

Society in the Pit of Suffering, Society in the Ocean of Bliss – How the Ironical Language of Nārāyaṇa Guru Contributed to His Politics of Social Transformation with the Help of the Tamil Siddhas’ Concept of the Lord’s Grace

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Abstract: The paper is an attempt to analyse the ironical language of selected philosophical works by Nārāyaṇa Guru – the mystic and social reformer from Kerala. As a follower of the tradition of Tamil Siddhas, based on the idea of liberative grace of the Lord, Nārāyaṇa Guru applies the same conceptual patterns in his poems. In order to promote the politics of social transformation, Nārāyaṇa Guru does not hesitate to introduce a highly sophisticated ironical language, which allows him to shift the sphere of esoteric mysticism and place emphasis on the realm of “social” mysticism, while claiming firmly that the process of Self-realisation should be aimed at the whole of society.

Keywords: Nārāyaṇa Guru, twilight language of Siddhas, *Ardhanārīśvara Stavam*, *Ātmōpadēśa Śatakam*, Śaivism

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The goal of Nārāyaṇa Guru's¹ social reforms, pointed at in his devotional and philosophical poems like *Daiva Daśakam* ("Ten Stanzas on the Universal God"), *Jāti Nirṇayam* ("A Critique of the Caste"), *Anukampā Daśakam* ("Ten Verses on Mercy"), and *Śiva Śatakam* ("One Hundred Stanzas Devoted to Śivan")², *Arddhanārīśvara Stavam* ("The Hymn on *Arddhanārīśvara*"), *Ātmōpadēśa Śatakam* ("One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction"), was to turn the status of the untouchable ones, affected by darkness and the illusion of diversity, into the ocean of bliss (*ānanda-kaṭal*, *paramāli*) attainable through the Lord's grace, love and compassion (*aruḷ*, *anbu*, *anukampa*) alone. The main literary source for such a social and mystic system could be the Tamil *Tirumandiram* composed by Tirumūlar.³ The monistic Śaivism of the Tamil author,⁴ developed under the influence of the Kashmiri doctrine,⁵ was able to provide the perfect background for Nārāyaṇa Guru's philosophy based on the politics of liberative grace activated within the one realm of individual souls bound with *iruḷ*, i.e., darkness or ignorance, which was the main obstacle in the process of social, as well as spiritual, uplifting.⁶

The biography – or, to be more specific – biographies of Nārāyaṇa Guru could themselves be treated as a hagiographic pattern, in which a variety of motifs (such as the unusual behaviour of the new-born child) seems to be the common part of a *curriculum vitae* of sages, or enlightened ones. Therefore, the social application of the Nārāyaṇa Guru's high-register ideas has been limited by the author of the article to the simple pattern of the Lord's grace bestowed on the low-caste people in the form of rain. The co-existence of the pattern and other elements or events, such as establishment of the temple, in many cases seems to be based on more or less approved oral transmissions. As this author remains

¹ Nārāyaṇa Guru (1856–1928) – a liberated Soul, mystic and social reformer from Kerala. He was the author of over sixty works composed in Sanskrit, Malayalam and Tamil, comprising devotional hymns, works of moral value and philosophical poems. His syncretic philosophical system mainly follows *Advaita Vedānta*, *Śaiva Siddhānta*, Śaivism and Śaktism. As regards his social reforms, Nārāyaṇa Guru becomes a representative of both the realistic and the monistic systems, synchronised under the banner of the concept of grace (*aruḷ*), which becomes the path and means for Self-realisation, conceived individually as well as in social context.

² The selected stanzas (64, 65) of another of Nārāyaṇa Guru's poem, *Śiva Śatakam*, have been interpreted by the author in a separate article (URBAŃSKA 2021: 557–574) in the context of the social philosophy of Siddhas employing the *aruḷ-iruḷ* idea in the service of politics. The ambiguous term *āli*, mentioned many times in Nārāyaṇa Guru's works, plays the key role in the exposition of his politics of grace (*aruḷ*), which emphasises the transformative function of the Lord's mercy in the process of social and religious uplifting of the "dark", untouchable ones.

³ KUMARAN (2014: 55); BALACHANDRAN (2015: 21); KRISHNAN (2018: 63).

⁴ GANAPATHY (2006b: 248–267).

⁵ ANAND and GANAPATHY (2006: 463–510). Cf. also ARUMUGAM (2006a: 3–11).

⁶ Cf. ARUMUGAM (2006d: 426–437); ARUMUGAM (2006c: 58–92); GANAPATHY (2010a: XXXV–LXXI).

partly sceptical about them (and partly not), she decided, as a philologist, to emphasise the linguistic dimension of the selected stanzas and works rather than to explore the social application of the analysed examples.

In stanza 1 of the *Arddhanārīśvara Stavam* (AS – “Hymn to the Half-Woman Lord”) composed for the sake of society tormented with a severe drought, Nārāyaṇa Guru introduces the term *āli* (“depths of ocean”) in its another meaning – *tīkkuli* (“fiery pit”):

*ayyōyī veyilkoṇṭu venturuki vāṭṭunnu nīyenniyē kaiyēkiṭuvatinnu
kāṅkiloruvan kāruṇyavānārahō!
payyārnnī janamāliyiḷ pativatinmunnē parannūliyiḷ
peyyārākamē ghanāmbu kṛpayā gamgānadīdhāmamē //1//*

(PRASĀD 2016a: 11)

Alas! All is fading, having melted under that scorching heat of the Sun –
Without You; while looking around for the hand given as support,
Who else would be merciful enough! Before this living being, afflicted
by famine,
Falls into the fire pit (*āli*)⁷, with all Your mercy the rain should be
poured
All around the earth, O abode of the Gaṅga river!⁸

The fact that people are in such a state is claimed to be the result of the *yogic* posture assumed by Śivan Himself, who is depicted in the 3rd stanza of AS as the one who remains in the root posture or in the basic state (*mūṭṭil tanneyirunniṭuka*):

*ūṭṭitṭīri vaḷarttum unbartaiṇī nāthannumippōḷuyirkkūṭṭattōṭoru
kūrumilla kathayentayō kuḷappattilāyū nāṭṭil kkaṇṭataśēṣavum bata
naśiccīṭunnatum kaṇṭu nī
mūṭṭilttanneyirunniṭunnu muṛayō? mūlarddhanārīśvarā //3//*

(PRASĀD 2016a: 59)

Lord of the divine river, who gives nourishing food to bring up
The multitude of living beings, now shows no affection for them.
Alas! How is it possible? Having seen that destruction of all

⁷ Svāmi Muni Nārāyaṇa Prasād’s interpretation is *valiya tīkkunḍam* – “a huge fire vessel or pit” (PRASĀD 2019: 361); BHĀSKARAN (2015: 163) suggests the meaning *tīkkuli* – “a fiery pit”, based on *Śabdatārāvali* (cf. PADMANĀBHAPILLA 2016: 299: *āli* – *kaṭal*, *cakram*, *ājñācakram*; *eriyunna tīyū*, *tīkkuli*). NĀYAR (2010: 285) translates the phrase *āliyiḷ patiyuka* (“to fall into the fiery pit”) as *marikkuka* (“to die; perish”); similarly, ŚĀŚINDRAN (2020: 834).

⁸ Selected stanzas and commentaries in Malayalam as well as the verses of TM supplemented with Malayalam text of NĀYAR (2007) have been translated by the author of the paper.

That exists – alas! – on the land put into confusion and muddle,
Is it proper that You remain in the primeval, unbound state
(*mūṭṭilttanneyirunniṭunnu*)⁹

Make at least a sound to agree with me, o Arddhanārīśvaran!

As the one who is absorbed in the unbound state, Śivan is not now able to bestow the flood of grace on his devotees. The same posture assumed by Arddhanārīśvaran in the 5th stanza of AS is called the *Paramātmāvū* state, i.e., the state of being absorbed into transcendent, unbound Reality, which makes it impossible for grace to descend:

*muppārokkeyitā muṭiñṇu muṭiyil colpoñnumappum dhari-
ccepōḷum paramātmaniṣṭhayilirunniṭunnu nīyentahō!
ippār ārinīyāḷum ippariṣayinnārōḷuraykkunnu nin
trppādattanalenīyē tuṇa namukkarddhanārīśvarā //5//*

(PRASĀD 2016a: 64)

All three worlds have been ruined; and You, the one who bears on His
head illustrious water,
Remain all the time in the state of *Paramātmāvū* (*paramātmaniṣṭhayil*)¹⁰

⁹ *mūṭṭilttanneyirunniṭunnu* – “You remain yourself in the basic, original state”. Bhāskaran understands the term *mūṭṭu* in accordance with *Śabdatārāvali* as *āsanam* and translates the whole phrase as “You remain in [yogic] posture” – *nī yōgāsanattiltanne irikkunnu* (BHĀSKARAN 2015: 165). Cf. PADMANĀBHAPILLA (2016: 1445): *mūṭṭu* – *vērū*; *āsanam* (*mūlam*). Muni Nārāyaṇa Prasād interprets the term *mūṭṭu* as *kāraṇam* (“the primeval cause”): *anakkamillāte vrkṣaccuvattilttanne (nissamganāyū ādikāraṇamāyi tanne)* – “[You remain] at the top of the tree without any movement, as the unbound one that is the primeval cause” (PRASĀD 2019: 364). *nīyippōḷ ā gaṃgaye talayil vaccukoṇṭṭu maraccu vaṭṭilirunniṭ tapassū ceyyukayāṇū. makkaḷāya ṇāṇṇaḷōḷuḷla uttaravāditvattinre kāryamokke nī maṇṇu. ninre tapassū kāraṇam gaṃgānadi ninre jaṭayilttanne uraṇṇukūṭi. aṇṇane nāṭṭil vellamillātāyi. ṇāṇṇaḷellām kuḷappattilumāyi [...]* *nīyākunna kāraṇattilninnāḷlō kāryarūpattilullaṇṇaḷum ī lōkavumokke uṇṭāyati. aṇṇane ṇāṇṇaḷellām uṇṭāyatiniśēsam ninikkini kēvalam kāraṇarūpattil mūṭṭāyitṭū (mūṭṭu = kāraṇam) tanne irikkān sādikkumō? Kāryatteyokke maṇṇiṭṭū ittarattil nīyirikkunnatū ētenkilum oru muṇṇayūkkū cērnnatāṇō? Viśvatte nilaniṭṭunna vyavasthayūkkū atu cērnnatāṇō?* – “Now, You keep practising penance, while hiding and retaining Gaṃga river at the top of Your head, having fixed yourself as *saṃnyāsīn* at the bottom of a tree. You forgot the whole effect of [Your] responsibility along with us, being Your children. For the sake of Your *tapas* alone the same Gaṃga river has been stabilised within matted hair of Yours. Thus, there is no water in the country. All of us are in trouble now. [...] The whole universe, along with us, remains in the form of effect that evolves from the [primeval] cause which is You yourself. In such a way, as long as all of us exist [in the form of effects], is it possible for You to remain in the [essential] form of the Sole Cause, as the Origin itself? Having absorbed or concealed all effects, would You remain united with any rule or order? Would it be connection with the state that makes the whole universe cease with nothing left?” (PRASĀD 2019: 365). Similarly, NĀYAR (2010: 286): *ellārīnum ādikāraṇamāyi viḷaṇṇunnu* – “You shine in the form of the Primeval Cause for everyone”.

¹⁰ i.e., in the supreme state, without revealing Your grace which is necessary now. *parabrahmalīnāvasthayil* – “in the state of being absorbed in the transcendent reality”

– Alas! Why is it so? Who else will take care of this earth in the future?
 To whom can this low folk complain today?
 Is there any other help for us except for the shade [shelter] of Your
 divine feet, o Arddhanārīśvaran?

The aforementioned attitude of Śivan, which is mocked by Nārāyaṇa Guru, may be analysed in the context of several visions exposed in the Tamil *Tirumandiram*. First of all, the whole image of rain being perceived as grace or blessings conferred by Civaṇ on living beings can be found in *Tirumandiram* 1 248 and 1 249¹¹:

(BHĀSKARAN 2015: 166). *nīyākaṭṭe ṅān paramātmāvāṇenna advaitānubhūtiyil amarnnirikkunnu* – “You remain absorbed in the non-dual self-experience of “I am *Paramātmāvū* itself” kind (PRASĀD 2019: 367). *brahmānandattil layiccirikkunnu* – “You remain absorbed in the Bliss that is Brahman itself” (NĀYAR 2010: 287). *nī ninre jaṭakkeṭṭil sadā samayavum gaṅgājalatte muḷuvan pērikkonṭāṇū vartikkunnatennatū lōkaprasiddhamāṇū. jalamāṇū jīvikaḷuṭe nilaniḷpinnādhāram ennū ninakkaṛiyāmāllō. atu vēṅṭavaṇṇam jīvajālaṅṅaḷkkū etticcu koḷukkuvānvēṅṭiyāṇū, avarkku tāṅṅāvunna tarattil etticcu koḷukkuvān vēṅṭiyāṇū, svarggattilninnu vanna gaṅgaye ninre jaṭakkeṭṭū tāṅṅi nīruttiyatū. ennāl tapassil layiccū paramāṭmaniṣṭhayilirikkunna nī akkathayokke maṛannu. aṅṅane gaṅgānadiyum puṛattu cāṭān maṭiccū ninre jaṭakkeṭṭinuḷḷil otuṅṅikkūṭiyirikkunnu. ninnil ninnutanne jātārāya ṅāṅṅaḷellām veḷḷamillāte tīyil vīṇatupōle dahikkāṅṅiṭayāvukayum ceyyunnu. paramāṭmasvarūpiyāya ninre aṅṅaṅṅaḷ tanneyāṅṅallō ṅāṅṅaḷ. appōḷ ṅāṅṅaḷe maṛaṅṅiṭṭū ninakkeṅṅane advaitānubhūtiyil amarnnirikkān sādḥikkum? ṅāṅṅaḷuṭe nāṅṅātvavum ninre ēkatayum onnutanneyallē? atariṅṅuṅṅū nī tapassil layiccāl, ninre tapassutanne ṅāṅṅaḷuṭe rakṣaykkāyi bhavikkum. aṅṅane ninre tuṅa eppōḷum ṅāṅṅaḷkku labhikkum. ennutanneyalla, ninre paramāṭmasvarūpam aṅṅane ṅāṅṅaḷum anubhavikkum. ṅāṅṅaḷum paramāṭmaniṣṭhayilamarum* (PRASĀD 2016a: 65). “It is widely known that You remain while carrying the whole of Gaṅga river in Your matted hair all the time. You know that the same water is the basis for the existence of all living beings. For the sake of the support for a multitude of living being, and for the sake of delivery provided in a bearable way to them, Gaṅga, who had descended from the heavenly world, has been restrained to be carried within Your matted hair now. However, You yourself forgot the whole story, while remaining in the state of *Paramātmāvū* after being dissolved in Your penance! In such a way, Gaṅga river – since She hesitates to flow outside, remains restrained within Your matted hair. All of us, offsprings of Yours, could be burnt [now] as if thrown into blazing flames, with no water left. Yet, we are parts of You yourself, whose essential form is *Paramātmāvū*. Then, how is it possible for You to remain dissolved in non-dual experience after forgetting about us? Our diversity and Your soleness – are they not one and the same? If You became immersed in *tapas* while being aware of that, the same *tapas* of Yours would become our salvation and protection. In such a way, Your support would be always accessible to us. Not only that, Your essential form of *Paramātmāvū* would become our own experience. All of us will be merged in the state of *Paramātmāvū*.”

¹¹ The English translation of all stanzas of the *Tirumandiram*, done by the author of the article, given above as supplemented with Malayalam translation by Nāyar, is based on Tamil edition (TM). The inconsistency in transcription of the Indian terms (Sanskrit, Malayalam and Tamil) could appear as a result of the following linguistic phenomena: 1. The absence of the keywords of the Sanskrit origin in the Tamil *Tirumandiram* (such as *Kuṅḍalinī*). 2. The inconsistency in the Tamil transliteration of Sanskrit terms, i.e., the presence of two or more equivalents of the Sanskrit nouns (Sanskrit *vidyā* appears as Tamil *vidiyai*, *vittiyā* etc.) is attested. As both

amṛtūrum māmaḷanīr mahimayāl amṛtūrum paṇmaram pāritil
taḷacciṭum /
kamukūrum teṇṇu karimbana vāḷa karimboṭu amṛtūrum
kāññiramīvakayē!

(NĀYAR 2007: 102)

The water of the great rain (*māmaḷai*) flows in excess like *amṛta*
(*amudu*);
It helps the surface of the Earth (or: the greatness of the Seer)¹²
To be covered with plenty of trees¹³ – like *amṛta* (*amudu*);
Areca palm, juicy coconut, the plantain along with a sugarcane,
The strychnine tree¹⁴ grows there – [in the rain flood] like *amṛta*
(*amudu*).¹⁵

uttuṅga śṛṅgamatil ninnoḷuki varum gaṃganīr aruvi ottu collippukaḷān
vākillavaḷ cintayilūrunnōḷ /
nurayillā māśillā oḷi vīśum teḷinīr atū kara illātoru kaḷumaṇi nīr
kaṇṭariññīṭuvin

(NĀYAR 2007: 102)

From the mountain space (*varai iḍai*) the heavenly water (*vāṇ nīr*)
springs to fall down;

There is no word [to describe it]; it remains welled up in the depths of
the Heart [*uḷḷattu agattu*];
It is foamless and stainless, the subtle and sharp (*nuṇṇiya*) clear water;

Dravidian languages permit the Sanskrit loan-word as well as its Malayalam or Tamil versions (for example Sanskrit *Kuṇḍalinī* and *Kuṇḍalini* in Malayalam), both versions can appear in the article, particularly in the general statements, which are the descriptions of the philosophy of Śaivism.

¹² The phrase *pārmicai* can be understood here as the surface of the Earth or the excellence of the wise one or the seer, in accordance with the tendency to interiorise the whole process of water, i.e., *amudu*, descent.

¹³ The plentiful trees (*paṇmaram*) mentioned here can also be treated as an allusion to the *paṇai* [*maram*], i.e., the Palmyra tree or Palmyra palm. In another stanza of TM (9 2887) the same tree symbolises the *suśumnā* channel, within which the snake, i.e., *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti*, is hidden.

¹⁴ The variety of trees mentioned in the stanza quoted above includes the plants associated with the liberation path (such as sugarcane, cf. TM 8 2365, KANDASWAMY 2010: 2650–2651) as well as those which create obstacles on the way to self-realisation (strychnine tree, cf. TM 1 204). “It presents the idea of duality natural to *māyā* and world. Darkness and light, pain and suffering, nutriment and poison – all are supported by the rains that give life to plants and animals, suggesting that although elements of the world may be life giving, there are inherent dangers (such as poison of strychnine), bringing awareness to the ultimate goal of transcending the earth together” (VENKATARAMAN 2010a: 308).

¹⁵ “The fertilising flood of rains outpouring makes trees and plants bloom enriched with sap; the areca palm, coconut, cane and plantain green, and nux vomica – stand laden rich with crop” (NATARAJAN 2018: 38).

It has no banks, indeed, such a purified (or purifying) gem (*kaḷu-maṇi*) of our Father.¹⁶

The water of the great rain is depicted as the *amṛta* flow, stainless and pure, bringing bliss to the surface of the Earth – or the greatness of the Seer, i.e., to the human Heart. Thus, the whole process becomes interiorised by Tirumūlar, who situates the point of transformation in the depths of the devotee’s Heart. The rain is hailed as being born in the mountain space, which could be an allusion to the Kailāsa peak – the symbol of transcendence and the ultimate goal; however, the precious nectar becomes a gift of our Father¹⁷; therefore, such an intimacy enables the devotees to be showered with His grace.

In the context of *Kuṇḍalinī Yoga* of Tirumūlar,¹⁸ the expression *tīkkuli* (fiery pit) – an equivalent of *āḷi*, i.e. the depth of ocean, now burning with grief, may be regarded as the ironical explanation of the fruit of Arddhanārīśvaran’s indolence in bestowing His grace brought by His *yogic* posture assumed at the basis or the root. The *Tirumandiram* provides us with suggestive visions of *Civa Yōgis* who are able to kindle the fire at the root (*mūlattē*), i.e., in the lowest *cakra* of *mūlādhāra*; the same act of kindling can be interpreted as burning up suffering at the root (*uruga aḷal mūṭṭi*), as stated in TM 7 1937:

*nōkkunna mātare nōkkātakannē pōyū ōrkkunna uḷḷam urukumāraḷal
uyartti /*

¹⁶ “There is reference to Lord Śiva’s great compassion that pours from the heavenly heights, filling one’s heart with love in an indescribably beautiful manner. As the soul grasps its real nature by Lord Śiva’s compassion and grace, it is filled with love and gratitude. God’s grace flows like a spotless river, crystal clear and subtle, for He is without blemish. The river of God’s compassion has no banks or limits” (VENKATARAMAN 2010a: 309). In TM 8 2511, the interiorised vision of the same process of rain falling is depicted in the twilight language of Siddhas as follows: *parayil para, aparattōṭēkittirayilninnāya taṅ punal pōluṅum / urayunarnnāramṛtotta uṅarvvuḷōn karakaṅṅavanurayaṅṅa kaṅṅakkē* (NĀYAR 2007: 771) “The sea of *Parai* merged into One along with the Lord – Possessor [of] *Param* – like a cool flood of waves ceased; having awakened with Word, the one who became aware with [such] sharp [roaring] *amudu* flow, is the one who attained the other shore alone, which transcends completely the word”. The sharpness and purity of water that is indescribable and filled with sweetness, defines the attainment of the final stage of liberation, which is identical to immortality itself.

¹⁷ In *Śaiva Siddhānta*, the five activities of Lord Śiva, *anugraha* in particular, are meant for the Self-realisation of the individual souls bound with *malas* in *sakala* state (cf. TM 8 2418; ARUMUGAM 2006c: 65). Therefore, the Lord obtains in the *Tirumandiram* (2 382) a status of Father (*ayyan*), who is easily approachable through His loving grace (*naṅṅa*); the one, who is both the means and result of the whole process of unification, is the Son (*payyan*), called also *māmaṇi* (the Great Gem). Both these terms can be referred to Subrahmaṅya as well as to the individual soul, with its potency to activate *ājñā cakra*, where *aruḷ* becomes the leading power. Nārāyaṅa Guru introduces these motifs in plenty of hymns devoted to Śivan (cf. *Sadāśiva Darśanam*) and Subrahmaṅya (cf. *Subrahmaṅya Kīrttanam*).

¹⁸ Cf. GANAPATHY (2006d: 159–179).

nōkkunna nayana sukham keṭumāru mūlattil cērkkum yōgi śivayōgiyē
(NĀYAR 2007: 586)

Not looking at glancing beauty, he keeps his distance, melting his Heart
in consideration;

Having kindled his blazing flame [of *Kuṇḍalinī*] at the basis
(or: having burnt the suffering at the basis) (*uruga aḷal mūṭṭi*)¹⁹;

He allows the desire of glancing eyes to go in vain;
The *yogi* yoked at the root [*cakra*] is indeed the *Civa Yōgi* (*mūlattē*
cērkkinra civayōgi tāṇē).²⁰

According to stanza 2 424 of the *Tirumandiram*, it is [Higher] *Kuṇḍalinī* herself, who descends from the cloudy mountain top in the form of the noble creeper along with the shower of grace and nectar in order to set fire to that within the pit of *mūlādhāra*, which helps the soul to attain the final liberation:

koṇḍal girimēl ninnīraṇṇi kulakkoṭi aṇḍattilūri ninnu aṣṭadikkādi /
ventupatam ceytu ṍm ennappurakkunḍattin mēl ankiyāyaṭaṇṇiyallō
(NĀYAR 2007: 154)

From the Mountain crowned with the rain cloud (*koṇḍal varai*)
Flows [down] the Noble Creeper (*kula-koṭi* = Higher *Kuṇḍalinī*)
To abide within the Universe (*aṇḍattu ul*), in eight curls [or waves]
twisting – beyond the AUM (*ṍm*)

Which brought (or which is brought along with) the state (or feet) of
Oneness (or of the One [Lord]);

¹⁹ The term *aḷal* denotes the burning or flame, heat or inflammation of grief or affliction. The verb *urugu* means “to dissolve with heat, melt, become tender, kind, glow with love”. The whole process of the kindling *Kuṇḍalinī* fire comprises two paths, i.e., the path of the dissolution of lower *tattvas* and the removal of grief and affliction brought by *malas*, and the path of attainment of the Lord’s love and grace, brought along with melting one’s mind with affection.

²⁰ “[...] The *yogin* lays his mind upon God and allows it to melt in love and devotion. With concentration, He kindles the *kuṇḍalini* fire at the root centre or *mūlādhāra cakra*, and purifies it of associated desires. Those desires are inflamed by covetous eyes. The *yogin* makes such desire dissolve by turning his eyes to the eyebrow center at the plane of *bindu*, called the *bindusthāna*. Thereby all desire that comes through the eyes vanish. Such a *yogin* is the real *Śiva-yogin*” (SOMASUNDARAM 2010: 2128–2129). TM 2 345 states that the *Kuṇḍalinī* fire is kindled (*mūl*) at the *mūla* [*cakra*], just as time (*kālaṇ*) becomes kicked out with the foot or breath (*kāl*). One who is able to attain that through *Agni Yōgam*, becomes prosperous forever: *mūladvārattil mūlum oruvane mēladvārattil amartti nōkki – mun / kālu urru kālanekkonagnni yōgamārnniṭil ṇāḷattaṭṭiyūr kaṭannu nalamārnniṭām nāḷellām* (NĀYAR 2007: 129). “Having perceived before the one who is kindled in the entrance of *mūla* [*cakra*] (*mūla-t tuvārattu mūlum*) and risen up to the entrance at the top, having got in contact with foot (or: basis, wind or breath; channel – *kāl*), having burnt up the Time (*Kālaṇ*) through the *Agni Yōgam*, [*yogī*] resides in the good fame and prosperity at the land of *Kaḍavūr*.” Cf. ARUMUGAM (2006b: 128–129).

Above the pit (*kuṇḍattiṅ mēl* = *mūlādhāra*) She kindles the fire (*aṅgi* = *agni*).²¹

While taking into consideration all these visions exposed in twilight language by Tamil Siddhas,²² one can say that Arddhanārīśvaran becomes ironically indicted by Nārāyaṇa Guru for the crime of being absolutely unsociable. He assumes the basic or root position as a *Yōgi* in order to remain in perfect and ultimate union with His grace, which has now been totally re-absorbed. At the same time, the whole territory inhabited by His devotees, devoid of grace and the rain of *amṛtam*, turns into a fiery pit, which is not the pit of kindled *Kuṇḍalinī*, but a pit filled with burning grief. The question arises as to whether such an ironical presentation could be the indirect recommendation or advice given to the people by Nārāyaṇa Guru; as stated in his biography by Parameśvaran, as soon as Nārāyaṇa Guru has composed the hymn, he ordered the people “to chant it with heart-felt devotion after bath” (PARAMEŚVARAN 1979: 63). In other words, he could suggest that society should assume the very same posture as Śivan did in order to achieve the state which transforms the pit of suffering into the pit of

²¹ The Mountain crowned with the Rain Cloud symbolises the top of *Kailāsa* – the Twelfth End, where *amudu* is accumulated (and, in fact, the state identical to immortality). *kulakoḍi* = *kulastrī* = Noble Virgin. *Kuṇḍalinī Śankhinī* may be mentioned here. *eṇ – tirai* – within the Universe, i.e., in the sphere of the *Mahā Laya*, above *turīya*. These eight curls are: three stages of *Parai*, three stages of *Paraṇ*, the Eleventh State and the Twelfth State; or, supreme *Bindu*, supreme *Nādam*, three stages of *Parai* and three stages of *Paraṇ* (i.e., beyond the OM (*turīyāṭīta*) up to the oneness of *Para Civaṇ*). The term *kuṇḍam* mentioned by Tirumūlar in the stanza quoted above appears in TM 2 360: *nallōr navakuṇḍam onbatum inbam uṛa pallōr amarar pariṅṇa pakarukennatum villāpuram viḷaṅṇiṭum eri kōrttavan pollā asurare ellām ericcuvalḷō* (NĀYAR 2007: 133). “May the excellent nine fresh pits (*nava-kuṇḍam*) be filled with sweetness (*iṅbam*); many immortals (*amarar*), oppressed by sorrow, fled to [the Lord]: ‘Bestow Your grace (*aruḷ*) with affection! (*parindu*)’. The archer, who strings arrows with his bow, flared the city [the body] up, filled with brightness, and reduced the vicious Asuras (*acurargaḷ*) to ashes.” The sacrificial pits can be interpreted as six *ādhāras*, two eyes and *sahasrāra* (GANAPATHY 2006a: 552). The famous myth of destroying the three cities symbolises the destruction of the three defilements (ARUMUGAM 2006b: 124–125). Thus, the twilight language introduced here by Siddhas depicts the process of the awakening and ascension of *Kuṇḍalinī Śakti*: the fire or blaze can denote the activation of the *mūlādhāra cakra*, the region of activation is the city or body itself (*puram*); the bow of Śiva (*vil*) represents the *ājñā cakra* (cf. GANAPATHY 2006a: 553); the activation of the latter results in the attainment of pure brightness (*viḷaṅgu*) and the cremation of *malas* (defilements) or desires. The whole process becomes possible thanks to the Lord’s grace (*aruḷ*), and its final or ultimate goal is the sweetness of Bliss (*iṅbu*). When confronting the immortals and Lord Śiva in the first part of the stanza, Tirumūlar uses the equivocal verb *pari[ndu]*, which can be related to the deities immersed in sorrow, i.e., bound with *āṇava mala* or *iruḷ* (darkness or ignorance), as well as to Śiva – the bestower of affection (*nēyam*). Cf. “Lord’s grace pours down, like rains from the mountains, envelops the earth and fills oceans all-around; as the Lord’s grace nourishes, His *nāda* sets fire blazing upon the sacrificial altar” (VENKATARAMAN 2010b: 518).

²² As stated by Ganapathy, “the twilight language is a clothed language in which the highest truths are hidden in the form of the lowest, the most sacred in the form of the most ordinary, the transcendent in the form of the most earthy” (GANAPATHY 2006c: 295).

blazing *Kuṇḍalinī*, which can grant the rain of bliss by means of grace.

In his most famous philosophical poem *Ātmōpadēśa Śatakam* (“One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction”) Nārāyaṇa Guru includes a chapter (stanzas 21–26) devoted to social duties. His definition of *priyam* – “that which is dear or precious” runs in accordance with the *Advaitic* concept of the ultimate *ānanda*, i.e., Bliss being the aspect of the Absolute that has Its spark in the human world in the form of individual *priyas*.²³ As a result, what is dear (*priyam*) to one person, should be dear to another – *aparan*, as stated in stanza 21:

*priyamoru jātiyitenpriyam tvadīyapriyamapara priyamennanēkamāyi /
priyaviṣayam prati vanniṭum bhramam tanpriyamapara
priyamennarīññiṭēṇam //21//*

What is dear is of one kind²⁴; this is dear to me, something else is dear to you:

In such a way confusion (*bhramam*) arises as regards differentiated objects of endearment.

What is dear to one person, is dear to another (*apara priyam*) – this should be comprehended.²⁵

However, as a *jñānin* of action Guru harnesses such a *Vedāntic* concept to the service of his social politics, which are influenced by the Tamil Siddhas’

²³ Cf. *Advaita Dīpika* 8 by Nārāyaṇa Guru: *ajñānaveḷayilum asti vibhāti raṅṭum ajñātam alla sukhavum vilasunnu mūnnum / rajjusvarūpam ahiyoṭum idantayārnnu nilkunnatinniha nidarśanamām itorttāl* (PRASĀD 2010: 95). “Even in the state of ignorance, ‘exists’, ‘shines forth’: these two aspects are never unknown; as the third [of these aspects], ‘bliss’ appears; when the essential form of the rope becomes associated with a snake, it assumes its ‘thisness’; when considered, this example illustrates the aforementioned”. Cf. PRASĀD (2010: 96): “*Asti*, *bhāti*, *priya* are three conjoined technical terms of *Vedānta*. *Brahman* or *Ātmā* is defined as *sat*, *cit*, *ānanda*. These three, as an individual experiences, are signified by the terms *asti*, *bhāti*, and *priya*. *Sat* means ‘Existence’, and is experienced by an individual as ‘I exist’. This existence of self-existence is referred to as *asti*, meaning ‘something exists’. The essential content of self-existence is pure Consciousness (*cit*) – the consciousness of beingness, effulgence in essence. Never remaining inactive, it incessantly finds expression as stream-like experiences. This function of *cit* is named *bhāti* meaning, ‘the shining forth of something’. Every such experience is more than an event of knowing. It involves an evaluation also, relating the object known to one’s own value notions or likes and dislikes, and thus treating it as pleasurable, painful or indifferent. This phase of the evaluating function of consciousness denotes ‘the state of being dear’ termed *priya*”. Cf. also ŚĀSTRĪKAL (2014: 78–79); YATI (2013: 152–153).

²⁴ Nārāyaṇa Guru treats the term *jāti* (“kind, race, rank, caste”) as a logical category, and, more specifically, one that is generic (*sāmānyam*), that is to say eternal (*nityam*), one (*ēkam*) and existing equally within a diversity or multiplicity of specific objects. *Jāti* represents the whole of humanity (*manuṣyatvam*) endowed with action (*karmam*) and a quality (*guṇam*) that is bliss (*sukham*; *priyam*) (cf. ŚĀSTRĪKAL 2014: 78).

²⁵ Translation based on YATI (2009).

philosophy of grace. In the consecutive stanza 22 of AŚ he explains that such a concept of *priyam* realises itself through *kriya*, i.e., an action:

*priyamaparanteyatenpriyam svakīyapriyamaparapriyamiprakāramāk
um /
nayamatināle narannu nanma nalkum kriyayaparapriya
hētuvāyvarēṇam //22//*

What is dear to another, is also dear to me;
One's own joy is the joy of another – in such a way it would be.
The action (*kriya*) which brings goodness to one person, thanks to
loving grace (*nayam*)²⁶
Should appear as the cause of the joy of another.

Thus, as a social reformer he brings the proper definition of *priyam*; it means an activity, which brings goodness to one person (stanza 23 of AŚ) and appears as a source of goodness for another (*aparan*), all thanks to the grace called *nayam* and strictly associated with Sanskrit *kṛpā* (compassion)²⁷:

*aparanu vēṇṭiyaharnniśam prayatnam kṛpaṇata viṭṭu kṛpālu ceytiṭunnu /
kṛpaṇan adhōmukhanāyū kiṭannu ceyyunnapajaya
karmmamavannuvēṇṭi mātram //23//*

The compassionate one (*kṛpālu*) keeps performing (*ceytiṭunnu*) his
deeds day and night

²⁶ Nātarāja Guru firmly states that stanzas 21–26 are “not meant to be a code of ethics [...] which would belong more to the side of action rather than to understanding” (NĀTARĀJA 2006: 108). The reason for that is that “the present work is devoted mainly to Self-realisation and should be free from the social and obligatory aspects of morality. Therefore, the author contents himself with broad generalizations which have more of a wisdom interest than one of obligatory social action” (NĀTARĀJA 2006: 108). It is, however, worth emphasising here that Nārāyaṇa Guru subordinates all kind of action to the Siddha concept of loving grace (*nayam*), hence each and every deed should be performed under the banner of the Lord's grace alone. Therefore, the process of Self-realisation gives the right value to *karmmam*. In other words, Self-realisation, i.e. a direct experience of grace (*arul*) becomes the *conditio sine qua non* within any kind of activity. In the social context, the term *nayam* can be treated as an equivalent of the perfectly balanced union of the Tamil term *nayam* (loving grace, happiness, goodness, civility, piety, devotion – cf. EMENEAU and BURROW 1961: 239) and the Sanskrit noun *naya* (prudent conduct, good management, civil and military government, wisdom, principle, doctrine – MONIER-WILLIAMS 2011: 528). The Malayalam term *nayam* comprises both semantic scopes (PADMANĀBHAPILLA 2016: 1058; DAKṢIṆĀMŪRTTI 2002: 874). Śāstrikaḷ states that the term *nayam* should be treated as the method, device or means (*upāyam*) that is used to provide the authority for Wisdom or Knowledge (*jñānam*), which is the direct instrument for achieving Self-realisation (*mōkṣattinū sākṣātū sādhanam*). Thus, the term *nayam* can be understood as the divine, higher power or greatness (*vaibhavam*) of the ultimate worship or accomplishment of Transcendence (ŚĀSTRIKAL 2014: 81).

²⁷ The same term *kṛpā* (Mal. *kṛpa* – compassion, mercy, beneficence, desire to do good selflessly. VĀRIYAR et al. (2016: 333) defines the Lord's attitude toward devotees during the process of Self-realisation (cf. *Śiva Satakam* 36: PRASĀD 2016b: 127–129).

For the sake of another, having rejected wretchedness (*kṛpaṇata*²⁸);

The wretched person (*kṛpaṇan*) rests as a downward-faced one

Performs unsuccessful deeds (*karmmam*) for the sake of himself [alone].

In *Tirumandiram* 5 1437 such a *nayam* or *nēyam* denotes the loving grace by means of which *Siddhānta Siddhi* transgresses the sphere of diversity and contradiction²⁹ – also within religious systems – to attain the state of Perfect Oneness identical to *Civam*, i.e. Ultimate Bliss, the Śaivic equivalent of the ultimate *ānanda*, representing the absolute dimension of *priya*:

*onnum raṅṭum illāta onnāyū ninnu mata nirākaraṇam nīṇṇi prājñanāyū /
ninnu parāparai tan pādakkamalamatil cennu śivamākuka siddhānta
śaktiyē*

(NĀYAR 2007: 443–444)

One, two, nothing; remaining in oneness, having escaped from
contradictions

(or: insignificance) within religious systems³⁰, remaining as a wise one,

Having united with loving grace (*nēyam*) of *Parāparai* by means of the

²⁸ It seems that Nārāyaṇa Guru deliberately selects this term instead of the frequently used *kāruṇyam* (mercy, kindness, pity, sympathy) or *anugraham* (favour, kindness, blessing, grace), since its two derivatives – *kṛpālu* (the compassionate person) and *kṛpaṇan* (the poor, wretched person) – present the two “socially” opposite attitudes. The ironical attitude of Nārāyaṇa Guru himself can be traced in confronting these two meanings as well: in fact, it is *kṛpaṇan* (the covetous one) who deserves compassion and pity, and his attitude contributes to the definition of social misery (*kṛpaṇata* – poverty, miserliness). YATI (2013: 163) translates *kṛpaṇata* as “self-centered interests”, and *kṛpaṇan* – as “self-centered man”.

²⁹ Cf. also TM 6 1651: *kāyattērēri manappākan kai telikkavē māyattērēri mayāṇṇi nilkkum; uṇarvurru / nēyattērēri nirmalan aruḷaṭaṅṅāḷ āyattērēri avan ivanāyitām* (NĀYAR 2007: 502). “Having mounted the chariot of the body (*kāya-ttēr ēri*) which is driven by the charioteer of the mind; having mounted the chariot of delusion (*māya-tēr*), they become stupefied; if they mount the chariot of gracious love (*nēya-tēr*) to obtain the grace of the Pure One (*nimalaṇ aruḷ*), having mounted the chariot of Mother (*āya-tēr*), this one becomes that one (*avaṇ ivāṇ āmē*).” Cf. GANAPATHY (2010b: 1798–1799).

³⁰ *Camaya nirāgāram nīṅgi* – “having abandoned insignificance (*nirākāram*) or contradiction (*nirākāram*) of doctrine or practice (*samaya*)”. Cf. “There is contention among the various schools of philosophy regarding reality. To the idealists, reality is one, an Absolute Brahman. To the realist, reality is two – the *Puruṣa* and the *Prakṛti* – the spiritual and the material. To the nihilists, there is nothing called reality; only *śūnya* exists. The sincere practitioner should remain detached from these contending religions because contention – philosophical or ordinary – serves no purpose. Only practice and devotion serve the purpose. Concentrating on the holy feet of the Lord, discarding contention, will bring results. This requires that one remembers the presence of the Lord within, by various methods. [...] when one holds on to the holy feet steadfastly, the rest will be taken care by *Parāparai*, the grace-power of the Lord. The practitioner is showered with grace (*śakti-nipāda*). This helps him to become *Śivam*, that is, attaining Śivahood. This attainment is called *Siddhānta Siddhi*” (ARUMUGAM 2010: 1552–1553).

holy feet

(*Parāparai nēyattaip-pādattāl cenru*), the *Siddhānta Siddhi* remains
Civam Itself.

TM 5 1420 claims that the loving grace of *Śaivas* is identical to eternity (*nityam*) and transcendence (*param*); it goes far beyond the realm of any differentiation or duality, even such as *sat* (existence) and *asat* (non-existence).³¹ The same loving grace, as stated in TM 7 1958, allows the *Śaiva* to be adept at kindling the fire of *Kuṇḍalinī* and lifting it to the sphere of the sun (i.e., the heart *cakra*), above the throat *cakra* up to the moon region of the head and beyond (*sahasrāra*, *dvādaśānta*), where the appearance of the cool *amṛta* announces the attainment of the stage of *ānanda* or *Civam*, i.e., the absolute Bliss:

*vinduvām bījam mēviya mūla nandiyatine agniyāl nayamārnneri /
ccantamillā [ati]bhānuvatine kaṇṭham mēlākki ccandranil ccālikkil
taṇṇamṛtē*

(NĀYAR 2007: 592)

Having burnt lovingly (*nayam*) with the increased fire (*nandiya aṅgi*)
The seed of *Bindu* (*vinduveṇ vījam*) [laid] in the abode of the root
(*mūlam*),

Having raised it to the endless Sun (*bāṇu = bhānu*) and above the throat
[*cakra = kaṇṭha*],

As soon as one unites with the Moon (*candiraṇ*) [region], the cool
amudu [appears].³²

³¹ *sattum asattum sadasattum tān kaṇṭu siddhum asiddhum cērnniṭā mēlninnū śuddhum aśuddhum kalarnniṭāyurnnū nityam paraśuddham śaivartam prēmamē* (NĀYAR 2007: 439). “Having realised the Existence, Non-Existence and Existence-Non-Existence alone after breaking connection with consciousness and unconsciousness; having remained with no immersion in the pure as well as impure – what is eternal (*nittam = nityam*) and transcendent (*param*) is the loving grace (*nēyam*) of [extremely] pure *Śaivas* (*paraṅcutta caivar*).”

³² “Here is described the white seed of *bindu* with the ever-rising fire of *kuṇḍalini śakti* in the abiding *mūlādhāra*. The *yogin* raises it to the ever-lasting region of the sun. Then it is kept near the cool moon, which will produce ambrosia to be consumed. The sun region is the space between the navel and heart. The moon region lies in between the eye-brows and extends to the crest. If the *bindu* is awakened with the fire of *kuṇḍalini śakti* and coursed with the breath to the *sahasrāra*, ambrosia will manifest. That will bestow longevity and everlasting bliss to the *yogin*. The exact method for doing so is reserved for initiation by an adept in *kuṇḍalini yoga*” (SOMASUNDARAM 2010: 2150). Cf. also TM 1 304: *īśanavan aruḷiṭuvattallō janimṛti cakram pāśamōṭṭēru pīrarkkuraceytu bhaktipūṇṭu / nēśamōṭu ninnāl katir oḷicintum vāsamalargandhan vannanañṇu vāḷitumallō* (NĀYAR 2007: 116). “The Lord’s grace, death and birth (*īcaṇ aruḷum iṛappum pīrappaiyum*): you remain praising, squeezing (*pitarruka*) within and obtaining joy; the gracious love will come (*nēcam = nēyam*); having settled as the shining Brilliant Light (*nigal-oli*), He would stay permanently [like] a scent of a fragrant flower (*vāca = vāsa*) *malar-k-kandam*) [within you].”

Nārāyaṇa Guru seems to select such a Śaiva system of dynamic transformation on account of the fact that it gives preference to the loving grace of the Father as well as to the famous motto of the *Siddhas*: “There is only one race, one God; do think only of goodness” (expressed in TM 7 2104). However, the metaphysical reflection of the social and religious transformation was not enough for Nārāyaṇa Guru. As a *jñānin* of action he preferred such a transformation to be in fact implemented within Kerala’s body³³ – representative of the pit of suffering, which was to be transformed into the pit of bliss. Thus, in the following stanzas of AŚ (23; 25, 26) the posture of an “unsociable” man is presented ironically by Nārāyaṇa Guru by means of several key-words from the Śaiva *Siddhānta* doctrine. In stanza 23, Nārāyaṇa Guru hails the attitude of the compassionate one (*kṛpālu*) who keeps performing his deeds for the sake of another day and night. On the other hand, the wretched person (*kṛpaṇan*) remains non-active and rests (*kiṭannu*) as *adhōmukhan* – the downward faced one, performing unsuccessful deeds for himself alone. In order to mock the egocentric posture of those who perform actions for themselves, Nārāyaṇa Guru ironically calls such a person *kṛpaṇa* – a wretched person – as opposed to *kṛpa*, the Lord’s grace; he also ridicules his posture with the compound (*adhōmukhan* i.e., downward faced one), which constitutes an epithet praising the Merciful Lord Civaṇ in TM 2 521:

*aṇḍamoṭu eṇḍisatāṇṇum adhōmukha kaṇṭham karutta karuttuṇarunnilla
nērāyū /
uṇṭatu nañcennuracciṭuvōr uṇarvillātōr veṇṭala māla viri
jaṭayōneyaṇṇē*

(NĀYAR 2007: 182–183)

The Downward-Faced Lord (*adhōmugam*) supports eight directions along with the Egg of Universe;

The darkened throat, nobody knows the purpose of that;

“He consumed the poison” – the non-awakened would quarrel like that;

The One who wears reddish matted hair and the garland of white skulls.³⁴

³³ Kerala’s body in such a case can be treated as a representation of individual beings, who are to be liberated collectively - in social terms - in the process of Self-transformation by means of the Lord’s grace.

³⁴ “The skulls belong to the *devas*. Lord Śiva is the Lord of the universe, including all *devas*. It is this downward face that upholds the world, and emanates grace unto souls. The primary objective of grace is to redeem souls from ignorance, brought upon them by *āṇava-mala*. *Āṇava* plunges the soul in ignorance, which is darkness. The Lord’s grace removes darkness. The blackness of the neck of the Lord may signify the ignorance of the soul. When the Lord carries out His fivefold action, with grace He creates the world, places the soul in it and provides worldly experiences for it to complete the *karmic* cycle. When the soul finally turns its attention away from the world and toward God, His grace operating through His downward

It is said that through the *adōmugam* Lord Civaṅ confers His grace upon living beings, as it is the Downward Face that is in intimate contact with devotees. “It showers compassion and leads souls from ignorance to the path of liberation”. “The concept of Adhomukha provides a beautiful form through which the grace of the Lord visibly functions.”³⁵

Not only is *priyam* the spark of universal Bliss (*ānanda*), which is an aspect of the One Absolute itself. Each individual primordially is the essential form (*rūpam* or *svarūpam*) of such a Reality, which is named *Ātman* by Nārāyaṇa Guru in stanza 24 of AŚ:

avan ivan ennaṛiyunnatokkeyōrttālavanīyil ādimamāyū orātmārūpam /
avan avan ātmasukhattinācarikkunnavaṇaparannu sukhattināyū
varēṇam //24//

“This one”, “that one” – all that is known in this world in such a way,
If contemplated, primordially (*ādimamāyū*) is the essential form of
Ātman alone (*ātmārūpam*);

Those deeds which are being performed for the happiness of such a self
[= the Self],
Should appear as that which brings happiness to another self
[= the Self]³⁶.

The universal Self remains the basis for all individual “selves”; as a result, any deed performed for the sake of any individual self by definition should bring happiness (*sukham*) to the rest of the selves which are rooted in the one Self or *Ātman*. Such is the attitude of the real *Śiddhānta Siddhi*, who acts through loving grace (*nayam*, *nēyam*) for the sake of *poruḷ*, i.e., one Substance identical to *svarūpam*.

face removes the final vestiges of *āṇava-mala*. The blackness at the neck may point to the fact it is the Lord’s grace that upholds all universe” (VENKATARAMAN 2010b: 623). The proper meaning of the consumption of poison by Lord Śiva is the absorption of the real venom, that is *iruḷ* or darkness of ignorance, or *āṇava mala*. In such a process, the activation of *aruḷ*, i.e. the Lord’s grace, is necessary, as the whole of *iruḷ* becomes finally transformed into *aruḷ*, in accordance with the realistic and monistic vision of Self-Wholeness and Singularity of *Civam*. Arumugam understands poison as semen: “Because the vital *Vindu* (semen), when wasted, brings death, it was interpreted as poison by Tirumūlar. He has also noted the dire consequences of wasting the *Vindu* and the benefits of retaining it. Since the down-flowing *Vindu* brings disaster it is considered as poison. The *Vindu* preserved and directed upward becomes nectar. This conversion is made possible by igniting the *Kuṇḍalinī* fire” (ARUMUGAM 2006b: 131).

³⁵ VENKATARAMAN (2010b: 621).

³⁶ The Sanskrit term *ātman* can be understood here in the *Upaniṣadic* meaning, i.e. the Absolute Self or Soul or the self (reflexive pronoun). Therefore, the compound *ātma[sva]rūpam* should be translated as the essential form or [each] self as well as the essential form of the Universal Self. Consequently, the second compound – *ātma-sukham* – when associated with two other terms: *avan* and *aparan* – obtains the meaning of “happiness to this self = the Self” and “happiness to another self = the Self”.

In stanza 25 of AŚ, Nārāyaṇa Guru continues to ridicule the activity of the unsociable one. He is condemned as a person who brings extreme suffering to another, i.e., *param paritāpam*. The latter term is derived from the Sanskrit root *pari-tap* – “to undergo penance, practice austerities”:

*oruvanu nallatum anyanallalum cērpporu toḷil ātmavirōdhiyōrttiṭēṇam /
paramu param paritāpam ēkiṭunnōr erinarakābdhiyil vīṇeriññiṭunnu //25//*

What brings goodness to one person and misery – to another,
Such activity is opposed to the Self – you should remember that!
The one who brings extreme grief (burning – *paritāpam*)³⁷ to
another perWill fall and burn constantly in the fiery ocean of hell
(*erinarakābdhi*).

The attitude mentioned above brings to mind the self-centered posture assumed by Arddhanārīśvaran in the hymn analysed earlier. When juxtaposed with the term *param*, denoting transcendence, the whole phrase can define the attitude of one who strives for his own liberation alone, resulting in the state of *Paramātmāvū* – ultimate transcendence deprived of the intimacy that provides others with grace and compassion. Such egocentric behaviour, devoid of mercy (*kṛpa*) and filled with wretchedness (*kṛpaṇata*), can provide goodness to one person immersed in the burning penance aimed at transcendence; at the same time, it brings extreme suffering or burning pain to other people. The social responsibility established by means of the law of *Ātma-rūpam*, i.e., the essential identity of all human beings, makes such a self-centered person, who causes burning to others, suffer the same grief. He would fall and burn constantly in the fiery ocean of hell (*erinarakābdhi*), called in *Arddhanārīśvara Stavam* 1 *ālī* (“depth of ocean”) identical to *tīkkūḷi* – the fiery pit. As a follower of the Siddhas’ tradition, Nārāyaṇa Guru approves the concept of kindling the fire in the pit of *mūlādhara cakra*, which is identical to burning the seed of suffering; as a social reformer, he ridicules the idea of striving for liberation as an ultimate goal in itself. Such a process should be always set in the social context, as the law of *Ātma-rūpam* requires a commitment whose goal is the transformation of the fiery pit into the ocean of bliss *in toto*, i.e., for the sake of the whole society.

Once again Nārāyaṇa Guru mocks the attitude assumed by the self-centered one in stanza 26 of *Ātmōpadēśa Śatakam*. Such a person suppresses all his limbs together as if in the *yogic* posture. As a result, he remains immovable, while resembling a small peg (*āni*). As the same term denotes excellence or superiority in Tamil, the usage of such a word can be regarded as an ironical description of the self-centered one: although erected excellently, in fact it is like a small peg, he keeps veiling his life-breath, or *svarūpam*, with ignorance:

³⁷ *Paritāpa* itself, apart from the meaning given in the translation above, has another meaning of a particular hell in the Sanskrit literary tradition (MONIER-WILLIAMS 2011: 595).

*avayavamokkeyamarttiyāñiyāyū ninnavayaviyāviyeyāvaricciṭunnu /
avan ivan ennatināl avan ninaykkunnavāśatayām avivēkam
onninālē //26//*

Suppressing all limbs together, remaining immovable like a peg (or
excellence – *āñi*)³⁸ –

³⁸ NĀYAR (2010: 604) interprets the phrase *āñiyāyū ninnavayavi* as *ellā pravarttanaiṅṅaḷuṭēyum kēndramāyi ninnirunna nān nān enna jīvan*, i.e. “the individual soul [that assumes the form of self-consciousness] such as: ‘I am indeed the central point of all events’”. Thus, according to him, such an attitude can be translated as “the self-centered person”. Nātarāja Guru states: “As we press towards this culminating notion in which the self is compared to an airy nothing or vaporous something, we have to pass through an intermediate notion of the ‘personality’ or universal individual phenotype, which is here compared to a bolt that stands upright or erect in perfect vertical poise” (NĀTARĀJA 2006: 118). The term *āvi* denotes breath, sigh, soul, steam, vapour or smoke (EMENEAU and BURROW 1961: 28); in general, it can be associated with vital *prāṇa*. In TM 3 624, Tirumūlar equates vital breath with *vāyu* (i.e., wind) imprisoned within the body; such breath should be joined to the ground of *mūlādhāra* in the process of *Kuṇḍalinī Yoga*. As a result, it can be released through loving grace that opens the third eye of *ājñā*; finally, the soul is able to consume the sweet fruit of ultimate liberation: *pūṭtomeyil poriyatilāya vāyuve tēṭṭam arṛū annilam cērumāru vaccē / nāṭṭatte viṭṭu nayanattilākkiyōrkku tōṭṭattu mānbaḷam kaniñṅapōle* (NĀYAR 2007: 212). “Having treasured the Breath (*vāyu*) joined to the ground (*nilam* = *mūlādhāra*) that is beyond searching, caught within the body (or truth – *mey*), which is like a closure: for those who remain united with loving grace (*nayan*) while releasing their Eye, the ripe mango fruit of the garden awaits suspended [there].” Cf. VENKATARAMAN (2010c: 747). Cf. also TM 3 714. Since the whole process of kindling the fire is presented as the *homa* sacrifice, the breath within assumes the shape of sharp, most subtle smoke (*nun-pugai*), which unites with the nectar of immortality (*amudu*) in TM 4 1091. The minuteness, sharpness and extremity of such an experience refers to the *prāṇa* itself, *amudu* (cf. TM 1 249) as well as to the intellect or discrimination (in TM 9 2961 the sharp sword of the [bright] mind, *ayil maṅga vāl*, cf. GANAPATHY 2010c: 3368). *tāmakuḷali dayākkanni uḷḷinilkkum ēvaliruḷ arṭtiṭum iḷamkoṭi / hōmappurum cuṭar uḷḷileḷum nunpuka mēviya amutoṭu mīṅṅatu kāṅuvin* (NĀYAR 2007: 351). “The woman with curled hair adorned with flower-garland, her eyes [filled with] compassion, remains within the Heart; She is the tender creeper (*iḷaṅkoḍi*), which blows away the darkness spread within the loom [of (the) universe]; the sharp and subtle smoke (*nunpugai*) that rises within as the great effulgence (*peruṅcuḍar*) of *ōma* [fire-sacrifice], when united [there] with *amudu* [*amṛtū*], comes back here – Oh! see!” Cf. commentary: “The inner murk is *āṅava mala*. The *homa*-fire burns in the *mūlādhāra*. The smoke is the power that blends with the vital air (*prāṇa-vāyu*); it reaches the *sahasrāra* and then descends with the elixir of immortality” (RAMACHANDRAN 2010: 1253). The term *āñi*, on the other hand, means in Malayalam a metal nail, a spike, peg; a short piece of iron (Sanskrit *āñi* or *añi* means the point of a needle; a linchpin, bolt or pin at the end of a carriage pole). There is, however, another Dravidian meaning of the same noun, that is excellence, superiority (EMENEAU and BURROW 1961: 26); the compound *āñi-ppon* denotes in such a case gold of the finest quality (the same meaning is attested by *Śabdatārāvali*; cf. PADMANĀBHAPILLA 2016: 259). In the TM the aforementioned compound becomes the key-word of the metaphor of smelting the *amudam* (immortality nectar); apart from *mūlādhāra*, another forge is situated in *ājñā*, the place of Subrahmaṅya. Here, molten gold of the finest quality, when improved, turns to be *amṛta* at the end of the day (in *sahasrāra* and above, in *dvādaśānta*). Cf. TM 1 131: *māñikyamuḷḷile marakatajyōṭiyāyū māñikyamuḷḷile marakatamāṭamāyū / āñippon maṅḍapattilāṭum tirukkūttine pēñittoḷuvinētu siddhiyārnnivar?* (NĀYAR 2007: 64). “Like the Effulgence (*cōdi*) of the Emerald (*marakada*) within (in the Heart

The limb owner keeps covering (*āvaricciṭunnu*) his own life-vapour (*āvi*);

Thanks to that, he differentiates between “this one” and “that one” –
Due solely to the non-discrimination (*avivēkam*) which is disability
itself.

Therefore, the self-centered one, as opposed to the Self-centered one, differentiates between “this person” and “that person” due to the non-discrimination (*avivēkam*). Such a disability is the result of the lack of loving grace (*nayam*), by which one conquers the sense of multiplicity and multitude.

* * *

The ironical language introduced by Nārāyaṇa Guru allows us to interpret the passages mentioned above in a wider, social context. The statements such as *aparanu vēṅṅi* (“for the sake of another”) or *priyam oru jāti* (“bliss is of one kind”) can be translated in accordance with Nārāyaṇa Guru’s politics of grace as follows: “for the sake of inferior ones (*apara*)” and “what is blissful is the one caste (*oru jāti*)”. Thus, the main social *mahāvākyas* propagated by Nārāyaṇa Guru, which could be traced in his devotional hymns and philosophical works, are as follows:

***aparanu vēṅṅi* (for the sake of another person) = for the sake of
inferior ones (*apara*)
priyam oru jāti (bliss is of one kind) = what is blissful is one caste
(*oru jāti*)**

Nārāyaṇa Guru deliberately combines the terms and concepts of *Vedānta* and *Siddhānta*. The rigid philosophical system of *Vedānta* transferred in Sanskrit – the language reserved for upper caste people, has been supported with the realistic *Śaiva* system of the Siddhas, who claimed only one race and caste for all. The main concept of *Śaiva Siddhānta* – the loving grace of the Lord and

of the Ruby (*māṅikkam*), like the Hall (*māḍam*) of the Emerald (*marakada*) within (in the Heart of) the Ruby (*māṅikkam*), that is the divine dance performed in the Hall (*maṅṅu*) of the Gold of the finest quality (*āṅi-ppoṅ*), when worshipping That with adoration, they can attain the Ultimate Childbirth (*pēru*). Cf. TM 7 2064: *māṅikyamālapōl malarneḷum maṅḍalam tanniḷ āṅipponnāyū ninnamṛtam viḷayikkumatine / pēṅikkonṅuṅṅōr piṅappaṅṅirunnōr uṅākki uṅṅu kaḷiccōr uṅarā manuṅyar* (NĀYAR 2007: 607). “In the region (circle – *maṅḍalam*), where the garland of the rubies (*māṅikka mālai*) flourishes, remains the gold of the finest quality (*āṅi-ppoṅ*) and the *amudam* ripens (*viḷaintadu*); those who cherish it while consuming, will become birthless (*piṅappaṅṅirundār*); those who do not realise it, remain for the sake of the body alone”. Thus, both terms introduced by Nārāyaṇa Guru – *āvi* and *āṅi* – can denote insignificant or minor things when related to the self-centered personality; while interpreted in the context of *Kuṅḍalinī Yoga* and the politics of grace based on the Siddhas’ twilight language, they constitute the basic aspects of the proper transformation and Self-realisation of each individual being. Therefore, the latter personality can be defined as the Self-centered one.

Father – has been used by Nārāyaṇa Guru as a tool for his politics of social transformation and reformation, which ridicules the concept of individual Self-realisation: since such loving grace of the Lord pervades the whole, equally real ocean of the universe, the liberation process should be aimed at the whole society.

The social application of the common pattern of the Lord's grace bestowed in the form of waters, both external (rain, flood) and internal (tears) can be easily extended throughout the reform movement started by Nārāyaṇa Guru. The installation of the stone resembling *Śivaliṅga* by Nārāyaṇa Guru in Aruvippuram, while shedding tears of compassion,³⁹ could become an excellent example of the universality and flexibility of such a pattern. Moreover, the answer given by Nārāyaṇa Guru, when being questioned by Brahmin society (“What I have installed is only *Ḫava Śivan*”),⁴⁰ brings to mind other possibilities of interpretation of the stanzas of the *Arddhanārīśvara Stavam*, while speaking of ironic language of Nārāyaṇa Guru in the light of his politics of grace, following the mystic system of Tirumūlar. The stanzas 1 248 and 1 249 of the TM, mentioned in the article, seem to have its equivalents in the magical hymns of the *Atharvaveda* (cf. 1.2.1, where the healing rain is called Father and protector, or 1.4.4, where *amṛta* is said to reside within heavenly waters).⁴¹ Thus, recitation of the *Arddhanārīśvara Stavam*, showing the influence of Dravidian mystic system of the *Tirumandiram*, as well as the magic elements of Sanskrit *Atharvaveda*, as if opposition to the trinity of other *Vedas* is the source of Brahminism, reveals to us another dimension of the irony of the Nārāyaṇa Guru's language and attitude. This problem, however, requires further in-depth study.

Abbreviations

AS *Arddhanārīśvara Stavam*. Ed.: PRASĀD (2016a).

AŚ *Ātmōpadēśa Śatakam*. Ed.: PRASĀD (2012).

TM *Tirumandiram*. Ed.: GANAPATHY et al. (2010).

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³⁹ KUMARAN (2014: 83–84).

⁴⁰ KUMARAN (2014: 85).

⁴¹ RAJESH (2005: 6–11).

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