TRANSLATION

Sonasaila Malai

Song Garland to the Red Mountain

SIVAPRAKASA SWAMIGAL
TRANSLATED BY ROBERT BUTLER

A selection of verses from this work were published in the Deepam 2006 edition of The Mountain Path. It is now planned to publish a translation of the whole work in a number of instalments, of which this is the first. Previously, in the July 2005 edition, an article featuring translations from Sivaprakasa Swamigal’s Tamil version of Prabhulinga Leelai, itself a translation from the Kannada, was published. The introduction which follows is principally an amalgamation of material taken from the two aforementioned articles.

Sivaprakasa Swamigal was an accomplished Virasaiva poet and scholar who lived in the 17th century. He had a strong connection with Tiruvannamalai. His father, Kumaraswami Desikar, used to come to Arunachala from Kanchipuram every year for the Deepam festival. It is said that his three sons, of whom Sivaprakasa Swamigal was the eldest, were all born by the grace of Arunachala. When Sivaprakasa

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Swamigal grew up, he had a Guru in Tiruvannamalai – also called Sivaprapkasa – whom he visited regularly. Sivaprapkasa wrote numerous works, one of the earliest being *Sonasaila Malai* – a song garland of 100 verses to the Red Mountain Arunachala, which he is said to have composed in a single *pradakshina* of the mountain. He possessed a vivid and daring poetic imagination that brings back echoes of the Sangam era, the golden age of Tamil literature, a gift which earned him during his lifetime the *sirappu peyar* (honorary title) of Treasure House of the Imagination.

Each verse falls into two parts, the first being a plea for Lord Siva’s grace in the face of the author’s self-avowed unworthiness, and the second, a daring image in which the nature and attributes of Lord Siva are compared and contrasted with those of the Mountain that is Lord Siva’s earthly-manifested form. Much emphasis is placed throughout upon the fact that, unlike the Siva of the temple cult, Arunachala is available to all without restrictions of any kind, an attribute which would have appealed very deeply to Sivaprapkasa, who, as a Virasaiva, would have rejected the elitism of the temples and their cult, although it should be made clear that Sivaprapkasa did not entirely reject temple worship, a fact to which many of the verses bear testimony.

Sivaprapkasa’s erudition is apparent throughout with numerous references to the Puranic literature, the lives of the 63 Saiva Saints, and the flora and fauna, legends and even the folklore (see v.76) of Arunachala itself. In particular the various mountains that feature in the Puranic canon, Mount Meru, the fabulous mountain at the centre of the earth, Mount Mandara, which the Devas and Asuras used to churn to Ocean of Milk, Mount Pothiyam, abode of the sage Agastya, the father of Tamil, the Eastern and Western Mountains, behind which the sun is said to rise and set, and even Mount Kailash, the very home of Lord Siva, are found lacking when compared to the majesty of Sonasaila, the Red Mountain. How could any mountain in the physical realm, however glorious, begin to compare with one that, as the very embodiment of Lord Siva, stands beyond time and space in the non-dual realm of the Self? Each verse is driven home with a stirring refrain that never lets us forget that Arunachala and Siva, eternally, are one: *Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!*

*Sonasaila Malai* can of course stand on its own as a work of great charm and spiritual depth. However it can do no harm to mention...
the fact that Bhagavan himself was one who appreciated its merits. The following is a quotation from My Recollections of Bhagavan by Devaraja Mudaliar.

One day Bhagavan quoted the following verse to me from the book called Sona Saila Malai. [Editor’s note: the Tamil verse is quoted here, followed by the meaning of the second part of the verse.]

“Arunachala, Lord of Kailas! When Manickavachakar and others like him sang that they were wanting in Love for you and prayed for the same it was only their modesty and not the truth. But it is the base truth when I say I have no Love for you. Pray therefore grant me the same.”

The next day I wanted to copy down this stanza since Bhagavan had quoted it and nothing he did was without significance. I was going to the library to fetch the book when Bhagavan said to me: “You need not go and fetch it. Come here. I know the stanza.” So saying, he was pleased to take a sheet of paper and write out the stanza for me. It was not unusual for Bhagavan to do such things for some of his close followers. About a score of people may have such writings of Bhagavan in their possession.

It has often been surmised that Bhagavan must have had an eidetic memory, given his ability to memorise extensive passages from works in a number of languages with no apparent effort. Even so the fact that he was able to reproduce this verse from memory in its entirety is a testament to the high regard in which he held it.

Regarding the translation, the style of these verses, consisting entirely as they do of daring, imaginative, one might even say far-fetched in some cases, poetic conceits does not lend itself to a flat, uninflected prose translation. An attempt has therefore been made to render them in verse. On occasion extra words have been added to complete the sense or fill out the metre. Such added words have been generally enclosed in square brackets.

Invocation

Holding in my heart the One
whose feet ringing anklets adorn,
who as a tribute received an elephant herd,¹
and who is praised as He
who receives the tribute of steeds²
that are the minds of devotees
whose words are sweet,
I shall praise Sonasailan, wise and fair!

Those three great sages³ of noble fame
sang songs rare and ornate in your name,
and now this song of mine, too, shall be yours.
For even as your ears take in sweet sounds
of those two⁴ [who by you stand],
yet do you not heed the call of the deer
[you hold] within your hand?⁵

Just as Mount Meru in the northern land,
raises up his cloud-capped head,
so do you, waxing great, arise,
as Sun and chilly Moon
shine out on either side,

In response Lord Śiva sent Vināyakar to scare the king.

1 The reference is to Vināyakar’s encounter with a foreign king called Mukilaṉ (a general term for Moghul), who was harassing the devotees in the environs of Aruṇācala. Vināyakar appeared to him in a dream and transformed him into an elephant, or at least, frightened him badly, according to another account. When Mukilaṉ awoke he realised his error and rounded up a herd of elephants as a tribute to Vināyakar. This incident is recounted in one of the Tamil biographies of the famous Aruṇācala saint, Guhainamaśivāyar, who invoked Lord Śiva’s intervention against the king with a *venba* verse. In response Lord Śiva sent Vināyakar to scare the king.

2 The three⁶ refer to Appar, Jñānasambandhar and Sundarar, who lived between the 6th and 8th centuries C.E. and whose works, collectively known as the *Tēvāram*, constitute the first seven books of the *Tirumuṟai*, the canon of devotional works in the Tamil language dedicated to Lord Śiva.

3 The melodious two⁷ refers to two Gandharvas, celestial beings with superb musical skills.

4 The idea is that Śiva takes note of the sounds made by the deer, in spite of the beautiful music going on around him. This gives the author courage to persevere, even knowing that his songs cannot match those of the three authors of the *Tēvāram*. [1]
In Arur to be born is to gain knowledge that lies beyond this worldly thrall; the end of all suffering is to reach and gaze on Tillai’s holy Hall.6
In holy Kasi7 men joyfully abiding, await death’s call. But to the mere thought of your own city can such as these compare at all?8

For those who journey on birth’s ocean bound for final liberation’s fair shore, you rise on high to guide for them the ship of tapas ending their confusion with a glance, Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

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6 The verse refers to Chidambaram simply as maṉṟu – the [golden] Hall [of Chidambaram]. The basic meaning of maṉṟu is hall of assembly. Due to its great renown the mere mention of the word maṉṟu is sufficient to indicate the Golden Hall of Chidambaram, where Lord Śiva, as Naṭaraja, performs his cosmic dance.

7 Kāśi is referred to simply as the unique abode. Again the idea appears to be that Kāśi is so famous, in its power to grant salvation, that even to say its name is superfluous. Yet Aruṇāchala is even more powerful. Verse 543 of the Tamil Aruṇācala Purāṇam particularly emphasises both the greatness of Kāśi, and to what extent that greatness is eclipsed by the greatness of Aruṇācala:

Even if food were given to ten million great tapasvins in one of the most eminent sthalas, it would not equal a single grain of boiled rice given in immortal Kāśi. (Similarly) if food was given in Kāśi to countless crores of great tapasvins, it could not compare to a single grain of boiled rice given in the land of Arunai, (embodiment of) the real.

8 The first part of this verse echoes a sentiment which has its source in the following śloka which is reputed to be from the Aruṇācala Māhāmyam, which is itself a section of the Māheśwara Kanṭam of the Skanda Mahāpurāṇam.

Liberation [will be assured] in Abhraśādasi (Chidambaram) through seeing it, in Kamalālaya (Tiru Ārūr) through birth there, in Kāśi through death there and at Aruṇācala through remembrance of it.
Caught up in the humours three,
here I dwelt,
afflicted by a suffering impossible to quell.
Then did I conceive the desire that,
before these three should cast me out,
I'd grasp and come to dwell
in your salvation's matchless state.
Yet still, your divine will, I cannot tell.

To dispel the flaw\textsuperscript{9a} the world decries, saying,
‘The waning\textsuperscript{9b} moon aloft your bear!’
with the full moon in your crown,
you rise on high,
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!}\textsuperscript{3}

None will accuse you, saying why
did you remove
the multitude of painful births
from a wicked one whose stony heart
melted only for those pretty girls
with coral lips,
that red of scarlet gourd defy.
Show me then your mercy!

As the Sun dispelling dewy cold
above dawn's matchless Mountain rises up,
like a mirror bright set on a stand,\textsuperscript{10}
waxing great, do you arise,
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!}\textsuperscript{4}

\textsuperscript{9} There is a play on the word \textit{kuṟai} in this verse. On its initial occurrence its meaning is \textit{deficiency, imperfection, fault, flaw} but in the phrase \textit{kuṟai mati} it means \textit{waning} as in \textit{the waning moon}. Only in his embodiment as Aruṇācala does Lord Śiva appear each month crowned by the moon at the full!

\textsuperscript{10} The idea is that that the Mountain of the dawn and the rising sun are offering themselves up as a sort of dressing table and mirror, in which Lord Sōnasailaṉ can view his own reflection.
Will it ever come, the day my mind
that now in sadness and confusion lies,
yielding to those whose eyes are dark,
like tall spears with their shining blades,
will come to dwell
upon the lotuses of your dancing feet,
fade, forget itself and melt?

Like a [bright red] lotus bloom
with petals full expanded,
as a [silver] swan glides by,
the Karttikai beacon shines out
upon your lofty peak
as the moon herself draws night\(^{11}\)
Thus waxing great, do you arise,
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!} (5)

The sage of Vadavur,\(^{12}\) whose hymns are rare,
and others too,
they said, ‘We have no love for you!’
but all their weeping and beseeching was a lie.
But when I say ‘I have no love, for you,’
my words are true.
Reveal to me your grace!\(^{13}\)

\(^{11}\) The scene described is that which occurs only once a year, on the full moon day of \textit{Karttikai Deepam}, when, as night falls, a great beacon is lit upon the summit of the mountain Aruṇācala, to symbolise the manner in which Lord Śiva appeared as an unfathomable column of fire before Viṣṇu and Brahmā, to end their quarrel over which of the two was the greater, and thus curb their egos. The sight of the bright disc of the moon sailing up into the sky as the red flame of the beacon flares up is a very impressive one, especially when viewed from a distance and from a high vantage point, from which the scene unfolds against the wide panorama of the mountain’s impressive silhouette. Here the beacon is fancifully compared to a red lotus blossom and the moon, to a swan swimming by it.

\(^{12}\) \textit{Vātavūraṉ} – \textit{he of Vātavūr} refers to the poet-saint Māṇikkavācakar, whose birthplace was Vātavūr. He lived in the 9th century C.E. and his poems, the \textit{Tiruvācakam} and the \textit{Tirukkōvaiyār}, are considered equal to, or even greater, than those of the three \textit{Tēvāram} poets mentioned earlier.
The black clouds that the ocean drink
and about you thickly cluster
recall the garment that you made,
from the hide of the elephant you flayed,
its temples oozing, wet
with dark juices of the must,
its trunk like a palmyra [ridged and black],
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

The Asuras in their cities, and Kama too,
about whose flowery darts
winged insects buzz and sing,
once knew your white smile as you laughed,
and the gaze that from your forehead flashed.
Shall not this wretch's dark delusion
come to know these too? 14

Too subtle even for thought to reach,
you are men say, but you,
this reputation to allay,
adopt this mighty material form,
and stand for all the world to see,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

That you ate as if ’twere ambrosia sweet
the poison that with a roar
the surging billows, curling back,
cast up from the deep, 15

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13 The poet is saying that it is inconceivable that the great saints of the past such as Māṇikkavācakar could actually have had no love for the Lord and that their saying so was simply a means of demonstrating the depth of their devotion to Him. ‘However, in my case,’ he cries, ‘it is actually true and therefore my need for your grace is greater even than theirs.’

14 Lord Śiva destroyed the three cities of the asuras with a smile when they stood against Him, and burned up Kāma with a glance from his third eye, when Kāma attempted to make him enamoured of Pārvati. ‘If you are so keen to destroy evil,’ the poet cries, ‘why then do you not destroy the evil of the āṇava malam (the illusion that one possesses a separate self or ego) that afflicts me so?’

15 The poison churned from the Ocean of Milk is here compared to the devotee’s own āṇava malam, which Śiva has the power to eradicate by taking it and absorbing it
is your great glory, yours alone.
Will you not now, by your divine decree,
complete it now, and make
of this poor wretch
a devotee at your holy feet?

The flame of Karttikai your bear
upon your beauteous peak,
to drive the dark delusion out\(^{16}\)
from hearts of all that look and see
you rising up and standing fast, to shine,
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!}\(^{(8)}\)

Before the Lord of Death,
a flower garland draped
across his mighty chest,
destroyed my body’s outward form,
will there be, for wretched me, a day
that your grace comes to wipe away
the ego self that lies within
so that, with every hindrance gone,
I and shining \textit{jñāna}’s form
supreme are one?\(^{17}\)

With an elephant’s tusk
for a crescent moon,

\footnotesize{\textit{āṇava malam} is not the ego as such, but the principle of egoity that is supposed to
inhere in all souls as a potential, even after union with Him, just as verdigris is ever
potentially inherent in the metal copper. However this \textit{iruḷ} or \textit{āṇava malam}, the soul’s
darkness or delusion, is often regarded as synonymous with \textit{ahaṁkāram} – the ego,
the erroneous sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’.
\(^{16}\) In this verse it is stressed that the \textit{Kārttikai} beacon has the power to dispel the
inner darkness of the soul, unlike other lights, which have the power only to dispel
outer, physical darkness.
\(^{17}\) A poetic formulation of Bhagavan’s central teaching that, once the illusion of the
ego self has departed, we shall come to dwell in the eternal bliss of the Self, ‘shining 
\textit{jñāna}’, beyond birth and death.}
and bright creepers, spreading in profusion
like untied tresses
upon your slopes, you shine,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!

Will the day ever come when,
fixing my thoughts upon the form
that Goddess Uma shares with you,
so that in my heart, that melts
like ghee before a flame,
I root out the delusion of female charms,
as my eyes pour forth floods of tears?

You who bathe in the wat’ry libation
that [Varuna], great Lord of the Flood,
pours down on you,
scooped up from the ocean’s basin
with a black cloud as a jewelled ladle,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!

Upon the flowery earth,
that the ocean's fair gown girds about,
quite fittingly you grant your grace
to those who deem the body false.
But to me, who take the body to be true,
will you not deign to grant it too?

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18 The cōtiyam kōdi – bright creeper is a creeping plant that, whilst appearing green by daylight, has a glowing radiance at night. The moonlight, catching an elephant’s tusk, and the shining creepers, resembling unloosed braids of hair, thus offer to the imagination a striking image of Lord Śiva with the crescent moon in his untied locks.

19 After Indra Varuṇa is the greatest of the gods of the Rig Veda, his role being the maintenance of the universal order. Varuṇa has a particular responsibility for aerial waters, pouring down the rains from the clouds’ inverted cask. In this striking image, Varuṇa, knowing that his power is small compared to that of the One who is responsible for the very existence of the universe, is depicted as travelling south to perform abhiśeka – ritual bathing of the lingam of Aruṇācala Śiva.

20 The word mey in Tamil means truth and also body, which gives an ironic twist to the Tamil text. The poet says, ‘Those who think that mey (body) is poy (false) are
Not wishing to dwell within a shrine,
id from view, and visited
with proper observance of time,
you grant your presence abundantly,
standing fast, for all the world to see,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!

Are you not the shining Sun
that with compassion’s surging fire
dries the mire of birth,
wherein I languish, sunk
through sensual desire,
and brings the lotus
of my heart to flower?

Mountain, where your palace stands,\(^ {21}\)
Mountain, you took as a bow,\(^ {22}\)
to confound the senses of your foe,
Mountain, father of your bride,\(^ {23}\)
within you all of these reside!
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!

right, and I who think that \(\text{mey (body)}\) is \(\text{mey (true)}\) am wrong.\(^ 7\) To those lacking in
discrimination, there is nothing more true or real than the body. Only the wise know
it to be false. The author, whilst admitting that he does not possess the attainment of
the great ones who possess this realisation, makes the point that, as one who labours
under this delusion, he is just as much, or more, in need of Šiva’s grace, in order
to dispel it. In the second half of the verse he reinforces his argument by pointing
out that Aruṇācala, unlike other gods that remain hidden in temples and shrines, is
accessible to all without restriction, regardless of their degree of spiritual attainment.
\(^ {21}\) Mount Kailash in Tibet, which is reputed to be Lord Šiva's home.
\(^ {22}\) Mount Meru, which Lord Šiva took as a bow when defeating the \textit{asuras} in their
aerial cities.
\(^ {23}\) The Himalaya Mountains, named after Himavat, the father of Lord Šiva's consort
Pārvatī. As the all-embracing Self, free of all attributes, Aruṇācala subsumes all
other mountains within himself.
Will there ever come a day
when you grant your grace,
so that I, poor wretch,
sloughing off the senses’ woes,
and setting up within the temple
of my mind your holy feet,
with ankle-rings adorned,
may join the great assembly
of those holy ones who virtue seek?

Men in pradakṣiṇā walk around
with cries that like the ocean’s roar
resound, as in their midst
like holy Mandara you stand and shine
the tapas of the world made manifest,²⁴
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!

This mortal frame, that's bound to die,
like a bubble that through water flies,
is truly real, thus did I think.
Whirled through births,
in bliss's enduring ocean
I knew not how to sink.
Will there ever be salvation
for one so ignorant as me?

With their tusks, the wild pigs root
upon your mountain slopes,
as if the Boar of former times
digging down, still sought today
your beauteous foot,²⁵
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!

²⁴ In another powerful image the author compares Aruṇācala to Mount Mandara, which was used by the devas and asuras as the churning-stick to churn the Milk Ocean, and the press of fervent devotees performing pradakṣiṇā around it, to the serpent Vāsuki, who was employed as the churning rope. The idea is that just as the Puranic churning brought forth the ambrosia which confers immortality, the unbroken throng of devotees performing circuits of Aruṇācala calls forth the ambrosia of liberation from birth and death.

²⁵ When Lord Śiva appeared before Brahmā and Viṣṇu as an immeasurable column
Holding you within my thoughts
who are compassion's noble form,
the Letters Five upon my lips,
both hands above my head conjoined,
grant that I may daily make
pradakṣinā of you!26

The moon that rises o'er that sacred peak
to adorn your holy locks you keep,
and black of mountain caves
for [the poison at] your throat you take,27
shining forth as Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!

Knowing that the insults of all the world,
are seen as praises by the Lord,

The first part of these verses eloquently expresses the necessity of worshipping Lord Śiva in thought, word and deed, the essential requirement for all who aspire to realisation of their true Self. The Five Letters refers to the five syllable mantra śi-vā-ya-na-ma; śi represents śivam; vā represents his energy of grace – arul śakti; ya represents the jīva; na represents māyā or tirōtam, the energetic whirl of impurity in itself, and ma represents āṇavam, that impurity as operating within the jīva. The symbolism of the mantra is described in the Siddhānta text Tiru Aruḷ Payaṉ – The Fruit of Divine Grace by Umāpati Śivācāriyār, a guru in the lineage of Meykaṇṭatēvar:

See on one side, the dance of defilement, on the other the dance of true knowledge, and oneself (the soul) in the middle.
As ‘ma’ and ‘na’ unfold, uniting with the consciousness (of the jīva) they do not permit it to return (to the Lord). If its powerful deeds are cancelled out, it will succeed in returning.

Again a parallel is drawn here between Śiva’s iconic anthropomorphic form, as bearing the moon in his matted locks and displaying at his throat the black stain of the poison halāhala, which was churned from the Milk Ocean and which he swallowed for the salvation of all living beings. The poison is equated to the blackness of cave openings on the mountainside.
the sage of Arur, on his wedding day, spoke words of calumny, [they say].
So grant me now the grace to bow down to the holy feet of Him that daily [hears such words and] finds them meet.

Above the glorious enclosing walls of the universe’s surrounding shell, as a Siva lingam you arise in the temple of the overarching skies. 

29 Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!

(To be Continued)

28 Sundarar is one of the three authors of the Tēvāram. (See v. 1, note 3.) He is also known as Ārūraṉ in virtue of his association with the town of Ārūr in the Taṅcavūr (Tanjore) district. His biography is told in the Periya Purāṇam by Cēkkiḻār, which recounts the lives of the 63 Tamil saints, the Nāyaṉār or Nāyaṉmār. When the time for his marriage came, Lord Śiva appeared in the guise of an old Brahmin and claimed that Sundarar was his slave according to the bond executed by Sundarar’s grandfather and therefore he objected to the marriage. A close examination of this deed revealed that it was a real one. When the people wanted to know the residence of the old Brahmin, he entered the temple and disappeared, only to reappear as Śiva himself seated with his consort upon the bull. Because Sundarar had called him a madman when he first put forward his claim in the disguise of the old Brahmin, Śiva bade him compose a hymn addressing him as pittāṉ – madman. Thus did it come to pass that Sundarar composed the first of his decades, the one which begins with the words pittā pigai cūḍī – Madman! You who wear the crescent moon [in your locks]! In this first part of the verse the author is saying, ‘Since you are known to accept even the insults of your devotees as praise, then perhaps even I may dare to offer my hymns to you, however inferior and unworthy of you they may be.’

29 In Hindu cosmology the universe was conceived as being contained in an egg-shaped shell. The idea here is that, if we were to conceive of Sōnasailaṉ in terms of a lingam housed within a temple, then the only temple which might conceivably be worthy or capable of containing it would be the shell of the universe itself.
Sonasaila Malai

Song Garland to the Red Mountain

SIVAPRAKASA SWAMIGAL
TRANSLATED BY ROBERT BUTLER

The biographies of Sivaprakasa Swamigal relate that his father Kumaraswami’s conversion to the Virasaiva movement had occurred through the intervention of Lord Siva himself, who had appeared to him in the guise of a Virasaiva sadhu as he sat in meditation. The sadhu instructed him to take dhāraṇā dīkṣā, the *initiation of investment with the liṅgam*, from a teacher called Gurudevar in Tiruvannamalai. Accordingly Sivaprakasa and his two brothers were brought up in the Virasaiva tradition. After Kumaraswami died Sivaprakasa and his brothers returned to Tiruvannamalai and, according to one account, continued their studies under the tutelage of one Gurudevar, who resided in a math in the western street of the town. It is not clear if this was the same Gurudevar who had formerly initiated their father. It was during this time that Sivaprakasa composed the work that is the subject of these articles, *Sonasaila Malai*, during a single *pradakshina* of the mountain Arunachala. At some point the

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brothers decided to undertake a pilgrimage to the south to further their studies of Tamil. Arriving in Turaimangalam they enjoyed the patronage of a local ruler called Annamalai Reddiyar for two and a half years. Then, determining to continue on their journey south, they took their leave of Annamalai Reddiyar and departed for Tirunelveli.

There, after taking śaiva sannyāsa, Sivaprakasa approached the head of Dharmapura Athinam Math, Velliambala Tambiran, with a request to teach him Tamil grammar. He in turn, in order to gauge Sivaprakasha’s literary prowess, requested him to compose a *venba* verse ending and beginning with the syllable ‘ku’ and containing the phrase ‘ūruṭaiyāṇi.’ In response Sivaprakasa composed the following verse:

kuṭakkōṭu vāneyiṟu koṇṭāṟkuk kēḷal
muṭakkōṭu muṇṇamaṇi vāṟku — vaṭakkōṭu
tēruṭaiyāṇ tevvukkut tillaitōl mērkoḷḷal
ūruṭaiyāṇ eṇnum ulaku.

*The world declares that,
for Him who broke the teeth of the Sun
who flees to the west,
for Him who once wore as an ornament
the curving tusk of a boar;
for the Enemy of Kāma, who flies north
on the chariot [of the southerly breeze],
Tillai is his home,
[tiger and elephant] hides are his attire
and a young bull is his mount.*¹

¹ The most likely meaning for the words ěr uṭaiyāṇ is *the one who possesses, the master of a city, town or village,* just as indeed the words tēr uṭaiyāṇ in the previous line mean *possessor of a chariot.* But Sivaprakasa puts a very clever twist on them, taking them as three separate nouns ěr – town, uṭai – attire and āṇ – bull and employing them in a *porul kōḷ – poetic device called niraṉiṟai (niral nirai) which means arrangement in rows or ranks.* In this, elements of speech, in this case three subjects and their respective predicate nouns, are ‘stacked’ within the same sentence on either side of the same verb, here the verb to be understood. Hence the meaning of the words tillai tōl mēl koḷḷal ěr uṭai āṇ is [The world declares that for Lord Śiva] *Tillai, hides [and his] mount [are] [his] home, [his] attire [and a] bull.*
Velliyambala Tambiran was deeply impressed and proceeded to instruct the three brothers in the five branches of Tamil grammar, consisting of letters, words, prosody, subject matter and rhetoric.  

(Biography to be continued in the next issue)

Will there ever come a day that, freed from body, senses and faculties of mind, with the veil of anavam’s dark illusion rent, I see you without seeing, within myself, I, a flower, and you the scent?

Flayer of elephant and lion you came [from Kailash’s Mount], and now upon your slopes great herds of these you raise too numerous to count, their burning hatred to assuage,  

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord! (17)

For me who languishes in the heat of delusive charms of pretty girls whose heavy braids are decked with flower wreaths where swarms of humming insects feast, will there ever come a day

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1 The faculties of mind, karaṇam are the intellectual faculties of which there are four maṇam – mind, putti – intellect, cittam – will, volition, and ahaṁkāram – egoity.

2 Siva wears a tiger skin which belonged to the tiger that the rishis in the Daruka forest conjured up to destroy him, and also a blanket of elephant skin which belonged to the asura Gajāsura who attacked him in the form of an elephant. Seeing him come from Kailash dressed in this way, the tigers and elephants of Aruṇācala might understandably be somewhat aggrieved.
that you draw me in, me safe to keep
in the cool shade of your holy feet?

Just as his shining locks do hide
the holy Ganga’s silvery tide
that flows down from his jewelled head,
white torrents roaring,
tumble down your glittering sides,
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (18)

Grant me now your holy grace
to remove that poverty of mind
whereby I idly waste my time
in lauding those whose deeds are base,
like Murugan who roaming goes
from peak to peak
or Kama with his cruel bow.³

Whilst great Mount Meru
cannot even bear to think
how he in days of yore
below the shoulder
of the Lord did, bending, shrink
and daily bows his head in fame,⁴
waxing great, do you arise,
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (19)

³ The reference here appears to be to the pre-Vedic Murugan, who is the Lord of the *kuriñci tiṇai* – hilly tracts in the pre-Vedic Tamil culture, before he was adopted into the Hindu pantheon as the son of Śiva. Murugan and Kāma are here used to represent those who are drawn towards worldly pursuits by youth and beauty.

⁴ When Śiva used Mount Meru as a bow to destroy the aerial cites of the *asuras*, its topmost summit would naturally have been drawn down to around the level of his shoulder. Verse 7 refers to a variant version of the story in which Lord Śiva does not even use his bow, but destroys the cities with a laugh.
Will that day come
that, through your grace,
you grant
to such a wicked one as I
the noble poverty that comes
from offering feasts
to sages great
who wear the holy ash,
and a body wasted
through exercise of holy fasts?⁵

The kuvalai flowers, where beetles suck,
that flourish on your spreading tanks
are not for any of the gods
but are for Cànticuvarar⁶ in joy to pluck,
*Flowering Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (20)

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⁵ Service to the servants of the Lord is considered equal to, or even superior to, direct service to the Lord himself. Indeed a great number of the nāyaṉmār, whose histories are recounted in the *Periya Purāṇam* gained their status through just such indirect service. In his *Marital Garland of Letters*, v. 104, Sri Ramana goes even further and begs to be a servant of the servants of those servants:

ṇāmaṅkēḷ anpartam āpparuk(ku)
āppaṅāy īṭavaruḷ āruṇācalā.

*Arunachala, grant through your grace that I may become a devotee of the devotees of the devotees who hear your name with love.*

⁶ Càntēcuvarar is another of the 63 Nāyaṉār. He was born into a Brahmin family and given the name Vicāracarumar. His devotion to the Lord caused him to slay his own father. Accordingly Lord Śiva declared that henceforth he himself would be his father and made him the chief of his devotees saying, ‘We confer upon you the rank of Chaṇṭīcaṇ, such that all the vessels from which we have eaten, all our apparel and all our adornments are yours alone.’ Since the water lilies that grow on the tanks of Aruṇācala qualify as nirmālya, that is to say offerings of food and flower garlands that have originally been offered to Śiva, Càntēcuvarar is the only one who has the right to pick them. Càntēcuvarar, or Càntikēcuvarar as he is commonly known, has a unique place in south Indian temple worship. During the *Karttiyai Deepam* festival in Tiruvannamalai it is he who, as the devotee-god, accompanies the main temple deities Śiva, Parvatī, Vināyakar and Murugan on each of their daily processions around the temple.
Like a kingfisher that spies its prey
great Yama stands and waits the day
to steal my very life away.
Please grant to me your grace ’ere this,
and drown me in your sea of bliss.

For those who see you [only]
as a great and towering Mount,
you bring forth trees,
venkai,7 asoka8 and sandalwood,
covered all in honeyed flowers.
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (21)

My worthless words have not the power
that dispatched you as an emissary9
to the maid whose words are pure and sweet,
as the hosts of heaven rained down flowers,
and holy sages weeping floods of tears,
damped down the dust upon the street.
So ranting on, I languish here.

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7 The *venkai* is the Indian kino tree, *Pterocarpus marsupium*. It is a large deciduous
tree which can grow up to 30-40 metres tall. It has yellow flowers that are worn
as garlands and used in the worship of Murugan.

8 The *acōka*, Skt. *asoka, Saraca asoka* is prized for its beautiful foliage and fragrant
flowers. It is a small, erect evergreen tree, with deep green leaves growing in dense
clusters. The *asoka* flowers are bright orange-yellow in colour, turning red before
wilted.

9 The maid is Paravaiyār, one of the two celestial handmaidens, whom, in their
human incarnations, Lord Śiva granted to Sundarar as wives. Previously Sundarar
had been a devotee of Lord Śiva at his court on Mount Kailash. Therefore Śiva
had decreed a human birth for him, in which he could satisfy his love for the two
women in their human incarnations. In the *Periya Purāṇam* it is simply stated that
the Lord instructed his devotees to conduct the marriage of the couple. There is
no mention of the Lord going as an emissary to request Paravaiyār’s hand or of
gifts of horse and elephant as stated in v. 41 later. However the story of Lord Śiva
going in disguise to plead on behalf of his devotee is prevalent, possibly stemming
from a variant version of the *Periya Purāṇam*. 

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‘Though I came clad in a form
of surpassing greatness
that [all] might know me,
those Two knew me only
inasmuch as I did make them know,’\textsuperscript{10}
thus declaring you rise on high,
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!} (22)

Obeying slender maids
whose words are sweet,
I did not serve those who crave
the lotuses of your holy feet,
renouncing all desire,
not squandering birth,
like nectar poured
on dry, cracked earth.

\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,}
where the \textit{simbul} bird\textsuperscript{11} in plumage rich
swoops to snatch a lion which,
gripping with its powerful claws,
has leapt upon the head
of an elephant drunk in the must,
down whose temples juices pour,\textsuperscript{12}
and clutching it, prepares to skyward soar. (23)

\textsuperscript{10} Although, as Aruṇācala, Lord Śiva is accessible to all, even the great gods Viṣṇu and Brahmā were unable to know him when they arrogantly assumed that they could know him by their own efforts. Only when they abandoned their arrogance and bowed down to Him did He graciously reveal his form to them.

\textsuperscript{11} The \textit{cimpuḷ} is a fabulous eight-legged bird which figures in the Purāṇas and other scriptures. It is credited with being more powerful than the lion and elephant, and is often depicted as part lion and part bird. The name appears to be a combination of the Sanskrit word \textit{simha} – lion and the Tamil word \textit{pul} – bird. Its Sanskrit name is \textit{śarabha}, \textit{carapam} in Tamil. The beast has a strong connection with Śiva in that this was the form that he took to defeat Viṣṇu’s lion-man avatar, \textit{Narasīṁha}.

\textsuperscript{12} The elephant is held to live in fear of the lion, whilst the lion in turn is held to live in fear of the \textit{cimpuḷ} bird. There is a Tamil proverb which says, ‘The elephant dreams
Shall I ever cease to lust for pretty girls
whose tresses soft like dark clouds swirl,
small of brow with wanton eyes,
like Kama’s flowery darts, dark
with fine veins in the white,
with tiny waists, and rounded breasts,
whereon a flower garland rests?

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,
who men applaud, saying,
‘Bright boar’s tusks\footnote{Śiva is on occasion described as wearing a boar’s tusk, possibly as a memento of his defeating Viṣṇu in his varaha – boar incarnation, or representing the tusk of the boar form abandoned by Viṣṇu after his doomed attempt to reach the Lord’s feet. In the following verse 11 from chapter 59 of the Tiruvilaiyāḍal Purāṇam, the evening sky is compared to Śiva’s body, the boar’s tusk to the crescent moon and the necklace of Brahmā’s skulls to the stars. The heavens turned red, as if the most beauteous Lord had appeared in person to dispel the suffering that beset his devotee [Māṇikkvācakar]. The crescent moon resembled the white boar’s tusk that hangs upon his chest, and the stars in the heavens were like the necklace of Brahma’s skulls [that he wears around his neck].} and serpents
as your matchless ornaments
you liberally afford.
Yours is the light
that illuminates the world.’  \(24\)

To see you, Viṣṇu did not think
to sweetly sound with all his power
the conch he carries in his hand,
nor did Ayan deign to shower
libations from his nine-jewelled pot\footnote{Śiva is on occasion described as wearing a boar’s tusk, possibly as a memento of his defeating Viṣṇu in his varaha – boar incarnation, or representing the tusk of the boar form abandoned by Viṣṇu after his doomed attempt to reach the Lord’s feet. In the following verse 11 from chapter 59 of the Tiruvilaiyāḍal Purāṇam, the evening sky is compared to Śiva’s body, the boar’s tusk to the crescent moon and the necklace of Brahmā’s skulls to the stars. The heavens turned red, as if the most beauteous Lord had appeared in person to dispel the suffering that beset his devotee [Māṇikkvācakar]. The crescent moon resembled the white boar’s tusk that hangs upon his chest, and the stars in the heavens were like the necklace of Brahma’s skulls [that he wears around his neck].}
Thus trying to reach you, they could not.\textsuperscript{15}
SONASAILA MALAI

You who, with mercy overflowing,
the mighty elephant to guard us gave
with five arms but a single tusk,
and the six-faced lion [Murugan],
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

At that wedding feast I could not be,
in the marriage pavilion
of the Lord of Cikāli,\(^{16}\) over whom
his deeds had power none.
That time [alas] is now long gone.
So now to you I direct my plea:
to grant your holy feet in grace
and all my suffering efface.

Unlike great Mount Pothiyam,\(^{17}\)
home of Tamil rich and sweet,

\(^{14}\) Brahmā is depicted as having four arms, one of which holds a water pot, representing the primal waters from which he caused the universe to evolve. The nine jewels are given in the Madras Tamil Lexicon as onyx, sapphire, coral, emerald, ruby, pearl, topaz, lapis-lazuli and diamond.

\(^{15}\) Brahmā and Viṣṇu became carried away by their own egos, believing that they could reach the head and feet of the Lord by their own efforts when all they needed to do was to use the implements they already held in their hands, the nava maṇi nīr karakam – nine jewelled water pot and the nantu – conch, to pay homage to him and thus gain darshan of him. The implication is that the same fate awaits all those who, employing the ego, attempt to gain realisation through their own mental efforts.

\(^{16}\) Pukali, the name used in the verse, is another name for Cikāli, is the birth-place of Jnānasambhandhar. See v. 1, note 3. His poems constitute the first three volumes of the Tirumugai. At the time of his wedding the Lord caused a vast effulgent light to appear, with which the bride and groom merged and attained liberation. All those who witnessed his wedding are said to have merged with the light and attained mukti also. The poet bemoans the fact that no such ‘fast track’ to mukti is available to himself!

\(^{17}\) Mount Pōthiyam is a mountain in the Pāṇṭiya country, abode of the sage Agastya. Agastya is said to have learned the Tamil language from Śiva himself and then to have settled on Mount Pōthiyam where he wrote a Tamil grammar and taught it to twelve pupils, thus founding the language and causing it to prosper.
you do not melt to music’s tones, 
but only to the daughter [of the Himalayas’] dulcet speech, 
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

‘Ambrosia you are, 
a jewel amongst maids!’ 
thus flattering foolish girls 
I wandered, all to no avail. 
Yet you I did not praise, 
though I knew that those who string together words to call you even ‘madman’¹⁸ in harmonious verse, 
are granted your reward.

Though you concealed from our view your beauteous limbs, our eyes’ delight, 
you did not hide your cooling hue that sheds a hundred thousand crores of shining [golden] rays of light.¹⁹ 
Thus rising up, you tower on high, 
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

To me, deluded by those maids with slender waists like threads, 
and flowery braids,

¹⁸See note to v.16, in the previous article for the explanation of this reference to Sundarar, who did indeed refer to Lord Śiva as a pittan – madman, albeit at the Lord’s own behest.

¹⁹This reference here appears to be to the golden form of Aruṇāchala, the form the mountain took after first manifesting as an immeasurable pillar of fire. The word katir, here translated as rays, could also mean suns.

In the first [Krita] yuga it was a Mountain of bright red flame, then, in the Treta yuga, of ruby. In the Dvapara yuga it shone with the lustre of pure gold, and in the Kali yuga, in which we now dwell, it is formed of stone. Its name is Arunachala, the Red Mountain.

— Aruṇācala Purāṇam, Ch.1. v. 52.
and wounded by the sting
of Venus mounds
like cobras’ jewelled hoods,
when will you vouchsafe
the cool balm of your holy foot
and end this madness
with your grace?

In fair Cikazhi’s noble town,
seemly and of great renown
you gave unto that Brahmin’s son
a booth, covered all in shining pearls.
And now you dwell beneath
a canopy of pearly stars on high
that glitter in the vast and open sky,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

Grant me now your grace, I pray,
that I may pass my days away
at the feet of true devotees,
tending to their every need,
studying the glorious Agamas’ word,

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20 The story is told in the Periya Purāṇam of how Jñānasambandhar was given a palanquin and parasol encrusted with pearls. He was on pilgrimage and had just arrived at the sthala of Māṟaṉpāṭi. As they approached on foot, Jñānasambandhar was reciting the five syllabled mantra ‘namaśivāya’ to ease the distress of his devotees who were suffering from the heat of the sun. Accordingly Lord Śiva ordained that a palanquin and parasol encrusted with pearls be provided to alleviate the suffering of his devotee.

The Lord who joyfully wears the enduring holy ash would graciously furnish him with a palanquin to ride in, a parasol to shade him and shining clarions to announce his approach, all set with flawless pearls.

Jñānasambandhar’s destination the next day was the nearby sthala of Tirunelvāyil Arattuṟai. Lord Śiva therefore appeared to the Brahmins of that place in a dream, informed them that the aforementioned items had been placed in the temple’s inner sanctum and told them that they should deliver them to the saint on the following day. Lord Śiva also apprised Sambandhar himself of what he had done. Thus the next day the precious items were duly delivered to him.
and bringing flowers, blooming new,
to make puja in praise of you.

You upon whose mountain slopes
maidens of the hunter clans\(^{21}\)
cast pearls and jewels
from the cobra’s hood\(^{22}\)
to scare the parrots from the land
where swathes of ripened millet stand,
\(\textit{fair Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!}\) \(^{(29)}\)

\(\text{(To be Continued)}\)

\(^{21}\) In the Sangam literature the words in this verse \(\text{eyiṉ maṭavār}\) apply more properly to the women of the hunter-robber clans of the \(\text{pālai tiṇai} – \text{desert tracts}\). What are being described here are the womenfolk of the \(\text{kugavar}\), the \(\text{hill tribes}\) of the \(\text{kuriñci tiṇai} – \text{hilly tracts}\), who, in addition to hunting, cultivate crops of millet on the upper slopes. The theme of young girls being delegated to guard the ripened crops in this way with slings and rattles is common in the literature, often involving the intrigue of clandestine lovers’ meetings.

\(^{22}\) Hooded snakes were believed to carry a precious jewel in their hoods. As for pearls, they were said to be produced in a number of ways, other than in an oyster shell. These places include the snake, the bamboo and the tusks of elephant and boar, all of which would have been plentiful on the mountain as imagined by the author.
Sonasaila Malai

Song Garland to the Red Mountain

Sivaprakasa Swamigal
Translated by Robert Butler

The biography of Sivaprakasa Swamigal continued.

In return for the instruction given to him by Velliyambala Tambiran, the head of Dharmapuram Athinam Math in Tirunelveli, Sivaprakasa offered to Tambiran as guru dakshina the 300 gold coins which Reddiyar had given them to finance their trip. Tambiran refused, requesting Sivaprakasa to go instead to Tirucendur and defeat in a contest of prosody a Tamil scholar with whom he was having a bitter feud and thus deflate that scholar’s arrogance. Sivaprakasa accordingly proceeded to Tirucendur and met up with the scholar in question whilst circumambulating the temple there. Both agreed to undertake a contest in which each would compose verses which contained no consonants (p,m,v) or vowels (u, o), in which the lips are closed or rounded. Sivaprakasa accordingly composed the nīrōṭṭaka yamaka antāti, consisting of a kāppu – dedication and 31 verses in the kaṭṭaḷai-k-kali-tuṟai metre. This verse form presents additional difficulties in that in each verse the first foot of every line must be

Robert Butler devotes his time to the translation of Tamil classical and spiritual texts. He has published a grammatical commentary on Uḷḷadu Nāṟṟpadu. This and other translations are available for online preview, purchase or download at the following link: http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=1212666.
identical in form but different in meaning and also, being an antāti, there must be a repetition of all or part of the final foot of each verse in the initial foot of the following one. The following is one of the verses from that composition.

kaṇakkāka nāykaṭīṅ kāya nilaiyenak kāṇyiyeṅṅa kaṇakkāka nāṇalain teyttē ṇeḻrcentīṛ kantanerrīk kaṇakkāka nārtanta ninnraṇai yēyiṅṅik kāṭaliṅṅr
kaṇakkā kaṇānikart tēyaḷi yaṅkattīṅ kāṭalarrē.

Thinking that the body, which is nought but food for hordes of crows and dogs, was real and enduring, to what end did I suffer and grow weary? Skanda, Lord of Tirucendur, may you, whom He fathered, whose body is clad in bones and who bears an eye in his forehead, vouchsafe me your protection, so that henceforth I may in devotion dwell upon you alone, freed from this love for the impermanent body, which is like a dream.¹

His opponent, however, was unable to complete a single verse, admitted defeat and swore allegiance to Sivaprakasa, who in turn took him to pay homage to Tambiran. Subsequently Sivaprakasa, on the advice of Tambiran, went to Chidambaram and spent some time there.

(The biography will be continued in Part Four)

********

In this world that the vast ocean girds, where waves, white crested, surge, I shall never forget you serenely dwelling there, as true devotees your noble form adorn with choice fresh blooms a mountain high, and thus to that old proverb give the lie.¹

¹ According to both Tamil commentators the proverb being referred to here is malai
As your fair form,  
with verdant creepers  
encompassed all about,  
casts forth its comely shadow  
so that men proclaim,  
‘Upon the pure, white moon,  
there lies a stain!’\(^2\)  
you gloriously stand and shine,  
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!*  

Mounted on a prancing steed  
of finest golden hue,  
though you came  
hurling well-honed missiles  
with your delicate lotus hand,\(^3\)  
how is it then  
that still the fearsome tiger  
of this sensate world  
for me you have not slain?

\(\text{āḷavu cuvāmikku malai āḷavu mālaiyā} – \text{Does a god a mountain high need a garland a mountain high also?}\) \(^\text{The remark is probably aimed at those who overindulge in shows of piety. Another proverb in the same vein is malai āḷavu cuvāmikku kaḍugu āḷavu karpūram – For a god a mile high a piece of camphor the size of a mustard seed will suffice.}\) \(^\text{The idea expressed in the verse is that, in the case of Sōṇasailaṉ, his devotees are so numerous and so devoted that they actually do fashion a garland as high as the mountain itself.}\)  

\(^2\) The conceit is that Sōṇasailaṉ is so high that the shadow of his peak will fall upon the moon. There are of course visible marks on the moon, which are traditionally recognised as being in the form of a hare, but these are hardly visible when the full moon is shining with its full brilliance. Thus for the purposes of this verse the moon’s face is taken to be clear and bright until notionally touched by the shadow of the mountain’s peak.  

\(^3\) Lord Śiva is here being described as a hunter, a role which he famously takes in the *Mahābhārata*, when he takes on the appearance of the hunter, Kirāta, and fights with Arjuna. There is also an instance in the Tamil *Arunācala Purāṇam* where Śiva appears to Brahmā in the company of Parvatī with the Four Vedas as his hounds. On that occasion his mission is to cure the infatuation of Brahmā with the beautiful *apsara* Tilottamā, whom he, Brahmā, has created to ensnare the other gods at the request of Indra, but with whom he himself accidentally becomes infatuated.
The shade cast by your trunk and feet
reaches all the oceans seven,
whilst the shadow of your mighty head,
towering up into the heavens,
runs, the outer ocean,
wide and vast, to meet,\(^4\)

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* \(^{(31)}\)\(^5\)

Even if you do not inspire me to sing,
feeding me with the milk
of Unnamulai Uma’s breast,
She who is all that is,\(^6\)
or even if you torture me
with gout and colic and all the rest,

\(^4\) According to Puranic cosmography the entire cosmos is divided into seven concentric island continents (*sapta dvīpa vasumati*) separated by the seven encircling oceans, each double the size of the preceding one (going out from within). The seven continents of the Purāṇas are stated as Jambūdvīpa, Plakṣadvīpa, Salmalidvīpa, Kuśadvīpa, Krauñcadvīpa, Śākadvīpa, and Puṣkaradvīpa. The seven intermediate oceans consist of salt water, sugarcane juice, wine, ghee, curd, milk and water respectively.

\(^5\) This verse echoes the sentiment of verse 2 of the author’s composition *Nālvar nāṇ maṇi mālai* – *Jewel Garland upon the Four,* ‘the Four’ being the three *Tēvāram* authors and Māṇikkavācakar, who are traditionally referred to in this way as being the four greatest of the Tamil bhakti poet-saints.

King of poets, you who adorn [the Lord] with garlands of words that are the cause of liberation! What does it matter whether the mighty One who dances in Tillai’s golden hall bestows upon one of you the ambrosia of true knowledge, but afflicts the other, as he once did you, with an intestinal colic never before seen in the land? In your hymns you and he both praise him in exactly the same way.

The reference of course is to Appar and Jñānasambandhar, who were willing to receive the Lord’s grace in whatever way he chose to bestow it. See notes 6 and 7.

\(^6\) The reference is to the famous incident in the life of Jñānasambandhar when Śiva and Parvati appeared to him as a child when he was hungry and Śiva requested Parvati to feed him with milk from her breast in a golden dish. When his father asked him who had given the milk, he pointed to the sky and sang the *patikam* which begins *tōḍu uḍaiya ceviyaṉ* – *He wears an ear-jewel in one ear.* This incident marks the conferring of the Lord’s grace and divine wisdom upon the child, who
that I may, by your grace,
sing your praise, is my one request.\(^7\)

Herds of deer too numerous to count
surround you, leaping all about,
reflecting thus,
‘If he adopts his ancient form again
he’ll not want the deer he abandoned then,
but will choose another amongst us,’\(^8\)

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (32)

Grant me the great felicity
of bowing at their holy feet,
and offering my service
to devotees of yours who’re steeped
in the highest form of bliss in which
desire and aversion both have ceased.

The torrents of compassion,
unceasing and impossible to stem,
that down your mountain flow,
are no different to them
who do not truly know,
than silvery streams that bubbling,

thereafter became known as Jñānasambandhar. It is this verse that begins the whole *Tirumurai* collection, being the first verse of the three books composed by Jñānasambandhar, which themselves come first in the collection.

\(^7\) In stark contrast, Śiva’s granting of grace to Appar took a very different form. Appar had abandoned the Saivite faith and joined the Jain religion. Śiva’s response was to afflict him with severe intestinal colic, *cūlai* in Tamil, until he realised his error and returned to his former faith. This event is commemorated in the first *patikam* of the first of his three *Tēvāram* volumes, *Tirumurai* 4-6, which begins *kūṟṟu āvīṇavāṟu vilakkakilīr – Will you not banish those things (stomach pains) that afflict me like death?*

\(^8\) Lord Śiva is often portrayed in iconography holding a deer in his hand, indicating the controlling of the restive mind. The deer of Arunachala are fancifully imagined to be leaping about, eagerly vying for his attention, in the hope that, when he resumes his anthropomorphic form once more, he will choose to hold one of them, rather than the one he had held before assuming the form of a mountain.
down other mountains rushing go,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord! (33)

Since in this life you generously afford wealth, and maidens chaste,
in whom virtue brightly shines and beauty overflows,
whilst in the next, you to them accord liberation’s heavenly estate,
what praise of you will learned bards be loath to make?

In your hilly fields
the doughty mountain folk
build lookouts,
chopping logs of sandalwood,
and planting them for legs,
whilst on the top
they make a floor
of elephant tusks outspread,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord! (34)

Grant to me your grace that I,
your devotee, may make my way
into your holy presence where
gods embrace their lady wives
with eyes like baby mangoes sliced.12

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9 Hillsmen, Tamil kuṟavar, are hill dwelling tribes, who live by hunting and hill farming. See v. 29, note 21.
10 Lookouts, Tamil paraṉ, itaṇam are platforms, built in the branches of trees, on high rocks or, as here, raised up on legs from ground level by hill folk and used as lookouts from which they can watch out for incursions into their fields by elephants, parrots and so forth. They feature in a number of Sangam Akam poems of the kuriñci tiṇai – the hilly tracts.
11 Sandalwood and ivory are of course very valuable commodities and would never be used for such a purpose. The idea here is that on Sōṇasailaṉ these things are so plentiful that there is no problem in so employing them.
12 poḻntidum vaḍu kan – eyes [like] sliced green mangoes. It is a poetic convention to refer to women’s eyes in this way. A vaḍu is an unripe, green mango in the early
In reverence they shrink away,

at a stroke from august Nandi’s stave,\(^{13}\)

then all around you press again.

Like a mother, when her heart melts

as her eyes upon her bonny infant rest

and she pours forth milk

in plenty from her breast,

as devotees [around you] prostrating go,

your streams [of grace] upon them flow,

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord! \((35)\)

Rama with his arrow true\(^{14}\)

went the evil rule to oppose

that on Lanka’s isle arose,

then came with deep devotion

those feet with sounding anklets

to worship and adore.

[Is it any wonder then that]

such feet as these, I fear to implore?

That no parallel might e’er be drawn

with any smaller mountain’s form,

you chose in your shape to suggest

your consort Parvati’s\(^{15}\) ample breast.

---

\^13\ Nandi, imagined in semi-human form, is Lord Śiva’s gatekeeper on mount Kailash, here pictured wielding his staff to control the crowds of lesser deities who seek audience with the divine couple, Śiva and Parvatī.

\^14\ The person referred to here is of course Rāma of the Rāmāyaṇa who is said to have worshipped Śiva at Rameswaram on his return from Lanka after defeating the demon Rāvaṇa, although some claim that this incident is not recorded in the Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa itself but only in later traditions.

\^15\ Parvatī is referred to here as malai māṉ – the deer-like maiden of the mountain, as being the daughter of Himavat, the personification of the Himalaya mountain range.
Thus waxing great, on high you soar,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

Thinking that the [other] gods,
were really gods,
unable as they were,
to save themselves
from whirling births,
they did not the shelter seek
of you who are ambrosia sweet.
For those of true knowledge all devoid,
can the ills of birth e’er be destroyed?

From your mountain caves,
as a dark cloud passes by outside,
lions, to pounce, rush swifty out,
thinking that an elephant is about,
then hurry back, their shame to hide,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

Whether my body stays
whilst aeons of time pass away,
or in the twinkling of any eye
doth fail and die,
‘tis well with me,
as long as I may stay, a devotee,
at the lotus flowers of your feet.

As it climbs on high, the rising Sun
recalls the infant Murugan,
clambering up [his father’s breast]
babbling child’s talk, sweet and dear
as jewels glint
on pointed spear,16
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

16 pūn tayaṅgu ayil vēl – with a sharp spear [on which] jewels shine. The sun rising up over the slopes of the mountain is compared to Śiva’s younger son, Murugan, as a young child, climbing up his father’s chest, grasping his spear, holding which he is almost invariably portrayed. His vēl – spear, javelin is often golden in colour with a blade set with jewels.
Men beg of you to come,  
mounted on your speedy bull,  
to bring birth to an end.  
So let them beg, but as for me,  
poor wretch, what I request  
is birth itself in which I may adorn  
you with flowery garlands  
replete with honeyed Tamil words.  

As Sun and Moon hang in the sky  
above the Mountains East and West  
it’s as if you laid an offering pole  
down upon the ground, adorned  
with jewelled pots at either end,  
and stood up tall between the two,  
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

All the space within my heart  
I gave to girls with tender breasts  
adorned with jewellery of gold,  
set with shining gems and pearls.  
Yet for you, who are to devotees  
the apple of their eye, offering  
them in grace a never-ending feast,  
no place at all for you to live  
however small, could I give.

\[17\]A similar sentiment is expressed by Appar in the following Tēvāram verse: The curving eyebrows;/ the gentle smile upon lips red as the scarlet gourd;/ the sleek, matted locks;/ the body, coral red, smeared with milk-white ash;/ the raised foot delicately poised —/ he who has the good fortune to see these/ will welcome even human birth upon this wide earth. Appar, Tēvāram, 4:81:4

\[18\]The Mountains East and West are the mythical mountains in the East and West behind which the sun is said to rise and set. The scene is set in the evening on the full moon day, the only time at which the sun sets at roughly the same time as the moon rises.

\[19\]kā, also kāvadi means an offering pole. Winslow’s dictionary gives the following definition: ‘A pole carried on the shoulder with offerings for a temple, commonly with some parade; also the religious mendicant’s pole which he takes from house to house to gather offerings, etc. for the service of an idol.’
As the *venkai* and *kondrai*,
with its blackened pods, shower down
upon the bamboo’s pure white pearls
the medallions of their golden flowers,$^{20}$
the serpents, [not to be outdone], upon you
scatter cool gems from their hoods,$^{21}$

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (40)

To you, who to that great bard,
two matchless maids,
adorned with choicest gems
in holy marriage did grant
with gifts of horse and elephant,$^{22}$
I gave no praise and wandered all bereft.$^{23}$

As ripples shimmer on your wide tanks,
where lotus flowers stand in ranks,
like devotees waving *arti* lamps,$^{24}$
you shine forth,

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (41)

---

$^{20}$ The *koṉṟai* tree is the Indian Laburnum. Its long cascading bunches of yellow flowers are sacred to Lord Śiva, who is often described as wearing them. It produces thick clusters of long seed pods, which when ripe are dark in colour with black seeds. Here the blossoms are compared to gold coins, as if the trees were making their equivalent of a monetary offering. Here the golden flowers are referred to directly as *pon* – gold coins, an instance of ākupeyar – metonymy. See *Kuruntokai*, 233, which similarly compares their blossom to gold coins.

The little pits with gaping mouths, from which the yams have been rooted up, covered over with bright *koṉṟai* blossoms, so that they look like the treasure chests of the rich, lids thrown open and filled with gold coins…

$^{21}$ Hooded snakes were believed to carry a precious jewel in their hoods. See previously v. 29 and note.

$^{22}$ The ‘great bard’ is Sundarar and the ‘the two matchless maids’ are Paravaiyār and Caṅkiliyār, the two celestial handmaidens, whom, in their human incarnations, Lord Śiva granted to him as wives. See v. 22, note 62.

$^{23}$ The poet avows his own folly in not praising a Lord who has a record of generously giving whatever is requested to deserving devotees.

$^{24}$ ālatti also *arti* is *the waving of lights*, usually ghee lamps or burning camphor
If you will only grasp the black
defilement of your devotee,
and place it at your sapphire throat\textsuperscript{25}
with that the mighty gods
churned from the sea,
behold, your beauty by that blackness
magnified will grow, and even brighter be!
The bright effulgence that spreads
from the jewel upon Adishesha’s\textsuperscript{26} head
up through the shaft
that great and noble Boar carved out
recalls to us how young Murugan
sprang, a tiny spark, from our Lord’s brow,\textsuperscript{27}

\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!} (42)

placed on a platter, before an idol or person who is being honoured. The tanks of
Arunācala are compared to \textit{ālatti} platters, with lotuses as the flames from ghee
lamps or burning camphor, being waved in veneration of the mountain. One might
imagine that the rippling waters of the tanks and pools, gilded in the setting sun,
might easily resemble shiny salvers of beaten brass or gold.

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{maṇi miḍiṟṟu} – \textit{[in your] sapphire throat}. \textit{maṇi} means jewel, gem, here standing
for \textit{nīla maṇi} – \textit{sapphire}, to which the black poison in Śiva’s throat is likened.
Hence the name \textit{nīlakaṇḍaṉ} – \textit{the One with the sapphire throat}.

\textsuperscript{26} \textit{aṉantaṉ maṇi oḷi piḻampu} – \textit{the mass of light [from] the jewels [on the head] of}
\textit{Aṉantaṉ}. \textit{Aṉantaṉ} – \textit{the Infinite One} is the serpent Adiśeṣa, who is said to support
the world on his thousand heads. He is the king of the \textit{nāgas} – \textit{serpents}, who dwell
in \textit{Pātāla} – \textit{the infernal regions} beneath the earth. Viṣṇu, when he burrowed down
in the form of a boar, would have needed to travel that far and further if he were
to reach the Lord’s foot, thus allowing the spark from the jewels on the serpent’s
heads to travel up through the shaft thus created. Adiśeṣa is said to have 1000
jewels upon his 1000 heads, which illuminate all the regions.

\textsuperscript{27} According to the account in the Tamil \textit{Kanta Purāṇam}, the gods complained to
Śiva of being harassed by the \textit{asuras} and begged him to produce a child who
could vanquish them. Accordingly Lord Śiva assumed his ancient six-faced form
and produced six sparks from the third eye on each of those six heads. The gods
Vāyu and Agni carried those sparks and deposited them in the river Ganges, which
conveyed them to the Šaravaṇa lake in the Himalayas, where the six fiery sparks
were transformed into six children. Later when Parvatī grasped them to take them
home, they became a single child with six heads and twelve arms. The child was
Lord Murugan, also known as Skanda, Kārttikeya, Aṟumukaṉ, Subrahmanya and
other names.
Will that day come that in delight
my eyes shall come to see
the beauty of your holy face,
your shoulders four like stony mounts,
the coiled locks that lightning plays about,
your eyes where grace abounds,
and your two holy feet?

The streams that tumble down your sides,
like music sweet of heavenly choirs\(^{28}\)
upon your slopes resound,
as if, in love, your very form
melted to that delightful sound,
*Fair Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!*  \((43)\)

Their bodies covered thick with white
of holy ash, your devotees I saw,
and yet, like a cow that stands and dotes
upon her baby calf,
my mind refused to melt and flow
and to worship you I did not go.

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,*
where streams rush down,
as if in anger to drive away
tigers fierce, lion and bear,
deeming it unseemly that they
upon your holy form
with such disdain should stray.  \((44)\)

\(\uparrow\)

\((to\ be\ continued)\)

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\(^{28}\) The words *heavenly choirs* translate the Tamil word *kimpuruṭar*, Sanskrit *kimpuruṣa*. ‘A class of demigods, celestial lyrists, supposed to have the form of a horse and the head of a man.’ (Tamil Lexicon)
Having remained in Chidambaram for some time, Sivaprakasa returned to Turaimangalam, residing in the math built by Annamalai Reddiyar and composing a number of works, including the Veṅgai-k-kōvai. When requested by Reddiyar to take a wife, Sivaprakasa expressed his determination not to do so in the following verse:

\[
cēykoṇḍā ruṅkamalac cemmaluḍa ṇeyaravap
pāykoṇḍā rumpaniyum paṭṭīccu rattāṇē
nōykoṇḍā luṅkoḷalām nūruvaya dāmaḷavum
pēykoṇḍā luṅkoḷalān peṅkoḷḷa lāgādē.
\]

Robert Butler devotes his time to the translation of Tamil classical and spiritual texts. He has published a grammatical commentary on Uḷḷadu Nāṟpadu. A translation of the biography of Māṇikkavācakar is now available at the ashram bookshop. These are available for online preview, purchase or download at the following link: http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=1212666.
Lord of Paṭṭīcuram, to whom Lord Brahmā, who dwells upon a bright red lotus blossom, and Lord Viṣṇu, who slumbers, resting upon a serpent as his couch, both make obeisance, if disease should afflict me, or I should be tormented by demons for a hundred years, let it be so. But let me be spared the taking of a wife!

However when Reddiyar made the same proposal to his two younger brothers, both assented and Sivaprakasa arranged for their marriages to take place. Thereafter he returned to Chidambaram with Reddiyar where he composed a number of works including the Nālvar nāṉ maṇi mālai – Jewel Garland upon the Four, in praise of the three Tēvāram authors and Māṇikkavācakar, verse 2 of which is given in note 5 of the previous article.

(The biography will be continued in Part Five)

Please grant it, if you may, that the water that Unnamulai, of tiny, thread-like, swaying waist, used to cleanse the dish of shining gold with polished gems encharged, from which rich Pukali’s king drank the milk that day, be poured out [now for me to taste].

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord, where a langur in his cave,

---

paṭṭīccurattāṉē paṇiyum – Lord of Paṭṭīcuram, to whom makes obeisance, arava pāy koṇḍ[u] ārum – He (Lord Viṣṇu) who reclines, taking a serpent [as a] mat, cēykoṇḍ[u] ārum kamala cemmal uḍaṉē – along with the Lord [Brahmā], who dwells upon a bright red lotus blossom, nōy koṇḍālum koḷālām – if disease should afflict me, let it afflict [me]. pēy koṇḍālum koḷālām – If demons should torment me, let them torment [me], nūṟu vayad[u] ām aḷavum – even for as long as a hundred years. peṇ koḷḷal āgādē – [But] let there not be [for me] the taking of a wife.

1 See v. 32, note 6 in the April-June edition of the Mountain Path for the details of this incident in the life of Jñāṇsambandhar.
setting great bright gems for lamps
and spreading *ashoka* leaves as a couch,
sleeps there entwined with his spouse. (45)

People of this world
seek only food
to meet the body’s needs,
which arises as the fruit of deeds.
But daily they do not you beseech,
that they may gain the holy feet
bedecked with flowers honey-sweet
which lie beyond those actions’ reach. ²

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,*
where jewels cast,
to drive the flocks of parrots
from the millet crop,
go flying into rocky caves,
as though, knowing where
the deepest darkness lies,
to banish it they rushing go. (46)

The head of the bard of Navalur,
where *kuyil* sing in mango groves,
with lotus feet to crown You deigned,
even though to wear them he declined.³

² To attempt to gain happiness by protecting the body is a fruitless task, since the actions that brought about its arising will equally bring about its demise. The wise course is to take refuge in the Lord, annihilating the ego and with it the attachment to the body that is the cause of all our troubles. Compare the second *Mangalam* verse of Sri Ramana Maharshi’s *Uḷḷadu Naṟpadu*:

Those people who have a deep fear of death will, for their protection, take refuge at the holy feet of Lord Siva, he who is without both birth and death. In thus taking refuge [in Him], they suffered their own death. For them, in this deathless state, will the thought of death remain?

³ The story is told in the *Taduttātkoṇda Purāṇam* of the *Periya Purāṇam* of how Sundarar, the bard of Nāvalūr, feeling that it was not fitting that he should enter
Yet notwithstanding all my pleas,
You placed them not upon the head
of me your faithful devotee.
What reason for this could there be?

Waxing great you reach
the heavens’ lofty outer shell,
yet in spite of that
you ride in state
mounted on a young bull’s back,
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!}\footnote{47}

Shall I that day ever see,
when through your grace
you grant to me
right conduct and good qualities,
a nature loving and benign,
engaging speech and the bravery

Tiruvadigai, where Appar had formerly performed service to the Lord, went instead
to the nearby \textit{sthala} of Cittavaḍam. Lord Śiva, however, determined to bestow
his blessing upon Sundarar, took the form of an aged Brahmin and entered the
math where Sundarar and his entourage were spending the night. Lying down and
pretending to be asleep, the old man placed his feet upon Sundarar’s head. When
Sundarar pointed this out to him, he apologised and blamed his poor sight. Sundarar
moved his head away some distance and went back to sleep, only to find out later
that the feet were back on his head again. The story continues in v. 233:

\begin{verbatim}
When once more he placed his feet
upon the holy head
of the Sire of verdant Navalur,
girt by tanks where red carp leap,
‘Who are you, sir,’ Aruran said,
‘who thus so oft’ upon me tread?’
To which the Lord who concealed
Lady Ganga within his matted locks
replied,
‘How is it that you knew me not?’
and in a trice disappeared from view.
\end{verbatim}

Filled with devotion for the Lord, Sundarar sang the \textit{Tēvāram padigam} which begins
\texttt{tammāṉai aṟiyāda cādiyār uḷarē} – \textit{Is their any kinsman who does not know his Lord?}
to conquer the senses enmity,
then banishing cruel birth,
you take me as your devotee?

Upon your slopes
the hillsmen bold
fell *aquila* and sandal groves.
Red gemstones, sifted
from the earth,
away they throw
and then the crop of millet sow.\(^4\)

\[ \text{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!} \]  
(48)

I rejoiced to see your form adorned
with civet\(^5\) in a jewelled hall,
filled with incense’s fragrant scent
as throngs of gods and holy sages,
crowding near with palms conjoined,
offered up their ardent praises.

\[ \text{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,} \]
where the chill moon, as it passes by,
meets a lofty *jyoti* tree,

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{4} Here the *kuṟavar* – hill tribesmen are again featured, this time clearing the land of trees and removing stones from the ground in preparation for the planting of millet. Because this is the fabled Sōnasailaṉ of the poet’s imagination, the trees that are so carelessly discarded are precious sandalwood and eaglewood and the stones are rubies.} \]

\[ \text{\textsuperscript{5} The story is told in the final chapter of the *Aruṇācala Purāṇam* of the asura Pulaka, who terrorised the gods in the form of a civet cat. The gods complained to Lord Šiva, who explained that it was not easy to vanquish him because he had garnered great strength from the act of shedding his fragrant civet over the holy mountain. However Lord Šiva summoned him and offered him liberation in return for giving up his civet cat form. Pulaka agreed but further begged that in return the Lord adopt as one of his names *He whom civet adorns*. Lord Šiva consented and granted Pulaka salvation, whereupon gods, rishis and citizens adorned the Lord’s matted locks with civet. The Tamil commentary notes that the ritual of anointing Lord Anṇāmalai with civet endures to this day and is held to confer great benefits.} \]
before a dark cave soaring high, looking like a ball of finest rice placed before your open mouth [ready] to be gulped down [in a trice].

Just as in the world, in a flower beset by clouds of humming bees, inner petals with outer ones combined we see,$^7$ so it is fitting on your part that you should number me amongst the band of devotees who from anger[’s taint] have freed their heart.

You whose body melted, [not your heart] when pressed by Uma’s sandal-painted breast$^8$

6 The cave is compared to a mouth, the tree to an arm and the moon to a ball of rice. One might imagine that the branches of the tree look like fingers grasping it. The jyoti tree is a tree that is supposed to shine in the dark like the jyoti creeper mentioned earlier in v. 9.

7 A flower has alli – inner petals and pulli – outer petals. In a lotus blossom, for example, the inner petals will be pristine and perfect, but the outer ones, in contact with the mud and water of the tank, are likely to be soiled or tattered, yet they are both part of the same flower. The poet suggests that in the same way he, a poor sinner, should be admitted into the company of the great ones who have mastered their emotions. He further implies that their glory would even be magnified by the comparison with his lowly self.

8. The story is told in the Arunācala Purāṇam of how Parvatī, as part of her penance for playfully covering Lord Śiva’s eyes and thus causing universal chaos, built a lingam of sand on the banks of the Kampa river near Kāñci and performed puja to it. To test the strength of her tapas Lord Śiva unleashed the river Ganges.

In order to keep the sand lingam from being destroyed by that deathless river, Uma, daughter of the Himalaya, ruler of [all] the mountains, embraced it with her bangle clad arms, holding it ever tighter against her
and whose heart was touched,
[not your body], by stones
a certain devotee threw,\(^9\)
prompted by his love for you.\(^10\)
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!} (50)

If I should cleave not
to your holy feet
and sing instead
of elephants and prancing steeds,
of chariots and palanquins,
of gold piled up in heaps,
and gem encrusted jewels,

breasts as if She held a lover in a passionate embrace, and even as She
did so, the chest of the Lord, perfumed with sandalwood paste, melted,
becoming softer and softer. (273)

In preserving the sand \textit{lingam} Parvatī left upon it the imprint of her nipples and bracelets:

Just then Lord Śiva appeared, mounted upon the bull, his body
resplendent with holy ash; on his shoulders was the scar made by the
Pandiyan King, who struck Him [with his golden cane]; on his feet
were the marks made by the crowns of the gods, who worship Him
morning, noon and night; and on his chest were the impressions made
by the breasts and bracelets of Her whose hair is black as jet, when She
embraced Him. (276)

\(^9\) Cākkiya Nāyaṉār is one of the 63 saints of the \textit{Periya Purāṇam}. On one occasion,
seeing a Śiva \textit{lingam}, he was filled with ecstasy and in his altered state flung a
stone at it. Taking this as a sign that henceforth this should be the form of worship
appropriate to himself, he adopted the daily practice of throwing stones at the Lord
as if they were garlands of flowers.

\(^10\) The conceit here is that Lord Śiva is being portrayed as reacting in an opposite
manner to the people of the world in the two situations described above. The verb
\textit{kuḻai} is used twice, first in the meaning \textit{to be soft, pulpy, squashed}, translated
here as \textit{melted}; and secondly in the meaning \textit{to be tender, as the heart}, translated
here as \textit{was touched}. When his body (the \textit{lingam}) was hit by the stones, it was not
affected by them (i.e. crushed or squashed), but his heart was affected (it melted)
due to Cākkiya Nāyaṉār’s devotion. In the second instance, when Uma pressed her
bosom against him, it was his body this time that melted not his heart, as would
be the case with a human man, moved by the embrace of his wife. Thus the ways
of the Lord are revealed to be quite other than those of mankind.
and of the wide earth and it rule,  
what worth in my songs  
could there be?

*Lord Sonasailan!* *Kailash’s Lord,*  
where mighty elephants, on whom  
the threefold juices$^{11}$ flow,  
feed on stands of tall bamboo.  
With their trunks they bend it low,  
then suddenly they let it go,  
whipping the horses of the Sun,$^{12}$  
which startled,  
drag his chariot swiftly on.  

Whether you destroy for me  
the fierce and cruel malady  
of close pursuing, painful births  
or not doing so,  
let them e’er more numerous be,  
not even in one forgetful moment  
shall I  
dwell on aught else but your lotus feet,  
not on those gods who’re bound to die.

Rivulets of nectar sweet,  
flowing down your sides,  
with your silv’ry streams compete,  
one from hives that swarming bees,

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$^{11}$The *threelfold juices*—*mu madam* in Tamil, are the three types of secretion produced by an elephant in must. They are *kāṇṇa madam*, *kai madam* and *kōca madam*, secreted from the *eyes, trunk* and *genitals* respectively.

$^{12}$The iconography of Śūrya, the sun god in Hinduism, varies with its texts. He is typically portrayed as a resplendent standing figure, holding lotus flowers in both his hands and riding a chariot pulled by one or more horses, typically seven. Here we are presented with the rather comical image of his horses bolting in panic, when accidentally struck by a branch which has been bent back and then released by a great elephant on Sōṇasailan’s lofty peak.
on honey drunk, have split and crushed
and one from elephants [in the must],\textsuperscript{13}
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!} (52)

Those who your holy name
invoke
will never grieve
in water or in fire,
from fatal onset of disease,
asuras, evil spirits,
wild beasts or thieves.

You who Lady Uma’s eyes recall,
pervading all directions four,
with \textit{maṇi} that are gemstones
and her pupils bright;
with \textit{ari} that are roaming lions
and tiny red veins in the white,
and \textit{mai} that are the clouds
that gathering above you come
and her fair black collyrium,
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!}\textsuperscript{14} (53)

\textsuperscript{13}The golden streams of honey from the beehives and the black streams of the
secretions from the temples of elephants in must are imagined to be tumbling down
the mountainside, clashing and mingling with the mountain’s silvery streams as they go.

\textsuperscript{14}This couplet employs a poetic device called \textit{cilēḍai} in Tamil. It is a figure of speech
in which a word or words admit of two or more interpretations, what we call in
English \textit{a play on words} or \textit{a pun}, the technical term being \textit{paronomasia}. Three
aspects of the mountain are mentioned, which can be taken as referring instead
to Umā’s eye’s when a second meaning to a word is taken. \textit{maṇi}, when taken as
meaning \textit{jewel, gem}, refers to the mountain as being littered with gemstones from
the hoods of cobras, but when taken as \textit{pupil of the eye} it refers to the beautiful
pupils of Umā’s eyes. \textit{ari}, when taken as meaning lion, refers to the widespread
presence of prides of lions upon the mountain, but when taken as \textit{thin red lines in
the white of the eye} it refers to Umā’s eyes, as being overspread with a network of
fine red veins. \textit{mai}, when taken as meaning cloud, refers to the dark clouds which
gather over the mountain, but when taken as \textit{collyrium, kohl}, black paint for eye
Grant your grace, that I
do no longer pine for girls
with jewelled earrings bright,
like lanterns lit on either side,
their pretty face to light
and breasts with trinkets overlaid,
coming forth as if they might
eclipse the glow of Fortune’s Maid\(^\text{15}\)
like a lamp lit in daylight.

 Unlike a household lamp
with bowl and wick,
and ghee and flame
and someone to ignite,
you rise up on high and shine
the entire world to light,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

(To be Continued)

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\(^\text{15}\) Fortune’s maid translates the Tamil malarāḷ, literally she of the lotus flower, a reference to Lakṣmi, in Tamil, tirumagal, the goddess of wealth, fortune and prosperity. She is depicted sitting or standing on a lotus flower. The idea is that the radiance of those girls is so bright that even Lakṣmi’s beauty would pale in comparison, just as a the flame of a lamp provides no perceptible illumination in broad daylight.
Sonasaila Malai

Song Garland to the Red Mountain

Sivaprapaka Swamigal
Translated by Robert Butler

The Biography of Sivaprapaka Swamigal concluded.

On one occasion, whilst on his way to Kanchipuram in the company of Annamalai Reddiyar, Sivaprapaka met up with Santhalinga Swamigal who was mentioned earlier. Sivaprapaka greeted him warmly and asked what his purpose was in leaving his home in Porur. He replied that he was on his way to pay homage to Siva Ŧana Balaya Swamigal in his math at Bommapuram. Sivaprapaka decided to accompany him and the two continued their journey together. In the course of their journey, Santhalinga Swami requested that, since both desired to have the darshan of Siva Ŧana Balaya Swamigal, Sivaprapaka might compose some occasional verses in praise of him. Sivaprapaka refused, retorting, nâm narar stuti paṇṭuṇiṅṟadē-ṟ-illai – I do not sing the praises of men. However, that night Lord Murugan, seated on his peacock mount, appeared to Sivaprapaka in a dream. Placing some loose flowers in a dish, he said, ‘You should weave these into a garland and adorn me with them,’ and disappeared from view.
The next day, when he related the dream to Santhalinga, Santhalinga suggested that, since Siva īna Balaya Swamigal possessed such a deep devotion to Lord Murugan, this was simply the God’s way of pointing out his worthiness. Accordingly Sivaprakasa relented and composed two hymns in praise of him, a tāḷāṭṭu and a neṇcu vidu tūdu. The two duly appeared before Siva īna Balaya Swamigal, who imparted jñāna upadeśa to them and requested Sivaprakasa to give his sister Gnanambikai in marriage to Santhalinga, a request with which Sivaprakasa complied. Sivaprakasa remained there for some time, having instructed Annamalai Reddiyar to return to Turaimangalam.

Some time later Sivaprakasa took his leave and made his way to Kanchipuram. There he composed Prabhulinga Leelai, a translation of a Kannada work that chronicles the life and deeds of Allama Prabhu, a 12th century Virasaiva saint and teacher. He also made translations of two other Kannada works, under the names of Vēdānta Cūḍāmaṇi and Siddhānta Cigāmaṇi. He continued to travel widely, composing works as he went. Amongst these is a refutation of the Christian religion, ēcumada nirākaraṇam, composed in response to an attack by the celebrated Tamil scholar, Father Joseph Beschi, an Italian Jesuit priest and missionary who later adopted the Tamil name of Vīramāmunivar. Only three verses of this work remain extant.

a The biography of Sivaprakasa includes the rather long and convoluted story of how Śiva īna Balaya Swamigal, or desikar, as some versions have it, came to have such a deep connection with Lord Murugan. He was, as the story goes, one of the leaders of Lord Śiva’s heavenly cohorts on Mount Kailash, called Caṅkukaṉṉaṉ, but as a result of a misdemeanour was cursed by Śiva to be born on earth as a man. When he begged to know when the curse might be lifted, Śiva replied that he should remain on earth, teaching the Vedas and Śiva Āgamas and reviving the Saivite faith until such time as he encountered his son, Subramanya, and fought with him. At that time the curse would be lifted and he would after some further time attain oneness with himself. Accordingly, Caṅkukaṉṉaṉ was born on earth as a boy siddha, Bālasiddha. Eventually events transpired as Śiva predicted. Bālasiddha’s curse was lifted and Śiva decreed that he should dwell with his son Subramanya on the mountain of Mayūrācala for a further 500 years before attaining oneness with Himself. Sivaprakasa’s appearance comes near the end of the prescribed 500 year period, during which time Bālasiddha had travelled widely preaching the Saivite creed and acquiring in the process the name Śiva īna Balaya Swamigal.

b Santhalinga subsequently abandoned the world completely and sent his wife to live with her brother.
Sivaprakasa died at the age of 32, according to some accounts, shortly after hearing of the demise of his guru in Bommapuram, whose 500 year sojourn upon the earth had reached its end.

****************

Except for those who daily
grant the body food\(^1\)
only that it may offer *puja*
and perform holy service
to You and to the sapphire Maid,\(^2\)
will the vanquishing of Death
be easy to attain?

Your glory’s such that when Vishnu,
many *yojana*\(^*\)s away,
bows down before Mount Kailash,
his homage there to pay,
it’s as if a heap of pure white rice
were being offered up by him to you,\(^3\)
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (55)

As I flounder in the sea
of ever arising births,
buffeted by waves
of disease and misery,
may you now vouchsafe
to me your holy feet

---

\(^1\) The idea is that the body’s sole purpose is to carry out service to Lord Śiva and his consort Umā and that the food we provide for the body should therefore be regarded simply as *kūli* – *daily wages* paid to that body for performing that service.

\(^2\) *nīli* – *The Sapphire Maid* is a personal noun formed from the word *nīlam* – *blue, black-blue, purple, indigo, sapphire*. It refers to Umā-Parvati as having that body colour, as in her ferocious aspect as Dūrgā-Kāli.

\(^3\) The poet imagines that Sōṇasailaṉ is so massive that when Viṣṇu pays homage to snow-capped Mount Kailash, that mountain appears no greater than a small heap of white rice that Viṣṇu is offering up to Sōṇasailaṉ.
with ringing anklets girt,  
and bring me to [your farther] shore,  
before the crocodile of Death  
comes to swallow me.

Unlike some ordinary lamp,  
men praise you as the Light  
that, when we speak your name,  
be it just one single time,  
removes all darkness from the mind,  
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (56)

Tell me [Lord],  
though they dwell in caves,  
for food and drink  
take water and leaves,  
walk on their hands,  
feet in the air,  
for those who your true state  
do not know,  
will birth[’s thraldom] rare  
ever cease and go?

Upon your lofty crest  
the full moon comes to rest,  
as if he doth adorn you  
with a garland [woven]  
of jasmine blossoms  
from Indra’s [heavenly] grove, ⁴  
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (57)

Should it upon my body fall,  
the dust stirred up

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⁴ The heaven of Lord Indra, the king of the gods, is described as having heavenly gardens planted with luxuriant trees which have delicious fruits.
by noble feet of those
who piously around you walk,
with faces like flowers opened up
and hands closed together [like a bud],
my births too
will become mere dust.5

The Lord of Pugali6
with flowering groves
toured holy sites
in all the landscapes four.7
Yet all the hymns
with which he them adorned
are naught but homages to Thee,8
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!
Worse than any beast
that in the forest roams,

5 Both the Tamil Aruṇācala Purāṇam and the Sanskrit Aruṇācala Māhātmyam extol the auspicious effects of the dust from the feet of those who have performed pradakshina of the holy mountain:
If the wind should carry a single speck of dust from the feet of those who have performed pradakshina of the Fire Mountain into any place, be it vile as hell itself, that place will attain the purity of Mount Kailash. Or, if a speck of dust from their feet should fall onto the body of any man, death will end for him, and close pursuing birth will disappear. How might I express in words the greatness of those who have performed pradakshina? — Aruṇācala Purāṇam v. 563.
asya pādarajahsparśāt pūyate sakalā mahī, padam ekāṃ tu dhatte yah śonādrīśa pradakṣiṇe.
The entire earth will be blessed by contact with the dust of the feet of one who takes but a single step in pradakṣiṇa of Śoṇādri.
— Aruṇācala Māhātmyam Pūrvārdha, Ch. 9, sl. 35.
6 The Lord of Pugali – pugalikku īraivan is Jñānasambandhar. See the note to v. 26 in Part Two.
7 nāl nilam – the four [kinds of] land are the four kinds of landscape which feature in the Agam love poetry of the Sangam era, each having its own emotional properties, flora and fauna, artefacts, gods and so on. They are kuriṅci tinai – hilly tracts, mullai tinai – woodland and pasture, marudam tinai – cultivated land and neydal tinai – the lands by the seashore.
8 The text says padigam doṟum pugaḻ – praise[d] in every padigam. A padigam is
I did not learn the things I ought;  
the senses’ objects ruled my thoughts.  
No shame before the wise I showed.  
When, alas, shall I salvation know?

You who rise on high,  
a refuge to afford  
for those that gentle breeze afflicts  
that wafts from Podiyam’s lofty peak,  
which towers up the skies to reach,  
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

The rule that says, ‘Make haste  
to keenly follow virtue’s path  
and so be saved!’  
I regarded with distaste,  
like an elephant fine and tall  
who rejects the balls  
of rice his keeper gave  
and uproots bamboo in a rage.  
For such as me what end  
to births can ever be?  
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,  
where gathering storm clouds

---

a poem consisting generally of ten verses, although Jñānasambandhar’s padigams contain eleven, the final one being a tiru-k-kaṭai-k-kāppu. In Saiva tradition this mentions the benefits one would get from reciting the verses. The idea is that Sōnasailaṉ, in his true nature as the pure consciousness of the Self, free of all attributes, subsumes within himself all other representations of himself that are installed in the temples of the many sthalas visited by the saint.

9 Mount Podiyam, is the abode of the sage Agastya, founder of the Tamil tongue. See v. 26, note 17 in Part Two. The wind referred to is ten[d]ral, the gentle southern breeze, which awakes passion in lovers and so on.

10 kaḷi cuḷi yāṉai literally an elephant [which] gets angry at bamboo. Elephants in must are unpredictable and often violent. Here the image is of such an elephant capriciously refusing the tasty food offered and rushing off in a rage into the jungle to tear up and eat bamboo.
rise on high
like palls of smoke
that mask the skies,
your fiery form’s truth
to proclaim aloud.¹¹

As music’s fanfare resonates
by turns upon an elephant,
and then upon a palanquin
they ride about in high estate.
Yet even these [one day] as beggars
will to others wheedling praises give.
Thus I’ve learned that only those
who serve you truly live.

As if the jewel-shedding clouds¹²
crowned you
with a weighty ornamental arch,¹³
sparkling with the choicest gems
a curving rainbow spans you[r head],

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

Of noble issue they may be,
excelling in all good qualities,
in countless learned works full versed,
and to fulfil pious vows ever keen,
but if for your band of devotees
no love they show,
salvation they shall never know.

¹¹ After first appearing as an unfathomable column or mass of fire, Aruṇācala remained in that form for an entire yuga, before becoming pure gold, ruby and finally stone in successive yuga-s. See the note to v.27 in Part Two. Here the poet imagines that the dark storm clouds are mimicking a pall of smoke to remind people of the mountain’s fiery origins.

¹² maṇi mēgam – jewel [shedding] clouds, also known as camvarttam, Skt. saṁvarta, one of seven types of cloud under the control of Indra, each shedding a different substance.

¹³ vācigai, tiruvācigai – an ornamental arch placed over an idol.
You who lend your might[\(y\) chest]
to bear up the perfumed
mountain [breast]s
that sit above the tiny waist
of the Maiden clad in jewels bright
whom the Himalaya sired\(^{14}\) and raised,\(^{15}\)

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!*

When I, poor wretch, at your feet
a refuge sought,
to the darkness that my heart obscures
this solemn oath I swore,
‘With Unnamulai’s Lord as my aid
I’ll drive you out this very day!’
In grace,
let this promise be not betrayed.

when a doomed [white] yak\(^{16}\)
goes tumbling down your side
as a [great] black cloud

\(^{14}\) *imayam īṉṟu eḍutta kaṇṇi* – *the maiden whom the Himalaya mountains sired and raised* is Śiva’s consort, Parvatī. When referred to in their personified form, as Parvatī’s father, the Himalaya mountains take the name Himavat.

\(^{15}\) The latter part of the verse may be an indirect reference to the incident alluded to in v. 50 and note, in which Śiva’s chest softened to take on the imprint of Parvatī’s nipples and bangles. Here it seems that his chest becomes even stronger to support the weight of her breasts, which her tiny waist is scarcely able to support. From some angles, Ādi Anṇāmalai temple, for example, the peak of the mountain is seen to sweep down gracefully to a second lower, smaller peak, which might be taken to represent Parvatī, a view which suggests that Sōṇasailaṉ has his arm around her, tenderly supporting her.

\(^{16}\) *vīḍu uṟum kavari* – *a yak which perishes.* The verb *vīḍu* means *to perish, be destroyed.* The yak would not normally be found outside the Himalayan region. Domestic yaks can be white but not wild ones. The poet paints the picture of a white yak losing its footing on the mountain and falling at the same time as a black cloud sails upward towards the summit, an image which suggests the idea that Brahmā and Viṣṇu, having failed to locate, respectively, the head and foot of Lord Śiva and, perhaps in desperation at their failed attempts, are each now adopting the opposite strategy and seeking the foot and head instead.
sails up into the sky, 
it seems the swan and boar [of yore] 
have reversed their former roles 
and now 
seek instead your feet and crown, 
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!*

Will this love for maidens 
with waists vanishingly\(^{17}\) svelte 
[every] by the lotus flowers 
of your holy feet be felt, 
and will this fondness 
for the fragrant paste,\(^ {18}\) 
upon their form applied, 
[one day] upon the white 
of holy ash be placed?

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,*
where parrots green in flocks 
alight on fields of millet 
ready for the scythe, 
and as the young girls chase them off 
rise swirling in the skies 
like toranam festoons\(^ {19}\) [strung across 
your holy mountainside].

My heart learned not to melt, 
like ghee set on a flame.

---

\(^{17}\) *aiya nuṇ maruṅgal* – literally, [with] slender, doubt [inducing] waists. Highly fanciful references to the slenderness of women’s waists are frequent in Tamil poetry. Here the waists are imagined to be so slender that the observer cannot be certain whether there even is one. Compare for example the *Tiruvilaiyādal Purāṇam*, ch. 60, v.2, in which the women are referred to as *maruṅgu ilādavar*, literally *those [maidens] without any waist*: *maruṅgu ilādavar vandu edir maṅgalam ēnda* – with *maidens* without waists coming forth, *proferring the [eight] auspicious items.*

\(^{18}\) *kalavai* – *mixture* here stands for *kalavai-c-cantaṉam*, ‘Sandal paste prepared with the addition of many aromatic substances,’ (Tamil Lexicon).

\(^{19}\) *tōraṇam* are ‘Festoons of leaves and flowers suspended across streets and entrances...
With water and choice blossoms
my hands no puja made.
What recourse, pray tell,
for me now remains?

Other mountains remedies
for sundry painful ills afford,
but these you put to shame, [we find]
rising as the cure for birth
for those who hold you in their mind,⁰

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (65)

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(on auspicious occasions,’ (Tamil Lexicon). The poet paints an arresting image of the
flocks of parrots rising up in swirling, bright green columns, resembling the plaited
leaves of ceremonial festoons.

⁰ *uṭkoḷvōr (uḷ koḷvōr)* – those who hold [you] within or in their minds. *uḷ* can mean
inside, that which is within or heart, mind, soul etc., as the inner aspect of man.
The verb *uṭkol* as a compound verb (*uḷ + kol*) means to take into the body, to eat.
Hence there is a neat play on words with the sense *those who consume the medicine
of your grace, which consists of meditating upon you in the heart.*
Sonasaila Malai

Song Garland to the Red Mountain

Sivaprákasa Swamigal
Translated by Robert Butler

As if a golden temple,
with gems fittingly inlaid,
as a [murky] roost for bats I gave,
within my barren heart
no union with thee I craved,
but there a home
for base desire I made.
One even such as I
will you come to save?

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,
where streams rush down
scattering gold,

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flood ing holes
that hillsmen made
to harvest tubers
and filling pits into which
elephants [unwary] slip.¹

I wandered rejoicing in the sight
of maids with fine dark skin
in perfumed gowns with jewels bright
but their inner truth I did not know,
just as a [silken] pouch
its sackcloth lining does not show.²

Though your ruddy lotus feet
reach down below the [seven] hells
and your holy crown
beyond the heavens towering goes,³
yet still you can encompassed be
by sweet songs intoned by the Three,⁴
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

¹ vēḷam vīḷ kuḷikaḷum – the pits [into which] elephants fall. The hunters dig pits and disguise them to trap unwary wild elephants.

² The idea is that the gross, repulsive nature of the fleshly body is hidden by the outer skin and fine clothing and ornaments, just as a beautiful silk bag reveals its rough hessian lining only if turned inside out. Compare Nālaḍiyār 42, which says of the body, maṟṟu adaṉai pai mariyā pārkka paṭuṃ – it should be looked upon as a bag turned inside out, and Manimēgalai, 4:121, idaṉai puṟam marippu ārāy – look upon it as if the innards were on the outside.

³ Compare Tiruvācakam, Tiruvempāvai, v. 10, l. 1-2:
Beneath the seven realms of hell his lotus feet
[reach down,] transcending speech and on his head
his crown with flowers intertwined, of all reality
Is the crown!

⁴ mūvar – the Three are Appar, Jñānasambandhar and Sundarar. See the note to v. 1 in Part One.
Each time I dwell  
on birth’s torment,  
or at death the mind’s confusion  
as the bonds that bind  
the body’s sinews loosen,  
my heart’s with terror filled  
as I suffer  
like sesame ground in a mill.

You echo to the rival cries  
of worthy devotees  
who Harahara⁵ chant  
and to the roar of lions  
who, seeing dark clouds  
massed on high surmise,  
‘This way comes an elephant!’  
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

Seeking refuge at your side,  
‘Merciful Lord,’ I cried,  
‘you who [even] to a spider,  
from his body spinning gauze,  
did your holy grace afford,⁶  
so that the pain of birth and death  
tormented it no more.’

And yet your holy will remains  
a secret to me still.

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,  
when a powerful elephant  
raises aloft his sturdy trunk,

---

⁵ There is a play on words in this verse. arakara, Skt. hara hara, is an invocation to Lord Śiva, one of whose names is Hara, the Destroyer. Earlier in the same line the words ari – lion and kari – elephant are juxtaposed. These words, taken together, arikari, can also be interpreted as Skt. hari hari, an invocation to Viṣṇu, uttered by those of the Vaishnavaite persuasion.

⁶ There are stories telling how Śiva granted liberation to a spider who protected him with its web related to Śri Kalahasti in Andhra Pradesh and to Tiruvāṇaikā in Tamil Nadu.
to the Sun in his fine chariot
it seems a black serpent\textsuperscript{7}
from your caves has sprung,
and fearful in his heart
he [from your holy peak] departs. \hfill (69)

Will it one day come to pass,
that with the fire and whetted axe\textsuperscript{8}
in your fair hands clasped,
you clear away the thickets
of my intractable deeds,
then, of undying love for you
planting the seeds,
of this devotee’s mind
you nurture\textsuperscript{9} the fields?

\textsuperscript{7} \textit{pāmbu} means serpent and also is a name of Rāhu, a planet in Hindu astrology. The serpent Rāhu is a demon with a dragon’s tail. When the gods churned the ocean for \textit{amṛita}, he disguised himself as one of them and stole a portion, thus becoming immortal. The Sun and Moon revealed the fraud to Viṣṇu who cut off his head, but, being immortal, he has ever since wreaked vengeance by occasionally swallowing them, causing them to disappear temporarily. His tail is known as Ketu, and both are regarded as planets in Vedic astrology. In scientific terms they represent the ascending and descending nodes, the points where the moon’s path in the sky crosses the ecliptic, the sun’s path in the sky; these are the only points near which eclipses can occur, since at those points all three celestial bodies, the earth, the moon and the sun, are in the same plane. The conceit here is that when the Sun sees the elephant’s trunk on the mountain, he thinks it is Rāhu exiting from a termite hill to come and swallow him and hurries away in fright.

\textsuperscript{8} \textit{kūrṅ kaṉal maḻuvāl} – with the intense fire and the sharp battle-axe. The word \textit{kūr} can mean both intense, excessive and also sharp, and can therefore apply to both nouns, i.e. with intense fire and sharp battle-axe. Fire and the battle-axe are two of the numerous items Śiva is seen to be holding in his hands in his various iconographic representations.

\textsuperscript{9} \textit{maṉattiṉai tiruttum nāḷ uḷadō} – will there be a day when you will cultivate [the field off] my mind. The verb \textit{tiruttu} has the general sense of to correct, level, amend, adjust and is used here in the twin senses of to discipline the mind and to improve land, levelling it, clearing it of trees and stones and so on, in preparation for cultivation. The word \textit{fields} is added in the translation to convey this double sense.
As the ruddy glow of eventide 
o’ertakes the dark blue sky, 
it appears from your noble stance, 
that you look upon the God of Love 
and engulf him in your fiery glance,\textsuperscript{10} 
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!} \hfill (70)

When will you in grace 
allow me at your feet a place 
in the goodly band of those 
who all five senses have restrained 
and true wisdom fully gained, 
and grant that those 
of nature harsh and base 
shall leave and far from me remain?

\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,} 
when [in your caverns] deadly serpents 
spit out gems of lustre bright 
tigers strong and proud in terror take flight 
thinking in delusion that the cave’s alight. \hfill (71)

\textit{Antari,\textsuperscript{11} Kumari, Anjali, Gauri} 
\textit{Ambika, Manonmani, Matangi}

\textsuperscript{10} vēḷ purattu eri kaduvida literally, \textit{in order to grasp [with] the flame [of your third eye] the body of the God of Love.} The Puranic tale of how Kāma, one of whose names in Tamil is \textit{Vēḷ}, was burned up by Śiva when he attempted to disturb his tapas was referenced previously in v. 7. Kāma is usually represented as having a dark green or greenish-blue body colour. It can often be observed that the lower area of the sky between the red hue of sunset and the deep blue of the upper heavens has a greenish-blue tinge.

\textsuperscript{11} antari is a name of Parvatī derived from Skt. antara – \textit{that which is inner, soul, heart, supreme soul}; kumari, Skt. kumārī, means maid, virgin; aṅcali can mean either \textit{She who should be worshipped}, from Skt. aṅjali – a gesture of reverence with the open hands placed side by side or, deriving it from aṅcal – \textit{do not fear!} it can mean Granter of protection, freedom from fear; ambikai, Skt. ambikā means mother; maṉōṉmaṉi means \textit{she who transcends the mind}; madaṅgi, Skt. mātaṅgi denotes a ferocious aspect of the goddess, a name of Durga; both Tamil commentators take it in the sense of \textit{songstress, musician}, which is one of its Tamil meanings.
Uma,12 Unnamulai,13 Sundari –
Pray grant your grace,
And tell me by what names
I may your holy consort praise.

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord,
where illustrious Tumpuru
and Narada14 too your praises sing,
plucking the lute’s sweet strings,
as Vishnu coming to stand nigh
intones the Vedas’ holy hymns.

May you grant your grace
and enrol me in the company
of those faithful devotees
who of the world’s delusion are free,
who in the highest wisdom ever abide,
and whose love for your holy lotus feet
ever foster in their minds.

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord,
where kantal blossoms’ petals

---

12 umai, Skt. umā, like parvatī references the goddess as daughter to Himavat, the Himalaya mountains.

13 unṇāmulai – [she of] the unsuckled breasts is the name of Śiva’s consort in the sthala of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. The Aruṇācala Māhātmyam gives an interesting explanation of how this name came about. It comes at the moment when Lord Śiva has just granted Parvatī the right of sharing his own form. Referring to the time when Parvatī left to perform tapas to atone for covering Śiva’s eyes and causing universal chaos, leaving her infant Skanda unattended, he says to her:

\[stanyārthīnāṁ guhāṁ hitvā yātāsi tapase yataḥ, \\
tad apītaśanā nāmnā nivasa atra mama antike.\]

Since you abandoned Guha (Skanda) who yearned for your milk, and went away for the performance of tapas, dwell with me here with the name Apītaśanā (She of the unsuckled breasts). Aruṇācala Māhātmyam, Utt. Ch. 21, slokas 25b-26a.

14 nāraday, Skt. Nārada is a celebrated sage and son of Brahmā. He is portrayed as a musician and storyteller and as a messenger of the gods. tumburu, Skt. tumpuru is one of the Gandharvas, celestial musicians and is sometimes described as the best of singers. He leads the Gandharvas in their singing.
softly strike the honey-filled beehives
as a [hammer strikes an hour] gong^{15}
each time the gentle summer breeze
caressing, comes along. \hfill (73)

The wonder of devotion^{16}
in which we fearless remain,
as ‘Birth for us is ended!’
we in ecstasy proclaim –
of that, we have no notion.
To what purpose then
do we your devotees
our lifetimes idly spend?

The hosts of heaven praise you,
saying,
‘When our unblinking sight
upon you falls
no sin in us remains at all.
But the penance, [alas],
in which we walk around
with both feet planted on the ground
for us can never come to pass,’^{17}
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord! \hfill (74)

^{15} The word gong translates the Tamil word kaṉṉal. Tam. Lex. describes kaṉṉal as ‘Perforated hour-glass that fills and sinks at the expiration of a nāḻikai.’ (A nāḻikai is an Indian hour of 24 minutes). Here it is used to indicate some other instrument for marking the hour, as a gong and hammer. tuduppu means spatula, small ladle. It is also the name given to the petals of the kāntal, Gloriosa superba as resembling a ladle. Here they are imagined to resemble the hammer of a gong. The open blossoms are often compared also to human hands with flexed fingers.

^{16} batti navam – the wonder of devotion. navam (< Skt. navam – new) = Tamil pudumai, which, in addition to the meanings newness, novelty also has the sense of wonder, miracle. batti (< Skt. bhakti) – devotion, love, piety is described as a wonder because it has the power of bestowing liberation from birth and death.

^{17} The point here is that the gods, although living in the blissful state of the heavenly worlds, are not immortal but are condemned eventually to die and be born again. The sight of Sōṇasailaṉ absolves them of all sins, but, as gods they cannot walk upon the earth and cannot therefore perform the penance of pradaksīṇa that will help them
My eyes with love
shall see you with delight;
my hands in adulation
shall be raised up above;
my ears shall hear the hymns
that your great glory fete,
and around you my two feet
pradakshina shall make.\(^\text{18}\)

When [on your slopes]
bears burrow into termite hills
cool rays in streams flash out
from gems that are unearthed,
as if they had been lying in wait,
the dark itself to rout,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

Those who like young Murugan\(^\text{18}\)
with sharp and bloody spear,
delight the jewelled maiden’s eye,
will wither like the tender bud
that flowers, soon to fade and die.\(^\text{19}\)
This I’ve seen, and yet do I
still glory in this sinful life.

(cont.) to gain the Lord’s grace and with it absolute freedom from birth. It is for this
reason that the gods themselves aspire to be born there in human, or any other,
form. See the Arunācala Purāṇam, v. 73:
Those who dwell in matchless Svarga, feasting on ambrosia, and those who severally
stand guard over that Garden of Pleasure and the other worlds, desire to be born
there, believing birth in that city, even as a mere worm, to be the greater good. Except
for those who have performed one hundred sacrifices, birth in that noble place is
not attainable. Whilst it is easy for those who are recipients of the Lord’s grace,
it is difficult indeed for the other gods, and the most eminent even amongst men.

\(^{18}\) The word kāḷai, used here means a young man in his prime. Here the reference is
clearly to Murugan, because of the mention of a spear dripping with the blood and
flesh of slain foes. See Kuruntogai 1: konṟu avunăr tēyta ceṅ kōḷ ambin – having
arrows red [with blood], with which he slew and annihilated demons.

\(^{19}\) tiri taḷiriṉ, literally like a shoot [which] change[s]. A leaf begins as a shoot, matures
into a green leaf, changes colour, withers and dies, a metaphor here for
the transitory nature of human existence.
Their anklets snared, a bridegroom
and his powdered bride\textsuperscript{20} around you go,
and only at the time of parting,
will that shy pair their situation know,\textsuperscript{21}
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!} (76)

Will it ever leave and go,
my futile praise of maids
with wide bright eyes
like sliced mango,
whose graceful hands
like \textit{kantala} blossoms glow
and the beauty of whose feet
in jewelled anklets clad
the tender mango leaf defeats?

With no brightly spotted Vasuki,
employed by those who churned\textsuperscript{22}
the majestic rollers of the [milky] sea,
you bestow the ambrosial medicine
that great \textit{tapasvins}
from the fear of death doth free,
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!} (77)
As my life ebbs away,

\textsuperscript{20} manam timir magalir – a maiden smeared with fragrant substances. \textit{manam} also means \textit{marriage}, so the sense is of a newly married girl anointed with sandalwood paste and other fragrant substances.

\textsuperscript{21} In earlier times, it was customary for a bride and groom, a few days after their marriage, to perform \textit{pradakṣiṇa} of Aruṇācala, closely accompanied by both sets of relatives, who, in the press of bodies, would contrive to tie together their anklets without them realising it. At the end of the \textit{pradakṣiṇa}, when the two sets of relatives departed for their various homes, the young couple would find to their embarrassment that they were unable to go their separate ways, symbolically affirming their marriage to each other.

\textsuperscript{22} When the \textit{devas} and \textit{asuras} churned the Milk Ocean to extract the elixir of immortality they required Mount Mandara as a churning stick and the nāga king, Vāsuki, to use as a rope. In sharp contrast Sōṇasailaṉ requires no such aids to produce the same result for his devotees.
and thoughts in turmoil stray;
as darkness fills my eyes,
my ears hear no sound
and phlegm wells up inside,\(^{23}\)
may this boon in grace be granted
that in my heart
your holy form be firmly planted.

You who in your throat hold
the black venom
that Mount Mandara bestowed
and at your left side place
the ambrosial Maid
the snowy Himalaya gave,
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (78)

Daily offering worship meet
with fresh blooms at thy holy feet
remaining to thee ever near,
so that Death himself,
the soul’s consumer,
shakes with fear,
will there ever be a day
that I shall walk
in liberation’s supernal way?

For those whose fast intent
is to best those mighty foes,
the triumphant objects of sense,\(^{24}\)
and to rule the heavenly realm

\(^{23}\) *ai mēl undu iḍa* – as phlegm wells up. *ai* is *phlegm, mucus*, a reference to the death rattle, sounds often produced by someone who is near death as a result of fluids such as saliva and mucus accumulating in the throat and upper chest.

\(^{24}\) *vayam koḷum vidaya perum pagai*, literally *the great enemy [consisting of] the objects of sense, which are victorious.* *vayam* can mean either *power, might* or *victory, conquest.* Here both meanings apply. Very few are those who can resist the attraction of the objects of the mind and senses and hence they are almost always victorious.
[of liberation] surely go,
thou art the fort\textsuperscript{25} [secure]
that doth their victory ensure,
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash's Lord!} (79)

Will there ever come a day
when I a wicked, evil one,
shall to your royal presence come,
where gods unsleeping cower back
as the baton held in Nandi’s hand
upon their head falls with a thwack,
only to surge forward, just as [when]
algae [scattered] by a stone
dropped [in a tank reforms again]?\textsuperscript{26}

You who abide and shine
as [against your chest] the elephants
of the Mountain Maiden[‘s
ample breasts] firmly press,
she whose warring eyes defeat
the long spear’s shining blade,
wide, finely honed, shaped like a leaf,
\textit{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!} (80)

Whether you guide me

\textsuperscript{25} \textit{araṇam} or \textit{araṇ} means \textit{fortress, castle or defence, fortification}, of which the dictionaries list four kinds, \textit{walls, seas and rivers, mountains and forests}. The word \textit{araṇam} brings to mind the second \textit{mangalam} verse of Ramana Maharshi’s \textit{Uḷḷadu Nāṟpadu}, previously quoted in relation to v. 46, which contains the lines:

Those people who have a deep fear of death will, for their protection, take
as their refuge (\textit{araṇ}) the feet of Lord Śiva, he who is without both birth
dead.

\textsuperscript{26} Nandi is again pictured in his semi-human form, controlling the crowds of lesser
deities with his staff in Lord Śiva’s court on Mount Kailash. See v. 35 and note.
As in that verse, those deities are imagined to be ultimately undeterred by Nandi’s
blows, but, having at first shrunk back, crowd forward again, prepared to risk his
wrath. In this they are compared to algae or pond scum on a pond or tank, which
is dissipated when a stone is thrown in but soon regathers again on the surface.
onto salvation’s true way
upon which those sages embark
who the god Desire have slain,
or saying, ‘What a fool!’
consign me to the [hellish] dark,
what recourse remains to me
other than the lotuses of your feet?

Unlike other mountains in the world
where deer prance27 ’midst summits high,
within you dwells the deer-like One
with unsuckled breasts like lotus buds
[who bears the name Unnamulai],28
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

(to be continued)

(cont.) The image recalls v. 399 of the Sangam anthology, Kuruntogai, in which
the heroine is telling her friend how she suffers in the absence of her lover:
Like the green scum/gathered/on the surface of a well/where the village/
draws its water,/this sickly pallor/recedes at his every touch,/only to return/
whenever he leaves.

27 vām marai – deer that leaps, go by leaps. marai is more properly the sambur, Indian
elk, one of the largest species in the deer family.

28 uṇāmulai ām tāmarai porundum māṉ, literally the maid who possesses the lotuses
that are [her] unsuckled breasts. uṇāmulai, which means unsuckled breasts is the
name of Śiva’s consort in the sthala of Tiruvaṇṇāmalai. See v. 72 and note. The
word māṉ – deer also means woman and is often used of Śiva’s consort. tāmarai –
lotus is here used to designate the closed bud of the lotus, which resembles the
female breast in its shape.
Sonasaila Malai

Song Garland to the Red Mountain

SivapraKasA swAmiGAl
Translated by Robert Butler

My mind, trusting [in the truth]
of the Letters Five,¹
praised by all those Agamas
compiled [by the wise],
of the Lord of Death I’ll have no fear
as astride a sturdy buffalo he appears,
unlike those who,
even with a weapon in their hand,
trembling before their enemy stand.

¹ The Five Letters refers to the five syllable mantra śi-vā-ya-na-ma; śi represents śivam; vā represents his energy of grace – aruḷ śakti; ya represents the jīva; na represents māyā or tirōtam, the energetic whirl of impurity in itself, and ma represents āṇavam, that impurity as operating within the jīva. See the note to verse 15 in the first article in this series.

Robert Butler devotes his time to the translation of Tamil classical and spiritual texts. He has published a grammatical commentary on Uḷḷadu Nāṟpadu. A translation of the biography of Māṇikkavācakar is now available at the ashram bookshop. These are available for online preview, purchase or download at the following link: http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=1212666.
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,
where stout-trunked elephants
trumpet loud, as peacocks
with long and arching tails
wake from sleep, high in the tops
of venkai trees with scented blossoms
and fill the air with [plaintive] wails.

This [foul] body I did not loathe,
nor lovingly desired
with holy ash to smear it whole;
the immaculate, holy Letters Five
I did not cherish in my mind.
As I wander thus in confusion lost
what fate fierce Death holds for me
I, a hapless wretch, know not.

You who did yourself conceal
as the Earth’s Consumer\(^2\)
languished, unable to reveal
the all-pervading ankleted feet
that by the adoring Patanjali\(^3\)
in [Tillai’s golden] Hall were seen,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

Might it be an easy task
to guide my mind

\(^2\) *man uṇi* – the *Consumer of the World* is a reference to Kalki, the 10th avatar of Viṣṇu, whose role is to appear mounted on a white horse and wielding a drawn sword to destroy the world at the end of the current *kali yuga* in preparation for the start of a new *satya yuga*.

\(^3\) *aravam* – *snake*, serpent refers to Patañjali, ‘A saint, author of the *yōga* sutras, *Mahābhāṣya* and a treatise on medicine in Sanskrit, considered an incarnation of Adiśeṣa,’ (Tam. Lex.). A number of stories tell of Patañjali’s desire to witness Śiva’s cosmic dance in the Golden Hall of Chidambaram and of how his wish came to be granted. The point here again is that Sōṇasailaṉ will remain inaccessible even to the gods if they are devoid of devotion and driven by ego but will make himself easily accessible to true devotees, however humble.
on liberation’s path
that lies through comely peaks
of maidens’ ample breasts,
across the ocean
of their wanton eyes
and through the black night
of their tresses?

Mountains there are
Where at dawn and sunset
The ruddy sun may take its rest.⁴
This you know full well,
so in the fierce heat
you tower high
to give the midday sun
a place to dwell,
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (84)

Prizing beads of *rudrasksha*
as the only jewels true,
smearing my body
with the holy ashes white,
drawing upon my brow
the three-barred Saiva sign,⁵
grant in grace that I
may perform puja to you.

Above your lofty head
where the *Kartikai* beacon
shines out like a lotus bright,
Ganga’s chilly waves are spread

---

⁴ The reference is to the *udayagiri* and the *attagiri*, the mountains in the east and west behind which the sun is supposed to rise and set. The eastern mountain is mentioned previously in v. 4: *udaya taṉi malai – the matchless Eastern Mount.*

⁵ *puṇḍara kuṟi* or simply *puṇḍaram* are lines or marks on the forehead, worn by religious devotees. That worn by Saivas consists of three horizontal lines and is known as *tiri puṇḍaram* and that worn by Vaishnavites, consisting of vertical lines in various configurations, is called *ūrttuva puṇḍaram.*
like a canopy all pearly white,

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

(85)

When will I be free from those
whose tongues do not
the Letters Five speak out
but other [lesser] mantras [spout],
from ignorant fools
who to base and mortal men
their plaudits raise
in all the forms of song,⁶
though you are there
for them to praise?

You who golden Meru chose
to be your flawless bow,⁷
and the Dark One who of yore
raised up a mountain⁸
his herd of cows to shield
to be your arrow⁹ so decreed,

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

(86)

⁶ pāviṇam – classes of verse or more precisely types of verse and their derived sub-classes. The four classes of verse are veṇpā, āciriya-p-pā, kaḷi-p-pā and vaṇci-p-pā, from each of which are derived three types of poem which partake of some of its properties; these are turai, tāḻicai and viruttam. Thus we have veṇṭurai, veṇṭāḻicai, veḷiviruttam and so forth.

⁷ See v. 19 and note in the first article in this series.

⁸ This is a reference to the famous incident in the life of Kṛṣṇa, when, during a dispute with Indra, he lifted up the Govardhana Mountain to protect the animals and people of the region from the devastating flood that Indra poured down. Kṛṣṇa is referred to in the verse simply as kuṇru – mountain. It has been translated in the verse as the Dark One to avoid the repetition of the word mountain.

⁹ Kṛṣṇa is an avatar of Viṣṇu, whom Śiva employed as his arrow when destroying the aerial cities of the asuras. On the same occasion he used Mount Meru as his bow, an incident referred to in v. 19, mentioned in the previous note.
Daylight and dark night,
sun, moon, noble soul,
five elements perceived\(^9\) –
when shall my eyes
exult in the sight
of your form [supreme]
transcending all of these?

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,
whom flowery tanks surround,
where beetles that amidst petals
of the lotus blossom sojourn,
rise up like clouds of smoke
from bright flames of *kungiliyam*
that in shining salvers burns.\(^10\)  

May you a single word vouchsafe,
so that I, poor wretch, may
of pure awareness’ form partake,
wherein the fivefold elements,
sense organs with their senses,
and the faculties of mind
all subside and go,
and so entirely slay my foes,
these powerful deeds [that bind].\(^11\)

---

\(^9\) The verse begins by listing the *aṭṭa mūrtti*, Sanskrit *aṣṭa mūrti*, the eight forms of Śiva. Their Tamil names are as follows: *būmi* – earth, *nīr* – water, *tēyu* – fire, *vāyu* – air, *ākāyam* – ether, *iyamāṉaṉ* – the sacrificer, the soul, *sūriyaṉ* – the sun, *candiraṉ* – the moon. *iyamāṉaṉ* or *iyamāṉ* Skt. *yajamāna* means sacrificer from the root *yaj* – to sacrifice. In Tamil it has the secondary meaning of life, soul. Śiva is the source of all created things but, as the verse points out, transcends all of them.

\(^10\) The lotus pads on the tanks of the mountain are compared to bright salvers set on stands, which are the stalks of the lotuses. The red flowers are compared to the flames of burning incense and the rising clouds of winged insects that feed on their nectar, to the smoke rising from it. *kuṅgiliyam* is a resinous gum of which there are a number of varieties, presumably used as, or as a base for, incense.

\(^11\) The ego self, the *jīva*, arises through the *poṟi* – sense organs, *pulaṉ* – senses and the *kāraṇāṅgal* – the mental faculties and the organs of action engaging with the
You shine out
like a comely tethering post
where lady Uma daily ties up both
The elephants of her ample breasts
And the lion of her midriff svelte,
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* (88)

Like rubies set in finest gold
your holy feet,
unto the virtuous go
their holy grace to bestow.
What a wonder then
that these bright jewels
should thus be set
within the iron of my soul!

Unlike other mountains
that oceans of the world surround,

(cont.) world of the *būtam – the five elements* to create the illusion of an individual who is the doer, the one responsible for his own actions, in an apparently external world that is other than himself. The result is that the *jīva* becomes trapped in the cycle of cause and effect created by those *aru viṅgi – deeds which are hard to escape*. Only the grace of the Lord, usually mediated by an enlightened guru like Sri Ramana, can end this vicious cycle of cause and effect and consequent suffering, often by *oru moḻi – a single or unique word*, a simple statement, such as *cummā iru – Just be!* The moment this bogus individual turns his attention inward to dwell purely on the simple sense of being, the house of cards, which is the illusive dichotomy of *jīva* and world, dissolves like a dream and he comes to dwell in the attribute-free nature which is *ārivu – pure consciousness*. *ārivu eṉa = aṟivu āgumpadi – so that [I] become pure / mere consciousness (jñāna).* Thus realisation is simply the state of pure being, unobscured by the accretions imposed by the mind and senses:

The consciousness of the Self is the normal state; our present entanglement is the abnormal state. We imagine that we have to develop towards a perfect state – when we are in it now but have covered it with accretions of external things and thoughts. People talk of attaining the super-consciousness. This is wrong. This Self is our normal consciousness; we imagine we have to develop and attain it but we are in it all the time, only our attention is diverted away from it to intellect and objects. *Conscious Immortality*, p.168.
you within yourself, men proclaim, hold the ocean vast of grace that Himavat, the mountain gave.¹²

Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

Those feet so hard to know for those of love for you bereft; those feet that from tall Mal’s heart have never [for an instant] left; those feet that rise and fall in blazing light of Tillai’s Hall, may they dance their dance within my thoughts.

Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord, where hives built by honey bees that burrow into blooms in lofty crowns of tall bamboo are like the fans of palm tree leaves¹³ borne by gatherings of devotees.

Everywhere grow grasses green and fresh and clear waters flow, and in all those places, when you’re adored, you come in love your presence to afford. Yet still does mankind

¹² After the self-immolation of his first consort, Sātī, Śiva took as his second wife Parvatī, who was the daughter of Himavat, the personification of the Himalaya mountain range.

¹³ āla vattam is a ‘Circular fan made of cloths, fragrant roots or palm leaves, carried in procession before idols and great persons.’ (Tam. Lex.) The poet imagines that the hives attached to the tops of long bamboo stems resemble circular fans on the ends of their long hafts.
vainly toil

The term ‘Mountain of Compassion’
is commonly but a metaphor,
[by devotees] employed,
but you this definition to avoid
as an actual ‘Mountain of Compassion’\(^\text{14}\)
[on earth] abiding, skyward soar.
\emph{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!} \hspace{2cm} (91)

Grant in grace to me
that with pure jnana’s eye
I may truly see,
so that I may meet and remain
in the company of those
who do false birth disdain,
and freed from gross desire
have for your holy form
true love attained.

You who rising high,
tower up like a column tall,
so that other mountains
over whose lofty peaks
the skyborne moon doth crawl
seem nothing more
than tiny wisps of straw,
\emph{Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!} \hspace{2cm} (92)

\(^{14}\) 
\textit{metaphor} translates the words \textit{aṉ-moḻi-t-togai} literally \textit{a compound with a missing word}. As for example \textit{poṉ toṭi} – \textit{[a lady with] golden bangles}. Thus taken as such a compound \textit{karuṇai malai} would refer to the \textit{Lord as [One who possesses or is like] a mountain of compassion}. However taken as a simple \textit{vēṟṟumai-t-togai} compound with omission of the case ending, the meaning is simply \textit{mountain of compassion}, meaning it is the mountain itself which possesses the compassion, without the epithet being transferred to Lord Śiva.
Sonasaila Malai

Song Garland to the Red Mountain

SivapraKasa Swamigal
Translated by Robert Butler

May you grant to me
eyes that you alone
behold endlessly,
a mind that dwells
on you alone,
and a tongue that your praise
alone intones,
and last of all by your grace
at your holy feet a place.

‘To those who climb them, other mounts
will show the world entire laid out.

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the following link: http://stores.lulu.com/store.php?fAcctID=1212666.
With such as these you disagree,
since for those who thus approach you,
it is their Self alone you make them see!’
thus does [the world] proclaim.

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!* 93

The gleaming expanse of your chest;
The ruddy forest of your locks¹
whose colour lightning sore covets;
the lotus blossoms of your feet,
where Indra, king of gods,
prostrates himself in worship meet,
when shall these within in my mind
as their home come to abide?

[Men praise you] saying,
‘Mount Meru once
A black crow’s colour
turned to gold.² So let it be.
For you’re the Mountain high

---

¹ *ceñ caḍai adavium – the forest of [your] ruddy tangled locks. caḍai, Skt. *jaṭā*, are the tangled or matted locks worn by Lord Śiva and his devotees in imitation of him.

² There is a Tamil proverb, quoted in Winslow’s dictionary, which says *mēruvai cārnta kākkamum pōṇiṉam – Even a crow which resorts to Mount Meru [will become] gold coloured.* Sri Ramana Maharshi expresses a similar sentiment in lines 311-314 of *Ramaṇa Purāṇam*:

Even the blackest of crows,
when it alights upon beautiful golden Mount Meru,
is transformed into the form of pure gold.
In just the same way even those *jivas*
who are entirely without distinction,
upon joining the presence of divine consciousness,
their own reality, will shine
attaining through its glorious majesty
the sublime form of the Self.
that changes all that cometh nigh
into the colour that is Thee,

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!*  94

To aspire to serve your devotees,
the apple of my eye to me,
and at their service [ever] be,
is sweeter than a king’s renown,
who rules the world
clad in a brightly jewelled crown.

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord,*
where the glow from rubies
from cobras’ jaws spat out,
upon the silv’ry moon doth cast its light.
like a [ruddy] morning sun that soars
up to the fair, wide heavens’ heights.  95

For those who praise
the strength that as the *cimbul* bird
stole the powerful lion’s might,³
the greatness that razed
three cities [in their flight]
and the force that one head
of Brahma on his lotus seat⁴
severed quite,
what suffering can there ever be?

You who rising up into the sky
as a column vast of fire bright,
into the heavens towered high,
as, leaping from your hand [in fright],
the deer in your fair hand

³ See v. 23 and note.
⁴ *ambuya ataṉaṉ* – *He whose seat is the lotus*, i.e. Brahmā.
did on the heavens’ fair moon alight,\(^5\)

*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!*\(^96\)

Bidding me, ‘Do not fear;’
may you place me, wicked
and worthless as I may be,
in the company of your devotees.
For is there anyone who would dare
to scorn you fair throat saying,
‘This throat is besmirched by
the swallowed poison that it bears?’\(^6\)

You rise on high as if to proclaim
that if that argument ever arose again
between the artful Five Armed One\(^7\)
and his younger brother, Murugan,
the task of circumambulating You\(^8\)
would not be an easy thing to do,
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!*\(^97\)

My mind that’s firmly fixed
on jewels, on sandal paste,

\(^5\) The idea is that when Śiva rose up as an unfathomable mass of fire, the deer, which he customarily holds in his hand, was frightened by the heat and leapt onto the cool moon for safety.

\(^6\) The poet is saying that, just as no one would ever blame the Lord for holding the deadly poison *halāhala*, churned from the Milk Ocean, in his throat, no one could blame Him for accepting himself as a devotee, in spite of the dark defilement of *āṇava malam* from which he is not yet free.

\(^7\) *aiṅkaraṉ – the five-armed One* is Ganeśa. He is most often depicted as having four arms, with his trunk making the fifth.

\(^8\) *valam koḷ vādu – the dispute about circumambulating.* The reference is to the well-known story of the dispute between Ganeśa and Murugan over the possession of a special mango. It was determined that the first one to circle the world three times and return would win it. Murugan set off at great speed on his peacock, whilst Ganeśa simply walked around his parents three times and successfully claimed the mango. The poet says that such a feat would not be so easy now with Śiva bearing the form of a great mountain.
on cloth of shining silk
and ladies’ sweet embrace,
will it ever clearly see
in Thee the one Reality?
Alas, I do not know, poor me!

You who, soaring high, abode,
so that all the pomp of Mal and Ayan
by many much adored,
though on high they rode
on flying creatures borne,
came to naught and was no more,
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

Will there ever come a day
that my mind [flourishing],
like a lotus covered pool,
like the heavens lit by the moon,
like a comely form
with jewels adorned,
like a city where dwells a king
who long rules over the world,
shall unite with your holy feet
girt with warriors’ anklets [meet]?

You who in your grace vouchsafe
sure liberation’s lofty state
to those who on you meditate,
so that other mountains
stand abashed,
bearing only trees for men
to build a house that cannot last,⁹
Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!

⁹ ᵇṵ uṟum maṉai – houses that will undergo destruction, i.e. perishable, material dwellings, which are provided by other mountains in the form of forests, are contrasted with ṭāṵ uṟum uyar viḍu – strength possessing lofty liberation, conferred by Sōṇasailaṉ. viḍu also means house, providing a neat, punning ending to the verse.
MOUNTAIN PATH

You it is that grant your grace
To those who praise you,
that they may gain learning
and the noble ornament of fame,
great wealth and children,
that like a fine jewel adorn
the householder and his mate,
and finally liberation’s high estate.

Through your great, supernal grace
you show yourself to all the world,
so that those who from the righteous path
have strayed, forgetting you, may see
and hold you in their thoughts,
*Lord Sonasailan! Kailash’s Lord!*

*(Concluded)*