The wisdom of the ages provides persons with a methodology to analyze the causes of the crisis in their life and to possibly look for some solutions. In enumerating the concept of māyai in Tirumandiram, we attempted not only to describe the speculative thinking of Tirumūlar on the material reality but to engage in the contemporary discourse on ecological crisis. The ecological crisis is caused by human activities with a certain understanding of the nature and the physical world. Tirumandiram offers an alternative worldview that can rectify the malady and prescribes a remedy. The study of concept of māyai in Tirumandiram is taken not to glorify the past and bask in the greatness of Tamil Śaiva Siddhānta tradition but necessarily to look forward for directives towards transformation of the present situation. Transformation is possible only with a critical reflection accompanied by appropriate interventions. A process of change becomes deeper and stronger only with a positive philosophy of life. Ecological crisis can be adequately dealt only with a change in world-view, a change in perception of the world, a change in human relationship with nature and then finally a change in life style. Our effort in this research aimed at facilitating this change, in engaging the humanity with positive outlook of the nature and enhancing a better human relationship with it.

Realistic notion of the materiality as found in the concept of māyai in Tirumandiram enumerates the healthy thinking and harmonious living of people of Tamil tradition as witnessed in the extant classical Tamil literature. Emerging from Tamil cultural tradition, Tirumandiram throws profound ecological thoughts concerning inter-connectedness between human existence and nature. Pluralistic realism and the affirmative concept of māyai in Tirumandiram are certainly beacons towards perfect ecological harmony between human and nature.

Tirumandiram emphasizing the necessity of nature for the humans describes the whole world with its material objects and bodies, is considered to be a place for life to manifest itself and unfold all its potentialities. Such a
positive view of nature has engendered a holistic vision of reality that respects environment and upholds the ecological balance.

It is a matter of fact that the world exists. Reality of the world is affirmed ontologically; for it came into and would go back to its own source and destination namely, \textit{māyai}, which is real and eternal. The change of form and the destruction of the manifestation of the differences in the forms cannot, in the light of \textit{Tirumandiram}, be brushed aside as non-reality or illusion or even un-describable. The ultimate material reality does not cease to be at one point or the other. Material reality, \textit{māyai} is eternal and it gives a value unto itself. Its purposive existence and dependent nature do not negate its meaning. The matter remains eternal as God and the soul are. This affirmation of the materiality has tremendous positive implications for the contemporary human society to respect and uphold the nature. In strongest terminology, \textit{Tirumandiram} affirms the positive value of human body and physical world. It emphasizes that the human body is sacred temple of the Lord where he resides. The sense of sacredness of the material world and physical body is what lacks in the contemporary mechanistic world view today. \textit{Tirumandiram} concept of world highlights the sacredness of matter.

The world is not by chance or by accident. It was created by God with a purpose of human liberation. Hence, the earth with its physical body and material objects become the locus where the pilgrimage of the seeker to one’s ultimate goal of liberation takes place here and now. Since human beings have not created the world, they cannot be the owners of the world. Body and the world have to be used for the greater purposes of human liberation and for the service for the humanity. It is imperative to acknowledge the positive qualities of the earth as a common property for all. Hence, moral responsibility is for the whole of human generation today to care for it, use it and leave it safe for the next generation. In this connection, \textit{Tirumandiram} advocates eco-justice where every resource of the earth is to be available for the well being of all the communities, especially for the poor and the marginalized. With the ecological
crisis of fast depletion of natural resources for the very survival of certain human communities, entertaining a high spiritual and religious notion of world serving as means of liberation is to be carefully analyzed and critically evaluated.

Again, Siddhānta concept of asserting the world and all its physical objects as useful means to liberation of the souls, in a way reminds the souls in sakala state that world is to be used only as a means never an end in itself. Concept of māyai in Tirumandiram does not propagate absolutism of material reality but pluralistic realism. Material reality is to be asserted realistically, not absolutely. That the world is created by God for the humans excels in the understanding of interconnectedness of triple realities. A profound transformation of anthropocentric mentality that would save the world from a possible future catastrophe, is evident in Tirumandiram’s concept of māyai, as it promotes eco-centric consciousness celebrating the interconnectedness of reality and the intrinsic value of all that exists.

Śaiva Siddhānta description of the unique characteristic feature of pacu in sakala state as sadasat and of having a tendency of assuming the nature of that with which it is associated, cārntatanvaṇṇamātal, is a definitive assertion of human beings as dependent. Philosophical view of interdependency with nature, determines the ‘how’ of human conduct towards other living and non-living beings in nature and ultimately with the world. Calling into question the notion of dichotomy between the subjective and objective reality, Tirumandiram identifies the human organism with that of the cosmic world, in the notion of human body as a miniature replica of the universe.

Instead of treating the periphery of the ecological problem with the proposals for change of life-style and eco-friendly means of living, our concern is the change of ideology and concept of nature. In Tirumandiram human attitude to nature is neither one of subjugation, nor one of domination and exploitation, but one of harmony. It develops a sense of harmony based on
concern, respect and non-violence towards nature. Religious philosophy of Tirumandiram upholds the material reality as real and it serves as a corrective notion in understanding the nature and in enhancing the human nature relationship which offers a possible conceptual solution to ecological crisis. The concept of māyai in Tirumandiram is not just a message but also a method for a change; a change for a ‘healthy thinking of ’ leading to a ‘harmonious living with’ the nature.

APPENDIX 1

EDITIONS AND COMMENTARIES ON TIRUMANDIRAM


