



# The Twilight Language of *Svānubhava Gīti* by Nārāyaṇa Guru – Analysis of Selected Stanzas in the Light of *Tirumantiram* and Other Tamil Literary Sources

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## Abstract

This paper attempts to interpret selected stanzas from the work of Nārāyaṇa Guru (1854–1928), a South Indian philosopher and social reformer from Kerala. The ancient yogic concept of *kuṇḍalinī śakti* presented by Guru in his short poem the *Kuṇḍalinī Pāṭṭ* (*The Song of the Kundalini Snake*) also appears in *Svānubhava Gīti – Lyric of Ecstatic Self-Experience* (among others in stanza 41 and 42) – the Malayalam hymn which represents the *nirguṇa*-poetry describing the mystical experience. An analysis of each motif included in the stanzas mentioned above in the light of Tamil Śaiva tradition (among others *Tirumantiram* by Tirumūlar) shows that not only the *kuṇḍalinī* concept could have been adopted from Tamil tradition; Nārāyaṇa Guru seems to apply the very same style of presentation of yogic experiences to his works by means of the twilight language. A comparative analysis of *Svānubhava Gīti* and *Tirumantiram* allows us to better understand the concept of the Śiva-Śakti relations presented by Guru.

**Key words:** *Svānubhava Gīti*, Nārāyaṇa Guru, *Tirumantiram*, *kuṇḍalinī*, twilight language

**Słowa kluczowe:** *Pieśń o samorealizacji*, Narajana Guru, *Tirumantiram*, kundalini, język metafor

## Introduction

In this paper I will attempt to interpret selected stanzas of the *Svānubhava Gīti* (*Lyric of Ecstatic Self-Experience* – henceforth SG) by Nārāyaṇa Guru – a South Indian philosopher and social reformer from Kerala.<sup>1</sup> In his mystical poem, Nārāyaṇa Guru includes mysterious descriptions of Śiva and Śakti, whose union becomes the goal of yogic practice.<sup>2</sup> Three commentators suggest interpreting this idea in the context of Kuṇḍalinī Yoga, which introduces the concept of *kuṇḍalinī śakti*, a serpent power which is coiled at the base of the spine in a state of sleep. The Tantric Yoga of the South adopted and revised the methods of Patañjali (Aṣṭāṅga Yoga) and added the practice of rousing the *kuṇḍalinī*, which means directing it upwards through the *suṣumnā* channel – the spinal or central column within the human body – to the crown of the head, where the *sahasrāra cakra* (lotus) blooms.<sup>3</sup> It is worth comparing the stanzas of SG mentioned above with the relevant passages of the Tamil Śaivite work – the *Tirumantiram* (TM) by Tirumūlar.<sup>4</sup> An attempt to interpret these stanzas by means of the

<sup>1</sup> Nārāyaṇa Guru (1854–1928), a South Indian philosopher, saint and social reformer from Kerala. He applied the basic aspects of his philosophical system which comprised Vedānta, Yoga, Sāṃkhya, Śaivism etc. to bring about radical social transformations in Kerala. Nārāyaṇa Guru did not write any commentaries on canonical texts like *Upaniṣads* or *Bhagavad Gīta*; instead he created – in three languages (Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil) – original works classified into five groups: 1. Devotional hymns; 2. Works of moral importance; 3. Translations from Sanskrit and Tamil; 4. Prose works; 5. Philosophical works (V. Jayakumar, *Sree Narayana Guru. A Critical Study*, New Delhi 1924; M. Kumaran, *The Biography of Sree Narayana Guru*, Varkala 2014).

*Svānubhava Gīti* – *Lyric of Ecstatic Self-Experience* – is a devotional hymn composed by Nārāyaṇa Guru in the Malayalam language around 1984 in Aruvippuram. The first three sets of ten verses were separately named *Anubhūti Daśakam* (*Ten Verses on Ecstatic Self-Experience*), *Prapañcaśuddhi Daśakam* (*Ten Verses on Clarity about Phenomenal World*), *Paramaśivā Cintā Daśakam* (*Ten Verses on Reflections on Parama Śiva*). The rest of the work was called *Vibhu Darśanam* (*Visualising the All-pervading God*). Forty verses are missing after ten verses of this section [hence editions offer two kinds of numeration: 41 or 81, 42 or 82 etc.]. Another name by which this work is known is *Amṛtatarāṅgi* (*The River of Immortal Elixir*) (M.N. Prasād, *Narayana Guru. Complete Works*, New Delhi 2006, p. 83).

<sup>2</sup> In several stanzas of *Svānubhava Gīti* (among others 41, 42, 45, 46, 47 and 49), Nārāyaṇa Guru introduces mystical description of the union of Śiva and Śakti by means of metaphorical language. In this paper I will examine two stanzas of *Svānubhava Gīti*: 41 and 42.

<sup>3</sup> “Teachers in the south did not develop a separate system based on Śaiva doctrines contained in the Āgamas, but revised the already prevalent system of Patañjali” (B.N. Pandit, *Specific Principles of Kashmir Śaivism*, New Delhi 1997, p. 93).

<sup>4</sup> Nārāyaṇa Guru was proficient in Tamil language and literature – as well as in Malayalam and Sanskrit – (N.C. Yati, *Narayana Guru*, New Delhi 2007, p. 13; M. Balachandran, *Sree Narayana Guru. A Comprehensive Study*, Varkala 2015, pp. 20–21). He studied yoga with notable ascetics such as Caṭṭambi Svāmikaḷ and Taikkāṭṭi Ayyāsvāmikaḷ, a novice of Śiva Rāja Yoga based on *Tirumantiram*, which is said to be the first exposition of Śaiva Siddhānta in Tamil Nadu (G.V. Tagare, *Śaivism. Some Glimpses*, New Delhi 1996, p. 60) and “the earliest representation of Tantric thought and practice among the Tamil citters [Siddhas]” (D.R. Brooks, *Auspicious Fragments and Uncertain Wisdom: The Roots of Śrīvidyā Śākta Tantrism in South India* [in:] *The Roots of Tantra*, K.A. Harper, R.L. Brown (eds.), Albany 2002, p. 57). The author of *Tirumantiram* – Tirumūlar – is described in the *Periya Purāṇam* by Śekkiḷār as a Śaivite *yogi* born in *Kailāsa* mountain, who travelled to Tamil Nadu and composed *Tirumantiram* within 3000 years (S. Ponnuswamy, *Sekkizhar’s Periya Puranam*, Chennai 2015, pp. 252–255). According to another version, Tirumūlar was born in Tamil Nadu and travelled to Mount Kailāsa (K.R. Arumugam, *Introduction* [in:] *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular. Essays on the Tirumandiram*, T.N. Ganapathy, K.R. Arumugam,

so-called twilight language (*sandhyābhāṣā*) of *Tirumantiram* by Tirumūlar as well as of works of other Tamil Siddhas (metaphorical language of deceptive simplicity, in which the most sacred is hidden in the form of the most ordinary)<sup>5</sup> shows that comparative analysis of these two works – the Tamil *Tirumantiram* and the Malayalam *Svānubhava Gīti* – can be an efficient instrument for research into *nirguṇa* poetry, presenting indescribable moments of self-realisation. It is worth emphasising here that Nārāyaṇa Guru – just like the author of TM – avoids the term *kuṇḍalinī* or *cakra*<sup>6</sup> (i.e. the energy centre) while introducing *sandhyābhāṣā* in his works.

The supreme reality, representing *nirguṇa* state and transcending all tattvas (principles of the universe) as well as the highest *cakra* (*sahasrāra*), has been described in *Tirumantiram* as *Parāparam* that has neither beginning nor end; when consorting with *Parāparai* (feminine gender), it gave birth to *Param* (*Para Śiva*) and *Parai* (*Parā Śakti*).<sup>7</sup> From the union of *Param* and *Parai* [*para-*]nāda was born. When *para-nāda* united with *para-bindu*, Śiva and Śakti tattvas were born.<sup>8</sup> This order of

G. Anand (eds.), Quebec 2006, pp. 8–9; T.N. Ganapathy, *Life Sketches of the Siddhas* [in:] *The Yoga of the 18 Siddhas. An Anthology*, T.N. Ganapathy (ed.), Quebec 2004, p. 21). It is worth emphasising here that the concept of *kuṇḍalinī* imagined as a dancing snake (*ātunna pāmb*), mentioned by Guru in another poem, *Kuṇḍalinī Pāṭṭi* (*The Song of the Kundalini Snake*), was borrowed from the Tamil songs of Pāmbāṭṭi Siddhar (T.B. Nair, *Jñānakkāṭal* (*Malayalam Mercital Version of Jnanakkovai, in Tamil*), Trivandrum 1974, pp. 48–65; cf. T.B. Siddhalingaiah, *Pāmbāṭṭiccittar. Selections from Dance, oh! Snake! Dance* [in:] *The Yoga of the 18 Siddhas...*, pp. 485–513).

<sup>5</sup> According to Ganapathy, twilight language means that “the ideas may be explained either by the light of the day or by the darkness of the night” (T.N. Ganapathy, *A Curtain Raiser* [in:] *The Yoga of the 18 Siddhas...*, p. 3). To express their mystical experience and to conceal the spiritual doctrines of *Kuṇḍalinī* Yoga from the uninitiated, the Siddhas used a paradoxical language – “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 meaning of the poems operates at two levels – one, the exoteric and the linguistic, the other, the esoteric and the symbolical” (*idem*, *The Twilight Language of the Tirumantiram* [in:] *The Yoga of the 18 Siddhas...*, pp. 295–297).

<sup>6</sup> The cakras, i.e. energy centres pierced by *kuṇḍalinī śakti* during her ascension within *suṣumnā* channel, are: *mūlādhāra*, situated at the base of the spine; *svādhiṣṭhāna* – located below the navel, *maṇipūra* – behind the navel, *anāhata* – the heart *cakra*, *viśuddha* – the throat *cakra*, *ājñā* – located in the space between the eyebrows. The highest point is called *sahasrāra cakra*, located on the top of the head.

<sup>7</sup> “*Parāparam* that has neither Beginning nor End, in pure Consciousness consorted with *Parāparai* and in that Light Pure arose *Param*; and from union of *Param* with *Parai* immaculate was *Nāda* born //381// *Nāda* united with *Bindu*; from the union of *Nāda-Bindu* was Śiva and Śakti born; from them evolved the three – *Jñāna*, *Kriyā* and *Ichā*; *Ichā* then sought union with *Bindu*” //382// (*Tirumantiram* by Tirumular, B. Natarajan (transl. and ed.), Madras 1991, p. 92).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Malayalam commentary (C.K.G. Nāyar, *Tirumūlanāyanār Tirumantram*, Kottayam 2007, p. 140): *parāparam* – *paramāyayilinnunum vimuktanāyavan*; *param* – *parāśakti* – “*parāparam* – the one who is released from/free[d] from *para*, *māya* [i.e. all levels/aspects of *śakti*]; *param* means *parāśakti*” [i.e. transcendental one]. In TM 8 2285 *Paramparaṅ* (*Parāparam*) is defined as superior to *Paramam* and *Param*. Compare also *Śabdatārāvāli* (*Malayālam Nighaṅṭu*), K.G. Padmanābhapiṭṭa (ed.), Kottayam 2011, pp. 1172, 1177); “The neuter *Parāparam* leaves no idea of *Śakti*, or female energy” (H. Israel, *Religious Transactions in Colonial South India. Language, Translation, and Making of Protestant Identity*, New York 2011, p. 94). The Siddhas are described as unbelievers of personal deity – for them there is an “It” or “Thatness” – *Parāparam* (P.S. Somasundaran, *Maccamuṇi. Kāraṇa Jñānam-10* (*Source of Wisdom*) [in:] *The Yoga of the 18 Siddhas...*, pp. 164–165). Ganapathy interprets the term *Parāparam* as impersonal conception – “It” or “Thatness”, “Suchness” (T.N. Ganapathy, *A Curtain Raiser*, p. 1).

creation agrees completely with the monistic view of Kashmir Śaivism.<sup>9</sup> Nandakumar differentiates between meditation of the *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* kind; in the former case, one concentrates upon the form of Śakti (*parā-dhyāna*), whereas with the latter one meditates upon the concept of transcendent Śivam – *parāpara-dhyāna*.<sup>10</sup>

## Interpretation of motifs included in stanzas 41 and 42 of SG in the light of Tamil literary sources

As mentioned above, in several stanzas of SG (41, 42, 45, 46, 47, 49) Nārāyaṇa Guru introduces the concept of a golden, beautiful or flowery creeper (*ponninkoṭi*; *pūṅkoṭi*), which represents the other side (*bhāgam*) of Śiva, and which is inseparably connected with Him and imagined as covering the Primeval/Original Tree or mounting the Silvery Mountain (SG 46). In this paper I will try to interpret two stanzas of SG: 41 and 42.

### A. Stanza 41

*onnumariṅṅīlayyō ninnuṭe līlāviśēṣamitu valutē /*

*ponninkoṭiyoru bhāgam tanniḷ currippaṭarnna tanimaramē // 41 / 81 //*

How great is your particular divine game! Nothing of that is comprehended by me – what a pity!

The golden creeper entwines you as [an inseparable] part of you, o the Primeval Tree!

The golden creeper (*ponninkoṭi*) is described as entwining the Primeval Tree (*tanimaram*), constituting an inseparable part of It. According to commentators, the climbing vine represents the Goddess Pārvati and the part (*bhāgam*) can denote the left side,<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> G. Anand, T.N. Ganapathy, *Monistic Theism of the Tirumandiram and Kashmir Śaivism* [in:] *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular...*, pp. 489–492.

<sup>10</sup> P. Nandakumar, *Tirumūlar Dhyānam-20 (Meditation)* [in:] *The Yoga of the 18 Siddhas...*, p. 75.

<sup>11</sup> *ponvallipōle saundaryamuḷla pārvati* – “Pārvati beautiful like the golden creeper”; *oru bhāgam – oru vaśatt; iṭatuvaśatt* – “On the one side – on the left side” (T. Bhāskaran, *Śrīnārāyaṇaguruvinṛe Sampūrṇakṛtikā*, Kozhikode 2015, p. 332). In the *Ardhanārīśvara* concept, the left side is occupied by the Goddess/Śakti, and the right one by Lord Śiva. In the Spanda doctrine of Kashmir Śaivism, “this Goddess is called Vyomeśvarī, Vyomeśvarī or simply Vāmeśvarī. She is the Goddess (*īśvarī*) who resides in the sky (*vyoman*) and emits, spits out or vomits (Sanskrit root *vam*) the universe of personal experience out of the universal experience of the absolute [...]. As Her name *Vāmā* (meaning ‘left’, ‘perverse’ or ‘contrary’) indicates, She accounts for a reversal or, more precisely, a ‘double-reversal’ within the absolute. For the unenlightened, She is the source of diversity and, as such, She is the potential cause of bondage – the ‘reverse’ of Śiva’s state of unity and freedom” (M.S.G. Dyczkowski, *The Doctrine of Vibration. An Analysis of the Doctrines and Practices of Kashmir Shaivism*, Delhi 1987, pp. 129–130). It seems that a similar concept can be found in *Ātmōpadēśa Śatakam (One Hundred Verses on Self-Instruction)* by Nārāyaṇa Guru: *aṛivilirunnorahantayādyamuṅṭay varumitinōtoridanta vāmayāyum/varumiva raṅṭulaṇṇāḷ pōle māyāmaramakhilam maṛayappaṭarnniṭunnu //51//* (“Having existed within consciousness, the I-ness, in the beginning, arises; together with I-ness This-ness comes as its counterpart/on the left side. These two, while coming, like creepers cover completely the *māyā*’s tree to conceal it”).

the creeper of *prāṇa* consisting of *tejas*,<sup>12</sup> or the *māyā*-creeper identical to Pārvatī;<sup>13</sup> the golden colour indicates the transformation of the lower *śakti* into the higher one, as stated by Prasād: “That golden creeper is nothing else but Pārvatī. As soon as Kālī becomes transformed into Gauri, such a golden colour can be obtained.”<sup>14</sup> The *Purāṇic* version of the concept of one Śakti operating on the lower and the higher level (*parā-aparā śakti*) presents Pārvatī addressed by Śiva as Kālī, the “black goddess.” When Pārvatī came to take her bath in the Gaṅgā, a new goddess was born from the five sheaths of her body, called Kauśikī, while Pārvatī remained herself as Kālī.<sup>15</sup> The Evergreen Tree mentioned above represents *Ardhanārīśvara*,<sup>16</sup> *kēvalam* state<sup>17</sup> or the Lord being fixed like a tree.<sup>18</sup> The idea of a golden creeper (*poṛkoṭi*) symbolising Śakti appears in *Tirumantiram*; the golden colour has been associated here with the creeper symbolising the *viśuddhi* (*viśuddha*) *cakra* – the *cakra* of the throat being the place of transformation of the poison into *amṛta*, and with the *ājñā* and *sahasrāra* *cakras*, representing the moon-region of the head. The body-space below the throat stands for darkness or ignorance; when the lower energy is sublimated above the *viśuddha cakra*, it becomes transformed into higher energy.<sup>19</sup> The top branch of the mystic tree represents the *suṣumnā* channel;

<sup>12</sup> *tējōmayamāya prāṇalata. acañcalavum ānandaghanavumāya oru bōdhattinullilānu urappulla marattil vallicurrippinayum pōle ī prāṇan prasarikknunatennum teḷiyum, atōte acañcalabōdhattil śaktispandanam prāṇarūpam kaikonṭ unṭākkkiyalikkunnatāṅ ī prapañcalīla* – “The creeper of *prāṇa* consisting of light/brightness. That *prāṇa* flows like a couple of creepers entwining the tree being the strength/stability, within immovable consciousness, which is condensation of bliss; simultaneously – when within that immovable consciousness the pulsation of *śakti*, having assumed the form of *prāṇa*, rises, the divine game being the phenomenal world becomes destroyed” (B. Nāyar, *Śrīnārāyaṇa Gurudēvarkṛtikā. Sampūrṇa Vyākhyānam*, vol. 1, Thiruvananthapuram 2010, pp. 418–419).

<sup>13</sup> *ninre tanisvarūpam arddhanārīśvaranṛtānennenikkariyām. [...] sakalatinum atītamāyatukoṅṭum marṛonninōṅṭum upamikkāñilāttatukoṅṭum [...] māyavum kalarāttatukoṅṭum nī taniyāṅ. prāpañcikaḷvita-mākunna māyālatakk paṭarnnukayaṟuvān tāññāyirikkunna maravumāṅ nī* – “I know that your genuine essential nature is that of *Ardhanārīśvara*. You are the sole/pure/genuine (being) because not mixed with *māyam* (falsehood or illusion), and because you are incomparable to anything else and transcendent to everything. You are the tree which becomes support which is to be climbed and entwined by the *māyā*-creeper representing worldly existence” (M.N. Prasād, *Nārāyaṇaguru. Svānubhavaḡīti*, Varkala 2002, pp. 127–128).

<sup>14</sup> *at pārvattiyallāte marṛārāṅ. kāli gauriyāyi māriyappōḷ kaivannatāyirikkām ā sūvarṇnacchavi* (*ibidem*, p. 128).

<sup>15</sup> *Devī Māhātmya* 5.83–88. Cf. P. Kumar, *Śaktism in India (With Special Reference to the Purāṇic Literature)*, New Delhi 2012, p. 52; *Devī Māhātmyam. In Praise of the Goddess*, transl. and com. D. Kālī, Delhi 2010, p. 119.

<sup>16</sup> *ninre tanisvarūpam arddhanārīśvaranṛtānennenikkariyām* – “I know that your genuine essential nature is that of *Ardhanārīśvara*” (M.N. Prasād, *Nārāyaṇaguru...*, p. 127).

<sup>17</sup> *kēvalamāya maramē* – “O tree being the *kēvalam* state” (T. Bhāskaran, *op. cit.*, p. 332).

<sup>18</sup> *āśrayamāyi maram pōle uraccu nilkunna allayō bhagavan* – “The Lord remaining fixed like the tree being the support [for the creeper]” (B. Nāyar, *Śrīnārāyaṇa Gurudēvarkṛtikā...*, p. 418).

<sup>19</sup> “When the sex-energy (*śukla*) is directed below in this body-space it is dark. When the *śukla*-energy is sublimated above the throat, it stands for *amṛta* and it illuminates the body-space above the throat” (T.N. Ganapathy, *The Yoga of Tirumandiram* [in:] *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular...*, p. 215). Tirumūlar interprets the famous myth about Śiva drinking the poison in the context of Kuṇḍalinī Yoga: according to him, the poison stands for semen; which, when wasted, brings death. Semen when it is preserved and directed upwards becomes nectar. This conversion is possible thanks to the igniting of the *kuṇḍalinī* fire. “The region of space, represented by *ājñā* and *sahasrāra* (which symbolises the transcendental space – *paraveli*) alone is conductive for Yoga. To mark the boundary line, the throat of the Lord

Table 1. Analysis of *Svānubhava Gīti* 41 in the light of Malayalam commentaries and Tamil literary sources

<i>Svānubhava Gīti</i> 41	M.N. Prasād	T. Bhāskaran	B. Nāyar	<i>Tirumantram</i> and other sources
Golden creeper ( <i>ponninkoṭi</i> )	The <i>māyā</i> -creeper, identical to Pārvati; when Kāji becomes Gauri, a golden colour appears	Goddess Pārvati, who stays inseparably on the other (left) side of Śiva [in the form of <i>Ardhanārīśvara</i> ]	The creeper of <i>prāṇa</i> which consists of <i>tejas</i>	<i>Poi-koṭi</i> – golden creeper which symbolises <i>Śakti</i> (7 1717) <i>Śakti Manonmani</i> who resides in <i>ājñā cakra</i> (7 1756) <i>Śakti</i> in <i>visuddhi (visuddha) cakra</i> (4 1196) <i>Śakti</i> who resides in <i>ājñā cakra</i> (3 816; 4 1039) Stable creeper identical to effulgence depicts the Supreme <i>Śakti</i> – <i>Parāparai</i> (4 1142) – Ādi <i>Śakti</i> or <i>turyā kuṇḍalini</i>
Evergreen tree ( <i>tanimaram</i> )	The tree which represents <i>Ardhanārīśvara</i>	The tree which represents the state of <i>kēvalam</i>	Lord who remains fixed like the tree	Mystic tree – top branch ( <i>komb</i> ) symbolises the suṣumnā channel (3 626) āla-maram – banyan tree represents Śivam, Śivatva, Nirguṇa Brahman (9 2899) a neem tree ( <i>vēmbu</i> ) symbolises Śivam or vairāgya, palmyra palm ( <i>paṇai</i> ) is sahasrāra or suṣumnā having snake ( <i>pāmbu</i> ), i.e. kuṇḍalini, inside (TM 9 2887)

in such a context, the golden creeper represents *kuṇḍalinī śakti* rising in the central channel above the *viśuddha cakra*, within the moon-region of the body. It is mentioned in TM 9 2887 that on the neem tree representing *vairāgya* arises the palmyra palm symbolising *suṣumnā* or *sahasrāra*, which has a snake (*kuṇḍalinī śakti*) inside. TM 4 1142 depicts the Supreme Śakti (*Parāparai*) abiding in the Supreme One (*Paraman*) and imagined as the ever-enduring/firm or powerful liana (*tiṅkoṭi*) being the effulgence (*cōti*) illuminating the whole world. As the term *cōti* appears in TM 2 381 in relation to the same (Supreme) aspect of Śakti,<sup>20</sup> the creeper identical to effulgence illuminating the whole world can also be referred to the highest aspect of *kuṇḍalinī* (called *turīya* or *mahā kuṇḍalinī* in Laya Yoga).<sup>21</sup>

## B. Stanza 42

The Primeval Tree has been identified in the consecutive stanza 42 with the Primeval Mountain, which Prasād and Bhāskaran explain to be Kailāsa Mountain:<sup>22</sup>

*tinamaramē, taṅgaliniyī ninkani kaḷaliṅayen talaykku pūvaṅiyē,*  
*kanakakkoṭi koṅṭāṭum tani māmalayē, yitentu kaṅmāyam? // 42/ 82 //*

O the Primeval Tree, your fruit will become my shelter in the future,

Your feet<sup>23</sup> are the flower-ornament for the top of my head,<sup>24</sup>

O, the Primeval Great Mountain dancing with the golden creeper – it is the great magic indeed!

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was blackened” (K.R. Arumugam, *Śaivism as Conceived in the Tirumandiram* [in:] *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular...*, pp. 130–132).

<sup>20</sup> *Parāparai* in TM defines the Supreme Śakti consorting with *Parāparam* – the Supreme Reality being pure consciousness. From the union of these two aspects *Param* (*Para Śiva*) and *Parai* (*Parā Śakti*) are born (TM 2 381).

<sup>21</sup> According to the Laya Yoga system, in *dhruva-maṇḍala* situated above *sahasrāra* the supreme *kuṇḍalinī* exists in the form of Śaṅkhinī being in 3½ coils: the first coil is supreme *bindu* (*para-bindu*), the second one supreme *nāda* (*para-nāda*), the third one *Śakti* and the half coil is *Sakala Śiva*. “At the *nāda* level, when *kuṇḍalinī* is towards Supreme Śiva, sound is completely coiled into her. When supreme *kuṇḍalinī* is at the Śiva-Śakti level, Śiva shines forth in *kuṇḍalinī*. Thereafter *kuṇḍalinī* is in union in supreme love with *Parama Śiva* – infinite Consciousness. This occurs at the *Sakala Śiva* stage. Finally *kuṇḍalinī* in supreme union becomes one and the same with *Parama Śiva*” (S.S. Goswami, *Layayoga. The Definite Guide to the Chakras and Kundalini*, Vermont 1999, p. 122).

<sup>22</sup> *ninṇe vāsam kailāsattilāṅalō. kailāsam iḷakkamillāta oru vanmalayāṅ. ninṇe vāsam kailāsattilāṅ ennu paṇṇayunnatinēkkāḷ tattvaparamāyi kūṭutal śari, nī tanneyāṅ ā māmalā ennu karutunnatāṅ* – “Your abode is Kailāsa mountain. Kailāsa is an immovable great mountain. More correct and truthfully than saying that you dwell in Kailāsa Mountain is to consider you to be that great mountain yourself” (M.N. Prasād, *Nārāyaṅaguru...*, p. 130). *tani malayumāṅ, kailāsaparvatam (atiluḷḷa śivaneyum kuṇṅkunnu)* – “is the Single/Original Mountain, Kailāsa Mountain (it aims at Śiva dwelling in the mountain)” (T. Bhāskaran, *op. cit.*, p. 333).

<sup>23</sup> *samsāra tāpamēṇṇuvalayunna enikkini orāśrāsam aviṭatte kārūṇyam niṇāṅṅa pādāṅṅaltanne* – “Feet filled with your mercy/compassion being in future consolation for me who is distressed by the risen pain of *samsāra*” (C.K.G. Nāyar, *Tirumūlanāyanār...*, p. 419).

<sup>24</sup> *eṇṇe talayil pū cūti kuḷirppikkaṅē* – “The flower should give consolation/make cool the heat on my head” (*ibidem*).

The concept of the mountain dancing with the golden creeper has been interpreted by Prasād as the process of manifestation in the form of the phenomenal world,<sup>25</sup> whereas Nāyar sees here the flow of *prāṇa* spreading within the body.<sup>26</sup> According to Bhāskaran's interpretation, it symbolises the final union of Śiva and Pārvati.<sup>27</sup> As a result of dance, the devotee is able to obtain the ripe fruit which is Śiva's mercy or grace – *aruḷ*, which becomes his shelter.<sup>28</sup> It is worth emphasising here that the Kailāsa in Kuṇḍalinī Yoga represents the element of the *sahasrāra cakra* and suggests the stage of final union of Śiva and Śakti.<sup>29</sup> In Śaiva Siddhānta, Śiva's feet placed on the devotee's head become the symbol of final realisation attained in *sahasrāra cakra* and beyond, in *dhruva-maṇḍala*.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the shelter given by the ripe fruit as well as the dance performed by Śiva and Śakti can be referred to the phenomenal world and *māyā* sphere.<sup>31</sup>

We can find the following interpretation in the *Tirumantiram*: the golden creeper/flowery twig – *kuṇḍalinī śakti* joins or ascends Meru Mountain – in the void representing the Supreme Reality (pure consciousness divested of all matter), or sways on the top of Meru, which is the symbol of the *suṣumnā* channel and Śiva Himself. The Dance of Śiva can be experienced as a result of yoga practice in the *ājñā* and *sahasrāra* cakras, in the space above the head, called *dvādaśānta*, beyond and beyond (*appuram*). The plump fruit being the bliss of *sahasrāra* or *Śivatva* can be obtained at the top of the mountain (*malai-mēl*), symbolising Kailāsa or the void above

<sup>25</sup> *kanakakoṭiyōṭ cērn̄n om̄ñāyirunnu koṇṭ nāṭakamāṭunna. nī ilakāte uraccu nilkkunnu, śaktiyuṭe sānniddhyam nimmittam ninnil sakala prapañcanāṭakannāḷum sadā naṭannu koṇṭirikkukayum ceyyunnu* – “Dancing while joined entirely into one with the golden creeper. You always remain fixed and immovable, because of the proximity of *śakti* you make constant movements and perform dance being the whole phenomenal world within you” (*ibidem*, p. 129).

<sup>26</sup> *kuṇḍalinīprāṇasākṣātkkārattil satyam spaṣṭamāyi teliyunnu. akhaṇḍabōdhavastuvinre uḷḷilāṇī prāṇan prasarikunnat. bōdhavastuvile ānandam prāṇaprasarattil sarvatranirāññanubhavappēṭukay um ceyyunnu* – “In the realisation of *kuṇḍalinī prāṇa* the ultimate reality clearly reveals itself. That *prāṇa* flows within the substance being undifferentiated consciousness. Within that consciousness, during the flow/rise of *prāṇa*, bliss can be experienced, having spread everywhere” (*ibidem*, p. 420).

<sup>27</sup> *āhlādapūrvam svikarikkunnat kanakalatapōḷḷa pārvati* – “Receiving with joy as a wife Pārvati being like a golden vine/creeper” (T. Bhāskaran, *op. cit.*, p. 333).

<sup>28</sup> *ninre kanivākunna kani (paḷam)* – “The fruit (the ripe fruit) being your compassion/mercy” (*ibidem*); *kanivākunna kani, karuṇyamākunna paḷam* – “The fruit being compassion, the ripe fruit being mercy” (M.N. Prasād, *Nārāyaṇaguru...*, p. 129).

<sup>29</sup> Kailāsa mountain as an abode of Śiva in the Laya Yoga system is said to be situated in the form of a triangle within *sahasrāra*, the moon-region, or represents *sahasrāra* itself (A. Avalon, *The Serpent Power being the Shat-Chakra-Nirūpana and Pādūkā-Panchakā*, Madras 1950, pp. 149–153).

<sup>30</sup> TM 5 1437 states that one who attains the shower of grace of *Parāparai* – the Supreme Śakti – by the holy feet (*pādattāl*), is able to become *Śivam* (i.e. *Parāparam*) – the supreme reality. Cf. H.W. Shomerus, *Śaiva Siddhānta. An Indian School of Mystical Thought*, New Delhi 2000, p. 292: “If the organs of the body are destroyed, the *Āmanbōdha* will rise up by the sound (*Paranāda*) of noisy foot ornaments (*Paravindu*) to unite itself with *Śivabodha* and be merged in it. And when that happens the Supreme who stands at the end of the sound will appear, in *jñāna* community of his Śakti, and loving you in this manner will make you one with himself.” *Parabindu* and *Paranāda* represent the sphere situated above *sahasrāra*, called *dhruva-maṇḍala*. In *Śiva Śatakam 27* – another hymn composed by Nārāyaṇa Guru – Parama Śiva becomes the one who bestows the grace through His divine feet placed on the devotee's head.

<sup>31</sup> *samsāra tāpamērruvālayunna enikkini orāśvāsam aviṭatte kārūyam nirañña pādannaḷtanne* (B. Nayār, *Śrīnārāyaṇa Gurudēvarkṛtikā...*, p. 419).



Table 2. Analysis of *Svānubhava Gīti 42* in the light of Malayalam commentaries and Tamil literary sources

<i>Svānubhava Gīti 42</i>	M.N. Prasād	T. Bhāskaran	B. Nāyar	<i>Tirumantiram</i> and other sources
The fruit ( <i>kani</i> ) of the evergreen tree ( <i>tanima-ram</i> ); Śiva's feet are flowers which decorate the head of the devotee	Śiva's mercy, compassion ( <i>kaniv</i> , <i>kāruṇyam</i> )	Śiva's mercy ( <i>kaniv</i> )	Compassion ( <i>kāruṇyam</i> )	The big fruit ( <i>kommati</i> ) symbolises liberation (9 2904) Delicious fruit ( <i>paḷam</i> ) in the sweet scented flower ( <i>sahasrāra</i> ) is Śiva Himself (8 2607) The juicy mango fruit symbolises Śivānubhava/samādhi (3 624) In Kudumbaicittar 242 fresh mango juice ( <i>māṅgāyppāl</i> ) stands for amṛta In Tirumuṅai hymns (V 91 7; IX 1 1; IX 5 2), Śiva is personified as a ripe fruit ( <i>kaṇi</i> ) The rich ripe fruit ( <i>vaḷaṅkaṇi</i> ) is the effect of the worship; however, only those who are ripe in heart can attain the Ripe Fruit ( <i>paḷam</i> ) – TM 5 1494 The plump fruit ( <i>koḷuṅkaṇi</i> ) is the bliss of sahasrāra; Śivam – TM 9 2882 (see below) --- One can become Śivam (ultimate reality) attaining the grace of the Supreme Śakti ( <i>Parāparai</i> ) by the holy feet – TM 5 1437
The primeval great mountain which dances with the golden creeper ( <i>kanakakkoṭi koṇṭṭam tani māṃala</i> )	Kailāsa Mountain, identified as Śiva Himself; Śiva while united with Śakti, performs the dance which is the phenomenal world	Kailāsa Mountain, identified as Śiva Himself, who joyfully joins Pārvati	The ultimate reality; the <i>prāṇa</i> , having spread everywhere, flows within immovable consciousness	Śakti or <i>kuṇḍalini</i> which as a creeper unites/joins Meru Mountain ( <i>Civamēru</i> ) being Śiva In the [empty] void ( <i>veṇumpāl</i> ) (TM 8 2455) or the coiled Śakti ascending to the top resembles a creeper entwining the mountain (TM 8 2640) Śivakāmi is a flower twig ( <i>punkomb</i> ) on the top of Meru – brahmarandhra (TM 4 1112) The rain on the top of the mountain symbolises grace or illumination in the sahasrāra or beyond ( <i>para-veḷi</i> ) – TM 9 2882 --- The dance of Śiva is experienced in <i>ājñā cakra</i> (4 1390) and above the head, in the <i>dhvādasānta</i> (9 2764; 9 2784); beyond and beyond ( <i>appuram</i> – TM 9 2766)

(*para-veḷi*). TM 5 1494 differentiates between *vaḷaṅkaṇi* (rich ripe fruit) and *paḷam* (the ripe fruit); the latter symbolises the result of internal worship and yogic practice, and can be obtained by those who are ripe in their hearts.

Nārāyaṇa Guru mentions the divine dance of Śiva in such a context in the 99<sup>th</sup> stanza of another hymn devoted to Śiva – the *Śiva Śatakam* (*One Hundred Stanzas Devoted to Śiva*):<sup>32</sup>

*amaravāhinipoṅṅivarum tiraykkamaramennaṅaku paṭaṅṅaḷum  
samarasattil viricc aravaṅṅaḷōṭamarum acciṭayāṭiyatukkanam // 99 //*

Please approach me while dancing, You – adorned with matted hair,

Surrounded by snakes, spreading up their hoods harmoniously<sup>33</sup>

Like a stern of a ship [moving towards/against] waves lifted up by the river bringing immortality.

The dancing Śiva and the spread of snake-hoods in one and the same shape above the yogi's head symbolises the ascent of *kuṅḍalinī śakti* up to the higher regions, where the *yogi* can experience the dance of Śiva and unite with the Lord in the moon region, the *sahasrāra* lotus and beyond. The image of the spread of snake-hoods resembles the *sahasrāra* lotus, described as standing with its face downwards in the void region where there are no *nāḍīs* – channels, resembling an umbrella spreading over the yogi's head.<sup>34</sup>

In the twilight language of *Tirumantiram*, the ripe fruit denotes liberation – *mokṣa* – or attaining *Śivatva* or *Śivam* – the supreme state without any limitation or attributes.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> *Śiva Śatakam* (*One Hundred Verses Devoted to Śiva*) is a devotional hymn composed by Nārāyaṇa Guru in the Malayalam language in 1884.

<sup>33</sup> *Tirumantiram* describes that dancing five-hooded snake, which symbolises the enjoyment of the senses, as making a single hood-pose, which stands for the control of the senses, withdrawal of the senses from their objects and performing *tapas* (TM 6 1621). There is an image of a five-hooded snake spreading its hoods over Śiva's head in the *Śaiva* tradition (cf. “The *nāga* is won over by the word of the Awakened One and lends him his support. Such is the king of the *nāga*, Mucilinda, who is represented in numerous sculptures standing erect behind the Buddha protecting his head from the elements by spreading his hood like a canopy or sunshade,” L. Silburn, *Kuṅḍalinī. The Energy of the Depths. A Comprehensive Study Based on the Scriptures of Nondualistic Kasmir Saivism*, Albany 1988, p. 18).

<sup>34</sup> The *sahasrāra* lotus is described as standing with its face downwards; it lies in the void region where there are no *nāḍīs*, resembling an umbrella spreading over the yogi's head (S.S. Goswami, *op. cit.*, pp. 266–267).

<sup>35</sup> Tamil *Śaiva Siddhānta* makes a distinction between the use of the terms *civaṅ* and *civam*; the former means Śiva, whereas the latter means supreme abstraction without any limitations or attributes (T.N. Ganapathy, *Preface* [in:] *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular...*, pp. XVII–XVIII).

## Conclusion

The Malayalam hymns of Nārāyaṇa Guru, which represent the *nirguṇa*-poetry describing the mystical experience, can be interpreted in the light of the Tamil works (especially *Tirumantiram*) composed in twilight language. A comparative analysis of each motif included in the stanzas quoted above allows us to better understand the concept of the Śiva-Śakti relations presented by Guru. He seems to apply the very same twilight language of Tamil Siddhas and to introduce the very same concepts and ideas presented in the form of the same metaphors. Almost each depiction of the golden creeper or the flowery vine symbolising Pārvati entwining the great mountain or evergreen tree representing Śiva constitutes – in accordance with Nandakumar’s interpretation – the description of meditation of *saguna* kind, during which one concentrates upon the form of Śakti (*parā-dhyāna*), and at the same time it contains elements characteristic of the description of meditation upon the concept of transcendent Śivam – *parāpara-dhyāna*.<sup>36</sup> *Svānubhava Gīti* reflects the ideas depicted by *sandhyābhāṣā* of Siddhas who “were not devotees in the sense of idol-worshippers. They believed in a Supreme Abstraction. The recurrent use by the Siddhas of the word *civam* (an abstract noun [...]) and the highest state of God, in which He exists as pure intelligence in preference to the common term *civaṅ* (meaning Śiva), makes the point very clear.”<sup>37</sup>

## Abbreviations

TM – *Tirumantiram*

SG – *Svānubhava Gīti*

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<sup>36</sup> P. Nandakumar, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>37</sup> T.N. Ganapathy, *Preface* [in:] *The Yoga of Siddha Tirumular...*, p. XVIII.

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