
ŚVETĀRAṆYA OF SOUTH INDIAN ŚAIVISM

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ABSTRACT

This article is a summary of 60+ *Tēvāram* hymns on Veṅkāṭu which are not only important documents in the history of South Indian Śaivism, but also the *sthala* and organizing principle of the structure of the temple, its location and iconography. The Śaivite Navagraha-*sthalas* in the Kāviri delta, are Curiyanārkōyil-Sūrya, Tiṅkalūr-Candra, Tiruveṅkāṭu-Budha, Vaittīcuvarankōyil-Aṅgāraka, Ālaṅkuṭi-Bṛhaspati, Kañcaṇūr-Śukra, Tirunaḷḷāru-Śanaīścara, Kuṃbhakoṇam/Nākeśvaram-Rāhu and Perumpalḷam-Ketu. The Vaiṣṇavas have their Navagraha-*sthalas* in the Tāmiraparaṇi basin, called Navatiruppatis (nine holy lands). The *nava*-Kailāsas in this zone are also treated Śaiva *grahasthalas*. Śvetāraṇyeśvara temple. Tiruveṅkāṭu, is a crucial Śaiva-*sthala*, much less known to the outer world. The three authors of the *Tēvāram*, viz., Campantar (*Tirumuṛai* 1-3), Nāvukkaracar (4.6) and Cuntarar (7) have contributed six *patikams* (decades of hymns, totally of 62 hymns) on the Budha-*sthala* in Tiruveṅkāṭu. The different manifestations of Śiva are extolled in these hymns, particularly Ardhanārīśvara, Naṭarāja, Yogīśvara, Candraśekhara, Ekapādamūrti, Bhikṣāṭana, Kālāri, Gajasamhāra and so on. These remain unexamined in scholarly works. It is worthwhile to see what the *Tēvāram*-trio have to say on Veṅkāṭu. It seems

during the past, Cōla, Veṅkāṭu was a base of the Vīraśaivas. Therefore, a shrine for the Lord Vīrabhadra is present within the Śvetāraṇyeśvara temple. The *bhakti* Tamil literature clearly recognizes the importance of this venue with reference to its landscape, *sthala*, *vṛkṣa*, cultic values, mythologies, *nāmāvalis* ‘epithets’ and its implications on the visual iconography of the temple that evolved under the Cōlas and successive rulers of the region. This article hopes to show the importance of an aspect of Tamil Śaivism which is often neglected by scholars.

Keywords: *Tēvāram*; Veṅkāṭu; Navagraha-*sthala*; Budha; Cōla

Introduction

In the Tamil tradition, the nine temples dedicated mainly to Śiva in the Kāviri delta, are also the seats of an astrological cults dedicated to a planet or *graha*.² All the nine *grahas* find a blending in the Cōla temple at Cūriyaṅṅarkōyil ‘Suryayanar Kovil’ (Taṅcāvūr Dist.) of the later Cōla period (Kulōttuṅga I 1070-1120 CE). This temple is primarily dedicated to Cūriyaṅṅ/Sūrya. He occupies the main *garbhagrha* in the temple. The other surrounding eight temples and *grahas* are as follows: Tiṅkalūr ‘Thingalur’ (Taṅcāvūr Dist.): Moon (Candra), Kaṅcaṅūr ‘Kanjanur’ (Taṅcāvūr Dist.): Venus (Śukra), Vaitīcuvraṅkōyil ‘Vaitheeswaran Kovil’ (Mayilaṭuṭurai Dist.): Mars (Aṅgāraka/Kuja/Bhauma), Tiruveṅkāṭu ‘Thiruvenkadu’ (Mayilaṭuṭurai Dist.): Mercury (Budha), Perumpallam ‘Keezhperupallam’ : Ketu, Tirunaḷḷāru ‘Thirunallar’ (Kāraikkāl): Saturn (Śani), Nākēcuvaram ‘Thirunageswaram’ (Nāgeśvaram³, Taṅcāvūr Dist.): Rāhu; Ālaṅkuṭi ‘Alangudi’ (Tiruvārūr Dist.): Jupiter (Bṛhaspati)⁴.

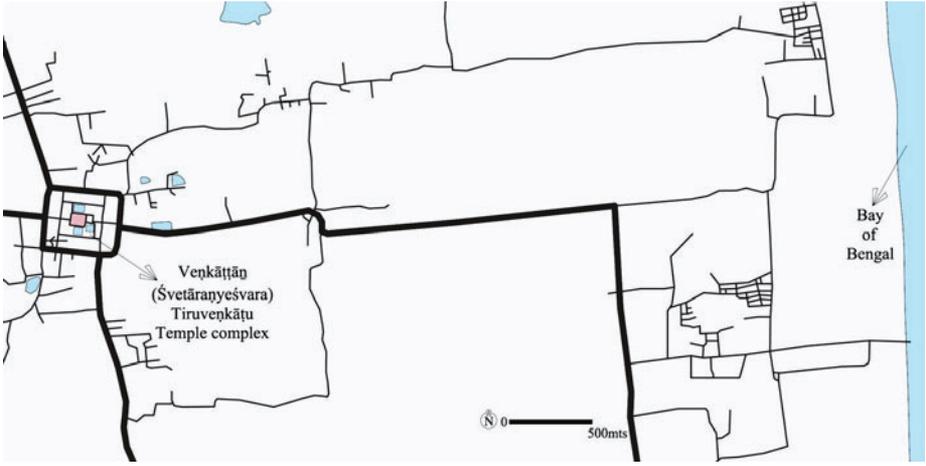


Figure 1. Venkātū and the Temple City (Plan by R.K. Parthiban)

The Śvetāraṇyeśvara Temple of Tiru|Veṅ-kāṭu (=Śveta-āraṇya) is an important center of Śaivism on the East Coast (Fig. 1). One among the Navagraha-*sthalas*, Veṅkāṭu is reserved for Budha (Mercury); others are Curiyaṅārṅkōyil – Sūrya (all nine forming a *maṅḍala* round the Sun), Tiṅkaḷūr - Candra, Vaitṭicuvarankōyil - Aṅgāraka, Ālaṅkuṭi - Bṛhaspati, Kaṅcaṅūr - Śukra, Tirunallāru - Śanaīścara, Kuṁbhakoṅam/Nākeśvaram - Rāhu and Perumpaḷḷam - Ketu. All these *sthalas* are located in the Kāviri delta. Tiru|Veṅkāṭu is much less known to the outer world when compared with Nallāru. The authors of *Tēvāram*, viz., Campantar, Nāvukkaracar, and Cuntarar have contributed six *patikams* (decades of hymns, totaling 62 hymns) on Veṅkāṭu. The different manifestations of Śiva are extolled in these hymns, particularly Ardhanārīśvara, Naṭarāja (Fig. 4), Yogīśvara, Candraśekhara, Ekapādamūrti, Bhikṣāṭana, Kālāri, Gajasamhāra and so on. These are often not mentioned in scholarly works. Yet it is worthwhile to see what the *Tēvāram*-trio have to say on Veṅkāṭu. The *sthalā*, Mūrti, *tīrtha* and [*sthalā*]-*vr̥kṣa* are unique in the annals of South Indian Śaivism, and the foundation of its mythology. The Mukkuḷam-*tīrtha* seems rooted in pan-Indian lore.⁵ We may talk of regionalism, but none escape from the shackles of nationalism that we call “emotional integration” or “unity in diversity.” The present article is a summary of the 60+ *Tēvāram* hymns on Veṅkāṭu signifying not only the importance in the history of South

Indian Śaivism, but also the *sthala* in the initial stages of growth from the view point of structure and organization of the temple, its location and evolution of regional visual iconography.



Figure 2. Gopura, Sthalavr̥kṣa, and Tīrtha: Śvetārāṇyeśvara temple, Tiruvenkātu (by R.K.K. Rajarajan)



Figure 3. Vīrabhadra shrine, Śvetārāṇyeśvara temple, Tiruvenkātu (by R.K.K. Rajarajan)

Coastal *sthalas*

The East Coast or Cōḷamaṇḍala-*kaṭarkarai* (Anglicized Coromandel) occupies a key place in Indian religious geography. From Pūri in Oḍisa to Aṇantapuram in Kēraḷa and Dvārakā via the Koṅkan, several *divyasthalas* are located on the West Coast (Rajarajan 2020, 2020a, Vairakkodi 2016, 2016a, 2017). Māmallapuram, Tiruviṭantai (*ardha-Setu*), Nākapattiṇam, and Vedāraṇyam (*Veda-Wild*, cf. Poongodi 2006) are important Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *sthalas* in the East Coast. Veṅkāṭu, Sanskritized Śvetāraṇya (Fig. 2) is an important Śaiva-*sthalā*, much less known to the outer world. My doctoral guide, Dr. A. Veluswamy Suthanthiran (1982), did his doctoral work (University of Madras 1982) on the temple in this *sthalā*, which remains unpublished. Tirunallāru is another nearby *sthalā* famous for the worship of Lord Śanaiścara, popularly Śaniśvara (Mevissen 1997). In fact, the Navagraha-*sthalas* of the Śaivite denomination is concentrated in the Kāviri delta in and around Kuṃbhakōnam, e.g., Curiyanārkōyil for Sūrya, including the other eight. Tiruveṅkāṭu is the *sthalā* meant for Budha (Fig. 7; Rajarajan 2015: 192; Santhana-Lakshmi-Parthiban 2019: 32-33). The Vaiṣṇavas have their Navagraha-*sthalas* in the Tāmiraparaṇi basin, called Navatiruppatis (nine holy lands, Rajarajan 2011: 131-144). The *nava-Kailāsas* in this zone are also treated Śaiva *grahasthalas* (Karpagam 2020: 297-321).⁶ The mystics that composed the *Tēvāram*, viz., Campantar (*Tirumuṟai* 1-3), Nāvukkaracar (4.6) and Cuntarar (7) have contributed six *patikams* (decades of hymns, totally of 62 hymns) on the *sthalā* in Veṅkāṭu. The different manifestations of Śiva are extolled in these hymns, particularly Ardhanārīśvara (Rajarajan 2012: 249-60), Naṭarāja (Rajarajan & Jeyapriya 2021), Yogīśvara (cf. Bakker 2019), Candraśekhara, Ekapādamūrṭi, Bhikṣāṭana, Kālāri, Gajasamhāra (Kalidos 1984) and so on. The thesis of Veluswamy Suthanthiran (1982) remains unpublished, but it is worthwhile to see what the *Tēvāram*-trio have to say on Veṅkāṭu. It seems during the time past, Cōḷa, Veṅkāṭu was a base of the Vīraśaivas. Therefore, a shrine for the Lord Aghoramūrṭi Vīrabhadra (Jeyapriya 2009; Fig. 3) is present within the Śvetāraṇyeśvara temple. Some basic information regarding

this *sthala* is as follows:

<i>Sthala:</i>	Veṅkāṭu/Śvetāraṇya, ⁷ Śvetavana (ARE 1918: 496)
Presiding God:	Veṅkāṭṭāṇ, Śvetāraṇyeśvara (ARE 475 of 1918)
Inscriptional names:	Tiruvenkāṭṭup Perumāl (465 of 1918: 465), Veṅkāṭatēvar (486 of 1918) and Cēyvētāraṇyanātar
Ammaṇ:	Brahmavidyā-nāyaki, Veyanṇa-tōḷinācciyār (122 of 1896) < Vēyanṇatōḷ-Umai (Umā whose shoulder is bamboo-like smooth)
<i>Sthalavṛkṣa:</i>	ālamaram (<i>vaṭavṛkṣa</i>)
<i>Tīrtha:</i>	Mukkuḷam (Agni- <i>tīrtha</i> , Sūrya- <i>tīrtha</i> and Candra- <i>tīrtha</i>)
<i>Sthala māhātmyas:</i>	Śvetāraṇyamāhātmya and <i>Tiruvenkāṭṭuppurāṇam</i> .
Inscriptions:	Cōḷa records of Rājarāja I, including Cempiyan Matēviyār, to Kulōttuṅga III are found in the temple. Other inscriptions are of the Pāṇḍyas (Empire II).



Figure 4. Naṭarāja, Śvetāraṇyeśvara temple, Tiruvenkāṭu (by R.K.K. Rajarajan)

***Tēvāram* Hymns: Campantar (2.184)**

The *Tēvāram* is a codification of the hymns contributed by the Śaivite mystics, Nāṇacampantar, Nāvukkaracar, also known as Appar (7th century CE) and Cuntarar (8th century). Their hymns have been brought under the seven *Tirumuṟais* (Books of the Sacred Order), books one to three by Campantar, books four to six by Appar, and book seven by Cuntarar. The hymns are highly revered by the Tamil Śaiva scholars, much dearer to them than their own life. The *Tēvāram* and *Tiruvācakam* (8th *Tirumuṟai*) are regularly recited with the musical accompaniment in the temples of Śiva all over the Tamil speaking south. It is meritorious if we listen to at least a few among the several thousands of the hymns by the *Tēvāram*-trio.⁸

1. The Lord Śiva's forehead is graced with an eye (*tritīyanetra*), one hand carries the fire (*agni*). the sacred icon is united with a female form (Ardhanārī), and the matted locks accommodate the crescent. The Lord's music is soaked in rhythms.⁹ He is the tempest that nurtures saplings.¹⁰ Habituated in Veṅkāṭu, His banner is inscribed with the bull (*vr̥ṣabhadvaja*).

2. Ghouls do not harass, *aññāna*, (ignorance) is unveiled, (devotees) beget good children, and all good *varadas* are assured; there is no worry regarding these benevolences (of the Lord). The Veṅkāṭu is the venue of the divinity whose half is occupied by the gracious maiden;¹¹ *Umai-paṅkaṇ*. If Thou take a dip in the *Mukkuḷam* (trio-*tīrtha*)¹², no evil [*tī*]-*viṇai* (evil deed) haunts anyone.

3. The Lord is an abstraction of the *pañcabhūtas*;¹³ *maṅ/pr̥thvi* (earth), *nīr/ap* (*jala* water), *aṅal/tejas* (fire), *kāl* (wind), and *ākāyam/ākāśa* (ether), *mati* (moon), *iravi* (sun) and the *prāṇa* (breath-spell) that makes up the Aṣṭamūrti¹⁴ ('Aṣṭamūrti' *Tēvāram* 4.48.10). He is *ika-param*. His abstractions are the Aṣṭadikpālakas, both male and female (Rajaraajan 2005). He is dignified. The king of gods, Indra, offers worship at Veṅkāṭu.

4. The Lord's throat is colored by poison (*hālahāla*). He is the master of the grove of Veṅkāṭu. Carp fishes fearing herons hide under the lotus flowers as the fragrant screw-pine unfolds their flat leaves. Viewing this scenario, the pearl shells coming out of the sea are laughing.

5. The Lord of Veṅkāṭu¹⁵ dwells in a venue in the coastal region. Yama had snatched the life of an expert in *Vedas*¹⁶, Mārkaṇḍeya in this place. The Yama-*dūtas* are afraid of the Lord of the scarred-throat to approach his savants because Yama was admonished (kicked 'kūr̥rai-yutaitavar,' 'Mrtyuñjaya' *Tēvāram* 1.30.1) by the Lord Śiva for casting a noose on devotees.

6. The Lord's decorated headgear has a cold moon and the threatening cobra. The maiden Umā occupies one half of his body. Parrots seated on trees listen to the names (*sahasranāma*) of the Lord recited by devotees. Veṅkāṭu is the venue where birds utter the Lord's sacred *nāmas*¹⁷.

7. The Lord has gifted the disc to Māl/Viṣṇu (Cakradānamūrti).¹⁸ Jalandarāsura was axed to death. Śiva is decorated with garlands of bones, *muṇḍamālā*. When the pious elephant, Airāvata, worshipped, it was blessed. Veṅkāṭu is blessed with ‘Mukkuḷam’ for *trinetra*-Śiva.

8. The lunatic (Rāvaṇa) lifted Kailāsa when the maiden spoke melodiously as he was afraid of who was seated with the Lord.¹⁹ The Lord is residing in this temple. The handsome peacock is dancing, the ocean is roaring, and bees in ponds are singing in the venue at Veṅkāṭu.

9. Brahmā is seated on a lotus brimming with honey. Māl/Viṣṇu is reposing on the Ocean of Milk. They want to find out the crest and feet of the inaccessible fire-phallus,²⁰ which they could not scale. Veṅkāṭu is the venue where the white elephant Airāvata worshipped the Lord and obtained grace. Those that do not melt their minds in devotion are not devotees.

10. The Buddhists and Jains²¹ are preaching philosophies based on false logic. Would you mind not listening to them? True wisdom is in the *Vedas*. The Lord of Veṅkāṭu is the favorite of the lovers of the *Vedas*. They are not afflicted by mundane evils (disease, senility, and death).

11. Tamil Ṇāṇacampantar belongs to the city of Caṅpai (Cīkālī), full of cold ponds. He is the author of the ten hymns bearing the *piraiccenni-vikirtan*, Candraśekhara, of Veṅkāṭu. Those that recite these hymns live happily on this earth. They are masters of the heavens.

4. Campantar *Tēvāram* 2.197

1. Umaipaṅkan (Śiva as part of Umā) is the Lord that devoured the poison coming out of the Churning of the Ocean of Milk. Our Patriarch, He is the emasculator of evils that attack the devotees of the Lord. Bees sit on flowers to collect the honey of sacred Veṅkāṭu.

2. The Lord is the master that redeems us from the evils of *karmavinai*, the *malas*. He stamps out errors and showers bliss on devotees. Veṅkāṭu is the venue where parrots are uttering *Vedas*.

3. The venue has three *tīrthas* (Mukkuḷam) as cold pearls. Devotees are enamored of the Mūrti with pearls of tears budding in their eyes. The Lord appears as buds of pearls in the minds of those that partake in heart-melting worship. The ocean waves wash white pearls ashore in the sacred venue at Veṅkātu.

4. The *sthala* is for the grey-haired people who visit during old age to obtain the Lord's grace. The Lord *karaiyā-vannaṁ-kaṇṭaṅ* (Nīlakaṇṭha) is the giver of solace to those who are friendless. Veṅkātu is the sacred place where swans visit and nest among the lotus flowers.

5. The Lord drives away the hardships that afflict his devotees. He is fitted with the child-moon and the flooding River (Gaṅgā). The venue is Veṅkātu, where the ocean washes white conch shells ashore by its waves²².

6. The Lord's form is *tejas*, Liṅgodbhavamūrti. He is simple to his devotees. He is the redeemer of the gods. The white elephant, Airāvata, offered worship in the sacred *sthala*-Veṅkātu.

7. The Lord admonished Yama (Kūru, Mr̥tyu) in this holy land to protect his ardent devotee, Mārkaṇḍeya. The *yāga-dhūma* (sacrificial smoke) kindled in the *kūṇḍas* of Vedis reaches the skies at Veṅkātu.²³

8. The lady of the hill 'Malaiyā!' is graced with bangles. She was alarmed when Rāvaṇa attempted to lift the Kailāsa²⁴. The Lord Candraśekhara pressed his toe to thwart the demon's effort. The Lord is at all times extolled in this sacred land at Veṅkātu, which is full of paddy fields, ponds, and groves.

9. The Lord elongated in a fiery form: Liṅgodbhavamūrti. The dark colored Viṣṇu (*kariyāṅ-Viṣṇu*²⁵) and Brahmā (*kamala-malarāṅ*, seated on the lotus) could not trace his feet and crest. He resides at Veṅkātu that is a rare sight for the celestials. Bees are humming among the ponds there.

10. He is the Lord that has tamed the dancing cobra. Devotees are assembled to shower praises. The sacred *vighraha* could not be understood by the Jains and the Buddhists (Camaṅ-Cākkiyar). The dignitary's *pati* "station" is Veṅkātu.

11. The Lord holding the *iṭapakkoti/vṛṣabhadvaja* is the Governor of Veṅkāṭu. This *patikam* (decade) is the work of Nāṇacampantar who preaches morality based on his nativity at [Cī]-Kāli. Recite these hymns to give up *vinai*. If so, you are to rule in the celestial world.

Tēvāram 3.273

1. He is my God extolled by the Vedic aphorisms (*mantira-marai/mantra-veda*) by the celestials and Indra. The Lord is smeared with *veṅṇīru* (*bhasma* “white-ash”)²⁶ is seated at Veṅkāṭu. He is the ādi (beginning) and *anta* (end). He has no beginning and no end.

2. His weapon is the *maḷu/taṅka* (stone-cutters chisel). His garment, *kōvaṇam/kaupīṇa*, is the tiger’s hide. His banner bears the bull, *viṭaiyuṭai-koṭi*. He is the Caturar (Caturatāṇḍavamūrṭi?) of Veṅkāṭu. His tiara is fitted with the flooding river, the Gaṅgā (Gaṅgādhara)²⁷.

3. The Lord is pleased to accept milk, ghee, curd, and other (fruits) oblations. His garment is a hide and puts on the sacred white thread. Śiva-yogis are found in the venue at Veṅkāṭu where the Lord is seated below the banyan tree for imparting wisdom²⁸.



Figure 5. Two hut-like structures, the *nṛttasabhā*, and the *etirampalam*, Śvetāranyeśvara temple (by R.K.K. Rajarajan)

4. The sacred land at Veṅkāṭu is rich in flora and fauna (such as) tiger-claw trees (ñāḷal), a sedge pear tree (*cerutti*), good flower Alexandrian laurel (*punnai*), and fragrant screw-pine (*tāḷai*). White herons (*kuruku*) are flying along the shores of the sea, and many in the ponds. This is the wild where the Lord stripped the elephant-demon, *gajāśura*, of his skin.²⁹ He is fond of the melody of the lute.³⁰

5. The gifted divinity, the Lord, is Holy, followed by the *bhūtagaṇas*. He absolves our crimes and overcomes all hardships. My God, He is foremost of the *Vedas*. He is the Eternal whose sacred feet planted in Veṅkāṭu are worshipped.

6. Adored by the people on earth and the celestials, the gods offer services to the Lord on all days without fail. His complete presence is felt in Veṅkāṭu, which is full of pools and groves. Nothing troubles devotees coming to the sacred land.

7. He offers whatever devotees solicit. The elephant, Airāvata, was blessed when it adored the Lord. He is present in Veṅkāṭu, a sacred land visited by recluses and *yogis*. He is the Eternal (Paramaṇ, Paramaśiva) holding the *ṭaṅka* in hand.

8. Śaṅkara is the dignitary that pressed down the crowned heads of the demon, Rāvaṇa when he attempted to lift the Kailāsa. He is present in Veṅkāṭu, the body smeared with white ash. He bears the wavy river, Gaṅgā, on his head.

9. Ayan/Brahmā seated on the lotus, and Māl/Viṣṇu tried their level best to discover the crest and feet of the Lord that they could not find out. Rare for *darśana* of infidels, He is dancing in the sacred land at Veṅkāṭu (Fig. 5).

10. The Bodhis and Jains (Piṅṭiyār see note 20) are the followers of agnostic philosophies that are unacceptable. Veṅkāṭu is full of the experts in *Vedas* who are at the feet of the Āti (the Primeval, cf. Ādinātha or Ādimūrṭi)³¹. None is there to deserve our adorations other than the Lord.

11. Nānacampantar is the resident of the *kṣetra* (Cīkālī) where good-natured people live. He is the author of these hymns on Tiruveṅkāṭu. The experts in the hymns shall be relieved from all ordeals of *karmavinai*,

leading to *Nirmala* (devoid of *malas*, or psychosis for likes and dislikes). Therefore, the Lord is *Nimalan*; ‘*nēyattē|niṅra|nimalan*’ (He is the Pure, loved by devotees *Civapurāṇam* [l. 12] of *Māṅikkavācakar*).



Figure 6. *Kanakasabhā* (see Rajarajan et al. 2017: fig. 93), Floating Tillai/Citamparam (December 2020), source: <https://i.redd.it/3ts5gtspa4361.jpg>

Appar *Tēvāram* 5.49

1. My mind, the Lord, is a dimple of the eye for devotees that sing his Praise by melodious music. The *Devī Umā* occupies his one half. The crest bears the crescent. For the attainment of bliss, one must reach *Veṅkāṭu* where the Lord is residing.

2. The Lord holds a burning fire in one hand while dancing. One half of his body is female (*Ardhanārīśvara*) who is always surrounded by the *bhūtagaṇas*. He is decorated with a white crescent and mounted on the white bull. His throat is black³² (colored by the poison from the white³³ Ocean of Milk). My mind reaches *Veṅkāṭu*, the Lord’s abode.

3. Do not pursue the enjoyment of *indriyas* that melt your tissues. Be in search of the otherworldly thoughts that elevate you to *Śiva-loka*. Honey-like, the Lord lives on the tongues of those that always cherish the names of the Lord, e.g., *Śivasahasranāma*. My mind goes in search of *Veṅkātu*, the *Kailāsa*.³⁴

4. *Umā* was afraid when the Lord stripped the demonic rutting elephant of its hide. He is posted on the big white hill.³⁵ His abode is the excellent white forest, *Naimiṣāraṇya*³⁶, the final resort of *ṛṣis* and *munis*. It is the *Veṅkātu*, which my mind is willing to reach for final beatitude.

5. *Śiva* is the only hope for living organisms. His tiara is mounted with the cobra and the crescent. He is a highly learned *nāni*.³⁷ With his arrow, he destroyed the enemies of humankind (*kayavar*) in the three-cities, *tripuras*.³⁸ My mind reaches *Veṅkātu* for redemption.

6. The Lord was united with *Umā* at one time. He was pleased to appear as *kirāta/vētan*³⁹ to bless *Pārttan/Pārtha* (*Arjuna* with *pāśupatastra*). *Civam* is the pinnacle of love, extolled by lovers of all countries.⁴⁰ My mind reaches *Veṅkātu*, where the Lord is present.

7. The Lord bears the *Gaṅgā*, cobra, and the moon on his matted locks. He was pleased to burn down the triple-cities of the immoral allies. He has explained the meanings of the four *vedas* and six *vedāṅgas* at *Veṅkātu*. My mind reaches this venue (to obtain benedictions).

8. The Lord, *Śiva*, is decked with a decorative strip on the forehead, *lalāṭapaṭṭa*, and garland of lotus flowers. Devotees praise the Lord by uttering the *nāmas Ciṭṭan*⁴¹ and *Āti-[mūrṭi]*. He is the dancer, *Natṭamūrṭi*⁴² (*Kalidos* 1996). He is the Lord of wisdom that appears in eight different forms, *Aṣṭamūrṭi*.⁴³ You may find the Lord (his various manifestations) at *Veṅkātu*. My mind hastens to the venue.

9. *Viṣṇu* as *ēnam* (*Varāha* “boar”) and *Brahmā* as *haṃsa* (swan) could not find out the Lord. The Lord is of these forms that appeared an inaccessible fire. He came as *jñāna-Kirāta* to bless *Vijaya/Arjuna* with the coveted [*pāśupata*]-*astra*. The Lord of *Veṅkātu* is the forest hunter. My mind reaches him.

10. The Lord takes pleasure dipping in milk, *kṣīrābhiṣeka*. He preaches the *Vedas* and half of *Umā*, whose eyes resemble the *cēl* (carp fishes). He was pleased to devour the poison emerging from the ocean that was caught in his throat. His necklace consists of the bones of corpses. My mind reaches the sacred venue *Veṅkātu*.

11. The Lord is crested with the moon that glitters during darkness. The elephant, *Airāvata*, offered prayers to obtain grace. He stamped his thumb to redeem *Rāvaṇa*, and his throat is of the hue of darkness. The Lord is present in *Veṅkātu*. My mind, reaches this venue.

***Tēvāram* 6.35**

All hymns in this *patikam* end with the invocation *vikirtanār* (see 2.184.11 above) which has a variety of meanings. It can refer to a God, a man of freakish behavior; a person who is obsessed with particular interest; a fitness-freak; a very unusual and unexpected event; a person with physical abnormality, an oddity, a rarity, an eccentric, a devotee, a lover, an enthusiast, an addict, a maniac and so on (“Manifestations” in Kramrisch 1981, cf. Meister 1984). Commentators often employ *nātha* for *vikirtanār* (cf. *Periya Tirumōḷi* 3.8.9, Rajarajan et al. 2020: 1625)

1. The Lord’s sacred mien burns as a fire and is smeared with the holy ash (*bhasma*). He lifts the *triśūla* in hand and is decorated with the *sarpamālā*. A good cobra is inserted in the ear-hole (*nāgakuṇḍala*)⁴⁴. His golden locks are hanging down. The Lord is decorated with a three-layered sacred thread, and a moon fitted on *jaṭāmakuṭa*. He is majestically marching in the streets of *Veṅkātu*. He is mounted on a white bull. He is a divinity of oddities.

2. The Lord is well disposed toward his devotees that extol his sacred feet by blessing them through his lotus feet, *pādapaṅkaja* infiltrating into the *pātāḷaloka*. This sacred foot stamps out all terrible crimes, and he is the *Ekapādamūrti*. He moves throughout all countries to receive *bali*. He plays the *vīṇā* during the *praḷayakāla* to tune the *Vedas*. He is the lover of *Veṅkātu*.

3. The Lord, Bhikṣāṭana, arrived there to receive alms.⁴⁵ I was standing there. He was pretending to be a visitor, not a beggar. I enquired where he from was. He did not tell me. He, Āliṅgaṇamūrti, is the mysterious person of Veṅkāṭu who dallies with the maiden graced with soft breasts.

4. The Lord was standing yonder, having accommodated Umā in his one half. The hooded *nāga* is tied around his hip. He is mounted on the bull vehicle, puts on the tiger's hide, and is surrounded by *bhūtagaṇas*. I went to offer alms. He caught hold of my hands to covet my bangles.⁴⁶ He is the mixture of opposites stationed at Veṅkāṭu, full of groves cloaked with rainy clouds.

5. Fitted with white conch-hangs in-ears, the Lord (Bhikṣāṭana) is wandering all over the Cosmos. Dwarfed *bhūtagaṇas* follow him sounding the *koṭukoṭṭi* (big drum).⁴⁷ He has captivated my mind.⁴⁸ I pretend not to have seen the Lord. But he is always present in my mind's eyes. He is the lover of Veṅkāṭu who is decked with the Gaṅgā[*dhara*]; his mouth whisper the *Vedas*.

6. Śūladhara, Śiva takes the *maḷuvāl* in hand and is decorated with the *koṅṅrai* (Cassia fistula) flowers. He is mounted on the *vṛṣabha*, and moves not to receive the *bali* if offered. His body is smeared with *bhasma*; he (Sundara) has captivated the viewers. He talks pleasingly to covet my bangles. He is the *jaṭādhara* whose tongue is the *Veda*, the beloved of Veṅkāṭu.

7. Ardhanārī, His one half is occupied by Umā, His ornament is the *nāga[maṇi]*. His job is not to eat and sleep as ordinary mortals; the food is *hālahāla* (= *madhu* among the *pañca-makāras*). He is *jaṭādhara*. Talking pleasingly, He has caught hold of me. The Eternal, he bears the moon on his tiara, Candraśekhara, He is preaching the *Veda* at Veṅkāṭu.

8. Scared *stotras* extoll the Lord. The gods, along with Viṣṇu and Brahmā, unite to offer worship by *dūpa-dīpas*. Those that provide services are amply rewarded with desirable boons. The dignitary is mounted on the *śveta-vṛṣabha* in the sacred venue at Śvetāraṇya.

9. The Lord is an inaccessible pillar of fire whose Brahmā and Viṣṇu could not discover crest and base. He is omnipresent as the Cosmic Light, and his garland consists of *konrai* flowers. He showered blessings on the white elephant, Airāvata. He is the lovable divinity based at Veṅkāṭu.

10. The Lord burnt down to ashes the son (Manmatha/Pradyumna holding the sugarcane bow) of Kṛṣṇa (Saṃkarṣaṇa) who lifted the great hill (Govardhana). He rendered invalid the demon, Rāvaṇa, by trampling his thumb. He is the aficionado of Veṅkāṭu.

Cuntarar Tēvāram 7.6

1. Thou have decked the hooded cobra on Thy crest, *bhujāṅgabhūṣaṇa*. The hide of the prancing tiger is on Thy hip. Thou (Tripurāntaka) burnt down the incorrigible triple-forts to bless the three demons,⁴⁹ *tripurāris*. At one time, Thou (Kālāri) had the magnanimity to bless the amenable God of death. Thou (Bhikṣātana) wander house after house in search of alms (*bali*). Lord, Thou are the Veṅkāṭaṇīr (Lord of Veṅkāṭu) that is surrounded by the ocean.

2. As requested by the celestials, including Brahmā and Viṣṇu, their archaic forms were destroyed and rehabilitated in new bodies.⁵⁰ Thou destroyed Manmatha when he dared ruin Thy *tapas* and gave him a new form. Thou are the Veṅkāṭaṇīr (Lord of Veṅkāṭu) that is surrounded by the ocean.

3. Lord, Thou are loitering along with the *bhūtgaṇas*, followed by Umā. Thy garment is a bit of cloth covering the genitalia, *kōvaṇam/kaupīṇa*. Tell me the truth, why are Thou frolicking and moving when the locks of Thou hair are pushed down.? Why are Thou begging seated on a bull? Lord, Thou are the Veṅkāṭaṇīr that is surrounded by the ocean.

4. Thou are the melody inherently present in music and poem. Thou are the eyes of human beings. Thou are the consciousness in devotees who meditate on Thee. Thou are present on the earth. Thou are the bearer of the crescent praised by the celestials. Thou are the Veṅkāṭaṇīr that is surrounded by the ocean.

5. Lord, Thy devotees worship by pouring water pots (*abhiṣeka*), showering flowers, and uttering the [*sahasra*]nāmas. Thou are the giver of joy and showers Thy grace. Thou are dancing and singing when Umā decorated with stringed gems on her breast was grafted to Thee. What for the deadly poison perpetually sticks to Thy neck? Lord, Thou are the Veṅkāṭanīr that is surrounded by the ocean.

6. Lord, Thou undertook the hazardous venture to strip the skin of the elephant that roams in the wild. It is now the blanket for Thee. Devī is grafted to Thy half with whom Thou are wandering around begging food. Thou are found deviating from Thy dignified status. Thou are the Veṅkāṭanīr that is surrounded by the ocean.

7. Lord, Thou are the Justice and the Judge. Thou are an expert in dance and amusement Thy devotees the *bhūtagaṇas* are playing instruments and generating music. The *nityajīva-siddhas* are creating music while standing by Thy side. Thou are propagating the *Vedas*, Thou Lord of Veṅkāṭu.

8. Lord, Thou are decorated with several flowers (such as *kuravu/kurā* [bottle-flower], *konrai* [Indian laburnum], and *mattam* [purple stramony]), the moon, the Gaṅgā and the cobra on Thy matted locks. Thou are the *vṛddha* (*kumāra* and *bālaka*). Thou have erased the impurities imposed on me. Thou stripped the fierce elephant of its hide when the maiden occupying his one half was afraid. Thou are the Veṅkāṭanīr that is surrounded by the ocean.

9. Thou are the resident of Kacci/Kāñci that is full of palatial edifices. Thou are simultaneously found in the minds of Thy ardent devotees. Why are Thou dancing in the crematorium where ghouls are found roaming? Thou appeared as an inaccessible pillar of fire and whose limits Brahmā and Viṣṇu could not find out. Lord, Thou the Veṅkāṭanīr that is surrounded by the ocean.



Figure 7. *Budha-standing before the Siṃha-vahana, Śvetāranyeśvara temple (by R.K.K. Rajarajan)*

10. The Lord is the Primeval God of Veṅkātu that is encircled by the eastern ocean. It is the venue of the experts in the *Vedas*. Ārūran, the resident of Nāvalūr, is Thy devoted slave, the author of this garland of ten bearings on Veṅkātu. The experts in these hymns are perfect men deemed to be celestials.

Interpretation

Four significant factors are predictable in the identification of a sacred center of worship in case of South Asian temples. They are Mūrti, *sthala*, *tīrtha* and *vr̥kṣa* (Soundararajan 1993-95: 9-10), and later *pūjās* and *utsavas* were added. There could be no temple without regular services *nityapūjā* or *nityotsava* and periodical festivals, *saṃvatsarotsava* or *Brahmotsava* (Kalidos 1989: chap. IX). The *sthala* is uniformly called Veṅ-kātu (Śveta-āraṇya)⁵¹. Nammālvār candidly adds that the venue is sacred where the earthly beings and the celestials congregate to offer worship. The homage is first to the holy-land and next to the tutelary God:

... maṅṅum viṅṅum toḷa niṅṅa tiru-nakaram
(*Tiruvāymoḷi* 5.9.10)

This is because the sacred venue is holy of the holies on earth (cf. Noble 1981: 1), the equal of Meru the Axis mundi: cf. ‘Poṅṅikaḷ Cittirakṅap-poruppu...’ (Golden-Hill, the Meru Cittirakūṅam/Tillai); Aṅṅantapuram is ‘Āṅṅaka-malai’, ‘Āṅṅakap-poruppu’ and ‘Āṅṅakap-potu’ (*Peruṅcollakarāti*, II, 67-68).

Though the early Tamil literature makes a note of Sūrya and Candra, all the nine are neither grouped nor named. The *Paripāṅṅal* 3.5 (dated during 350-400 CE, Zvelebil 1974: 89) notes Sūrya and Candra and five more: *Ñāyirun tiṅkaḷu maṅṅu maivarum* “The Sun, the Moon and five more (Gods)”. The *Maṅṅimēkalai* (550 CE, Zvelebil 1974: 141) notes 6. 178: *Iruvakaiccuṅṅarum irumūvakaiyir/Peruvaṅṅap peytiya teyvata kaṅṅaṅkaḷum* “The two flames (Sun and Moon), the shining hosts in the six-fold (2 x 3 = 6) retinue of the gods (totally eight)”. It might be the case that the *Paripāṅṅal* had no idea of Rāhu and Ketu and note only seven. It is not clear whether the *Maṅṅimēkalai* clubs Rāhu and Ketu into one, in which case there are six plus two, or a total of eight (Kalidos 2006: IV, II, 146, cf. Mevissen 2005: 580). It is only in the *bhakti* hymns of the *Tēvāram* (2.221.1) around the 7th century CE that a clear perspective of the planetary deities is obtained and the hymn itself is called *kōḷarupatikam* (Decad on Planets): ... *Ñāyiru tiṅkaḷ cevāy putan viyāḷam veḷḷi caṅi pāmpiraṅṅu* ... The planets listed are nine and they are Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn and the two snakes (Rāhu and Ketu). Another hymn notes five of the *grahas* in a disorderly pattern: *Caṅi putan ñāyiru veḷḷi tiṅkaḷ* (*Tēvāram* 3.268.7), i.e., Śani, Budha, Sūrya, Śukra and Candra. The fact that the moon is caught by the snakes (Rāhu and Ketu) is noted in a hymn: *Mūrkkap pāmpu piṅṅittatu mūccīṅṅa/Vākkap pāmpinaik kaṅṅatatuṅṅi mati/pākkap pampainaiparṅṅum* (*Tēvāram* 5.149.4). The *grahadevatās* are called *pāmpu* “snake” and not by the names Rāhu and Ketu. *Mūrkkap pāmpu piṅṅittatu* means the “ruffian snake caught (the moon)”.

Another hymn from *Nālāyiram* directly refers to Rāhu and Ketu:

matittāypōy nāṅkiṅ matiyārpōy vīla
maṭittāy matikōḷ viṭuttāy – matittāy
Mmaṭukkiṭanta māmutalai kōḷviṭuppāṅ āḷi
viṭarkiraṅṭum pōyiraṅṭiṅ vīṭu

(Tirumaḷicai Āḷvār's, Nāṅmukaṅ Tirunvantāti – 50)

“The souls that are not dedicated to the Lord are born again and again in any one of the caturyonis. He is liberator of the moon from being tortured by the demonic *grahas* (Rāhu and Ketu resulting in *Candra-grahaṅam*). The *cakrāyudha* was discharged to admonish the crocodile living in a pond. The liberated beasts (crocodile and elephant) were blessed to attain *mokṣa* and *mukti* (PVP).”



Fig. 8. *Gajasamhāramūrti, Tēr (Temple Car), Tirucentūr (by R.K.K. Rajarajan)*

Veṅkāṭu by about the 7th-8th centuries CE was a noted Śaiva-*sthala* in the East Coast that received the attention of the *bhakti* hymnologists. We have references to the Mukkuḷam that may be the equal of Triveṇi-saṅgama (in Prayāgaḥ) where the celestial Rivers Sarasvatī (underground), Gaṅgā and Yamunā meet. Kūṭalcaṅkamam or Kūṭalasaṅgama (Tuṅga, Bhadrā, and Kṛṣṇā) and Mukkūṭal (Bhavāni, Noyyal, and Kāviri) are the South Indian equals of Triveṇi. He is the redeemer of the good-natured from the blunders they committed. At the same time, the Lord is the annihilator of the wicked, Kālāri or Gajasamhāra (Fig. 8, Rajarajan 2022) that threatens Cosmic Harmony through wanton war or meditated pestilence. In the end, terror or Corona shall fall by its weapon; he who takes up the sword will perish by the sword. However, we do not indicate either Budha (Fig. 7) or the Budha-*sthala*,⁵² which seems to be a later overgrowth of the *sthala-māhātmya*. The epigraphic sources bearing on the temple are fascinating because the Cōḷa Queens, e.g., Cempiyaṅ-mātēvi (ARE 444 of 1918), Vānavan-mātēvi (442 of 1918) and Cōḷa-mātēviyār (111 of 1896), were involved with the temple's projects.

ENDNOTES

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² There is strong belief in India that the planets have a role to play in deciding their fortunes in all walks of life. Each family maintains an individual horoscope that is consulted with traditional local experts in astrology in times of need.

³ This Nāgeśvaram is 5 kms to the northeast of Kuṃbhakōṇam (Map) and not the temple that falls within the precincts of the city, examined by Rajarajan (2008: 405-14).

⁴ In Tamil tradition, there is a grouping of five, seven and eight Śaiva *sthalas* into an entity, called *Pañcabhūta-sthalas* (after the *pañcabhūtas*, e.g., Ap “water”, Āṇaikkā) or *Pañcanṛtya-sthalas* (*supra*), *Saptavitāṅga-sthalas* (seven dancing venues, e.g., Ārūr, *vīṭivīṭaṅkaṇ*) and *Aṣṭavīraṭṭāṅams* (performing eight deeds of heroism such as causing the fall of Andhakāsura, Kōvalūr). *Vide*, Latha 2010, Sumathi 2010.

⁵ Czerniak-Drożdżowicz (2022: 185-218) and Czerniak-Drożdżowicz and Sathanarayanan (2022a: 128) write about the *navatīrthas* of Śrīraṅgam: Candrapuṣkariṇī (Cakra Rāyar renovated the tīrtha and built a mandapa close to the Paramapādanātha complex; Rajarajan 2006: 24), Bilva-, Jambu-, Aśvatha-, Punnāga- Palāśa-, Vakula-, Kadamba-, and Āmra- *tīrthas*. The waters of Poṇṇi or Kāvīri encircle Śrīraṅgam ‘Araṅkam’ (*Perumāḷ Tirumōḷi* 1. 1, 7, 2.3) and Tiruvaṇaikōvil ‘Āṇaikkā’ (*Tēvāram* 3.311.10). The twin-*kṣetras* is *ārāmañcūṅḷtav Araṅkam* “Araṅkam full of *ārāmas*” (*Cīriyatirumaṭal* 1. 142) and the Liṅga in the *garbhagrha* of Āṇaikkā is eternally surrounded by a pool of water (Rajarajan 2016: 86). Another hymn of Nammālvār, (*Tiruvāymōḷi* 7.2.8: *ceḷum taṭam puṇal cūḷ Tiruvaraṅkattāy* ‘Lord of sacred Araṅkam that is filled with brimming ponds and the inundating river’) justifies that there are many ponds in Śrīraṅgam. There are more hymns of Nammālvār that relate the water body connection to Śrīraṅgam: 7.1.11, 7.2.1 to 7.2.8. The Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* literature clearly points the importance of the *tīrtha*; the existing structural monuments add the value of the traditional living rituals connecting to the daily life.

⁶ Good examples may be found in the Kūṭal Aḷakar temple at Maturai and the Varadarājasvāmi temple at Periyakuḷam. Interestingly the *Nava-Kailāsas* (Nine Sacred Venues of Śiva) on the banks of the Tāmiraparaṇi river in the Far South of India are linked with the Nine Planets as follows: Mūṛppanāṭū = Vyāla; Pāpanāsam = Sūrya; Cēraṇmātēvi = Candra; Kōṭakanallūr = Cevvāy; Teṅtiruppērai = Budha; Cērntapūmaṅkalam = Śukra; Kuṇṇattūr = Rāhu; Śrīvaikuṇṭham = Śani; Irācapati = Ketu.

Similarly, the *navatiruppatis* ‘sacred venues of Viṣṇu cult’ on the banks of the Tāmiraparaṇi River are linked with the *Navagrahas* and the *daśāvatāras* of Viṣṇu as follows: *Matsya* – Ketu; *Kūrma* - Śani (Son of Bhāskara/Sūrya); *Varāha* – Rāhu;

Nṛsiṃha – Cevvāy; Vāmana – Vyāla; Paraśurāma – Śukra; Śrī Rāma – Sūrya; Balarāma - Kuḷika (Son of Śani); Kṛṣṇa – Candra; Kalki – Budha (Son of Soma/Candra); cf. Rajarajan (2015: 208, fn. 4).

⁷ Śvetadvīpa is the “White Island or Continent” (identified by Colonel Wilford with Britain - Dowson 1998: 315). In mythology, the Sapta-*dvīpas* are Jambu, Palakṣa, Śālmala, Kuśa, Krauñcha, Śāka and Puṣkara, surrounded by waters of (*saptasamudras*) *lavana* (salt), *ikṣu* (sugarcane), *sura* (wine), *sarpis* or *ghṛta* (butter), *dadhi* (curd), *dughda* or *kṣīra* (milk - śveta “white”), and *jala* (freshwater); for more details see Dowson (1998: 102).

⁸ The Romanization of the hymns is avoided due to the constraint of space in this small communication.

⁹ The Rhythm of creation (*sr̥ṣṭi*), integration (sustenance *sthiti*) and destruction (*samhāra*), the *pañcakṛtyas* (Zvelebil 1998: 3), the Lord perhaps is Kūttan̄/Naṭarāja (Rajarajan & Jeyapriya 2021, fig. 4).

¹⁰ Commentators add Śiva assures prosperity for the *jīvarāśis*.

¹¹ Most *Tēvāram* hymns have something to say on Kūttan̄ (Naṭarāja) or Ardhanārīśvara (cf. the hymns on the theme summarized in Rajarajan 2012).

¹² Mukkuḷam is the name of the *teppakkuḷam* (Rajarajan 2018) of the Āṅṅāḷ-Vaṭapatraśāyī temple in Villiputtūr (Parthiban 2019: vol. II, plates).

¹³ The *pañcabhūta*-Līngas are Kāñcīpuram (earth - Ekāmranātha), Āṅṅaikkā (water - Jambukeśvara), Aṅṅāmalai (*tējas*-Aṅṅāmalaiyār, Kalahasti (fire - Kālahastīśvara) and Tillai/Citamparam[*] (ākāśa - Naṭarāja). The hymns bearing on Kōyil-Tillai are translated (for Romanization see Rajarajan & Jeyapriya 2021). Kālahastīśvara temples are found in huge numbers in western Tamilnadu, e.g., Tiṅṅukkal, Uttamapāḷaiyam and Vaṭakarai (Santhana-Lakshmi-Parthiban 2019).

[*] By a turn of the wind (cf. v. 1, Śiva is ‘Putalān̄’) the ākāśa-*tattva* of Tillai was overturned *jala-tattva* (Kalidos 2021, see Fig. 5).

¹⁴ They are Bhava, Sarva, Īśāna, Paśupati, Ugra, Rudra, Bhīma and Mahādeva (Śrītattvanidhi 3. 24).

¹⁵ Lord of Veṅṅkāṭu, the place name is the Lord’s name. The *sthala* and Mūrti are rooted in the same name, e.g., Ālavāy > Ālavāyāṅ, Araṅkam > Araṅkaṅ.

¹⁶ Expert in the *Vedas*, denotes Mārkaṅḍeya.

¹⁷ Parrots are brought up pets in some temples, e.g., *Kīlikkaṭṭu-maṅḍapa* in Ālavāy/Maturai (Rajarajan 2006: 52).

¹⁸ An image is reported from the Kailāsanātha temple, Kāñci (Kalidos 2006: II, 193-94).

¹⁹ An image conforming to this description is reported from Cave XVI, the Kailāsa in Ellora (Kalidos 2006: II, pl. XXIII). The hymns of Nāyaṅmār inspired the Ellora caves. Raju Kalidos (2006: II, 95) has identified Appar present in the sculptures of Cave XIV, Ellora.

²⁰ Liṅgodbhavamūrti examined with reference to the *Tēvāram* hymns in Kalidos (2003).

²¹ The Jains are Piṅṭiyār in Tamil; *piṅṭi* “meal or group” (*Tamil Lexicon* V, p. 2657, Telugu “flour”) that were gluttonous.

²² This may be the reason why the place got the name, Veṅkāṭu (white forest) full of conchs and pearls on the seashore.

²³ The scene radically changed in the 15th century with the coming of Malik Kapur and his diabolic followers during the Khilji and Tughlak periods. The *Madhurāvijayam* (Canto VIII) of Gaṅgādevī says the *agrahāras* permeating with the sweet-smell of *yāgadhūma* were nauseating with the beef roasted by the *mlecchas* and the Kāviri flowing with gold sediments was mixed with the blood of martyred *brahmaṇas* (Aiyangar 1921, Dodamani 2008: 19-20).

²⁴ Everyone wants to possess the Himālayas, the abode of Śīva (Kailāsa) and Viṣṇu (Badaṛīnātha), and Bhāratīyār long ago vociferously said ‘mannum Imayamalai eṅkaḷmalai’, cited by the Prime Minister of India in one of his talks (cf. Anitha 2015), the Finance Minister, Dr Nirmala Sitaraman, behind the curtain.

²⁵ This name appears in *Periya Tirumōli* (3.7.1, 9.10.3) of Tirumaṅkai Āḷvār (Rajaraajan et al 2020: 540).

²⁶ Some epithets of the Lord are unique to Tamil, e.g., Veṅṅīṟṟar (Lord of the white-ash), cf. Tiruvālavāyāṅ-tirunīru in *Tēvāram* (1.202.1-11, Kalidos 2006: II, 68-70).

²⁷ Gaṅgādhara bearing the inundating Gaṅgā and presenting the *caturatāṇḍava* is interesting. Will he dance or take care of Gaṅgā? In fact, he is beyond the dancing faculty. See the Lord bearing the Gaṅgā-*tripathagā* or *trisrotāḥ* on his matted locks in the rock-cut Hindu cave, Aihole (Kalidos 2006: II, pl. LI.3).

²⁸ The Lord is Dakṣiṇāmūrti or Yogīśvara (Bakker 2001, Rajaraajan 2011).

²⁹ The classical image on the subject is Cave XVI, Ellora, the Kailāsa (Kalidos 2006: II, pl. XXII) in addition to the Cōḷa bronzes.

³⁰ *Saptasvaramaya*, ēḷicaiyōṅ, *iṅṅicaiyāṅṅavaṅ* (cf. *Tēvāram* 4.79.3, Kalidos 1996: 34-35).

³¹ Note Ātipakavaṅ/Ādibhagavān in *Tirukkuraḷ* 1.

³² Therefore, Śīva is Kariyaṅ, cf. Viṣṇu’s name in (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 6.6.3, 9.4.5).

³³ In this way Śīva is sometimes considered Whiteman, Śvetamūrti, cf. Veḷlamūrtti (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 5.2.9, Rajaraajan et al. 2020: 1591). See note 14.

³⁴ All Śīva-*sthalas* are *bhūloka*-Kailāsa, several ancient temples take the name Kailāsanātha.

³⁵ Maybe *veḷḷimalai* (snowy hill, the Kailāsa). The golden hill is the Meru, the Axis Mundi on which any *divyasthala* stands.

³⁶ Naimiṣāraṇya is one among the 108 Vaiṣṇava *divyadeśas*. It belongs to all *munis* irrespective of sectarian affiliation. All *ithāsa-purāṇas* are dramatized here for the entertainment of souls undergoing *sannyāsaśrama*.

³⁷ *Uyarñānankal* means “higher wisdom” that includes *satya*, *dharma* and *nīti* (justice to all and malice to none); religions addicted to war and contagions preach *kaḷḷa-nūl* (*Periya Tirumoli* 9.7.9), the *saitān*’s philosophy. Tirumañkai Āḷvār in this connection notes Pōṭiyār (Buddhists) and Piṅṅiyār (Jains).

³⁸ The *tripuras* exist through the ages, e.g., the Axis during the Second World War; those that propagate terrorism and Corona (in several waves) today.

³⁹ An episode in the *Mahābhārata*, elaborated in the *Kiratārjunīyam* of Bhāravi (Rajaraman 2021).

⁴⁰ *tēṇṇāṭuṭaiya|civanē|pōṛri|ēṇṇāṭṭavarkkum|iraivā|pōṛri* “Lord of the South be extolled; Lord of all countries be Praised” (*Pōṛṛittituvakaval* ll. 164-65 of Māñikkavācakar).

⁴¹ *Ciṭṭar* are learned persons in Vedic lore; wise, learned men (*Tamil Lexicon* III, 1407).

⁴² *Naṭarācaṇ*/*Naṭarāja*, including *Citamparam*, fails to appear in the *Tēvāram* and *Tiruvācakam* and inscription of the Tillai temple (Rajaraman & Jeyapriya 2021). *Kūṭṭaṇ* and *Āṭavallāṇ* are reported. See *Āṇantakkūṭṭaṇ* (“Bliss Dancer” *Vāṛṭtai* 3) and *Āṭumaracaṇ* (“Dancing King”) are found in *Tiruvācakam*.

⁴³ A separate shrine for Lord *Virabhadra* (Jeyapriya 2018: 42, 2019: 62) is found in the *Tiruveṅkāṭu* temple (Fig. 2), cf. the *aṭṭavīraṭṭāṇams* (Latha 2010) and *saptavitaṅga-sthalas* (Sumathi 2010). Though *Aṣṭamūrti* is a Śaivite concept, for glimpse on Vaiṣṇavite idea of *Aṣṭamūrti*, see Rajaraman 2004. ‘The artist comprehension to the literature and deploy liturgical tradition in the making of eight-armed *Aghoramūrti* bronze’, cf. Srinivasan (2007: 127). It is pertinent to see the unity of thought. The literature belongs to an early period and so its impact over a later art-form is taken for granted. This is to affirm that Indian art is not the creation or wild imagination of an artist. Behind each work of art, a saga of thinking and meditation had gone (Rajaraman 2015a: 57).

⁴⁴ The *nāga* is inseparable from the Lord; it is Śiva’s ornament that appears on tiara, ear-hole, neck and all over the body.

⁴⁵ The bronze *Bhikṣhāṇamūrti* of *Tiruveṅkāṭu* is one of the masterpieces of *Cōḷa* art (see Rao 1914: 309, pl. LXXXVII).

⁴⁶ The scene seems to be set in the *Dārukavana* (Pine Forest). The lady in the hymn is a *ṛṣipatnī* who has come to offer alms to *Bhikṣhāṇa* (Suthanthiran 1982, 1992). However, the myth of coveting bangles is popular in Vaiṣṇava lore; see the *Tiruviruttam* of *Nammāḷvār* (Rajaraman et al. 2020a: vol. II).

⁴⁷ This drum is played when the Lord presents the *Ūrdhvatāṇḍavam* (Kalidos 1996a) in the *Etirampalam* (Fig. 5) (Mevisen 1996) when the *Ānandatāṇḍavam* is performed in the *Kanakasabhā* (Fig. 6).

⁴⁸ See *Nāṇacampantar*’s (1.1.1) maiden hymn, *eṇ|uḷḷaṇ|kavar|kaḷvaṇ* “the robber has stolen my mind”.

⁴⁹ Commentators say the three are Cutanman (Sudama), Cucilan (Susila) and Cuputti (Subuddhi).

⁵⁰ The *Tēvāram* (5.214.3) talks of 60-million Nārāyaṇas, ārukōṭi-Nārāyaṇarkaḷ, and *nūru-kōṭi*-Piramar (100 million Brahmās). Time, *yuga* and *kalpa*, are *nitya* in Indian lore.

⁵¹ The Malayāḷi way of enquiring a visitor's nativity is: *sthalam eto* (where are you from); the Tamil way is; *uṅkal ūr etu* (what is your place). In Tamil tradition, sacred centers of worship are *sthalas* whereas in Malayāḷam all places are *sthalas* (Gods own country!).

⁵² For the Navagrahas and Budha's *ratha* is pulled by four lions. He may also be seated on the *siṃhavāhana* (Rajarajan 2015: 216).

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