

ஸ்ரீதத்துவராய சுவாமிகள் சித்ஷடானம்



John Maynard

Samadhi of Thattuvaray

# Tattuvaraya

DAVID GODMAN,  
T.V. VENKATASUBRAMANIAN  
AND ROBERT BUTLER

Tattuvaraya was a Tamil saint and poet whom scholars believe flourished in the late 15th century. He was a prolific author who wrote thousands of verses on a wide variety of spiritual topics. Bhagavan noted in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, §648, that he was 'the first to pour forth *advaita* philosophy in Tamil'. Prior to his arrival on the Tamil literary scene, *advaita* texts in Tamil seem to have been translations of, or expositions on, texts composed in Sanskrit.

One of Tattuvaraya's compositions was mentioned several times by Bhagavan. This is how he narrated the story in *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 21st November 1945:

Tattuvaraya composed a *bharani* [a kind of poetical composition in Tamil that features military heroes who win great battles] in honour of his Guru Sorupananda and convened an assembly of learned pandits to hear the work and assess its value. The pandits

raised the objection that a *bharani* was only composed in honour of great heroes capable of killing a thousand elephants, and that it was not in order to compose such a work in honour of an ascetic. Thereupon the author said, 'Let us all go to my Guru and we shall have this matter settled there'. They went to the Guru and, after all had taken their seats, the author told his Guru the purpose of their coming there. The Guru sat silent and all the others also remained in *mauna*. The whole day passed, night came, and some more days and nights, and yet all sat there silently, no thought at all occurring to any of them and nobody thinking or asking why they had come there. After three or four days like this, the Guru moved his mind a bit and thereupon the assembly regained their thought activity. They then declared, 'Conquering a thousand elephants is nothing beside this Guru's power to conquer the rutting elephants of all our egos put together. So certainly he deserves the *bharani* in his honour!'

Sorupananda, his Guru, was also his maternal uncle. Early on in their life they had made an arrangement whereby they would both seek Gurus in different places. Tattuvarya travelled to the north of India from Virai, their home town, Sorupananda to the south. The agreement further stipulated that whichever of the two attained the grace of the Guru first would become the Guru of the other.<sup>1</sup> Sorupananda became the disciple of Sivaprakasa Swami and realised the Self with him. Then, to fulfil the agreement with his nephew, he became his Guru.

---

<sup>1</sup> A fuller account of Sorupananda's and Tattuvarya's lives can be found in *The Mountain Path*, 2004, pp. 75-103. A slightly longer account also appears at <http://www.davidgodman.org/tamilt/sorupasaram.shtml>. Both locations contain a complete translation of *Sorupa Saram*, Sorupananda's only known work. Sorupananda's name is spelled 'Swarupananda' in Ramanasramam publications, while Tattuvarya's name appears in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* as 'Tatvaroyar' and 'Tatva Rayar'. There is a very similar retelling of the *bharani* incident in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, §262. In *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam* (letter dated 8th April 1948) Bhagavan gives a brief summary of how Sorupananda became Tattuvarya's Guru.

Though Tattuvaraya was a prolific author, only one work has ever been attributed to Sorupananda: *Sorupa Saram*, a 102-verse poem about the nature of the experience of the Self. This work was so highly valued by Bhagavan, he included it on a list of six titles that he recommended to Annamalai Swami. Since the other five were *Kaivalya Navaneetam*, *Ribhu Gita*, *Ashtavakra Gita*, *Ellam Ondre*, and *Yoga Vasishtha*, *Sorupa Saram* is in distinguished company.

Tattuvaraya realised the Self quickly and effortlessly in the presence of Sorupananda. The opening lines of *Paduturai*, one of his major works, reveal just how speedily the event took place:

The feet [of Sorupananda], they are the ones that, through grace, and assuming a divine form, arose and came into this fertile world to enlighten me in the time it takes for a black gram seed to roll over.<sup>2</sup>

Black gram is the *dhal* that is one of the two principal ingredients of iddlies and dosa. It is 2-3 mm across and slightly asymmetrical, rather than spherical. This property led Tattuvaraya to write, in another verse, that Sorupananda granted him liberation in the time it took for ‘a [black] gram seed to wobble and turn over onto its side’.<sup>3</sup>

Tattuvaraya attributed this near-instantaneous enlightenment wholly to the power and grace of his Guru, rather than to any intrinsic merit, maturity or worthiness:

It is possible to stop the wind. It is possible to flex stone. But what can be done with our furious mind? How marvellous is our Guru, he who granted that this mind should be totally transformed into the Self! My tongue, repeat this without ever forgetting.

When my Lord, who took me over by bestowing his lotus feet, glances with his look of grace, the darkness in the heart vanishes. All the things become completely clear and transform into *Sivam*. All the *sastras* are seen to point towards reality.

---

<sup>2</sup> *Tiruvadi Malai*, lines 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> *Nanmanimalai*, verse 10.

Most glorious Lord, if you hadn't looked upon me with your eye of divine grace, how could I, your devotee, and the mind that enquired, experience the light that shines as the flourishing world, as many, as *jnana*, and as one?

To destroy me, you gave me one look in which there was no looking. You uprooted the ignorance of 'I' and 'mine'. You brought to an end all the future births of this cruel one. O Lord, am I fit for the grace that you bestowed on me?<sup>4</sup>

Sorupananda's mind-silencing ability is quite evident both from the story of the *bharani* that Bhagavan told on several occasions and from the verses in which Tattvaraya spoke of this transmission from his own direct experience. Tattvaraya even stated in some places, somewhat hyperbolically, that Sorupananda, unlike the gods, bestowed instant liberation on everyone who came into his presence:

[In order to convince the *devas*] Brahma, lacking the power to make them experience directly the state of being, held the red-hot iron in his hand and declared, 'This is the ultimate reality declared by the *Vedas*. There is nothing else other than this. I swear to it.' Siva as Dakshinamurti declared, 'In all the worlds, only the four are fit; they alone are mature for *tattva jnana*.' Lord [Krishna], holding the discus, had to repeat eighteen times to ignorant Arjuna, who was seated on the wheeled chariot. But here in this world [my Guru] Sorupananda bestows *jnana* on all as palpably as the gem on one's palm.<sup>5</sup>

The *Brahma Gita* is the source of the story mentioned at the beginning of the verse. This text was translated from Sanskrit into Tamil by Tattvaraya himself. His version of the relevant verses, taken from chapter five, is as follows:

---

<sup>4</sup> *Venba Antadi*, vv. 12, 14, 60, 69.

<sup>5</sup> *Tiruvadi Malai*, lines 117-126. 'Eighteen times' refers to the chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita*.



John Maynard

Statue of Tattuvaraya at his samadhi

96 The four-faced One [Brahma], he who creates all the worlds and is their Lord, said, 'You [gods] who love me well, listen! Since it is I who declare to you that this is the meaning of the arcane *Vedas*, this is the reality beyond compare. If you are in any doubt, I will have the iron heated till it is red hot and hold it in my golden hands to prove myself free of any falsehood.'

97 He who sits upon the lotus blossom [Brahma] said, '[Gods, you who are] loving devotees [of Lord Siva], listen! The meaning of the *Vedas*, as I have explained it, is just so. There is nothing further. In order that you should be convinced of this in your minds, I have sworn a threefold oath, holding onto the feet of Lord [Siva].

Holding a red-hot iron in one's hand was ancient trial-by-ordeal way of affirming the truth. If the flesh of the hand did not burn, then the statement uttered was deemed to be true.

Tattuvaraya made the claim in the *Tiruvadi Malai* lines that his Guru was more powerful and more capable of granting enlightenment than the *trimurti* of Brahma, Vishnu in the form of Krishna, and Siva. Elaborating on this theme, Tattuvaraya stated that Siva, appearing as Dakshinamurti, only managed to enlighten the four sages (Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata); Brahma had to resort to holding a red-hot iron and taking an oath to persuade his *deva* followers that his teachings were true; whereas Krishna, despite giving out the extensive teachings that are recorded in the *Bhagavad Gita*, wasn't able to enlighten even Arjuna. Though this is a somewhat harsh assessment, the inability of Krishna to enlighten Arjuna through his *Gita* teachings was mentioned by Bhagavan himself:

Likewise, Arjuna, though he told Sri Krishna in the *Gita* 'Delusion is destroyed and knowledge is imbibed,' confesses later that he has forgotten the Lord's teaching and requests Him to repeat it. Sri Krishna's reiteration in reply is the *Uttara Gita*.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> *Sri Ramana Reminiscences*, p. 52.

While all this might sound slightly blasphemous, it is a long and well-established position in Saivism that, when it comes to enlightening devotees, the human Guru is more effective and has more power than the gods themselves.

Though Tattuvāraya knew that it was the immense power of his Guru that had granted him liberation, he was at a loss to understand why that power had ultimately singled him out as a worthy recipient of its liberating grace. In one of his long verses he ruminated on the mysterious nature of *prarabdha* – why events had unfolded the way they did in various narratives of the gods – before chronicling the circumstances of his own liberation in a stirring peroration:

When [even] the gods despair; when those who investigate the paths of every religion become confused and grow weary; when even they fail to reach the goal, they who perform great and arduous *tapas*, immersing themselves in water in winter, standing in the midst of fire in summer, and foregoing food, so that they experience the height of suffering, I do not know what it was [that bestowed *jnana* upon me]. Was it through the very greatness of the noble-minded one [Sorupananda]? Or through the nature of his compassion? Or was it the effect of his own [absolute] freedom [to choose me]? I was the lowest of the low, knowing nothing other than the objects of sense. I was lost, limited to this foul body of eight hands span, filled with putrid flesh. But he bade me ‘Come, come,’ granting me his grace by looking upon me with his lotus eyes. When he spoke that single word, placing his noble hands upon my head and crowning it with his immaculate noble feet, my eye of *jnana* opened. [Prior to this] I was without the eye [of *jnana*], suffering through births and deaths for countless ages. [But] when he commanded me ‘See!’, then, for me, there was no fate; there was no karma; there was no fiery-eyed death. All the world of differentiated forms became simply a manifestation of Sorupananda.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> *Nanmanimalai*, v. 37, lines 28-50.

The lines that immediately precede this extract discuss destiny, karma and death, and mention a claim that it is impossible to destroy them. Tattuvaraya then disagrees, citing his Guru Sorupananda's statement: 'We have routed good and evil deeds in this world; we have destroyed the power of destiny; we have escaped the jaws of Yama [death].'<sup>8</sup>

In the portion of the verse cited here Tattuvaraya emphatically backs up this claim by saying that when his own eye of *jnana* was opened through the look and touch of his Guru, 'for me, there was no fate; there was no karma; there was no fiery-eyed death. All the world of differentiated forms became simply a manifestation of Sorupananda.'

There are other verses which reaffirm Tattuvaraya's statement that after he had been liberated by Sorupananda he knew nothing other than the *swarupa* which had taken the form of Sorupananda to enlighten him:

All that appears is only the *swarupa* of Sorupan[anda]. Where are the firm earth, water and fire? Where is air? Where is the ether? Where is the mind, which is delusion? Where indeed is the great *maya*? Where is 'I'?

[In greatness] there is no one equal to Sorupan. Of this there is no doubt. Similarly, there is no one equal to me [in smallness]. I did not know the difference between the two of us when, in the past, I took the form of the fleshy body nor later when he had transformed me into himself by placing his honey-like lotus feet [on my head]. Now I am incapable of knowing anything.<sup>9</sup>

Let some say that the Supreme is Siva. Let some say that the Supreme is Brahma or Vishnu. Let some say that *Sakti* and *Sivam* are Supreme. Let some say that it is with form. Let some say that it is formless. But we have come to know that all forms are only our Guru.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> *Nanmanimalai*, v. 37, lines 24-26.

<sup>9</sup> *Nanmanimalai*, vv. 38, 39.

<sup>10</sup> *Venba Antadi*, v. 8.

Tattumaraya wrote of the consequences of his realisation in a poem entitled *Pangikku Uraittal* (*Paduturai*, v. 64), which can be translated as 'The Lady Telling her Maid'. The second of the five verses, which speaks of the simple, ascetic life he subsequently led, was mentioned with approval by Bhagavan in *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*, § 648:

Our reward was that every word we heard or said was *nada*  
[divine sound].

Our reward was to have 'remaining still' [*summa iruttal*] as our  
profession.

Our reward was to enter the company of virtuous devotees.  
My dear companion, this is the life bestowed by our Guru. 1

Our reward was to have the bare ground as our bed.

Our reward was to accept alms in the palms of our hands.

Our reward was to wear a loincloth as our clothing.

My dear companion, for us there is nothing lacking. 2

Bhagavan's comment on this verse was:

I had no cloth spread on the floor in earlier days. I used to sit on the floor and lie on the ground. That is freedom. The sofa is a bondage. It is a gaol for me. I am not allowed to sit where and how I please. Is it not bondage? One must be free to do as one pleases, and should not be served by others.

'No want' is the greatest bliss. It can be realised only by experience. Even an emperor is no match for a man with no want. The emperor has got vassals under him. But the other man is not aware of anyone beside the Self. Which is better?

The poem continues:

Our reward was to be reviled by all.

Our reward was that fear of this world, and of the next, died  
away.

Our reward was to be crowned by the lotus feet of the Virtuous  
One [the Guru].

My dear companion, this is the life bestowed by our Guru. 3

## MOUNTAIN PATH

Our reward was the pre-eminent wealth that is freedom from desire.

Our reward was that the disease called 'desire' was torn out by the roots.

Our reward was the love in which we melted, crying, 'Lord!'  
Ah, my dear companion, tell me, what *tapas* did I perform for this? 4

There is an indirect reference in the first line to *Tirukkural* 363: 'There is no pre-eminent wealth in this world like freedom from desire. Even in the next, there is nothing to compare to it.'

The final verse says:

Our reward was to wear the garment that never wears out.

Our reward was to possess as 'I' the one who is present everywhere.

Our reward was to have [our] false devotion become the true.

My dear companion, this is the life bestowed by our benevolent Guru. 5

'The garment that never wears out' is *chidakasa*, the space of consciousness.

After his realisation Tattuvaraya subsequently spent much of his time absorbed in the Self. Sorupananda knew that his disciple had a great talent for composing Tamil verses and wanted him to utilise it. However, to accomplish this, he knew he had to coax him out of his near-perpetual *samadhi* state. This is how the story unfolds in the traditional version of Tattuvaraya's life:<sup>11</sup>

Sorupananda thought, 'This Tattuvaraya is highly accomplished in composing verses in Tamil. Through him, we should get some *sastras* composed for the benefit of the world.'

He indicated his will through hints for a long time, but as Tattuvaraya was in *nishtha* [Self-absorption] all the time, he could not act on the suggestions.

---

<sup>11</sup>The indented biographical details that follow are all taken from an introduction to a 1953 edition of Tattuvaraya's *Paduturai*, published by Chidambaram Ko. Chita. Madalayam. They appear on pages 8-16.

Sorupananda eventually decided to accomplish his objective by following a different course of action.

Pretending that he wanted to have an oil bath on a new-moon day, he turned to his attendant and asked, 'Bring oil'.

Tattuvaraya, who was standing nearby, knew that it was *amavasya* [new-moon day]. He began to speak by saying 'Am...' and then stopped.

It is prohibited to have an oil bath on *amavasya*. This breach with custom was sufficient to bring Tattuvaraya out of his Self-absorption. He spontaneously uttered 'Am...', presumably as a prelude to saying that it was *amavasya*, but then he stopped because he realised that it would be improper of him to criticise any action his Guru chose to perform. This gave Sorupananda the opportunity he was looking for:

As soon as he heard Tattuvaraya speak, Sorupananda pretended to be angry with him.

He said, 'Can there be any prohibitions for me, I who am abiding beyond time, having transcended all the *sankalpas* that take the form of dos and don'ts? Do not stand before me! Leave my presence!'

Tattuvaraya thought to himself, 'Because of my misdeed of prescribing a prohibition for my Guru, who shines as the undivided fullness of being-consciousness-bliss, it is no longer proper for me to remain in this body. There can be no atonement other than drowning myself in the sea.'

With these thoughts in his mind, he walked backwards while still facing his Guru, shedding torrents of tears at the thought of having to leave his presence.

Other versions of this story make it clear that Tattuvaraya walked backwards away from his Guru's presence because he felt that it was improper to turn his back on his Guru. Though it is not clear in this particular retelling, he apparently walked backwards until he reached the shore of the sea where he intended to drown himself. The narrative continues:

Through the compassion he felt for other beings and through the power of the Self-experience that possessed him, he began to compose verses as he was walking [backwards towards the ocean]. These were the eighteen works he composed in praise of both his Guru and his *Paramaguru* [Sivaprakasa Swami]. These were noted down by some of Sorupananda's other disciples.

As he continued to sing these eighteen works, the disciples who were following him took down what he said, [conveyed the verses to] Sorupananda, and read them in his presence.

Sorupananda pretended not to be interested: 'Just as a woman with hair combs and ties it, this one with a mouth is composing and sending these verses.'

Another version of Tattuvaraya's life states that Sorupananda had sent disciples to write down the verses that Tattuvaraya was composing, so his lack of interest should not be taken to be genuine. It was all part of a ruse to get his disciple to begin his literary career.

Meanwhile, Tattuvaraya was pining and lamenting: 'Alas, I have become unfit to have the *darshan* of my Guru. Henceforth, in which birth will I have his *darshan*?'

Like a child prevented from seeing its mother, he was weeping so much, his whole face became swollen. At this point he was singing *Tiruvadi Malai* from *Paduturai*. He was close to the edge of the sea and was about to die.

When the disciples went to Sorupananda and updated him about these events, he [relented and] said, 'Ask the "*Guruvukku Veengi*" [the one whose obsessive desire for his Guru is making him ill] to come here'.

When Tattuvaraya heard about this, he was completely freed from his bodily suffering, and he also regained the power to walk [forwards].

The *Pulavar Puranam*, an anthology of the biographies of Tamil poet-saints, reports in verse thirteen of the Tattuvaraya chapter that he was already neck-deep in the sea when Sorupananda summoned him to return. The story continues:

He [Tattuvaraya] told the disciples [who had arrived with the message], ‘Sorupananda, the repository of grace and compassion, has ordered even me, a great offender, to return.’

Experiencing supreme bliss, he sang some more portions of *Paduturai*, and then returned to the presence of the Guru. He stood there, shedding tears, in ecstasy, singing the praises of his Guru.

Sorupananda merely said, ‘*Iru*’.

*Iru* is the imperative of a verb that means both ‘Be’ and ‘Stay’. In choosing this word Sorupananda was ordering him both to remain physically with him and also to continue to abide in the state of being.

Tattuvaraya lived happily there, serving his Guru.

Sorupananda went through the works that Tattuvaraya had composed and was delighted with their depth of meaning and the grandeur of their vocabulary. However, he made no sign of the joy he felt.

Then he thought to himself, ‘These *sastras* will be useful only for the learned and not for others’.

He told Tattuvaraya, ‘Son, you have sung all these *sastras* for your own benefit, but not for the benefit of the people of the world’.

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the cooks who informed Sorupananda, ‘Swami, you should come to have your food’.

When Sorupananda went for his meal, Tattuvaraya, who was left alone, pondered over the words of his Guru. Concurring with his remarks, he composed *Sasivanna Bodham* before Sorupananda had returned from eating his meal. He placed it at the feet of his Guru [when Sorupananda reappeared] and prostrated. Sorupananda was delighted at the simplicity of its style and the speed with which Tattuvaraya composed poetry.

The next incident is the story of the *bharani* that Bhagavan narrated and referred to. There are several sources of Tattuvaraya’s life, and

the details vary from text to text. The version that appears in this narrative is slightly different from the one Bhagavan told, and it also has a few extra details:

Tattuvaraya composed some Vedanta *sastras*, but was mostly in *samadhi*. Around that time some Virasaivas, who were on a pilgrimage, along with some pandits, came before Tattuvaraya, who was sitting in the presence of Sorupananda.

[They read the *bharani* and complained:] ‘A *bharani* is [only] sung about great heroes who have killed a thousand male elephants on the battlefield. How is it that you have composed this [kind of poem] on your Guru who has not heard of or known heroic valour even in his dreams?’

To this Tattuvaraya replied, ‘As our Guru kills the ego-elephants of disciples, I sang in this way’.

They responded, ‘The ego-elephant that you mention is not visible to the eye, so it is not proper [to compose in this way]. However, even to kill one ego-elephant would take many, many days. How did he manage to kill the egos of 1,000 disciples simultaneously?’

Tattuvaraya, thinking that they should be shown through a demonstration, resumed his *samadhi* state, without replying to them.

Under the power and influence of Sorupananda all the pandits who came remained in *paripurnam* [had the full experience of the Self] for three days, without knowing either night or day. On the fourth day Tattuvaraya opened his eyes. All the pandits arose and prostrated to both Tattuvaraya and Sorupananda.

They said, ‘It was because of our ignorance that we objected.

The power of your [Sorupananda’s] presence is such that even if 10,000 disciples happen to come, it [the presence] has the ability to bring them all to maturity simultaneously.’

Then they composed their own verses in praise of the *bharani* and departed.

It is not unreasonable or fanciful to compare the relationship of Tattuvaraya and Sorupananda with the one that existed between Muruganar and Bhagavan. Tattuvaraya and Muruganar came to their Gurus (who both liked to teach through silence) and realised the Self soon afterwards. They both subsequently composed thousands of verses that either praised their respective Gurus, or recorded some aspect of their teachings. Tattuvaraya's poems in praise of his Guru (and Sivaprakasa Swami, his Guru's Guru) include *Venba Antadi* (100 verses), *Kalitturai Antadi* (100 verses), *Irattaimanimalai* (20 verses), *Nanmanimalai* (40 verses), *Jnana Vinodan Kalambagam* (101 verses), *Kali Madal* (232 verses), *Ula* (393 verses), and many, many more. Then there was the *bharani* that Bhagavan mentioned: a 493-verse poem (*Ajnavaatai Bharani*) on the annihilation of ignorance by the 'hero' Sorupananda. *Mokavatai Bharani* was another 850-verse *bharani* on the killing of delusion that includes in its text 110 songs in which a goddess instructs her followers in Vedanta. These 110 songs are often published independently as a Tamil primer on Vedanta under the title *Sasivanna Bodham*. This is the work that Tattuvaraya composed while Sorupananda was having his meal. Selected translations of one of Tattuvaraya's works on Vedanta (*Amrita Saram*) will appear in the next issue of the *Mountain Path*.

There are, in addition, two long anthologies of Tamil poetry that contain more of Tattuvaraya's verses: *Peruntirattu* (*The Great Anthology*), and *Kuruntirattu* (*The Short Anthology*). Though these anthologies mostly contain works by other authors, Tattuvaraya contributed some verses to both collections, and he is also acknowledged as the compiler of both books.

Muruganar, at Bhagavan's behest, composed *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, modelling it on Manikkavachagar's *Tiruvachakam*. In another interesting parallel Tattuvaraya composed *Paduturai*, a 1,140-verse collection of verses that are derived from contemporary folk songs. This work is also loosely based on *Tiruvachakam*. The 'Lady Telling her Maid' poem that appeared earlier in this article comes from this collection of verses. A selection of verses from *Paduturai* will appear in one of next year's issues of the *Mountain Path*.

Though Tattuvarya clearly played a Muruganar-like role in the life of Sorupananda, it is interesting and a little intriguing to note that Satyamangalam Venkataramayyar, the author of *Sri Ramana Stuti Panchakam*, addresses Bhagavan himself as ‘Tattuvarya’ in the second line of verse nine of *Kalaippattu*. This poem is chanted every Saturday evening in Bhagavan’s *samadhi* hall.

In addition to the original Tamil compositions and the anthologies he compiled, Tattuvarya also translated *Brahma Gita* and *Iswara Gita* from Sanskrit into Tamil.

Despite this prolific literary output, it is fair to assume that Tattuvarya regarded as his greatest accomplishment the state that was bestowed on him by his Guru Sorupananda:

What if the world praises me henceforth or reviles me? What if Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, remains close to me or separate from me? What if the body assuredly exists without ever decaying or perishes? Will there be any gain or loss to me on account of them, I who have worn perfectly on my head the twin feet of immaculate Sorupananda?<sup>12</sup>

The passing of both Sorupananda and Tattuvarya is described in the traditional story of their lives:

Sorupananda started to wander aimlessly, leaving Tattuvarya behind. Tattuvarya followed him. When Sorupananda reached the sea shore, the waters separated to let him enter. However, when Tattuvarya tried to do the same [and follow him], the sea did not part.

Tattuvarya stood on the shore, crying loudly, like a calf separated from its mother. He searched for his Guru in all directions. Finally, Sorupananda appeared to give him [a final] *darshan* before shining as *akanda paripurna satchitananda* [the undivided transcendent fullness, being-consciousness-bliss].

In the context of what follows, this is the author’s way of saying that Sorupananda took *mahasamadhi*.

---

<sup>12</sup> *Jnana Vinodan Kalambagam*, v. 99.

After performing his Guru's *samadhi* rites, Tattubaraya was constantly thinking of Sorupananda. Either through the supreme love he felt for him, or through his inability to bear the separation, or because of the understanding that there was nothing for him to do apart from his Guru, he immediately attained *mahasamadhi*.

Tattubaraya's *samadhi* shrine is located at Irumbudur, which lies between Vriddhachalam and Chidambaram. ▲

# Amirta Saram

[*The Essence of Nectar*]

TATTUVARAYA

*In the previous issue of Mountain Path we published an article on the life of Tattuvaraya, a 15th century Tamil saint. In this issue we are publishing extracts from Amirta Saram, one of his many works on Vedanta. The verses are taken from a subsection of the work entitled Kalai Kattalai ('Section on the Teachings'). The translation has been done by T. V. Venkatasubramanian, Robert Butler and David Godman.*

## 1 Reverence to the Lord

To those who possess the eye of *jnana*, Sorupan, the reality, is the effulgence of *jnana-ananda*. But to those who possess only the physical eye, he [that reality] is the world. His golden feet which are unattainable even by the gods in heaven are, on this day, easy for me to attain.

*In the first verse Tattuvaraya salutes his Guru, Sorupananda, equating him with the bliss of jnana.*

## 5 The greatness of the *jnani's* words

What does it matter to what caste they [*janis*] belong? What does it matter which religion they belong to? What does it matter which type of verses they have sung? Only the words of those who have renounced the mind are pure words. All the rest lead only to rebirth.

6 Name of the work

A whole lifetime will not suffice for anyone to comprehend clearly the truth through studying the *Vedas* and *Agamas*. By studying this work [though], the heart will abide in the ocean of *amirta* [nectar]. It is therefore given the name *Amirta Saram* [*The Essence of Nectar*].

7 Expression of modesty

When formerly the three gods explained the import of the utterances of the *Vedas*, the world could not comprehend. Now, if I claim that I am going to declare this truth for the world to know, I will be like the firefly that says, 'I will dispel and destroy the dense darkness that exists as high as heaven'.

8 Declaring the good [or beneficial] path

Knowing them to be transient, renounce the thought of life here and hereafter. Walk the path of virtue [or rectitude]. Turn back the mind. Seek the Self-realised. Hasten to know the true nature of reality.

9 That which is rare

It is rare indeed to obtain a human birth. Even if one gets it, it is more rare to study the *jnana* scriptures. Rarer still is to become one who possesses renunciation. But rarer than that is to become one possessing knowledge of reality.

10 The characteristic of a *jnani*

The *jnani* knows that consciousness alone exists, and that there is nothing that is not consciousness. He knows consciousness entirely through consciousness. He is the Lord who exists without knowing or not knowing. He is indeed the Supreme Reality declared by the *Vedas*.

11 The *jnani's* actions

For both the *jnani* and the *ajnani* external conduct in activities such as eating look identical. But the mind of *jnani* is quite different. Though the breast of a woman is the same for both her baby and her husband, their mental development [leads to] different [results].

12 The *jnani's* conduct

Will he think 'This is good,' or 'This is bad'? Is not the entire world food for the *jnani*? Could there be any rule whereby a fire raging in

the forest might discriminate between trees, thinking, ‘One good and another bad’?

### 13 Greatness of the *jnani*

Space is extremely vast, but the great *maya* that gave birth to it is mere clay in the hands of Iswara. If one ponders over it, there is no one greater than Siva, but the one who has contained Siva in his mind is greater than Siva Himself.

### 14 Greatness of service to the *jnani*

Whenever the powerful *jnani* asks God to manifest, God, eager to appear, will be waiting expectantly to serve him wherever he goes. Who indeed is there equal to those who serve the *jnani*?

### 15 Greatness of *puja* to the *jnani*

When the *jnani* eats, everyone in the universe has eaten. [Even] Brahma, Vishnu and Siva have eaten. He who worships a perfect *jnani*, regarding him as *Sivam*, has indeed feasted his eyes fully on the Supreme Being and worshipped Him.

### 16 Those who revile the *jnani*

Those who revile the powerful *jnani*, those who listen to it [the abuse], those who do not get angry hearing the abuse, those who permit the *jnani* to be abused, and those who do not leave the company of these four, [not] thinking it best to keep away from them [these four] – these are the five deadly sinners.

### 17 Improper conduct

Those cruel hypocrites who have not removed the faults in their deluded minds, claiming, without having gained the true *jnana* born of yoga, that they are abiding as the one reality merely for the sake of food, will not attain liberation, and neither will those who hold them in their thoughts [their followers].

*‘For the sake of food’ denotes any kind of material benefit that is gained from pretending to be enlightened.*

### 20 The cause of the world

They will say ‘Atoms are the cause’; ‘Great *maya* is the cause’; ‘A combination of atoms is the cause’; ‘The five elements are the cause’;

‘The *gunas* are the cause.’ Let them say any cause to be the cause. Not asking ‘What is the cause of this world?’ is the real cause of the world.

21 Cause and effect are not different

Do not say that this impermanent world is apart from the eternal reality. Before becoming an ornament, when it is an ornament, and when the ornament is remelted and made again into a lump of gold, it is only gold.

22 Cause and effect are not different

The Lord is the underlying screen that is His one Self, which is the pure light of *jnana ananda*. On it He, the Self, traced, by means of Himself, the picture of the world of multiplicity, girt by the roaring ocean. He looked upon it and was well pleased.

25 The quality of all-pervasiveness

The Eternal One creates the 84 *lakhs* of different species and abides within them all, just as empty space enters into and occupies all the countless pots that have [ever] been made.

*Some Hindu texts posit that there are 8.4 million (84 lakhs) of species in which one can incarnate.*

26 Destruction

The body comprising the five elements will be destroyed in the elements. The five elements, beginning with space, will be destroyed in *maya*. Great *maya*, the darkness, in which multiplicity has ended, will be destroyed by the *jnana* that arises here [in this world], saturated with the light of being.

27 The cause of birth

Like the transparent, shining and colourless crystal which takes on the colour of the object that is adjacent to it, the knower [the crystal] becomes [takes on the appearance of] the adjacent objects [body and mind]. Since births come to an end when the knower knows his real nature, the fundamental cause of birth is ignorance of one’s real nature.

35 The base nature of the body

When their *prana* leaves men who are getting attached to land [wealth and women], they are given the name ‘corpse’ and removed for burial. In an instant worms come and infest this body. Is there in

this body any place as tiny as the tip of the sesame seed that remains free from fault?

### 37 The despicable nature of enjoyment

The asuna bird, the elephant, moth, fish and bee get ruined respectively by a craving for sounds, touch, sight, taste and smell. How disgusting! Won't humans, possessed by worries, lose their power through their appetite for not one, but all these five cravings, beginning with sound.

### 41 The base nature of *swarga* [heavenly worlds]

[Lying with celestial damsels is] lying with prostitutes. Drinking ambrosia is nothing but getting drunk on intoxicating liquor. When in one day of Brahma *crores* of *devas* are born and die, what is the glory that those who rule the *deva* world attain?

### 42 Impermanence

There is not a single thing that remains permanently in this world. This is what all the three gods declared. This is also the doctrine of those other religions that war with each other. Therefore, only impermanence is permanent.

### 44 Renunciation

Those who want to bring to an end this birth in which one is caught in ignorance should realise that even the body is superfluous, and renounce completely. For those who do not, it is not easy to attain liberation, which is freedom from taking birth and dying.

*The verse includes an indirect reference to Tirukkural 345: 'For those who seek an end to birth, the body itself is a superfluous burden. What then can we say of other forms of attachment?'*

### 80 The argument that *prarabdha* is supreme

If the body is a result of karma, then it would mean that the body existed before to perform the karma. If karma is eternal, then liberation will never be attained. The fundamental cause of *prarabdha* is ignorance.

### 82 Taking *kaya kalpas*

We have not known anyone who lived for ever in this sea-girt world through *kaya kalpa* medicines. Why are you afflicting yourself,

## MOUNTAIN PATH

strengthening the body, which is as unstable as a water bubble, and which causes ruination to one and all?

### 83 Caste

Freedom from the primal ignorance is the caste of the rare *tapasvins*. Will they make even the slightest mention of differences in caste? Only those who possess *jnana* belong to the noble caste and lineage, and deserve to be worshipped. The rest are low-caste people.

### 84 Bathing in holy water

Will the defilement of a mind that is not established in dharma be cleansed through water that is external [to itself]? The holy rivers are for the body only. Otherwise they are powerless. For the mind to become cleansed of defilement and to shine, the holy water one bathes in is consciousness.

### 85 Puja

Those lacking wisdom and thirsting for bliss, while standing in the flood of endless supreme bliss that abides in the heart, will bathe in water, collect water for *abhishekam*, gather flowers, cleanse the precincts with cow-dung, and eventually perform *puja*.

### 86 Knowing the many paths

You who are a *tapasvin* seeking the truth! Let all the many paths declare ‘This alone is the way! This alone is the way!’ What is the path through which the consciousness that knows all these paths can be known? That path, which is declared by the *Vedas*, is the way of liberation.

### 87 Learning *sastras*

Those who have failed to grasp the true import of the holy scriptures they read and have therefore not come to know consciousness as it really is will not go anywhere near the truth, even if they read *crores* and *crores* of scriptures.

### 88 Attempting to know by measurement

It is through consciousness that all measures have to be known. He who desires to know consciousness through measures, all of which have to be known through consciousness, is like one who wants to burn fire with firewood.

## 89 Disputation

In the way of disputation, when one wins, pride greatly swells. When one loses, sorrow waxes a lot. [The conclusions of] disputation are not something that remain permanent. The only benefit is tearing one's head off and getting a sore throat.

## 92 The noble way

If the truth is known clearly, then that path which remains without conflict with any other path will be the path of becoming *sat*. If there is God's grace, it is easy to attain. In the absence of God's grace, it will be difficult for everyone.

95 *Sathya* [truthfulness]

If you ask 'What is the practice of truthfulness?' then they say it is to utter that which does not cause harm to any being. But those who have realised the truth declared at the end of the *Vedas*, which speak a lot about purity, say that truth [*sathya*] is only the Supreme, the Imperishable One.

*The first sentence refers to Tirukkural 291: 'If you ask, "What is truth?", it is to utter words that are entirely free of any harmful effect.'*

*Yamas and niyamas are codes of conduct for dealing with people and the world. In this selection verses 95-100 explain the inner significance of some of the yamas.*

96 *Ahimsa* [non-violence]

*Ahimsa* is not to inflict suffering on any living being. The Self-realised know that realising that the Self is not destroyed by weapons, wind, water, fire, etc. is *ahimsa* to oneself.

97 *Asteya* [non-stealing]

They say that to steal a thing either through force or deceit is theft. But if we are to declare the doctrine of *jnanis*, stealing is to regard the body, which does not belong to one, as 'I' and 'mine'.

98 *Brahmacharya*

*Brahmacharya* is to avoid the company of women, but those who truly possess *brahmacharya* are the ones who have become one with *Brahman*, which is extremely difficult to attain.

## MOUNTAIN PATH

99 *Arjava* [honesty], *dhriti* [steadfastness] and *daya* [compassion]

*Arjava* [honesty] is to view completely as all one: mother, father, son, daughter, wife, and evil enemies. *Dhriti* [steadfastness] is conviction in the way of the *Vedas*. *Daya* [compassion] is to have love like a mother [towards her children].

100 *Kshama* [patience]

If you want to conquer those who have done evil to you, always bear with them patiently without entertaining hatred. If you have to entertain hatred [towards something], kill that one thing 'anger'. He who can do it will be freed from all dangers.

103 *Tapas*

*Tapas* is curtailing one's food through vows and tormenting the body. But the *tapas* to end births is enquiring 'Who am I?' 'Through what did I get this birth?' 'What is the nature of liberation in which one becomes *Sivam*?'

*Verses 103 and 104 elaborate on two of the ten niyamas.*

104 *Santosham* [contentment]

Contentment is to be satisfied by acceptance of whatever one gets. But the *Vedas'* words say that contentment is the happiness of experiencing truly the Supreme in the heart, forsaking all the states that are spoken of, beginning with Brahma Loka.

117 Ridiculing *siddhis*

There will be trouble for those who contemplate the wealth of *siddhis*, beginning with *anima*. Without realising that *ashtanga* yoga is a step towards attaining *jnana*, they are crazy, like those who lift an iron wall, using [flimsy] sugarcane as a lever, and willingly gather bran.

*Anima, the first of the eight listed siddhis, is the ability to shrink oneself to a minute form.*

*Bran is the skin of the rice seed that is removed during milling. The combination of the two images in the final sentences indicates that an immense amount of pointless activity is invested in gaining siddhis that ultimately have little or no use.*

## 127 The six defects

Food and drink are the *prana's*. Happiness and misery are for the mind. The trouble of growing old and dying are for the body. If one [knows the truth, one] knows these are not for the Self.

## 137 The three attachments

All relationships that arise constitute attachment to offspring. All the *sankalpas* constitute attachment to the world. All the sense objects enjoyed constitute attachment to wealth. These three attachments will leave if one sees the reality.

148 *Tattvas*

If one knows the truth of the indestructible reality, then the rest of the various *tattvas* cease to exist. Then why are these mentioned and discussed? If people with defective vision see the moon as many, does it become many for that reason? Is not the cool moon one only?

159 The *mahavakya*

In the three words 'That you are' 'That' refers to *Brahman*, 'you' refers to *jiva*, the word 'are' refers to the union of *Brahman* and *jiva*, achieved through casting off the limitation, the body.

165 The difference between the *jiva* and the Iswara

In the body there are two, a knower and a witness, known as *jiva* and Iswara. The differences that can be ascribed as base and excellent qualities exist through limitations, but their *swarupa* is identical.

*The implication of the original Tamil, which is hard to convey in a literal translation, is that once the jiva comes into existence with a limited outlook, the opposite and complementary entity, Iswara, comes into existence with no limitation on it.*

## 167 Iswara

He is the cause of everything and the Lord of everything. He is the source, sustainer and destroyer of everything. He is none of these many things, but they cannot exist apart from him. He pervades within and without, and knows all.

168 *Jiva* and the Iswara are not different

If the limitations are destroyed, the *jiva* and Iswara are identical. Their limitations of base and excellent are only an appearance. It is like seeing the space within a pot and unlimited space as different. But look, consciousness is one only.

169 Cause of *maya*

If one seeks to know the fundamental cause of *maya*, which is not known [directly], it will be impossible to know it through consciousness. If you can know and tell me the cause of darkness with the help of a lamp, then you can know the cause of ignorance through consciousness.

171 The world

This world, a delusory dream, consisting of infinite differences, is seen as different from oneself, and as if real [in the sleep of *maya*]. When the sleep of *maya* ends, how can this world, which is destroyed in *jnana*, come into existence? Can there be dreaming after one wakes up from sleep?

172 The world

Despite fire existing within wood, it rots on earth, becoming a prey to white ants. This is similar to what happens in the absence of the shining of the Self. Will the miseries arising from the world exist if the Self, which is *jnana*, shines through [the grace of the] *Sadguru*? If fire is generated in wood, can the wood exist?

*The fire within the wood denotes the hidden power of the Self within each being. The 'shining of the Self', channelled through the form of the Sadguru, brings out the latent fire within the wood.*

173 The primacy of *jnana*

If the three paths *charya*, *kriya* and *yoga* do not become steps towards *jnana*, then they will become inferior states of liberation and be destroyed. To merge with the liberation that destroys identification with the body, there is no way other than the eye of *jnana*.

*The practices of charya, kriya and yoga are part of the Saiva Siddhanta tradition. Kriya is worshipping Siva inwardly and outwardly, charya is*

*rendering service in a temple and worshipping there, and yoga denotes inward meditation on Siva.*

174 The characteristic of *jnana*

*Jnana* is to know consciousness without the knowing that takes the form of knower, knowing and object of knowledge. This occurs when knowledge of the mind and the senses, which know through the various sense organs, have all subsided.

175 The greatness of *jnana*

The rare *Vedas* position karma, which tosses one about, at the bottom. But they wear *jnana* on their heads without any contradiction and confusion. Only they know the greatness of *jnana*. The rest do not.

176 *Jnana puja*

To bathe in the tears of bliss, to worship strewing beautiful flowers of love, offering oneself as consecrated food, to view all the *chit* and *jada* appearing before one as *Sivam* – this is the *puja* to Siva.

178 The power of *jnana*

Do all the innumerable *punyas* and *papas* that attach to one exist when the fire of *jnana* is kindled? Is there anything that remains unburnt along with ignorance? When a forest is caught in a fire, does any tender tree survive?

179 Slipping from yoga

If a *jnana sadhaka* happens to die midway [through his *sadhana*] without merging with the reality through yoga, he will not enter the evil worlds but will gain and experience all the fruits attained by those who have performed virtuous sacrifices. Thereafter, he will be born again and attain liberation through yoga.

181 The means for liberation

Karma performed without desiring its fruits, listening to [expositions of] *jnana* scriptures, *shanti*, and renunciation are the means to attain a Guru. He is the means to gain the hard-to-attain liberation.

182 The Guru's characteristic

O Lord! I am not any of those things beginning with the body, which is a prison, and ending with mind. The *Vedas* declared 'You are That!' But if you ask, 'What am I?', the Guru will declare, 'You are this. See!'

183 The greatness of the Guru

God remains in the heart concealing himself, but the Guru, dispelling ignorance, reveals God. Tell me, who is the liberal benefactor? Is it He who bears the formless form, or he who took the form of the Guru, so that that formless form might be seen?

184 Incompetent gurus

The office of guru performed by those who do not have knowledge of reality is like the following: achieving pregnancy through intercourse in a dream, trying to make a cloth from the hair of a sea-turtle, trying to light a fire with a firefly, trying to make a bow with the horn of a hare, and obtaining milk from a bull.

185 The mature disciple

He who has realised in his mind the impermanence of the body, he who feels like one caught in a raging fire, or like the frog in the mouth of an angry cobra – his heart is like the prey caught in the tiger's clasp.

186 The immature disciple

They do not have *tapas*, purity, truth and compassion. They do not worship the feet of the Guru. They do not believe in reality. They are eager to make money. Their thoughts are on enjoyments. It is not proper to bestow grace on these.

187 The immature disciple

The teaching which for some leads to clear attainment will for some others lead to perverse understanding. Though pure water is all the same, when the cow consumes it, she yields milk, but when the cobra consumes it, it yields poison. ▲

# Paduturai

TATTUVARAYA

*In the previous issue we published a sample of verses from Amrita Saram, one of Tattuaraya's works on Vedanta. In this third instalment of our series on Tattuaraya, we are publishing extracts from Paduturai, a work of his that includes poems on his teachings, praise of his Guru Sorupananda, and many expressions of his own enlightened state. The translations are by Robert Butler, T. V. Venkatasubramanian, and David Godman.*

## *Paduturai 29: Nenjirku Amaivurai [Advice to the heart on being still]*

1 Heart of mine! Hunger will be appeased even if one consumes unsalted, watery gruel. Thirst can be quenched by drinking water from wells, tanks and rivers. Supporting yourself in this way, be satisfied and be still. Even if you get up and rush around [looking for food], will the rewards be different or better than what is ordained for you?

2 Heart of mine! Even if the whole land is full of sumptuous food, consisting of rich curry, seasoned with many condiments, milk, ghee, fruits and rice – if your *prarabdha* does not permit you to eat

## MOUNTAIN PATH

them, either through illness or for other reasons, will it not speedily annul all those enjoyments for you?

3 Heart of mine! The six delicious flavours exist only in the tip of the tongue. Its extent is two finger breadths and no more. When you are not able to cross slowly this two-finger breadth, you will still go forth and cross the tumultuous ocean.

Note: 'When you are not able to cross slowly' means 'when you are not able to transcend or go beyond'. It is a common image in Tamil poetry that food is only attractive and appealing when it is in contact with this narrow zone on the tongue. Once it has been swallowed, processed by the body, and ejected either as vomit or excrement, it no longer holds any attraction.

4 Heart of mine! Greatly desiring a well turned-out appearance, you suffer a great deal, running around to earn wealth for that purpose. Even if you get it, though, don't you realise the trouble that will arise from washermen, rats, the need to find a safe place where they will not get stolen, and other such matters?

5 When cold weather comes there already exist ragged clothing, white ashes, mountain caves and many desolate temples [for shelter and warmth]. And in the sweltering heat of summer, even a loincloth is a burden. This alone is the function of clothes.

Note: *Sadhus use wood ash to keep themselves warm in winter.*

6 Heart of mine! Be yourself and remain still. By running about thinking [about your food], and then being disappointed at not getting [it], you have brought a lot of trouble upon yourself. People of the lowest kind will tire their legs for the sake of [appeasing] burning hunger. But will not those who are wise remain settled in stillness?

7 Mind of mine! Instead of remaining satisfied with what you get, wherever you get it, thinking it sufficient, you get up, not giving yourself the time to blink, and run around. Realise that this is the

seed of a poverty that can never be eradicated. It is also the veiling [that will appear in or cause] the next birth.

8 A cow will seek out the apparent [lushness of the] greenery on the opposing river bank, [preferring it] to the one it is on, and do this repeatedly. My heart, in much the same way, your reward for this [kind of] activity is only running about, wandering around and getting distressed.

9 The hallmark of greatness is to stand firm where one is, and face up to whatever comes one's way, is it not? Wretched and foolish heart, even if you go to the doors of those who are sweet like nectar, they will not extend their hospitality. Know that this is the nature of things. See [if it is not]!

10 Those who have understood the world have truly declared through their understanding that for the wise the body is an affliction. Even if you renounce all of the possessions you own and are associated with, having love for the unreal body, my heart, is getting deluded again.

11 When we examine the conviction of the wise – that what is not cannot be, and that what is, cannot fail to be – what need is there for this agitation, my heart? All happens as it is ordained to happen. [The wise] recognise the things that are destined for them.

12 When in this life the embodied *jiva* is perceived without error, then all will be as it has been ordained. This being so, my heart, why do you run every which way, traversing forests and oceans, suffering for the sake of your body? Tell me!

13 If you wish to know the means for remaining at peace, my heart, seek out the company of those great Self-realised ones who have tasted the sugarcane of *jnana*, which engenders forbearance, and [remaining] at their feet, carry out their commands in a single-minded manner.

## MOUNTAIN PATH

14 Even if you stand with your head on the ground and your feet in the air, nothing will happen that is not destined to happen. The best course, my heart, is to remain still, and be relaxed, viewing what comes to pass exactly as it is, without dashing about and tormenting yourself.

15 When there is good present in the virtuous, do not go to their presence and pay attention to negative things [you see] there. My heart, do everything as per the commands of the Guru and eschew evil ways. The way of truth is not other than this. Henceforth keep to it!

16 Mind of mine! It is not good for you to be distressed, imagining praise or abuse [towards yourself] in the words [of others]. Realising that these are just sounds coming from the windpipe through the medium of air, do not attach any great value [to them].

17 Those who lovingly praise the defective, unclean, fleshy body that generates filth through all its nine orifices, and which is therefore malodorous, are actually looked upon as abusers by those who are on the path to realisation. Those who revile them [those on the path] are regarded as friends.

18 Heart of mine! You neither feel love nor hatred for the effects arising from insentient causes such as air, fire, water, disease and many, many more. Therefore, regard the sentient causes also in the same way.

19 Do not exhibit friendship or animosity towards anyone. Taking the view that there is something to be learned from every situation, stand firm, taking care not to act contrary to the words of virtuous people of mature understanding. This is the path for you.

20 Contenting yourself with what you have, be not disheartened even over great calamities. Do not indulge in malicious talk about what

is good, and what is evil. Furthermore, do not speak idle words. My heart, seeing the perfect behaviour of the virtuous, conduct yourself without forgetting it.

21 Until the body, which is like an unreal dream or a mirage, comes to its end, adorn yourself with the holy feet of the Guru, holding on tightly with a melting heart. Without letting go, remain there singing his praises, my heart, in order that you may never be born again.

22 Melting through dwelling over and over again on the nature of the Guru who subjected you to his rule, entreating him intensely more and more for true love, adorn yourself solely with his feet and be still, my heart, constantly sipping the rare ambrosia of peace.

*Paduturai 33: Arudi Uraittal [Definitive Declarations]*

1 If this *samsara* does not end before giving up this body, we will again and again come, be born as a baby, suffer and die. See!

2 If you do not realise your true nature so that you can put an end to the evil of birth and death, this swinging on the golden swing, going back and forth, will not cease, ever! See!

3 If you do not extricate yourself from birth and death with full awareness by realising your true nature, ignorance will catch hold of you in this world and the next and torment you. See!

4 If you do not realise your true nature as it really is, giving up the idea that your body is your [true] form, the powerful birth will not end for you, even if [Lord Siva] appears before you with deer and battle axe. See!

5 If, in this birth, you do not realise the [the truth] of yourself and thereby become free of all future births, you will die, repeatedly

## MOUNTAIN PATH

assume a body and stand with [baby] anklets on your feet [again and again]. See!

6 If you do not subside and abide [as the Self], knowing that consciousness is your form, thereby freeing yourself from all suffering, *maya* will plunder you, turn you into a body and make you dance as a leather marionette. See!

7 If you do not recognise your Self, without saying ‘We will know [it] later,’ the devil of desire will unbalance you and trample you down. See!

8 Do not suffer extreme misery by placing your head under binding *sankalpas*. If you wear the feet of our Lord [the Guru] on your head, then you can abide [as the Self], saying, ‘What does it matter where the sun rises!’ See!

9 If, without seeking the feet of the Guru, placing them on your head, and realising your true nature, you take the body as ‘I’, hosts of relatives will gather and place fire on your head [on the day of your cremation]. See!

10 Those who do not accept this definitive declaration of truth will be like the beast and the devil. They will, alas, never cross the ocean of birth. I swear to this, never! ▲

*(To be continued)*

# Paduturai

TATTUVARAYA

*We now present part two of extracts from Paduturai, a work of Tattuvaraya that includes poems on his teachings, praise of his Guru Sorupananda, and many expressions of his own enlightened state. The translations are by Robert Butler, T. V. Venkatasubramanian, and David Godman.*

## *Paduturai 58: Sivaprakasa Kuruvai*

*When Manikkavachagar composed Tiruvachakam more than a thousand years ago, he used the motifs of children's games and women's pastimes to express the journey that the jiva must make towards union with Siva. Tattuvaraya adopted this literary form in many of the sections of Paduturai. However, in the four examples we are giving here, the theme is not a longing for union with the divine but a celebration of the definitive final state that is attained once that union has been consummated.*

*The 'Sivaprakasa' in the title is the Guru of Sorupananda. Kuruvai is the name of a dance, performed in a circle. It is also a shrill celebratory shout exclaimed by women on auspicious or festival occasions.*

## MOUNTAIN PATH

1 Singing of the nature of those feet that,  
though far beyond the *Vedas*' reach,  
came easily to wretched me,  
raise the cry called *kuravai*.

That all the world may know the greatness of the grace  
with which the Supreme Lord made me his,  
raise the cry called *kuravai*.

Singing of how he bestowed his glance of grace,  
so that in a trice births which grasp and cling were rooted out,  
raise the cry called *kuravai*.

Saying, 'All thought has perished,  
learning has been destroyed.  
*Jnana* itself became my eye,'  
raise the cry called *kuravai*.

2 Singing of the richness through which,  
with a single matchless word,  
he revealed the whole [truth],  
raise the cry called *kuravai*.

Singing of how in an instant  
he wiped out the bonds of births  
that endure for aeons of time,  
raise the cry called *kuravai*.

Singing of the nature whereby a unique clarity,  
impossible to describe,  
suffused my mind with sweetness and remained there,  
raise the cry called *kuravai*.

Singing of the perfect nature whereby he seeking came,  
thinking us poor wretches to be worthy,  
and bent us to his rule,  
raise the cry called *kuravai*.

3 Singing of the radiant feet that consumed  
 even that consciousness  
 which is the light that swallowed up the seven worlds,  
 raise the cry called *kuravai*.

Singing of the enduring state of him who is the deathless reality,  
 which has become form, formless,  
 and neither with or without form,  
 raise the cry called *kuravai*.

Singing of the goodly worth whereby he transformed my mind,  
 which trembled like the moon reflected in water,  
 into *Sivam*, his own nature,  
 raise the cry called *kuravai*.

Singing of how his *jnana* utterances and a smile  
 abolished the [so-called] wisdom of wretched me,  
 raise the cry called *kuravai*.

*Paduturai 59: Sri Sorupananda Swamigal Kunalai*

*Kunalai is either a dance accompanied by shouting or a warrior's shout of valour or defiance.*

1 Proclaiming how the reality that the *Vedas* speak of  
 came in human form, cry *kunalai!*

Telling how he placed upon my head his feet,  
 which even Vishnu in delusion [could not find], cry *kunalai!*

Telling how my mind, which heaved like the thundering ocean,  
 in an eye's blink was destroyed, cry *kunalai!*

Proclaiming how impossible it is to see [the mind],  
 except as the form of consciousness, cry *kunalai!*

2 Telling how the path we walk twixt birth and death  
 was blocked,  
 and grass grew thereupon, cry *kunalai!*

## MOUNTAIN PATH

Telling how, even while existing with this body,  
we dwelt in the state of liberation, cry *kunalai!*

Proclaiming how we dwelt as consciousness,  
free of forgetting and remembering, cry *kunalai!*

Proclaiming, 'We shall not forget the might of the Liberal One  
who granted us his grace,' cry *kunalai!*

3 Proclaiming, 'Even if we recite a *crore* of *srutis*,  
[bliss] will not be revealed,' cry *kunalai!*

Proclaiming, 'With a single word from Sorupananda,  
bliss will appear,' cry *kunalai!*

Proclaiming, 'We have seen with our own eyes the reality  
that cannot be conceived by mind,' cry *kunalai!*

Proclaiming, 'Seeing his fair and compassionate feet,  
we have beheld a vision of delight,' cry *kunalai!*

4 Proclaiming, 'We have freed ourselves from  
the agitating net of the scriptures,  
that come to us in the form of words,' cry *kunalai!*

Proclaiming, 'We have experienced delight  
in the blissful ocean of the Self,  
impossible to describe,' cry *kunalai!*

Proclaiming, 'We have forgotten the mind that values  
the filth-ridden body,' cry *kunalai!*

Proclaiming, 'We value the understanding which comes  
when [such a] mind is abolished,' cry *kunalai!*

5 Proclaiming, 'The flood of endless bliss abounds  
everywhere about us,' cry *kunalai!*

Proclaiming, 'The idea of "all" will not occur  
even though forgetfulness,' cry *kunalai!*

Ever asserting his [Sorupananda's] skill in saying  
'Remain still and see,' cry *kunalai!*

Continuously praising the one who granted  
that we should thus live and prosper, cry *kunalai!*

***Paduturai 60: Pakati***

*Pakati is a masquerade dance, or a dance performed around a pole.  
The 'he' mentioned in all the verses is Sorupananda.*

1 Saying, 'He is the destroyer of the sins that, never leaving,  
accompany us from age to age,'  
dance *pakati*.

Saying, 'He is the great mountain of compassion,  
who has raised his banner,  
vowing to bring me under his rule by revealing his feet,'  
dance *pakati*.

Saying, 'He is the Skilful One, who through his glance,  
contrived that I should perish, becoming his own Self,'  
dance *pakati*.

Saying, 'He is the hero who, despite pervading them,  
is not touched by the whole that consists of bodies,  
worlds and *jivas*, all combined,'  
dance *pakati*.

2 Saying, 'He is the Wise One, who slew religious rituals  
that rise in ten *crore* ways,' dance *pakati*.

Saying, 'He is the one who, for the four *Vedas*  
and the Three [*trimurti*],  
was impossible to reach,  
though they worshipped him with heads bowed low,'  
dance *pakati*.

## MOUNTAIN PATH

Saying, 'He is the One  
who came and subjected me forcibly to his rule,  
as I lived in deceit with arrogant pride as my support,'  
dance *pakati*.

Saying, 'He bestowed upon me his own nature,  
which no word can describe,  
as clearly as the gem in my palm,'  
dance *pakati*.

3 Saying, 'Beautifully did he transmute the sorrow  
that arises as the knower and the things known,'  
dance *pakati*.

Saying, 'Having revealed that the things  
that are known exist in [objectified] consciousness,  
he annihilated that consciousness in the knower,'  
dance *pakati*.

Saying, 'He gazed upon me so that the entities known as the senses,  
assumed to be different, were all abolished,'  
dance *pakati*.

Saying, 'We have become the incomparable light,  
the all-embracing fullness that knows no divisions,'  
dance *pakati*.

