and individual thinkers have been trying to explain the reality in rational categories from different perspectives. Māyā, the metaphysical concept of materiality, is an inevitable concept to be addressed in any philosophical system. Philosophizing could never take place in its absence; in a sense that it has either to be accepted or rejected as a reality in any system of thought. No wonder it is that in every philosophical system māyā is accounted for either in negative or in positive terms.

Summing up the discussion on the material reality in philosophical traditions we find the following theories proposed to account for the external world. Common-sense or direct realism holds that the physical world exists and is in no way dependent on our perception for its existence. Subjective idealism or phenomenalism holds the external reality is totally dependent upon the perceiver for its existence. For critical realists the physical world is partly dependent and partly independent on a perceiver for its existence. What is perceived is in some ways like and in some ways unlike what is really “out there”. There is both similarity and dissimilarity between the world as we perceive it and the world as it really is. Among many theories, direct realism stands out to be an appropriate view on the ontological status of the physical world. Tamil realism is closer to the conception of direct realism, characterized by common-sense. We would elaborately deal with it in the following chapter that serves as a sure foundation to build upon the concept of māyā in Tirumandiram.

CHAPTER 3

NATURAL WORLD IN CLASSICAL TAMIL TRADITION
The Classical Tamil literature remain a strong evidence for the Tamil tradition to be proud of both for its own linguistic excellence and for its conceptual frame of thinking. In a largely debated platform of Indian philosophy in general, the ancient Tamil tradition has scanty reference and even suffered a neglect in the academic discourse.\textsuperscript{339} The present chapter specifically assigned to deal with the concept of natural world in the Tamil tradition is devoted to address these concerns to somewhat adequately. Attempt is made to cull out from the extant classical Tamil literature, a ‘thought pattern,’ if we hesitate to call it a ‘system of thought,’ which is unique and specific to Tamil tradition. In its pristine purity without borrowing from any other Indian tradition – even though we cannot neglect the factor of ‘being influenced’ by the other traditions - ancient Tamil community developed a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the material world in which they were living. In the ancient and classical period, there are been many trends of thought. In the largely agricultural based Tamil society nature posed as a background for the philosophical tradition. The concept of nature becomes a specific thread of thought that characterizes something unique to the Tamil tradition.\textsuperscript{340} From such an understanding of the material reality we would be able to focus in the next chapter on the unique contribution of *Tirumandiram* on the concept of *māyā*.

3.1. **Nature in Classical Literature**

Eco critics says that environmental crisis is not because of somehow developed technology and archaic sciences, but actually by the state of mind

\textsuperscript{339} Often stated reasons are the following: Tamil tradition has not been known to have produced any specific ‘philosophical’ treatise; there is no evidence for any philosophical thinking as such in Tamil tradition; even if there are some stray philosophical injunctions they could well be integrated in the whole gamut of different classical Indian systems; there is nothing specific to Tamil tradition at all. These above mentioned statements are widely prevalent in any Indological study and in Indian philosophical discussions.

and metaphors, images of narratives and stories about nature. The contemporary cry for ecological balance calls for a ‘paradigm shift’ from the Western mechanistic world view of the nature where the human state of mind portrays one of superior, dominant, aggressive and controlling attitude, metaphors and images. It is evident that no effort on ecological crisis could be effective and progressive unless a paradigm shift of human thought pattern takes place. Human endeavors needs to set harmonious existence, symbiosis, and revered engagement with the universe as a goal of human existence. Looking for a holistic eco-centric world view, we search for alternative remedies with different state of mind, metaphors, images and stories of human relationship with nature. Classical literature, especially classical Tamil literature is rich in content in this regard.

3.1.1. Tracing Philosophy in Literature

Favouring classical literature for a philosophical enterprise of ascertaining the material reality needs a brief explanation and a strong justification. Philosophical engagement in the ‘non-philosophical’ texts, such as mere poetic literature may sound little odd for the ‘arm-chair’ abstract philosophical minds. Contemporary trends in philosophy, such as eco-philosophy, inter-cultural philosophy, socio-political philosophy, have shown that philosophy is not confined only to ‘abstract,’ ‘non-empirical,’ and ‘meta-physical’ discourses. Philosophy always engages itself with the concrete experiences of reality and expressed in and through a ‘real’ language in a particular culture and context. Literature in any culture or tradition is a textual

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evidence of such an engagement whether the philosophical terms are used or not.

Somewhat rigid and compartmentalized notions of philosophy have kept aside many a literature branded as ‘primitive,’ ‘non-rational,’ and ‘non-philosophical.’ Contemporary discourse on philosophy of Nature calls for revisiting and resuscitating of such indigenous traditions, hitherto, forgotten or less emphasized. It is indeed an attempt, daring and difficult, yet significant and rewarding. The heritage of classical literature is definitely very ancient, but not antiquated as it has a contemporary relevance. These ‘non-academic,’ and ‘non-philosophical’ literary texts are reservoirs of deep philosophical insights of reality and life. Genuine philosophizing as context-sensitive and creative is possible when we draw our attention to such texts.

For instance, the classical Tamil Tolkāppiyam which is the earliest existing Tamil grammatical text, is basically dealing with the grammatical aspects of Tamil language and literature. Any grammatical work is supposed to be a literature that explicitly puts forward the rules of language. It is certainly a work that exposes the current usages of the language in a various forms. None contends it to be a philosophical treatise. Yet we postulate that the text provides us with rare insights of the ancient Tamil intellectual tradition. Philosophical views can certainly be culled out of these kinds of literatures although a question arises whether a grammatical work could be relied upon for any philosophical discourse. “Since grammar is closely connected with the study of expressions of the people, it is reasonable to expect that some speculative expressions also should have found a place in this vast grammatical treatise.” In Tolkāppiyam, one can trace the philosophical insights

342 While arguing for literature as textual traditions for philosophical considerations, we too are aware that there are wide range of philosophical notions and expressions embedded in large number of ‘non-textual’ sources of a particular community, such as art, architect, songs, folk customs, dances etc. We decline to elaborate on this aspects in our present work.
343 S.N. Kandaswamy, Tamil Literature and Indian Philosophy (Chennai: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 2000), 276.
concerning logic and epistemology, metaphysical thoughts and ethics.\textsuperscript{344} Highlighting the salient features of the non-philosophical classics is with the purpose of looking for their relevance in the modern society. Surely, we benefit from the insights found in the ancient literature.

3.1.2. Nature in Tamil Classical Literature

Ancient Tamil Literature impresses people not so much by the bulk, range and variety of the works, as by richness of its content and the culture of the South India.\textsuperscript{345} While the early literature is a direct evidence of specific Tamil philosophy of life it is extremely rich in information about the thought pattern of the Tamils.\textsuperscript{346} A brief note on ancient Tamil thought on human-nature relationship expressed in poetic forms could reveal to us the philosophical notions about the reality of the external world.

The \textit{Tolkāppiyam}, \textit{Eṭṭutokai} and \textit{Pattupāṭṭu} are the fine products of the Tamilian intellect belonging to the \textit{caṅkam} period extended from 500 BCE to 300 CE. \textit{Tolkāppiyam} describes how Nature is framed as the background of human behaviour and emotions in poetry.\textsuperscript{347} In eight anthologies, \textit{Eṭṭutokai}, divided into \textit{Akam} and \textit{Puṟam}\textsuperscript{348} that deal with ‘interior’ and ‘exterior’ human experiences, Nature plays a vital role. They contain suggestiveness regarding nature, detailed description of Nature and an explicit avowal of the mutual


\textsuperscript{345} Xavier S. Thani Nayagam, \textit{Landscape and Poetry} (Chennai: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 1997), 1.


\textsuperscript{347} Nayagam, \textit{Landscape and Poetry}, 2-3.

\textsuperscript{348} \textit{Akam} deals with internal, personal and directly incommunicable human experience. \textit{Puṟam} is about all that does not come under this internal and interior experiences of humans. “In \textit{Puṟam} poetry, the study of Nature is mainly objective and consists in similes and metaphors, whereas in \textit{Akam} poetry Nature is the background and sympathetic stage for the emotional and aesthetic aspects of love.” Nayagam, \textit{Landscape and Poetry}, 5.
influence between Man and Nature. From the description of Nature in the poetry both akam and Puram we find that the environment definitely conditions human life and ideology.

In the Pattupāṭṭu (ten idylls) there are lengthy and picturesque descriptions of the Tamil country and its seasons. In each of the ten idylls there are passages relevant to the theme of Nature. In Puram poems, Nature has a place in the following four descriptions. Firstly, the poets describe the landscape and the beauty of the country while praising the king of the region or lamenting over the present condition of the country after the war. Many poems, about hundred of them, in Maturaikkāṇci by Māṅkuṭi Marutaṉar and in Paṭṭinappāḷai by Uruttiraṉkan have a similar setting of praising the landscape and its beauty before the destruction.

The second type of describing Nature is as in Āṛṛuppatāi poems. Āṛṛuppatāi forms of poems are a kind of guide-books and travelogues that

349 The ten idylls are: Ciṟupāṇāṛṛuppatāi by Nattattaṉar, Kurinccippāṭṭu by Kapilar, Malaiṟuṟukataṭam by Perukaučiṅkar, Maturaikkāṇci by Māṅkuṭi Marutaṉar, Mullippāṭṭu bty Nappūṭalār, Netunavāṭai by Nakkār, Paṭṭinappāḷai and Perumpāṇāṛṛuppatāi by Uruttiraṅkan, Porunarruppatāi by Muṭṭattamakcanṭiṉar and Tirumurkaruppattai by Nakkār. For details on these texts, refer; M. Shanmugam Pillai, Čaṅkat Tamiḻar Vāḻviyal – Philosophy of Life of Cankam Tamils (Tamil) (Chennai: International institute of Tamil Studies, 1997), 7-19.


351 “<nad ,ujjNyh mhpNj eP mJ ey;fpDk; ey;fh ahapDk; nty; NghH vwpgilf;F Xh Mz;ik mWitj; Jtphp flG;gj; Jtd;wp kPkipj; jz;gy ,opjUk; mUtpedp; nfHz;ngUq; fhdk; ghlnydf; nfspNj – īēna iratatalō arite ni atu nalkinum nalkā vāyinum velpōr eripadaiku ōdā āṁma aruvait tāviri kāṭuppai tuvani mīncait tāppala āḷitarum aruvinin kopperuñ kānām pādaññam keḷite ” Puram – 154. Here the poet says that it is easy for him to praise the beauty of the king’s country than to ask him directly for some boon. “njhWj;j tay;Muy; gpwo;eTk;> VW nghUjnWr cohJ tpj;JeTk; fUk;gpd; ghj;jpg; G+j;j neajj;j> ,Uq;fz; vWkipd; epiuJLf; FeTk;> fynfO Jzq;if Mba kUq;fspd;> tişiy %jįh Mk;gy; MHeTk;> xypnįq;fpd; ,kpo;kJupd; Gdy;thapw; G+k;ngha;ifg; ghly; rhd;w gq;nfO itg;gpd; ehL – toruta vayalāral pirāḷñavum, ēru purutečur vulātu vittunavum karuppin pāṭtip pūṭta neitai, irukkaṅ erumaiyin niraṭṭuk kunavum, kalikekku Ṭuṇṇakkai āṭiyā maruṅkiṅ, vaḷaiṭalai mūṭā āṁpāl āṛnāvum, olitenkī inimaiṟuṭin pūnvalvīr pūmpoikaip pāṭal cānār painkēlø vaipin nādu” Patirrumpattu -13. The poet describes the fertile landscape before invaded and destroyed by the enemy.

adopt a more credible and realistic device than other *caṅkam* poems.\(^{353}\) They are intended not only to praise the kings and the beauty of their country, but also to guide poets who are desperately in need to approach these kings.\(^{354}\) “The Āṛṛruppaṭai is of a piece with Tamil realism and describes the journey as experienced by a human traveler, and that on *terra firma.*”\(^{355}\)

Thirdly, in poems of *Paripāṭal*, description of Nature is clearly the natural environment of the local gods, namely, *Tirumāl* and *Murugan*.\(^{356}\) Nature is said to be playing a different role here, so varied from the other *akam* as arousing human-divine relational aspects.\(^{357}\) Fourthly, natural objects are used just for making allegories and similes and merely as poetical expressions.\(^{358}\)

Interestingly, as noted by Mu. Varatharasan, although Tamils have given so great a place for Nature in the literature, there is no mention of a term ‘iyarkai,’ or any equivalent term.\(^{359}\) The interpretation of such non-mention of a particular term for Nature is rendered as Tamils gave a non-exclusive treatment for Nature that they do not consider nature as something different from them. They have been infused with it that they regarded it as part of human nature. It also goes to an understanding that feelings of human hearts

\(^{353}\) “$j;jUk; ghzUk; nghUeUk; tpwypAk;> Mw;wpilf; fhl;rp cwoj; Njhd;wpg; ngw;w ngUtstk; ngwhmHF;F mwpTwP;r;> nrd;W gandjpur; nrhd;d gf;fk; - kūtarum pāṉarum porumarum viraliyum āṛṛtāik kātcī uraḷat tōnṛp pēṭra peruvaḷam pēṟārkku arvṛtīc, cenṟu payanetirac conṇa pakkam. ” Tol. Porul. 9.

\(^{354}\) In *Tirumurgāṛṛruppaṭai* which is a poem on the god, Murukan, the descriptions of the natural beauty of the place is given to glorify the god as his immanent presence is in the Nature, and to declare that natural flowers, trees and animals are sacred to Him. Minute and interesting descriptions of the hill country, of the dawn and the setting in of evening, and of the close life of the people with Nature, occur in *Malaiṇpukatakam* and Kapilar’s famous *Kuriṅcippaitu*. Few passages in *Netumalvaitai* portray the interplay of human emotions and sentiments, with that of North Wind and its effects.


\(^{356}\) *Paripāṭal* – 8, 9, 14-20.


\(^{358}\) *Puram* – 65, 155.

and the beauty of nature are so intertwined that Tamils have forgotten that there is something out there. For instance, in a poem of Kuruntokai, the deep longing of a person in love is made to coincide with sound of the misty mountains and the sound of the peacock. “The influence of Nature as obtained in the Tamil land on poetry was final and far-reaching and very decisive. Tamil poetry bears in nearly every page the imprint of the land and the landscape in which it has been created.” Viewed as a whole, this literature helps us reconstruct the thought pattern of the Tamils and in deciphering the history of philosophy in the Tamil country.

3.2. Nature in Human Life

Unearthing the philosophical dynamics in the social life of the Tamils, expressed in caṅkam literature reveals the refreshing insight of Tamil classical life style and thought pattern that would enable one to get involved in realistic living in the contemporary era. The caṅkam literature ever remains a written source or a social document. It contains a detailed description of nature and an explicit avowal of the mutual influence between human and nature. The appreciation of nature arose not just out of interest to be associated with human events but to be viewed as the seeding ground for human emotion and action to emerge. The caṅkam literature proclaimed a fact that the environment definitely conditions human life. Tolkāppiyam describes how nature is framed as the background of human behaviour and emotions in poetry. In the

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360 Mu, Varatharasan, Paḷaṇṭamīl Llakiyatl Illyarkai – Nature in Ancient Tamil Literature, 21.
361 ‘‘dkapy; mfTk; kuk;gapy; fhdj;J> eiulKf Cfck; ghHg;ngH;gdpg;gg;> glkio nghope;j rhuy; mtHehl;Lf; Fd;wk; Nehf;fpndd; Nhjop> gz;il aw;Nwh fz;brpd; EjNy – inamayil akaum marampayil kānatu, naraimuka ūkam pārpōṭu panikkap, paṭumaḷai pōlinta sāral avarnāṭuk kunram nōkkinen toli, paṇṭai yaṛṛō kaṇṭicin” Kuruntokai- 249.
362 Nayagam, Landscape and Poetry, 38.
365 For instance, the emotional experience of people is termed as uriporul in caṅkam literature. Tolkāppiyam equates this with nature. “GzHjy; ghpjy; ,Ujjy; ,uq;fy;> Cly; ,tw;wpd; epkpj;jk; vd;wpit> Njuq; fhiyj; jpirzF chpq; nghUNs - pugartaal pirital uruttal,
pattu pāṭṭu (ten idylls) there are lengthy and picturesque descriptions of the Tamil country and its seasons. In each of the ten idylls there are passages relevant to the theme of nature.

In eight anthologies, ettutokai, that deals with human experiences, Nature plays a vital role. In akam songs there is much of sympathetic interpretation of Nature. Nature is brought into relationship with man in response to human conduct and aspirations or provoking human emotions. For instance, in Kuruntokai, the mulai region is depicted to show the rainy season where the birds sing and flowers blossom creating a situation of gladness and cheerfulness. The master of the house returns back home after work abroad, bringing the same joyfulness to the family. The human feelings of joy and happiness after a long awaiting for the arrival of a person (uripporuḷ) is mixed with the situation created by the karupporuḷ (natural ambience) and mutalporuḷ (rainy season and mulai region). The pūṟam poems like Puranānuṟu and Patirṟuppattu there is not much elements of the interpretation of Nature as there is in akam poems like Ainkurumuru, Kuruntokai, Naṟṟinai

ūṭal ivaṛin nimitam enṟivai, tēruṇ kālait tiṇaiku urip porulē.” – Tol. Porul. 14. It is worthwhile mentioning here that Tolkāppiyar considers idamum kālamum (place and time) are mutal porul (primary). “Kiy;vdg; GltJ epyk;ngHOJ ,uz;bd;> ;ay;ngd nkhopg ;ay; GzhHe;NjhNu – mutalenaṇ paṭuvatu nilam poḷuṭu iraṇṭin italpenu molipa iyal pugantarō” Tol. Porul. 4. Karupporuḷ are that which creates the ambience. “nja;tk; czhNt kkhuk; Gs;Giw> nra;jp ahopd; gFjpnahL njhf;> mt;tif gpwTk; fUvd nkhopg – teivam uṭavē māmaram pūḷuṟu, ceiti yaṭin pakutiṭo tokaiyi, avakai pīṟavum kaṟuṇa molipa” Tol. Porul. 18. For detailed treatment on mutalporuḷ, karupporuḷ and uripporuḷ refer: Mu. Varatharasan, Paḷāntamiḷ Llakiyatil Iyarkai – Nature in Ancient Tamil Literature (in Tamil), 2nd ed. (Chennai: Pari Nilayam, 2006), 23-25. 366 The eight texts are Ainkurumuru, Kuruntokai, Naṟṟinai, Patirṟuppattu, Paripāṭal, Kalitokai, Akanānuṟu and Puranānuṟu. Refer for the detailed history and number of poems, M. Shanmugam Pillai, Caṅkat Tamiḻar Vāḷiyāl – Philosophy of Life of Caṅkam Tamils, 20-38. 367 Nayagam, Landscape and Poetry, 5. 368 "tZ;LjhJ Cjj; Nju njtpl;lj;> jz;fko; Gwtpd; Ky;iy kyu;> ;d;Gwj; jd;W nghONj> epd;Fwp tha;jjdk; jPHdpg; glNu - vaṇṭūṭatu ūṭat tērai teviṭṭat, taṣkamaḷ pravīn mulai malara, inpurat taṇṭu poḷute, ninkuri vaṭāntan tīrka inip poṭarē” Kuruntokai – 494. 369 There is a scholarly discussion on which is given importance, mutalporuḷ, karupporuḷ or uripporuḷ. Refer: Mu. Varatharasan, Paḷāntamiḷ Llakiyatil Iyarkai – Nature in Ancient Tamil Literature, 24-25. In our research we are concerned about how these remain interrelated and mutually influence each other. That the Nature plays a vital role in arousing human feelings and emotions is largely evident in all these discussions.
and Akanānuṛu. Yet they have an abundance of similies and metaphors regarding Nature. These cannot be just brushed aside as mere poetic interpretation of Nature. As it is said by Mu. Varatharasan, more than the puṟam songs akam poems have deliberately shown the truth that Nature by its power can not only attract human life but also change it as well. “Though human emotions form the primary subject of these anthologies, it is the human emotions of a people who lived in intimate relationship and communion with Nature.”

In Paripāṭal, a devotional ode to Murukan and Tirumaal, praises the natural scenery of their shrines surrounded by natural loveliness, where the river takes its origin. The poems affirm human affection for the river that confers beauty, fertility and prosperity to the city and the kingdom of Madurai. The various description of natural objects and creatures by the poets reveal to us the involvement of them in the nature and the subtle knowledge of nature they possessed.

The physical texture of the south Indian landscape provided various types of poetry, conceptions and cultures within the south. The ancient Tamils had conception of the world as ‘nāṇilam,’ compising of four types of lands. As in Tolkāppiyam, the landscape is divided into only four, namely

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370 Nayagam, Landscape and Poetry, 5-6.
372 Nayagam, Landscape and Poetry, 7.
373 Ibid., 6.
374 M. Shanmugam Pillai, Caṅkat Tamīḷar Vāḻviyal – Philosophy of Life of Cankam Tamils, 220.
375 Tolkāppiyam enumerates the names and characteristics of each landscape and its impact on human conduct, feeling and thought pattern. Refer for instance the following hymns. “…FwpQ;rp $jph; ahkk; vd;kdhH GytH… fhUk; khiyAk; Ky;iy” Tol. Porul. 6; “itFW tpbay; kUjk;…vw;ghL nea;j yhjy; nka;ngwj; Njhd;Wk;” Tol. Porul. 8; “eLTepiyj; jipizNa ez;gfy; NtdpnyhL KbTepiy kUq;fpd; Kd;dpj newpj;Nj. gpd;gdp jhDk; chpj;nd njhopg.” Tol. Porul. 9-10.
376 M. Shanmugam Pillai, Caṅkat Tamīḷar Vāḻviyal – Philosophy of Life of Cankam Tamils, 212.
kuṟiñci, mullai, marutam and neital. The fifth one, pālai, is only the derivative of kuṟiñci and mullai. The abundant variety in the landscape provided the Tamil thinkers the natural prospect of a view with all its divergence and richness. Kuriñci is the name given to the landscape with mountaineous terrain. Whole of Tamil country has mountains, tall or short, with different names and varieties. Some are with mere rocky stones heaped up. Some are described as having some plants and trees in the rocky cliffs and few with greeny covered all over the mountains. Caṅkam pictures all of them with their beauty and names many of them. Entire view of the mountains with the plains down is well portrayed in many poems. E specially in Pattupāṭṭu and Malaiṭaṭukāṭāṁ the picture of kuriñci are note worthy.

Mullai region which is of forest terrain is portayed with romanticism during rainy season and evening hours. The region is full of trees and flowers. The land is full of creatures, big and small.

377 “...Ky;iy FwpQ;rp kUjk; nea;jy;vdr; nrhy;ypa Kiwahy; nrhy;yTk; gLÑk – mullai kuṟiñci marutam neitalenac coliy muraiyāl colavum paṭumē.” Tol. Poruḷ. 5.
378 Later in one of the five great epics, aimpeṛuṃkāppiyam, namely, Cilappatiṅkāram, its author Ilāṅkōvatikal speaks of it. “Ky;iyAk; FwpQ;rpAk; Kiwikapd; jhppe;J> ey;ypay;G,oe;J eLq;FJaH cWj;Jg;> ghly vd;gNjhH gbtk; nhś;Sk; - mullaiyum kuṟiñciyum muṇaiyin tirintu, nalliyalpu iḻantu naṭuṇtuyar uruttup, pālai espatōr paṭivam koḷḷum.” Cilappatkāram, kāṭukāṉ. 64-66.
379 For further details, refer: K. Ramamurthi, “Some aspects of the Regional Geography of Tamil Naad,” Indian Geographical Journal, Vol.XXIII, No.2 ff; K.M. Panikkar, Geographical Factors in Indian History (Bombay: n.p., 1955), 24. “It has been also observed, for instance, that monotheism is characteristic of religions which have originated in the desert, and polytheism of cults where Nature is diversified and luxuriant.” Nayagam, Landscape and Poetry, 10.
380 Different mountains like Imayam (Puram - 2), Kolli (Puram - 152), Mullūr (Puram - 126), Potiyil (Puram - 128), Venkatam (Puram – 389), Parṅkunṭram (Paripāṭal – 14:1-17).
381 White clouds hovering over the green mountains as it portrayed in “fiotphpe;J vOjU kiojto; neLq;NfhL - kaḷaiirintu eḻaturu maḷaiṭavai netūŋkōṭu” Patiṛṛupattu – 78. “MLkio jtOK; NfhLāH neLtiu - ṧuṭumalai tavaḷum koṭuyar netuvaḷai” Naṟrīnai – 385. “kiof;fzk; Nrf;Fk; khdy - maḷaikaṇṭəm cēkkum māmaḷai” Puram – 131. “nhfz;ly; mtiug; G+tpd; md;d> ntz;jy jhkkio ḏb;i> Nṛḥd;wy; Mdh... kzpneLq;Fd;W - koṇṭal avaraip pāvin avaḍa, veṇṭalai māmaḷai cūṭt tōṅraḷ āṛā... maṇiṇeṇuṅkuṟu” Ainkuruntūṟi - 209. There are poems picturing the water falls down the hills, for example as in “kiyePH ntd;now nfhbapd; Nṛḥd;Wk; - maḷaṅṅir veṇeṇu koṇṭiṅ koṭṟum” Malaiṭaṭukāṭāṁ – 582.
382 As rainy season and evening hours are specific to mullai poems as their perumpoḷu and ciṟupoḷuṭu.
383 “nnwpaṇiyf; fhah mQ;rdk; kyu - ceṇṟilai kāyā aṅcaṇam malara” Mulaipāṭṭu – 93.
cultivated area with lots of vegetations and food crops. The land is full of domestic animals, water channels with fishes and trees with flowers and fruits.  

Neital is the coastal region. As Tamil country is surrounded by sea in all three sides, there are many poems dedicated to this land. The caṅkam poets like Amūvanār, Culōcanār and Nalantuvanār, sing about the coastal land, its birds, trees and plants. There are references about the sea shores and the ports. 

Eventhough there is no specific landscape as pālai, caṅkam literature has many poems sung in this. As we have seen already, kuriñci and mullai turn to be pālai in dearth of rain and prosperity. In pālai heat of the sun is unbearable and the hills are devoid of charm and greenery. Wind is heavy and hot which dries up the branches and the leaves of the trees. Pluralistic conception of reality in Tamil tradition has its foundation in such an interaction of nature and human mind. “There is in Tamil love poetry much of the sympathetic interpretation of nature whereby Nature is brought into relationship with man, furnishing lessons and analogies to human conduct and

384 Frogs, deer, cows and elephants are found all over mullai region. “gLkio nghope;j gakpF Gwtpd; neLePH mty gFtha;j; Njiu - paṭumalai poḷiṇa payamico puraviṇ neṭunir avala pakuvait tērai” Akam – 154. “jhpkUg;G ,uiy njs;swy; gUfpf; - tirinaruppu irable tēḷaral paruki” Akam – 154. “fd;WgapH Fuy kd;Wepiñ FjUk; khiy - kaṇṭypayar kurala maṇṭru nirai kutarum mālai” Akam – 14.

385 “JiwkPd; toq;Fk; ngUePHg; ngha;if> mhpkyH Mk;gy; Nka;e;j newpkUg;G> <He;jz; vUikr; Rty;gL KJNgj;j Ji;j> Jjq;FNRw;W ms;sy; JQ;rp; nghOJglg; ig;e;epz thumy; Fiwag; ngaHje;J> FUCf;nhbg; gfd;iw #b KJHg;j> NghHnrwp ks;shpd; GFJUk; - tuṟaimiṇi vaiṅkum perunip poikai, arimalar āmpal meintu nērimaruppu, irinṭu erēmaic cāvalaṅṭu mutupōṭṭṭi, tūṅkuṭēṛu allal tūncip poḻutupatai paimiṇa varāḍu kuṟai peyantu, kuṟuvukkotip paṭṭrai cūṭi mutūṟu, pōrceri māḷarir pukutarum.” Akam – 316.

386 “guh miug; Gd;id thq;Frpidj; NjhAk;> fhdyk; ngUe;Jiw – parā araip puṁai vāṅkam, palvēṛu iḷitarum paṇṭāru” Akam – 270.

387 “thypij nLj;j tspjU tq;fk;> gy;NtW gz;lk; ,opijUk; gI;bdj;j - vāḷitai yeṭutu vaṭṭuṭu vaiṅkam, pāḷveṇu pāṭum iḷitarum paṇṭātu” Māṭurāṅkañci – 536-537.

388 “mj;jk; tha;fjpH flfpa ftpd; mop gpwq;fy;j> Nta;fz; clie;j rpika;> tha;gL kuq;fpd kiy – attam kāṭikatı kāṭukiyā kavinaṭṭa praṅkaḷ, vēikaṇ utaṇita cinaia, vaikaṭu karukaṅṭa malai.” Akam – 399. “igiw ntk;gpa hΟH mj;jk; - paitāra vemyipā pāḷcer attam.” Akam – 371.

389 “ePLrpip tpwa Mf xy;nyd> thLgy; mty;iy Nfhifl;F xa;Ak; - niṭucniāi vaṛiya āka olleṇa, vāṭupal akal ilai kōṭaikkku oṭum.” Akam – 143.
human aspirations, and expressing itself in sympathy with or in antagonism to the lives of men.”

The classical Tamil literature nature is portrayed as directly involving in the life of the humans and influencing the human living and thought patterns. All the descriptions of Nature and its surroundings in both akam and puram poems deliberately speak of the intertwining of human life with that of nature. All these external aspects of Nature are very much reflected as the internal human aspects. The external material world, according to classical Tamil tradition, participates in the world of humans.

3.3. Conception of Material Reality

Sincere search, unquenched yearning and systematic thinking unravel the mysteries of the universe and enable one come closer to the truth. Tamils have been from the time immemorial, people with simplicity of life, subtlety in their thinking and living in harmony with the nature. Tamil tradition has recorded evidences for its thinking at least from BCE 600. Much noted character in them has been their practical sense of living. They are very close to nature with their simple and realistic descriptions of natural world. Philosophy of Tamils is concrete and intimately connected with the nature. Tamil philosophy of life from the caṅkam period onwards has been down to earth in its rational approach to nature and world. The classical caṅkam literature as a direct evidence of specific Tamil philosophy of life is extremely rich in information about the thought pattern of the Tamils regarding material

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390 Nayagam, Landscape and Poetry, 5.
392 Mu. Varatharasan, Paḻantamil Llakiyatil Iyarkai – Nature in Ancient Tamil Literature (in Tamil), 2nd ed. (Chennai: Pari Nilayam, 2006), 45. Further, Varatharasan argues in the pages 45-52, that in classical Tamil literature human life is centric where the description of the nature serves only as a background and setting. Nature takes only the secondary position in the literature. Humanistic aspects emerge prominently in them.
reality. The poetic expressions are echoes of interaction of nature and humanity that formed a way of thinking and living.\footnote{V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *Studies in Tamil Literature and History*, p.273, as cited in Mu. Varatharasan, *Paḷantamil Llakiyatiḻiyarkai – Nature in Ancient Tamil Literature*, 26.} Deeper study, even a casual reading, of the classical Tamil literature illustrates classical Tamil thought on human-nature relationship expressed in poetic forms of caṅkam literature, revealing the Tamil philosophical notions about the reality of the external world.

### 3.3.1. Naturalism

From the beginning of human history nature played a vital role in the life of community by creating the ambience for the human beings to live and to think. Many ancient civilizations have records of human beings frightened and threatened by the natural powers which are beyond human control to comprehend. Fear and anxiety over the natural forces have led the human beings to consider them as ‘supra-human’ gods to be worshiped. The ‘horrifying’ Nature is said to be the major contributor for the origin and emergence of most of the religious rituals and customs of the panic stricken primitive human society. Later with the persevering efforts of humans in unraveling the mystery of Nature have been instrumental in better comprehension of Nature and its powers. The untiring endeavours in grasping the powers of Nature have resulted in various conceptual assertions about nature in different traditions.

Interestingly, classical Tamil literature has recorded the ancient Tamils’ approach to Nature slightly different from many of world’s cultures. More than the ‘fear-factor,’ it has been the ‘wonder-at’ attitude of the Tamils that aroused human curiosity to know Nature.\footnote{Arunan, *Tamiḻarin Tattuva Marapu – Philosophical Tradition of Tamils* (in Tamil) (Madurai: Vasantham Publishers, 2004), 7.} Evidently ancient Tamil tradition has focused its attention more specifically on both aesthetical and rational aspects of human understanding of Nature than on ending up in ritualistic and religious
rendering of natural powers. The influence of Nature on Tamils thought pattern is very decisive and far-reaching.\(^{396}\) Naturalism and romanticism are the two great thought pattern that pervades the entire classical Tamil literature.\(^{397}\) These two witness to Tamil thinking as ‘nature-dependent’.\(^{398}\)

Tamils had a unique feature of Naturalism.\(^{399}\) \textit{Bhuātavāda} is the result of it. Tolkāppiyar mentions about it while speaking on ‘piṟappiṇ ākam’ from the air, the sound is produced and then it gave rise to letters.\(^{400}\) Tamil philosophical journey started with ‘from external to internal’ in the ancient period. In \textit{Tolkāppiyam}, \textit{Puranānnūru}, \textit{Akannānūru}, \textit{Pattupāṭṭu} food was collected by hunting, pastural, coastal and agrarian societies.\(^{401}\) \textit{Kula teivam} (gods of the clan) and \textit{nila theivam} (gods of the land) were there. \textit{Nila theivam} is to be understood against the background of emergence of the \textit{bhutavāda} which created a unison thought about the life of people with Nature.\(^{402}\)

### 3.3.2. Nature of World

Speaking of the nature of the world classical Tamil literature calls the world with the name, \textit{nānilam}, consisting of four types of landscape, of which we have already dealt on the foregone paragraphs. While describing the nature

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\(^{396}\) Nayagam, \textit{Landscape and Poetry}, 38.


\(^{398}\) Arunan, \textit{Tamiḻarin Tattuva Marapu – Philosophical Tradition of Tamils}, 12.

\(^{399}\) Tamil thought pattern is not a systematized due to various reasons of sticking on to living with nature. Naturalism still not so systematized in the classical period. KR. Arumugam understands that Tirumūḷar comes as the first one to make sure of systematization where there is Agamic and Vedic traditions are synthesized. Agamic has naturalism as its base.

\(^{400}\) K. Muppaalmani, \textit{Tamiḻaka Tattuva Cintaṇai Marapukal – Philosophical Thought Tradition of Tamil Country}, iv.


\(^{402}\) K. Muppaalmani, \textit{Tamiḻaka Tattuva Cintaṇai Marapukal – Philosophical Thought Tradition of Tamil Country}, 2. Patience of the earth, vastness of sky, strength of air, destructive power of fire and gracefulness of water, all of them are also qualities of human person, as mentioned in \textit{puram}, 2. \textit{Akam} 139 says about \textit{ũpy; neQ;R Elq;fpaJ} – what is outside is inside. Tolkāppiyam mentioned about world constitutive of five elements. (\textit{Tol, ku. marpiyal} 91.). letters are born out of sounds that are made up of sound atoms which are born from air. (\textit{Tol, gpw}, 1)
of each landscape they have not treated them as separated from each other. There are poems where entire world is viewed as one entity, termed as nilaulakam, ulakam, maṇṇakam, vaiyakam, vaiyam etc.\footnote{403}

It is not the utilitarian appreciation of nature that is expressed in various caṅkam literature. What interested the Tamils in the Natural world is not centered on the utility but the sublimity and beauty of the universe. It is not the bare appearances of the nature that is studied but its holistic beauty. Tamils enter deeper into the secrets of nature and examine nature’s relationship with man.\footnote{404} Love for nature emerges from their life which is in touch with nature and feeling intimate with it. The poetic expressions are echoes of interaction of Nature and humanity that formed a way of thinking and living.\footnote{405} Life of Tamils both in internal and external life activities, akam and puram, is so interlinked that their thought pattern is concerned with life here and now. Philosophy of Tamils is concrete and intimately connected with the nature.\footnote{406}

The world is not an abstract entity, but a concrete tangible expression of nature. For the Tamils, physical world is true, real and existing.\footnote{407} The universe is the amalgamation of five gross elements, earth, water, fire, air and ether.\footnote{408} “Though the products are ephemeral, the primordial matter is considered to be a reality.”\footnote{409} The physical world is constituted of the five elements, which contains within it the seeds of decomposition. The world is of a composite structure and there is a possibility of it being reduced to its constituent parts later. Hence there one finds that the world is impermanent, termed as kaṇci.

\footnote{403} “GyTf;fly; cl;j; thdk; #ba kyHjjiy cyfk; - pulvukatal uṭuta vāṇam cūṭiya malartalai ulakam” Perumpagāṛṟṇaṭai – 409-410. “epyTf;fly; tiug;gpd; kz;zfk; - nilavukatal varippu maṇṇakam” Puram – 3. “thpePH itafk; - varinīr vaiyakam” Naṟṟinai – 130. “gLjiu itak; - paṭtitrai vaiyam” Tol. Porul. 2.
\footnote{404} M. Shanmugam Pillai, Cāṅkat Tamiḻar Vāḷviyal – Philosophy of Life of Cankam Tamils, 41.
\footnote{405} Nayagam, Landscape and Poetry, 22-25.
\footnote{406} Arunan, Tamiḻarin Tattuva Marapu – Philosophical Tradition of Tamils, 11.
\footnote{407} Ibid., 17-18.
\footnote{408} Tol. Porul. 635.
\footnote{409} S.N.Kandaswamy, Tamil literature and Indian Philosophy, 284
Impermanence is attributed to all the things, father, mother, youthfulness, wealth, body, all under the term, *kañci*.\textsuperscript{410} “It is purely a Tamilian concept to name the various kinds of impermanence as *kañci* which educates one to realize the folly of mundane life and to march on the path of eternal bliss.”\textsuperscript{411} In the introductory portion of the commentary on the chapter on transience, Parimēlałakar, elucidates the theory of impermanence to show how Tiruvalḷuvar deals with the evanescent nature of the worldly objects to remind people to adopt virtuous life.\textsuperscript{412} The reminder of the short-lived nature of youthfulness and body, is not to degrade them and hold them as unreal or illusory or appearance.\textsuperscript{413} The purpose of such declaration is to speed up the actions required for the fulfilment of earthly perfection. Ancient Tamils have accepted birth and death as natural and true. They have never dismissed them as illusory.\textsuperscript{414}

During the epoch of didactic literature or ethical works, *Tirukkural* occupies a supreme place.\textsuperscript{415} Tiruvalḷuvar makes agriculture the main stay of the world.\textsuperscript{416} He uses expressions such as *nilam* (land), *mānilam* (great land), *ulakam* (world), *ńālam* (earth) and *vaiyam* (universe) for referring to the physical world inhabited by community.\textsuperscript{417}

\textsuperscript{410} Tol. Porul. 75,77.
\textsuperscript{411} S.N.Kandasamy, *Tamil literature and Indian Philosophy*, 287.
\textsuperscript{412} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{413} Nirmal Selvamony, *Persona in Tolkāppiyam* (Chennai: International Institute of Tamil Studies, 1998), 25.
\textsuperscript{414} Arunan, *Tamiḻarin Tattuva Marapu – Philosophical Tradition of Tamils*, 16.
\textsuperscript{415} Tirukkural is the monumental masterpiece composed by Tiruvalluvar (about 50 CE) dealing with *aram* (righteousness), *porul* (wealth) and *inpan* (love) in 133 chapters each of which consisting of 10 couplets, known for their brevity and potentiality of expression, laden with profound thoughts and ideals of practical living. S.N. Kandaswamy, *Tamil literature and Indian Philosophy*, 12.
\textsuperscript{417} S.N. Kandaswamy, *Tamil literature and Indian Philosophy*, 25-26.
The philosophical tradition of ancient Tamils has been pragmatic existential philosophy. Earthly life with body is for the sake of enjoying the fruits of previous *karmas* and to work out one’s own liberation. The bodies, material aspects of the world are thus necessitated so as to make the soul reach its destiny of attaining perfection.

### 3.3.3. Uyir-Mey: Soul-Body Relations

According to *Tolkāppiyar*, the world of nature is divided into word and substance or categories. The natural objects are classified as *uyir, mei, uyir-mei*. There are rational beings, the dead and inert. (*Uyartinai enmanār makkat cutte, agrinai enmanār avarāla pirave*). The time, world, soul, body, God, action, elements, sun, moon and the word are included in the substance (*poru*).

Differentiation between soul and matter is a significant metaphysical principle in many systems of Indian philosophy. The *Tolkāppiyam* upholds the reality of both soul and matter. In the following phrases ‘*uyire utampe,*’ ‘*ceṇṭa uyirin niṇra yākkai*’ ‘*ṭampum uyirum vāṭiyak kaṇṇum,*’ we find both soul and matter are mentioned as separate categories. Consciousness is the one, which differentiates soul from matter. The soul is endowed with consciousness whereas the matter is insentient.

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419 S.N. Kandasamy, *Tamil literature and Indian Philosophy*, 287
420 Nirmal Selvamony, *Persona in Tolkāppiyam*, 124
422 *Tolkāppiyam*(Tol.). *Porulathikāram (Porul.).* 71, 200, *Collathikāram (Col.).* 57.
423 In the understanding of Cenavaraiyar, the conscious soul and insentient soul are treated indiscriminately in some of the usages. “*aram ceytu turakkam pukkan – Having performed virtues, he entered heaven.* (Tol. Col.57.) In this ‘he’ denotes not the body but the soul. In another expression. ‘*uyir nīttu orumakan kitantān*’ – one person lay there deprived of his soul. Here the ‘*makan*’ denotes not the soul but the body. Therefore, in some usages soul and body are to denote mutually. For Teyvaccilaiyar, *ṭampu* in one context denotes the subtle body.
The classification of the alphabets indicates uniquely the relation between soul or spirit and matter. The Tamil alphabets are known by *Uyir* and *Mey*. In linguistic parlance they are commonly known as vowels and consonants. Etymologically they stand to mean the soul and body. The twelve such ‘soul’-letters, conjoin with the consonants to give meaning and life. Spirit animates the body, the matter to be alive.

Meaning of any existence, either it be any word in a language or any life in the world, is derived out of the combination of soul and matter, *uyir* and *mey*. While stressing the coexistence of soul and matter for a meaningfulness of existence, *Tolkāppiyam* maintains the distinction of the two. In the process of conjoining with the consonants, the vowels do not change their nature.\(^4\) Vowel appears only through the medium of body, consonant.\(^5\) *Tolkāppiyar* is well aware of the differences in the nature of the two realities, soul and matter.

Analysis of the concepts of soul and matter, as metaphysical principles found in *Tolkāppiyam*, leads one to interpret them as clinging towards the monistic tendency.\(^6\) One ‘soul’-letter ‘A’ pervades all other eleven letters and the ‘body’-letters. Such interpretation too leads to explain the one soul appearing diversely according to the nature of the bodies. Another interpretation leads to conclude that the dichotomy between spirit and matter is maintained throughout. In either case, one finds that the spirit and matter

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\(^5\) Tol. Eluttu. 18.
\(^6\) Monistic Interpretation of Soul-Matter Relation: There are twelve ‘soul’-letters. ‘A’ letter is the only one ‘Soul’-letter, which combines with the other ‘soul’ -letters and the ‘body’ -letters, and it assumes a variety of forms. The commentator Naccinarkkiniyar holds that the one soul appears diversely according to the nature of the bodies. He also quotes the Bhagavad-gita: “I am the letter ‘a’ in all the letters’ and the Kural: ‘All letters have ‘a’ as their source.” Therefore the view is that letter ‘a’ is the soul of all the other ‘soul’-letters, just as God is the soul of souls. “Thus there are letters of which the letter ‘a’ is the substance and there are bodies in which the letter ‘a’ is the substance and there are bodies in which the letter ‘a’ appears variously. It is one and appears variously.” P.K. Sundaram, *Some Philosophical Concepts in Purananuru* (Chennai: University of Madras, 1979), 16.
continuum is essential for meaningful expressions in terms of language and in ordinary existence of the humans on earth.

While discussing on the personhood, it is always important that the dichotomy of soul and body would not serve our purpose. Human being is a holistic personality having equal status and importance given to body and soul. Personality for Tolkāppiyam insists on the importance of having a sound body. “Only a body that is fit can adequately respond to the surroundings and externalize the thoughts and feelings. Such externalization (meyppāṭu) being a basic function of a persona, what the body, and looks mean to a persona cannot be underestimated.”

Tolkāppiyam shows clearly the significance of the physical aspect of human being. The philosophical tradition of ancient Tamils was pragmatic existential philosophy.

For the contemporary crisis of Human-Nature encounter, with serious ecological threat to the very existence of both the nature and the humankind, Tolkāppiyam provides us the insight that meaningful existence is possible only with due recognition of spirit and matter. One cannot underestimate and throw away the existence of either of spirit or of the matter. Uyir-mei combine together to form meaningful words and existence. Uyir-mei is not just combination of uyir and mei, it is uyir-mei, having spirit and matter as constitutive of each other. Devaneya Pavanar, a great Tamil scholar explains spirit-matter in the following way; “that which animates the matter (mei) is uyir (spirit). Mei is the body that surrounds the constitutive spirit. Thus, uyir-mei is the mei with the spirit.”

In classical Tamil tradition human nature is not just body or soul alone, but the right combination of both spirit and matter. Human or worldly nature is both spirited matter and materialized spirit.

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427 Nirmal Selvamony, Persona in Tolkāppiyam, 113.
428 Arunan, Tamilārin Tattuvā Marapu – Philosophical Tradition of Tamils, 19.
Therefore in caṅkam literature, besides the literalism with imagery and poetic expressions realistic approach to nature is found throughout Tamil literature that Nature is out there, existing by itself and influencing the human living and thought patterns. The external material world participates in the world of humans. The appreciation of Nature arose not just out of interest to be associated with human events or to be viewed as the background to human emotion and action.\(^{430}\) It is philosophy of here and now\(^{431}\) which characterizes Tamil concept of human life in the material and physical world.

### 3.4. Tamil Realism

Hardly one can claim the caṅkam literature to be purely philosophical treatises. Nevertheless, philosophical aspects with regard to epistemology and metaphysics could be easily traced out in them.\(^{432}\) The poets of caṅkam age have very closely noted the Tamil mode of life and expression during times and utilized the observation to write about the their culture. From the study of caṅkam we get an account of the basic principle of epistemology and metaphysics known to the Tamils of that age.\(^{433}\)

K.A.Nilakanta Sastri opines,

It [caṅkam literature] reveals to us a fairly well-developed civilization evolved out of the harmonious blending of much that was borrowed from the incoming northern culture with that already in existence. … But none can miss the significance of the facts that early Tamil literature, the earliest to which we have access, is already fully charged with words, conceptions and


\(^{432}\) As we have already discussed in forgoing paragraphs, *Tolkāppiyam* is certainly a work that exposes the current usages of the language in a various forms as any grammatical work supposed to be a literature that explicitly puts forward the rules of language. Though text is not at all a philosophical treatise on speculative thoughts, on religion and philosophy, yet this text has found pretext to deal with matters philosophy in an indirect manner.

\(^{433}\) Without any specific mentioning it would be understood that the ethical and moral teachings of many of caṅkam and post-caṅkam literature have profound moral philosophy of Tamil tradition.
institutions of Sanskritic and northern origin, while it is characterized by a direct and forceful expression and an unrivalled vividness and realism all its own.\textsuperscript{434}

While influence of other traditions in Tamil systemic thinking cannot be totally ruled out, unique thought pattern and philosophy of life as an indigenous Tamil tradition could never be underestimated. There had been interaction of ancient Tamil tradition with Vedic, Buddhist and Jaina traditions. The influences of these traditions were very much seen in the fact that ancient Tamil tradition had not grown in its own way, to an extent that it gave an impression if the Tamils were really interested in philosophizing at all. In dealing with the three supreme goals of human living namely, \textit{ar\textsuperscript{ram}, por\textsuperscript{ul}} and \textit{inpam} the \textit{Kural} speaks of the socio-ethical, physical and emotional needs and the right means to fulfill them. In \textit{Tirukkural} we find tenets of all systems, like Sāṁkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāmsa, Vedānta, materialism, Jainism and Buddhism.\textsuperscript{435}

Arunan is of the opinion that in cankam period there are enough evidences to show that vedic ritualistic tradition as well as vedantic idealistic tradition were present in Tamil country. Yet one could not conclude that they were the dominant tradition at the time as cankam was the period where ancient Tamil tradition interacted actively with other traditions.\textsuperscript{436} Tamils have known all philosophical traditions emerged from the sub-continent. Definitely one could vouch for the same in the way Tamils had interacted, examined, assimilated and expressed these traditions in their own way.\textsuperscript{437} An inter-cultural enterprise indeed it was.

Classical Tamil tradition with a profound thought pattern and harmonious living with nature has something concrete to contribute to contemporary understanding of nature and to develop respectful attitude

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{434} K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, \textit{A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar}, 4th ed. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), 20.
\item \textsuperscript{436} Arunan, \textit{Tamilin Tattuva Marapu – Philosophical Tradition of Tamils}, 36.
\item \textsuperscript{437} Ibid., 269.
\end{itemize}
towards nature. Sense of wonderment is the beginning of human thought. People experiencing the nature regarded its greatness and enjoyed its beauty and eventually were educated by it. Classical Tamil Tradition proves that human activities concretely takes place in Natural environment and are constantly influenced by environmental factors. Tamil philosophy of life emerged in quite compatibility with love of nature. The Nature served human beings as the suitable setting for their living and loving. Changes in natural seasons and of the day were portrayed as having strong effects on human personality. Concept of nature in classical Tamil tradition was fundamentally realistic, humanistic and concrete. Wisdom of the Tamils had not deduced from the rationalistic mind of the humans, but rather from the animals and the birds and their reactions the Tamils have learned wisdom. Tamil philosophical tradition emerged from the simple life style of ancient Tamils in harmony with nature. That life is to be lived here and now becomes Tamil philosophy of life. Classical Tamil literature is a collection of poems adopting a credible and realistic device to bring out Tamil realism. Besides the realistic understanding of nature, classical Tamil tradition had the pluralistic notion of reality.

Nature has been defined as the outer, external and objective world of sense perception. It is non-human and is not the product of human either in material or mental sense. It exists by itself having its own uniqueness of its existence and it is an independent reality without any ontological dependence of human existence. Realism in ancient Tamil tradition is neither naïve realism nor representationism but a common-sense realism and critical-scientific realism. External world is a real, independent existent whose truth could well be established by virtue of its own existence and by perception of it by human senses and mind. Ontologically human and external world are independent realities and pragmatically they are interdependent and interconnected realities.

438 Ibid., 268.
for their sustenance. They co-exist with each other with relationship of mutual and complementary nature.

3.5. Summing Up

Summing up the discussion on ancient Tamil treatment of Nature one could emphatically declare that the poetic lines of ancient Tamils are of deeply philosophic in nature expressing the close association of humans with nature. Tamils have been from the time immemorial, people with simplicity of life, subtlety in their thinking and living in harmony with the nature. Much noted character in them has been their practical sense of living. The classical caṅkam literatures bear sufficient witness to this aspect of the Tamils. They are very close to nature with their simple and realistic descriptions of natural world.

Tamil Philosophy of life from the caṅkam period onwards was down to earth in its rational approach to nature and world. The realistic notion of the material world is very much influential on the later philosophical system of Saiva Siddhānta, especially in its metaphysics. The positive and affirmative approach towards physical reality and openness to pluralistic world-view of the Tamil tradition, are very much reflected in Tirumandiram in its metaphysics. Understanding of Human-nature relationship in Tirumandiram with its metaphysical, epistemological and ethical concepts and implications would have lasting consequences on the contemporary world.

CHAPTER 4

MĀYAI IN TIRUMANDIRAM

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