

VIPRANĀRĀYAṆA  
OR  
TŌṆḌAR-ADIP-PŌḌI ĀḶVĀR  
(Enjoyer of the Dust of the Feet of Devotees)

INTRODUCTION

Vipranārāyaṇa, or Nārāyaṇa, the Brāhmaṇa, who is otherwise known as Tōṇḍar-Adip-Pōḍi ĀḶvār (or Bhaktāṅghrirēṇu in Sanskrit) had a romantic life. He was born, so says the *Guruparampāra*, in 2814 B.C.<sup>1</sup> in the month of Dhanus (December-January) under the lunar asterism Jyeṣṭhā, in the village of Tiru-Manḍaṅguḍi. He was brought up as a devout Brāhmaṇa and initiated in the Vedic scriptures. He grew and undertook the vocation of serving God by making garlands for Him. For this purpose he grew a well-nurtured beautiful flower garden. When he was spending his life thus, romance came to him in an unexpected manner.

There was in that place a beautiful dancing girl (*vēśyā*), Devadevi by name, who was attending to her duties at the palace of the local chieftain. One day, when she was returning to her house, the day being very hot, she, along with her companion, sat under the shade of the trees in the garden of Vipranārāyaṇa. She was admiring the wonderful ability of the gardener and learnt from her companion that the garden belonged to Vipranārāyaṇa, a very devout devotee of God who would not look at any woman. But the *vēśyā* being conscious of her accomplishments in the art of enticement and seduction of the opposite sex, vowed to make the brahmin her victim within six months or else to become a servant of her companion. Thus a mutual agreement between herself and her companion was entered into for making the brahmin fall off from his devout life. Next day Devadevi donning very plain clothes approached the saintly Vipranārāyaṇa. He was lost in the work of God. After some time she prostrated before him and narrated to him her story, that she was a dancing girl and seized with a desire to serve God and get away from that hereditary life to which she was born she had approached him. She offered to work in the garden and tend the plants and water the trees. The innocent saint accepted her offer, and permitted her to do such service as she could do. Some months thereafter one day there was a heavy downpour of rain. The saint went into his hut. He saw *Dēvadēvī*, who was standing outside, being drenched. He asked her to enter the hut, and as she was completely wet he gave his own upper cloth to her to wear. Then alone did his mind turn outwards, and gazing at her attractive form and beauty and seductive

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<sup>1</sup> Ancient India : (by Dr. S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar) p.404. The historical date assigned is the seventh century, A.D.

looks he fell in love with her. The victory was won by Devadevi and her vow was fulfilled. Thereafter his passion for her took its determined ruthless course. He began neglecting his duties to the temple, his brahminic duties were slowly given up; his one and only absorption was this woman; slowly all his property was lost in feeding the infatuation, and having become poor in all ways, he was turned out of her house. Yet his infatuation for her did not lessen.

It was under such circumstances that the Lord (Śrīraṅganātha) and Mother Lakṣmi took pity on his condition and wished to rescue him from his fatal infatuation for a woman of ill-fathe. Taking one of his golden vessels used for performing worship to Him, the Lord went to the house of Dēvadēvī and called out to her saying that He, Azhakiyamaṇavālan, servant of Vipranārāyaṇa, had brought a golden cup to her from him. She took it from him, not knowing that it was God Himself. Soon after she sent word to Vipranārāyaṇa to come and be with her, and he with undiminished infatuation for her ran up to her shamelessly.

Next morning the temple priests did not find the golden vessel in the sanctum sanctorum. A search was started. The companion of Dēvadēvī reported to one of the servants of the local Chief that Vipranārāyaṇa sent to Dēvadēvī a golden vessel the previous night. The servants then seized the golden vessel from Dēvadēvī and marched both Dēvadēvī and Vipranārāyaṇa to the chief's presence. At the hearing of the case Dēvadēvī asserted that Vipranārāyaṇa sent through a servant of his, by name Azhakiyamaṇavālan, the golden vessel. But Vipranārāyaṇa denied it and said than he had no servant at all, not to speak of having one Azhakiyamaṇavālan as his servant.

The judgement was reserved for the next day. That night in a dream Azhakiyamaṇavālan (Śrīraṅganātha) told the chief that all this was His work and it was He who delivered the golden vessel to the woman, and thus humiliated both that woman and Vipranārāyaṇa. He told him that that was sufficient reformatory punishment, for what is there worse than loss of honour to man? The woman was also asked to be exonerated, as she too had learnt the lesson that she should not tempt saints. The saint was therefore next morning released, as also the woman.

The saint, having been publicly humiliated, and learning that it was due to the grace of God, which he did not deserve, that he was released from more severe punishment, and rescued from the life of sexuality and folly into which he had sunk, and fully seized with the sense of guilt and sinfulness, undertook to serve the feet of the devotees of God and purify himself with the dust and water of their feet.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>2</sup> Mahābārata:-

Nirapekṣam munirh śāntath nirvairath amadarśanam  
anuvrajāmy ahath nityam pūyē yētaṅghrirēṇubhih.

Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa:-

name *Tondar-Adip-Poḍi* means this and it was assumed by him. Thus purified by the dust of their feet, he began to serve the Lord as he was doing previously. He developed para-bhakti and attained the status of an enjoyer of God's love of infinite attributes, an āḷvār.

The life of the āḷvār above given is the traditional version. It reveals that even though one might be very learned in sacred lore and performing service to God in the most sāttvika way, the lower vital life is likely to invade it and storm it with terrible fury. Under such circumstances God's grace alone can retrieve the soul and purify it. The āḷvār's verses in the *Tirumālai* from 23 to 40 reveal in a nutshell his own story. The service of the feet of the devotees of the Lord without displaying any irreverence to those of them born in lower castes is finely intimated in the verses 39 to 42. The āḷvār counsels the necessity of seeing God in His devotees whoever they are. The meaning of the word 'outcaste' seems to be something different from our modern meaning, for it means one who does not see the Godhead in His devotees (*adiyārs*). The āḷvār always remembers the story of the emancipation from great danger of Gajendra as illustrating the easy accessibility and *ārjava*-nature of God. The wearing of the name of God, Kaṇṇan, Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa, is equivalent to the utterance of the death-abolishing mantra: it is *mṛtyuñjaya-mantra*. Is it strange then that this Tirumalai is chanted on the birthday of Śrī Ranganatha at Srirangam? It is also the mantra of liberation and attainment of the highest *puruṣārtha*, namely *kairīkarya* of God. Devotees of God are set on the royal road to fullest enjoyment of God's nature, and the bliss and the beauty of the Divine incarnate everywhere. They must assist one another and learn of each other the glory and wonderful mystery of the Divine Lord, the omnipervading beneficence (*bōdhayantah parasparam* of the Gitā).

The āḷvār has left two works, Tirumālai, the Sacred Garland of Hymns, and *Tiruppalliyēzhucci*, Songs of the Morning of which translations are given in this article. The āḷvār himself is stated to be an *aṃśa* of the garland of God, Vijayanthi. The story goes that *Vijayanthi* is the *Vaiṣṇavī-āstra* which is capable of destroying every thing and every one. Murā was destroyed by it, and the story of Bhagadattavadha in the Mahābhārata: *Drōṇā Parvan*, shows that God wears this most powerful weapon as his garland and that He had given it to Naraka at the request of Mother Earth and that it was then returning back to Him. The āḷvār indeed considers his composition to be such a wonderful weapon, useful for attaining immortality and Ānanda, triumph over sinfulness and attainment of the vision and the knowledge and the service of

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Yasya mūrdhni sthitarh yāvad vaiṣṇavāṅghriraja's  
śubham Gaṅgādī sarvatīrthāni tāvat tiṣṭhanty asamsayaṃ  
Bhāradvāja Saṃhitā:-  
Etat samastapāpānām prāyaścittam maniśibhih  
nirṇitam bhagavad-bhakta-pādōdakaniśēvanam.  
(These quotations are from the Guruparapara)

God.

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## TIRUMĀLAI

1. O lord who art residing at Śrīraṅgaṃ, O Thou First Being (cause) who protectest the three worlds within Thyself during dissolution and throwest them out of Thyself (at the time of creation)! By learning (to practise) Thy name, the senses and the sinful objects of those are restrained,<sup>3</sup> and having gone beyond and in a challenging attitude we have placed our feet on the heads of Yama (Death) and his hosts.
2. O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ! I do not wish it, even if I get, the taste of the blessed rule of the Indraloka in preference to the taste of fervently addressing Thee here ever as Oh! Acyuta<sup>2</sup> possessing the graceful body likened to a splendid green mountain, the mouth likened to the red coral, rosy eyes likened to the lotus, O Ruler of the celestials and O tender chieftain of the cowherds!
- <sup>3</sup>. Even though man's age according to the Veda be hundred years, half of it will be passed in sleeping; and the remainder of fifty years is spent as a baby, boy, youth, in disease and hunger, old age and grief.

Therefore I seek not this kind of birth, O Lord gracious of Śrīraṅgaṃ!<sup>3</sup>  
(Āṭvār addresses others)

- <sup>4</sup>. Standing in the encircling sins, even Kṣatrabandhu by uttering the three lettered name of Thine (Govinda) attained the supreme status. Lo! even though knowing that our superb loving Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ descends (to save) the devotees who do this much alone uttering His name, unheeding are men caught up in birth.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Kathōpaniṣad I 3,10-11 : Indriyēbhyah Parā Hy Arthāha...

<sup>2</sup> Acyuta : the unfalling, undeteriorating, undiminishing. This is the name of the most perfect Being. It also means that He does not permit any of His devotees to fall or slip back into ignorance, or sin of sleep.

<sup>3</sup> *Śatāyuh* or *śatamāna* indicates the normal span of human life on this planet. The following Ślōka appears to be an identical expression of the above hymn:

Āyur varṣāsatath nṛṇām parimitatha rātran tadardhatha gatam  
tasyārdham parasya cārdham aparam bālatva-vṛddhatvayōh  
sēṣam vyādhi-viyōga-duhkha- sahitarha sēvādhībhir nīyate  
jive vāritaraṅgacañclatare saukhyarh kutah prāṇinām

<sup>4</sup> Birth means birth-death cycle; or as intimated in the previous hymn, a round of sleep and disease, and misery and old-age or imbecility.

5. How can those low men who seeking to enjoy the pleasures with women, gain great sorrow, eat during nights and live, abandoning these vile ways, think only of their self with mind surrendered, become slaves of the Lord wearing Śrī on His chest, with cool Tulasi-garland, and sing and dance and attain the status of a complete-dependent (on Him) and enjoy the Nectar (immortality-bliss)?<sup>5</sup>

6. Having cruelty as a wall within and thus attaining the poverty of Heaven, and having this perishable body as the outer cover, Ye men, ye know not the hour of your death.<sup>6</sup>

Not doing service to the Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ who is the wall of Dharma, ye remain decorating your exterior for birds to prey upon (without caring for your interior).

7. Those good knowers of the scriptures will they care to learn or hear Buddhist and Śramaṇa doctrines that teach the false dharma? Even though my head is cut off, I shall not die. This is truth. Know. The God who conquered Laṅka with His bow is alone the supreme Godhead.<sup>7</sup>

8. Disgusted, the Śramaṇās (Cārvākas) Muṇḍas (Jainas), ill-fated Śākyas (Buddhists) speak intolerable; words in respect of Thee, that become insufferable; to me if I should attain my wish (then and) there it would be my duty to cut off their heads.<sup>8</sup>

9. O ignorant men, is there any other godhead when dissolution occurs to save you? (Who worship other gods) will not be able to know Him as the One Supreme Being, who can save. The Being taught by Vedic knowledge ye will not know. There is no God other than He (Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ) (to save). (Therefore) seek refuge at the feet of the Lord, our father, the grazier of the herd.<sup>9</sup>

10. (The lord) has established gods in all places. Out of His incomparable love to all those who seek liberation He has revealed Himself in the temple of Śrīraṅgaṃ. O

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<sup>5</sup> The abandonment of sexual life and riot of the senses for the sake of pleasure is deprecated as obstacles to perfection. These are prāpti - virōdhis.

<sup>6</sup> The cruelty herein referred to is the sacrificial cruelty, as the performance of these sacrifices of animals leads to heavenly enjoyment according to the śāstras. And the perishability of the body is stated here in order to point out that the pleasure-hunt is due to dēhātmabhrama - delusion that the body is the soul. Real poverty is lack of God's service.

<sup>7</sup> The original has Śāven, "I am prepared to die" but the comm. Periya Vacchān Pillai has Śākēn, "I shall not die because I am immortal."

7 and 8. refer to the doctrines that there is no soul, or that the body is the soul or rather the size of the soul is that of the body. The Śākyas are called ill-fated, because they know the greatness of God and yet are unable to seek refuge in Him and are unable to get His grace. The Āḷvār's bitterness is great.

<sup>9</sup> This verse has obviously a reference to the vision of Vaṭa-Patra-Śāyi by Sage Markaṇḍēya: Nārāyaṇa alone was then: He is the Cause and End.

men of God! Hearken; when there is the Garuḍa-rider (to give everything including liberation) will any one seek to get riches from Jyēṣṭhādēvī-the goddess of misfortune.<sup>10</sup>

11. With His unique bow (as weapon) having built a bridge across the raging ocean. He slew the king of the Rākṣasās in battle so as to save the worlds! O Ye who are devoid of grace while in womb, and do not utter about our Lord residing in the sanctum of the great temple in high-walled Śrīraṅgaṃ, are wasting your time (without seeking His refuge).<sup>11</sup>

12. When the denizens of Naraka, heard the conversation between Yama and Muḍgala, that Naraka it self came to be thought of as Svarga due to having become filled with the Names of God!

But because these ignorant men forgetting that His place in Śrīraṅgaṃ and His names, having fallen, are caught up in sorrow, am I distressed.<sup>12</sup>

13. All dwellers of this earth surrounded by the vast scented ocean, if only these men though lacking the knowledge for praising the Lord of celestials wearing the fragrant tulasi-flower garland, would but utter 'Śrīraṅgaṃ', then the entire Naraka in which the senses are caught will disperse.<sup>13</sup>

14. From the mouths of the foolish men who do not utter the name Śrīraṅgaṃ' that has gardens where honey-bees are humming, where peacocks are dancing, whose tree-tops are approached and touched by clouds' and where Indian Cuckoos make love-calls to one another and where the Lord of celestials resides, do you forcibly remove the food they are greedily eating and give it to the dogs!<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The gods are the dik-pālakas and others who have been assigned their respective places in the quarters and planes and worlds. Men seek fruits of these gods according to their desires. Liberation however is capable of being granted only by the Lord at Śrīraṅgaṃ Nārāyaṇa Himself. He has Śrī fortune, in His chest. Others are those who give misfortune because the true fortune is liberation from *saṃsāra*, utter uprooting of misery and attainment of the nectar of immortality

<sup>11</sup> The story referred to is that of *darbha-śayanaṃ* when Rāma threatened to make the ocean dry if the ocean did not make way. Without seeking the grace of God, one cannot gain His grace. Surrender to God is all.

<sup>12</sup> Muḍgala-Yama-Saṃvāda : Viṣṇu-Dharma. Heaven is where the name of God prevails. And hell is purified and mortality is extinguished, and sorrows are banished by the mere utterance of God's names.

<sup>13</sup> Śolai is flower-garden or forest. The temple city of Śrīraṅgaṃ indeed all places where Viṣṇu resides, are surrounded by excellent gardens and forests. The *Kenōpaniṣad* instructs the meditation on the Lord-Supreme power as *Vana* or *Tad-Vana* and Śrī Raṅgarāmānuja renders it as *vananīya* or *varaṇīya* the most electable and the most excellent (Variṣṭa, śrēṣṭa).

<sup>14</sup> Iśā 4: cf. Veṅkaṭanātha's commentary. God is afar to those who are looking outward and away from Him and near to those who are turning towards Him. God is near to those who love Him or have *sneha-bhāva* and have no *dvēṣa* or hatred or revulsion. The doubt which the Divine dispels is with reference to the means and ways of arriving at Him and the getting rid of the obstacles. The

15. The Lord who has the Garuda as his flag is true to those who are truthful: to those who are untruthful like me, is He untrue. To those who are seeking to become regenerate, He Himself, after granting the knowledge that He is the only One person, cuts asunder the doubts by revealing the beautiful city of Śrīraṅgaṃ.<sup>15</sup>
16. At the time when I was a gambler and a thief and, caught in the net of a woman's fish-like eyes, was helpless, was it not the Beauty of Śrīraṅgaṃ who called me, entered into my mind, and made my love increase for Him?<sup>16</sup>
17. Though standing respectfully, I was not singing praises nor folding my hands, not knowing that there was one supreme Lord; so that my hard mind could like iron be melted little by little, the sugar-like Lord who had taken up residence in the great Śrīraṅgaṃ surrounded by gardens where bees are humming, has become the Object of mine eyes.<sup>17</sup>
18. In the midst of the shining cool waters where the beating waves sound pleasantly, the lotus-eyed Lord is staying as ruler:
- On beholding His loving red lips and eyes, cool tears of delight flowing copiously from mine eyes have, alas, prevented me from enjoying more of Him. Unblessed me! What shall I do?<sup>18</sup>
19. Seeing the Lord of the colour of the ocean, resting on the serpent having placed His crowned head to the Western direction and His feet to the Eastern direction, showing His back to the North and gazing at Laṅkā in the Southern direction,

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Divine is the way and the means to the goal which is Himself and indeed He is also the remover of all obstacles to the attainment of Himself.

<sup>15</sup> The reference is to his own story when he was seduced into making love to the maiden who wanted to acquire his property by pretending to be devoted to God and at first assisted him in the making of his garlands.

<sup>16</sup> The grace of God who sought to rescue him from his pathetic position when he was arrested for the theft of a gold vessel from the temple, made it possible for him to realise the love of God to man and it was this that melted him and made him a lover athirst for God's vision.

<sup>17</sup> The passionate love for God is here expressed by the āḷvār who complains about the interference from the eyes which had always been interfering since they were always directed outwards. Now the tears are interfering, though not the eyes.

<sup>18</sup> The melting of the mind is the process or movement towards losing oneself in the Divine; it is not a collapse of the mind but the process of intuiting, of knowing that coincides with being in the depths. The resistance is broken, the solidity of the ego is impaired permanently through the heat of love, tapas or concentration and the identity of private being yields place to the realisation of oneness with the Lord who becomes the abode of the soul, and himself the abode of the Lord. There is fusion of God and man. Devotion to the Lord, concentric and integral helps this melting fusion interpenetration.

my soul has begun to melt,O dwellers of earth, what shall I do? <sup>19</sup>

20. If the devotees but perceive the wonderful person in Śrīraṅgaṃ surrounded by the flowing waters (of Kāvēri) lying on the serpent. His chest adorned by Śrī, His body like the emerald and His shoulders, His eyes like the pure lotuses,His lips red and His mouth like the coral, and His crown long and glorious, and the general effulgence, they would grow vast (big). <sup>20</sup>
21. If the mind which from beginningless time has been going towards other things is directed towards the coral-red lipped Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ in submission, then it is possible for that mind to know the wonderful (manner) of the resting of the emerald-hued Lord in the beautiful golden Meru-like temple in Śrīraṅgaṃ. <sup>21</sup>
22. The statements (of Śrutis about the Lord) are but statements about just a portion of His greatness; except for those who have turned away from falsity, incapable is He of being known. O poor mind! Say thou whether the hymns sung by us who have surrendered ourselves to Him who dwells in those who have sought refuge in Him wholly and live and experience Him, are adequate? <sup>22</sup>
23. Though having perceived our loving supreme Master God, resting wonderfully in the temple surrounded by gardens at Śrīraṅgaṃ set in the midsts of the flowing waters

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<sup>19</sup> It is the Lord that possesses and not the ego. The heating agent is God's beauty, its attractiveness is grace-beneficent, the subjective nearness to God achieves the flow of the soul to the ocean of God. Recalling the Upaniṣadic simile the rivers flow to the ocean but rivers flow to the ocean only when there is the rainfall of Grace or from having their source in some perennial source. The Grace has the colour of the rain-cloud: Kṛṣṇa indeed is Mēghavarṇa. It is the rainfall that clears the silt and the debris that are washed along with the waters to the ocean or sea—" Fire indeed becomes water" thanks to God's grace. The soul becomes vast or big with delight, it becomes *pūrṇa* with joy or *ānanda* of having known the enticing beauty of God.

<sup>20</sup> The mind must be directed godward and must enter into Him in order to understand the meaning of the Arcā-descent. The purpose of the divine descent as the Lord resting in sleep of Yoga or concentration, which is said to be the state of transcendent awareness of the needs and evolution of the souls, is one of deepest love; cf. Drōṇa Parvan 29, 32-4 (XXIX 24-26) M.N. Dutt's. Trans.

Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna (Bhagadatta Vadha):--

" Caturmūrtir aham śaśval lōkatrāṅārtham udyatah  
Ātmānam pravibhajyēha lōkānām hitam ādadhē.  
Ekamūrtis tapaścaryām kurutē mē bhuvī sthitā  
Apara paśyati jagatkurvāṇaṃ sādhyasādhunī.  
Aprā kurutē karma mānuṣaṃ lōkam āśritā  
Sete cathurthi tva aparā nidrāṃ varṣasahasrikīṃ.

<sup>21</sup> No one can even understand the glory and greatness affirmed of Him unless one has turned away from falsity and has taken refuge in Him.

<sup>22</sup> God has come to the earth but man has not gone to Him or even cried out to Him. The Divine has come in all His four forms and has even rested Himself so that He could be approached and even spoken to as when Arjuna and Duryodhana approached Śrī Kṛṣṇa when he was asleep at Dvārakā. He who chooses wisely like Arjuna always gets his success. Mahābhārata: Virāṭa Parvan.



of Kāvēri, purer than Gaṅgā, I am living forgetting Him. Poor me! Poor me!!<sup>23</sup>

24. In the temple of Śrīraṅgaṃ surrounded on all sides by gardens watered by the floods (of Kāvēri), though having seen the resting posture, the lotus-eyes and lustrous face of the Lord, O mind, you have not known that He is the One (without a second). You are making false devotion and in that falsehood you are spending your lifetime.<sup>24</sup>
25. I have lost the brahminhood that comprises in bathing and worshipping the three fires without any faults in performance; nothing is it to me; but in respect of Thee have I become bereft of Love; with what shall I, O perfect Lord! O Lord of ocean's colour! O Lord dweller in Śrīraṅgaṃ! do? I am imploring Thee with loud cries. "Make me thine object of mercy and deliver me."<sup>25</sup>
26. I am not spending all my time in offering flowers at Thy golden feet:  
I am not speaking faultless words describing Thine auspicious qualities:  
Nor have I even connected my mind lovingly with Thee: Therefore nothing have I done to Thee O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ. For what purpose then have I been born?<sup>26</sup>
27. When the monkeys were lifting and carrying mountains to build the bridge across the sea, the small and tender squirrels carried particles of sand by bathing in the sea and rolling on the sand and bathing again! I am not like them even.  
I who am an ignorant being like the trees, hard in the mind deceitful and not doing any service, am getting lost!<sup>27</sup>
28. The Lord of Light, incomprehensible to Brahma, and other gods, came running in anger against the crocodile that feeds on red flesh, for the sake of (saving) the elephant.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> False devotion is devotion for the sake of worldly benefits, not for the sake of the ultimate deliverance from ignorance and saṃsāra and for total attainment of the vision and service of the Divine.

<sup>24</sup> Even the loss of Brahminhood is as nothing compared to the falling off from the love of God. The āḷvār having been enticed away by the beautiful looks of the damsel lost his love to Him and lost his brahminhood, and was outcasted. But the latter is as nothing compared to the deviation in love. The āḷvār cries out to God to restore his love to Himself. *Avyabhicāriṇi-Buddhi* is the necessity

<sup>25</sup> Though the individual soul is not perfect, the Divine Lord takes it up and leads it though the individual soul feels that it had not done anything to deserve such grace. Therefore arises a thirst for doing service to God as a recognition of His Grace and as a sign of its gratitude.

<sup>26</sup> Thus observing the doings of even the tiniest and weakest of creatures doing service to God he also tries to do his mite to God out of gratitude. Thus gratitude is sign of free worship and *kaiṅkarya*.

<sup>27</sup> The Lord to whom we have offered ourselves or at whose feet we have surrendered has to be served and remembered but the soul is unable to do the same due to external attractions.

<sup>28</sup> The story refers to the exploit of God who rescued the soul (Gajendra) caught by the crocodile (wiles of saṃsāra). The reference to dogs is to animals which are lowliest: it typifies the *vāsanās* of

Have we (who have placed ourselves at His feet) any burden in respect of saving ourselves?

Why am I born without doing service to Him, our Master, our Saviour, who sees not faults of our's who are like dogs.

29. I have no place nor plot of ground, nor relatives, nor friends:

On this earth I have not attained thine lotus-feet.  
O Supreme Godhead, O luminous cloud-hued Form,  
Kaṇṇa! I implore Thee Lord resident at Śrīraṅgaṃ!  
Who else have I except Thee to protect me?<sup>29</sup>

30. In my mind there is no purity,

In my mouth no words of affection have I  
In anger I utter words of piercing insult.

O Lord wearing the fragrant garland of *tulaśī* residing in Śrīraṅgaṃ surrounded by the river (pōnni: Kāvēri),  
O Master, who have me as Thine slave! Hereafter tell me as to what way is open to me<sup>30</sup>

31. Nor do I belong to the society of *tapasvins*,

Nor to the wealthy class; nor am I anything to my relatives like brackish water;  
Having become enslaved by the crimson-lips of ladies  
I have become a knave;

O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ! Thou hast in vain given me this birth!<sup>31</sup>

32. O Kaṇṇa, having a body like grouping clouds! Thou who residest in the beautiful Śrīraṅgaṃ surrounded by groves where bees are humming tunes! Knowing not any means to attain Thee, I have become knave among men and stubborn. Stubborn am I! Stubborn am I!<sup>32</sup>

33. Having let go all that is true and having got fully caught in the snares of women, I have become shameless, O Master, Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ!

Out of desire for Thine grace have I come and stood before Thee. Alas false am I,

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greed and love of carnal food even like the crocodiles. They enter every door uninvited. The *Gītā* teaches that the seer sees the dog, the untouchable, the saint and all with an equal eye.

<sup>29</sup> Place here refers to a place sanctified by God's presence in the past or present, such as in Brindāvana or Sālagrāma or Ayōdhyā or Śrīraṅgaṃ,

<sup>30</sup> With all their faults and frailties the Lord loves His slaves, and makes them whole. The Lord is the means to the ultimate destiny, the fullest and purest enjoyment of the Divine Lord Himself in all His majesty and incomparable radiance and power, and delight and truth.

<sup>31</sup> The āḷvār reveals his abasement and humility, and his distaste for his selfish relatives, and yet his own condition is none so good as to be fit for one-pointed attention on God alone

<sup>32</sup> The knavery of the individual is due to his seeking all pleasures for himself. Theft is defined as the taking of things that belong to another, here the Divine, without His having given them out of His grace. The triple mention of the stubbornness on his part is both for emphasis as well as for mentioning the triple kinds of stubbornness in mind, speech and body.

false am I, false am I!!<sup>33</sup>

34. Not having the knowledge of the ever-indwelling Lord in my heart, I have become ignorant.  
I too became Thine willing-slave, pretending devotion; knowing that Thou knowest by Thine indwelling, all the thoughts of devotees, I was ashamed and laughed within myself to the extent of my ribs being broken.<sup>34</sup>
35. My Lord who once for all assumed the rulership of the worlds by covering it (with thine feet)! None other than Thee O red lotus-eyed God! will I serve.  
(My) Breath! (My) Nectar! O my Master indwelling within me as self! Sinner that I am, I shall not think at all of any other but Thee.<sup>35</sup>
36. Lord who lifted up a mountain and protected the cowherds and cows from terrible rain! O Lord of the river of sweetness(Madhura)!  
Thou are going away without looking at me, who am struggling caught in the net of the deer-like eyes of damsels! O primeval person! Dweller in Śrīraṅgaṃ! It is Thee I am calling out to (to release me from the net).<sup>36</sup>
37. The supremely effulgent person residing in the temple at Śrīraṅgaṃ gird by the muddy waters (of Kāvēri) is my father and mother too! Has He not to remove my distress from me saying "This our boy is fit to be helped out"? This my saviour does not say. Alas! Is it His nature only to hear the cries of grief?<sup>37</sup>
38. O Lord who resides in Śrīraṅgaṃ gird by waters (of the Kāvēri).It appears Thou appreciates those who after giving up materialistic view of things know rightly the truth (of the soul), learn that service (to thee) is the end to be sought, (and) controlling firmly their five senses, cutting themselves away from every other means and abolishing the wrong ways in themselves stand at Thine gateway (seeking refuge).<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> The triple mention of falsity on the part of himself is also to be construed in a triple manner as in the previous verse.

<sup>34</sup> Some wear the name of the God and assume his form also, as Pauṇḍarīka Vāsudēva in the Bhāgavata seems to have done, but they do not become omniscient. They do not know the temple where He resides. God is the indwelling Lord, whom one has always as a treasure in one's heart. This consciousness must become continuous, concentric, and then alone one will perceive the truth of His existence as all-indweller : Gītā XVIII 61 and 62.

<sup>35</sup> Sēviyēn unnai yallā! Losing Thee, only myself and others remain and in neither do I find any possibility of union. These two are expressed by the second letter (U) of the *praṇava* and by the middle word (*Namah*) in the Mūla mantra. Due to the instinct for dependence (śēṣatva), even though separation from matter ceases and others, yet there is service to be done as duty, Dharma, and as an expression of one's eternal gratitude for the Divine who has made one perfect in His light, truth and delight.

<sup>36</sup> The reference is to the exploit of the lifting up of the Govardhana Hill and the humiliation of Indra.

<sup>37</sup> The Āḷvār cries out to the Lord who appears as if he did not hear the cries.

<sup>38</sup> The commentators consider that the verse 38 is the crucial verse. It is stated that it gives the meaning of the Dvaya-mantra--"Sriman Nārāyaṇacaranaṃ śaraṇaṃ ahaṃ prapadyē Śrimate Nārāyaṇāya". In the *dvaya*, the *prāpakam* is put first and *prāpyam* afterwards. In this verse the

39. Than those who have practised the Vedas without remembering that thine service is the goal, is it not better to be born in the lowest caste with service (to Thee)?  
O Thou wearer of the Tulasi on thy crown! O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ! Does not the service of Thine feet by Thine slaves bring delight to Thee?<sup>39</sup>
40. Lord who having Śrī and Śrīvatsa on the chest resides in Śrīraṅgaṃ! Even though all the earth-dwellers are having world-quaking sins, if they keep Thee in their hearts firmly, then they will not experience the result of those sinful acts.<sup>40</sup>
41. Even if they be cruel and torture others, if they would but address Thee (as) "O Dweller Eternal in the supreme abode, incapable of being known even by the celestials,  
O Thou wearer of the honey-laden Tulasi garland on they Crown", and offer to Thee lovingly nectar-like food, then by itself they would become sinless.<sup>41</sup>
42. Thou, Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ of high walls hast instructed thus: O Ye, who follow the "traditional knowledge of the four Vedas faultlessly! even though my devotees of the Feet (*adiyārs*) are born of the lowliest caste, tell them the highest truths, and learn from them, (for) they are my equals(at least).<sup>42</sup>
43. Though they be born of the Brāhmaṇ- caste, supreme among thine devotees, learned fully in the four Vedas and their excellent six subsidiaries (*aṅgās*), if they speak disrespectfully of thine devotees of other castes, then that very instant they

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*prāpyaṃ* is stated first and then the *prāpakaṃ*. Nammāḷvār is stated to have meditated on the first part of the dvaya, Āṇḍāl is stated to have practised the second part of the dvaya. This āḷvār practises them together. Man has three states of ignorance: loss of the knowledge of God due to continuous absorption in things enjoyable to the senses (*melezhundapōra*); incapacity to get rid of the view that his soul is identical with his body (*mēvinaporul*); and thirdly the view that those whom one has attained are omniscient. Thus one has to get rid of the thought that body and soul are identical, that the material things related to or feeding the body are one's own and that the soul though different from the body is independent of God (*svatantra*). The individual soul is distinct from its body and the supreme Godhead, it is independent of its body but dependent on the Godhead.

<sup>39</sup> The āḷvār considers that service of God is better than mere Vedic knowledge; it does not mean that Vedic knowledge is not valuable, but even Vedic knowledge must be seen to instruct that the service of God's feet is the goal of all knowledge.

<sup>40</sup> The constant remembrance of God within oneself is the surest cure and means of emancipation from sins and sorrows due to *sancita* and *prārabdha karma*.

<sup>41</sup> The sincere prayer to the Lord as the supremest Being and Person, the primal cause, is necessary.

<sup>42</sup> This important hymn refers to the secret word of God to the devotees to worship, adore and mutually instruct (*bōdhayanti parasparam*) each other without any difference of caste, for all are devotees of the feet of God. His service is all important, and the realisation is, God dwells in those who one-pointedly serve Him alone. These devotees are not more than Himself, but they indeed manifest Him because they constantly live and move and have their being in Him.

would become outcastes! O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ!<sup>43</sup>

44. While He of the matted locks in which is flowing the lady (Gaṅgā), and Brahman (the fourfaced) unable to know Thy full nature, for a very long time performed askesis and not realising Thee stand. Thou wentest to save the elephant caught by the crocodile even as the eternal were looking on with wonder.<sup>44</sup>

O hard-hearted Lord ! What is the means to attain Thee who are thus?

45. These hymns on Kaṅṅan, who slew the mad-huge elephant in Mathura-city, which had very beautiful and silver-white palatial buildings, and who is now residing at Śrīraṅgaṃ who is the lover of His devotees, done by Tondar-adip-podi who does service by making *tulasī* garlands for the Lord, even if they have faults in poesy, indeed will please the Lord!<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> The āḷvār then adds his own indictment against those who do otherwise against the instruction given by God.

<sup>44</sup> The Lord is difficult to achieve and know fully through knowledge (*jñāna*); for His supreme powers exceed all celestial comprehensions. But that does not prevent His running to the succour of the poor elephant caught by foot by the ravenous crocodile. The āḷvār points out that these two contradictory attributes are possible. The difficulty of the former approach is there. But the latter is quicker: seek God's refuge, perform *śaraṅāgati*, *prapatti*, become *akijñācana* holding to nothing else except the Supreme Godhead, then sinlessness, deliverance, and goodness are assured. But there are other mansions in God's Universe and personality. Knowledge is helped if it is sanctified by surrender and becomes fulfilled gradually. Knowledge must be sought for the sake of divine service alone and divine enjoyment. Veṅkaṭanātha thus promised that all are fit for *prapatti*. But *prapatti* can indeed be the constant companion of the other Yogas such as *bhakti*, *karma* and *jñāna* which are for those who had become fitted for undertaking them in the ordained manner. They become divinised, and god-directed, and exist for God's delight and fulfillment alone.

TIRUPALLI YEZHUCCI  
OR  
THE SONG OF WAKING UP THE LORD  
(SONGS OF THE MORNING)

INTRODUCTION

The āḷvār Toṇḍar-aḍip-poḍi composed these songs of the morning hour-*suprabhātam*- to wake up the Lord in the temple. The Lord is never asleep; for His sleep or resting means fullest action, it is super action that is imbedded in the outer pose of absolute silence in the image (arcā) and in addition the pose of the Lord is that of resting, what some interpreted rather naively "after having created the worlds the Lord retired to rest" The Lord on the contrary in this supreme pose of Śānti, peace, celestial and divine, denoted by the *suṣupti* is one of supreme awareness *prajñā*, a supreme absorption in the welfare of the creatures and intent on saving the souls wallowing in the mire they have settled in and the waves that they have aroused; The Lord is stationed at the very centre of the individual and the universe, in the temple at Śrīraṅgaṃ and in the souls of all devotees (*adiyārs*). The souls are offered also an opportunity of showing their gratitude to the Lord who in all ways is absorbed in the work of redeeming them, and making them realise that they are indeed of Him. And if they would but turn inward with but an utterance of Name they could enjoy the blessedness even here on this very earth where they had created all sorts of misery for themselves directed by their ignorance, illusion of the senses, and their craving for independence from God. There is in God neither fatigue nor frailty, neither impotence nor inconscience; He neither wants man's service nor man's prayer. But since it is the only way by which the individual soul can find himself in Him and get freed from his own inconscience ignorance, misery, fatigue, frailty, sin and sorrow, he is granted an occasion to show his relationships to the Lord, through devotion, *bhakti*, *śraddhā*, and *prapatti*, surrender or speech of submission. *Kaiṅkarya*, the service of God which is an expression of one's gratitude to God for His everlasting mercy (*dayā*) in relating Himself with the individual soul, a condescending act of Grace, can be of all kinds, spiritual, psychical, mental, vital and physical, *ātmika*, *mānasika* *vācika* and *kāyika*.

The ordinary man considers that all worship in the temples is but the enacting of the play, just a symbolic expression and even a humanised representation of the gratitude and loyalty and supreme oneness too. They could even be considered to be just a drama which might have no reality but pleasure for us. It was asked by one writer why not, why should not one imagine the Divine in the *saguṇa* form and worship Him everywhere? The question is not that. The āḷvārs as a rule felt that when they were offering worship to the Lord in the temple and performing such routine duties, *kaiṅkarya*, such as singing of *suprabhātaṃ* etc., they were by no

stretch of imagination just dramatising; they were supremely conscious that the arcā or icon they worshipped was indeed a divine descent for the sake of saving the souls and out of His infinite condescension the Lord has assumed a Form adorable and comforting to the individual, a Form and personality that could help the spiritual progress of the soul and lead it to the understanding of the inexhaustible infinity of the divine Nature by transmuting it in the flame of divine desire for complete absorption in His beauty, truth and personality. The Arcā does not cease to be adorable at any time, does not become just a symbol whose purpose ceases when the inner light of the *antaryāmin* has begun to appear and direct, nor does it vanish as a mere image when a great world reforming and shaping Descent occurs, nor does it fail to be inspiring and guiding when one has transcended the world process represented by the knots of creation, preservation and destruction of individual life *Brahma-Granthi*, *Viṣṇu-Granthi* and *Rudra-Granthi* within oneself. On the contrary, the arcā gains greater luminosity and meaning and power of Grace at each step of the realisation of the intra-individual and cosmic manifestations of the Deity. There happens a supreme integration of the personalities of these four forms of the Deity, Which pour out the Divine light on the individual in all his manifold being and grant him a radiant and fundamental unity with the Divine which act is realised at first as the incidence of Grace, as the incidence of power, incidence of beauty and incidence of knowledge, Gnosis. *Ārcā* thus is a pivotal concept of the Deity, and not just a mere idol, a representation, a symbol: all this it can become to those whose knowledge is warped by misunderstanding and who consider the known to be less true than the unknown.

- I. The sun has come up on the eastern mountain-top;  
The night's darkness has completely gone;  
As the beautiful morning has come, big flowers have blossomed and honey is dripping from them;  
Gods and kings have come and are standing crowding on the opposite side;<sup>5</sup>  
The elephants, male and female, that have come with them and the trumpets, are making loud noises in all directions like the noise of the Ocean's billows;  
Therefore O lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ, wake up from Thine sleep!
- II. The morning wind is blowing gathering the fragrance from the jasmine creepers;  
The swan-couple lying on the lotus-bed shaking off the dew-drops from their wings have got up;  
O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ who removed the great peril of the suffering elephant caught between the huge mouth of the crocodile, wake up from Thine sleep!
- III. The rays of the Sun have spread in all directions;  
The stars in the sky have lost their luster;  
The bright cool Moon has become pale;

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<sup>5</sup> The Lord who has descended into this world (Śrīraṅgaṃ) is adored both by gods, celestials, rulers of heaven and rulers of the earth, Devas as well as Rākṣasās, who are good and by Ṛṣis, seers who see no difference between the devotees of God, *adiyārs*.

Darkness has passed away;  
The gentle wind, blowing over the yellow gardens through the branches of beetle-nut trees is spreading their aroma;  
O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ who have in Thine beautiful hand the extremely powerful luminous discus!  
Wake up from Thine Sleep!

IV. The sounds of the huge and tender buffaloes moving, the flutes of the cowherds who have untied them, the jingling noises of the bells (tied to their necks), these sounds have spread in all directions;  
The honey imbibing bees have all moved out (of their hives);  
O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ, Master of the celestials, Protector of the sacrifice (of Viśvāmitra) who destroyed the Laṅka's Rakṣasa hordes wielding the bow, and was anointed and crowned ruler and reigned at Ayōdhyā for the purpose of destroying enemies (of light and truth) Wake up from Thine sleep!

V. The birds in the flower-garden have woken up;  
The night has passed away; The morning has come;  
The sounds of the waves of the sea are coming from the east.  
The celestials have come with beautiful garlands made of many flowers humming with honey-bees, to offer them at Thine holy feet;  
Therefore my Master! O Lord of the temple where the Ruler of Laṅka (Vibhīṣana) serves Thee!  
Wake up from Thine sleep!

VI. Ādityas with their huge bejewelled chariots, eleven Rudras governors of the worlds, the peacock-riding six faced god, Maruts, Vasus, and Aruṇa coming in procession, crowding with all their horses, chariots and songs and dances are arriving with Kumāra (at their head);  
They are standing before Thine shrine to catch Thy sight O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ, wake up from Thine sleep!

VII. To the gates of Thy temple, O Master, Indra on his elephant has come;  
And the hosts of the gods of creation and sages, rich with strenuous austerity, and Maruts, Siddhas, Vidyādhara, press on one another very close, and Yakṣās who are in love with Thine beautiful feet;  
There is no space left (vacant) either on the sky or the earth; O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ! wake up from Thine sleep!

VIII. The fragrant gods devotedly carrying to Thee great treasures in their hands (have come);  
The Kapila (cow) and mirror and others, the first to bathe Thine sight (have come);  
The good sages Tumburu and Nārada (celestial singers of Thine praise) have come:  
The Sun spreading his great light has come and darkness has utterly been removed from the sky;



Therefore wake up, O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ, from Thine sleep!

IX. Faultless Mṛdaṅgaṃ, single stringed Vīṇā, Mārḍālam, Vīṇā and flute are being played by Kinnaras, Garudaṣ and Gandharvas, on all sides;

All through the night the great saints of austerity, the gods, Caraṇās (Worshipers of Thine feet), messengers (of Thy will) Yakṣas, Siddhas, are anxiously waiting, crowding to touch Thy holy feet:

Therefore so as to bestow Thy mercy sight on them, O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ, wake up from Thine sleep!

X. Fragrant lotuses have blossomed; the Sun has risen from the roaring waters of the eastern sea;

Slender-waisted ladies having bathed in the river, having rinsed and shaken off the water from their tresses (and tied them up) wearing their clothes, have got up the banks: O Lord of Śrīraṅgaṃ, girt by the Kāvēri river, who have accepted me, the Rejoicer in the dust of feet of Thine devotees (TONDAR-ADIP-PODI) carrying in his hands the Tulasi-garland, as fit object of Thine love (mercy) kindly wake up to bless Thine devotees!

(The first darshan of God in the morning is called Visvarupa Darshanam. It is the Darshan of God who has woken up (Visva being the Vedic name of the God of the Jagrat or waking state: Mandukya) The final Darsan at night should be called prajna (supta) darsan (which is called Ekanta seva). The Darsan of God in our sleep is the Taijasa Rupa.)