



BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

TIRUVACHAKAM
THE HINDU TESTAMENT
OF LOVE

Ratna Navaratnam

GENERAL EDITORS

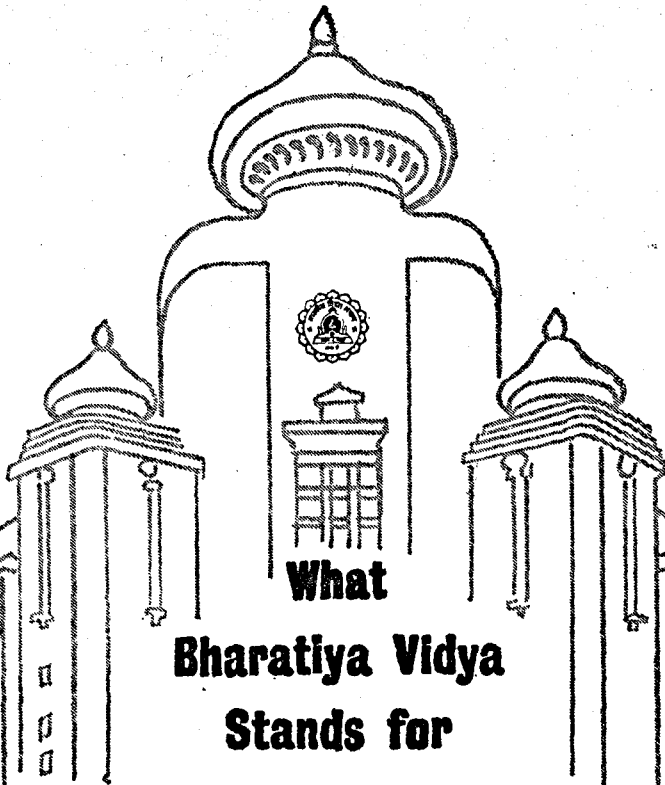
K. M. MUNSHI
R. R. DIWAKAR



ATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN, BOMBAY

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What Bharatiya Vidya Stands for

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2. Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

M. Jamunaacharya

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideoforms, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

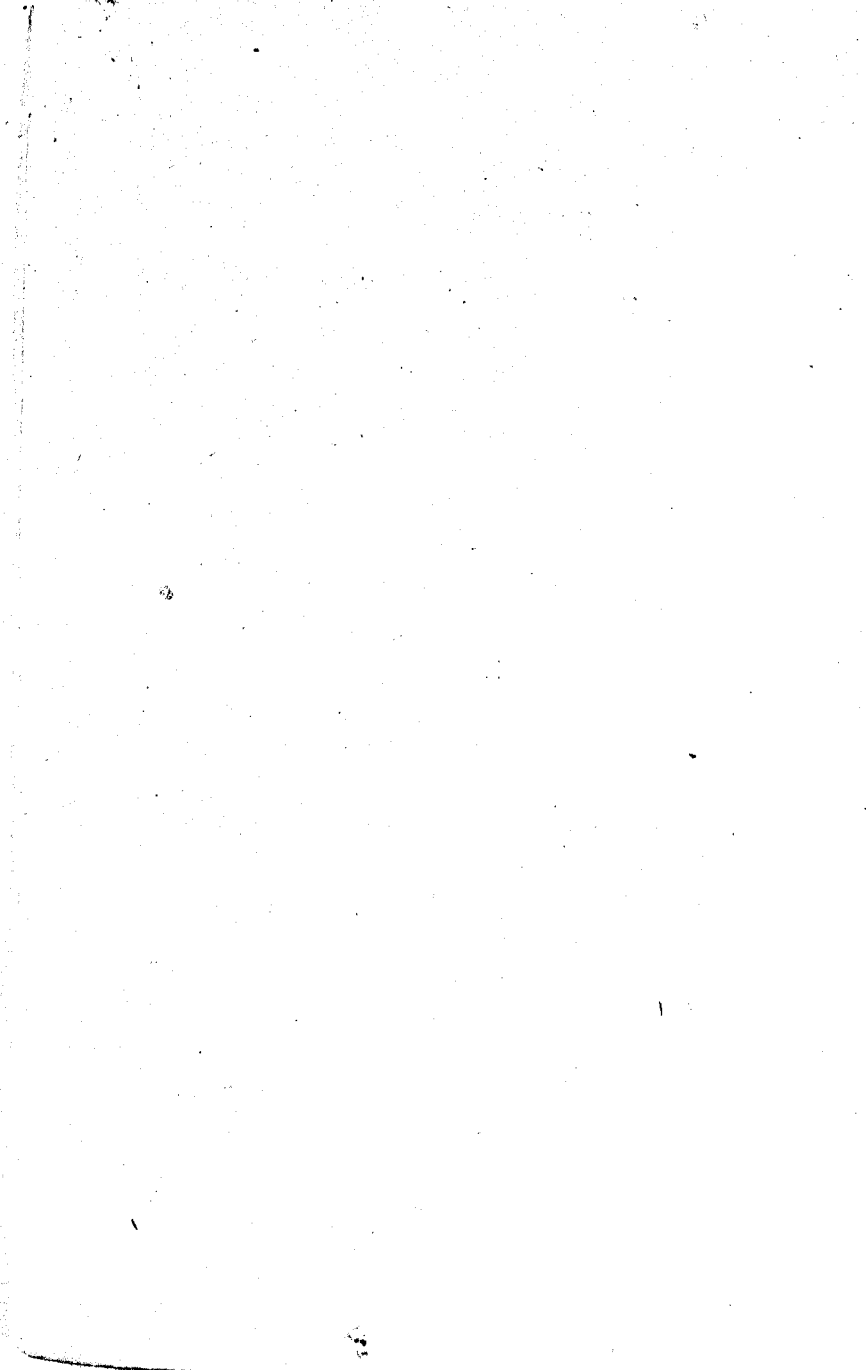
(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world.





आ नो भद्राः ऋतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side.

—Rigveda, 1-89-i

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General Editors :

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TIRUVACHAKAM
THE HINDU TESTAMENT OF LOVE

BY

RATNA NAVARATNAM

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Lord Siva as Nataraja

BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY ✓

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
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CHAUPATTY, BOMBAY ✓

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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulses of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages and was to be priced at Rs. 2|-.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting itself to the utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions that allow him freedom to evolve along lines of his own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspirations which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books from other literatures of the world if they illustrate the principle we stand for will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, besides the movements of the Indian mind, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata*, summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita*, by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata*: "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who does not know it does not know the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita*, which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas the climax of which is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone, the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

Queen Victoria Road,
NEW DELHI:
October 3, 1951.

K. M. MUNSHI

PREFACE

St. Manikkavachakar's Tiruvachakam is a great poem of sublime beauty and forms the subject of an inexhaustible study. Few feats of the human mind have equalled that of Manivachakar's expression of an absolute Love and faith in God, man, and the world and of translating such joy into exquisite poesy. In order to interpret this Poem of poems, this Testament of Love, we found it essential to formulate an acceptable general Idea of Great Poetry, gleaned from the theories of poetry advanced by the seers of East and West, and then proceeded to interpret the essence of the beauty of thought and diction embodied in each section of this wondrous Poem.

The work of translating this poetry of 'Incantation' has never been an easy one and attempts have been made by many reputed scholars to translate the stanzas of Tiruvachakam from Tamil into English. In our translation, we have tried to render in terms of feeling rather than of intellect, those profound experiences of the poet whose communication to our minds depends on all our relevant feelings and impulses being raised into the completest harmony. In the absence of an adequate terminology of feeling, we were compelled to adapt the static intellectual terms to the dynamic realities of feeling. For a fuller appreciation of Tiruvachakam, readers are requested to refer to standard editions like Dr. Pope's monumental work on Tiruvachakam. References which are made in our work to the cantos and poems in Tiruvachakam follow also the pattern and order adopted in standard editions both in Tamil and English of Tiruvachakam.

In our study of Tiruvachakam, we have tried to show that an approach through the Muse of Poesy can bring new light to bear upon the great issues that appear in religious experiences. The ascent of the soul from the human to the divine, from time to the eternal, from the many to the one—in short the varied spiritual experiences of the pilgrim seer—are interpreted by the emotional symbolism liberated by the

power of Manikkavachakar's poetry. We have sought to follow the avenues where the intense expression of religious feeling is indissolubly linked with the wider connection of emotion in poetry.

An approach has also been made to understand the soul of St. Manikkavachakar by means of his poem. In the perfection of its fine poetry into which we impersonally enter, we behold the perfection of all things and are one with that perfection. Poetry is a fine medium to pay homage to the absolute truth and the reality of the truth makes a sovereign claim upon poetry that it may well be said that great experience gives rise to great poetry. Thus in Tiruvachakam, all that is offered to the sum of perfection has both the unity of inspiration and the sublime grace of art.

In attempting to write on the Poem of Eternal Love, we have no other apology than the one which St. Sekkilar advanced.

"Though impossible to reach its limits,

Insatiable love drives me to the task."

This book is dedicated to my father Sangara Pillai Chelliah whose inspiring devotion to his Guru, led me step by step to find the master key to enter the undiscovered domain of St. Manikkavachakar and to realise the reality of this God-Guru in my life.

RATNA NAVARATNAM

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*THE POETRY OF
TIRUVACHAKAM*



CHAPTER I

THE ESSENCE OF GREAT POETRY

Poetry has been defined as a perfection of experience and an inspired realisation by the great poets of East and West. The end of Poetry according to Aristotle is to present life and to establish the true connection of things. Life for Aristotle is matter striving for form. In his Poetics, he speaks of art as imitating nature. According to Plato, art is born out of man's natural impulse to beauty, love, truth, wisdom and goodness. In 'Phaedrus', he states that 'absolute beauty is recognised as a supersensuous and spiritual essence which is discerned by the mind when thrown into ecstasy in its presence'. The artist realises the eternal and infinite Beauty and can therefore create forms of beauty more beautiful than are found in the outer world. In 'Symposium', Plato elaborates this idea. "If a man has eyes to see the true beauty, he becomes the friend of God and immortal". He defines Love as 'the instinct of immortality in a mortal creature'. Greek philosophy springs from poetry of this order and in Greek poetry are contained the classics of aesthetic doctrine for the western world.

Dante calls a poet 'a scribe of eternal love', and Tolstoy believes that great poetry is the resonance of greatness of soul. Matthew Arnold supports the view that poetry is a criticism of life. The Poet is the prophet of the world's final causes; the interpreter of a creation groaning and tra-
vailing after its proper meanings. In his inimitable way Milton has said, "He who likes to write on laudable things ought himself to be a true poem". Shelley was of the opinion that "Whatever in the world has any worth is an expression of Love. Love sometimes talks. Love talking musically is poetry". Wordsworth emphasised that "Poetry was emotion recollected in tranquillity".

The ancient Indian bards affirm that "art is the expression of aesthetic experience". Art should from the poet's point of view transform his experience into expression and from

Poetry implies passion and as every passion has its proper pulse, so will it have its characteristic modes of expression. As far as the metre acts, it tends to increase the vivacity and susceptibility of the reader's feelings and gives greater intensity to the language. The practice of the best poets of all countries, in all ages, shows that there is essential difference of style, though not of words, between the language of prose and that of poetry.

"What is poetry"? inquired Coleridge and he said that it involved the question of "What is a Poet"? For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet's own mind. The poet brings the whole soul of man into activity with the subordination of its faculties to each other. He creates an atmosphere of harmony that blends into a spirit of unity by the magical power of imagination. This power first put into action by the will and understanding reveals itself in the reconciliation of discordant qualities, the sameness with difference, the admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry.

Thus all great poetry is the blossom and the fragranciness of all human knowledge, human thoughts, passions, emotions and language.

CHAPTER II

INDIAN POETRY AND RASA

What is the place of 'Meypadu' or rasa, in other words, emotional realisation in all great poetry? Leo Tolstoy in his Essay on Art defines the activity of art as 'one of transmitting a *feeling* one has once experienced'. Valmiki also held the same view. The sloka metre in sanskrit has its origin in an incident in the life of Valmiki which incidentally reveals also his view on the origin of Indian poetry.

When Valmiki went to collect sacrificial wood and grass, he saw a pair of kraunca birds singing merrily on the branch of a tree. Suddenly he heard a sound and the male bird

poetry. In Srimad Bhagavata is expressed this idea: "The singing of the glory of God is the revealing of ever new and ever radiant Beauty, the bestowal of eternal and matchless bliss on the heart, and the destroyer of the engulfing depth of human grief, sorrow and pain".

Sivaprakasa Swamigal in his paean of praise on Tiruvachakam refers to the author in inimitable lines:

"The quintessence of poesy is contained
In thy poem Tiruvachakam, beloved of Vathavur."

CHAPTER III

HOW IS THE SPIRIT OF POETRY REVEALED?

The universal appeal of poetry is revealed by some of the world's greatest poets in their masterpieces, and East and West vie with one another in giving a local habitation and a name to the blissful state of enjoyment emanating from the Muse of Poetry.

"O honey maker! we are undone by our
Search about the truth of things.
You are the happy being as you seek
Bliss in preference to knowledge.

— *Kalidasa* — "*Shakuntala*".

"Man arrives at the notion of absolute Beauty.
.....If he has eyes to see the true beauty,
He becomes the friend of God and immortal".

— *Plato* — *Symposium*.

"Art conducts us from the vestibule of Reality
into the innermost shrine and reveals the
transcendental to our vision".

— *Schelling*.

"There is no repose except in the absolute, the
infinite and the divine".

— *Amiel*.

"For faithful guide unto my labouring heart
Beauty was given me at birth....

TIRUVACHAKA RAJYA

CHAPTER IV

THE KINGDOM OF LOVE

If poetry is the 'resonance of greatness of soul', Tiruvachakam stands unchallenged as one of the finest gems of poetry in the literature of the world. Some have found in it as did Ramalinga Swami Adigal, an expression of their personal faith. Others like the exponents of the 'Meikanda Sastras'—Arulnandi Sivachariyar and Umapathi Sivam, read into it a testimony of the system of philosophy termed 'Saiva Siddhanta'. There are classical scholars like Dr. Pope who have studied this work for its biographical and historical interest. Sir P. Arunachalam and Professor K. Subramaniam Pillai have been attracted to it as a poem of mystic experiences, while Mahamahopadhyaya Kathiresan Chettiar and Brahmasri Navaneetha Krishna Bharati have been inspired by its literary merits. But as far as we are aware, none has so far delved into this great religious Poem to delight merely in its flowing numbers and bhakti 'rasas'.

The fundamental purpose of our quest has been to answer the question: 'Does Tiruvachakam fulfil our conception of Great and Pure Poetry?'—the touchstone of excellence of Poesy being that of the unified theory of Poetry advocated by Eastern and Western literary critics. By tracing the different ideas of Poetry in the different countries at different ages, we have sought to interpret Tiruvachakam which though it is a typical gem of South Indian Poetry, yet fulfils the canons of great and religious poetry of the East and West.

The approach to Tiruvachakam can only be made through the light shed by the author of Tiruvachakam; and we shall enter this holy way in lowly reverence. The path unfolds the designed and focussed shapeliness of the whole poem from 'Sivapuranam' to 'Acho Padigam'. We shall attempt to get an insight into the progressive realisation of the poet and follow the arrangement and order of the poet's compositions as they are found today, by interpreting it as the

CHAPTER V

THE SUPREMACY OF OM NAMASIVAYA

It is said that the essence of our being lies in the earth; the essence of the earth in water; the essence of water in the plants; the essence of plants in the man; the essence of man in speech; the essence of speech in the scriptures; and the essence of the Holy Scripture in the name Namasisvaya — the sound symbol of Lord Siva. It is the word of wisdom to be meditated upon and is the symbol of all life. The whole of this universe exists in its manifested state with both name and form as its conditions. Form is the outer crust and the name is the inner essence. They both are one and the same truth eternal, knowledge divine, essence everlasting.

Namasivaya is the sacred name of Siva. It is a name without a synonym. Chanting this name, an aspirant can realise the divine reality. Namasivaya connotes the love and music of the divine and fills the whole cosmos animate and inanimate with its silent music. It fills time, space, causation, with its silent speech. Namasivaya is beyond all preaching and time; meditation on it results in superconscious experience. It cannot be taught from books but can only be caught by intuition from the experience of the Guru. Realisation cannot be intellectualised or reasoned upon but can be experienced, felt and lived. By repeating the name 'Namasivaya' the mystic word of God, Manikkavachakar has again and again emphasised that one can realise God — the underlying Reality, the supreme light of Eternal Truth.

Let us analyse the poetic unity of the first two lyrics in Tiruvachakam. "Sivapuranam" was supposed to have been sung by the poet after being enlightened by the God-Guru at Tirupperunturai, and it deals mainly with the transcendent nature of the Lord. Long afterwards, at Tillai, filled with profound gratitude, he sings on the manifestations of the Lord's Grace in the second lyric on "The Psalm of Sivan's Glory". The first poem Sivapuranam is the morning hymn

*SAINT MANIKKAVACHAKAR
AS REVEALED IN
TIRUVACHAKAM*

CHAPTER VI

THE POET OF DIVINE UTTERANCE

Manikkavachakar was one of the greatest of Poets, Saints and Sages. It is very difficult to disentangle his history from the multitude of legends in which it is involved; but we have fifty-one poems ascribed to him, and believed to be genuine. From these, something of his character, history, and teaching may be gathered. When they are carefully studied, we see the real *man* and *poet of divine utterance*.

Few of the world's biographies are more interesting than that of this man of rare genius; who, in his early youth, when he was the chief minister of the great Pandya King, met with, and was converted by a guru, whom he then and always believed to be Siva himself; and became at once an utterly self-renouncing, ascetic Saiva mendicant; continuing instant in labours, patient in suffering, and constant in devotion, through the many years of his after-life.

The poet perceived, realised, lived and communicated to man, the supreme experience that Siva is the transcendent and immanent Reality, pervading the whole visible and invisible universe, and that his five-fold acts of creation, preservation, destruction, embodiment and gracious release are embodied in his ceaseless mystic dance at Tillai. In man's sleep and at all times his activity goes on. The heart-beat continues. Who regulates it, when all his other limbs are at rest? By the power of His immanence, He works through 'Sakti' or Grace, and moves into activity the listless limbs of man. In the hearts of all men, the Lord Siva has planted his lotus feet and energises man to create, preserve, destroy, embody and release. This is known as the mystic dance. As an external symbol of this internal dance of Siva in the secret recesses of the human heart, Tillai signifies the centre of the universe from where He performs His Cosmic Dance. He is thus the active force behind both the movement of the universe as well as of man, and this in essence is the message of St. Manikkavachakar.

THE POETRY OF ADORATION

CHAPTER VIII

SIVAPURANAM — IN PRAISE OF SIVA

INVOCATION

'Namasivaya' — Word of God eternal,

Gracious Feet so holy, all Hail!

Hail! holy Feet of Him

Who quits not my heart for a split second;

Master-Gem who in Kohali brought me under thy spell;

Thy holy Feet all hail!

Hail Holy Feet of Him

Who draws nigh in grace, as wisdom of the 'Agamas'.

5. *The One in many, and many in one art thou Oh Lord,
Thy Holy Feet, all hail!*

Thou who with sovereign sway, subdues my soul's

unrest,

Hallowed be thy Feet.

Siva, who vanquishes delusive births,

Thy almighty Feet, long live!

Thou who recedes from those that love not,

May thy beauteous Feet for ever gleam.

Thou distilled joy of all who adore thee with folded

arms,

Victory to thy kingly Feet.

10. *Thou who uplifts thy worshippers true,*

May thy Feet resplendent be!

Praise be to Thee Oh Lord, our Father,

Thy Feet for e'er protect us!

Praise be to the radiant, roseate Feet of Siva,

May He our solace be!

Praise be to Thee, inmost Love so sublime,

Thy Feet our repose be!

Praise be to Thee who chases illusive birth,

His Kingly Feet our refuge be!

'Neath His Holy Feet, surrounded by His Holy band of devotees,
Invoke His Blessed NAME — OM NAMASIVAYA".

CHAPTER X

KEERTHI TIRU AHAVAL THE PSALM OF GLORY
PLACE TILLAI
QUINTESENCE IN PRAISE OF SIVA'S GRACE

Lord Siva's manifold acts of glorious grace as recounted in the sacred lore of the Saivite Hindus are woven poetically in this garland of homage. He who is the supreme being has assumed many a habitation and a name, in order to manifest His gracious love to His devotees, who yearn for His light of grace.

THE PURPOSE

The Lord manifests Himself to his faithful devotees under varying circumstances, in varied places and grants them the succour they sorely need and pray for. The Almighty Lord reveals Himself to them in their diverse walks of life, and moves with them in consonance with their varied stages of spiritual development, so that His faithful ones may be drawn towards His light. From out of the abundance of His immeasurable love, He metes out to each one of his myriad votaries in accordance with his own intrinsic nature and abilities.

"To each and every one, His own nature imparting
Our Lord stands alone, Supreme, full of grace". (1.95-96)

SWEET REMEMBRANCE

The beauty of this psalm lies in the rich associations which each episode taken from the pages of the Sacred Books evokes in the hearts of all true lovers of Lord Siva. This magnificent tale of the compassionate acts (divine Leela) of the Lord unravels itself on the three dimensions of time, space and causation of not only this *world* at large, but also in the goodly realm of the *hearts* of all seekers of the Lord of Tillai and particularly in the life of St. Manikkavachakar.

CHAPTER XI

TIRUVANDA PAHUTHI
PLACE
QUINTESSENCE

THE RHAPSODY ON SIVA
TILLAI
SIVA'S MANIFESTATIONS

In the previous psalm, St. Manikkavachakar has been exhorted by his Guru to sojourn to Tillai. In this poem, he extols the revealed and the subtle relationship of the Lord in his interplay with the universe. The Supreme Being does not only take His abode at special sacred places like Mt. Kailas or Tillai; His presence embraces every part of this visible and invisible universe. He pervades the tiniest speck and atom and fills everything big and small—He whose omnipresence, none, not even the Gods of Creation and Preservation can ever comprehend fully.

The planetary spheres that constitute the elemental universe,
With their immeasurable nature and majestic phenomena,
Vying with one another in delicate distinctions of harmony,
And enhanced by infinite variety, past reckoning—
They're like floating atoms penetrated by rays through

narrow slits;

So microscopic they seem when pitted against His Infinity.

Know Him, who moves the realms of Brahma and Tirumal
In their work of creation and preservation; who effects
Their dissolution—Himself, the abiding source of Involution;
By His seen and unseen manifestations, as a mighty whirlwind
Overpowers the low pressure wind belts, He moves the world
In its dynamic processes—The Beauteous One.

According to the philosophy underlying the opening twelve lines of this psalm, the Supreme Being's interplay with the elemental universe is depicted. In the beginning of each aeon, the Lord evolves the phenomenal universe and sustains it as the scene of the activity of births and deaths of countless beings. At the end of each aeon, He destroys and

truth—in short, Have you seen God?”—we hear St. Manikkavachakar's answer in this Canto. “Yes! Verily have I seen Him, and this is how I have experienced His Presence.”

CHAPTER XII

POTRI TIRU AHAVAL	THE GARLAND OF PRAISE
PLACE	TILLAI
QUINTESENCE	THE PROGRESSION OF HUMAN LIFE

In this psalm, the poet sings the song of praise to the Lord, for graciously guiding man through the vicissitudes and uncertainties of life. It is a faithful record of a pilgrim's progress from the mother's womb to the light of God, the emergence of the life of man through successive stages, guided by the ever sustaining power of Grace. The poet's pledge of dogged surrender to the Feet of God is but a feeble attempt to signify his immeasurable debt of grateful love to the Giver of Life, Love eternal and Light. This is the last of four psalms of Adoration, and in it is heard the crescendo of praise—'All Hail'—to the Lord in His transcendent and immanent forms. The quartet weaves the immortal garland of salutation and forms the most popular of all the songs in Tiruvachakam.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THY HOLY FEET

1. *While the four-faced Brahma and other celestial devas implore,
He measureth the three worlds with His sacred Feet—
While Seers from all four quarters adore Him with
their senses five,
He—Beauteous Mal—whose head doth gleam with rays,
He doth assume the guise of a boar and set forth to probe*

THE POETRY OF EXPERIENCE

CHAPTER XIII

TIRUCHATAKAM:
THE SUBLIME CENTO

BEFORE AND AFTER

In the light of realisation after his initiation by the God-Guru, our Poet sang jubilantly the psalms on Siva, in the first quartet of Tiruvachakam entitled "The Poetry of Adoration". At His holy Feet, we saw the poet offering his garland of praise and from it was born this rubhayat of hundred odes known also as the "Cento of Divine Beatitude". In this "Cento", his unflinching devotion to his Guru blossoms afresh, as he bids adieu to his life as a minister of state.

In a mood of detachment, freed from the thronging desires of a man of the world, the poet in rapt astonishment muses on the different phases of mystic love. Who could fathom its depths? Who could explore the recesses of the mind of a man standing at the threshold of supreme surrender to the Divine Love? St. Manikkavachakar's heart is like a perennial fountain from whose springs flow the purest and holiest Love. It eludes analysis. In Tiruchatakam, we see the pageant of the most moving, passing strange and magnetic of all human relationships, that of a Siva bhakta who beholds the light of Siva manifested in human form, and at whose sacred Feet, he pledges eternal love and servitude.

THE BLOOMS

Holy Love (Bhakti) is the divine principle which energises the mind of Manivachakar. In Tiruchatakam, we watch his response to the blessedness of his illumination by his Guru, obtaining which he becomes intoxicated, transfixed and bound. He recounts in the hundred odes of this Cento, that neither the Devas nor the Asuras can break asunder this silken cord of supreme surrender to his sovereign Lord and Master. We understand but dimly the beauty of his renunciation, that

lyric is appropriate to a soliloquy, where Manivachakar discerns the urgency for right understanding. In the third decad of Tiruchatakam, is worked out the steps by which man can attain right understanding.

CHAPTER XIV

TIRUCHATAKAM

THE THIRD ASCENT. DECAD 3.

Mortification of the Self

Is it all "I" or all "Thou"?

The poet is moved to follow the path of love, in order to assuage his sense of separation from the Supreme Self. Manivachakar relies on two main techniques to heighten his endeavour, as he climbs up the Mount of Love. The incomprehensible nature of his Beloved is constantly penetrated by the poet's references to vedic and agamic allusions, and by his many illustrations of traditional beliefs and rituals. Secondly, we have in sharp contrast the picture of himself, an object of abject insignificance, having been chosen as His "vassal" of love! He was unworthy and was not meant for this high calling. How could his frail mortality withstand the torrential flow from the source of Love? The result of this encounter is witnessed in his maddening sensations of gasping, panting, throttling, choking, benumbing, melting, resisting, escaping until in overwhelming awe, fear, disgust, pathos heroic, defiance and mirthsome frolic (the classic rasas of emotional experiences) he is strengthened to receive the offerings of Love divine. He was not ready for it but he was whipped into acceptance.

When Manikkavachakar realised that there was absolutely no way 'Out', and that his enslavement was absolute, vanquished as he was by the insuperable power of the Divine will, he gave up his isolation and separateness and it was then that he experienced His living presence within him. It was at this juncture that he began his ascent on the mystic mount of love, step by step. Since his enslavement, he had

pany of the saints, and unabashed, he joins in the joyous ecstasy of the august assembly.

CHAPTER XV

TIRUCHATAKAM

THE SEVENTH STAGE. DECAD 7.

A Plea for Divine Compassion

In this decad where the saint begs for divine grace, we hear the plaintive notes of a weary pilgrim. As he labours up the mystic mount, he has already bodied forth in imagination, his enjoyment of the company of the saintly pilgrims who shall welcome him at journey's End. In this section, he continues to sing in praise of the Lord and tunes his prayer for more and more of strengthening love.

The poet artistically portrays the inevitable obstacles which bar his way for a speedier ascent upwards. The barriers of existence, the limitations of the body, the spirit willing and the flesh being weak idea, play on the poet's feelings, that he wrings out a haunting cry in this decad, for "The Immediate Solace of His Love."

It is not satisfying to be a spectator of others' enjoyment, however gladsome such a sight is! Detachment to the world alone will not suffice. Attachment must actively spring in the core of the heart and the depth of the mind to the "Matchless, Supreme, Spotless one, the Mystic Dancer at Tillai. No longer can I continue to abide in this body, Oh Sankara, My felicity!"

5. 7. 61.

Adoration to the Lord both in his formless and manifested aspect, is an effective device adopted by our bard of Tillai to attain His feet. The whole Poem of Tiruvachakam is a poetic garland of adorable incantation to the Beloved Lord. That it is beneficial to attach oneself to the highest Love is conveyed by sage Tiruvalluvar:

CHAPTER XVI

NEETHAL VINNAPPAM: THE POET'S PRAYER
PLACE: UTTARA KOSA MANGAI
QUINTESENCE: RENUNCIATION ABSOLUTE.

"My Gem! In ignorance Thy Grace I denied."

THE WAY

This hymn is a prayer. That every man aspires to enjoy the bliss of Siva and be for ever in the presence of His eternal light has been the theme so far. In this poem, the poet supplicates that His loving Grace should never forsake him; this time his path does not lead him up to the mystic mount of love, but to the way of renunciation and detached service.

In its primeval state, the soul of man though embedded in gloom was inseparable from His Divine Grace. When the soul has its first gleam of illumination by his Grace, then begins the pangs of separation from His Gracious feet. The soul after its active impact with the divine grace begins its process of cleansing and purification and searches for the way of reunion with the Gracious Feet. Love is one of the searchlights and the other is the discipline of detachment to the world. The prayer of the poet in this psalm is to reunite him to His loving gracious Feet and not to leave him alone in the world.

After his initiation, Manivachakar had wandered to the shrine of Uttara Kosa Mangai. He felt desolate at the separation of his Guru and His devotees at Tirupperunturai. In this psalm, he fortifies his mind by detachment to withstand the burrs of this world. In these fifty quatrains, the last word in each verse is repeated as the first word of the following verse and the repetition of the refrain, "Leave me not in loving grace," contributes to the unity of thought and expression.

LEAVE ME NOT

Fear and dejection are the dominant sentiments (bhavas) in this elegiac strain of poetry. "To extricate himself from

THE TESTAMENT OF BEAUTY

CHAPTER XVII

THE TESTAMENT OF BEAUTY

TIRUEMPAVAI (ODE 7) TO TIRUTHASANGAM (ODE 19)

Introduction

The Poet relates his impressions on the road to Tillai through the devices of children's games and recreations, by adopting folk song lore, folk games and sending messages through the bee, kuyil and the parrot. Having sung 'The Poet's Prayer,' he awaits the answer of the Lord. The reaction to his cry of "Leave me not," is conveyed in these happy songs where the Lord unfolds the truth of His nearness to His devotees and His presence in the world where cares abound. He is in the world and in the soul of man mingling in the thoughts of man and movements of nature. As the Poet journeys from place to place witnessing the 'Leela' — the Dance of Siva in all its manifold aspects — he finds this world neither a blot nor blank; it is indeed an endearing world to live and let live, to love and be loved.

After Manivachakar had tasted the wondrous love of God and learnt the value of detachment, he views the world as a fine training ground to work for the good of all mankind and enjoy lasting contentment. The Lord bade him at the time of his initiation to remain on earth and find his way to Tillai, His abode of bliss. Though the master's order "Tarry here yet awhile" seemed a cruel exile at first, the poet came to understand that his mission in life was to sing the glory of the Lord. So we see the bard here on the road to Tillai. On the wayside and highways of his pilgrimage, he sees the people busily engaged in the game of life. He halts and sings these lyrics that they may hear and follow the royal road to God through work and worship. He directs the attention of all the wayfarers who listen to his songs to dedicate their work and pray to God. "Do your work as unto the Lord and sing His praises continuously. Come all

CHAPTER XVIII

TIRU AMMANAI. 8.

PLACE:

TIRUVANNAMALAI

QUINTESSENCE:

THE ECSTASY OF ANANDA

Manivachakar has been viewing the world as a stage of God where the continuous processes of creation, preservation, dissolution, involution and grace are carried on. In Tiru Empavai, he is filled with wonder at the working of this marvellous force of Grace, both in the external universe and in the hearts of men, particularly in the souls of those ordained by the light of the Guru. In Tiru Ammanai, the poet has composed an ode which the young girls can sing while playing their favourite ball game, and the poem is full of bubbling joy as it dwells on the glory of God.

The saintly Vathavurar dwells here in gratitude most profound, on the working of the Grace of God in his heart, and through the lips of children, he reflects the joyful experience of his life at Tirupperunturai when the Guru revealed himself to him. The refrain of the canto is "Sing ye and play the ball game". The song is one of linked sweetness on the majesty of the Lord who is transcendent, unknown even to the understanding of the Gods, Brahma and Vishnu who preside over creation and preservation of the universe. Though He is without name and form, beyond the comprehension of created objects including the heavenly devas, yet the wonder of wonder is that He is also accessible in manifested form to all true devotees. 8.2. He revealed Himself to me, enslaved me and vouchsafed the highest freedom ever realised by man. "Sing Ye my little ones and play the ball game".

The essence of this poem lies in its incommunicable yet bubbling feeling of ineffable joy. This is an example of poesy subordinating matter to the inspiration of feeling. The poet's inner experience is lit up with a halo of lighted joy that we seem to hear the joyful tinkle of the cymbals of the children who sing and play the game; so ingeniously has the Songster

CHAPTER XIX

TIRUCHALAL: 12.

THE SACRED DIALOGUE

PLACE:

TILLAI

QUINTESSENCE: ON SIVA'S COMPASSIONATE ENERGY

This lyric is beautiful in form and falls under the class of the dialogue of ideas, represented by the dialogues of Plato. The aim is the logical establishment of a definite set of ideas. In this case the puranic references relating to Siva and embodied in the tenets of Saivism are interpreted. The background of the dialogue creates an attitude of sympathy, and arouses interest in the subject. It is said that the poet here appears to refute the arguments of the Buddhist priests through the lips of the Buddhist princess from Ceylon, whose dumbness he had cured; she rebuts their arguments against Siva's manifestations and His sports as illustrated in the puranas. The mystical meaning of each of His manifold appearances and acts is brought out clearly; so the final effect on the reader is more exhilarating than if we had read the arguments in the way of direct exposition.

"Chalal" is a kind of a game in which the verse is the accompaniment. The first two lines of each verse contain the answer. Usually it is sung by a chorus of girls with much clapping of hands. The main purpose of the poem is to convey the true glory of the Lord, by bringing out the esoteric meaning of the rituals, insignia and puranic episodes connected with the Lord. Some commentators think that the poem also contains a refutation of the Buddhist precepts as practised in his day. There is no internal evidence however to prove the truth of this incident, nor of his curing the dumb princess from Ceylon.

The Lord is Infinite, Transcendent; He manifests Himself to man, through His Grace which is symbolised by the Sakti-Uma by His side. The poet has stressed the validity and the authority of the Agamic scriptures as the revealed "word of God" throughout this poem. The frequent allusion to

of men. Manivachakar has implicit faith in the sovereignty of His Grace to lead man to the Bliss of Union with Siva.

Though the Ocean of Bliss (Ananda) may lie at our feet, we shall continue to thirst for its refreshing waters, if the Lord does not will to give it to us. We can take only that which comes from Him. Of our own accord we cannot sip the waters of grace and quench our dying thirst. He must teach us first how to sip it, and then we shall know not only to sip but quaff and shall never know any satisfaction, till we are filled with its honeyed sweetness. By singing His praises, we can learn to love Him and His world, and thus steadfastly, we shall be led to the refuge of His Blessed Feet. They also serve who only sing of HIM and His Grace.

CHAPTER XX

TIRU PALLI ELUCHI: 20.

THE MORNING HYMN

PLACE:

TIRUPPERUNTURAI

QUINTESSENCE: DARKNESS RECEDES WITH THE DAWN

The night gives us rest and recoups our strength. In this lyric, the call is to the inner self of man to awaken from his slumber and use his potent energies with the aid of the rays of the morning sun, and realise the high purpose for which he is born in this earth.

In Tirupperunturai, Manikkavachakar was first awakened from the slumber of worldly power and ease to face the light of God's Grace. While journeying from Madura, for the purpose of purchasing horses for his royal Master, the sun of Truth appeared in the guise of a teacher under the Kuruntha Tree and enlightened him to realise the destiny of his soul. The darkness that enveloped him hitherto receded. He was exceedingly happy in the company of his Guru and His holy Saints, when one day they too left him. The Poet pictures his God Guru in the state of involution, a state of passive non-activity, and he adopts the form of popular Hindu worship in India to awaken the Lord to gra-

CHAPTER XXI

THE TESTAMENT OF LOVE

PRE-VIEW

After singing the Temple lyric, the poetry of Manikkavachakar becomes more and more mystical. Bhakti is a mode of recognition in which the soul is concerned with pure "awareness". From the Temple lyric to the last song of the "Testament of Attainment", we trace the upward flight of the emancipated soul towards the final goal of eternal bliss.

In every one of the lyrics that follow, Manikkavachakar's poetry consists of a sinking in rapture, a prayer for consummation and craving for the sole actuality which transcends thought and speech. All great saints pass through the vicissitudes of pain and pleasure, the way of all flesh, the way of all seekers after Truth, through the sting of purgation blind, on to the sloughs of Despond and Despair, till they commingle with the Ananda of Bliss. From pleasure to pessimism, ecstasy to gloom, despair to loneliness, Manikkavachakar soars on the wings of his viewless poesy to the House of Joy. An understanding of the general import of the poetry of "Bhakti" (Spiritual Love) is essential in order to follow the poet, in the last phase of his soul's sublime ascent.

The mind of the poet is filled with eternal forms of Beauty and Perfection which were their materials of thought, their media of observation. The 'Bhakti' literature resorts to the constant employment of musical imagery, as we find in the Testament of Attainment (49):

"The pure gem's wordless music then shall yield delight".

"The unheard melody of the conch shells resound joyfully."

The condition of joyous and awakened love to which the saintly mystic passes when his purification is at an end, is to him, the state of song. Manikkavachakar does not see

yearning of the poet to see Him, visibly, directly, in His manifested form as at Tillai, is resounded in this lyric of aspiration.

CHAPTER XXII

ATHISAYA PATHU: 26.

ODE TO WONDER

PLACE:

TIRUPPERUNTURAI

QUINTESENCE:

THE FACETS OF LIBERATION

Manikkavachakar's poetry is impregnated with the element of 'wonder' — the *rasa* of novelty, which originated in the miraculous enlightenment of the poet under the Kuruntha tree and flowed around the might of His infinite grace. This element of wonder pervades all pure poetry. It enabled Blake to see the world in a grain of sand, and Tiruvalluvar sought it in "Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha", while Kambar, Tolstoy and Shakespeare discovered it in the travails of humanity and its still sad music.

Manivachakar is wrapt in a spirit of reverential wonder and trumpets to the world the wondrous way in which his master called him, even him, into the fold of the society of the holy saints of God. "In wonder, I gazed" is the oft-repeated chorus which conveys the rhythm of his wondrous experience.

Did you know the wonder, oh, the wonder of the great treasure, the gem of rare lustre that came my way; I did not value it, allured as I was with the charms of the fair sex. Yet, my pearl, my incomparable father, He who is without a peer, He took me into His own and enlisted my services in the society of His Saints! 26. 1.

I did not give much thought to analyse my way of life; neither did I espouse the company of the righteous and the just, for ever since I was born, I whirled in sorrow of one kind or another. Yet He appeared before me with grace by His side and proclaimed that I was His bondsman, and took me into the company of His Saints. 26. 2.

This Ode is not a paean on renunciation so much as a song of victorious living. It breathes the melody of buoyant surrender. There is no idea of world-weariness here as commented upon by some western critics. Instead of life-negation, there is life-affirmation. The purpose of life cannot be understood by the mastery over this changing world of ours, and the processes of life here with all its magnificent achievements. It is the glimpse into the invisible world of eternal values which can illumine the problems of human existence. To be in tune with the rhythm of this invisible world of light and truth and to experience it in its fullness, is the significant message of this poem.

With the strength of Grace, which St. Manivachakar invokes in the following poem on Grace, he hopes to achieve the mastery of life whereby the soul shall become purified from the "unwilling dross that checks its flight". Trust is a positive condition but because it is fixed on an Object which is beyond the range of human thought, negative terms are used to describe it. The focus is on realisation or fulfilment which is the ultimate goal of life. Life becomes purposeless *only* if we do not cling to His gracious Feet for support and guidance.

"Other than thy laudable Feet,
I know of no other refuge—Why?
Thou sought me out, Lord of Sivaloga,
Dweller in the shrine of Tiru Perunturai.
In love I chide thee now and bemoan.
Be it thy will to make me steadfast, or else
I faint. No longer can I bide here on earth.
Call me to Thee in Grace."

28. 3.

CHAPTER XXIII

ARUL PATHU: 29.
PLACE:
QUINTESENCE:

ODE ON GRACE
TIRUPPERUNTURAI
THE PURIFYING PROCESS

'Grace' is the "Open Sesame" that opens the gates of divine happiness to the soul of man, and every seeker of God

I was tied up like the meek cow.
 Then the Lord fed me with the nectar of bliss.
 He purged me from the strains of life.
 He freed me from all afflictions.
 Thus liberated, I've come to the Liberator
 He who holds His mystic dance at Tillai."

He who is the diversity of life and who is beyond the comprehension of the mortals, is also the cosmic Dancer whom the bard sees in the House of Tillai. He is immanent in the phenomenal universe, in the minds and hearts of His devout saints, in all diverse forms as the *One* that remains, while the many change and pass.

In Tillai, Manikkavachakar beholds the unity of the Lord in his aspect of Ananda, the source of purest bliss unending. The light of perfect wisdom radiates from His beauteous presence; therefore the sages and Gods too revere the Lord of Tillai. His own joyful experience at Tillai is the award of his Guru's enlightenment at Perunturai. The abode of the Lord of Tillai signifies the highest illumination, for He is the source of the vedas, the activity of the world and the wisdom of the ages. We see the true lover of Siva (Siva bhakta) in St. Manivachakar in a mood of jubilation, as he reaches the abode of eternal wisdom, Tillai, the House of Bliss.

CHAPTER XXIV

PIKARTHANAI PATHU: 32.

PLACE:

QUINTESENCE:

A PRAYER

TIRUPPERUNTURAI

A SUPPLICATION FOR EVERLASTING

BLISS

This lyric is in the form of a tuneful prayer, a prayer for greater and deeper love for the Guru, so that an aspirant can enjoy the experience of everlasting bliss.

In the company of the saints, Manivachakar was perfectly happy after his initiation at Perunturai, but when they departed, he felt depressed and exhausted. His sensitive nature

CHAPTER XXV

PIDITHA PATHU: 37. THE LYRIC OF FLAMING LOVE
PLACE: TIRU TONIPURAM
QUINTESENCE: COMMUNION IN DIVINE BLISS

After arduous wanderings and experiences, St. Manivachakar is in one of his exalted moods as he neared the city of Tiru Tonipuram. The poet of ruby utterances communicates his intimate relationship with the One, who is beyond the horizon of the mind's dominion. This lyric conveys the resolve of the saint to grasp tenaciously at the "pearl of great price". It had been his experience to find the pearl and then lose it. At the end of a weary search he finds again the precious pearl, so that his exultation knows no bounds and this poem is a hymn of victory.

There is a power in the soul which is linked to the infinite nature of Siva. Like the seed which is dropped into the ground and lost to view, even so, the soul takes its genesis from the essential nature of Siva. In the ripeness of time, it radiates the incomprehensible essence and then the soul conceives superintelligibly and beatifically. In that beatific mode, it holds tenaciously to the "Blessed Feet" and calls out:

"To Thee Lord Siva I hold fast,
Thou my wealth of Bliss".

The Lord is the all-pervasive splendour and the excellence of the mystic union. He is also like a delicious fruit which satisfies the hunger of a poor mendicant.

"To me who am starved in this world full of defilement,
Thou art the mellowing fruit, the healing balm
That cured me of my ailments and gave a new lease of life.
My divine physician has not only made me whole,
But also saved my family, nay, the whole of humanity.
My well-being most rare, my Lord Siva,
That we may live I hold fast to Thee.
How can Thou betake Thyself from me?"

He ends the canto with this memorable gem:

"Did I perform any worthy acts of worship?

Did I merit initiation of "*Sivayanama*"?

Like honey, nectar sweet, my blessed Siva

Of his own accord came, entered my soul

And bequeathed his serf, the legacy of Grace.

This bodily existence, from that day, I loathed.

38. 10.

We are reminded of what Browning says in Paracelsus:

"I knew I felt (perception unexpressed),

Uncomprehended by our narrow thought

What God is, what we are,

What life is—how God tastes an infinite joy

In infinite ways. One everlasting bliss.

All power proceeds from whom all being emanates".

TIRU PULAMBAL: 39.

A DITTY ON SACRED LAMENT

PLACE:

TIRU ARUR

QUINTESENCE:

THE RIPENESS OF EXPERIENCE

This canto consists of only three verses. The poet assures his own self that he will praise none but the Lord, and having seen Him once, he would always invoke Him. He conveys the sweetness of his enjoyment of the Lord's grace in this stanza:

"I seek not kith or kin; place or name I prize not.

The wise, no more do I desire, nor knowledge—

Lord of Kuttalam! Thy beauteous feet I seek,

Like the mother cow yearning for its calf".

39. 3.

CHAPTER XXVI

KULAA PATHU: 40.

HYMN TO GOLDEN TILLAI

PLACE:

TILLAI

QUINTESENCE:

UNINTERRUPTED ENJOYMENT

Manivachakar's calm serenity which followed the vision of the Lord of Tillai is communicated in each of the ten verses in this hymn, which reminds us of Arnold's prayer.

merged in the light of contemplation and there lies the secret of the Jivan Mukta's *realisation*.

"My eyes see no more Thy Gracious feet;
 No adoration raise I from my lips —
 No worship do I perform, neither do I cherish Thee.
 Self-knowledge has gone out of me.
 To enjoin Thy holy saints, I've no desire;
 With my ignoble senses, I've ceased to act;
 Even if Thou should'st come to me, my master,
 I should feel bashful to look on Thee."

44.

CHAPTER XXVII

YAATHIRAI PATHU: 45. THE SONG OF THE PILGRIMS
 PLACE: TILLAI
 QUINTESENCE: THE CALL TO THE WORLD!

In the joy of contemplation and with the certitude of the Lord's infinite love, Saint Manivachakar is filled with a holy desire that the struggling humanity too should make their ascent to the "city of God". So far we have followed the bard as a pilgrim of an inward Odyssey. At Tirupperunturai, his master's grace flowed into his soul and on the Road to Tillai, he speaks of the sense of the "divine presence" seen at the Eagle Mount. In a state of exalted happiness, he became "a mode of the infinite" at Tillai, and was filled with an abounding sense of the divine life and of the reality within him as THAT, underlying the phenomenal universe. He wished to communicate this revelation to the world of men; hence his call in this poem to all who seek the joyous release, to join him in the great pilgrimage. His Quest has ended in Conquest and he wants all to follow him. With what tenderness does he rally the still sad forces of humanity to free themselves from the havoc of their own ruination and afflictions of life. "It is time", he says so touchingly, "that we abandon the falsities of life and betake ourselves to the refuge of His Holy Feet. The compassionate radiance of His Grace bubbles in foaming whiteness in

He praises the Lord's sacred abode of Tirupperunturai, the place of his liberation, the centre of worship for pious householders, saints, sages and devas. Exerywhere he turns, he sees His glory shining in this universe.

"He is the goal of Thought, Knowledge Absolute.

He transcends the beauteous spoken word and yet by uttering 'Perunturai', I'm released from my births. His Healing Feet, I placed them in my soul.

48. 7.

Thus we see that by chanting His praise in gem-like utterances, Manikka Peruman attained the illumination that radiated from the 'flawless gem'.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TIRU PADAIAADCHI: 49.

THE TESTAMENT OF
ATTAINMENT

PLACE:

TILLAI

QUINTESENCE:

THE BLESSEDNESS OF BLISS

In the experience of Siva's final manifestation, St. Manivachakar apprehends the Truth of Oneness. *He is all that is*. The poet has released himself from the world of images, and beckons us to do likewise; he does not shrink from the world of woes and delights as in the days of yore; he does not shun the world as a fearful place nor does he ignore it as a mirage. The One remains; the many change and pass away.

"He sees it all the time as that which it is".

48. 6.

All the time-forms that change in the process of the cycle of 'becoming', gain a new meaning and a new dignity which without the vision of the Real, it could not have. This is the revelation of Reality which Manikkavachakar evokes in this "Song of Attainment".

It embodies the highest consummation of Manivachakar's enjoyment of bliss, to experience that all things in their time-illusion, events in life as well as problems of life, have to

pain, then He initiated him into the secrets of spiritual health. The Source of Excellence (Omkaram) can be discovered by one who follows the path of Love. 51. 7. In 'Acho-Padigam', the poet has given significant expression to an experience remote from human comprehension. Fully steeped in humanity and Love, Manivachakar recalls the lowest step from where he began his journey of life, and gazes in wonder from the summit of Truth which he has at last attained!

"My divine Mother bestowed on me Her Love,
Exalted me as one with some Significance,
Like a dog that's uplifted to a palanquin.
Who's so blessed? Salutation in wonderment."

51. 9.

CHAPTER XXIX

INTEGRAL RELATIONSHIP

SIVA RAJYA IN TIRUVACHAKAM

Indian poets conceived poetry as a kind of philosophy touched with emotion. The poet is the prophet of the world's final causes; the interpreter of creation groaning and travailing after its proper meanings. The poet sees the infinite Truth in his most exalted and entranced moods and spends his less exalted moments in giving form and expression to his realisations. The ideal of poesy wherein song and self-realisation become one in joy is of the essence of Indian conception of the mission of art. It is in the fitness of things that aesthetic delight and spiritual bliss are expressed by the suggestive word "Rasa". In India is found the golden link between Poetry, Religion and Philosophy.

Tiruvachakam gives us not merely a coherent system of Philosophy which in later years came to be known as "Saiva Siddhanta", but also the individual throb of emotional realisation, in which by means of that system, a man feels he understands and can love the inmost reality of things. The

"Though Ether, Wind, Fire, Water, Earth should fail,
His constant being fails not, knows no weariness!

In Him my body, thought and soul are merged —
On the extinction of 'meself', sing we, and beat Tellenam!"

11. 18.

It is not enough for the soul to become one with God, but it must also consider its actions as those of the Lord.

CHAPTER XXX

BLOSSOMS OF ILLUMINATION

THE SYMPHONY OF LIFE AND LOVE

Questions on the goal of human existence, the means of attaining it, and the nature of life in the state of spiritual freedom are elucidated in Tiruvachakam. In the ode on Tiruchadakam (5) it is said that Man by the grace of a Guru begins seriously to enquire about the whence and the whither of himself and of the world, and about the means of attaining freedom from the imperfections of human life and of becoming one with the Supreme Being. Several births are required before man can reach the final goal. He has to practise several disciplines to build up a good and strong character. He has to achieve purity in body, thought, word and deed. He has to learn to refrain from evil and to try to do good to others.

Manivachakar experienced God as Supreme Love and that Love was also identical with the supremacy of Law. A spiritual aspirant had to cultivate love of God and worship Him in all sincerity and humility (Vide Ode of Tiru Empavai). Such worship was acceptable to God. Without great love and devotion to God, no amount of penance would take the worshipper to the highest goal. God is the nearest to us, and should be felt as the dearest to us as well.

Profound gratitude for all His mercies shown to man through aeons, mercies unsought and unasked, melts the heart of St. Manivachakar. And the realisation that He is love,

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An Oriental College, teaching Sanskrit and the Shastras by traditional methods.

Departments

(a) Mumbadevi Sanskrit Pathashala, for specialized Shastric studies; (b) Devidas Lallubhai Pathashala, for preliminary Shastric and Sanskrit studies; (c) Nagardas Rughnathdas Jyotish Shikshapith for specialized study of Indian Astrology and Astronomy, and (d) Purushottam Thakkar Vedashala for Vedic studies.

Examinations Conducted

For the Bhavan's diplomas (recognised by the Government of Bombay) of Shastri, Acharya and Vachaspati in Sahitya, Vyakaraṇa, Vedanta, Jyotish.

Facilities

Free tuition to all and free boarding and lodging or scholarships to all deserving students.

2. GITA VIDYALAYA:

An Academy for the study of Indian Culture with special reference to the *Bhagavad Gita*. Classes conducted at the Bhavan and 19 centres. Examinations for the Gita Vid and Gita Visharad Diplomas are conducted and scholarships, medals and prizes are given to successful candidates.

3. MUNGALAL GOENKA SAMSHODHAN MANDIR:.

A Post-graduate & Research Institute recognised by the University of Bombay for research for Ph.D. & M.A.

Departments

(a) Sanskrit Shikshapith; (b) Singhi Jain Sahitya Shikshapith; (c) Narmad Gujarati Shikshapith; (d) Bhagavad Dharma Shikshapith.

Facilities

Scholarships and free guidance to deserving scholars.

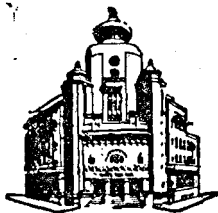
4. BHARATIYA ITIHASA VIBHAG: (Dept. of Indian History)

The Bharatiya Itihasa Vibhag was organised in 1944. The Vibhag's 10-Volume scheme of "History & Culture of the Indian People" is a monumental work designed to give a comprehensive and authentic, balanced and up-to-date account of India's History and Culture through the ages.

5. MUNSHI SARASVATI MANDIR: (An Institute of Culture)

Departments

(a) *Library* with about 60,000 printed volumes, including rare indological volumes and a Children's section; (b) *Museum* consisting of ancient and valuable manuscripts, paintings, bronzes, etc.; (c) *All-India Cultural Essay Competition*; (d) *Bharatiya Sangit*



Shikshapith—An Academy of Music for teaching and conducting research in Music—affiliated to the National Academy of Hindustani Music, Lucknow, teaching for Intermediate and Graduate courses.

6. **BHARATIYA KALA KENDRA**—An Academy of Arts and Dramatics, including a School of Dancing.

7. **MUDRAN AUR PRAKASHAN MANDIR**:

As a first step towards establishing an Academy of Printing, Bhavan has acquired Messrs. Associated Advertisers & Printers—one of the biggest presses in Bombay.

(a) This department publishes the results of the research work of the Bhavan, the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad and the Munshi Sahitya; (b) *The Book University*—Under this scheme, books—ancient and modern—are published in a uniform size and at a low price with a view to make the best literature and classics of India and the world available to the common man in easily understandable form.

8. **DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALS AND PERIODICALS:**

Bhavan's Journal: English fortnightly devoted to life, literature and culture, was started in August, 1954.

Bharati: A Hindi monthly is being brought out since August, 1956.

Bharatiya Vidya: A research quarterly is also published by this Department.

9. **M. M. COLLEGE OF ARTS & N. M. INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE:**

This College of the Bhavan is affiliated to the University of Bombay for courses leading to B.A., B.Sc., M.A., M.Sc. and Ph.D. The College has a Gita Academy also.

Kendras outside Bombay

Bhavan has opened four centres in Delhi, Kanpur, Allahabad and Madras.

The Bhavan has also three centres outside India at Stuttgart in Germany, at California and at Brooklyn in New York.

Associated and Affiliated Institutions

(1) The Gujarati Sahitya Parishad; (2) The Gujarati Sahitya Sansad; (3) The Bombay Astrological Society; (4) The Bharatiya Stri Seva Sangh.





THE AUTHOR

Ratna Navaratnam, born in a pious Hindu family known for its culture, has had a brilliant academic record at the Presidency College, Madras, Annamalai University and the Institute of Education, London. For over ten years she was the head of the Ramanathan College, Ceylon. She then joined Government service and is now Education Officer, Jaffna District.

Ratna Navaratnam was a delegate to the Geneva Conference for International Understanding in 1951. She is a Life Member of the Royal Asiatic Society, and an active member in many educational and cultural organisations. She has travelled widely in India, the United Kingdom and West Europe.

She has written several books for children. Her *New Frontiers in East-West Philosophies of Education* has done much to promote East-West understanding.

Inheriting a religious temperament from her father, Ratna came under the powerful spiritual influence of Maha Yogar Swamigal of Columbuturai. This set her on a deep study of Saiva Siddhanta books which resulted in her writing a thesis entitled *The New Approach to Tiruvachakam*, published by the Annamalai University in 1946. The present book is an elaboration of the thesis based on the fullness of the spiritual experience she has had since in her quest for Immortal Beauty.