Appendix I

The Historical Background of the Āḻvār Saints

The peculiar historical circumstances of 5th century A.D. South India set the stage for the blossoming of a significant religious movement called the Bhakti Movement. This movement which was spearheaded by the Āḻvārs marked a turning point in the religious history of Tamilnadu. Three major powers, viz., the Cālukyas, the Pāndyas and the Pallavas were fighting with each other for supremacy of South India. The movement gathered momentum when the Pallavas established their empire. This was a period when a number of extraordinary pious saints endowed with poetical and musical talents wandered about the country visiting temple after temple, singing hymns in praise of Lord Viṣṇu or Lord Siva. The twelve Vaiṣṇava saints were called the Āḻvārs and the 63 Śaivite saints, the Nāyānṭārs. These saints were least affected by the tumultuous political situation, their only concern being other-worldly. The Āḻvārs took Viṣṇubhakti to the masses especially at a time when the Hindu tradition needed measures of popularization to counter the influence of Buddhism and Jainism which were strong at that time in South India. They wanted to revive Viṣṇu worship and Vaiṣṇavism but not with the old methods of rituals and sacrifice which came under severe criticism from the Buddhists and the Jains. They did it with an entirely new method with emphasis on love and devotion for salvation expressed through their emotionally powerful hymns. They won over many kings who were adherents to Jainism and Buddhism and brought about a religious renaissance in the Pallava, Pāndya and Chola countries.

The Tāmil word ‘Āḻvār’ means one who is immersed, and the Āḻvār saints were totally immersed in the devotional love of God and literally
God-intoxicated. The profound and spontaneous outpourings of their enjoyment of the Divine Being in the form of beautiful Tamil poetry are collectively called the *Nālāyira divyaprabhāndham* or the collection of Four Thousand Divine Hymns. The hymns are laudatory songs which praise the Lord’s glory in all His aspects. They have great religious significance and are sung by the Vaiṣṇavas during worship in temples and at homes on special occasions. The hymns are altogether four thousand in number including 108 hymns in praise of Śrī Rāmānuja composed by his disciple Tiruvarangathamudanār. Similar devotional poems are there like the *Tevārām* and *Tiruvācakam* of the Śaiva Nāyanmars, the bhajans of Meerā Bai, abhangs of Maharashtra and the *Gītagovinda* of Jayadeva. But the hymns of the Ālvārs are different in that they contain the philosophy of the Upaniṣads as interpreted by Śrī Rāmānuja and the Vaiṣṇava theology based on the Vedas, the Āgamas, Purāṇas and the epics. The hymns of the Ālvārs contained rich philosophical thoughts and apart from teaching only a devotional means to liberation they also taught of:

1. The nature of the Ultimate Reality, of a Personal God with attributes and of his Consort Śrī and the Avatāras of God
2. The nature of the Self
3. The means by which it can obtain liberation
4. The nature of that liberation
5. The Doctrine of Prapatti or Surrender as a means to liberation.
6. The grace of God and Bhakti

A large number of hymns refer to the blissful experience of the mystic saints when they are in communion with God (*samśleśa*).
The Date and Chronology of the Ālvārs

The Ālvārs appeared not at the same time, but over a period of several centuries. The dates during which they flourished are a matter of controversy. The Guruparamparā assigns to them a period from 4200 BC – 2700 B.C. and also regards them as divine incarnations. This date is not accepted by the historians and modern scholars. However, they are said to have lived during the periods of the Pallavas, Pāṇḍyas and the Cholas.

There are some monographs on individual Ālvārs of which the following are the most important:

1. Divyasūricarita by Gaudavāhanapandita who was a contemporary of Śri Rāmānuja.
2. Guruparamparāprabhāvam of Pinbalakiyaperumāl Jīyar based on the Divyasūricarita written in manipravāla\textsuperscript{20}
3. Periatirumudiadaivu of Anbillaikandādiappar (Tamil)
4. Upadeśaratnamālai of Maṇavāla Māmuni contains the list of the Ālvārs
5. Yatindrapravanaprabhāvam of Pillai Lokācāriar
6. The Nālāyiradivyaprabandham of the twelve Ālvār saints written in the Tamil language
7. We find references in the poems of some of the Ālvārs, to the period in which they lived and the places where they lived. They mention the names of the Pallava or Pāṇḍya kings who patronised them
8. Epigraphical evidences scattered over Tamilnādu

\textsuperscript{20} मणिप्रवाल means ‘a mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit words like gems (manī) and corals (pravāla) in a necklace.
According to Maṉavāla māmuni\textsuperscript{21}, the first four Āḻvārs flourished at the time of the Pallavas who came to Kānci in 4\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. Prof. Dubrenil says Māmallai (present Mahābalipuram), the native town of Pūṭattālvar did not exist before Nasrasimha Varma Pallava who founded the city in the middle of the 7\textsuperscript{th} A.D. Further Tirumaṅgai Āḻvār praised the Viṣṇu temple of Kanchi built by Paramesvaravarman II. It seems, therefore, the Āḻvārs flourished in the 8\textsuperscript{th} century which was a period of great Vaiṣṇava movement in the Chola and Pāṇḍya countries and also of the Advaitic movement of Śankarācārya. According to traditional accounts Nammālvar was the son of Kari, holding a high post under the Pāṇḍyas and himself bore the name of Karimāran Parāṅkuśa and Śatakopa, his disciple was Mathura and he was born at Tirukkurukkūr. Two -stone inscriptions - one is dated Kali 3871 in the reign of Parāntaka, whose mantrin was the son of Māra, also known as Mathura. The other is dated in the reign of Māran Jadaian. The Kali year 3871 corresponds to AD 770. This was when Parāntaka Pāṇḍya ascended the throne. His father Parāṅkuśa died about the year 770. MarAIkari continued as mantrin. Nammālvar’s name Karimāran shows that Kari, the mantrin, was the father. This is in accordance with Guruparamparā-prabhāvam. These and many other evidences collected by Dr. T.A.Gopinatha Rao show that Nammālvar flourished at the end of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century or in the first half of the 9\textsuperscript{th} century. Tirumangai Āḻvār refers to Vairamegha Pallava who probably flourished in the 9\textsuperscript{th} century. Therefore we can suppose that Tirumaṅgai Āḻvār lived about that time. According to S.K. Ayyangar\textsuperscript{22} the last of the Āḻvārs flourished in the earlier half of the 8\textsuperscript{th} century. Dr. R.G.Bhandārkar holds that Kulasekhara Āḻvār lived in the middle of the

\textsuperscript{21} One of the great Ācāryas of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism; he mentions this in his Yāśodra-pravāna-prabhāvam.
12th century. He was the king of Trävancore and in his ‘Mukundamāla’ he quotes a verse from Bhāgavata Purāṇa. On the basis of inscriptive evidence that Permādi of the Senda dynasty who flourished between 1138-1150 conquered Kulasekhara, Dr Bhandārkar comes to the conclusion that Kulasekharālvār lived in the middle of the 12th century. Gopināth Rao23 does not agree with this on the ground that Bhandārkar was confusing Kulasekhara Perumāl (Ālvār) with another Chera king Kulasekharānanda and had come to the wrong conclusion. According to Gopināth Rao the earliest Ālvārs flourished in 5th and 6th centuries.

There are different versions of the chronological order of the Ālvārs but the widely accepted and authentic one is given by Śrī Vedānta Deśika24 and Manavāla Māmuni25. The chronological order according to these two Ācāryās is as follows:

1. Poigaiālvār
2. Pūtattālvār
3. Peyālvār
4. Tirumalisai Ālvār
5. Nammālvār
6. Kulasekharālvār
7. Periyālvār
8. Tondaradippodi Ālvār
9. Pāṇālvār
10. Tirumāṅgai Ālvār

23. T.A.Gopinath Rao, History of Srivaivasnavas, Madras, 1923, p.17
Historical details cited from ‘A History of Indian Philosophy’, Vo; 3, Dasgupta S.N., New Delhi, 1922
After these ten are added Āṇḍal and Madhurakavi. Āṇḍal is the adopted daughter of Peniālvār and Madhurakavi is a disciple of Nammālvār and hence they are also included in the list. For all practical purposes, they are treated as Ālvārs and their hymns are also part of the Nalayira divyaprabandham.

After a critical evaluation of the view of several modern scholars, Dr. N. Subba Reddiar has arrived at the following dates:

1. Poigai Ālvār 713 A.D
2. Pūtattālvār 713 A.D
3. Peyālvār 713 A.D
4. Tirumalisai Ālvār 720 A.D
5. Tondaradippodi Ālvār 726 A.D
6. Kulasekharālvār 767 A.D
7. Tiruppanālvār 781 A.D
8. Tirumaṅgai Ālvār 776 A.D
9. Periālvār 785 A.D
10. Āṇḍal 767 A.D
11. Nammālvār 798 A.D
12. Madhurakavi 800 A.D

These dates also lack clear historical evidence and there are discrepancies also. Āṇḍal, the adopted daughter of Periālvār could not have lived earlier than Periālvār. Nammālvār, who according to the traditional scholars is the fifth in the chronological order, could not be the last but one, as stated above. Further there is a reference in the Bhagavata Purana which goes against the views of the modern scholars. The Purana states:

In the beginning of kaliyuga persons exclusively devoted to Nārāyana and endowed with spiritual knowledge will be born here and there but in large
numbers in the land of the Dravidas where flow the river Tampraparnī, Kṛtamālā (Vaigai), Payasvinī (Pālār), the holy Kaverī and the Mahānadi (Periyār) which runs westwards.\footnote{4}{\textit{Bhāg.} P. XI.5}

It is interesting to note that the Āḷvārs - Nammāḷvār and Madhurakavi were born in Tāmaraparnī country, Periālvar and Āṇḍal in the krtamālā, Poigai, Puta, Pey and Tirumalisai Āḷvārs in the Payasvinī, Tondaradippodi, Tiruppan and Tirumaṅgai in the Kaverī and Kulasekhara in the Mahānadi countries. While the places are indicated, there is no mention of the period of their birth except in a general way that they will appearin the Kaliyuga.

Tradition regards the Āḷvārs as divine incarnations. The first four Āḷvārs-Puta, Pey, Tirumalisai, Poigai – were incarnations of weapons of Viṣṇu – gada (mace), śankha (conch) cakra (discus) and nandaka (sword) respectively Nammāḷvār was an incarnation of Viṣvaksena, the divine angel, Kulasekhara of kaustubha (the ornament on Viṣṇu’s chest), Periālvar, Tondaradippodi and Tirumaṅgai Āḷvārs were incarnations of Garuḍa (The divine bird and vehicle of Viṣṇu) Vanamāla (the garland worn by Viṣṇu) and śāranga (the bow of Viṣṇu) respectively. Periālvār was the manifestation of Śrivatsa (the mole in Viṣṇu’s chest) and Madhurakavi is regarded as representing the chief of Viṣṇugana. Āṇḍal is considered as a manifestation of Bhūdevi one of the consorts of Viṣṇu.

The tradition also speaks of supernatural birth of some of the Āḷvārs. Poigai Āḻvār is said to have sprung from a lotus flower in the tank near Yathoktakārī temple at Conjeevaram, Pūtattālvār, from a madhavī flower in the present Mahābalipuram and Periyaḻvār from a red lotus in a well
near the present Mylapore in Chennai. Āṇḍal was discovered as an infant lying in the flower garden maintained by Periāḻvār. Tirumālisai was born to a sage named Bhrugu who was enticed by a celestial nymph and the baby born out of this union was deserted by the nymph but later brought up by a hunter. Nammāḻvār was born to pious parents in Tirukkurukūr in Tirunelveli Dt. Right from his infancy he entered into yogic meditation under a tamarind tree near a Viṣṇu temple where he remained in meditation for 16 years. Āṇḍal was offered in marriage to Lord Ranganātha, the deity of Śrīraṅgam temple and soon after the marriage she merged with the Deity. The moment she entered the sanctum sanctorium she vanished becoming one with the Deity. Tirumangaigai was a brigand in younger days, but was transformed into a saint through the marriage with a celestial lady. Kulaśekhara was a Chera king who was an ardent devotee of lord Viṣṇu and spent most of his time listening to religious discourses rendered by the Bhagavatas. Later he abdicated his throne, moved to Śrīrangam and engaged himself wholly in the service of God and godly men.
Appendix II

Song of Solomon

Chapter 1

1 The song of songs, which is Solomon's.

2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.

3 Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

4 Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee.

5 I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon.

6 Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me: my mother's children were angry with me; they made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.

7 Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions?

8 If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.
9 I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.

10 Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, thy neck with chains of gold.

11 We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver.

12 While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof.

13 A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts.

14 My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi.

15 Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes.

16 Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant: also our bed is green.

17 The beams of our house are cedar, and our rafters of fir.

Chapter 2

1 I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys.

2 As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.

3 As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.
He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.

Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love.

His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me.

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.

My beloved is like a roe or a young hart: behold, he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, shewing himself through the lattice.

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.
15 Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.

16 My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.

17 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

Chapter 3

1 By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

2 I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.

3 The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?

4 It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.

5 I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please.

6 Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant?
Behold his bed, which is Solomon's; threescore valiant men are about it, of the valiant of Israel.

They all hold swords, being expert in war: every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.

King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon.

He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom thereof of gold, the covering of it of purple, the midst thereof being paved with love, for the daughters of Jerusalem.

Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon with the crown wherewith his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.

Chapter 4

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks: thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from mount Gilead.

Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep that are even shorn, which came up from the washing; whereof every one bear twins, and none is barren among them.

Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, and thy speech is comely: thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate within thy locks.

Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men.

Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.
6 Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the
mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense.

7 Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.

8 Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon:
look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon,
from the lions' dens, from the mountains of the leopards.

9 Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast
ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck.

10 How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy
love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!

11 Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are
under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of
Lebanon.

12 A garden inclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a
fountain sealed.

13 Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits;
camphire, with spikenard,

14 Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of
frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices:

15 A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from
Lebanon.

16 Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden,
that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his
garden, and eat his pleasant fruits.
Chapter 5

1 I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

2 I sleep, but my heart waketh: it is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night.

3 I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?

4 My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him.

5 I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock.

6 I opened to my beloved; but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone: my soul failed when he spake: I sought him, but I could not find him; I called him, but he gave me no answer.

7 The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.

8 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved, that ye tell him, that I am sick of love.
9 What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?

10 My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiepest among ten thousand.

11 His head is as the most fine gold, his locks are bushy, and black as a raven.

12 His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set.

13 His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers: his lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh.

14 His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl: his belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.

15 His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

16 His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

**Chapter 6**

1 Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? whither is thy beloved turned aside? that we may seek him with thee.

2 My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.

3 I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies.
4 Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah, comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners.

5 Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.

6 Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep which go up from the washing, whereof every one beareth twins, and there is not one barren among them.

7 As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples within thy locks.

8 There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number.

9 My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bare her. The daughters saw her, and blessed her; yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.

10 Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?

11 I went down into the garden of nuts to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded.

12 Or ever I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.

13 Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return, that we may look upon thee. What will ye see in the Shulamite? As it were the company of two armies.
Chapter 7

1 How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.

2 Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.

3 Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins.

4 Thy neck is as a tower of ivory; thine eyes like the fishpools in Heshbon, by the gate of Bathrabbim: thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus.

5 Thine head upon thee is like Carmel, and the hair of thine head like purple; the king is held in the galleries.

6 How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights!

7 This thy stature is like to a palm tree, and thy breasts to clusters of grapes.

8 I said, I will go up to the palm tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof: now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine, and the smell of thy nose like apples;

9 And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine for my beloved, that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.

10 I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me.

11 Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages.
12 Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth: there will I give thee my loves.

13 The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.

Chapter 8

1 O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.

2 I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, who would instruct me: I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine of the juice of my pomegranate.

3 His left hand should be under my head, and his right hand should embrace me.

4 I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, until he please.

5 Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved? I raised thee up under the apple tree: there thy mother brought thee forth: there she brought thee forth that bare thee.

6 Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.
7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.

8 We have a little sister, and she hath no breasts: what shall we do for our sister in the day when she shall be spoken for?

9 If she be a wall, we will build upon her a palace of silver: and if she be a door, we will inclose her with boards of cedar.

10 I am a wall, and my breasts like towers: then was I in his eyes as one that found favour.

11 Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon; he let out the vineyard unto keepers; every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver.

12 My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.

13 Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the companions hearken to thy voice: cause me to hear it.

14 Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices.