shows his audience the way to find the lord.”⁸⁴

The saints’ poetry promotes pilgrimage. Appar underlines the importance of temple worship declaring that villages in which a Śiva temple is not found are veritable jungles.

The village that does not have a temple lacks in lustre
 The village that does not wear holy ashes is lost on its beauty
 The village does not sing out of deep devotion
 The village that does not have many shrines
 The village that does not blow the conch with affection
 The village that has neither a canopy nor a white flag
 The village that does not gather buds and flowers [for the worship of Śiva] before dining
 They are not villages, but veritable jungles. (6.95.5)

The ultimate end of human birth is, according to Appar, to adore Śiva in the temple. He muses “Of what use is the body, if it does not circumambulate the temple of Śiva, shower flowers [at his feet] with hands and praise him?”⁸⁵ Two of his *Tiruttāṇṭakam* (sixth *Tirumuṟai*) are important in respect of pilgrimage and temple worship. Whereas *Tiruttāṇṭakam* (70) lists a

⁸² Ibid., 21.

⁸³ Ibid., 22-27.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁸⁵ 4:9:8.

number of sacred places in the Tamil country where one could see the Lord of Kailāsa, *Tiruttāṅṭakam* (71) categorises them under various types of shrines and temples that existed at that time: *paḷḷi*, *vīraṭṭāṅṅam*, *kuṭi*, *ūr*, *kōyil*, *kāṭu*, *vāyil*, *īccuram*, *malai*, *āru*, *kuḷam*, *kaḷam*, *kā*, and *turai*.⁸⁶ Prentiss observes that many of the places visited by the saints were open, unstructured.⁸⁷ “Thus, both natural (yet social) and constructed places are included in the poet’s places of pilgrimage; only some are specifically religious buildings.”⁸⁸

Śivabhakti involves a contract of mutual obligations between Śiva and his devotees.

One of the *Tēvāram* saints Appar sings,

Your duty is to sustain me, your slave
My duty is to remain rendering service to you.⁸⁹

Our duty is to be a servant to the dancing lord⁹⁰

Your duty is to remove the distress of those who worship you.⁹¹

He is there dispelling afflictions of slaves who render service through *pattimai*.⁹²
He removes the distress of the slaves who render service⁹³

Devotees are known as *toṅṭar*,⁹⁴ *aṭiyār*,⁹⁵ and *pattar*.⁹⁶ *Toṅṭar* are an embodiment of *bhakti*.⁹⁷ Service performed by them in temples is called *toṅṭu*⁹⁸ or *paṇi*,⁹⁹ which is portrayed as a meritorious act. The following hymn lists the tasks to be performed in temples:

⁸⁶ 6:71:5.

⁸⁷ *The Embodiment of Bhakti*, 52.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁸⁹ *taṅkaṅṅaṅṅi yēṅaiyum tāṅkutaḷ eṅkaṅṅaṅ paṅi ceytu kiṭappatē* (5:19:9).

⁹⁰ *kūṭṭaṅṅuk kāṭpaṭ ṭiruppaṅṅaṅ rōṅṅantaṅ kūḷaimaiyē* (4:81:5).

⁹¹ *toḷuvār avar tuyar āyiṅṅa tīrttal uṅṅa toḷilē* (7:1:9).

⁹² *pattimaiyār paṅi ceyyum toṅṭar taṅkaḷ ētaṅkaḷ tīra iruntār pōlum* (6:2:10).

⁹³ *toṅṭupaṭu toṅṭar tuyar tīrppāṅ* (6:65:8).

⁹⁴ 7:7:11.

⁹⁵ 7:53:10.

⁹⁶ All these terms refer to devotees. For instance, *pattarāy vaṅṅaṅkum toṅṭar*(6:68:7); Dorai Rangaswami states that these terms correspond to the following concepts:

aṭiyār - aṭimai -absolute self-surrender; *toṅṭar- toṅṭu* - service; *pattar -bhakti* –reverential love; *cittar-citti* (*siddhi*) – spiritual realization; *aṅṅar - aṅṅu*-love. (*The Religion and Philosophy of Tēvāram* (Madras: University of Madras, 1990),1087.

⁹⁷ *pattākiya toṅṭar toḷu* (7:80:1).

O heart, come if you think of being firmly established [in God]
 Having entered the temple of our Lord daily
 Before the day-break sweep and smear ground with cow-dung
 Make a garland of flowers, extol, praise and sing
 Worship abundantly with the head and perform a dance
 And keep on shouting “hail to Cankara!
 To the Supreme Being with red matted locks,
 The receptacle of billowy Ganges
 And to the one who belongs to Ārūr” (6:31:3)

Śiva is said to be rejoicing in the menial service (*kurṛēval*) of *tonṭar*.¹⁰⁰ Dorai Rangaswami thus observes, “*Aṭiyārs* are the life of the *Bhakti* cult. From this point of view, Śaivism becomes a religion of service.”¹⁰¹ Unlike *antaṇar* (Brahmans) who perform *pūcai* (*pūjā*),¹⁰² the devotees undertake a very simple form of worship, that is, adoration of Śiva with water and flowers. This is called true tapas.¹⁰³ Singing and dancing are also predominant forms of bhakti worship.¹⁰⁴ Patti is compared to a flower that confers *mutti* (*mukti*).¹⁰⁵

Several terms meaning serfdom and tenancy occur in *Tēvāram*. They are *kuṭi*, *āl* and *aṭimai*. The term *kuṭi* is mainly used in three senses in *Tēvāram*. Several localities that are held to be the abode of Śiva end with the term *kuṭi* meaning a village or a hamlet, e.g. Tirucceṅkāṭṭaṅkuṭi, Tirumaṅkalakkuṭi, Tirunīlakkuṭi etc. Secondly, the term may also indicate the act of taking up residence. For instance, “[Śiva] who has taken up residence in the heart of the devotees (pattar maṅam kuṭi koṅṭānai, 6:68:4). Thirdly, *kuṭi* refers to a bonded slave living on the land owned by a person of higher social rank. The state of bondage which is called

⁹⁸ tonṭupaṭu tonṭar (6:65:8).

⁹⁹ cōṛrut turaiyarkkē patti yāyppaṇi ceymaṭa neṅcamē (5:33:2).

¹⁰⁰ tonṭar kurṛēval tāmakilnta kuḷakar pōlum (6:21:1) tonṭar toḷappaṭuvāy eṅṅēn nāṅē (6:37:5)

¹⁰¹ *The Religion and Philosophy of Tēvāram* (Madras: University of Madras, 1990), 1095.

¹⁰² poyyāta vāymaiyār potippūcip pōṛricaittup pūcai ceytu kaiyiṅāl eriyōmpi maṅaiṅalarkkum antaṅṭaṅ karuppariyālūr (7:30:6)

¹⁰³ koytupattarmala rumpuṅaluṅkoṭu tūvittuti ceytu

meytavattiṅ muyalvār (1:2:10)

paththaroadupala rumpoliyamalar angkaippunal thoovi (1:3:1)

¹⁰⁴ pāṭiyāṭum pattarkkaṅpuṭaiyāṅnai (6:67:2) pattarkaḷ pāṭiyāṭap parintu nalkiṅṅir (7:88:5)

¹⁰⁵ attāṅ ārūraip pattimalar tūva mutti ākumē (1:91:1)

*kuṭimai*¹⁰⁶ is attested by a document called *otti* or *orri*.¹⁰⁷ Śiva is depicted as Chief of a local village, and his devotees as his subjects or tenants.¹⁰⁸ It may be noted that the expression *āṭci koḷ* is used in connection with Śiva's ownership of Tamil lands.¹⁰⁹

Another term that is connected to *kuṭimai* is *āḷ* which, as a noun, simply means a person. However, in *Tēvāram* it indicates a person of inferior rank in a hierarchical relationship. Thus it denotes a servant or a slave of Śiva in *Tēvāram*.¹¹⁰ The expressions *āṭkol*¹¹¹ and *āṭcey*¹¹² connotes the process of becoming a servant of Śiva.¹¹³ Similarly the terms *aṭimai* and *aṭiyar* or *aṭiyār* that are ingrained in the *bhakti* theology stem from the word *aṭi* (a foot, base or bottom) and denote a slave of Śiva.

The devotees form a cohesive community pledging allegiance to Śiva,¹¹⁴ whom they reach after a long period of wandering.¹¹⁵ They would not worship any deity except Śiva. Appar declares that “we will not resort to minor deities; we have reached the feet of Śiva.”¹¹⁶ Almost in all of his compositions Campantar refers to the myth that asserts the superiority of

¹⁰⁶ maṅṅilāvumaṭi yārkuṭimaittoḷil malkumpuka lūrē (1:2:3)

¹⁰⁷ aṭiyār tamakkōr kuṭiyē ottiyāl (7:4:4)

¹⁰⁸ kītattai mikappāṭum aṭiyārkaḷ kuṭiyāka (2:44:5)

paṅṅora icaipāṭum aṭiyārkaḷ kuṭiyāka (2:44:8)

aṭiyār kuṭiyāvar (6:17:6)

kuṭiyākap pāṭiniṅ rāṭaval lārkillai kuṅṅamē (7:50:10)

¹⁰⁹ aricir perunturaiyē āṭci koṅṭa

cittaṅ kāṅ (6:87:4)

atikai vīraṭṭāṅam āṭci koṅṭār (6:96:1)

¹¹⁰ teṅpāl veṅṅey nallūr aruṭṭuraiyuḷ attā uṅakkāḷāyiṅi allēṅ eṅalāmē (7:1:1)

¹¹¹ āṅṅānai aṭiyēṅai āḷāk koṅṭu (6:54:1)

¹¹² umakkāṭceya aṅcutumē (7:2)

¹¹³ umakkāṭceya aṅcutumē (7:2)

¹¹⁴ toṅṭar kuḷām toḷutēṭta aruḷ ceyvānai (6:90:3)

¹¹⁵ pēyāyttirintteyttēṅ (7:1:2)

¹¹⁶ ceṅṅru nām ciṅru teyvam cērvō mallōm

civaperumāṅ tiruvaṭiyē cērap peṅṅōm (6.98.5).

Śiva over Brahmā and Viṣṇu. The *bhaktas* follow the path of *bhakti*¹¹⁷ and Śiva bestows his grace on them amidst the slander and reproach made by Jains and Buddhists.¹¹⁸

The Tirumantiram:

The *Tirumantiram* differs from the redacted version of *Tēvāram* in form and content. *Tēvāram* is fundamentally a book of hymns composed on Śiva, and the recitation of which has been part of public worship in Śiva temples since the medieval period. In contrast, the *Tirumantiram*, as it is available now, appears to be a work meant for serious students of theology in a monastery. It sets forth Śaiva doctrines concerning God, the soul and the bondage that keeps the soul in *samsāra* eternally and the means of getting rid of it. Whereas *Tēvāram* is, in general, composed in a simple and lucid style, free of ambiguity, the intelligibility of the *Tirumantiram* is marred by abstruse symbolic expressions and unfamiliar terminology, mostly borrowed from Sanskrit tantric literature.

The fundamentals of *bhakti* presented in the *Tirumantiram* do not differ materially from those found in *Tēvāram*. Regular *bhakti* themes, i.e. pilgrimage, praise and service occur in the *Tirumantiram*. The text provides three versions of *bhakti*: temple-based *bhakti*, Śiva-*bhakti* and *guru-bhakti*. *Bhakti* is defined as performing service for the master (*pati*).¹¹⁹ As in *Tēvāram*, *bhakti* in the *Tirumantiram* represents a formal, unequal relationship between Śiva/preceptor (*guru*) and a devotee/disciple. The devotee is exhorted to be meek and humble in heart.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ pattarkaḷ pattimai ceyya (1:42:5)

¹¹⁸ ciṟutērarum cilcamaṇum puṇāṅkūṛa neṟiyē pala pattarkaḷ kaitolūtēṭta (1:32:10)
puttaroṭu pollāmaṇac camaṇarpuṇāṅ kūṛap pattarkkaruḷ ceytāṇavaṅ (1:14:10)

¹¹⁹ itupaṇi māṇuṭar ceypaṇi īcaṅ
patipaṇi ceyvatu pattimai kāṇē (TM 1454:3-4)

¹²⁰ pattikku vittu paṇinturrap paralē (TM 2506:2)

Śiva- bhakti: Śiva is conceptualised as a king and called *kō*,¹²¹ *kōṅ*,¹²² *vēntaṅ*¹²³ and *manṅaṅ*.¹²⁴ He is also referred to as *aṅṅal*, *talaivaṅ*, *pirāṅ*, *iraivaṅ*, *irai*, *nāyakaṅ*, *īcaṅ* and *nātaṅ*. The *Tirumantiram* speaks of two strategies to become a devotee of Śiva. One should know him and think of him constantly. To know him means that one should acknowledge the three fundamental theological facts about Śiva. Firstly, Śiva holds supremacy over other deities. He is sovereign ruler of the universe.

civaṅṅoṅok kuntteyvam tēṅṅum illai
avaṅṅoṅoṅ pāriṅku yāvarum illai (TM 5:1-2)

Even if you search there is no deity equal to Śiva
None is on par with him here.

No celestial stands above him
No arduous penance is done if not for him
Triple deities cannot achieve anything without him (TM 6:1-3)

Secondly, only Śiva is capable of granting liberation and bliss. Whereas the fifth Tantra informs us that only an inferior type of *sāloka mukti* is available to devotees, the devotional hymns in the text proclaim that the highest goal of liberation is attainable. The outcome of the acts of *bhakti* is liberation from *saṃsāra*,¹²⁵ purging of sins and removal of darkness of ignorance.¹²⁶ Thirdly, Śiva is accessible only to his devotees. The text says “God seeks those who seek their souls to save.”¹²⁷

¹²¹ TM 546 1314

¹²² TM 21;112; 116; 277; 443; 917; 1055; 1426; 1453

¹²³ TM 1503

¹²⁴ TM 540; 1346

¹²⁵ tiraipacu pācac ceṅṅkaṅṅaṅ nīnti
karai pacu pācam kaṅṅantteyṅṅalāmē (49:3-4)

¹²⁶ pakaliṅṅat tumira vumpaṅṅin tēṅṅi
ikaṅṅiṅṅat tēyiruṅṅ nīṅṅki niṅṅ rēṅṅē (TM 4:3-4)

¹²⁷ piṅṅaikka niṅṅṅār pakkam pēṅṅi niṅṅṅāṅṅē (Tm 22:4)

The second strategy to become a devotee of Śiva is to contemplate him. This is expressed by the verbs: *cintai ceṭtal* (46:2), *ninaittal* (47:1), *uḷḷutal* (49:1), *uṇṇutal* (3:1), *muṇṇutal* (48:2). Eulogizing or singing of his praises also helps the devotee to remember Śiva. The following verbs are used to indicate this activity: *kūrutal* (2:4), *pōrri ceṭtal/pōrrutal* (2:1; 3:4; 41:4), *icaittal* (2:1) *ēttutal* (4:3; 36:3; 37:1), *pukaḷutal* (21:4, 34:4; 42: 1), *vāḷttutal* (39:1;40:3), *paravutal* (48;1) and *pāṭutal* (50:2). The act of eulogising may be accompanied by *malar tūvutal* (50:2) and *āṭutal* (50:3). In addition, the text employs several verbs in the sense of worship in general: *iraiñcutal* (39:3), *vaṇaṅkūtal* (48:2), *cēvittal* (75:3), *paṇital* (50:2) and *toḷutal* (9:3).

Temple-based Śivabhakti is theorised in Tantra five. Of the nine Tantras contained in the *Tirumantiram*, the fifth Tantra stands apart from the others as a systematic presentation of Śaiva *pādas*: *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yoga* and *jñāna*. According to that Tantra, *bhakti* is the foundation of the religious hierarchy envisaged by the *Tirumantiram*. Hence it follows that the fundamental quality one has to cultivate is *bhakti* that would enable one to attain the highest form of liberation –*sāyujya*.

[When] the devotee, having practised *caryā* and *kriyā*,
Through pure grace, having attained faultless yoga,
The means that ensures salvation, realizes knowledge (*jñāna*)
His mind would become *civam* through the grace of Guru.¹²⁸

Caryā is characterised by *bhakti* and those who observe *caryā* are called *bhaktas*.¹²⁹

The *Tirumantiram* reiterates the fact that *bhaktas* consider themselves as slaves of Śiva,

¹²⁸ pattaṅ cariyai kiriyai payilvuṛruc
cutta aruḷāl turicarra yōkattil
uytta neṛiyuṛru uṇarṅṅra ṇāṇattāṅ
cittam kuruvāṛuḷāṅ civamākumē (1455)

¹²⁹ pattaṅ caritai paṭuvōṛ (TM 1446:1)

engaged in temple service (*taḷitoḷil*).¹³⁰ Hence, *caryā* is known as *tācamārkkam* (*dāsamārga*, the path of the slave).

Two main activities of the *bhaktas* are pilgrimage and temple service.¹³¹ Verse 1445 urges devotees to make pilgrimage to temples to secure the grace of Śiva.¹³²

Roam through village and town and beautiful temples
Seeking him and sing “Śiva”
Adore Him by singing, after the worship
He will make your heart as his temple¹³³

Temple service (*taḷitoḷil*), comprises several acts of devotion performed for Śiva.

Lighting the lamp, simple and good, gathering flowers,
Smearing [the floor] with mellow paste [of cow dung],
Sweeping the floor, praising,
Kindling the camphor, [bringing water for performing] ablutions [of the deity]
Thus Carrying out [various]deeds at temple constitutes *dāsamārga*¹³⁴

However, temple- based *bhakti* defined by pilgrimage and service is relegated to the bottom of the hierarchical paths leading to liberation. *Caryā* is linked to a lesser soteriological goal of *sāloka mukti*,¹³⁵ in which *pāśajñāna* is transformed into *paśujñāna*,¹³⁶ but it does not

¹³⁰ taḷitoḷil ceyvatu tāṅ tācamārkkamē (TM 1502:4)

¹³¹ The last line in verse 1447 *nērnta cariyaiyōr nīl nilattōrē* is interpreted that pilgrimage constitutes the path of *caryā*: “*Cariyai neriyil nirpavar talayātīrai puripavar āvar.*” See Varatarājan’s commentary.

¹³² The text also draws attention to the futility of pilgrimage motivated by *bhakti* for Śiva, in favour of the practice of yoga.

There is no point
in circumbulating the earth
girded by roaring ocean
With feet sore by walking
ōtam olikkum ulakai valamvantu
pātaṅkaḷ nōva naṅantum payaṅillai (TM 707:1-2)

¹³³ nāṭu nakaramum naṅ tiruk kōyilum
tēṭit tirintu civaperumāṅ eṅru
pāṭumiṅ pāṭip paṅimiṅ paṅintapiṅ
kūṭiya neṅcattuk kōyilāyk koḷvaṅē (TM 1445)

¹³⁴ eḷiya nal tīpamiṭal malar koytal
aḷitiṅ meḷukal atu tūrttal vāḷttal
paḷimaṅi parral paṅmaṅcaṅamāti
taḷi toḷil ceyvatu tāṅ tāca mārkkamē (TM 1502)

¹³⁵ cālōka māti cariyāti yīrperum (TM1507:1)

lead to *patijñāna* or *śivajñāna* which is the source of salvation. The other form of institutionalised *bhakti* is *gurubhakti* which is given a higher place than temple worship in the text.

Several reasons could be adduced for the *Tirumantiram* not valuing highly the popular mode of temple worship. The saints imagine Śiva as a deity present in various locations all over the Tamil country, and these sites, intimately associated with Śiva worship, are held sacrosanct. This constitutes the primary reason for pilgrimage to emerge as a key theme in the devotional genre, *Tēvāram*. On the contrary, the *Tirumantiram* treats the human body as the abode of Śiva¹³⁷ and this result in Śiva being addressed as *kāyakkulappan*, *kāyanannāṭan*, *kāyattinullē kamalkiṅra nanti* (2071) and *kāyaṇa nanti* (2658). The body-shrine concept enables the practitioner to withdraw from social space which is not conducive to the effective practice of yoga. Instead of undertaking pilgrimage, the text urges the practitioner to practise *prāṇāyāma* to reach the deepest state of consciousness, *samādhi*. The practice of *prāṇāyāma* may be compared to the act of pilgrimage. The verb *tiri* denotes both the movement of the air within the body¹³⁸ and pilgrimage to temples (*kōyil*).¹³⁹ It follows that *ādhāras* in the body constitute sacred shrines. The pilgrimage of the air begins in the *mūlādhāra* and ends in the highest plane, *sahasrāra*. Thus, the cult of body-shrine that has replaced the cult of sacred places diminishes the significance and validity of temple worship, celebrated in *Tēvāram*.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ pācam pacuvāṇa tākumic cālōkam (TM 1509:1)

¹³⁷ māṭattu lāṇalaṅ maṅṭapat tāṇalaṅ
kūṭattu lāṇalaṅ kōyiluḷ lāṇavaṅ (TM 2614)
uṭampulē uttamaṅ kōyil koṅṭāṅ (TM 725:3)
eṇṇuṭal kōyil koṅṭāṅē (TM 1722:4)

¹³⁸ puṛappaṭṭup pukkuṭ tirikiṅra vāyuvai neṇṇipṭaṭa vullē niṇmala mākkil (TM 575:1-2)

¹³⁹ nāṭu nakaramum naṇṇiruk kōyilunt tēṭit tirintu... (TM 1445:1-2)

¹⁴⁰ uḷḷattiṇullē uḷapala firṭṭaṅkaḷ
meḷḷak kuṭaintu niṇṇāṭār viṇaikeṭap
paḷḷamum mēṭum parantu tirivarē
kaḷḷamaṇamuṭaik kalviyilōrē (TM 509)

Secondly, temples are a symbol of royal power, which is inferior to the powers (*siddhi*) yogis attain through the practice of *aṣṭāṅga* yoga.¹⁴¹ Verses 515-519 in Tantra Two reflect several of the popular beliefs regarding the link between temple and kingship. The *linga* in the main shrine of the Śiva temple represents king, and the temple represents his palace. The king in turn represents his subjects. *Pūjās* are performed in the temple to enhance or sustain the sacred powers of the king. Hence, the text warns of dangers that are likely to befall the king and his country in five worst case scenarios involving the *linga*, the temple, and *pūjā*.¹⁴² However, the king is deemed inferior and lower to those who are walking –temples (*naṭamāṭak kōyil*).¹⁴³ In other words, it is the kings who give obeisance to yogis who are Śiva in mortal frame,¹⁴⁴ not vice-versa. Thus the *Tirumantiram* subtly asserts the superiority of yogic renouncers over kings by undervaluing the institution of temple that plays a key role in legitimizing the status of king.

Thirdly, around the fifth century the classical notion of the Tamil king imbued with sacred powers was transferred to the deity in the temple, that in turn was replaced by the *jñānācārya*, celebrated in the sixth Tantra. The guru represents both Śiva and king.¹⁴⁵

kāyakkulaṭṭappāṇaik kāya naṇṇāṭaṇaik
 kāyattiṇuḷḷē kamaḷkiṇṇa nantiyait
 tēyattulē eṅkum tēṭit tirivarkaḷ
 kāyattuḷ niṇṇa karuttaṇiyārē (TM 2071, 2550)

¹⁴¹ Siddha who practise the eight –limbed *yoga* attain the eight types of *siddhi*: *aṇimā*, *ilakimā*, *makimā*, *pirāṭti*, *karimā*, *pirākāmiyam*, *īcattuvam*, and *vacittuvam* (TM 668-692).

¹⁴² Transplanting the *linga*, established in a temple, is forbidden as it brings about disaster to the kingdom (*aracu*) (TM 515). The temple should be maintained properly. Even the removal of a stone from the temple wall spells disaster for the king (TM 516). *Pūjās* should be performed in the temple regularly; otherwise, the king would lose his powers, rains would fail, diseases would multiply, and theft and crime would proliferate (TM 517, 518). A knowledgeable Brahman should function as a temple priest, failing which famine would strike the land (TM 519).

¹⁴³ *naṭamāṭak kōyil nampar* (TM 1857:2, 3)

¹⁴⁴ *kōvaṇaṅkumpaṭi kōvaṇamākippiṇ
 nāvaṇaṅkumpaṭi nanti aruḷ ceytāṇ* (TM 2674)

¹⁴⁵ *kuruvē civaṇumāyk kōṇumāy niṅkum* (TM 1581:3)

Tirumūlar refers to his own preceptor Nandi as *kōṇ* (king).¹⁴⁶ A Śaiva priest functions only as an intermediary between devotees and Śiva in a temple; but the human guru who is Śiva himself descends to earth for the benefit of those desirous of *mukti* and *siddhi*.

Gurubhakti: The *Tirumantiram* is premised on the notion that liberation is not attainable without the mediation of the liberated one.¹⁴⁷ The soul (*jīva*) does not know on its own as it is enveloped in ignorance. It will not realise its own true nature until its veil of ignorance is lifted by one who is knowledgeable. This gives rise to the concept of the *guru* who ensures the liberation of the soul. The following verse emphasizes that it is of no use if one worships Śiva on his own, that is, without the guidance of a guru.

The countless celestials worshipped Śiva
Having worshipped Him [thus], they gained nothing.
[They did not aware of the means of worshipping Śiva].
If one worships the preceptor who,
worshipped Him, [Śiva as shown by his Guru]
Reveals the path so that
One can be united with Śiva.¹⁴⁸

The text is emphatic that the preceptor (guru) is none other than Śiva himself:

kuruvē civameṇak kūrīṇaṇ nanti (TM 1581:1)
cittam iraiyē civakuru vāmē (TM 1573:4) .

Verse 113 describes Śiva who transcends all worlds¹⁴⁹ as descending from heaven in human form (*viṇṇiṇṇilintu ..meykoṇṭu*) to eradicate all impurities (*kaḷimparuttāṇē*). Whereas *Tēvāram* urges devotees to visit temples to have a vision of Śiva, the *Tirumantiram* proclaims

¹⁴⁶ *kōṇanti* entail (TM 1583:2)

¹⁴⁷ *kuruvaṇṇi yāvarkkum kūṭavoṇṇātē* (TM 2840:4)

¹⁴⁸ *civaṇai vaḷipaṭṭār eṇṇilāt tēvar
avaṇai vaḷipaṭṭu aṅku āmāru oṇṇillai
avaṇai vaḷipaṭṭu aṅku āmāru kāṭṭum
kuruvai vaḷipaṭṭil kūṭalumāmē* (TM 2119)

¹⁴⁹ *ellā ulakiṅkum appālōṇ* (TM 1576:1)

that Śiva takes the form of human guru to meet his devotees down on earth.¹⁵⁰ Hence

Tirumūlar refers both to Śiva and his preceptor as Nandi.

He placed his holy feet on my head
Through his compassionate gaze
He gave me the great form
He was Lord Nandi, my king
I saw Him in the form of Guru
I found Him as the [means of] deliverance from birth [*saṃsāra*]¹⁵¹

The text also remarks that the grace of Śiva comes in the form of *guru*.¹⁵² Those who fail to realize the divinity of the preceptor, which is often highlighted in the text, are condemned as idiots of faulty vision.

The untainted Śiva comes taking the form of Guru
Purifies [the fit of triple impurities]
And grants his good grace in great measure.
The fools, without understanding that
[comparing themselves to Him]
say, “ He has falsifiable knowledge as we do [He is not different from us]
Only those of great religious merit worship his feet
Saying “He is Śiva [himself].¹⁵³

The identification of guru with Śiva stems from the fact that through the practice of Śivayoga,¹⁵⁴ the guru has himself become *civam*. Only the one who transforms himself into

¹⁵⁰ viṇṇiṇṇu iḷintu viṇaikku iṭāy meykōṇṭukaḷimpu aṟuttāṇē (TM 113:1).

¹⁵¹ tiruvaṭi vaiṭtu eṇ cirattu aruḷ nōkkip
peruvaṭivait tanta pēr nanti taṇṇaik
kuruvaṭiviṇṇ kaṇṭa kōṇai em kōvaik
karuvaḷivāṇṇiṭak kaṇṭu koṇṭēṇē (TM 1597)

¹⁵² When the soul treats good deeds and bad deeds as equal, then Siva’s grace descends in the form of the *guru* conferring knowledge. (iruvinaṇai nēoppil inṇaruṭ cakti kuruveṇa vantu kuṇam pala nīkkit tarumeṇu nāṇattāl..TM 1527 1-3)

¹⁵³ cutta civaṇ kuruvāy vantu tūymai cey
tattaṇai nalku aruḷ kāṇā ati mūṭar
poyttaku kaṇṇāṇ namar eṇṇar puṇṇiyar
attaṇ ivaṇ eṇṇu aṭi paṇivārē (TM 1578),

¹⁵⁴ The Guru is the one He is Guru Holy,
Who, entranced in bliss
The Vedas and Agamas speak of
Enters into Siva yoga
And all thoughts stilled,
Removes the bondage of pasa
Leads you to Lord. (TM 2057 translated by Natarajan)

civam could instruct others in the ways of becoming *civam*.¹⁵⁵ Since the knowledge of becoming *civam* is acquired from a guru, the path enunciated in the text is called *kuruneṛi*,¹⁵⁶ which is none other than *caṇmārkkam*, the path inaugurated by Nandi.¹⁵⁷

As Thomas Thangaraj points out, the concept of *guru* is eminently a theological concept as it is spoken of in relation to the supreme deity Śiva; however, it is also a soteriological notion as the primary task of the *guru* is to confer the knowledge required for salvation and for purification of the self.¹⁵⁸ Thus the terms *kāṭṭatal* (revealing) and *māṛṛutal* (transforming) reflect the fundamental functions exercised by the *guru* in respect of the disciple. The guru reveals the distinctions between the three permanent entities- *cat* (God), *acat* (the impurities) and *catacat* (the soul)-¹⁵⁹ the doctrine of liberation,¹⁶⁰ and the ways to sunder the bonds of *pāśa*.¹⁶¹ He also transforms (*māṛṛutal*) the souls into *civam*, liberating them from the triple impurities as an alchemist turns anything he touches into gold.¹⁶²

Liberation is available to all irrespective of caste distinctions. Hence, the text declares “*oṇṛē kulamum oruvaṇē tēvaṇum*.”¹⁶³ The guru is said to be working for the benefit of all souls, referred to as *nallār*.

He is beyond all worlds. [Yet]
He is here bestowing his grace in abundance to the good.
Since he shows his favour to redeem all
[The object of] praise is the good Guru who himself is pure Śiva. (TM 1576)¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁵ *cittaṅ kuruvaru lārciva mācumē* (TM 1455:4)

¹⁵⁶ *kuruneṛiyām civamām neṛi kūṭum* (54:3)

¹⁵⁷ *caivap perumait taṇinā yakaṇ nanti*
uyya vakutta kuruneṛi oṇṛuṇṭu
teyvac civaneṛi caṇmārkkam (TM 1478:1-3)

¹⁵⁸ Thomas Thangaraj, “The Word Made Flesh: The Crucified Guru: An Indian Perspective,” in *One Gospel, Many Cultures: Case Studies and Reflections on Cross-Cultural Theology*, ed. Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Hendrik M. Vroom (New York : Rodopi, 2003), 113.

¹⁵⁹ *cattum acattum catacattum kāṭṭalāl* (TM 1573:3)

¹⁶⁰ *mēlaikkati* (TM 2413:1-2) *meyyaṭiyārkkup patiyatu kāṭṭum paramaṇ niṇṛāṇē* (TM 710:3-4)

¹⁶¹ *pacupāca nikkam* (TM 2413:2); *pativaḷi kāṭṭum pakalavaṇ* (TM 45:4) *nanti vaḷi kāṭṭa* (TM 68:4)

¹⁶² TM 2054

¹⁶³ One the family,
One the God (TM 2104:1)

Vision is an important element of *bhakti* in temple worship and guru worship. In *Tēvāram* it is centred on visual images of Śiva; in contrast, in the *Tirumantiram* it is focussed on the human form of guru. Seeing Guru's body, pronouncing his name, listening to his holy speech, and contemplating his form contribute to the dawning of wisdom.¹⁶⁵ The following are recognised as acts of piety: seeing the *guru*, adoring him, touching him, meditating on him, singing his praise, and bearing his holy feet on the head.¹⁶⁶

II

Anpu

The emotional content of devotional literature is the result of the influence of the concept known as *anpu*. *Anpu* is a Dravidian term meaning love, which figures in Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam.¹⁶⁷ It is predominantly a term describing an emotional disposition towards others. The exact nature of *anpu* is disputed in South Asian religious scholarship. Bror Tiliander is of the view that *anpu* cannot be entirely free from an erotic touch, even if a

¹⁶⁴ ellā ulakir̥kum appālōṅ ippālāy
nallār uḷḷattu mikku aruḷ nalkalāl
ellārum uyyak koṅṭu inkē alittalāl
collārnta nar̥kuruc cutta civamē (TM 1576)

¹⁶⁵ teḷivu kuruviṅ tirumēṅi kāṅṭal
teḷivu kuruviṅ tirunāmam ceppal
teḷivu kuruviṅ tiruvārttai kēṭṭal
teḷivu kuruvuru cintittal tāṅē (TM 139)

¹⁶⁶ tericikkap pūcikkac cintaṅai ceyyap
paricikkak kīrtikkap pātukam cūṭak
kurupatti ceyyum kuvalayattōrkkut
tarumūrttic cārpūṭṭum caṅmārkantāṅē (TM 1479)

¹⁶⁷ Dravidian Etymological Dictionary:330 *Ta. anpu* love, attachment, friendship, benevolence, devotion, piety; *anpan* friend, husband, lover, devotee; *aṅi* love; *aṅam* love, friendship, affection; *aṅu* attachment, affection. *Ma. anpu, ampu* love, affection, trust, devotion; *anpan* lover, friend, husband; *anpuka* to be fond of, connected with. *Ka. anpu, anpita* relationship, friendship; *ammu* to be willing, wish, desire; *n.* desire. DED 279.

sublime meaning is given to it.¹⁶⁸ Vamadeva, who challenges this proposition, asserts that *aṅṅu* is the idealistic love of Tamils, bereft of erotic connotations.¹⁶⁹ Neither position can be proved wrong as more than one representation of *aṅṅu* is found in classical and devotional literature.¹⁷⁰

The term *aṅṅu* is not confined to the *akam* genre alone, even though it is the genre in which the term occurs the most. The term *aṅṅu* signifies affection in *puṛam* works such as *Puṛanānūru*, *Paṭiṛruppattu*, *Maturaikkāñci*, *Tirumurukāṛruppaṭai* and *Paripāṭal*. For instance, the king's affection for the bard¹⁷¹ is denoted by the term *aṅṅu*.¹⁷² The deity Murukan addresses the devotee with words dipped in *aṅṅu*.¹⁷³ *Aruḷ* and *aṅṅu* are said to be two vital attributes of the king in *Puṛanānūru*.¹⁷⁴

As mentioned earlier, *aṅṅu* is an emotional disposition that stems from a human desire for warmth and intimacy. The Dravidian term *neñcam* or *neñcu* (the heart or the mind) is the seat of emotion.¹⁷⁵ *Aṅṅu* that arises in *neñcam*¹⁷⁶ is based on certain principles. The first principle is proximity or closeness in physical space, which is a symbolic expression of likeness, intimacy and kinship or relationship. One feels *aṅṅu* for those who live in close proximity to them. In other words, sharing physical space and having face-to-face interaction

¹⁶⁸ B.Tiliander, *Christian and Hindu Terminology :A Study in their mutual relations with special reference to the Tamil area* (Uppsala: Religionshistoriska Institutionen, 1974), 208.

¹⁶⁹ Chandreka Vamadeva, *The Concept of vaṅṅaṅṅu "Violent love" in Tamil Saivism with special reference to the Periyapurānam*, Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1995), 22.

¹⁷⁰ Modern interpretations of *aṅṅu* can be found in the anthropological work *Notes on love in a Tamil family* by Margaret Trawick. See Chapter III, *The Ideology of Love*, 89-116.

¹⁷¹ The term *kāṭal* is employed to denote the poet's love for the king: *kāṭar kiḷamaiyum uṭaiyavaṅṅu* (PN 216:10).

The bard tells his patron that he praises him out of love (*kāṭal*) for him, though his art has not reached perfection: *murrileṅṅu āyiṅṅum kāṭaliṅṅu ētti* (Puṛa. 373:32)

¹⁷² *aṅṅuṭaimaiyiṅṅu em pirivu aṅṅu* (Puṛa. 381:7)

¹⁷³ *aṅṅu aṅṅuṭai arivaṅṅu niṅṅu varaveṅṅa*

aṅṅuṭai naṅṅuḷi aḷai i viḷiviṅṅu (Tiru.291-92)

¹⁷⁴ In this poem, the poet advises the king not to associate himself with those who are devoid of *aruḷ* and *aṅṅu* as they are surely destined for hell, and to safeguard his subjects as the mother would protect her infant. (Puṛa. 5).

¹⁷⁵ *neñcam perumalakkurumē* (Kuṛu.194:5) *allal neñcam alamalakkurumē* (Kuṛu.43: 5) *aḷuṅkal neñcam* (Kuṛu. 307:8) *nōm eṅṅu neñcē* (Kuṛu. 202:1, 5) *neñcam valippa* (Kuṛu. 341:6)

¹⁷⁶ *aṅṅuṭai neñcam tāṅṅu kalantaṅṅavē* (Kuṛu.40:5)

aṅṅuṅṅu neñcattu (Aka. 107:2)

play a crucial role in generating and sustaining *anpu*. The bard says, “We spent our time happily eating and drinking as the guests of Karumpaṇṭṛk Kiḷāṇ. When we told him that we wanted to go to our country that was due to celebrate a festival, he who was affectionate to us, said thus in fear of separation.”¹⁷⁷ Thus, being together is vital to a lasting relationship.

Physical presence of the loved one is emphasized in a relationship because *anpu* springs and grows from seeing and being seen.¹⁷⁸ *Anpu* cannot sustain itself if one withdraws from the physical space one shares with the other. This is perceived to be highly problematic for lovers, especially by women, because one who withdraws from the common physical space is believed to have lost feelings for the other. For instance, in *akam* works the heroine assumes that her lover who has left her in search of wealth does not love her at all and calls him *anpilar* (loveless).¹⁷⁹ A female friend tells the hero to let the heroine accompany him on his mission to find riches abroad instead of leaving her behind as a loveless person would do.¹⁸⁰ In another verse, the female friend assures the heroine that though the lover went away in anticipation of rare wealth, he does hold great affection for her.¹⁸¹ The poet calls his patron *anpilāḷa* (loveless) as the latter asked him to return to him only after his wife [poet’s wife] gave birth to a son.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁷ *anpuṭaimaiyiṅ em pirivu aṅci* (Pura. 381:7).

¹⁷⁸ Tamil idealizes mutual love at first sight (e.g. Meeting of the eyes of Rāma and Sītā in *Kamparāmāyaṇam*). In contrast, love between man and woman stems from hearing about excellent qualities of each other in Sanskrit literature. (See *Nalopākhyānam* in the third book of the *Mahābhārata*.) The influence of Sanskrit convention can be seen in Appar’s *Tiruttāṅṅakam* 6:25:7: *muṇṇam avaṇṇṭaiya nāmam kēṭṭā!* (First, she heard about his name).

¹⁷⁹ *Naṅ. 277:10; 281:11; Aka. 331:9*

¹⁸⁰ *ivaḷoṭum celiṇō naṅṅē ...anpilar akaṅṅi āyiṅ* (Naṅ. 37: 4, 7)

¹⁸¹ *arumporuḷ vēṭkaiyiṅ akaṅṅaṅar āyiṅum perum pēr anṅiṅar tōḷi* (Aka. 91:8-9)

¹⁸² After the glory for parents that is a son has been born to your beloved wife
she who never leaves the shade of your body and her body glows
with radiant ornaments burnished in fire, come back then”
you said and you were heartless to send me away from here! (eṅ ivan olitta anpilāḷa)
You must know how much I feel for you!
You who long for renown! Where shall I take my place? (Pura. 222, Hart’s translation)

Secondly, *anpu* that thrives on familiarity finds itself expressed in a relationship.¹⁸³ The relationships found in the Caṅkam poetry can be classified into four groups; three of these are from the *akam* tradition: (a) heterosexual relationship (b) parent-child relationship and (c) relationship between hero/heroine and their same- sex companion, and the last is from the *puṛam* tradition: patron/king -bard /subject relationship. Mutual love between a man and a woman is denoted by the term *anpu*: “Though the lover is away in a far away country, he has great *anpu* for you.”¹⁸⁴ “This is the village in which she who contemplates me in her mind with loving fondness resides.”¹⁸⁵ The daughter’s love for her family is also denoted by the term *anpu* (Aka. 49:2). The patron is said to have made a donation to bards out of great affection: *āṭunarkku ītta pēraṅ piṅaṅē* (Puṛa. 221:2); *akavunarp puranta aṅpiṅ* (AN 97:11). Thus the term *anpu* refers to the love and affection between family members, lovers and friends in *akam* poetry, and to the love and affection between the patron and the bard in *puṛam* situations.

Only *anpu* in heterosexual relationships has been subjected to scrutiny and theorised by Tamil grammarians who acknowledge the connection between *anpu* and physical space. Five basic love situations are connected to the five physiographic regions: union- *kuṛiñci* (mountainous region), pining in separation-*neytal* (sea-shore), patient waiting- *mullai* (forest), wife’s sulking on the return of the husband -*marutam* (cultivated fields), and separation -*pālai* (dry land). They are known as *aṅpōṭu puṅarnta aintiṅai* or *aṅpiṅaintiṅai*. Manickam states “The love theme of *aintiṅai* is morally good, universally acceptable, humanly possible, and poetically fit for imagination.”¹⁸⁶ Unreciprocated love too (*kaikkiḷai* and *peruntiṅai*) finds a

¹⁸³ Kinship terms are abundantly encountered in *Tēvāram* and in the *Tirumantiram*. They are used by Tamils to address strangers or people who are not related to them.

¹⁸⁴ *kāṭalar tavaṅ cēy nāṭṭār āyiṅum mikappēr aṅpiṅar* (Naṅ. 115:7-9).

¹⁸⁵ *aṅpu kalantu nam vayiṅ purinta kolikaiyoṭu neṅcattu uḷḷiṅar uṛaiṅvōr ūrē* (Naṅ. 59:6).

¹⁸⁶ *The Tamil Concept of Love* (Madras : South India Śaiva Siddhānta Works Pub. Society, 1962), 24.

place in the *akam* poetry.¹⁸⁷ However, it is excluded from *aṅṅiṅaintiṅai* and not linked to any physiographic regions.

Aṅṅu primarily manifests as a delight in union and sorrow in separation.¹⁸⁸ It follows that one who causes sorrow to another is deemed loveless, and that one who safeguards another from misery is considered affectionate. For instance, avaricious hunters ready to kill the wounded elephant for its tusks are described as *aṅṅil kāṅavar* (AN 21:24). Protective function is ascribed to *aṅṅu*: the one who wears *kaḷaltoti* protects the bards [from the tribulations of poverty] out of affection (*aṅṅu*).¹⁸⁹ The function of protection attributed to *aṅṅu* is sometimes denoted by a separate term *aruḷ* meaning granting a wish or rendering a favour to a seeker. Like *aṅṅu*, *aruḷ* also occurs mostly in *akam* works. Both *aṅṅu* and *aruḷ* are paired together in the literature and attributed to *talaivaṅ* as desirable characteristics. In the *akam* genre the hero is expected to show *aruḷ* for his beloved by abandoning his plans to leave her in pursuit of worldly goals.¹⁹⁰ In *puṛam* contexts, he is required to possess *aruḷ* for bards and his subjects, who are his dependents.¹⁹¹ Thus, *akam* and *puṛam* genres can be considered to be the two sides of a single coin as they reflect the challenges the hero faces in both the domestic and public realms.

¹⁸⁷ Unreciprocated love falls into two groups: *kaikkilai* and *peruntiṅai*.

¹⁸⁸ The emotions associated with union and separation are expressed through the eyes. The Caṅkam literature treats briefly the first meeting of lovers: *kaṅ tara vanta kāma oḷḷoḷi* (Kuṛu.305:1). He looked at her again and again disregarding her gaze : *parimuṭuku tavirtta tēraṅ etir maṛuttu niṅmakaḷ uṅkaṅ paṅmāṅ nōkkic ceṅṛōṅ maṅra ak kuṅṅu kiḷavōṅē* (Aka. 48:20-23). The affectionate look of the heroine is often mentioned: *cēyari maḷaikkaṅ amarntiṅitu nōkkam* (Naṅ.16: 9-10) ; *kuṛu makaḷ kuḷalai uṅkaṅ maḷiḷmaṭa nōkkē* (Naṅ.77:11-12) . When the hero makes plans to go abroad, tears stream down like rain from the eyes of the heroine that signal him not to go. (Naṅ.5) When the heroine realises that she would not be able to accompany her lover who goes on the mission of amassing wealth, her eyes become sorrowful in response to impending separation: *aruṅceyal poruṭṭiṅi muṅṅi yāmē cēṅum maṅantai eṅṅaliṅ tāṅraṅ neyṭal uṅkaṅ paital kūrakalaṅkaṅar uṅvōḷ pulampukoḷ nōkkē* (Naṅ.113: 5-6, 12).

¹⁸⁹ *akavunarp puranta aṅṅiṅ kaḷaltoti* (Aka. 97:11)

¹⁹⁰ *aruḷum aṅṅum niḷkit tuṅai tuṅantu poruḷvayir pirivōṛ uravōṛ āyiṅ* (Kuṛu. 20:1-2)

¹⁹¹ *aruḷum aṅṅum niḷki* (Puṛa.5:5)

Whereas the Caṅkam literature reflects the tension between the man's worldly pursuits and conjugal life, *Tēvāram* advises him to rise above this conflict and focus his attention on Śiva. The most significant semantic change that took place during the *bhakti* era in this regard was that secular love, denoted by the term *aṅpu*, is referred to as *ācai* in *Tēvāram* and *aṅpu* is interpreted as divine love.¹⁹² In *Tēvāram* Śiva is equated to a local Tamil hero (*talaivaṅ*) liberating his devotees from the misery and suffering of worldly life. Saint-poets imagine themselves as bards who sing his praise and /or his beloved who pines away in separation from him. Thus both *akam* and *puṇam* themes and motifs find a place in *Tēvāram*.

Both Śiva and the devotee are denoted by the term *aṅpaṅ* in *Tēvāram*. Only those who love him can reach his feet.¹⁹³ Since *aṅpu* is influenced by factors like proximity and kinship, it is not surprising that Śiva is easily accessible to those who love him.¹⁹⁴ *Aṅpu* operates in a relationship. Hence, one enters into a relationship with Śiva, this mostly being a being a master-servant relationship.¹⁹⁵ Since Śiva is the sole refuge of the devotee, he represents all kinship relations: Śiva is father, mother, elder brother, uncle and aunt.¹⁹⁶ Śiva reciprocates the love of his devotee: he binds them with his love.¹⁹⁷ Hence, he is called *aṅputaiyāṅ* (affectionate).¹⁹⁸

¹⁹² vācam malku kuḷaliṅārkaḷ
vañca maṅai vāḷkkai

ācai nīkki aṅpu cērtti (7:7:7)

¹⁹³ If there is pleasure there is pain

Domestic life is [the result of] ignorance

O dry-hearted! [it is so because] you earlier uttered words of ridicule

Those who do not love him will not reach the feet of the deity adorned with koṅrai [Siva]

Let us reach the temple of Etirkoḷpāṭi. 7:7:8

¹⁹⁴ aṅpāki niṅrārkkku aṅiyāy pōrri (6:26:2)

aṅputaiyārkkku eḷimaiyatāy (6:96:7)

¹⁹⁵ aiyāṅrkkku āḷāki aṅpu mikku 6:26:2.

¹⁹⁶ aṅṅaiyaiyum attāṅaiyum pōla aṅpāy aṅaintēṅai (6:91:1) aṅputaiya māmaṅum māmiyum nī (6:95:1)

tāyūṅiyē tantaiṅiyē caṅkaraṅēyaṅiyēṅ āyuniṅpāl aṅpuceyvāṅ ātarik kiṅratuḷḷam (1:50 7)

¹⁹⁷ attā uṅ aṅiyēṅai aṅpāl ārttāy (6:95:8)

¹⁹⁸ aṅputaiyāṅai araṅai (1:7:11)

eldest son²¹² (both are authority figures in a family). Śiva's love is superior to maternal love.²¹³ The text contrasts the love of Śiva with the love of kinsfolk. Relatives do not love one who has lost his wealth; they would only love him if they were able to benefit from him materially. Hence this self-interest cannot be compared to the selfless love shown by Śiva to his devotees.²¹⁴

There are four distinctive aspects of the representation of *aṅpu* in the *Tirumantiram*. Firstly, the text classifies *aṅpu* into two types: violent love and tender love. The *Tirumantiram* denounces a violent expression of *aṅpu* for Śiva. Since the text lays stress on the preservation of the body, it disapproves of the mode of demonstrating *aṅpu* through self-harming acts.

The bones are the fuel;
Having cut the flesh of the body
Even if one fries it in the fire glowing like gold
The gem like Śiva cannot be attained
unless one melts with love and his mind becomes tender. 272

The love that melts the heart is preferred. In this sense *aṅpu* is followed by the verb *uruku* or *urukku* (causative).²¹⁵ Melting with love is a common expression found in the text.²¹⁶ The heart should become tender (*akam kuḷaital*) with *aṅpu*.²¹⁷ Weeping and shedding tears are taken as signs of love.²¹⁸ As the love for Śiva is intense, the devotee wants to experience him with his mouth as well.

I melt with love, cry and bewail
I adore day by day with my bones melting
He is my gold, the gem, Lord, and God
I will eat, bite and chew him. (TM 2980)

²¹² *taṅṅai oppāy oṅṅumillāt talaimakaṅ* (TM 7:2)

²¹³*nal aṅparkkut*
tāyīṅum nallaṅ tāḷ caṭaiyāṅē. (TM 8:3)

²¹⁴ TM 209.

²¹⁵ *aṅpōtu uruki* (272:4) *aṅpu urukki* (274) *aṅpiṅ urukuvaṅ* (1456:1) *aṅpuḷ uruki* (2980:1)

²¹⁶ *aṅpōtu uruki* (TM 272: 3) ; *aṅpiṅ urukuvaṅ* (TM 1456:1)

²¹⁷ TM 272:3

²¹⁸ *aṅputaiyārkaḷ aḷutu akaṅrārkaḷē* (TM 152:4)

Secondly, the text underlines the mutuality of *anpu*. The one who loves and the person who is loved are denoted by the same term in the text: *anpan*.²¹⁹ *Bhakti* does not have a common terminology for the devotee and Śiva.²²⁰ The *Tirumantiram* thus speaks of mutual love:

Whoever could rejoice in the burning *anpu* for him,
to such, well-pleased he awards his grace of *anpu*.²²¹

Worship the lord with heart melted in *anpu*;
seek the lord with *anpu*,
when we direct our *anpu* to God,
he too approaches us with *anpu*.²²²

This reciprocal love is referred to as “*icainttu eḷum anpu*”²²³ (*rising love in harmony*) in the text. Those who stand in such love are referred to as *icaikkinra anpar*.²²⁴

Thirdly, *anpu* is used in connection with yoga in the text. Forming bonds of love with Śiva is a prerequisite to yoga. One’s heart should melt with *anpu* if one wants to practise *kuṇḍalinī* yoga²²⁵ or enter the *samādhi* with the goal of becoming *civam*.²²⁶ Finally, *anpu* is identified with the transcendental state of *civam*. The third and fourth aspects will be elaborated in the next section on Yoga.

²¹⁹ Śiva is referred to as *anpan*: *inpatitai niṅṅiratikkuṁ anpanai* (286: 3-4). His devotees are also referred to as *anpar* (plural of *anpan*): *neṅṅiyāṇa anpar nilai aṅṅintārē* (617:4;2471:4) *icaikkinra anpar* ((1692:4) *aran anpar* (2391:1)

²²⁰ Śiva is addressed as *pattā* (the one who has *pattars*-devotees!) 7:25:3

²²¹ TM 280;

²²² TM 274 –Natarajan’s translation.

²²³ TM 1590:1

The expression 1692:4 refers to those who stand in love and in accord.

²²⁴ TM 1692:4. *Icaikinra* becomes *icaikkinra* -the doubling of the consonant *ka*-in poetry.

²²⁵ *ōrkkinra uḷḷam uruka aḷal mūṭṭi* (TM 1937:2)

²²⁶ *cittam urukkiḱ civamām camāṅiyil* (TM 325:1)

III Yoga

The term yoga is employed in two senses in the *Tirumantiram*: (a) Yoga as the ultimate end (liberation), and (b) Yoga as a means to the end. Yoga as the ultimate end is referred to as *Śivayoga* in the text, the very purpose of which is to transcend dualities and to become *civam*. The highest form of yoga mentioned in the *Tirumantiram* is *samādhi*, meaning union, completion, silence, intense contemplation of any particular object (so as to identify the contemplator with the object meditated upon).²²⁷ *Samādhi* is identified with the fourth and the final stage of consciousness called *turīya*, which transcends the other three stages of consciousness- *jāgrat* (waking), *svapna* (dream), *suṣupti* (deep sleep). “The word *Cit* (consciousness) applies both to waking and dream consciousness and the word *Acit* (unconsciousness) as the ground of *Cit* (consciousness) is not to be understood as devoid of consciousness. *Turīya* is beyond the concept of *Cit* and *Acit*.”²²⁸ *Śivayoga* is *turīya Samādhi* in which the dualism of *cit* and *acit*²²⁹ is transcended.

Symbols representative of the supreme state:

The text provides two religious symbols, *ardhanārīśvara* and *linga* that represent the transcendental *turīya* state the practitioner strives to achieve. *Tēvāram* attests to the fact that the development of Śaiva *bhakti* in the Tamil country was centered on the temple and that one of the images of Śiva celebrated by the saints was that of *ardhanārīśvara*. Several expressions occurring in *Tēvāram*²³⁰ evoke the image of Śiva as androgyne. Besides, his androgynous

²²⁷ Monier-Williams Sanskrit -English Dictionary.

²²⁸ I.C. Sharma, “The Four Dimensional Philosophy of Indian Thought and Plotinus, Paulous Gregorios (ed.), *Neoplatonism and Indian Philosophy* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 2002), 193.

²²⁹ *tiruneṛiyākiya cittacittinṛi....turiya camātiyām* (TM 232:1-4)

civayōkamāvatu cittacit tenṛu (TM 122:1)

²³⁰ *vēyaṇatōḷ umai paṅkaṇ, 2: 48:2; mātilaṅku tirumēṇiyiṇāṇ 1:2:2*

image is vividly captured in several of the hymns through a juxtaposition of male and female symbolism.

A earring of bright new gold glows on one ear;
 a coiled conch shell sways on the other.
 on one side he chants the melodies of the ritual Veda,
 on the other, he gently smiles.
 matted hair adorned with sweet konrai blossoms
 on one half of his head,
 and a woman's curls on the other, he comes.
 the one is the nature of his form,
 the other, of hers;
 and both are the very essence
 of his beauty. (IV.8.10)²³¹

Ellen Goldberg who analysed the image of *ardhanārīśvara* observes,

...it leads the devotee to an inner apprehension or progressive awareness of his/her own subtle and essential likeness with the deity (e.g. Ardhanārīśvara). The fundamental goal for Śaivites is to attain *mokṣa* by recognizing one's essential self as a "second" Śiva. This involves the self-realization of one's own so-called androgynous nature. The Tamil poet-saints, by utilizing the marks of Śiva's male and female nature, imply an androgynous counterpart in the listeners' own essential being.....²³²

The image of *ardhanārīśvara* is symbolic of the ultimate goal of yogic ideology propounded by the *Tirumantiram* "to become *civam*,"²³³ which refers to the transcendental state embodied in the *turīya samādhi*.²³⁴ The term *Civam* which is an irrational singular noun, is different from the rational masculine noun *Civan* (Śiva) in Tamil. The state of being *civam* results from the union of Śiva and Śakti within one's body.²³⁵ Śiva and Śakti are referred to as

²³¹ Translated by Indira Peterson. See *Poems to Śiva*, 105.

²³² Ellen Goldberg, *The Lord Who is Half Woman : Ardhanārīśvara in Indian and Feminist Perspective* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 99.

²³³ iruntār civamāki (TM 127:1); civam āyinarē (TM: 1799:4); ..camāti civamātal.. (TM: 2713:4)

²³⁴ civamām camātiyil (325:1)

ceppariya civamkaṇṭu tāṇ teḷintu
 apparicāka amarntiruntārē (126:3-4)

²³⁵ catti civamām irañṭum taṇṇuḷ vaikkac
 cattiyam eṇcittit taṇṇaiyumāmē (TM 333:3-4)

nāda and *bindu* respectively.²³⁶ Thus, the *turīya samādhi* is characterised by the union of *nāda* and *bindu* in the *sahasrāra*, called the mount of Meru.²³⁷

Civaliṅkam²³⁸ also symbolises the goal of becoming *civam*, which is homologised to the transformation of copper into gold.²³⁹ It represents the unification of *nāda* and *bindu*,²⁴⁰ or Śiva and Śakti.²⁴¹ Realization of the union of Śiva with Śakti within the body constitutes true knowledge.²⁴² Once the knowledge is achieved by means of yoga, the body itself becomes *civaliṅkam*.²⁴³ The *Tirumantiram* discusses the three techniques to realise the unification of *nāda* and *bindu* within the body: *aṣṭāṅga yoga*,²⁴⁴ *paryaṅga yoga* and *candrayoga*. It may be

²³⁶ “binduḥ śaktiḥ śivo nādaḥ.” “bindu-nādātṃmakam lingam.” (Candrajñāna-Āgama, kriyāpāda Paṭala 3.13,16). Quoted in Guy L Beck, *Sonic Theology :Hinduism and Sacred Sound*, Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1993,153.

Nāda dwelling in the *sahasrāra cakra* represents Śiva: ucciyil ōṅki oḷitikaḷ nātattai nacciyē inpaṅkoḷ vārkku namaṇḷlai (TM 442:1-2). However, Tantra Seven that discusses the conquest of *bindu* or the regulation of *bindu* flow, identifies *bindu* as Śiva and *nāda* as Śakti:

puṛamakam eṅkum pukunttoḷir vintu
niṛamatu veṇmai nikaḷnātañ cemmai (TM 1929:1-2)

²³⁷ vintuvum nātamum mēruvil ōṅkiṭṭiṭṭi
cantiyilāṅga camātiyīṭṭi kūṭṭiṭṭum (TM 619:1-2)

²³⁸ The male generative organ known as *iliṅkam* (...iliṅka vaḷiyatu pōkki (TM 346:2); viḷuntatu liṅkam virintatu yōṇi (TM 455:1)) is the symbol of Śiva in stone or other material established in temples (tāvāra liṅkam, 515:1).

²³⁹ naṭaṅ civaliṅkam nalaṅ cempu poṇṇē (TM 902:4)

²⁴⁰ ātāra vintu atipīṭa nātamē

pōtāvi liṅkap puṇarcciya tāmē (TM 1754:3-4)

vintuvum nātamum mēvum iliṅkamām

vintuvatē pīṭa nātam iliṅkamām (TM 1757:1-2)

²⁴¹ catti civamām iliṅkamē tāparam

catti civamām iliṅkamē caṅkamam

catti civamām iliṅkañ catācivam (TM 1755:1-3)²⁴¹

tattuvamām vintu nātam catācivam (TM 2396:2)

²⁴² entai paramaṅum eṇṇammai kūṭṭamum

munta vuraṭtu muṛai collīṅ ṇāṅamām (TM 1170:1-2)

²⁴³ taṅmēṇi taṅcivaliṅkamāy niṅṛiṭum

taṅmēṇi taṅum catācivamāy niṅṛum (TM 1750:2)

²⁴⁴ According to the text, Tirumūlar is not the author of the system of yoga which consists of eight limbs, found in Tantra three. It was first expounded by his guru Nandi. The term *piraiccatam* is employed to denote yoga : *piraiccatam eṭṭu (aṣṭāṅgayoga)*. The eight limbs of yoga are *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyaṇa*, *samādhi*. Two significant benefits accrue from the practice of the eight-limbed yoga are knowledge and liberation. *Yama* consists of ethical injunctions: non-killing, not-lying, non-stealing, of sturdy character, virtuous, humble, impartial, sharing food with others, committing no faults, abstaining from intoxicants, and being devoid of lust. The *Tirumantiram* provides a lengthy list of religious virtues under *niyama*, the first and foremost among them is to have faith in Śiva. Other twenty virtues, mentioned under the category of *niyama* are as follows: purity, compassion, reduced food intake, patience, sound condition of the body and mind, truthfulness,

recalled that in one of his autobiographical verses Tirumūlar states that through the grace of Nandi, having resorted to *mūlaṅ* (i.e. practice of yoga involving the *mūlādhāra*), he became *catācivam*²⁴⁵ (*civalingam*), and thereby came into possession of true knowledge.²⁴⁶

Concepts related to yoga- *puṅarcci*, *kalavi*, *aṭakkam* and *odukkam*

The text employs two terms- *puṅarcci* and *kalavi*- to underline the fact that the fundamental principle of yoga is the union of male and female elements.²⁴⁷ According to the University of Madras Tamil Lexicon, the verb *puṅar* means mating and uniting.²⁴⁸ In the text it has the meaning of “to wed”,²⁴⁹ “to have sexual union”,²⁵⁰ and “to stand united as *ardhanārīśvara*.”²⁵¹ The literal meaning of *kalavi* is sexual intercourse.²⁵² Hence, *paryāṅga yoga* is referred to as *kalavi*.²⁵³ Both *ardhanārīśvara*²⁵⁴ and *linga* reflect the sexual union of Śiva and Śakti, from which proceeds the universe.²⁵⁵

steadfastness, abhorrence of lust, of stealing and murder, penance, meditation, satisfaction, belief in the existence of god, charity, vows in honour of Śiva, learning of *siddhānta*, sacrifice, *śivapūjā* and wisdom. The Tirumantiram acknowledges the existence of numerous *āsanās*, among which only nine are mentioned by name. The literal meaning of *prāṇāyāma*, is control of breath, which is the means of restraining the mind (*maṇam*). “ Let *prāṇa* merge in mind and together the two will be stilled; then no more shall birth and death be. (TM 567:1-2). This science of breath should be taught by a guru. The benefit of practising *prāṇāyāma* is immortality. These last four limbs of the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* (*pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*), explained in 53 verses (578-631) contain references to *ādihāras* and *kuṇḍalinī* that are not previously dealt with. It is difficult to find a clear, consistent definition of these four steps. *Pratyāhāra* is the fifth step in the *aṣṭāṅgayoga* which is characterized by the withdrawal of the mind from the objects of senses and looking inward. *Dhāraṇā* is to concentrate on a particular object. *Dhyāna* is of two types: *para-dhyāna* (meditating on Śakti) and Śiva- *dhyāna* (meditating on the formless Śiva). The union of *nāda* and *bindu* in the *sahasrāra* takes place in *samādhi*.

²⁴⁵ catti civamām ilinḱam catācivam (TM 1755:3)

²⁴⁶ nanti aruḷālē mūlaṅai nāṭippinḱ nanti aruḷālē catācivanḱ āyiṅḱēṅ nanti aruḷāl meyṅṅāṅḱattuḱ naṅṅiṅḱēṅ nanti aruḷālē nāṅṅiruntēṅē (TM 92)

²⁴⁷ Female homosexuality is decried as folly: peṅṅoru peṅṅaip puṅarntiṭum pētamai (TM 1159:1)

²⁴⁸ puṅarmati yōṭuru (TM 628:3), puṅarmati (TM 1080:3); puṅar vintu (TM 879:2)

²⁴⁹ maṅam puṅar (TM 150:1)

²⁵⁰ mātar puyaluṅu pulliṅ puṅarntavarē yiṅḱum (TM 206: 1-2) puṅarcciyuḱ āyiḱai mēḱ aṅḱu pōla (TM 283:1); aṅḱap puṅarcci (TM 828:1) pāvai puṅarvu (TM 1163:3)

²⁵¹ maṅkaiyum tāṅḱum puṅarntuṅḱēṅ niṅḱum (TM 1063:3) kāccarṅa cōti kaṭavuḱuṅḱaṅ puṅarntu (TM 1160:3)

²⁵² kāyam puṅarḱḱum kalavi. TM 1249

²⁵³ TM 825

²⁵⁴ pākam parācakti paimponḱaṭaimuṭi (TM 1217:1)

Parāśakti is the half of him who sports golden matted locks (Natarajan’s translation)

²⁵⁵ TM 387.

Two more concepts that are vital to the understanding of yoga are *aṭakkam* and *odukkam*. *Aṭakkam* is one of the requisite qualities enumerated under the category of *yama* in *aṣṭāṅga yoga*.²⁵⁶ It has very specific connotations in the *Tirumantiram*. Firstly, *aṭakkam* denotes the control of senses. The Siddhas who strive to curb their senses are compared to a tortoise²⁵⁷ that retracts its head and limbs into its shell.²⁵⁸

Secondly it denotes the control of breath (*pirāṇan*,²⁵⁹ *kārru*,²⁶⁰ *vaḷi*,²⁶¹ and *vāyu*²⁶²).

If the [sādhaka] inhales the breath and retains it in his abdomen (vaḷiyiṇai vānki vayattil aṭakki)
The body would be as sturdy as crystal, and
Though it ages, it would remain young
If he receives the grace of the guru to calm [the mind]
His body would be lighter than air.²⁶³

To those who can sleep [while awake] in order to dispel misery
With both the eyes focused on the tip of the nose, and
With the air restrained within, without letting it rise
No more fear of [decay] of the body, this is the fruit of [yoga]²⁶⁴

The breath is compared to a horse that can only be driven by one who has mastered the techniques of breath control.²⁶⁵ The soul (*jīva*) is described as the master of senses²⁶⁶ and the

²⁵⁶ aṭakkamuṭaiyāṇ (TM 554:2)

²⁵⁷ Natarajan comments on the symbolism of tortoise found in verse 133: “The simile of the tortoise and the five senses is a favourite one in Hinduism. The Goraknathis (Khanpata yogis) of the 14th century onwards seem to have adopted the tortoise as their symbol and emblematic mascot.” The Bhagavad Gītā also uses this symbol in Chapter II.58.

²⁵⁸ orumaiyuḷ āmaipōl uḷ aintu aṭakki (TM 133:3); āmaiyōṇ rēri (TM 1206:1)

²⁵⁹ TM 567

²⁶⁰ TM 571

²⁶¹ TM 569

²⁶² TM 575

²⁶³ vaḷiyiṇai vānki vayattil aṭakkil
paḷiṅku ottuk kāyam paḷukkiṇum piṅcām
teḷiyak kuruvīṇ tiruvaruḷ perrāl
vaḷiyaṇum vēṭṭu vaḷiyaṇumāmē (TM 569).

²⁶⁴ nayaṇam irañṭum nācimēḷ vaittiṭṭu
uyarvu eḷā vāyuvai uḷḷē aṭakkit
tuyar aṇa nāṭiyē tūnka vallārkkup
payaṇ itu kāyam payam illait tāṇē (TM 605).

²⁶⁵ TM 565

²⁶⁶ aivarkku nāyakaṇ (TM 564:1)

lord of the body-habitat:²⁶⁷ the horse the *jīva* rides to reach his intended goal is breath.²⁶⁸ Sometimes the number of steeds mentioned is two: *prāṇa* (air inhaled) and *apāna* (air exhaled).²⁶⁹ Both could be tamed only by the grace of guru.²⁷⁰ The text lays emphasis on breath control as it leads to the restraint of the mind.

Let *prāṇa* merge in mind
and together the two will be stilled;
then no more shall birth and death be.²⁷¹

Thirdly, the non-emission of semen is referred to by the term *aṭakkam*. The term occurs in this sense in connection with *paryāṅga yoga*. The practitioner is compared to a blacksmith who takes the precaution of covering the fire with carbon so that molten silver will not mix with gold. In *paryāṅga yoga* the practitioner should be wary of mingling silvery semen with uterine blood (gold); that is, he should avoid ejaculating the semen into the vagina of the woman. Instead, he should raise the semen through breath control and preserve it in the tip of the tongue.²⁷² The blessings of this practice are denoted by the expression *aṭakkattil ākkam*.²⁷³ It is regarded as the sure means of attaining immortality.²⁷⁴

Aṭakkam is employed in the text in the sense of restraint or control. Nonetheless, the text is not of the view that complete elimination of sensual experience would enhance the effectiveness of yoga. Those who lay undue stress on absolute control of senses are derogatively called *aṛivilār* (ignorant), as it is said that there is little difference between those

²⁶⁷ avvūrt talaimakaṅ (TM 564:1)

²⁶⁸ uyyakkonṭērum kutiraimaṅ ṛonruṅtu (TM 564:2)

²⁶⁹ āriyaṅ nallaṅ kutirai iraṅṭuḷa (TM 565: !)

²⁷⁰ kūriya nātaṅ kuruviṅ arulperṛāl
vāriṅ piṭikka vacappaṭunt tāṅē (TM 565:3-4)

²⁷¹ pīrāṅaṅ maṅattoṭum pērātataṅkip
pīrāṅaṅirukkiṅ pīrappīrappillai (TM 567:1-2)

Translated by Natarajan.

²⁷² TM 834

²⁷³ TM 1957

²⁷⁴ kiṭakkum uṭaliṅ kiḷar intiriyam
aṭakkaluṅmavaṅ tāṅē amaraṅ (TM 2032:1-2)

who practise such control and an inert mass (*acētaṇam*). In other words, sensual pleasure is not forbidden to a yogi.²⁷⁵ He can practise sexual intercourse without ejaculation (*paryāṅgayoga*) that confers Śivabhoga.²⁷⁶ In Tantra five, *bhoga* is interpreted as the acquisition of the four goals in life (*dharma, artha, kāma* and *mokṣa*).²⁷⁷ The yogi does not perceive any conflict in enjoying the first three goals while his mind is set on liberation. Hence, Tirumūlar states that he came into possession of the knowledge that does not entail a complete riddance of sensory experience.²⁷⁸

Closely related to the concept of *aṭakkam* is *oṭukkam*.²⁷⁹ Both terms suggest a progressive withdrawal from the external world. They are used in the sense of controlling desire.²⁸⁰ They (*aṭaṅku* and *oṭuṅku*) also depict the state of non-dualistic liberation.

aḷiyil aḷi pōy aṭaṅkiyavārum
oḷiyil oḷi pōy oṭuṅkiya vārum²⁸¹

In particular, the term *oduṅkam* also implies becoming calm and tranquil.²⁸² Those whose minds are focussed and established in serenity do not agitate.²⁸³

The text also attempts to explicate *oduṅkam* in terms of reabsorption of tattvas into the mind. Of the five acts performed by Śiva, emission and reabsorption are central to the

²⁷⁵ yōkamum pōkamum yōkiyark kākumāl

...iraṇṭum aḷiyāta yōkikkē (TM 1491:1, 4)

The immortal yogi may enjoy both yoga and bhoga.

²⁷⁶ kayak kuḷali kalavi yoṭuṅkalan

tūcīṭ tuḷaiyuraṭ tūṅkātu pōkamē (TM 825:1-2)

²⁷⁷ pōkam puviyīṭ puruṭārtta citti (TM 1491: 3)

²⁷⁸ aṅcu maṭakkā aṅvaṅṅint tēṅē (TM 2033: 4)

²⁷⁹ *oṭuṅku* 1. To be restrained, as the senses or the desires; to grow less; to respectfully slide on to one side, as when meeting a superior; to move to a side; to be desecated, hidden; to be subservient ;to be lazy, inactive; to close, as the petals of the lotus flower; to cease, as noise, bustle; to be quiet, silent ;to be weary, exhausted; to sink; to become dissolved, involved one within another, as the elements, worlds, till all is absorbed in the great Infinite; to grow dim, as light (University of Madras Lexicon).

²⁸⁰ arutti oṭukki (626) avāvai aṭakki TM 1108:4

²⁸¹ As nectar drowns in nectar

As light dissolves in light (TM 124:1-2)

²⁸² viṭuṅkāṅ muṇaintuṅṅiriyaṅka ḷaippōḷ naṭuṅkātu iruppāṅṅum (1942:1-2)

²⁸³ oṭuṅki nilaiperra uttamar uḷlam naṭuṅkuvatillai (TM 1624:1-2)

cosmology of Śaiva Siddhānta.²⁸⁴ Richard Davis explains the emission and reabsorption of tattvas as follows:

As with the emanation of the tattvas, any movement along the path of “path of emission” (*śṛṣṭimārga*) involves a transformation from unity to differentiation, from one to many, from pervasiveness to increasing particularity. By contrast, the “path of reabsorption” (*saṁhāramārga*) reintegrates that which has become separated; it reinstates the unity lost through differentiation. Emission indicates a movement from subtle (*sūkṣma*) to gross (*sthūla*), from pure to impure, from superior to inferior; reabsorption indicates the converse. Emission and reabsorption also relates to the disposition of things in space. The path of emission is represented visually as a descending motion from high to low, or as a radiating movement proceeding outwards from a centre toward peripheries. Reabsorption ascends or moves inward toward a centre.²⁸⁵

Dhāraṇā, one of the steps in the *aṣṭāṅgayoga*, is presented as being based on the principle of reabsorption of tattvas into the source, within one’s mind.

To contain body’s harassing senses five
 In elements of five
 To contain elements of five
 In organs cognitive internal
 To contain cognitive organs internal
 in their *tanmatras*
 To contain the *tanmatras*
 in their Being Uncreated
 That, verily, is *Dharana*
 In stages practised (TM 597)²⁸⁶

Cheever Brown explains the link between the process of liberation and that of reabsorption. “Liberation entails a reversing of the cosmogonic process through the practice of meditative dissolution.”²⁸⁷ Tattvas merge or dissolve into preceding tattvas successively until the unity of *nāda* and *bindu* is realised in the *sahasrāra*, which culminates in the dawn of Knowledge (*jñāna*). *Paryāṅgayoga* also gives rise to *jñāna*.

He (who is engaged in *paryāṅgayoga*) becomes master of *jñāna*²⁸⁸

When *nāda* and *bindu* are raised to the Meru [*sahasrāra*]
 There will be *samādhi* as a result of the union [of them]
 The endless, excellent Light which is the great object of knowledge
 Will verily appear [in *samādhi*]²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ Richard Davis, *Ritual in an oscillating universe: Worshipping Śiva in Medieval India*, 109.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 110.

²⁸⁶ Natarajan’s translation.

²⁸⁷ *The Devī Gītā: the song of the Goddess* (Albany : State University of New York Press, 1998), 15.

²⁸⁸ *talaivaṇumāyīṭum taṇvaḷi ṇṇāṇam* (TM 829:1)

Yoga and *aṅṅpu*: Yoga that gives rise to knowledge is founded in *aṅṅpu*. The literal meaning of the expression *aṅṅpīr kalavi ceytal* occurring in verse 281 is to engage in sexual union, being immersed in love. Since sexual intercourse is recognised as one of the yogas, the phrase could be taken to denote *paryaṅga* yoga; alternatively, the expression may be construed as simply implying yoga which is interpreted as “an internalization of sexual intercourse between a man and a woman.”²⁹⁰ *Aṅṅpu* is especially linked to *samādhi*, the final limb of the *aṣṭāṅgayoga*:

He is our own; he is the primal one; he is the reciter of the Vedas
 He is the light that shines within the purest gold
 Having restrained the desire they conceived *aṅṅpu* for him
 They scaled the horn,²⁹¹ united the palms²⁹² and merged with him (TM 626)

Thus, yoga and *aṅṅpu* are inseparable elements of religious *sādhanā* the *Tirumantiram* deals with.

Unlike *bhakti* that is regarded a gratuitous gift of Śiva,²⁹³ the secular concept of *aṅṅpu* is suggestive of human free will. The verbal roots that accompany *aṅṅpu* in the *Tirumantiram* (*aṅṅpu cey*,²⁹⁴ *aṅṅpinai ākku*,²⁹⁵ and *aṅṅpu vai*²⁹⁶) imply that the emotion of *aṅṅpu* is intentional. It

²⁸⁹ vintuvum nātamum mēruvil ōṅkiṭiṅ
 cantiyil āṅa camātiyil kūṭiṭum
 antam ilāta aṅṅviṅ arumporuḷ
 cuntarac cōtiyūm tōṅṅriṅṅuntāṅē (TM 619)

²⁹⁰ David White, *Tantra in practice* (Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 2000), 15.

²⁹¹ *suṣumṅnā nādi* or *sahasrāra*

²⁹² *iḍā and piṅgalā*

²⁹³ *pattiyūm nātaṅ aruḷiṅ payilumē* (TM 1575:4).

Through the grace of Śiva (Guru), [one] will be endowed with *bhakti*.

Humans have no power over *bhakti*. It will be bestowed on the person select. Nonetheless, a person could engage in activities that would ensure his chances of being endowed with *bhakti*. For instance, *ottu mikavum niṅṅāṅṅai uraiṅṅpattu patti koṅṅkum* (TM 1639:1-2).

Praising the One [who is resident in the body] is instrumental in the production of *bhakti*.

²⁹⁴ *makiḷntu aṅṅpu ceyyūm aruḷ* (TM 280:4)
avaṅṅpāl aṅṅkiyē aṅṅpu ceyvārkaḷ (1880:1)

²⁹⁵ TM 626:3

²⁹⁶ *aṅṅpu vaittilai* (TM 544:2)
ātittaṅṅ pattiyuḷ aṅṅpu vaittēṅṅē (1465 :4)
aṅṅpu vaittu uṅṅātattillai (TM 2095:2)

is within the power of the person to create love for the object he chooses. In other words, the underlying premise is that a person is endowed with the capacity to direct and control his emotions.

The Lord knows who despises Him and who possesses [loves] Him.
The best of Lords will grant His grace accordingly.
To those capable of tender love for Him in abundance,
Pleased, He [who is an embodiment of] benevolence reciprocates the love.²⁹⁷

Anpu and kāmam: The *Tirumantiram* distinguishes *anpu* from *kāmam* (lust) which is one of the five great sins.²⁹⁸ *Kāmam* is excessive passion, whereas *anpu* is regulated by *aṭakkam*. *Kāmam* tends to make one swerve from the right path to the chosen goal. While the text recommends sexual intercourse as one of the yogas, it distances itself from *vāma* tantric practitioners by condemning their ritual sex practices²⁹⁹ and ritual drinking.³⁰⁰ Disapproval of *vāma* tantric ritual sex stems from the perception that practitioners of that sect do not observe sex without emission. The abstinence from *kāmam* and *kaḷ* is counted as one of the virtues belonging to *yama* in the text.³⁰¹ The union with Śiva is possible only if the semen is conserved and internalised within the body.³⁰² Hence, yoga is defined as follows:

Two bodies in union may unite,
Yet if he emits not Bindu
That union is Yoga way;³⁰³

ammalarp porpātattu anpu vaippārkaṭkē (TM 2744:4)

²⁹⁷ ikaḷntatum perratum icaṇ ariyum
ukantu aruḷ ceytiṭum uttama nāṭaṇ
koḷuntu anpu ceytu aruḷ kūra vallārkkku
makiḷntu anpu ceeyum aruḷ atuvāmē (TM 280).

²⁹⁸ kolaiyē kaḷavu kaḷ kāmam poykūṛaḷ
malaiivāṇa pātakamām (TM 200:1-2)
kāmam is also counted as one of the three blemishes along with *vekuḷi* (wrath) and *mayakkam* (mental delusion) TM 2436:1.

²⁹⁹ Copulation, one of the *pañcamakāras*, is referred to as *kāmam* in the text.

³⁰⁰ kāmamum kaḷḷum kalatikaṭ kēyākum (TM 326)
vāmattōr tāmum matuvuṇṭu māḷpavar
kāmattōr kāmak kaḷḷuṇṭē kalaṅkuvar

³⁰¹ Yama is the first step in *aṣṭāṅga yoga*. See verse TM 556:3

³⁰²kāmat toḷil niṇṇu
mātavanṇ iṇṇpam maṛanttoḷintārkaḷē (TM 2091:3-4)

³⁰³ Translated by Natarajan.

Anpu and inṣam: The text often emphasizes the link among *anpu*, yoga and *inṣam*. *Puṇarcci* or union produces an immense pleasure with which Śiva is identified. Śiva is described as the orgasmic sexual intercourse (*inṣakkaḷavi*)³⁰⁴, *inṣam* (*pleasure*)³⁰⁵ and *inṣan* (one who gives pleasure). The *Tirumantiram* postulates that *inṣam* or pleasure experienced in the union with Śiva is parallel to the pleasure derived from sexual intercourse in which seminal emission is arrested.

Tirumūlar proclaims that he seeks to impart the knowledge of the means through which he attained *inṣam* (pleasure).

Let this world experience the bliss I experienced
The esoteric teaching that leads to heaven is this:
If one steadfastly clings to the mantra
Rooted in the sensual perception of the body
It will result in the unitive experience with Śiva. (TM 85)

However, the emotion of *anpu* is not disruptive of the mental concentration required of yoga as the *sādhaka* is exhorted to practise the virtue of temperance. Phrases such as *cittam*, *kaḷaṅkātu*,³⁰⁶ *uṇarcciyilātu*³⁰⁷ lay stress on the unruffledness or equanimity of the mind in the act of *paryāṅgayoga*. The text also advocates the attribute of *naduvunilai* (middle path) for practitioners of yoga. *Naduvunilai* means impartiality. I, however, interpret the term as middle path because yoga as envisaged by the *Tirumantiram* means transcending dualities by following the middle *nādi*, *suṣuṃṇā*, that is, in the course of *prāṇāyāma*, *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* become united with *suṣuṃṇā*. Unless one stays on the middle path, knowledge is inaccessible.³⁰⁸ Tirumūlar

³⁰⁴ inṣamum inṣak kaḷaviyūmāy niṟkum (TM 416:2)

³⁰⁵ inṣamum inṣak kaḷaviyūmāy niṟkum (TM 416:2)

³⁰⁶ vaiṭṭa iruvarum tammiṅ maḷiṅtuṭaṅ
cittam kaḷaṅkātu ceykiṅṟa āṇantam (TM 835:1-2)

³⁰⁷ uṇarcciyil lātu kuḷāvi ulāvi
aṇaittalum inṣam atuvitamāmē (TM 283:3-4)

³⁰⁸ naṭuvuniṅ ṟārkkāṅṟi ṇāṇamum illai (TM 320:1)

refers to himself as a practitioner of middle path.³⁰⁹ It is worthy of note that *naduvunilai* is identified with *śāntarasa* by Tamil grammarians. According to the *Tirumantiram*, the sādhaka who has his emotion under control becomes an embodiment of love in his state of *jīvanmukti*.

Aṅṅpu (love) and *civam* are separate,` say the ignorant;
None knows that *aṅṅpu* itself is *civam*
Realizing that *aṅṅpu* is none other than *civam* itself,
They remain as *civam* which is *aṅṅpu* itself. (TM 270)

This verse depicts the state of *civam* in which the dualities are transcended. It also suggests that *civam* is to be known as well as to be felt because *civam* is the embodiment of the contradictory principles: knowledge (*aṅṅivu*) and love (*aṅṅpu*);³¹⁰ both are defining elements of God and the Siddha. The concept of *aṅṅakkam* is the moderating principle of the emotion *aṅṅpu*.³¹¹ In the light of the discussion of the relation between yoga and *aṅṅpu*, the term yoga in the *Tirumantiram* should be defined as *uṅṅarcciyuḷ oṅṅukkam*, the absorption in the emotion of *aṅṅpu*. When deeply absorbed in the emotion, categorical distinctions fade away and self-realisation dawns. However, this is not a transitory state of the mind. The *Tirumantiram* contrasts *aṅṅpu* (love) with *kāmam* (lust) and cautions against intense emotion that dissipates one's life-energy. *Aṅṅpu* is a carefully guarded emotion that constitutes the basis of the final state of *samādhi* in which the soul's bondage is shattered and unity with the ultimate reality is realised.

I recapitulate the main points of my argument in conclusion. Ideological differences between *bhakti* and yoga are conspicuous and undisguised. In *bhakti* the deity is perceived to be external to the worshipper, who considers herself inferior to the deity in all respects. This is one of the reasons for scholars to define *bhakti* as reverential devotion. *Bhakti* does not arise in

³⁰⁹ *naṅṅuvuniṅ rāṅṅvaḷi nāṅṅumniṅ rēṅṅē* (TM 320:4)

³¹⁰ *aṅṅpum aṅṅivum aṅṅakkamumāy niṅṅkum* (TM 416:1)

³¹¹ *aṅṅivum aṅṅakkamum aṅṅpum* (TM 1471:1).

the heart of the devotee without the intervention of Guru.³¹² The *Tirumantiram* uses the term *bhakti* to refer to the form of devotion displayed in public, institutional or formal settings. In Tantra five, *bhakti* is linked to the institution of temple. *Gurubhakti* is also demonstrated to be related to *maṭam* (monastery). The *Tirumantiram* itself was composed by the Head of a monastery called *mūlaṇmaṭam*.³¹³ One verse states that having a vision of the monastery confers salvation.³¹⁴ In contrast, the practitioner of yoga does not see God as external to and distinct from him. He does not go out to the world in search of God because God resides within his body and he attains liberation by realizing his own divine nature. The divine is an embodiment of the union of male and female elements, known as Śiva and Śakti respectively. By means of yoga, the practitioner becomes *civam* himself.

Yoga is premised on the notion that dualities are transcended in sexual intercourse without emission. In the Caṅkam literature, it is *anpu* that constitutes the basis of sexual union. Hence, *anpu* is a more appropriate notion than *bhakti* to be employed in connection with yoga. Besides, *anpu* is spontaneous whereas *bhakti* is taught. *Anpu* is personal whereas *bhakti* is impersonal. In *bhakti* the deity and devotee are in a hierarchical relationship. In *anpu* that leads to sexual union, compatibility of the partners is emphasized. *Tirumantiram* declares that those who follow the path of *bhakti*, based on duality of worshipper and the worshipped, would not be in a position to appreciate the signification of the text, *Tirumantiram*.³¹⁵ The next chapter is concerned with another strategy of indigenizing the yogic tradition- use of connotative language distinctive to Tamil literary culture.

³¹² pattiyaṁ nāṭaṅ aruḷiṅ payilumē (TM 157.5)

³¹³ TM 101.

³¹⁴ TM 2649.

³¹⁵ muttikkirunta muṇivarum tēvarum
ittuṭaṅ vēṅā iruntu tuti ceyyum
pattimaiyāl ip payaṅ aṅiyārē (TM 98:2-4)

CHAPTER FOUR

LIVING LIBERATION AND CONNOTATIVE LANGUAGE

The objective of this chapter is to bolster the previously made argument that the Tirumantiram displays a body-centered tradition that is distinct from both the temple-based ritual tradition enshrined in Sanskrit *āgamas* and the pilgrimage-based bhakti tradition celebrated in Tēvāram. The core teachings of the text reflect the fundamental belief that male semen epitomizes the divine presence in the human body. Such a belief necessitates the retention of semen through the practice of yoga as the means to immortality and freedom. This explains why extraneous religious practices are disparaged in the text.¹ The text resorts to a symbolic and profoundly enigmatic mode of language to disseminate living liberation, its central teaching, which is fundamentally a

¹ “Extraneous religious practices” may be defined as those which, in the opinion of the *Tirumantiram*, are not conducive to finding God, immanent in the human body. I give below a few examples:

(a) pilgrimage (*tīrtha*):

Within the mind [body] are many holy waters
They do not take a dip in them to destroy karma
They wander about the hill and the plain
They are misinformed men of perplexed mind. (TM 509).

There is no point

in circumambulating the earth

girded by roaring ocean

With feet sore by walking (TM 707:1-2).

They wander everywhere in the country looking for him.

[But] they do not perceive the fact that he is indwelling within the body (TM 2550/ 2071 3-4).

The dumb despises the body as impure

See! [They] remember [go about seeking] something else as a holy shrine.

malam eṅṅu uṭampai matiyāta ūmar

talam eṅṅu vēru tarittamai kaṅṅīr (TM 2137)

(b) Wearing external insignia: Brahmans are condemned for wearing the sacred thread and tuft without possessing true knowledge (TM 230). Those who pretend to be *jñānis* by donning the sacred thread and matted locks are condemned (TM 240-242, TM 1665, TM 1668-69)

(c) Ritualistic practices of left-handed *tāntrikas*: Sexual intercourse and consumption of intoxicating drinks and meat are despised (TM 326- 330, TM 332, TM 1452).

(d) Observance of purity (TM 2551-2552).

(e) Penance unaccompanied by yoga (TM 2565, TM 1568).

(f) Reading scriptures, gathering flowers, performing worship without love for God (TM 1506).

(g) Reciting *stotras* without comprehending their true meaning. (TM 33).

transformation of consciousness through “the transformation of sexuality.”² The downward flow of the semen has to be reversed and sent upwards for the self to transition into a higher plane of consciousness. It should be noted that the practice of retaining semen constitutes an integral part of the *kuṇḍalinī* yoga this Chapter is concerned with. The passage quoted below explains the role played by *kuṇḍalinī* in attaining immortality: In her sleeping state, she is associated with death as vital energy is drained away. When she is awake, activities of the *idā* and *piṅgalā*, that are connected to the markers of the passage of time, i.e. the Sun and moon, cease to exist and the *suṣumṇā nāḍi* opens up. The semen is raised to the *sahasrāra* along the channel of *suṣumṇā*; consequently, immortality is attained.

...the *kuṇḍalinī*, when she sleeps, is identified with *kālāgni*, the fire of time that cooks all creatures to death, through the aging process. the fire of yoga (*yogāgni*) that destroys the fire of time, is identified as *kālāgnirudra*, the “Rudra of the Fire of Time,” that is, a fire which is greater than, which consumes, the fire of time. When she sleeps, the *kuṇḍalinī* is associated with the fire of time, a time whose passage is marked by the movements of sun and moon in the subtle body; when she awakens, sun and moon (here the *idā* and *piṅgalā nāḍis*) are immobilized, and the *kuṇḍalinī*, doubling as the *suṣumṇā nāḍi*, is said to “consume time.”when the *kuṇḍalinī* rises, she also siphons upwards the semen that had previously remained inert and subject to loss in the yogi’s abdomen..... what happens when the *kuṇḍalinī* rises? A “column” of ambrosial semen is raised, via the *suṣumṇā nāḍi* to flood the cranial vault.³

Two kinds of language are employed for the exposition of fundamentals of yoga in the text: technical language and connotative language. The connotative language, mostly dominated by colloquial expressions and by images of man and nature drawn from the rural life of the Tamil country contrasts sharply with the technical language whose vocabulary is borrowed from Sanskrit tantric texts. This chapter is concerned with the connotative language, which is comparable to *Sandhābhāṣā*⁴ found in Tantric

² Gopi Krishna, *Kuṇḍalinī: The Evolutionary Energy in Man* (Berkeley: Shambhala Publications, 1971), 98.

³ *The Alchemical Body* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 232-233.

⁴ *Sandhā* is an abbreviated form *sandhāya*, a gerund formed by a verb *dhā* prefixed by *saṃ*. Agehananda Bharati notes that though *sandhā* is more prevalent than *sandhāya*, the latter occurs in important passages.

literature. *Sandhābhāṣā*⁵, translated as intentional language, is defined as “the language literally and apparently meaning one thing, but aiming at a deeper meaning hidden behind.”⁶ For instance, in *sandhā* terminology, *vajra* (thunderbolt) and *padma* (lotus) represent the phallus and the vulva respectively. It is difficult to find an appropriate Tamil term to describe the esoteric language of the Tirumantiram. The text’s highly symbolical and metaphorical language may be called *kuṛiyiṭṭu molī*⁷ in Tamil, though it is not an ideal one. The term *kuṛi*⁸ in this expression means symbol. The description of the symbolic language by Will Coleman is applicable to *kuṛiyiṭṭu molī*:

Linguistically, it seems to be a system, for lack of a better expression, of picture words and imagistic metaphors. And finally, all symbolic language says something other than what it seems to- that is, it is polyphonic (Bakhtin) or poly voiced. The symbol itself has the semantic structure of an immediate or apparent sense, a material, physical sense that also intends an existential one, one that is deeper and therefore non-verbal. Furthermore symbolic language says more than what it says, something other than what it says, and consequently, grasps the individual because it has created new meaning in its expression or articulation, multidimensionally speaking.”⁹

In this chapter, the term connotative language refers to both *sandhābhāṣā* of the Tantras and *kuṛiyiṭṭu molī* of the Tirumantiram. The connotative language of the Tirumantiram is not monolithic and homogeneous. The text makes use of several literary

He also points out that the shortened form *sandhā* could be explained in terms of a certain linguistic pattern in Pali in which the final letter is dropped: e.g. *abhiññā*, *abhiññāya* (Skt.*abhiññāya*). See *The Tantric Tradition* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1965), 168, 181-182.

⁵ The language used by esoteric *āgamas* is known as *sandhābhāṣā* or *sandhyābhāṣā*. The term *sandhyābhāṣā* was proposed by Haraprasad Shastri in 1916 to denote the language in which the songs of the Buddhist Caryāpadas and Dohas are composed. *Sandhyābhāṣā* is interpreted as twilight language meaning semi-concealed and semi- revealed. However, M.M Vidhusekhara Sastri contends that the correct term is *sandhābhāṣā* or intentional language: *Sandhābhāṣā* is also translated as “enigmatic language”, “mystery” and “hidden sayings.” S. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1969,3d ed.), 413.

⁶ S. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults*, 413.

⁷ The language of the siddhas is referred to as *kuṛiyiṭṭu molī*. See T.N. Ganapathy, *cittarkaḷiṅ kuṛiyiṭṭu molīyūm tirumūlariṅ cūṇiya campāṣaṇaiyūm* (Chennai: Ravi Publications, 2006).

⁸ The male or female generative organ is also denoted by *kuṛi*. Upward ascension of the sperm is referred to by the expression *kuṛivali cenru* (TM 2848:3).

⁹ *Tribal Talk* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 158.

devices including symbols, extended metaphor, and double entendre to treat esoteric themes.

The chapter is based on the presumed notion that connotative language is a vehicle of esoteric knowledge. Defining esoteric knowledge is beset with several difficulties. Though secrecy and initiation do play a part in defining esoteric knowledge, they represent only one end of the continuum, that representing the distribution of knowledge. The actual production of esoteric knowledge is mostly overlooked. In this chapter, I define esoteric knowledge as self-knowledge derived from both one's own spiritual experience and from interaction with a guru. The first part of the chapter deals with the claim made by the text that self-knowledge is higher than revealed knowledge. The second part looks at the reasons for the emergence of connotative language. From the perspective of a preceptor, esoteric knowledge could be imparted only to those worthy students who are initiated into the tradition and hence, it may be asserted that connotative language is meant for the initiated alone. Yet, from the perspective of disciples or practitioners, connotative language serves as both a mnemonic apparatus and also a medium to express those experiences that surpass words. Besides, if we assume that choice of a particular mode of language is socially meaningful and significant, the connotative language of the Tirumantiram reflects a desire to contest and subvert the existing social order of the society. The final section deals with the theme of sublimation of semen, fundamental to living liberation. Firstly, I explain how myths are exploited to convey principles of yoga by making use of the technique of double entendres. I point out that the overt and hidden meanings of select mythological verses are incompatible. Secondly, I demonstrate how the theme of sublimation of semen is expressed through

three symbols -milk, snake, and fruit – and through extended metaphor that involves agriculture. This section ends with a discussion on the symbolism of the dance of Śiva.

I

Esoteric Knowledge and the Tirumantiram

The term esoteric is used to describe tantric cults in Hinduism. For instance, Peter Hees states “Given the number and diversity of Hindu tantric texts, one is obliged to speak not of a single system but of many different ones.....The chief purpose of all tantras is to present the rituals of esoteric cults, which are said to be more effective than the rituals of the Veda, particularly in this present, debased age.”¹⁰ Nonetheless, Alexis Sanderson points out that not all tantric cults are esoteric. Of the two major tantric paths, Atimārga that excludes Goddess worship is meant for ascetics alone. In Mantra mārga, which is followed by both ascetics and householders, the hierarchy of various cults is determined according to the degree of proximity in which each of them stands in relation to the concept of Śakti, because goddess-centered traditions offer “a more powerful, more esoteric system of ritual (tantra) through further initiation (dīkṣā).”¹¹ The less removed a tradition is from the concept of Śakti, the more esoteric it is. According to this principle, tantras dealing with Kālī are more esoteric than those of Siddhānta. The Siddhānta tantras (ten Śivāgamas and eighteen Rudrāgamas), that are concerned with the cult of Sadaśiva or Linga, are seen as exoteric revelations, whereas Bhairava tantras connected to various manifestations of the Goddess, Tumburu cult, Bhairava cult etc, are reckoned as esoteric revelations. Factors that contribute to the Śaiva Siddhānta being reckoned

¹⁰ Peter Hees (ed.), *Indian Religions: A Historical Reader of Spiritual Expression and Experience* (London : Hurst, 2002), 193-94.

¹¹ “Śaivism and the Tantric Traditions” in *The World’s Religions*, ed. Stewart Sutherland, Leslie Houlden, Peter Clarke and Friedhelm Hardy (London: Routledge, 1988),669.

as exoteric revelation include the subordinate position occupied by feminine power, and the absence of rituals that make use of impure substances such as blood, meat and alcohol.¹²

However, the term esoteric is used in relation to the Tirumantiram, connoting incomprehensibility and vagueness of the text. Judith Martin argues in her Ph.D thesis that “certain portions of the manual dealing with advance techniques in tantric yoga are deliberately written in guarded esoteric language and consequently, remain largely unintelligible to the uninitiated.”¹³ She states that “such opaqueness, however, is not characteristic of the work as a whole”¹⁴ and only less than 10 percent of verses contribute to the ambiguity of the text. Since the Tirumantiram was composed in the Tamil language and made use of the idiom of the masses, she concludes that “the Tirumantiram was an intelligible document of considerable social relevance, not an elite atemporal manual of esoteric instruction.”¹⁵ The notion of intelligibility of the text is vital to Martin’s argument that the text emerged as a book of popular instruction with a vision to reconciling Vedic, āgamic and bhakti cults through the use of myths.

The understanding of the adjective ‘esoteric’ merely as abstruse or obscure is, however, misleading. The term is derived from the Greek word *esô* (or *esôterikós*), meaning the inner, and is first encountered in a satire by Lucian of Samosata of the second century C.E., whereas its antithesis exoteric was already present in ancient Greek philosophy.¹⁶ However, the term esotericism came into vogue only in the early part of

¹² Ibid. 668.

¹³ *The Function of Mythic Figures in Tirumantiram*, 25.

¹⁴ Ibid., 126.

¹⁵ Ibid., 129.

¹⁶ Kocku von Stuckrad, “Western Esotericism: Towards an integrative model of interpretation” in *Religion* 35 (2005), 80.

the nineteenth century. “Scholars described the esoteric as a kind of subculture, as a tradition that had formulated alternatives to the Christian mainstream from the renaissance onwards. Like ‘Gnosis’ and mysticism-in fact terms often used synonymously in earlier scholarship for what today is discussed as esotericism – esoteric currents were regarded as having been suppressed as heretical by orthodox Christianity.”¹⁷

In this chapter I argue that the term esoteric is intimately connected to the notions of higher knowledge, secrecy, symbolism and subversion in the sense of “destroying and reinventing language.”¹⁸ (The social significance of this aspect is dealt with in Section two.) This section deals with “self-knowledge” and contends that self-knowledge constitutes esoteric knowledge which is privileged over revealed knowledge or exoteric knowledge in the text. As explained in the first chapter, the Tirumantiram discusses two types of religious instruction and provides us with a clue as to how to distinguish the esoteric from the exoteric. To shed light on how a work may contain both esoteric and exoteric teachings, Sanderson explains that an esoteric text might incorporate exoteric teachings, but an exoteric work cannot include esoteric teachings, as esoteric teachings are deemed higher than exoteric ones. In verse 90, Tirumūlar asserts that he has explained in detail the theological concepts that are the fundamental precepts of Śaiva Siddhānta (exoteric teachings).

I have explained in full what is to be known,
Knowledge [that facilitates that understanding] and the knower,
Māyai, parai āyam that arises from māmāyai,
Śiva and akōcara vīyam¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Mircea Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 251.

¹⁹ nēyattai nāṇattai nāturu vattiṇai
māyattai māmāyai taṇṇil varumparai
āyattai accivaṇ taṇṇai akōcara

In contrast, the expressions-*mantiram* (*mantra*) and *maṛai* or *maṛaiṭṭoruḷ* (esoteric knowledge or esoteric substance)-occurring in verse 85 are suggestive of the esoteric nature of the teachings related to living liberation:

May the world attain the bliss I experienced
 Let me speak of esoteric knowledge that leads to heaven/ambrosia
 If one steadfastly clings to [or practise repeatedly]
 The mantra,²⁰ tied to the consciousness of the body
 It would slowly emerge.²¹

The above two verses represent two types of knowledge the text is concerned with: propositional or revealed knowledge, and personal or empirical knowledge. The Śaiva Siddhānta concepts referred to in verse 90 could be traced to *jñāna pāda* of Śaivāgamas which embodies the knowledge revealed by Śiva to humanity.²² It is dubbed *tattuvañānam*²³ (*tattvajñāna*). However, revealed knowledge in Sanskrit remained little

vīyattai murrum viḷakkiyiṭṭēṇē (TM 90)

²⁰ One might be tempted to identify mantra with intentional language since both are considered secret instructions and remain inscrutable to an ordinary reader. Agehananda Bharati agrees that intentional language may be taken “as a specialized extension of mantric language.” He cautions, however, that it is not identical with mantric language. A wrongful identification of intentional language with mantra might have arisen “from the fact of outward analogy: both mantra and *sandhābhāṣā* are cryptic, clandestine utterances, unintelligible to the non-initiate. On a more sophisticated level, the confusion could have arisen from the enormous amount of instructions and directions about the correct formation of mantras, which fill all tantric texts. Such secondary instruction is frequently couched in *sandhā* terms and works as a sort of mantric meta-language.” See *The Tantric Tradition*, 164,101-102.

²¹ yāṇṭṭeṛra iṇṭṭam peṛuka iv vaiyakam
 vāṇṭṭeṛri niṇṭṭa maṛaiṭṭoruḷ colliṭṭiṇ
 ūṇṭṭeṛri niṇṭṭa uṇṭṭaruṇṭṭu mantiram
 tāṇṭṭeṛrap paṛrat talaippaṭṭuntāṇē (TM 85)

²² aṇṇal aṛaintta aṛivu (TM 64:3).

²³ tattuva ñānam uraittatu tāḷvarai (TM 98:1).

However, the meaning of *tattuvañānam* is modified in the text in Tantras three, eight and nine. According to Varatarājan, *tattuvañānam* denotes true knowledge derived from the practice of *khecarī yoga*. His commentary on verse 816 runs thus: “When the creeper-like *kuṇḍalinī śakti* that confers *kāmajaya* (winning of desires) stays happy in ethereal space conjoined with *civam*, then true knowledge that leads to the attainment of *aṣṭhasiddhis* would blossom. Śiva whose form is knowledge exists in knowledge together with cit- Śakti (The *kuṇḍalinī śakti* takes the name of cit- Śakti as it completes its upward movement in *sahasrāra*.)” *Tattuvañānam* denotes the knowledge of *tattvas* as well as true knowledge in verse 2330. Varatarājan states, “*Tattuvañānam* [true knowledge] dawns on those who lead their lives with the goal of possessing the knowledge of thirty-six *tattvas* and the manner of their functioning. The soul that attains *tattuvañānam* [true knowledge] becomes *civam* and *tattuvañānam* [true knowledge] leads to the state of *Śivānanda*.” The term *tattuvañānikaḷ* may be interpreted as those who possess *tattuvañānam* or those who have self-knowledge: *taṇṇai aṛintiṭṭu tattuva ñānikaḷ* (TM 2611:1).

understood by the Tamil populace for several reasons including restrictions imposed on its learning by non-Brahmans.

In contrast, verse 85 speaks of empirical knowledge to realize the one hidden in the body. This knowledge is called *tannarivu*²⁴ (self-knowledge) that can be accessed both by mediation and by individual experience. Self-knowledge does not result from scriptural study, but from inward scrutiny and reflection of the self, as well as from the intervention of Guru.²⁵ The fact that it is celebrated in the text as liberating knowledge implies that it is higher than revealed knowledge.

If one knows himself, no harm befalls
 He perishes without knowing himself
 When he attains the knowledge of knowing himself
 He remains [as knowledge or *civam*] being worshipped [by others]²⁶

Self-knowledge is also referred to as *Śivajñāna* (*civaññam*) which is explained as *civamāṇa ññam* in verse 1587, which may be interpreted as ‘*civam* itself is knowledge’. The physical body is indispensable to attaining *Śivajñāna*,²⁷ which is also known as *meyññam* (true knowledge).²⁸ The one who possesses *Śivajñāna* is called a *Siddha*,²⁹ *aṭiyār* (slave),³⁰ *Śivajñāni*,³¹ *mōnattaṅ* (the silent)³² and *muttaṅ* (the liberated).³³

²⁴ TM 2224:2.

²⁵ akamukam āyntta arivu (TM 2654:4).

²⁶ TM 2355.

²⁷ uṭampār aṭiyil uyirār aṭivar
 tiṭampaṭa meyññāṇaṅ cēravu māṭṭār (TM 724:1-2).

²⁸ *Jñāna* is of two types : true *jñāna* and false *jñāna*. True *jñāna* can be subjected to critical scrutiny whereas false *jñāna* cannot. Only *śivajñāni* is the true *jñāni* and others are imposters who should be punished by the king (TM 242).

²⁹ cittar civaññam ceṅreytuvōrkaḷē (TM 1446:1).

³⁰ The term *aṭiyār* generally means devotees. However, the Tirumantiram reinterprets *aṭiyār* as those who possess *śivajñāna*: *aṭiyār civaññamāvatu peṅṅōr* (TM 1672:3).

³¹ ññattiṅṅār pata naṅṅum civaññāni (TM 1674:1).

³² TM 1674:3.

³³ TM 1674:3.

Śivajñāna,³⁴ is conferred by a guru who is a *śivajñāni* himself, without whom liberation is unattainable and remote.³⁵ Tirumūlar fondly refers to his guru as “our Nandi” (*eṅkaḷ nanti*) when he is first introduced in the text,³⁶ and states that he attained true knowledge through the grace of his guru,³⁷ who is eulogized as chief of knowledge.³⁸ Nandi is credited with inaugurating a new path to liberation (known as *caṅmārkkam*, *kurunerī* and *teyvac-civaneri*).³⁹

Mediation by the Guru is essential in order for the disciple to have access to true knowledge, as the latter is afflicted with impurities, especially with ignorance. The only difference between the soul and God is that the former is enveloped in ignorance whereas God is omniscient.⁴⁰ As the Sanskrit term *Ātman* in the Upaniṣads denotes both the supreme entity and the soul, the Tamil term *aṟivu* represents both God and the soul, highlighting the fact that both are not fundamentally dissimilar in character. In other words, in the highest state of consciousness, the subject (*jñātr*, the soul) identifies itself with the object of knowledge (*jñeya*, i.e. Śiva), and knowledge (*jñāna*).⁴¹ Guru is the one who invests the disciple with the knowledge that enables the latter to realize his own true nature and become *civam*.

I knew not that my form is knowledge
 Nandi taught by his grace that my form is knowledge
 When I knew through his grace my form as knowledge
 I experienced the form of knowledge.
 [I became knowledge itself]⁴²

³⁴ *kaṟṟum civaññamillāk kalatikaḷ* (TM 318:1).

³⁵ TM 2937.

³⁶ *nava ākamam eṅkaḷ nanti perrāṇē* (TM 62:4).

³⁷ *nanti aruḷāl meyññāṇattul naṇṇiṇēṇ* (92:3).

³⁸ *nantiyai entaiyai ṇāṇat talaivaṇai* (TM 2801:1).

³⁹ TM 1478.

⁴⁰ *aṟivu iraṇṭum oṇṇākum* (TM 892:1).

⁴¹ *ñēyattai ṇāṇattai ṇāturuvattiṇai* (TM 90:1).

⁴² TM 2357.

Mediation and individual experience are complementary means to the attainment of knowledge. Whereas yoga represents individual experience, the guru stands for mediation. Hence, we find statements in the text to the effect that yoga leads to *jñāna*⁴³ and that *jñāna* is conferred by Guru. Verse 2346 uses a metaphor that compares Śivajñāna (self-knowledge) to a horse. The commentator explains that *Śivajñāna* itself is *kuṇḍalinī*, thus he points to the close connection between yoga and *jñāna*.⁴⁴ *Śivajñāna* is the root of immortality and bliss. Unlike propositional knowledge, self-knowledge that is based on personal experience, is subjective, and expresses itself in vernacular tongues. Tirumūlar, having been initiated by Nandi and attained eternal bliss through self-knowledge⁴⁵ decided to share his experience with his fellow-beings in Tamil.⁴⁶

It was briefly noted that the Tirumantiram discusses two types of knowledge: revealed knowledge contained in the Āgamas and self-knowledge known as *Śivajñāna* that alone liberates the souls. Self-knowledge is attained through the practice of yoga and through the intervention of Guru who is Śiva himself. Self-knowledge which is experiential knowledge is regarded higher than propositional knowledge found in the revealed texts. Self-knowledge is also associated with the notions of secrecy, subversion and symbolism which are examined in subsequent sections.

⁴³ *nanṇeri celvārkkū nāṇattilēkalām* (TM 551:3) ;TM 320.

⁴⁴ *civañña māviṇait tāṇṇit tāṇṇic civaṇṇa cāralumāmē* (TM 2346:3-4).

⁴⁵ *enṇai ariyaluru iṇpuravārē* (TM 2288:4).

⁴⁶ *enṇai nanṇāka iraiṇ paṭaittaṇ taṇṇai nanṇākat tamil ceyyumārē* (TM 81:3-4)

II

Secrecy and Subversion

The term *marai*, as a verb means to hide or conceal, and as a noun denotes the Vedas (the etymological meaning of Veda is knowledge), the hidden, hence, the secret.⁴⁷ The Upaniṣads are also considered esoteric texts, referred to as *arumaṛai antam*,⁴⁸ or *eḷutā maṛai yīru*.⁴⁹ The text's use of the term *maṛai* to indicate the Vedas suggests that the Brahmanical religious scriptures were confined to particular *varṇas*, and that access to these sacred revelations was restricted to inhabitants of the Tamil country, identified with members of the *sūdra varṇa*. The *āgamas* are also signified by the term *maṛai* in the Tirumantiram: *cittānta māmaṛai*.⁵⁰ Śivabrahmans who had the privilege of studying the *āgamas* are denoted by the term *maṛaiyavar*.⁵¹ Thus, the use of the term *maṛai* was confined to revealed knowledge, which was the exclusive property of Brahmins, and Śivabrahmans in the case of the *āgamas*.

The text, however, redefines the term *maṛai* as self-knowledge characterised by mediation and experience. In Tantra three dealing with yoga, the text advises the student not to reveal the secrets of his training:

Unless one perseveres in the due manner as instructed [by the Guru]
It is impossible for anyone to become God.
Self-knowledge (*maṛai*) is the sole ground, none other than that
Accomplish in meekness without trumpeting⁵²

⁴⁷ *nān maṛai* (TM 1148:1); *paṇṇu maṛaikaḷ* (2005:2); *perumaṛai* (TM 2546:3) *maṛai* (2789:3).

⁴⁸ TM 234:1.

⁴⁹ TM 1426:3; TM 2358.

The term Vedānta meaning the upaniṣads is literally translated as *maṛai īru* (the end of the Vedas) in the text (TM 2358).

⁵⁰ ... *cittānta māmaṛaiyāyp poruḷ*

tunṇiya ākama nūḷeṇat tōṇṇumē (TM 2403:3-4).

⁵¹ *maṛaiyavar arccaṇai vaṇṇaṭikantān* (TM 1721:10).

⁵² *muṛaimuṛai āyntu muyaṇṇila rākil*

īraiyīrai yārkkum irukka aritu

maṛaiyatu kāraṇam maṇṇōṇṇu millai

paṛaiyaṛaiyātu paṇintu muṭiyē (TM 748).

The text also interprets *maṛaiyavar* or *maṛaiyōr*⁵³ denoting Brahmans, as Siddhas who have attained *turīya samādhi* by following the path of guru.

The pure *maṛaiyavar* are those
 By means of the supreme *gurumārga*,
 Resorting to the refuge of guru
 Transcending cit and acit (polarities)
 And abandoning religious rites and injunctions
 Attains turīya *samādhi*. (TM 232)

These concepts seem to have been revised during a period in which Tamil tantric practitioners resented brahmanical dominance in the socio-religious sphere of the country.⁵⁴

The reasons for the text's use of connotative language, though nowhere expressly stated in the text, can be accounted for. The fact that self-knowledge is denoted by the term *maṛai* suggests that it is deemed esoteric. One could reasonably assume that, similar to its counterpart esoteric tantras in Sanskrit, the text is meant for the initiated alone. The very purpose of the text is to disseminate the means of achieving blissful liberation while alive. This knowledge is accessible to all irrespective of *varṇa* and caste distinctions, but

⁵³ These terms *maṛaiyavar* or *maṛaiyōr* refer to Brahmans in general.

⁵⁴ Verse 229 depicts Brahmans as innately avaricious or materialistic. The term *vēṭkai* used to describe their materialistic inclination, is connected to the act of gobbling food rapidly without sharing with others.

O the greedy! Do not hasten to eat [your] food!
 Know the eating time of the crow during which
 it calls out to other crows [to share the food]
 vēṭkai uṭaiyīr viraintu ollai uṇṇamiṇ
 kākkai karainttu uṇṇum kālam aṛimiṇē (TM 250:3-4).

The rapt focus on satisfying sensual needs stands in the way of ascertaining the truth (*vēṭkai mikuttatu meykoḷvār inkillai* TM 175:1). The text prescribes the study of Vedānta for the dissolution of worldly desire. Those who have truly understood Vedānta abandon desire. Yet, Brahmans, even after the study of Vedānta, are enveloped in desire, a trait the text attributes to their hypocritical leaning.

vētāntam kēṭka virumpiya vētiyar
 vētāntaṅ kēṭṭum vēṭkai oḷittilar
 vētāntamāvatu vēṭkai oḷinttiṭam
 vētāntam kēṭṭavar vēṭkai viṭṭārē (TM 229)

with initiation. A graded initiatory system is set forth in Tantra five. Followers of *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yoga* and *jñāna* should undergo *samaya dīkṣā*, *viśeṣa dīkṣā*, *nirvāṇa dīkṣā* and *abhiṣeka* respectively.⁵⁵ The text lays an injunction on the disciple not to share his knowledge with unauthorized people, blatantly telling him not to trumpet his knowledge (“*parai araiyātu*,” TM 748). The *parai* is a percussion instrument associated with funerals in the second Tantra.⁵⁶ Hence, the use of *parai* in connection with the teachings of yoga might be taken to suggest that disclosure of esoteric practices brings upon the revealer misfortune and misery. This also emphasizes the fact that one needs to receive knowledge from the preceptor alone.

Furthermore, the text admits the inadequacy of verbal language to describe “the intuitions and perceptions that often lie beyond consciousness.”⁵⁷ Verse 2944 speaks about the eye of the body and the eye of the mind. True knowledge emanates from perceptive experiences of the mental eye, whereas the physical eye is related to the superficial survey of the material world, the conclusions of which are bound to be unreliable. While language is the medium of expressing the mundane world as experienced by the physical eye, the experience of the inward-looking mental eye defies words. The union of the soul with Śiva, homologized to the union between a man and a woman, cannot be adequately expressed as this experience can only be grasped by the mind.

O fools who [only] see [things] with eyes on the face (fleshy eyes)
Bliss is to see with the eye of the mind (inner eye)
If a mother is asked to tell her daughter
the pleasure derived from the union with her husband
How (in what terms) would she describe it?⁵⁸

⁵⁵ TM 1450.

⁵⁶ TM 153.

⁵⁷ Edward C. Dimock, *The Place of the Hidden Moon*, 4.

⁵⁸ mukattiṛ kaṅkoṅṭu kāṅkiṅṛa mūṭarkā!

Thirdly, connotative language was possibly used to serve as a mnemonic device in the text. For instance, *prāṇāyāma* is described in the text using animal symbolism:

iraṇṭu kaṭāvunṭu ivvūri nuḷḷē
 iraṇṭu kaṭāvukkum onrē toḷumpaṇ
 iraṇṭu kaṭāvum iruttip piṭikkil
 iraṇṭu kaṭāvum oru kaṭā vāmē (2889)

Two rams are in this hamlet [body]
 Only one slave the two rams have
 If the two rams could be controlled [and merged]
 One ram would they become.

In the above verse, the two rams denote *iḍā* and *piṅgalā nādis* or *pūraka* and *recaka*. The hamlet and the slave stand for the body and the soul respectively. Regulating the breath is the key to restraining the activities of the mind. Inhalation is called *pūraka* and exhalation is called *recaka*. Since the transcendence of dualities is the object of yoga, both *pūraka* and *recaka* merge in *kumbhaka*. In other words, *iḍā* through which breath is inhaled and *piṅgalā* through which breath is exhaled unite to form a central *nādi* called *suṣumnā*.⁵⁹ The unification of *nādis* should be understood in terms of the larger yogic goal of the transcendence of dualities in order to find a middle path.⁶⁰

Agehananda Bharati cites an example from a Buddhist *tantra* to illuminate the use of connotative language as a mnemonic device. He notes that several Buddhist tantras

akattiṛ kaṅkoṇṭu kāṅpatē āṅantam
 makaṭkut tāytaṅ maṅāḷaṅōṭu āṭiya
 cukattaic col eṅṅāl collumāru eṅṅaṅē (TM 2944)

⁵⁹ Ellen Goldberg, *The Lord who is half woman*, 79.

⁶⁰ Goldberg observes, “bipolar pairs as *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, *iḍā* and *piṅgalā*, sun (*sūrya*) and moon (*candra*), *prāṇa* and *apāna*, guru (*nātha*) and disciple (*chela*), inhalation (*pūraka*) and exhalation (*recaka*), left (*vāma*) and right (*dakṣiṇa*), northern and southern, and so on, all based on the conventional, underlying, hierarchical gender paradigm of masculine and feminine. ...In a more extended sense, we also encounter triads in yoga tradition in so far as the members of the aforementioned pairs unite to form a third unified field. When the dyadic homologues become unified (emptied of duality), then and only then can Śakti ascend through the medial channel of the subtle body (*suṣumnā*) to unite (yoga) with Śiva and to attain emancipation. As mentioned previously, it is in this sense that the *suṣumnā* or central channel (middle way) is not a separate *nādi* but rather the union of the *iḍā* and *piṅgalā*.” (See *The Lord who is half woman*, 78-79).

begin with a statement that “once upon a time the Lord of all *Tathāgatas* was dwelling in the vulvae of the *vajra*- woman.” The translation of the commentary runs thus: “..the intuitive knowledge is the *vajra*-woman due to its nature as undivided wisdom (*prajñā*...) and “vulva” is (used on account of its) destroying all afflictions (*kleśa*..).”⁶¹ He therefore, concludes that it is easier to remember the teaching couched in sexual terms, representative of typical *sandhā*-diction.⁶² In contrast, the Tirumantiram uses non-sexual symbols to convey sexual themes, as will be seen in the next section.

Evidence is also available to show that the connotative language of the Tirumantiram was partly the result of an attempt to mask sexual aspects of the Śaiva yogic cult. Several verses found in *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai* are concerned with the sexual potency of a yogic practitioner. For instance, the ram mentioned in the verse quoted above is recognized as a universal symbol of male sexual potency and phallic deities.⁶³ This subject is dealt with in detail in the next section.

Finally, connotative language is connected to the subversion of normative values of the society. Conventional poetry subjects itself to rules of language and produces meanings in consonance with a dominant system of values. Thus it reflects the symbolic order underlying the socio-economic system in which it takes shape. On the other hand, symbolic and metaphorical poetry is not bound by ‘common-sense’ rules of the language and in almost every case attempts to undo the meaning traditionally ascribed to words. This type of poetry is often courted by people, marginalized by influential sections of the society and, in a way, reveals their unconscious will to subvert the symbolic order of the

⁶¹ *The Tantric Tradition*, 170.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Hope B. Werness, *The Continuum Encyclopaedia of Animal Symbolism in Art* (New York, : Continuum, 2004),341.

orthodox society. As far as the Tirumantiram is concerned, it may be said that it aims at the transformation of society through the transformation of sexual practices that ultimately lead to transcendence of polarities.⁶⁴

Several examples can be furnished to show that the text has rejected the fundamental values of Vedic culture. The text does not endorse the *varṇa* system introduced by the Brahmans. It maintains that one is not born a Brahman and that a Brahman should not be identified on the basis of the distinctive hereditary insignia of wearing a sacred thread and having a tuft of hair.⁶⁵ It thus negates or trivializes the significance attached to the sacred Vedic *upanayana* ritual, only after which one is considered a full Brahman and entitled to wear the insignia.⁶⁶ The text also condemns the performance of temple ritual by one who is a *pārppāṇ* only by name and warns of drastic consequences that would result from it, such as deadly wars, epidemic and famine.⁶⁷ The text insists that only the possession of certain qualities makes one a Brahman and places stress on attributes rather than on birth and deed. Brahmans are portrayed as lacking in qualities critical to performing their functions and are called *pittērum mūṭar* (demented fools).

[They] are not truthful, lack in singular wisdom
 [They] are without self-restraint [they wander off from the fit objects of senses]
 They want in scrutinizing consciousness
 [they] are not pious; they do not grasp the truth supreme

⁶⁴ See Toril Moi, *Sexual/textual politics :Feminist Literary Theory* (London: Methuen, 1985), 11. In this she summarizes the argument made by Kriesteva about symbolic order and modern symbolic poetry.

⁶⁵ nūlum cikaiyum nuvaliṇ piramamō (TM 230:1)

⁶⁶ nūlatu kārppācam nuṇcikai ṇāṇamām (TM 230:2)

The thread is but cotton and the tuft is but hair.

Instead, the Vedanta and jñana are recognized as the sacred thread and the tuft of hair respectively.

nūlatu vētāntam nuṇcikai ṇāṇamām (TM 230:3)

⁶⁷ pērkoṇṭa pārppāṇ pirāṇ taṇṇai arccittāl

pōr koṇṭa nāṭṭukkup pollā viyātiyām

pār koṇṭa nāṭṭukkup paṅcamumām (TM 519:1-3)

Insane simpletons are verily the Brahmans⁶⁸

The major concepts relating to Brahmanical ideology have been revised by the text. As we noted in this section earlier the term *marai*, used to denote the Vedic corpus, is reconsidered as self-knowledge one attains both through the practice of yoga and the grace of a preceptor. Hence, maraiyōr are those who have reached the highest state called *turīya samādhi* in which ideational and phenomenal polarities melt away. In other words, the term *maraiyōr* refers to those who have attained living liberation, *jīvanmuktas*. The Tirumantiram also redefines the notion of fire ritual as one in which a person kindles the fire of *mūlādhāra* in his body by engaging in sexual coitus with his spouse.⁶⁹

The superiority claimed by Brahmans over other *varṇas* or castes on the basis of purity rules are also challenged by the text. Brahmanical fear of pollution stems from two sources: bodily discharges and excrements, and contact with impure substances and persons.⁷⁰ The Tirumantiram does not regard bodily fluids, especially the semen, and menstrual blood and vaginal discharges, as impure. The semen is identified as *bindu* and menstrual blood as *nāda*. These two are the purest of all tattvas and the union of them leads to living liberation and a state of eternal bliss. Hence, the text does not agree with the view propagated by Brahmans that some people are purer than others, or that an individual from a high caste would be polluted by coming into contact with a person born of low caste. It argues that since human birth itself is pollution, one cannot entertain fear that another person could pollute him as he or she is already in a state of pollution.

⁶⁸ cattiyam inṛit taṇiñāntāṇ inṛi
otta viṭaiyam viṭṭu ōrum uṇarvu inṛip
pattiyum inṛip paraṇ uṇmai inṛip
pittēgum mūṭar pirāmaṇar tām aṇṛē. (TM 231)

⁶⁹ TM 216.

⁷⁰ Patrick Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the body in Indian Asceticism," in Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis (ed.), *Asceticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 190.

The ignorant say impure, impure
 None knows where impurity lies
 If one knows the locus of impurity
 It is humanity [human birth] that is impure.⁷¹

Since the concept of physical impurity is absent in the text, the term *ācūcam* occurring in this verse should be interpreted as three types of impurities that afflict the soul: *āṇava*, *karma*, *māyā*.

The Brahmanical concern and anxiety about bodily impurity is rooted in the unconscious fear of threats to the social order that privileges the Brahmans. Olivelle observes,

Especially within the Brāhmanical tradition, maintaining the purity of the body was and continues to be a major element of ritual and morality. Mary Douglas (1982) again has argued, convincingly I believe, that anxiety about bodily margins and the pre-occupation with keeping them clean express anxieties about social integrity and concern for maintaining social order. This anxiety and the resultant preoccupation with bodily purity increase with the increase in the perceived threat to the integrity of the social body.⁷²

The text not only rejects the purity-impurity paradigm and but also declares, “One the lineage; one the God.”⁷³ Instead of the hierarchical *varṇa* system, the text seems to favour the indigenous classification of the populace into different occupational groups. The fact that self-knowledge is accessible to all is reflected in the representation of the soul as a member of different occupational groups in the text: temple priest,⁷⁴ farmer,⁷⁵ robber,⁷⁶ fowler and fortune-teller,⁷⁷ goldsmith,⁷⁸ charioteer,⁷⁹ warrior⁸⁰ and trader.⁸¹

⁷¹ ācūcam ācūcam eṇpār aṇivilār
 ācūca māmiṭam ārum aṇikilār
 ācūca māmiṭam ārum aṇintapiṇ
 ācūca māniṭam ācūca māmē (TM 2551)

⁷² Patrick Olivelle, “Deconstruction of the body in Indian Asceticism,” 189.

⁷³ onrē kulamum oruvaṇē tēvaṇum (TM 2104)

⁷⁴ paṇavaṇ (2874), pārppāṇ, (2883)

⁷⁵ uḷavu ceyvār (2871)

⁷⁶ kaḷḷar (2900)

⁷⁷ kuṇavaṇ (2923)

⁷⁸ taṭṭāṇ (2876, 2924)

Finally, I end this section on a note on secrecy, which can be defined in two ways. One is privileged information, intelligible to all, but accessible to the initiated alone. The other constitutes of deliberately obfuscated statements or poetry, and uses various literary strategies such as multiple symbolisms, double entendres, and extended metaphors. Though the latter may be accessible to all, as in the case of Tamil Siddha poetry, few are capable of comprehending its meaning. Even among the initiated, it is subjected to various interpretations as noted out by Urban (2001) who studied the esoteric teachings of the *Kartābhajā* sect in Bengal. In this chapter, I focus on both the form and content of secrecy, and propose to uncover the hidden meaning of the Tirumantiram's esoteric verses with the help of technical jargon used in the text and through the study of symbols in vernacular literature. The technical jargon, abundantly used in the text, should be distinguished from the connotative language that speaks with two voices: the surface meaning and the underlying meaning of what is communicated are not identical in connotative language. For instance, *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* and *naṭu nāṭi* (*suṣumnā*), may be cited as instances of technical language. Yet, in connotative language, they are referred to as left hand (*iṭakkai*), right hand (*valakkai*), and trunk (*tutikkai*)⁸², or two intractable rams that need be made into one as shown in verse 2889. Secondly, religious symbolism and metaphors are interpreted on the basis of their use in Tamil culture. For instance, to understand the reference to a lizard occurring in one of the verses of the Tirumantiram in

⁷⁹ pākaṅ (2926)

⁸⁰ maṛavaṅ (2927)

⁸¹ vāṇipam ceyvār (2915, 2930, 2935)

⁸² iṭakkai valakkai irantaikum māṛṛit
tutikkaiyāl uṇpākkuc cōravum vēṇṭām (TM 801:2)

terms of esoteric knowledge, one is required to appreciate the things (prophetic knowledge, divination) symbolized by lizard in Tamil culture.

III

Connotative Language

Living liberation is attainable by sublimating the bindu (Śiva) and uniting it with *nāda* (Śakti). This section begins with an introduction to the theme of sublimation of semen known as *vintucayam* (*bindujaya*) and illustrates how this subject is treated in connotative language. My examples include mythological narratives taken from the second Tantra, symbols and extended metaphor found in *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai* in the ninth Tantra and the dance of Śiva (*kūttu*).

Sexuality lies at the heart of the religious tradition represented by the Tirumantiram. It is not easy to penetrate the exoteric covering of bhakti or the Śaiva Siddhānta theology woven around the esoteric nucleus of sexuality. For instance, in the Tirumantiram published by the Śaiva Siddhānta Press in 1942 (with the commentary by P. Irāmanāta Piḷḷai, and explanatory notes by A. Citamparaṇār), the dilemma about the interpretation of the word *kāyam* (body) is quite palpable. The commentators prefer to see the heart as the abode of God, rather than the corporeal body,⁸³ and denounce practitioners of kuṇḍalinī as attached to the body.⁸⁴ Śiva is declared to be the supreme

⁸³ Line 2 in verse 1606 *meykkāyam iṭam kaṇṭāl* is interpreted as follows: meyyākiya uṭampin kaṇ civaperumāṇ uḷḷam peruṇ kōvilākak koḷvōṇ ātaliṇ... See pp. 629-630. A Citamparaṇār explains kāyattu uḷ - uḷḷattiṇuḷḷē on page 807. The heart of the guru is said to be the abode the dwelling of Śiva. (See pp. 1067-68).

⁸⁴ The Tirumantiram with the commentary of P. Irāmanāta Piḷḷai, and explanatory notes by A. Citamparaṇār, 122.

deity for all, and people are encouraged to worship him by means of the Tamil Veda, Tēvāram.⁸⁵

The Tirumantiram states that even those who accept the doctrine of immanence of God in the universe, are disinclined to recognize the fact that Śiva is present in the semen.

Sweet-tasting Nandi stands as cosmic seed
[They] do not realise that he is present in the human seed
atuvitti lēniṅṅaṅ kaṅṅikku nanti
ituvitti lēyūḷa vāṅṅai uṅṅarār (TM 1931)

If only they perceive without confusion
the seed within the seed
vittiṅṅil vittai vitara uṅṅarvarēl (TM 1946:3)

The text seeks to establish the unity between the one who pervades the universe and the one who exists in human seed, invoking the Upaniṣadic Great statements. “The Divine presence in semen” is to be seen as the fundamental core principle on which the text is built. This constitutes the primary reason for the text to underscore the preservation of the body. As God protects the seven worlds,⁸⁶ one needs to cherish the body.⁸⁷ In both instances, the Dravidian verb *ōmpu*⁸⁸ is used.

The semen is often denoted by the term *poruḷ* in Tantra three, meaning essence, true object or significance. In verse 725, the author explains that the body became the temple of God following his vision of *poruḷ* in the body,⁸⁹ which is identified as vintu (bindu) in Tantra Seven.⁹⁰ Verses 761 and 762 speak about the wasteful ejaculation of semen.

⁸⁵ *elliṅṅum kālaiṅṅum ēttum iṅṅaivaṅṅai* (TM 280:3) is commented upon as follows: “*iravum pakalum yāvarkkum iṅṅaivaṅṅam civaperumāṅṅaic centtamiḷḷ tirumāṅṅarai vaḷiyākat toḷuṅṅkaḷ*” 123

⁸⁶ *ōmpuṅṅiṅṅāṅ ulaku ēḷaiṅṅum uḷ niṅṅru* (TM 2352:1)

⁸⁷ *uṅṅampuḷē uttamaṅṅ kōyil koṅṅṅāṅ eṅṅru*
uṅṅampiṅṅai yāṅṅiruntu ōmpuṅṅiṅṅ rēṅṅē (TM 725:1-2)

⁸⁸ See entry 1056 Ta, in *A Dravidian Etymological Dictionary*.

⁸⁹ *uṅṅampiṅṅukkulḷē uṅṅuporuḷ kaṅṅṅēṅ* TM 725:2).

⁹⁰ They do not know the amount of Bindu [thus] destroyed
They do not look into the ways of retaining it within

Those do not see the substance discharged.
 [but] they could see that substance discharged.
 If they attentively look into the substance discharged
 They could see that imperishable substance (762)

Those who cannot see speed to ruin
 Those who do not have shame speak rhetorically
 All the substance discharged by those who cannot see
 Go waste without their knowledge (761)

Sexual intercourse in which emission is suspended is hailed as *paryāṅgayoga*.⁹¹
 Mingling of *bindu* (white semen) with *nāda* (red female blood) confers longevity and liberation.⁹² The ejaculation of semen into the vagina of the woman is described as *velli urukip poṇṇaḷi oṭṭuḷ*⁹³ or *poṇṇiṭai velli tāḷṭal*.⁹⁴ (The slivery liquid - *velli*-mingles with female blood-*poṇ*.) By coursing the breath through the *suṣumnā nādi* while engaged in sexual intercourse, one could amplify and prolong his enjoyment,⁹⁵ keep the organ erect and stiff,⁹⁶ and raise the semen upward preventing its outward flow into the womb of the female partner.⁹⁷

The act of retaining the semen in the body is called *amuri tāraṇai* (*dhāraṇā*) in the Tirumatiram. Several commentators interpret *amuri* as urine. However, Varatarājan points out that the placement of the section *amuritāraṇai* right after *paryāṅgayoga* suggests that this section is related to male sexual fluid. Besides, urine has no role to play in yoga as expounded by the text. The semen assumes several names in the text such as *kuṭinīr* (845:1), *civanīr* (846:1), *civattiṅ nīr* (847:1), *uvāri* (848:1), *vīra maruntu*

They who suffer and become fatigued in the perishing body
 Do not know the cause of the decay and give it up (1936)

⁹¹ See Tantra III and VII. Even though two bodies mingle, the union without emission enabled by yoga is indeed Śivaboga. (TM 1960:1-2). Those who adopt the path of yoga will not waste their seed in sexual intercourse out of lust for women.(TM 1961:1-2)

⁹² TM 1929

⁹³ TM 834:3

⁹⁴ TM 836:3

⁹⁵ ūcit tuḷaiyuṛat tūṅkātu pōkamē (TM 825:4)

⁹⁶ taṅṭu orukālum taḷarātu aṅkamē (TM 827:4)

⁹⁷ cōrvillai vellikkē (TM 833:3) ; turuttiyil velliyum cērātu eḷumē (TM 837:4)

(850:1), *viṅṅōr maruntu* (850:1), *nāri maruntu* (850:2), *āti maruntu* (850:3), *cōti maruntu* (850:4), *kaṅkai* (712, 809, 832, 1774). One who practices the suspension of emission is endowed with immortality, youthfulness and golden complexion.⁹⁸

I. Mythology:

Śaiva mythology is discussed in Tantra under eight titles,⁹⁹ and sporadic references to it are found throughout the text. In the pages following, I discuss three myths: The first myth “Destruction of three cities” is introduced to show the distinction between Tēvāram and the Tirumantiram in handling Śaiva myths. This is followed by a discussion of two myths to illustrate how yogic ideology is conveyed through them.

Sanskrit mythology does not constitute a very prominent literary feature of classical *Caṅkam* works as it does in devotional genre “Tēvāram.” In general, myths are used in two ways in *Caṅkam* anthologies. Martin points out that deities and their deeds are transformed into similes and applied to earthly heroes in verses eulogizing them; or else, they are incorporated into the descriptions of places of the Tamil country.¹⁰⁰ Cosmic imagery is generally used when invoking blessings on the king in the *Caṅkam* works.¹⁰¹ However, Auvaiyār compares her patron-king Atiyamāṅ to Śiva who is

⁹⁸ TM 846-849

⁹⁹ 1. The myth of Agastya (Akattiyam) 2. Eight heroic deeds of Śiva (*Pativaliyil vīraṭṭam*) 3. The linga purāṇa (*Iliṅka purāṇam*) 4. Sacrifice performed by Dakṣa (*takkaṅ vēlvi*) 5. Destruction (pīraḷayam) 6. Offering a disc to Viṣṇu (cakkaraṅ pēru) 7. The bone and skull (elumpum kapālamum) 8. The lingodbhava myth (āti muṭi tēṭal).

¹⁰⁰ *The Function of mythic figures in Tirumantiram*, 49-58.

¹⁰¹ O Lord! May you live long in this world

As the cool-beamed moon and
As the sun of burning bright rays
taṅkatir matiyam pōlavum teruṅuṭar
oṅkatir nāyiru pōlavum

maṅṅuka peruma nilamicaiyāṅē (Puṛa.6:27-29)

depicted as black-throated and as a wearer of a crescent moon on his head.¹⁰² In verse 56 in *Puranānūru*, a Pāṇṭiya king is compared to Sanskrit deities as well as to the Tamil god Murukan.

Mythic material is also incorporated in the delineations of Tamil places. For instance, in *Perumpāṇārruppatai*, the description of the city of *Kāñci* alludes to the cosmic myth of creation (402-405):

.....The city shines
like fair seed vessels of the lotus bloom
That many –petalled springs from navel fine
Of dark-skinned Vishnu tall from whom was born
The four-faced god.¹⁰³

The *puram* tradition of the classical *Caṅkam* literature sets precedence to Tēvāram in the phenomenon of eulogy. Śiva is treated as a Tamil king or chieftain, and his mythical acts are interpreted as acts of heroism and gallantry in Tēvāram. A local chieftain is compared to the cosmic divine in the *Caṅkam* literature whereas the cosmic deity assumes local identity in Tēvāram.¹⁰⁴ In the Tirumantiram, verses dealing with Śaiva mythology lend themselves to more than one reading.¹⁰⁵ At the exoteric level the theme is related to bhakti and at a deeper level they correspond to yogic ideology. This brings to mind an exoteric/esoteric type of literature Paul Bagley discusses in his essay titled *On the Practice of Esotericism*, which he interprets as a forgotten esotericism. In

¹⁰² May you live long
as black throated Śiva
who wears the milky white
crescent moon on his head.
pālpurai piṛainutal polinta ceṇṇi
nīlamaṇi miṭṭaru oruvaṇ pōla
maṇṇuka peruma nīyē (Puṛa. 91:5-7)

¹⁰³ See Pattuppāṭṭu, *ten Tamil idylls : Tamil verses with English translation*. trans. J.V. Chelliah.

¹⁰⁴ Mythological material which is a very prominent feature in Campantar's Tēvāram is presented in epithet form.

¹⁰⁵ Karu. Āṅgumukattamiḷaṅ, *Tirumūlar kālattin kural*, 61-75.

this type of esotericism, the exoteric and the esoteric discourses are not governed by the principle of segregation, but rather the esoteric is contained within the exoteric. This type of literature simultaneously addresses both the initiated and the uninitiated.

The purpose of exoteric/esoteric literature exceeds the aims of other types of esotericism. It is designed to present two dissimilar teachings at the same time: one is propounded for the majority of readers, while the other is detected only by those who exercise sufficient effort to discern it. Consequently, by speaking both to the vulgar and the wise in the same writing, exoteric/esoteric literature serves the purpose of communicating certain views in a covert manner to one audience without plainly divulging them to others.¹⁰⁶

The Tirumantiram adopts this literary technique with a view to accommodating two differing ideologies of bhakti and yoga in the presentation of Śaiva mythology.

Destruction of three cities:

The following Tēvāram claims Śiva, the destroyer of three cities or fortresses (*puram*), to be a resident of Vīlimalai in the Tamil country.

When the gods cried, “Save us from peril,
O Lord seated under the ancient banyan tree!”
The celestial beings united to become his chariot;
Ayaṅ, the creator, yoked the Vedas as horses;
The world-mountain became the bow,
its string was the great snake.
Māl was the arrow, with wind for its feathers.
With swiftly kindled fire he shot at the citadels.
Vīlimalai is his abode. (1:11:6)¹⁰⁷

Whereas Tēvāram is purely concerned with the depiction of Śiva’s mythic acts, and with indigenizing the Sanskrit deity, the Tirumantiram is interested in exploring the underlying meaning of myths and in exploiting them as a vehicle for advocating the fundamental principles professed by the text. A clue as to how myths should be interpreted is provided in verse 343.

“The primal lord who wears the Ganges in his red hair

¹⁰⁶ “On the practice of esotericism”, *Journal of the History Ideas* 53, No.2 (1992), 236.

¹⁰⁷ Translated by Indira Peterson. See *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints*, 128.

Destroyed three cities” simpletons say
 The three cities are triple impurities
 Who would know that [the same lord] resides in the body

appaṇi ceṅcaṭai āti purāṭaṇaṅ
 muppuraṅ cerraṇaṅ eṅparkaḷ mūṭarkaḷ
 muppura māvatu mummala kāriyam
 appuram eytamai yāraṅi vārē (TM 343)

This refers to the myth in which three demons, oppressors of the whole universe, had three flying fortresses which were burnt to ashes by Śiva. According to the text, the three fortresses made up of gold, silver and copper are symbolic of the triple impurities, *āṇava*, *karma* and *māyā*, which are removed by the guru, Siva-incarnate.¹⁰⁸

My interpretation of the last line of the verse *appuram eytamai yāraṅi vārē* differs from that of Natarajan and of Varatarājan. Both of them take the term *puram* as alluding to the three fortresses mentioned in preceding lines of the verse. For instance, Natarajan translates the last line thus: “It is them He burnt. Who knows this truth thereof.” Varatarājan’s commentary does not materially differ from that of Natarajan: “Who is capable of knowing the destruction of the fortresses by him.” However, there is a pun on the word *puram*. It has the meaning of human body in addition to that of city, temple, upper storey and house. The pun gives added meaning to the last line suggesting that the underlying theme is concerned not only with the destruction of impurities, but also with the immanence of the sacred. The word *eytamai* stands abbreviated for *eytiyamai* (having attained). Thus, it is implied that all three- the mythic Śiva who destroys the three citadels, the tantric guru who burns the impurities of the disciple and the Tamil notion of the sacred that lies within the human body -are of single identity.

¹⁰⁸ Śiva takes the human form of guru. See verse TM 113.

The guru shatters all impurities: kaḷimparuṭ tāṅeṅkaḷ kaṅṅutal nanti (TM 114:1) patiyaṅu kirpacu pācanil lāvē (TM 115:4) mummala māṅṅit tayā eṅṅum tōyamātāy eḷum cūriyaṅāmē (TM 116:3-4) cūriyaṅ cānniti yiṅcuṭu māṅṅupōl āriyaṅ tōṅṅamun arra malaṅkaḷē (TM 117:3-4).

Exoteric-esoteric literature:

Myth of Agastya: It was noted that the text invites readers to make an effort to uncover the meaning buried in myths. I further illustrate how the text conveys two different teachings in a single unit of poetry. The following verse briefly recounts a myth of Agastya who, at the behest of Śiva, journeys to the south to redress the balance of the earth, disturbed by the assemblage of celestials and humans on the mount Kailāsa on the occasion of the wedding of Śiva and Pārvatī.

naṭuvunillātu ivvulakam carintu
ketukinṛatu emperumāṅ eṅṅa īcaṅ
naṭu uḷa aṅki akattiya nī pōy
muṭukiya vaiyattu muṅ iru eṅṅāṅē (337)

“ Our Lord! This world which has lost its balance
and is tipped towards the side
is about to perish” said [celestial beings]
The Lord says, “Agastya who tends the [sacrificial] fire in the centre
Go and rectify [the imbalance of] the earth
hastened [towards its destruction].¹⁰⁹

The double reading of the verse is possible if the special meaning attached to the term *naṭuvu* is taken into account. In general, *naṭuvu* or *naṭu* means middle or centre. However, in the text they refer to the *suṣumnā nādi* (*naṭunāṭi*¹¹⁰ and *naṭuvu*¹¹¹) that runs up the spinal column from the lower back to the cranial vault. *Naṭuvuniṅṛār* are those who awaken the *kuṇḍalinī* and bring it up through the *suṣumnā nādito* the *sahasrāra* by means of the force of *prāṇa*. Only they are endowed with knowledge, escape hell and become immortal.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ naṭuvunil lātiv ulakam carintu
ketukinṛa temperu māṅēṅṅa īcaṅ
naṭuvuḷa aṅki akattiya nīpōy
muṭukiya vaiyattu muṅṅireṅ ṅāṅē (TM 337)

¹¹⁰ TM 669:3; TM 857:2

¹¹¹ naṭuvu nillāmal iṭamvalam oṭi aṭukinṛa vāyuvai (795:1-2)

¹¹² naṭuvu niṅṅārkkāṅṅi ṅāṅamum illai
naṭuvu niṅṅārkkku narakamum illai

The myth makes a connection between Kuṇḍalinī yoga and Agastya (*naṭu uḷa aṅki akattiya*), who is celebrated as the first preceptor of Tamil Siddha tradition.¹¹³ The verse may be interpreted as follows. A complaint is made to Śiva that people on earth are doomed as they are ignorant of the means for transcending dualities. (*naṭuvunillātu ivvulakam carintu keṭukiṅratu*). Śiva commands Agastya to save the world by imparting the knowledge of Kuṇḍalinī yoga.

Destruction of Kāma: The following verse narrates the myth of destruction of Kāma by Śiva. Once celestial beings were oppressed by a demon called Tāraka whose end could only be brought about by the progeny of Śiva. At the request of the celestials the god of love attempted to arouse Śiva, who was deep in penance; however, enraged Śiva frustrated his attempts by burning him to ashes. This valiant act is said to have taken place at Koṟukkai in the Tamil country.

He sat in great tapas- like yoga at Koṟukkai
 Foiling the attempt by the Lord of love [to tempt him]
 Dismissing the path of generative organ [abstaining from sexual act]
 With the mind firmly set on [meditation]¹¹⁴

According to the commentator Varatarājan, the underlying theme of this verse is *paryāṅgayoga* (sexual intercourse without emission) which is dealt with in Tantra Three. His interpretation rests on the double reading of the word Koṟukkai. Koṟukkai can be split into two words as *koṟu* and *kai*. *Koṟu* means the wicker-muzzle placed on the mouth of a calf to prevent it from drinking milk when it stays close to its mother. *Kai* denotes

naṭuvu niṅṅār nalla tēvarumāvar (TM 320:1-3)

¹¹³ K. Sundararajan and Bithika Mukerji (ed.) *Hindu Spirituality: Postclassical and Modern* (New York : Crossroad Publishing, 1997), 235.

¹¹⁴ irunta maṅatta icaiya irutti
 porunti iliṅka vaḷiyatu pōkkit
 tiruntiya kāmaṅ ceyalaḷit taṅkaṅ
 aruntava yōkaṅ koṟukkai amarntatē (TM 346)

hand. Varatarājan takes it to mean the *suṣuṃṇā nādi*. However, the hand is a euphemistic symbol of phallus.¹¹⁵ Hence, *koṛukkai* means “muzzled penis”, namely, the sexual organ in which the downward flow of semen is suspended. The expression *aruntavayōkam* denotes *pariyāṅka yōkam*, which is difficult to perform. The verse may be thus interpreted: contemplating Śiva in the mind, not letting the semen escape through the generative organ, withdrawing from the act of *kāma*, that is, ejaculation, to engage in sexual intercourse, is known as *koṛukkai*.

II. *Cūṇiya campāṣaṇai (śūnya saṃbhāṣaṇam)*

The study of *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai* in Tantra nine is fraught with a number of difficulties. Firstly, little consensus is found on the esoteric meaning of the poetry. More than one interpretation is available for several obscure stanzas in modern commentaries. The issue of deciphering symbols becomes exacerbated owing to the multiplicity of symbols present in a single verse. It is not possible to interpret the intricate interplay of all the symbols involved. Knowledge of the fundamental principles of yoga and Tantra is certainly helpful in determining the main theme of the stanza. However, that alone does not suffice to comprehend the interconnectivity of symbols. Unless this knotty issue is tackled, the poetry appears absurd and unintelligible.

In certain ways, the symbolic poetry of *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai* resembles the classical *Caṅkam* literature. Features common to both texts include the technique of suggestion,¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Mahadev Chakravarti, *The Concept of Rudra-Siva through the Age* (Delhi : Motilal Banarsidass, 1986), 123.

¹¹⁶ The subject-matter of the *Caṅkam* literature falls into two divisions: *akam* (poetry dealing with love) and *puram* (poetry dealing with heroism, magnanimity etc.). The universe is perceived in terms of three categories: *mutal*, *karu*, *uri*. *Mutal* denotes space and time. The space is divided into five landscapes and time is classified into major seasons of the year and minor divisions of day and night. *Karu* represents all things native to respective landscapes. Finally, *uri* stands for psychological states connected to the landscapes. Descriptions of nature in the *Caṅkam* poetry are related to events taking place in the lives of the hero and heroine. They are introduced to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the poetry. Two techniques,

sexual symbolism and a complex interplay of symbols. Hart, thus, comments on the symbolism of classical *Caṅkam* works:

Every image in the poem has an often complex symbolic function, and the interplay of symbols causes the poems to create a resonant effect in the reader's mind, with each symbol reinforcing the others to create an almost inexhaustible variety. That is why the deeper one hoes into these poems, the more one can find in them. It is curious that this technique fits the *dhvani* theory of Sanskrit poetry propounded best by Ānandhavardhana of Dhvanyāloka, far better than most of the Sanskrit poems that the *alāṅkārikas* sought to analyze by it.¹¹⁷

I give below a poem from Kuṛuntokai (38) to illustrate how a technique of suggestion is handled in the *Caṅkam* literature.

He was from the mountain
Where a monkey cub
Sporting in the sun
Rolls an egg
laid by a wild peacock on a boulder
His friendship was always pleasant.
I am separated from him
With tears incessantly filling my eyes painted black
He was strong –willed to leave me
Without thinking of separation from me.

The above is a poetic utterance made by the heroine who is distressed at the hero's procrastination to wed her and formally accept her as his wife even after her furtive rendezvous with him has come to public knowledge. The hero took advantage of the friendship and intimacy offered by the heroine and then abandoned her without considering the sad plight she is placed in. She describes the hill country of the hero as a place where a monkey cub playing in the sun, rolls the egg laid by a wild peacock on a boulder. Through a portrayal of the ignorant and unkind act of the monkey, she suggests

iraicci and *uḷḷurai uvamam* (ambient allegory) are used in the *Caṅkam* poetry. *Iraicci* is a "suggestion or an implication through the description of a natural phenomenon or event." Another literary technique present in the *Caṅkam* literature is *uḷḷurai uvamam* (ambient allegory or implied metaphor) in which objects of nature and their actions stand for the hero, the heroine, and other humans and their actions. It is "constructed with the *karupporuḷ* of the respective regions, except the god of the region." See Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan*, 102 and 135; Abraham Mariaselvam, *The Song of Songs and ancient Tamil love poems*, 135.

¹¹⁷ *The Poems of Ancient Tamil : Their Milieu and Their Sanskrit Counterparts*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 169

the wanton and ruthless behaviour of the hero. Like the monkey cub, naturally inclined to play in the sun, does not take into account in its sport the brittleness of the egg and the pain of the peacock in the event of its breakage, the hero, who is just a pleasure-seeker full of youth and vigour, knowingly ignores the damage caused to the heroine's reputation in his flirting with her and the mental agony she suffers as a result. Hence, she utters in despair if any one could advise such a person to marry her without delay. As the *Caṅkam* poetry exploits events happening in nature to indicate the psychological states of the speaker, the physical world serves as an aid to illustrating fundamental tenets of the Tirumantiram, which will be discussed shortly.

Besides, love poems are replete with sexual imagery. For instance, the heroine who speaks of her love for the hero describes him as “from a hillside where black stalks support Kuṛiñci flowers from which rich honey is made.”¹¹⁸ The act of bees gathering honey from flowers is sexual imagery which illustrates the bedrock of her relationship with him. In another verse from *Aiṅkuruṅṅuru* (454), the heroine who is separated from her husband awaits him at the onset of the rainy season. Her sexual longing is conveyed by the imageries of nature presented sequentially in the poem: the intertwining of two creepers, the desire of the jasmine for the rain and the jasmine nurturing its straight buds like moonlight. The poem ends with the reference to her yearning for his chariot. The chariot appears as a sexual symbol in the *Caṅkam* poetry.¹¹⁹ In Verse 186 in *Aiṅkuruṅṅuru*, the image of the chariot splashing water to water lilies symbolises love-making.¹²⁰ It is notable that a male yogi engaged in paryaṅga yoga in the Tirumantiram is

¹¹⁸ G. L. Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*, 165.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 164-65.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

referred to as an excellent charioteer.¹²¹ In Kuruntokai (25) a solitary heron eyeing the āral-fish, its victim, represents the lover who seduced the heroine in a lonely place. With this brief introduction on Tamil symbolism in *Caṅkam* literature, we now turn our attention to *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai*.

The expression *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai* is not easy to define. The term *cūṇiyam* does not occur at all in the text save for the titles of two sub-sections, “muccūṇiyat tontattaci” in the eighth, and “cūṇiya campāṣaṇai” in the ninth Tantra. The Upaniṣadic *mahāvākya tat-tvam-asi* (Thou art that) is represented as *tontattaci* (tvam-tat-asi) in Tamil. (The three terms in *tat-tvam-asi* are known as *tarpatam- tompatam –acipatam* respectively in Tamil). The expression *muccūṇiyat tontattaci* is interpreted as the highest state in which the differences between the three terms (*tat-tvam-asi*) are extinct or no longer valid. Hence, it may be said that *cūṇiyam* denotes the transcendental state of a *jīvanmukta*. *Cūṇiya campāṣaṇai* consisting of 70 verses (2866-2935) is not constructed in the form of a dialogue despite the suggestion made by the term *campāṣaṇai*. Symbolism found in *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai* lends support to my thesis that living liberation constitutes the principal concern of the text. I examine three symbols: milk, snake and fruit.

Milk: Milk stands for semen in *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai*.¹²² Milk is mentioned in connection with *pārppāṇ* or *paṇavaṇ*, both the terms referring to a priest belonging to the Adīśaiva lineage performing *pūjā* (*parārthapūjā*) in temples.¹²³ Tēvāram speaks of Śiva being bathed with milk, curd, ghee or *pañcagavya*.¹²⁴ However, the reference to *abhiṣeka*

¹²¹ TM 826:3

¹²² *kāl koṇṭu kaṭṭik kaṇal koṇṭu mēlēṇṇip*
pāl koṇṭu cōmaṇ mukam paṇṇi uṇṇātōr (TM 246:1-2)

¹²³ *pērkoṇṭa pārppāṇ pirāṇ taṇṇai arceittāl* (TM 519:1)

¹²⁴ *māntartam pālṇaru neymakiṇtāṭi* (1:44:5) *ampāl neyyōṭu āṭal amarntāṇ* (1:99:1) *tēṇ ney pāl tayirteṅkiṭa nīr karumpiṇ teḷi āṇaṅcāṭum muṭiyāṇum* (2:6:5) *tēṇulā malar koṇṭu meyttēvarkaḷ cittarkaḷ pāl ney aṅcuṭaṇ*

is absent in the Tirumantiram, though milk, curd and ghee count among substances that may be used for the formation of a linga.¹²⁵ Milk and milk products do not find a place in *cakrapūjā* either. Only flowers,¹²⁶ unguents,¹²⁷ and water¹²⁸ are recommended for *arcanā*. In Tantra seven, the offerings of songs of praise (*pāṭṭavi*) to Nandi is favoured over milk-sacrifice (*pālavi*).¹²⁹

Milk has a sexual connotation as early as in the *Caṅkam* literature. *Akanāṅūru*, one of the anthologies of love poetry, describes two activities of a new bride at a nuptial house, which have overt sexual overtones. The freshly wedded wife boils milk on a many-sided hearth¹³⁰ and pestles rice obtained from the paddy field.¹³¹ The act of boiling milk is homologized to the act of raising semen by means of *kuṇḍalinī* fire in the Tirumantiram.

Having blocked [the downward flow of semen] with breath
raised it by means of kuṇḍalinī fire
Those who do not imbibe in the moon sphere
the milk (semen) [that turned into ambrosia]

kāl koṇṭu kaṭṭik kaṇal koṇṭu mēlēṛrip
pāl koṇṭu cōmaṅ mukam paṛri uṇṇātōr (TM 246:1-2)

It is noteworthy that the same idea recurs in *Meyññāṅappulampal* composed by one of the late Siddhas called Pattirakiriyār.¹³²

When will the time be I will satisfy my hunger drinking the milk

āṭṭamuṅ āṭiya pālvaṅṅ (2:9:5) pāloṭu neyyāṭiya pālvaṅṅā (2:23:3) āṭiṅāyṅaṅu neyyoṭu pāltayir antaṅar
piriyāta ciṅṅampalam (3:1:1); pālneyyāṭum paramaṅṅā (3:11:3);

¹²⁵ TM 1720.

¹²⁶ TM 1003

¹²⁷ TM 1004

¹²⁸ TM 1828

¹²⁹ TM 1824

¹³⁰ palkōṭṭu aṭuppil pāl ulai irī (Aka. 141:15)

¹³¹ pācaval iṭikkum iruṅkāḷ ulakkai (Aka. 141:18)

¹³² The late medieval centuries saw a resurgence of esoteric tantric elements in the Tamil country and modern editions carry esoteric poetry allegedly composed by Siddhas during this period. Unlike the Tirumantiram, the Tamil Siddha poetry wins no religious recognition. Hence, the points of differences in scope and emphasis between the Tirumantiram and Tamil Siddha poetry that was composed during this period, taken as a whole, are worthy of scrutiny.

in the moon-terrace,
boiled in the fire ignited in the *mūlādhāra* (95)

mūla neruppai viṭṭu mūṭṭi nilā maṅṭapattil
pālai irakki uṅṭu paci olivatu ekkālam? (95)

The following two verses in *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai* stress the importance of producing semen in abundance. Though this might sound contrary to a popular image of a yogi, he is entailed to produce semen in large quantity, preserve it, and then transform it into ambrosia. Gopi Krishna states,

“Our text refers to unusual ferment in the genial parts and to the production of an increased abundance of semen. This runs contrary to the usual notions that yoga is an acetic discipline through which the sexual impulse is depotentiated. Just not! And we can understand why chastity and continence and other sexual mystiques (including the orgy and black mass) belong archetypally to the disciple of the ‘holy man’. It is not that he has less sexuality than others, but more. ...The ‘holy man’ as ‘greater personality’ implies the endowment of greater sexuality.¹³³

Let us look at the first verse involving the Śaiva priest and cows in *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai*.¹³⁴

Stray cattle are twenty four in number
Young cows are seven and five
Young cows give pots of milk
Yet, the paṇavaṇ has only stray cows. (2874)

The Brahman who is required to gather *pañcagavya* (five substances derived from cows) for the conduct of *pūjā* in temple, is mistakenly going after barren stray cattle, ignoring young cows that are liberal in providing milk. His folly would thus prevent him from performing his function in due manner. Similarly, a yogic practitioner who needs to

¹³³ *Kuṇḍalinī*, 98-99.

¹³⁴ Verses which contain extended metaphor may be said to be making use of the figure of speech known as *pīritu molītal aṇi* or *oṭṭaṇi* mentioned in later Tamil treatises on rhetorics. In *oṭṭaṇi* the intended idea is hidden; but it is sought to be conveyed by a depiction of another idea similar to that. This may be illustrated through a couplet from the post-caṅkam Tamil didactic work *Tirukkuraḷ*: “The axletree of a cart which though loaded with only peacock’s feathers will break, if it be greatly overloaded (475)”. The intended meaning of the couplet is that even though a king is strong and valiant, he will be vanquished by his feeble foes if they rise in unison against him.

produce semen in abundance with a view to realising liberation, seeks worldly desires represented by the twenty-four *ātmatattvas*, that would drain his vital energy, while being oblivious to seven *vidyātattvas* and five *Śivatattvas*, both of which are conducive to the achievement of his goal.

The second verse reads thus:

Five milch cows are in a temple –priest’s house
 They roam inebriated with none to herd them
 If there is one to herd them and if their wild behaviour is controlled
 The five cows of the temple-priest would give milk in abundance (TM 2883)

This verse suggests that the performance of *abhiṣeka* with milk for Śiva is feasible only if the intractable cows are domesticated. Indirectly, the control of senses is emphasized for a yogic practitioner as a prelude to the highest goal of converting the semen into ambrosia in the sphere of the moon.

Snake: The snake occurring in *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai* is identified with *kuṇḍalinī* by Natarajan and Varatarājan. In Tantric literature, *kuṇḍalinī*, having the form of a snake, is described as *kuṭilāṅgī* (crooked bodied), *bhujaṅgī* (a female serpent).¹³⁵ David White speaks of two *kuṇḍalinīs*: the *kuṇḍalinī* in slumber and the *kuṇḍalinī* in awakening.

When she slumbers, “as if stupefied by a poison,” in a man’s abdomen, the *kuṇḍalinī* is identified with human mortality, with death laden existence, and the bondage of the ignorant, which is figured by the incessant drain of semen that she, as woman, effects in man. In this role, the sleeping *kuṇḍalinī* is identified with the fire of time (*kālāgni*) because the mortal who allows her to drain away his semen is doomed to be consumed by the fire of time and die.....It is when the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened that she becomes capable of giving pleasure-and here too, it is appropriate that she be figured as a female serpent..... The yogin in rousing her from her slumber finds in the rising *kuṇḍalinī* a vehicle by which to raise himself from mundane existence to the god-consciousness that renders him a second Siva.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ The Haṭhayogapradīpikā describes the *kuṇḍalinī* thus:

tena kuṇḍalinī suptā santaptā samprabudhyate
 daṇḍāhatā bhujaṅgīva niśvasya rjūtām vrajet (3:68)

¹³⁶ *The Alchemical Body*, 219-220.

The term *kuṇḍalinī* is conspicuously absent in the *Tirumantiram*. Instead, we find in Tantra three a term *kuṇḍalī*, that emits red fire. The *kuṇḍalī* is identified with the *mūlādhāra* region which is referred to as *ceñcuṭar maṇṭalam*, a red, luminous sphere (2719:1).

Two finger length above the anus
 Tow finger length below the genitals
 Four finger length below the navel
 Arises the red fire in the kuṇḍalī (580)

Fire is a metonym for *kuṇḍalinī* in the text.¹³⁷ The sublimation of semen¹³⁸ would not materialise unless the fire of *kuṇḍalinī* is ignited.¹³⁹ The seed is scorched or burnt in the *kuṇḍalinī* fire¹⁴⁰ and then raised through the *suṣuṃṇā nādi* to the region of the moon where it transforms into ambrosia.¹⁴¹ One who preserves the semen in the aforesaid manner is called *vintu aḷiyāta aṇṇal*, the exalted being whose semen is not destroyed (TM 1950), Śivayogi (TM 1937, TM 1949), and the state he attains is described as Śivayoga (TM 1937, TM 1949), Śivagati(1968), Śivabhoga (TM 1960-1961) and Śivoham (TM 1969).

However, it is questionable whether the snake can be identified as *kuṇḍalinī* in *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai*, in which it occurs in association with other symbols. I suggest that in the following verse the serpent symbolizes semen.

There is a neem tree that is born of the bamboo shoot.
 On the palmyrah tree that leans against the neem

¹³⁷ *Kuṇḍalinī* is denoted by the terms *kaṇal*, *aḷal*, *cuṭar* and *aṇal* meaning fire: *vintuvum nātamum mēlak kaṇal mūḷa* (TM 1963:1) ; *vanta aṇal* (TM 1963:2) ; *mūlattu aḷalai eḷa mūṭṭi* (TM 1962:3); *ceñcuṭar maṇṭalam* (TM 2719:1); *varra aṇalaik koḷuvi maṇṭṭēṇṇi* (TM 1949:1)

¹³⁸ Several expressions are used to indicate this act: *maṇṭṭēṇṇi* (TM 1947) indicates the act of sublimation of semen. *vintu varral* (1946); *vintu māḷutal* (1956, 1963, 1965, 1952); *vintu aṭaṅkūtal* (1969) *vittitūtal* (1946), *vintu cerraḷ* (1954) *aṭakkattil ākkam* (1957); *vintu cayam* 1957, 1967)

¹³⁹ *varra aṇalaik koḷuvi maṇṭṭēṇṇi* (TM 1949:1); *mūlattu aḷalai eḷa mūṭṭi* (TM 1962:3); *vintuvum nātamum mēvak kaṇal mūḷa* (1963:1); *aḷal mūṭṭi* (TM 1937:1)

¹⁴⁰ *kaṇaḷiṭaikkattī kalantu erittu* (1951:3) *mūlattu nantiya aṅkiyiṇālē nayantu erittu*(1958:1-2) *vaṇṭṭiṇṇavāṇum* (1970:1)

¹⁴¹ *nāṇṇicai oṭā naṭu nāṭi nātattō tāṇṇi amutam arunta vintāmē* (TM 1962:3)

Is found a serpent. There is none who could chase and eat it.
Hence, the neem lies withering away.¹⁴²

The first line refers to a neem tree that arises from a bamboo shoot. The neem tree known as *vēmpu* or *vēppa maram* in Tamil is treated as a sacred tree with medicinal value in the *Caṅkam* literature. The wife who tends her mortally wounded husband places neem leaves in the house, which have healing properties.¹⁴³ *Pāṇṭiyan Neṭuñceliyan* is described preparing for the war by taking a bath in the pond and wearing a garland of gentle leaves of the neem tree to the sound of drums.¹⁴⁴ *Akanāṇṭru* describes how the deity immanent in the neem tree is worshipped:

Ferocious inhabitants of the desert tract...
For the sake of the deity living in the huge trunked neem tree
Killed a fat cow and sprinkled the blood [worshipped the deity offering the blood]
And consumed the flesh after scorching it¹⁴⁵

A striking similarity is seen between the neem tree and the human body in that both are deemed to be the abode of the sacred.

To appreciate the connection between the bamboo (*mūṅkil*)¹⁴⁶ and the neem, one needs to look at the primitive method of extracting oil from neem seeds. For the extraction of the oil, the seeds were fed into the mortar, the inner surface of which was

¹⁴² mūṅkiṅ muḷaiyil eḷuntatōr vēmpuṅṭu
vēmpinīr cārntu kiṭanta paṇaiyilōr
pāmpuṅṭu pāmpait turattit tiṅpāriṅṅi
vēmpu kiṭantu vēṭikkiṅṅa vārē (TM 2887)

¹⁴³ vēmpu maṇaiccerī I (PN 281:1)

¹⁴⁴ mūtūr vāyil paṇikkayam maṅṅi
maṅṅa vēmpin oṅkuḷai milaintu
teṅkiṅṅai muṅṅark kaḷiṅṅi iyali
vempōrcceliyaṅum vantaṅaṅ (Pura. 79:1-4)

¹⁴⁵ kaṭuṅkaṅ maravar ..
teyvañ cērnta parārai vēmpir
koḷuppā eṅintu kuruti tū uyp
pulavup puḷukkuṅṭa (Aka. 309: 4-6)

¹⁴⁶ Tender bamboo shoots are mentioned murrā mūṅkil muḷai (AN 85:8). mūṅkil iḷa muḷai (Aka. 241:6) ; muḷai vaḷar mutala mūṅkil (Aka. 331:1).

made with bamboo.¹⁴⁷ The act of grinding neem seeds in the bamboo mortar represents the sexual act, the result of which is a strong neem tree.

The second line reads, “Reclined against the neem is a palmyra-palm (*paṇai*).” This might evoke an image of a mortar carved out of neem tree and a pestle made of Palmyra, both are obvious sexual symbols. In the *Caṅkam* literature, pounding rice (*pācaval* also denotes productive green land) with a pestle symbolizes sexual intercourse.¹⁴⁸ The marked characteristic of the pestle (*kāl*, meaning a piece of wood) is its being black. *Kāl* is prefixed with the adjectives *irumai* and *karumai* denoting blackness.¹⁴⁹ The Palmyrah which “has an erect, straight, unbranched almost black trunk”¹⁵⁰ with white sprouts¹⁵¹ is a phallic symbol. In the *Caṅkam* literature, the palmyrah palm is linked to other phallic symbols such as elephant’s trunk,¹⁵² birds,¹⁵³ ear¹⁵⁴ and fish.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁷ H.S. Puri, *Neem : the divine tree : Azadirachta indica* (Amsterdam, Netherland : Harwood Academic Publishers, 1999),67.

¹⁴⁸ *pācaval iṭṭitta karuṅkāḷ ulakkai* (Kuṟu. 238:1)

pācaval iṭṭikkum iruṅkāḷ ulakkai (Aka. 141:18)

¹⁴⁹ *irumai kāḷ = iruṅkāḷ; karumai kāḷ = karuṅkāḷ.*

¹⁵⁰ K. Theivendirarajah, *Palmyrah Palm* (Scarborough, Ontario, 2008), 1.

¹⁵¹ *irumpaṇai veṇ tōṭu malaintōṇ* (Puṟa. 45:1)

¹⁵² *paṇait tiral aṇṇa paru ēr eṟuḷ taṭakkai... yāṇai* (Aka. 148: 1,3)

vēṇil veliṟruppaṇai pōlak kaiyeṭuttu

yāṇaip perunirai vāṇam payirum (Aka. 333:11-12)

the upward trunk of the elephant is compared to the palmyrah palm that is shorn of leaves in the dry hot wind.

paṇaimaruḷ taṭakkaiyoṭu...nōṇ pakaṭu (Puṟa. 161: 16-17)

irumpaṇai aṇṇa peruṅkai yāṇai (Puṟa. 340:5)

paṇai veḷiṟu aruntu paiṅkaṇ yāṇai (Aka. 187:18)

The tender-eyed elephant eating the young shoots of the palmyrah palm .

¹⁵³ *iṇamīṇ aruntu nāraiyoṭu paṇai micai aṇṟil cēkkum muṇṟi* (Aka. 360:16-17) l –the Palmyra palm standing in the compound of the house on which dwell white cranes and aṇṟil.

maitarum paṇaimicaip paitala uyavum aṇṟilum (Naṟ.335:7-8)

¹⁵⁴ *paṇaip pōḷ ceṟi ik* wearing an ear stud made up of Palmyrah palm leaf (Puṟa. 22:21)

¹⁵⁵ *paṇai nukumpu aṇṇa ciṇaimutir varāloṭu*

Mature (white) eggs of a greyish green fish resembling unexpanded (white) tender leaf/flower buds of (black) Palmyrah (Puṟa.249:5).

The next imagery presented in the verse is the palmyrah palm encircled by a snake. Both of them are symbols of immortality. Snake and tree together are male and female respectively and also symbolize the earth's fertility.¹⁵⁶ The snake that appears to be an androgynous fertility symbol in the classical *Caṅkam* literature, is associated with mountains, water, rain and thunderstorm.¹⁵⁷ The *Caṅkam* literature contains numerous snake imageries connected to male sexuality. In the following instances the snake is linked to water, a prominent symbol of semen: Water gliding like a snake (Aka. 324:13,339:3); water flowing from the mountains into the caves in which snakes lie (Aka. 362:1); the gems spewed by the snakes being carried away by the river that enters the dark caverns of the mountain (Aka. 192:11). The snakes setting out to look for food at night is a metaphor for sexual union (Aka. 258:10; Aka. 285:1).¹⁵⁸ The term *pōkam* (Skt. *bhoga*) occurring in verse TM 825 meaning sexual enjoyment is a synonym for snake. Furthermore, the snake is identified with Soul and breath in the poetry of Pāmpāṭṭic Cittar of the late medieval period.¹⁵⁹ Eliade states, "The *bindu* is dependent upon the breath and is in some sort homologized to it; for the departure of the one as of the other is equivalent to death."¹⁶⁰ In the Tirumantiram too, the semen is homologized to breath *maṅṅiṭai māykkum pirāṇaṇām vintuvum* (TM 1951:2). This may be translated as follows: The bindu that is breath itself causes death (if not properly controlled.) The above examples confirm that the snake is a symbol of male sexuality.

¹⁵⁶ James Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary of symbols in eastern and Western Art* (London : J. Murray, 1994), 46.

¹⁵⁷ Kuru.158:1-2; Aka. 92:11, 323:10-11; Pura. 17:38-39, 37:1-4, 58:6-7,126:19, 366:3.

¹⁵⁸ Similarly, "...the heron searching for and eating fish is often used in the poems as a symbol of sexual activity." (See George Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*, 162.)

¹⁵⁹ David Buck, "The Snake in the Song of a Sittar" in Harry M Buck and Genn E Yocum (ed.) *Structural approaches to South Indian studies* (Wilson Books, 1974), 162-183

¹⁶⁰ *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 249.

Without eating the poisonous snake, the text says that the neem tree cracks or splits. In fact, the act of eating the snake symbolizes the highest spiritual experience represented by the *khecarī mudrā*. The semen initially being poison when it leaves the body becomes amṛta when ingested by the body.¹⁶¹ Several steps precede the act of transformation of poison into ambrosia: kindling the *kuṇḍalinī* fire; reversing the downward course of the semen and sending it upwards along with *kuṇḍalinī*. The semen scorched in the fire of *kuṇḍalinī* reaches the realm of the moon where it is transformed into ambrosia. This is imbibed by the yogi through the *khecarī mudrā*.

The expression *pāmparintuṅṅal* (chopping and eating the snake) occurs in Tantra Two as well.

The educated spend [the semen in vain] and speed away [to death]
 Those who have a lizard [those who possess the correct knowledge] cut the snake and eat it.
 [By means of yoga, they raise the semen to the sahasrāra]
 Day and night worship the Lord [conserve the semen forever]
 Your body will become like the one fortified by medicinal herbs (valli)¹⁶²

The phrase *palliyuṭaiyār* (literally meaning those who have a lizard) refers to persons who possess Śivajñāna. In the *Caṅkam* literature, the lizard is linked to prophetic knowledge. Kailasapathy states,

The lizard was considered a creature of prophetic insight. Prognosticators made use of the chirps of the lizard to peep into the future. Several poems speak of the use the early Tamils made of the lizard's clicks. Wives awaiting the return of their husbands from long journeys looked out for the omen from the lizard. The man on his homeward journey wishes the lizard might signify to his wife his safe return and thus console

¹⁶¹ “In Tamil thought, *amirtam* is considered to be transformation of semen, which also holds a man's life essence. Tamil siddha yogis are believed to bring their semen up into their heads and to carry out this transformation of semen to *amirtam* at a place behind their throats. They feed only on this *amirtam* created by their own bodies and dripping into their throats, in a kind of eternal narcissistic cycle. As long as they keep themselves to themselves in this way, they will remain deathless.” See Margaret Trawick, *Notes on love in a Tamil Family*, 33-34.

¹⁶² kalvi yuṭaiyār kaḷintōṭip pōkiṅṅār
 palli yuṭaiyār pāmpariṅ tuṅkiṅṅār
 elliyum kālaiyum iṅai vaṅṅai ēttum
 valli yuḷ vātitta kāyamumāmē (293)

her.....The lizard is said to possess a mouth of prophetic import, *kaṇivāyppalli* .
It is also described as *mutuvāyppalli*.¹⁶³

It should be noted that the epithet *mutuvāy* used for the lizard is shared by the male priest who appears possessed and prophetic in the *Caṅkam* works. This dance-priest plays a key role in the exorcist cult of ancient Tamils. It was previously noted in Chapter one that the priest identifies himself with the deity Velan in his exorcist dance ritual according to *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* and assumes the name of his deity. The notion of his ritualistic identification with the deity was possibly embraced and enlarged on by the Tirumantiram. Hence, the expression *palliyuṭaiyār* may be taken to refer to persons who have special knowledge on becoming one with Śiva. Only such people successfully impede the outflow of semen.

Fruit: The fruit of the male seed is offspring, or liberation and immortality through sublimation. The text recognizes sexual intercourse in which the semen is retained as one of the principal yogas and recommends ejaculation for the sake of progeny alone.¹⁶⁴ The general tenor of the text is to discourage procreation as it involves the squandering of vital energy. The practitioner is advised to shun women who look at him¹⁶⁵ and to regard every woman as *kūrram* (death). *Kūrram* or *kūrruvaṇ* is a Dravidian deity who separates the soul from the body according to the *Caṅkam* literature.¹⁶⁶ If a practitioner cannot observe self-discipline, he may be engaged in normal sexual intercourse for the sake of progeny alone. However, the woman whom he chooses to deposit his seed in is discredited as a dissembling woman (*māyāl*).¹⁶⁷ The auspicious day

¹⁶³ *Tamil Heroic Poetry* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 64-65.

¹⁶⁴ TM 1939

¹⁶⁵ *pārkkīṇra mātaraiṇ pāraṭu akaṇru pōy* (TM 1937:1)

¹⁶⁶ George Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*, 24.

¹⁶⁷ TM 1939:1

When the realization dawns on the yogi that the seed of the universe (Śiva) exists in the human seed, then the sublimated seed turns into a nectar-dripping mango fruit. This is referred to as a mango in the garden (*tōṭṭattu māmpaḷam*),¹⁷⁴ or the mango that is present in the curdled milk. Mattu means both the churning rod (phallus) and the curdled milk (semen) in the following verse. In this particular instance, it is not apposite to consider the mango to be a vaginal symbol as suggested by Gananath Obeyesekere.¹⁷⁵

Except for those who sow the seed
No harvest exists beyond
Except for those who sow the seed
There will be no great wisdom
If [they] realise the seed within seed
[The seed sublimated] is a mango fruit
That is present in the curdled milk (TM 1946)¹⁷⁶

The following verse from *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai* contains multiple symbols and ends with a reference to a ripe banana which I contend to be the sublimated seed in sexual intercourse known as *paryāṅgayoga*.

vaḷutalai vittitap pākal muḷaittatu
puḷutiyait tōṇṭiṇēn pūcaṇi pūttatu
toḷutu koṇṭōṭṭiṇar tōṭṭak kuṭikaḷ
muḷutum paḷuttatu vāḷaikkaṇiyē (TM 2869)

The bittergourd grew as the seed of brinjal was sown
I dug up the dust; the pumpkin bloomed
Tenants in the garden darted out paying homage
The entire [bunch of plantain] became ripe.

The first two lines of the verse contrast the act of sublimation with the act of procreation. I interpret the verse as follows: The term *vaḷutalai*, literally meaning a brinjal, represents the male sexual organ. When the seeds are planted into the womb of

¹⁷⁴ TM 624.

¹⁷⁵ *The Work of Culture* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1990), 120.

¹⁷⁶ vittitū vōrkaṇṇi mēḷōr viḷaiṅvillai
vittitū vōrkaṇṇi mikkō raṅṅivillai
vittinil vittai vitāra uṅarvarēḷ
matti liruntatōr māṅkaṇi yāmē (TM 1946)

the woman, a child is born. Wife and children represent bondage denoted by bittergourd. In Akanānūru the bittergourd creeper is used to bind cows that have just given birth, to a *Kāñci* tree to prevent them from consuming the ripe paddy.¹⁷⁷ The second line is concerned with sexual intercourse without emission. “Dust” (*rajas*) in tantras means menses and genital secretions.¹⁷⁸ Digging the dust means arresting the outflow of semen and stimulating vaginal secretions, the result of which takes the form of a yellow- hued pumpkin flower, which I infer, heralds the emergence of *nāda* (Śakti). Other tattvas depart in the wake of the union of *nāda* with *bindu* (seed). The seed sublimated is symbolized by a ripe banana.

I end this section with a discussion of an extended metaphor using agricultural language. Agricultural symbolism is already found in the *Caṅkam* literature. Descriptions connected to battle and battle- fields contain similes drawn from the agricultural realm. Hart observes,

The battlefield itself was metamorphosed into another world for the participants, a place where everything was charged with sacred power to the highest degree. Thus the poems describe over and over the metamorphosis of the gruesome objects of battle into beautiful or productive things associated with peace, especially things connected with agriculture. A warrior hindered by gust around his feet is like an elephant whose legs are chained (Pur. 275). Elephants’ heads are cut off and roll on the ground, so they resemble plows, the tusks being like handles and the hallow severed trunk being like the plowshare (Pur. 19)¹⁷⁹

In the Tirumantiram, the term *uḷavu* (ploughing) means to make one fit for spiritual training. The expression *eṇṇāvi uḷavu koṇṭāṇē*¹⁸⁰ meaning “he ploughed my life for abundant harvest” implies that Śiva, in the form of Guru, rids the soul of its impurities. However, in *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai* it takes on sexual meaning. Production and

¹⁷⁷ Aka. 156: 3-6.

¹⁷⁸ M. Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, 254.

¹⁷⁹ *The Poems of Ancient Tamil*, 32.

¹⁸⁰ TM 1875:4

absorption of semen is denoted by the expression “ploughing the interior field”.¹⁸¹ Wasting the semen through sexual intercourse with women is described as *kaḷar uḷutal* (ploughing the wasteland).¹⁸² The verse given below emphasizes the need for sublimation of semen.

There are two picottahs and seven wells
The elder draws out, the younger waters
If the water does not flow into the field
But flows into the waste land
It is like the hen
The harlot rears. (2873)¹⁸³

The interpretation of the verse is as follows: Two picottahs are the two nādis: idā and piṅgalā. Seven wells denote seven cakras: *mūlādhāra, svādhiṣṭhana, maṇipūra, anāhata, viśuddhi, ājñā and sahasrāra*. Whereas exhalation and inhalation of breath is represented by elder and younger siblings, the semen is symbolized by water. The energy is wasted if it is not raised by the force of breath along the medial channel. The premature emission of semen is symbolized both by the danseuse (prostitute) and the hen (*kōḷi*). It is notable that *kōḷi-p-pōkam* denotes sexual union attended with a very early discharge of semen.

Kūttu (Dance)

Though there are sporadic references to *kūttu* throughout the work, 81 verses (2722-2803) in the ninth Tantra have been dedicated to the depiction of Śiva’s dance.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ uḷḷacey yaṅkē uḷavucey vārkaṭku (TM 2871:3)

¹⁸² We do not know why they plough the waste
Those who plough the waste do not think deeply
Those who plough the waste perish due to
The young vañci creeper that shoots from the wasteland. (TM 2880)

¹⁸³ ēṛram iraṅṭuḷa ēḷu turavuḷa
mūttāṅ iraikka ilaiyāṅ paṭutta nīr
pāttiyīr pāyātu pāḷppāyntu pōyiṭṭir
kūtti vaḷarttatōr kōḷippuḷḷāmē (TM 2873)

The terms *kūttu* and *naṭam* are pregnant with esoteric meanings. The term *kūttu* occurs in the text for the first time in Verse 74 in which the author claims to have lived for seventy million years, after witnessing *kūttu* in the *sabhā*.¹⁸⁵ *Kūttu* in this verse represents the acme of yogic experience that enabled him to defy time. Subsequently in verse 77, he declares his intention to expound the esoteric meaning of *kūttu* performed by Śiva in the company of his blue-hued consort.

O Mālāṅka [let me tell you] the reason why I came here
I came to proclaim the esoteric nature
Of the sacred dance, the root of everything, which he performs in the company of
The dark –limbed woman bedecked with exquisite jewels

To answer the query, “what enabled the author to have a vision of the dance of Śiva”, we have to turn to Tantra three that deals with the subject of yoga extensively. According to verse 730, when *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* are united, the consciousness of the practitioner would undergo a tremendous transformation, the final stage of which is marked with “the acoustic, and photic, phosphorescing drops of sound.”¹⁸⁶

If the left and the right are merged
In the temple [body] of one who bears a javelin
you can hear the sounds of instruments in the central place between the brows (ājñā cakra)
Śiva will manifest with his rhythmic dance
This is true, we declare in the name of Nandi. 730¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Verse 2723 mentions five types of dance:

ciṛparañcōti civāṇantak kūttanaic
corpatamām antac cuntarak kūttanai
porpatikkūttanaip porrillaik kūttanai
arputak kūttanai yāraṇivārē

Accordingly, the eighty verses are divided into five sections titled *civāṇantak kūttu*, *cuntarak kūttu*, *porpatikkūttu*, *porrillaik kūttu*, and *arputak kūttu*.

¹⁸⁵ tappillā maṇṇil taṇikkūttuk kaṇṇapin
oppil eḷukōṭi yukam iruntēṇē (TM 74:3-4)

¹⁸⁶ David Gordon White, *Kiss of the Yogini*, 235.

¹⁸⁷ cattiyār kōyil iṭamvalam cātittāl
mattiyāṇattilē vāttiyam kēṭkalām
tittitta kūttum civaṇum veḷippaṭum
cattiyam conṇōm catānanti āṇaiyē (TM 730)

Whereas the merging of breaths gives rises to a vision of Śiva dancing to the accompaniment of musical instruments, the expression *cattiyār kōyil* (body) signifies the fundamental aspect of yoga, sublimating the semen. One of the meanings of *catti* is a javelin and the deity Kumāra is known as *cattiyāṇ* (one who possesses a javelin or spear). The change of the noun ending *āṇ* to *ār* is expressive of respect or politeness. The javelin, being a phallic symbol, represents the role played by sexual fluid in the attainment of the final goal. The same notion is reiterated in Verse 666 which relates *kūttu* to yogic practices of *prāṇāyāma*, especially *kumbhaka*. *Kūttu* becomes visible in the *ājñā* region between the two eye-brows only if the air is controlled and the mind is focussed.¹⁸⁸ Suspension of breath is facilitated through the control of senses (*oṭuṅkutaḷ*) and the concentration of the mind (*oruṅkutaḷ*).¹⁸⁹

The term *kūttāṇ* refers to Śiva, the soul imprisoned in the body,¹⁹⁰ and the semen.¹⁹¹ In the following verse, the semen is referred to as *kūttāṇ*.

kaḷalkaṇṭu pōmvaḷi kāṇa vallār̄kuk
kuḷalvaḷi niṅṅiṭum kūttāṇu māmē (TM 754:3-4)

To those who can see the path shown by (kaḷal)
And proceeds on that way
He [the semen] is the dancer in the *suṣuṃṇā nādī*.

The term *kaḷal* is interpreted as foot¹⁹² by commentators. However, it also means an anklet or a toe-ring, which evokes the image of a ring of iron placed around the penis by Kanphata yogis with a view to avoiding sexual contact with women. *Kaḷal* cannot be

¹⁸⁸ oṭuṅki oruṅki uṇarṭaṅ kirukkil
maṭaṅki aṭaṅkiṭum vāyu ataṇuḷ (TM 666:1-2).

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ kūttāṇ purappaṭṭup pōṇa ikkūṭṭaiyē (TM 167:4). The term *kūtu* (cage) refers to the body.

¹⁹¹ kollaiyṅṅiṅṅu kuti koḷḷum kūttāṇukku (TM 542:3)

¹⁹² The foot is considered a very primitive sexual symbol. See S. Freud, *Three Contributions to the theory of sex* (New York : Nervous and Mental Diseases Publishing Co., 1920),34.

taken to refer to a physical device similar to what the Kanphata yogis wore, because sexual intercourse plays an integral part of the yogic discipline envisaged by the text. Hence, *kaḷal* in this context means merely a stoppage of emission so that the semen (*kūttan*) could be retained and lifted upward through the *suṣuṃnā nāḍī*. *Kuḷal* meaning any tube –shaped thing may be interpreted as phallus or the middle nāḍī.

The text attaches special significance to *mūlādhāra cakra* and *ājñā cakra* as the locus of *kūttu*. The Golden court at the sacred shrine Cidambaram is referred to as *maṅṅru*,¹⁹³ *pati*,¹⁹⁴ *tillai*¹⁹⁵ and *ampalam*.¹⁹⁶ Whereas the Golden hall denotes *ājñā cakra*, the term *kollai* refers to the *mūlādhāra*.¹⁹⁷ The journey of male seed begins in the *mūlādhāra* and ends in *ājñā cakra*. *Ampalam* is defined as the place where fire and water mingle.¹⁹⁸ In yogic parlance it indicates a place where dualities do not exist. Siva's dance is generally interpreted as a symbol of his five activities known as *pañcakṛtya*. Śiva's drum, his right hand gesturing protection, the fire, the foot planted down and the left foot raised, represent creation, preservation, dissolution, obfuscation and Redemption respectively.¹⁹⁹ Fundamentally, *kūttu* is expressive of the state of bliss that results from the completion of the upward journey of the semen in the *ājñā cakra* from the *mūlādhāra cakra* via the *suṣuṃnā nāḍī*.

I have examined in this chapter the form and content of connotative language of the Tirumantiram. The esoteric language should be differentiated from technical

¹⁹³ TM 67:3; 74:3; 123:3;131:3; 2743:2

Maṅṅru is the Golden Hall (*kanaka sabhā*/ the golden court) of Cidambaram, the most sacred shrine for Śiva in the Tamil country: āṇippon maṅṅriḷ āṭunt tiruk kūttai (TM 131:3).

¹⁹⁴ poṅpatik kūttan (TM 2723:3)

¹⁹⁵ poṅtillaik kūttan (TM 2723:3; 2743:1)

¹⁹⁶ TM 2744:3; 2749:4

¹⁹⁷ kollaiyiṅṅru kuti koḷḷum kūttanukku

ellaiyillāta layamuṅṅāmē (TM 542:3-4)

¹⁹⁸ ampalamāvatu apputtī maṅṅalam (TM 2775:3). Fire and water are also mentioned in verse 2266.

¹⁹⁹ TM 2799.

language which derived its vocabulary solely from Sanskrit Tantras. In contrast, the connotative language drew inspiration from various sources: Tamil literary tradition, colloquial Tamil speech and the tantric tradition. In connotative language the literal meaning of the text is incompatible with a deeper meaning which lies beneath the surface of the text. This appears to be a result of the deliberate obfuscation of content intended to be communicated. The Tirumantiram makes use of several literary devices –double entendre, symbols, extended metaphor- for this purpose.

The chapter was premised on the notion that connotative language is a vehicle of esoteric knowledge. I defined esoteric knowledge as self-knowledge, which is capable of liberating, hence higher than other types of knowledge, and which is derived both from one's own spiritual experience and from interaction with a guru. Several reasons were cited for the emergence of connotative language on the strength of the evidence found in the text. The final section looked at how the theme of sublimation of semen, fundamental to living liberation, is dealt with in myths, symbols and extended metaphors.

CONCLUSION

In general, the question of unity and coherence of the *Tirumantiram* is either disregarded or inadequately dealt with in commentaries and secondary works. The scholars who treat the *Tirumantiram* as a unified text dealing with Tamil Śaiva Siddhanta, have difficulty in elucidating why the human body is privileged in the text or why immortality is the supreme goal of Siddhas.¹ It is not that Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta does not recognize living liberation. The issue here is that the doctrine of living liberation developed by Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta is not identical with the one conceived by the *Tirumantiram*. According to Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta, living liberation is merely an interim state a practitioner has to dwell in until he attains the ultimate goal of *videhamukti* (salvation after death), and total freedom from bondage is only possible after death; hence, a *jīvanmukta* is not a fully liberated person in Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta,² as in the *Tirumantiram*. Besides, the concept of immortality that is integral to living liberation in the *Tirumantiram* is entirely lacking in Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta. On the other hand, to the scholars who consider the *Tirumantiram* to be the fountainhead of both Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta and Tamil Siddha tradition, it is a work consisting of two distinct texts: the first four Tantras represent Tamil Siddha tradition while the remaining five Tantras (5-9) constitute an exposition of Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta.³ The link between the two sections of the text, however, remains unexplored and unexplained.

¹ According to Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta, *tanu-karaṇa-bhuvana-bhoga* are created by God for redemption of the souls bound by *pāśa* since the time immemorial; the notion of immortality does not figure in the discourse.

² Chacko Valiaveetil, "Living Liberation in Śaiva Siddhānta" in *Living Liberation in Hindu Thought* ed. A.O. Fort, & P.Mumme (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 226.

³ R. Māṇikkavācakam, *Tirumantira āṛāycci*, 270.

This dissertation was written to establish the textual unity of the *Tirumantiram*. It analyzed how textual unity was brought about by the coalescence of two divergent religious and cultural idioms reflected in the Sanskrit religious texts and the Tamil *Caṅkam* literature. It was highlighted that the Tamil–Sanskrit dichotomy is integral to Tamil thought. The *Tirumantiram* which identifies itself with the *Śaivāgamas*, places Tamil on an equal footing with Sanskrit by claiming that both Sanskrit and Tamil are capable of disclosing the nature of God and that the *āgamas* were revealed by Śiva in both languages. Despite the fact that the Vedas and the *āgamas* are recognized as primary texts for Sanmārga Śaivism, the *Tirumantiram*'s ambivalence towards them is quite palpable.

All the four chapters in this dissertation dealt with aspects of living liberation and its relations to Tamil and Sanskrit traditions. The interaction between Tamil and Sanskrit takes the following forms in the text:

(a) Assimilation of autochthonous elements into the text modelled on Sanskrit *āgamas*

In the first chapter, I showed how the notion of the sacred and its relation to humanity as conceptualized by ancient Tamils and the yearning for eternal life on earth symbolized by fame possibly contributed to the formulation of the concept of living liberation in the *Tirumantiram*. The notion of the sacred cannot be considered in isolation, but within the framework of Tamil literary conventions governing themes and motifs, oriented towards this world. Six elements of indigenous Tamil culture represented in the *Caṅkam* poetry were identified as possible antecedents to the concept of living liberation: (a) this worldly –orientation (b) the concept of immanence of the

sacred (c) interpenetration of humanity and divinity (d) the divinization of the human priest (e) conception of the sacred as heat (f) immortality conceptualised in the form of fame. The discussion of the *Caṅkam* literature is crucial, as the origin of *bhakti* and *aṅṅpu* in the third chapter and of connotative language in the fourth chapter, are traced to it.

The second chapter, which was devoted to the analysis of the relationship between the revealed textual traditions and the *Tirumantiram*, argued that the text drew on the Sanskrit *āgamas* to construct a theological background to the doctrine of living liberation. It was demonstrated how thematic unity was accomplished within the broad *āgamic* conceptual framework, which contrasted itself with the autochthonous Tamil worldview. The conceptual framework was rooted in two major concepts, bondage and liberation, unknown to older layers of *Caṅkam* poetry.

Despite its best efforts to integrate and reconcile the Sanskrit traditions with the Tamil tradition, the *Tirumantiram* reveals an uneasy and tension-ridden relationship with ritualistic traditions reflected in the *Vedāgamas* and their privileged custodians, Brahmans/Śivabrahmans. The text contests through the exposition of living liberation the discriminatory *āgamic* injunctions that explicitly forbids the majority of the Tamil indigenous populace considered *sūdras* from seeking liberation and becoming teachers of liberation. The text not only dissociates itself with temple ritualistic tradition which considers the body of the *sūdras* as the most impure of all, but also deemphasizes ritual as the means to liberation, in favour of yoga and *jñāna*, thus contradicting the core principle of Sanskrit *Śaiva Siddhānta* enshrined in the *āgamas*. The text draws on the Upaniṣadic *mahāvākyas* to buttress the claim of identity of the soul with God in the state of release; but it repudiates the Vedic sacrificial lore and the supremacy claimed by the Brahmans.

Thus, it maintains conflicting positions with regard to the *karmakāṇḍa* (ritualistic section) and the *jñānakāṇḍa* (the Upaniṣads) of the Vedas. Moreover, the Vedic sacrifice is interpreted as tantric yoga and the identity of the Brahman is converted from that of ritualist to that of Siddha who treads the path of *sanmārga*.

(b) Marginalization of dualistic *bhakti* from the highest soteriological aim and integration of *aṅṅpu with yoga*

Aṅṅpu and *bhakti* are related concepts and at times used interchangeably. The third chapter discussed the synthesis of Tamil and Sanskrit that culminated in the enrichment of the concept of yoga, one of the means to living liberation. Though a secular concept initially, *aṅṅpu* added a new dimension to the ideology of yoga found in Sanskrit texts. Despite being one of the key concepts in the *Tirumantiram*, *bhakti* was not directly involved with yoga, the means to living liberation, as the ideology of *bhakti* is in conflict with that of yoga. *Bhakti*, which is modelled on the relationship between patron and bard of the classical *Caṅkam* literature is a form of devotion displayed in public, institutional, or formal settings, and is rooted in the hierarchical patterns of relations between Śiva/preceptor (guru) and a devotee/disciple. Besides, it is linked to the lowest form of religious worship, *caryā* path, in the text. Dualistic *bhakti*, therefore, is an inadequate concept to be associated with yoga, which aims at non-dualistic union with God. This should have made the text privilege the term *aṅṅpu* in connection with yoga.

Aṅṅpu is treated in the text as a distinct concept from *bhakti*, with the meaning of sexual love wherever it is mentioned in connection with yoga, which is recognized as the means to attain blissful union with Śiva. Hence, of the two major modes of *aṅṅpu*: love in

separation which is predominant in Tēvāram and love in union, the *Tirumantiram* embraces the latter as is deemed more appropriate to be associated with yoga. This illustrates the text's commitment and willingness to formulate the doctrine of yoga within the framework of Tamil language, literature and culture. *Pātañjala* definition of yoga lays stress on intense mental concentration: "Yoga is the restraint of the fluctuations of the mind."⁴ In contrast, the *Tirumantiram* that evolves an eight- fold yoga system similar to the one found in *Patañjali Yoga sūtra* reinterprets yoga in terms of immersion or absorption in the emotion of *aṅṅpu: uṅṅarcciyuḷ oṅṅukkam* (TN 283). Thus, one who reaches the highest state of yoga becomes *civam*, an embodiment of two contradictory principles: knowledge/*aṅṅivu* and emotion/*uṅṅarcci* (*aṅṅpu* or love). The Tamil notion of *aṅṅpu* thus augments the concept of yoga, and also transforms the way Śiva is perceived in the *āgamas*. However, this does not minimize the importance of *bhakti* in the overall conceptualization of the text. In the *Sanmārga* Siddha tradition represented by the *Tirumantiram*, emphasis shifts from the institution of temple to that of guru, who is none other than Śiva himself; *gurubhakti* is regarded as the highest form of *bhakti*. *Bhakti* that characterizes *caryā* is deemed the foundation of the hierarchized religious paths, recognised by the *Tirumantiram*. Moreover, there are indications to present *bhakti* as an independent path to liberation as demonstrated in chapter Three.

(C) Indigenizing esoteric tradition

The fourth chapter further extended the discussion of yoga by examining the connotative language which is easily distinguishable from technical language that uses Sanskrit terms, and established that the *Tirumantiram* is an esoteric text. (An esoteric manual can contain exoteric material, but not vice-versa). The connotative language that

⁴ *yogaścittavṛttinirodhaḥ* 1:2

employs myths, double entendres, extended metaphors and symbols, is concerned with living liberation, specifically, the esoteric element of yoga: sublimation of semen. It was also shown that the connotative language draws on both Tamil and Sanskrit traditions and is characterized by secrecy, symbolism and subversion of the normative values of society.

This chapter also brought to light the dual nature of the text which is reflected in its exoteric and esoteric discourses. Though the exoteric –esoteric distinctions are acknowledged by the text itself, they are not structurally demarcated. Esoteric meaning underlies many a verse, which is overtly devotional or at times moralistic. Hence, it is impossible to hold that that only certain Tantras deal with doctrine and others with esoteric practice, as claimed by certain scholars. The exoteric sections provide doctrinal contextualization for living liberation and contain interpretations of *Śaiva Siddhānta* which are meant to be read. On the other hand, the esoteric material of the text cannot be grasped through intellect alone, but should be experienced through a combined effort of the body and the mind (*sāadhanā*). The doctrine that bridges the esoteric with the exoteric is living liberation.

The *Tirumantiram* stands out as a paramount example of a literary genre that incorporates both exoteric and esoteric material in a single text. This literary style was adopted by later Siddhas in their poetry, for instance, by Civavākkīyar. The extreme form of esoteric/exoteric is found in several stanzas of the text, in which the esoteric underlies the exoteric meaning. The method of presentation of esoteric material is unique in the *Tirumantiram* because, conventionally, the esoteric and the exoteric constitute the subject matter of separate texts and are rarely presented in the same text, let alone, in the same stanza. The text finds a solution to the issue of communicating transgressive content in the innovative manner of combining both. Thus, the text succeeds not only in

eliminating possibilities of public scrutiny, but also in achieving recognition as one of the Śaiva canonical texts. In other words, this style of writing reflects the text's conscious decision not to oppose and challenge any theology or religious practice that was dominant and authoritative in the society, though not in harmony with its esoteric doctrine.

Implications of esoteric/exoteric distinctions:

The findings of the research, particularly the flourishing of a parallel stream of Śaivism – independent of temple, the central feature of the Tamil bhakti movement – justify to a greater extent the claim that the *Tirumantiram* is a work of *Sanmārga* siddhas in its essence. Though it is highly probable that Tamil Tantric Siddha tradition existed long before the composition of the *Tirumantiram*, it is difficult to reconstruct its early history with the scant evidence available to us now. The fact that local images and colloquial language are found in *cūṇiya campāṣaṇai* speaks for a broad diffusion of esoteric practices at a popular level at the time the *Tirumantiram* was composed. I tentatively suggest that the dancing priest Velan of the Caṅkam era, the exorcist and the healer, could be a precursor to the Tamil Siddha. It should be noted that dance emerges as an important symbol in the *Tirumantiram* through which the author conveys the objective of his text (TM 77). Besides, the text devotes more than a hundred verses to describing the dance of Śiva, apart from intermittent references to it throughout the text.

The term Siddha can be traced to *Tēvāram* in which it is used in several meanings: a Tantric Siddha, a semi-divine-being, the enlightened one in Jainism, and performer of extraordinary feats or miracles. Śiva is also known as *cittaṅ*⁵ and the temple

⁵ 1:29:11; cittaṅ (1:96:4; 5:77:7; 5:87:4; 7:52:10); taṅ aṭiyārkaḷ cittaṅ(2:82:4); 3:51:2; 5:2:6; 5:4:3; 5:13:4; 5:40:8; 6:87:4; 7:52:1

he resides in is known as Citticcaram.⁶ In Tēvāram, Siddhas are mentioned along with *bhaktas* as opposed to Jainas and Buddhists.⁷ Tēvāram also looks for commonalities between *bhaktas* and Siddhas: both worship Śiva⁸ through singing and dancing,⁹ and practice penance.¹⁰ Paḷuvūr¹¹ and Vētavaṇam¹² Tirukkāṇūr¹³ are home to both categories. Tenets and practices of the Siddhas also receive attention in Tēvāram. Cuntarar defines them as those who worship Śiva through meditation in his *Tiruttoṇṭattokai*.¹⁴ Appar's Tēvāram reflects some of the ideology of *Sanmārga* siddhas discussed in the *Tirumantiram*: the human body being the temple,¹⁵ immanence of God in the body¹⁶ and condemnation of external worship.¹⁷

Despite the portrayal of an amicable and harmonious relationship between *bhaktas* and Siddhas in Tēvāram, a converse picture emerges in the *Tirumantiram* that is suggestive of enmity and competition between the two groups. “Siddhas never know Him, the supreme Light; But He gave salvation and revealed Himself to devotees who worship Him in devotion (*bhakti*)” (TM 284). “Though they practice yoga for eight thousand years, they would not perceive Him who is pleasing or sweet like ambrosia to the eyes “(TM 603:1-2). Whereas the fifth Tantra states that only an inferior type of *sāloka mukti* is available to devotees, the devotional hymns in the text suggest that the

⁶ 1:29:1-11

⁷ 1:43:10; 1:47:10; 1:66:10; 2:87:10; 2:118:10

⁸ pattar cittar palar ēttum paramaṇ (7:52:10)

⁹ pārār pukaḷāl pattar cittar pāṭi āṭavē (1:71:5)

pattar cittarkaḷ pāṭiyāṭum paiññīli (7:36:8)

¹⁰ tavamali pattar cittar (2:87:10)

¹¹ pattaroṭu cittarpayil kiṇṇapaḷu vūrē

¹² 3:76:5

¹³ cittar pattarkaḷ cēr tirukkāṇūr (5:76:5)

¹⁴ cittattaic civaṇpālē vaittārkkum aṭiyēṇ (7:39:10).

¹⁵ 4:76:4

¹⁶ 4:43:6; 4:45:1

¹⁷ 5:99

highest goal of liberation is attainable through *bhakti*. The outcome of the acts of *bhakti* is liberation from *saṃsāra*¹⁸ purging of sins and removal of darkness of ignorance¹⁹

It is probable that *Tirumantiram* was the fruit of the efforts invested by Tamil Tantric Siddhas in synthesizing their tradition with that of Tamil *bhakti* tradition, which upheld the *āgamic* temple ritual system governed by the theology of *Śaiva Siddhānta*. The *Tirumantiram* reflects the challenges faced by Tamil Tantric Siddhas in the competitive and polemic religious environment around the ninth century. The rising ascendancy of Brahmans with their sacrificial ritual system, the social system of *varṇa* introduced by them, and temple worship popularized by Tamil *bhakti* saints and extensive temple ritual cultivated by the *āgamas*, and the prestige enjoyed by the Sanskrit language must have placed the vernacular *Sanmārga* Siddha tradition or Śuddha Śaivism at a disadvantage. It seemed to have responded to the challenges in two ways: firstly, the tradition was institutionalised. The institutionalization of tradition- that characteristically takes place in the event of external or internal challenges- is mentioned in the prologue of the text. Seven *maṭhas*, probably with a few bi-linguals at the head with a large gathering of monolingual vernacular followers, existed under the leadership of seven chiefs including Mūlar. Secondly, the tradition responded to these challenges innovatively through the synthesis of Tamil and Sanskrit, alternatively speaking, by synthesizing yoga with the notion of *aṅṇpu* and by identifying *civam* with *aṅṇpu*. *Aṅṇpu*, in a general sense, is the bedrock of Tamil *bhakti*, but not related to “mechanistic” *tantra* at all. Besides, the whole theological structure of the text was borrowed from Śaivism. Thus, the adoption

¹⁸ tiraipacu pācac ceḷuṅkaṭal nīnti
karai pacu pācam kaṭantteytalāmē (49:3-4)

¹⁹ pakaliṭat tumira vumpaṇin tētti
ikalīṭat tēyiruḷ nīnki niṅ rēṅē (TM 4:3-4)

of the exoteric covering of bhakti and of Śaiva Siddhānta theology rendered the Tamil tantric Siddhas acceptable to Tamil society and also enabled them to exercise some authority in the outer social world. Besides, the esoteric/ exoteric poetry and symbolic poetry discussed in the fourth chapter suggest that internal aspects of the tradition were different from its external features. This means that outwardly *Sanmārga* Siddhas posed as *bhaktas* and theologians of Śaiva Siddhānta but continued to observe their esoteric practices in secret. Thus, they assumed a dual identity that enabled them to negotiate the legitimacy of their tradition in a competitive religious environment, while cherishing a liberated esoteric identity of Siddha for themselves.

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