

A CONCEPT OF COMIC DANCE AS  
PRESENTED IN *KĀLI NĀṬAKAM*  
OF NARAYANA GURU  
in the Light  
of His Later Philosophical Works

This article is devoted to the concept of the cosmic dance of the goddess Kālī presented in *Kālī Nāṭakam* (*the Dance of Kali* – KN), composed by Nārāyaṇa Guru (Narayana Guru)<sup>1)</sup> in 1887–1897. This hymn can be analysed in the context of later philosophical works written by Guru, especially the last philosophical hymn devoted to Dēvi addressed as Mother of Royal Yoga (*rājayōgajanani*) – *Jananīnavaratnamañjarī* (*The Bouquet of Nine Gems Devoted to Mother* – JNRM), composed in 1909. Other works to be taken into consideration are: *Ātmōpadēśa Śatakam* (*One Hundred Verses of Self-Instruction* – AŚ) – a poem composed in Malayalam in 1897 – and *Darśana Mālā* (*Garland of Visions* – DM), a philosophical work in ten sections, composed in Sanskrit in 1916.<sup>2)</sup>

Kālī is treated here as an object of devotion, described both in impersonal and personal terms, as a goddess with auspicious qualities while evoking fear at the same time. She is sometimes identified with Śiva; however, as a great

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<sup>1)</sup> Nārāyaṇa Guru (1854–1928) – philosopher, saint and social reformer of south India (Kerala). He created – in three languages: Malayalam, Sanskrit and Tamil – original works on *advaita*. His writings can be classified into five groups: hymns works of moral import, translations from Sanskrit and Tamil, prose works and philosophical works.

<sup>2)</sup> Compare chronology of Nārāyaṇa Guru’s works given by Nataraja (2003: 389–392).

Mother and identical to the ultimate reality, she is exalted higher than him<sup>3)</sup>. Nārāyaṇa Guru combines in this hymn elements of *advaita vēdānta*, *sāṃkhya*, *tantra*, *haṭhayoga*, *śākta*, *bhakti* etc.

The hymn starts with a short adoration, in which Kālī is addressed by Guru as being *nāda* and *bindu*<sup>4)</sup> in essence, and the beautiful jewel-like lamp illuminating all Vedas.<sup>5)</sup> The cosmic dance of Kālī comprises five activities (*pañcakriyā*),<sup>6)</sup> mentioned in the subsequent parts of the poem (verses 5–24). This part, describing the active, creative nature of *Dēvi-Prakṛti*, consists mainly of verbs. While tasting the world she feels delighted; while dancing she experiences bliss, horripilation. Creation is the ecstatic dance of Dēvi, and its sole absolute object is the joy of dancing; it is a divine play from which Kālī derives *ānanda*, being at the same time *ānandarūpiṇī*, by whom the ultimate reality, as she is, manifests itself objectively as well as subjectively – it is mentioned that she resides in the inner place of bliss (*mamānandadēśē*), in

<sup>3)</sup> Narayana Guru's KN in general follows the tradition of Bengali hymns devoted to *Kālī*; however, one can find here elements characteristic of Sanskrit hymns addressed also to other goddesses (comp. Avalon 1913).

<sup>4)</sup> *Nāda* means a primordial, yet inaudible sound, born from the union of *prakāśa* (*śiva*) and *vimarśa* (*śakti*), which becomes concentrated in a drop, or point (*bindu*) of phonic energy, containing the active urge to emanate forth, to shine through, gradually expanding itself into the whole of the created world. According to Goldberg *nāda-bindu* is not separate from *ardhanārīśvara*, denoting the union of masculine and feminine – Goldberg (2002: 86). The image of Kālī described by Guru does not reflect the traditional differentiation along the central vertical axis into male and female; the goddess is presented as totally united with Śiva and addressed as *Śivāmbā* – Mother Śiva. Compare also Avalon (2009: 268–271).

<sup>5)</sup> *namō nādabindvātmikē nāśahīnē namō nāradādīdyapādāravindē namō nānmaraykkum maṇippūm viḷakkē namō nānmukhādīpriyāmbā, namastē*

(‘Adoration, o embodiment of *nāda* and *bindu*, the imperishable one, adoration to your lotus feet, worshipped by sages like *Nārada*; adoration, o beautiful jewel-lamp [of Wisdom], that illuminates the four Vedas; adoration, Mother, who is dear to [all gods] beginning from Four-Faced *Brahmā*). The English version of *Kālī Nāṭakam* is based on the translation by Prasad (2006: 137–145).

<sup>6)</sup> *sṛṣṭi* – creation of the universe, *sthiti* – supporting, sustaining the created world; *samhāra* – destroying it; dissolution, *tirobhava* [*nigraha*] – concealing herself by withdrawal of her grace, covering with illusion and *anugraha* – showing mercy, kindness to her devotees and bestowing salvation upon them; revealing Herself through Her grace. Compare Coomaraswamy (1918: 59); Smith (1998: 17–18).

the heart of her devotee.<sup>7)</sup> Like the *Sāṃkhya* system, Narayana Guru identifies here the feminine principle as the active agent, the great actress of the world;<sup>8)</sup> but the relationship between two ontological categories: transcendent and static reality and the immanent and inherent kinetic *śakti* are different. In the hymn they become one and the same; however, we can find the same tendencies in Guru's later philosophical works.<sup>9)</sup>

Kālī manifests herself by spreading in all directions as the whole universe, but having hidden within it as all-pervading inner controller as subtle as a sesame seed. Again, she represents the immanent kinetic aspect of reality,<sup>10)</sup> whirling and twisting in her dance, as well as transcendent, static one – although she shines forth as the whole visible world remaining within it, she

<sup>7)</sup> *srjiccum bhariccum mudā samhariccum rasiccum ramiccum kaḷiccum puḷaccum mahāghōraghōram viḷiccum mamānandadēśē vasiccum*

(‘You created the whole universe, you sustained and joyously destroyed it. Enjoying/ tasting all this and feeling delighted, playing and feeling exhilarated, making most terrifying cries, calling aloud you resided in the hidden cave of my bliss’). *enre ānandānubhavasthānamāya hṛdayattil* – ‘in my heart being the place, where bliss is experienced’ – Nāyar (2010: 677).

<sup>8)</sup> NG admits both *prakṛti* and *pradhāna* as two [separate] aspects of *māyā* / *śakti* in his Sanskrit philosophical work – DM 4 9, 10. The latter seems to be responsible for the emergence of the world held properly within *pradhāna*, being the material cause; the former one – for the activity and permutations / combinations of *guṇas*, resulting in the evolution of the *tattvas* (compare Prasad (2007: 141–147)). However, this kind of differentiation does not find place in AŚ, where the *prakṛti* seems to comprise all these functions (compare AŚ 75). Activity, the process of becoming and change ascribed to *guṇas*, which cannot be the state of harmony and sameness (*samatvam*) between rival tendencies, is defined in AŚ 71 as beginningless play (*anādilīla*).

<sup>9)</sup> AŚ mentions *māyā* / *śakti* being the primeval seed (*ādibijam*) or potential (*kalya*), giving birth to the innumerable forms and worlds (compare AŚ 53; 57). *Sṛṣṭisthīlayam* as an effect (*kāryam*) of *śakti* is mentioned also in AŚ 80. *Śakti* is treated here as the power inherent in ultimate reality – *aṛiv* (consciousness) inseparably associated with her (AŚ 95). AŚ 15 differentiates between *para* (higher, transcendent) and *apara* (lower, immanent) *prakṛti*; the former one is identical to the ultimate reality.

<sup>10)</sup> *tiriñṇum piriñṇum mahānandadhārām coriñṇum padāmbhōjabhaktarkku nityam varunnōru tumbannāḷellāmariñṇum kariñṇūmārāvirātāṅkabījam kurañṇōrunēram ninaykkunna bhaktarkkariñṇīla marruḷḷa kaivalyarūpam* – KN 11–16

(‘Turning round, twisting and pouring down the stream of great bliss, fully aware of the daily troubles of the devotees of your lotus feet, and scorching out seed of all the emerging sorrows, when contemplated even for a short while, no other form of liberation will be then known’).

is praised as being devoid of any defect or change. This real form of Kāḷi is the unthinkable and indescribable one, beyond anybody's comprehension.<sup>11)</sup> Another aspect of the goddess, who is praised as the great wielder of her power – *mahāmāya*, has been associated by Guru with her terrifying form (*ghōrarūpam*), which involves concealing herself via the withdrawal of her grace. In such a context Kāḷi becomes at the same time the one who shows mercy to her devotees, bestowing salvation upon them (*tārā*).<sup>12)</sup>

The cosmic dance of the goddess is described with the following verbs: *teḷiyuka*, [*prapañcam*] *tuḷumbuka*, *tuḷayuka*, *tiriyuka*. The first one (*teḷiyuka* – 'to shine forth, manifest, appear, make something visible') depicts the function ascribed to *cit* (consciousness) which never remains inactive, incessantly finding expression as a stream of experiences,<sup>13)</sup> manifesting itself objectively as well as subjectively.<sup>14)</sup> The next verb (*tuḷumbuka* – 'to fluctuate [in the form of waves constituting] the universe; to overflow') evokes another concept of manifestation present in AŚ: a waveless depth of the ocean being the [shining] source of innumerable waves rising to its surface.<sup>15)</sup> The verb *tuḷayuka* ('to perforate, pierce' and 'to be perforated') indicates that Kāḷi remains

<sup>11)</sup> *niraññāññane viśvamellāmoruppōlaram cerrumillāte vāṇum cirannāl kaḷiññālumillōru nāsam; kuṛaññonnariññīṭarāyinnahō! ghōrarūpam maraññīṭumō viśvamellāmitennōrttariññīṭuvān śaktarāruḷḷu lōkē?* – KN 17–22

('When you spread in all directions, filling the whole universe fully, you remained [as a controller] within with not a bit of fatal foreboding; no destruction you have even after you remaining so for a long time. What a mystery! So few know your real form! Will this terrible form disappear from view? Who in the world is capable of understanding this world to be so?')

<sup>12)</sup> Compare footnote 9, where the real form of the goddess as soleness and liberation, is mentioned: *kaivalyarūpam. mōkṣapradamāya rūpam* – 'the form bestowing liberation' – Nāyar (2010: 678). Kāḷi is similarly presented in hymns from Bengal – as the great wielder of *māyā*, creating the phenomenal world in order to delude her devotees as well as the one, who carries them over the ocean of *sāmsara*, being at the same time identical to the ultimate reality – comp. McDermott (2001: 38–46; 47–51; 66–75).

<sup>13)</sup> Compare Prasad (2011: 229). The function of the ultimate reality called *bhāti* ('shines forth') is usually associated with *cit* – consciousness, shining forth and manifesting itself as the whole apparent world – compare DM 2 1. Malayalam verb *teḷiyuka* in such a context appears in AŚ 14, 36, 100. Compare also Prasad (2010: 53–61).

<sup>14)</sup> *teḷiññum – indriyaññālkkum viṣayamāyum* – 'having become an object for senses' – Nāyar (2010: 678); *vyaktamāyum* – 'in its manifest form' – Bhāskaran (2004: 119).

<sup>15)</sup> Compare AŚ 75; AŚ 57.

within the manifested world, being immanent as well.<sup>16)</sup> The verb *tiriyuka* ('to turn round') appears also in AŚ 33 and 34. In the first of these stanzas Narayana Guru introduces the well-known Buddhist example of a burning twig (*alāta*), repeating the mentioned verb twice. The constant turning in circles (*vaṭṭamtiriyum alātasamam tiriññiṭunnu*) has been ascribed to the knowledge or consciousness (*ariv*),<sup>17)</sup> assuming the form of five *vibhūti*s, which are mentioned in Guru's works as the representatives of the manifestation of *māyā-prakṛti*. This manifestation of *ariv* (identified in this case with *prakṛti*), as the phenomenological chain of events within consciousness, requiring space, is only half the world picture. The other half is the experience of this moment, the horizon of time presented in next stanza by means of a picture of a chariot wheel constituting of spokes, which are very short moments of time. The rolling forward, the constant circulation, should be known as the beginningless divine dance (*tiruvīlayaṭāl*) taking place within knowledge (*arivil* – AŚ 34).<sup>18)</sup> The very same compound describes the famous dance of Śiva – *tāṇḍava* (ŚŚ 6) in *Śiva Śatakam*.

The nave (hub) of such a wheel, the immovable — i.e. not dancing — central point of the whole universe, is pure consciousness (*cinnābhi*), as mentioned by Guru in JNRM 1.<sup>19)</sup> Hence the *māyā / prakṛti / śakti* enters the stage (space)

<sup>16)</sup> Compare: *eḷḷinmaṇi pōle sūkṣmamāya cittattinre rūpattil nilaniṛuttiiyūm* – 'having remained within in the form of cittam being as subtle as sesame seed' Nāyar (2010: 678) and: *anupravēśiccu eḷḷil eṇṇapōle sarvavyāpiyāyi antaryāmiyāyi vartticcum* – 'having entered as all-pervading one, inner controller, [included within] like an oil in sesame seed' – Bhāskaran (2004: 119).

<sup>17)</sup> *arivu nijasthitiyinnariññiṭānāy dhara mutalāya vibhūtiyāyi tānē maṛiyumavasthayil ēri māri vaṭṭamtiriyum alātasamam tiriññiṭunnu // 33 //*  
(‘Knowledge, to know its innate state here, has become earth and the other divine manifestations; in such a changing state spiralling up, back and whirling, like a glowing twig it is ever turning’).

<sup>18)</sup> *aranoṭiyādiyarāliyārnniṭum tēruruḷ atil ēriyuruṇṭiṭunnu lōkam arivil anādiyatāy naṭanniṭum tantiruvīlayaṭāl itennariññiṭēnam // 34 //*  
(‘Having mounted on the rotating wheel of a chariot which has half-moments and such for spokes, the world rolls on; know this to be the beginningless divine dance, that is ever going on within Knowledge’).

<sup>19)</sup> [...] *ennāśayam gatiperum nādabhūmiyilmarnnāvīrābhapaṭarum cinnābhiiyil tripuṭiyennāṇarum paṭikalarnnāriṭunnu janani!*  
(‘[...] when, o Mother, could my inner being, after merging and unifying with the centre being pure consciousness, become cool?’). *Nābhi* – ‘the nave of a wheel, hub of a wheel’.

provided by consciousness, which in its pure transcendental aspect is the immovable spectator. Narayana Guru analyses the whole process of dancing from the perspective of an ultimate, non-dualistic perspective: this cosmic dance cannot be performed without *aṛiv* (consciousness), just like the chariot wheel cannot roll on without a hub or a rim.

The cosmic dance of Kālī means, on the one hand, creating the veil of illusion which covers the real shape of reality, known almost to no one. Narayana Guru clearly states that this form of Dēvi, spread as the visible universe, is a terrible one (*ghōrarūpam*). This aspect of the creatrix is associated with *avidyā* – ignorance, and Kālī is worshipped in this context as *mahāmāya* – the great wielder of *māyā* (illusion); her power is defined as *vaibhavam*, i. e. creative splendour.<sup>20)</sup> On the other hand, Kālī liberates and destroys the *saṁsāra*-bonds at the same time, being associated with *vidyā* (knowledge); she pours down the great stream of bliss and scorches out the seed of emerging sorrow, she also bestows liberation upon her devotees (*kaivalyam*), so she is also worshipped as *Śambhu* – one who grants happiness. The self-concealment of Kālī as consciousness is therefore bondage, while self-revelation is liberation – this process is purely a game. In the JNRM, the philosophical hymn devoted to the Mother of Royal Yoga (*rājayōgajanani*) and some other works of Guru (AŚ, KP), the idea of divine dancing is also presented as a two-way process proceeding downwards and upwards. The self-concealment of consciousness is the way down; when associated with the inner organs and body (*amgam, akam*) it enters the stage of phenomenality and starts its dance (*āṭuka*) according to what is perceived (i.e. objects of senses);<sup>21)</sup> when manifested as five *vibhūtis* (this process is

<sup>20)</sup> The mentioned above term denoting creative power of Kālī – *vaibhavam* – appears in the most important Sanskrit work of Guru – DM 4 2, where it has been equated with *māyā*.

<sup>21)</sup> JNRM 3: *uñṭāyi mārumarivunṭāyi munnamitu kañṭāṭumamgamakavum koñṭāyiram tamaruñṭāśayam praticuruñṭāmahassilmarayum kañṭālumīnilayilu nṭākayillarivakhaṇḍānubhūtiyilelum tañṭāril vīṇumadhuvunṭāramikkumoruvañ āṇusūri sukṛti*

(‘Knowledge that comes but to go again, arose in times of yore; together with body and mind, which dance/act a part in a play according to what is perceived [i.e. objects of senses], it became darkened in thousand ways and contracted into the form of coil around the inner part of mind, to become finally reabsorbed in the great splendour; even the perceiving thuswise the real wisdom dawns not; the really enlightened is a bee fallen into the lotus-core relishing therein the nectar of the unbroken experience of boundless Bliss Supreme’).

described as *ullāsam*), it provokes *mati* (*buddhi*) to dance, swing between opposite thoughts.<sup>22)</sup> Thus it becomes darkened and contracted into the form of coil around the inner part of each individual being. The suggestion given in the commentaries is the more an individual becomes immersed in *saṃsāra*, the more the coil-like quality of *Kuṇḍalini* increases.<sup>23)</sup> Thus the way up, the self-revealing, has been associated in this case with yoga practice and worship, awakening and uncoiling the *Kuṇḍalini*. This concept, although only alluded to in the major philosophical works of Narayana Guru (AŚ), has been directly expressed in *Kuṇḍalinippāṭṭ* (*The Song of Kundalini Snake*), bringing out the spiritual significance of a physical process by which a snake is lured to dance.<sup>24)</sup>

In hymns, especially those devoted to Dēvi, she is not only a goddess who conceals and then reveals herself in her cosmic play. Dēvi is regarded here as primeval cause of the universe; she is the ultimate reality Herself, immanent as well as transcendent. She becomes a dancer as well as a spectator of her own spectacle. Being the ultimate reality, she is equally a personal – the next, central part of the hymn contains a description of the dancer – Kālī from head to toe. Narayana Guru treats Kālī as identical with Śiva: in terms of Sanskrit mythology, her matted hair is adorned with the crescent of the new moon, skull and garlands, swinging and whirling in her dance, which are made of the *mandāra* flowers, and ruby-gem radiates its dazzling sheen from

<sup>22)</sup> JNRM 2: *illātamāyayaiṭum ullāsam onnumarivallātayillanilanum kallāliyum kanalumallāte śūnyamatumellāmorādiyarivām, tallāghavam parakilillāraṇamkriyakaḷ mallāṭukilla matiyīsallābhamonnu matiyellāvarum tirayumullāghabōdhajanani!* (“This upsurging display being the *māya*, non-existent [apart from consciousness], is in essence no other than consciousness pure. Wind, stone, ocean and heat, and the void beyond them are all but primeval consciousness alone. This effortless simplicity if given expression to, all the Vedic rituals turn out to be nothing, no more rival positions that make the mind swinging / dancing between; gaining that state of beingness alone would become the only wish; o Mother of the healing awareness, that everyone always seeks!’).

<sup>23)</sup> *jīvan samsārattil kūṭtal kūṭtal muḷukuntōrum kuṇḍaliniyuṭe curuḷicca anukramam ādhikyam prāpikkunnu [...]. kuṇḍaliniyuṭe ā nilaye māṛṛirjūkarikkunnatāṇu yōgiyuṭe niyatamāya sādhana – “The more jīvan becomes immersed in excess in the saṃsāra, the more the coilness [the coil-like quality] of kuṇḍalini increases [...] The practice – self-control of yōgi serves as improvement of such a state of kuṇḍalini” – Śāstrikaḷ (2007: 55).*

<sup>24)</sup> KP 1: *āṭupānbē! punam tēṭupānbē! yaruḷānandakkūttukaṇṭ āṭupānbē!* (‘Dance, o Snake! Seek the burrow! While witnessing the wild display of the bliss [given through] grace, dance, o Snake!’).

her golden diadem (*ponkirītam*). She is praised for preparing a place in her matted hair for *Mandākini* who, when released, could easily shatter the very bottom of the earth. Her forehead is adorned with the fifth-night moon. In accordance with *śākta* tradition, Kāli is able to control other gods, beginning with Śiva and Brahmā. All of them are trapped within her power of illusion.<sup>25</sup> The arched tendrils of her eye-brows defeat the flower-bow of Kāma. From her ears dangle golden earrings studded with jewels, their lustre reflected on the mirror of her cheeks. The ruby-red lips are worshipped by the best of hibiscuses, and the row of her teeth puts to shame a bright necklace of pearls.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> KN 25–40. *aṭikkullutōṅṭippaṛiccambarāntam naṭukkam koṭukkunna mandākinikiñṇāṭakkam koṭuppāṇitam peṭṭirikkum jaṭaykkanbiṭittellumellum vilōlaccaladbhamgamandāramāṇikyamālā vilaykkappurattuḷla ratnam paticcujvaliccuttaraṅgikṛtam ponkirītam parampañcamiccadranam tōrrupōyi tiraykkappuram kurramillennu tēri tiramviṭṭu kappam koṭukkunna nerrikkurikkullil vīṇāḷiyēlāmaraññā-ñaraykkanvaham cārttumurvīmaṇālan mahādēvanum brahmanum munparāyōrahō! māyayilpeṭṭirikkunnu citram! mahātmākkaḷāyullāvarkkum ninaccāl mahāmāya! nin vaibhavam kintaranyam?*

(‘Your matted hair, which created space to pacify Mandākini, who, when released, could easily shatter the very bottom of earth, and who causes sky to tremble [in her descending way from above], is adorned with the crescent of the new moon, skull and garlands swinging and whirling [in your dance], which are made of the *mandāra* flowers and ruby – priceless gem that radiates its dazzling sheen of colourful effulgence from your golden diadem. The beautiful fifth-night moon, praised for its beauty, having decided that there is no shame [in surrendering to you], has abandoned his pride and pays homage to your forehead, adorned with the mark, into which has fallen the spouse of the Earth-Goddess, whose waist is encircled by the girdle of the seven oceans. And more, Mahādēvan and Brahmā and all other gods are trapped within your *māyā*, a mystery indeed! O great [wielder of] *māyā*! Even for the great souls, if cogitated on well – is there anything capable of crossing over your creative splendour?’).

<sup>26</sup> *anaṅganre pūvillinalalppetuttum kunicillivallikkoṭittallutelliñṇanaṅgannu mamgattilēṛāloliccūtanāññāte pōyañṇaṭaṅṅunnatē nalppadattār bhajikkun navarkkullorattalppadattekkeṭṭuppānatē cilli raṅṭum vaśattākkivacceppolum minniminnunnatum kaṅṇiṇappaṅkaṅjappūvilōlum krpattēkaṅakkaṅkaṅam māricērttārttipōkkum kaṭakkaṅṇuraṅṅiṅkalum vimvivimmittiṭṭukkennu pāyunna kallōlinikkum paṭutvam koṭukkunnorānandavārikkāṭalkkaka reppādabhaktaprayuktaśrutam stōtrasamgītanṛttañṇalum tṛcevikkoṅṭu nilkkunna karṇaṅṇāḷilpponmaṅikkunḍalam koṅṭolippeṭṭupōṅṇum ghrṅikkāṅkitam gaṇḍakaṅṇāṭiyum nanmaṅiccembarattiprasūnam namikkum maṅiccuṅṭuraṅṅinṇu muḷḷāyi viḷaṅṅum paḷuṅkotta palpatti muttuppaṭattinṇilbhiam koṭukkunnatinnentu bandham?*

(‘The arched tendrils of your eye-brow-twigs put to trouble and defeat the flower-bow

The round face of Kāli becomes a source of excellent brightness.<sup>27)</sup> Her hands are adorned with bracelets adorned with jingling grains. She carries a spear, sculptured conch, sword and skull. Her frightening cries make the lion's roar weak, while loud laughter grinds all the directions to dust.<sup>28)</sup> Golden pot-like breasts shine with saffron and sandal-paste, adorned with a pearl-necklace and a garland made of *kalpavṛkṣa* flowers.<sup>29)</sup> The slender waist of Dēvi is praised as a mere handful in size, enwrapped with lovely silk cloth. Her

of the Limbless One; if a mild slap of those eye-brows falls on the limbs of Limbless One, unable to stand it, he vanishes, becoming inactive. [...] In your twin eye-corners [are seen the nectar-waters] of the ocean of bliss, supporting the river overflowing [with your tears of mercy], and across this ocean do stand the sacred ears of yours, listening to the hymns, songs and dance practised by the devotees of your feet. Dangling from your ears are the golden earrings studded with jewels, and their lustre gets reflected on the mirror of your cheeks; the ruby-red lips of yours are worshipped always by the best of red hibiscuses, and within those lips shine the crystalline rows of your teeth. What could be compared to them, if they put to shame a bright necklace of pearls?' – KN 41–61).

<sup>27)</sup> KN 62–65: *teḷiññiññane pūrṇacandrannumallalkkaḷaṅkam*  
*koṭukkunnetirdvandaśōbhāṅkuram vaktrabimbam karāḷōnnataśrīkaram*  
*ghōradamṣṭrādvayam bhīṣaṇīyam*

(‘Your round face, being the sprout of rival brightness, that stains the full moon with the grief of its ability to shine only like this, is terrifying as well as auspicious, dreadful are the twin canines frighteningly sticking out’).

<sup>28)</sup> KN 66–73: *karē kaṅkaṅam kiṅkiṅṣaṅkulam kiṅkarībhūtavētālakūli*  
*pravāham parannaṭṭahāsaṅṇaḷiṭṭiṭṭu kuntam kaṭaṅṇūḷla śamkham kṛpāṅam*  
*kapālam bhaṭanmāretirttōṭi maṅṭunna kaṅṭhasvanam simhanādattinam*  
*kṣiṅamunṭāmiṭṭikkum paṭutvam koṭukkunna poṭṭiccirikkeṭṭudikkum*  
*poṭṭikkāykoṭukkum*

(‘Bedecked with jingling grains are the bracelets in your hands. *Kiṅkarīs*, *bhūtas*, *vētālas* and *kūlis* flow around you. Flying, you shout and laugh aloud wielding a spear, with a sculptured conch, sword, skull in your hand, your frightening cries scatter mighty warriors away while encountering them, and make the lion's roar weak. Your loud laughter lends depth to peals of thunder and grinds to dust all the eight directions’).

<sup>29)</sup> KN 75–81: *piṭiccambarijālasamgītanṛttam tuṭikkiṅkiṅṣivēṇuvuṅṇāprayōgam*  
*cevikkoṅṭu taṅkakkukṭakkoṅkaraṅṭum kaḷam kuṅkumīpaṅkamālēyalēpam paḷuṅk*  
*ottamuttuppaṭaṅkalpavṛkṣattalam pūṅkulakkottukōrttiṭṭu mālākaḷaṅkāvihīnam*  
*kalāpiccum [...]*

(‘Hordes of celestial nymphs rhythmically dance and sing, playing little drums and bells, flutes along with *vīṅas* – and caring for all these, your twin golden pot-like breasts, shine with saffron and smeared sandal-paste. Crystal-clear pearl-necklace and garland made of cluster-flowers gathered from the the heavenly tree *kalpavṛkṣa* adorn you faultlessly [...]').

hips are compared to the pot of Kāma's chariot; the thighs are saluted by the beauty of elephant trunks. The charming feet make the defeated tortoise take the cover of water to practice penance as a remedy. Kāli is surrounded by hordes of formidable servants (*kiṅkarīs*), *bhūtas*, *vētālas* and *kūlis*, but also by celestial nymphs, dancing, singing and playing little drums (*tuṭi*), bells (*kiṅkiṇi*), flutes (*vēṇu*) and lutes (*vīṇa*). Listening to all this she also dances and walks joyfully with *jhaṇat*-sound arising from her lovely anklets, spreading brightness on Mount Kailāsa.<sup>30)</sup>

In the last part of this description, Narayana Guru calls back the concept of *Dēvi* worshipped in the ambivalent form of the wielder of illusion and the embodiment of mercy, being the only reason for liberation. The eternal flux of the perishable phenomenal world (*kṣaṇam kṣiṇalōkaprapaṇcapravāham*)

<sup>30)</sup> KN 84–108: *piṭikkullāṭakkikkoṭukkum vayarrinnaṭikkōmanappūmaṇippaṭṭ  
uṭuttammuṭiccikkukaccappuram vaccirukkikkakaṭikkāmavaṇṭikkukūṭattinnilīṇ  
ṇattuṭakkāmbu tumbikkaraśī namikkum aṅkaṇaṅkālaṭikkacchapam tōrru  
tōyē tapassinnu pōkunnapādāgrasōbhamkaṇaṅkālaṭittāmarappūvilōlam  
kaḷikkunna pūntēn nukarnnāttamōdam viḷaṇṇunna dēvāmganāgānamēlam  
kaḷam vīṇa nānāvidham vādyabhēdam śraviccū sakhīcārūnaryāṇitannil  
jhaṇatkārapūram vahiccum naṭannum mudā śōbha kailāsaśṛmgē lasiccum  
tadā dēvanārisamakṣam vahiccum namiccum suranmār vahiccum kaṭākṣam  
gamiccum nijānandamōṭāvīrāsāvidhikkulla kāmam labhiccum padāntē  
bhajiccum tadāvāsadēśē vasiccum sukhiccum ramiccum svakāryēṣvalam  
sambhramiccaṅkuriccatallam mūlamākkī viḷaṇṇunnivaṇṇam bhavattṛkkaṭakkaṇ  
cuḷicconnu nōkkāyamūlam krpālō! namastē namastē!*

(‘Your slender waist – a mere handful in size – is worn the lovely pearl-decked silk garment with your flowing tresses gathered within the waist-band, descending from your hip – the pot of Kāma's chariot – the twin thighs – saluted always by the beauty of elephant-trunks. The lower part of your calves, golden and tender, begin to vie with the quiver of the Limbless One, finally vanquishing it. The beauty of your soles makes the defeated tortoise take the cover of water to practice penance [as a remedy]; your feet – lovely lotus flower, filled with flowing nectar, sipped joyfully by the chorus of celestial goddesses spreading brightness all around and playing *vīṇa* and other instruments in their varied notes. Listening to all this you also dance and walk joyfully with *jhaṇat*-sound arising from your lovely ankles, spreading your beauty and splendour on Mount Kailāsa. The heavenly goddesses flow around you; the gods of heaven with great respect salute you. They acknowledge your side-glance and go ahead filled with their great bliss; they gain whatever they aspire, worshipping your feet, residing where they reside, enjoying and taking delight in personal matters, constantly agitated, creating causes of suffering sprouted again and again, they continue to live the same way, because you didn't mind to give a sacred glance of yours. O, embodiment of mercy! Obeisance to you!’).

is called *māyāvilāsam* – *māyā*'s play, being the trap of three *guṇas* – but Guru immediately mentions *kṣaṇajyōtiss*, the highest reality revealing itself in sudden flash.<sup>31</sup> It is the experience during which the spectator, spectacle and actress become one. We can admire all the skilful devices used in order to produce different *rasas* in this poem – *śrīṅgāra*, *bhayānaka* and *vīra rasa* – while describing the pleasant and formidable appearance of Kālī and her victory over the warriors, the *adbhuta rasa* produced by the paradoxical nature of Mother that are implemented for the sake of awakening the *śānta-rasa* (*ānanda-rasa*).<sup>32</sup> The climax of this long hymn is a short compound describing the experience of liberation, sudden flash – from this moment Kālī is addressed as *śivāmbā*, being auspicious only (or united totally with Śiva).

In JRN 5 Dēvi is addressed as Mother being that, which is covered, concealed with *mūlāvidya* – primeval ignorance, being above everything. She is described to be in a state of ecstasy or dance, but her dance is not the one known as *tāṇḍava*, performed by Śiva, but is *lāsyam*, the shining one, causing manifestation.<sup>33</sup> While dancing, she sets free all commotion

<sup>31</sup> KN 109–123: *namastē mahāghōra samsāra vārānnidhikkakkarekkēruvān*  
*tr̥ppadattārīṅakkappalallātorālanbanam mar̥renikkonnumillamba,*  
*kāruṇyārāṣē, ninaykkunnatellām koṭukkunna tr̥kkaṇṇiṅattēnkaṭākṣam*  
*labhippānanaññēn, padāmbhōjavaimukhyamennil piṅaṅṇiṅolā tē namastē,*  
*namastē, namastē, paṅam peṅṇilum maṅṇilum cennupukkāśvaniccāttamōdam*  
*guṅam keṭṭu duḥkhiṅcu pōvānayaykkollaham dēhamennōrttu sattvādiyām*  
*mukkuṅamkeṭṭu peṭṭōrumāyāvilāsam kṣaṅam kṣiṅalōkaprapaṅcapravāham*  
*kṣaṅajyōtirācandratāram namastē śivāmbā, namastē, namastē*

(‘Obeisance to you! To reach the farther shore of this frightening ocean of *samsāra*, I have only this ship of your lotus-feet; no other refuge I do find, O Mother, ocean of mercy! I stand here to gain the side-glance being the nectar flowing from your sacred eyes that grants whatever desires are thought of. May there be no ill-will of your lotus feet on me. Obeisance to you! Obeisance to you! Obeisance to you! May my mind not get stuck on money, sex and properties, finding joyous solace in them, destroying virtue to suffer. May I realize I’m not this body. This eternal flux of perishable phenomenal world, is *māyā*'s play, being a trap of three *guṇas*, beginning from *sattva*; but [you reveal yourself] in a sudden flash. As long as the moon and star exist, salutations, o Mother-Śiva, salutations, salutations!’). [...] *kṣaṅajyōtirācandratāram* – *oru kṣaṅam uyarunna jyōtissu; svātmabōdham / anaśvaram* – ‘the light being self-realisation, arising in one moment/imperishable, eternal [the light of consciousness, rising in one moment, is imperishable, eternal]’ – Bhāskaran (2004: 130).

<sup>32</sup> Compare Prasad (2010: 98).

<sup>33</sup> It is worth emphasising here that the term *nṛttam* – dance – refers in KN to devotees, human beings as well as gods, celestial beings, whereas majority of terms

(*kōlāhalam*), as a mixture of five *vibhūti*s – Guru chooses here water, wind and fire, the three intermediary elements which are well known for their constant movements and activity. NG speaks of her fancy vest (*līlāpaṭam*), which is woven of a subtle thread that is time and so on, which in her cosmic dance releases larger elements, constituting the phenomenal, visible world. She is wrapped entirely in the this veil of phenomenality, concealing her true form –(*ullat*), and for this reason nobody knows what it is.<sup>34</sup>) Here the *Jananī*, Mother as *nirguṇa*-brahman is beyond all form and *guṇas*; her supreme form (*para*) is known to nobody. She is praised as the one who is beyond (*anta*) comprehension of all scriptures (*āgama*).

Thus, the one reality symbolised by Kālī – Mother Goddess – in her never-ending dance performed to feel the joy of seeing actualised for herself all the

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describing *māyā*'s play [also in another works] are derived from the root *las* – ‘to shine [forth], manifest’: *ullāsam, vilāsam, lāsyam, lasikkuka*. The same root can be found in AŚ 95, where the power of the whole universe (*viśvavīryam*) shining forth (*vilasunna*) as covered / dispersed by illusion (*māyā*) is called the wisdom of playing (*vinōdaavidya*), which is [given] the widest space: *vipulatayārṇna vinōdaavidya māyāvvyavahitayāy vilasunna viśvavīryam / ivaliṣaḥ iñṇavatīrṇṇayāyīṭum tannavayavam aṇḍakaṭāhakōṭiyākum // 95 //* (‘Virility/ power of the whole universe, shining forth as covered /dispersed by *māyā* – is the wisdom of playing, being [given] the widest space, again and again she, she becomes manifested here; her limbs are ten million cosmic eggs’). The term *vīryam* means inexhaustible energy, which – though being the material cause of the world – remains unchanged; this creative power seems to be strictly associated here with the inexhaustibility of *śakti*, again and again creating, sustaining and destroying thanks to her power of illusion.

<sup>34</sup>) *mēlāyamūlamatiyālāvṛtam janani! nīlāsyamātivīṭumikīlāvāyvanal kōlāhalam bhuvanamālāpamātramakhilam; kālādiyāya mrdunūlāleneyyumuṛu līlāpaṭam bhavatiṃey mēlākemūṭumatīnālārumuḷḷatarivīlāgamāntanīlayē!*

(‘You, o Mother, remain concealed with primeval ignorance, being the root-cause [of the whole universe]. From your sportive dance of romantic mood you set free all this commotion – a mixture of water, air and fire, that constitutes the world – all this is but mere name only. Your fancy vest, woven out of subtle threads being time and the like, envelops wholly your real shape, and for this reason nobody knows the real [form of you], o Mother, being beyond the comprehension of all scriptures!’)

*mēlāyamūlamatiyāl āvṛtam – mēlāyuḷḷa (ellārīnum appuramāyuḷḷa – sarvōttaramāyuḷḷa) mūlabhūtamāya (ādikāraṇamāya) matiyāl (buddhiyāl)*

‘[covered] with buddhi [mati] which is the primeval, root-cause, being above everything, higher than anything’; here: *mūlāvidya*; *samaṣṭibhāvattiluḷḷa prakṛti* – ‘primeval ignorance, collective prakṛti, included in all beings’ – Śāstrikaḷ (2007: 61); *kālādiyāya mrdunūlāle – kālam, dēsam, nimittam ennī mūnnu nūlukaḷkoṇṭu* – ‘[woven out of] three threads, being time, space and cause’ – Nāyar (2010: 580).

immense possibilities latent in her own being, assumes the form of all the worlds. In order to depict such a incredible momentarily changing dance-drama, Narayana Guru not only deliberately introduces various elements of many philosophical systems, but also mingles different literary traditions: Sanskrit as well as Dravidian.<sup>35)</sup>

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<sup>35)</sup> Compare Jayakumar (1999: 170).