

## **Historical sequence of the Vaiṣṇava Divyadeśas. Sacred venues of Viṣṇuism**

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### **Abstract**

Forty years ago Prof. George W. Spender wrote an article on the Śaiva *tiruttalams* (called *divyadeśa* in Vaiṣṇava tradition) and suggested a complimenting work could be undertaken on the sacred venues of Viṣṇuism. The present article fulfills the longfelt need of scholars in Indian religious and more relevantly art historical studies. Based on the first-hand materials derived from the Vaiṣṇava canon, *Nālāyirativviyapirapantam*, it presents the historical sequence of the evolution of the 108 *divyadeśas*. The earliest of these had their origin by about the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century CE and reached maturation by about the early half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. The stages of evolution are earmarked. However, what the Vaiṣṇava mystics, the Āḷvārs, saw during the centuries down to the 9<sup>th</sup> are not the *kṣetras* (sacred space of the temple) or *sthalas* (sacred venues) that we find today. The temples had undergone spectacular changes through the centuries as could be proved with case studies of either Vēnkaṭam or Allikkēṇi. A handful of the *sthalas* were purely imaginary on part of the mystics. The text is duly illustrated with modern photographic evidences and a map. The parochial views of some American scholars are discussed to point

out their inability to deal with the original sources in Tamil and consequently their views on Viṣṇuism or Śrīviṣṇuism happens to be biased.

Keywords: Vaiṣṇava-*divyadeśas*, Viṣṇuism, Ālvārs, Śrīvaiṣṇavism, Bhakti, *Nālāyira-divya-prabandham*.

Tradition would record the Vaiṣṇava *divyadeśas* or *divyasthalas* are 108. The *divyadeśa* is a base of the cult of Viṣṇu in Viṣṇuism tradition.<sup>1</sup> The list of 108 seems to have reached maturation by about the early 9<sup>th</sup> century CE as all the *deśas* are extolled in the hymns of the twelve Ālvārs. Among these the earliest venues are Māliṛuñcōlai (modern Alakarkōyil), Araṅkam (Sanskrit Śrīraṅgam), Vēṅkaṭam (modern Tirupati/Tirumala) and Āṭakamāṭam (modern Aṅantapuram, Anglicized Trivandrum).<sup>2</sup> The 108 are brought under six or seven topographical segments of the Indian subcontinent under Malaināṭu or Cēranāṭu (Hill Country, Kerala, cf. Keralaput[r]a in Aśoka's Edicts; 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE), Pāṇḍināṭu (*Tamil Lexicon* method: Pāṇḍināṭu, south of the River Kāviri), Cōlanāṭu (the Kāviri delta), Naṭunāṭu (intermediary region that falls in between Cōlanāṭu and Toṅṭaināṭu), Toṅṭaināṭu (northern Tamilnāṭu), Vaṭanāṭu (northern country, meaning North India) and those in the heaven (Map 1). Very little work has been done on the *divyadeśas* based on the primary sources of the Ālvārs (cf. Ramanujam 1973, Hardy 1983; Kalidos 1993-95, 1996: I 303-308, II 289-94; Meeneshwari 1993-93; Jeyapriya 2003: 612-15; Rajarajan 2012a; Dutta 2007: 22-43) and so the choice of the theme has a justification. George W. Spencer 1970 and Burton Stein

<sup>1</sup> I follow Jan Gonda 1970 in deploying the religious denomination, Viṣṇuism. *Kṣetra* means "soil", "region", "repository", "a sacred spot", "an enclosed spot of ground" and so on. Its equal *sthala* means "soil", "ground", "a heap of artificially raised earth" (cf. *teṛṇiyampalam*, the core temple that stands on an elevated basement, e.g. Kūṭal Aḷakar in Maturai), "mound", "tableland" and so on. *Deśa* means "region" and "country". Raju Kalidos (2006: 293n) says *sthala* is the venue, city or village, where the sacred abode of the resident God is situated. *Kṣetra* is the space occupied by the sacred temple. The *kṣetra* falls within the space of the *sthala*.

<sup>2</sup> The Sanskritic equivalent is given within parentheses. Of the temples in Tirupati/Tirumala one on the hill-top is likely to have been the earliest. Down the hill at Tirupati a number of temples for Viṣṇu and Devī-Maṅgammā are there. These are likely to have been later emergences.

1977 has done a similar work in respect of the Śaiva venues of worship as gleaned from the Nāyaṃmār works, especially the *Tēvāram*. The present article compliments the work of G.W. Spencer and B. Stein from the Vaiṣṇava point of view. However, I may note the learned professor Spencer has not presented a list of the 280 Śaiva *tiruttalams* in a chronological order, which is very difficult to compile since all these are dated during the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries CE (Kāraikkālammaiṃyār to Cuntarar).<sup>3</sup> Early in 1940, S. Krishnasvamy Aiyangar, followed by B.V. Ramanujam, both deeprooted Vaiṣṇava scholars, wrote much about the *divyadeśas*, which is now outdated but Aiyangar's work is chewed and digested by devoted Vaiṣṇava scholars. Friedhelm Hardy's 1983 work is a dedicated piece on Tamil Viṣṇuism but has very little to say on the subject under study. A fresh look is felt essential in the light of recent research on Vaiṣṇavism in general; and Śrīvaiṣṇavism in particular with A.K. Ramanujam 1981 leading a team of scholars in the United States who attach more importance to the works of the Ācāryapuruṣās, which is a parochial approach in my view. We must cautiously differentiate between Viṣṇuism/Vaiṣṇavism (Viṣṇu as the foremost of the gods) and Śrīvaiṣṇavism (Viṣṇu looked through his grace, Śrī). Note the following two important works:

B.V. Ramanujam 1973:

*History of Vaiṣṇavism in South India upto Rāmānuja*

N. Jagsdeesan 1977:

*History of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism in the Tamil Country (post-Rāmānuja)*

Viṣṇuism takes its root in Vedic lore and reaches a saturation level in the hymns of the Ālvars. Here Viṣṇu is the focal point of attention. Śrīvaiṣṇavism/Śrīviṣṇuism developed as a codified system of philosophy after the time of Rāmānuja in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Here the focal point is Viṣṇu through the mediator Śrī. Viṣṇuism is a religion and Śrīvaiṣṇavism a philosophical way of approach to Viṣṇuism as one may on a comparative line find the differences between Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism and Eastern Orthodox, all coming under the

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<sup>3</sup> But Professor Stein (1977: fn. 27) pin-points that Spencer's map is not the final as much work remains undone. While Spencer 1970 hints 280 *tiruttalams*, Stein 1977 notes 537 *tiruttalams* of that 274 of them have versified by the Nāyaṃmārs.

common banner Christianity. In all these three systems, Jesus the Christ is the foremost to a follower and not the colour of the bread or wine whether you consider it the blood and flesh of Jesus based on transubstantiation or treat it merely a bread from a bakery or wine from an ale house. We are not debating the Christian philosophy to say the bread consists only of the flour of wheat or barley and the wine not the blood of a divine person or godman. For all three Christ/Christianity is important though the Catholic will not tread the path of a Lutheran or Anglican in matters ritual and iconographic setting in churches. The tussle between them is so acute in India that a Catholic institution may prefer to appoint a Hindu for a job requirement and definitely not a Protestant. However, this is not the prime theme of our discussion. Let us come to Viṣṇuism and Śrīviṣṇuism.

G.W. Spencer called the venues of Śaiva worship, *tiruttalam* “sacred geography” and Eric Isaac 1960 “the landscape of myth” (cited from Spencer 1970: 233); B. Stein as “historical geography” and David E. Sopher 1968 “circulatory flows to define pilgrimage regions in India”. The learned professor has spent his time on Śaiva centers of worship and suggests “a study of Vaiṣṇavite sacred geography...is obviously feasible” (Spencer 1970: 233). Nobody thought of it during the past forty years. It may note the Śaivite centers of worship around the 9<sup>th</sup> century were 281 (Kalidos 2006: II, 292) and at the same time those of the Vaiṣṇavas 108. Whether these are the “landscape of myth” (Isaac 1960, cf. Hopkins 2004: 29-55) or “landscape of history” (Gaddis 2002) is a good question (cf. Spencer 1970: Map – Sacred Places in Tañcāvūr; and Stein 1977: Map – Tēvāram Sites of the Kāvēri Basin), which the present article answers. I have not seen the article of Isaac and may take liberty of presuming by “landscape of myth” the scholar mean the “geography” of classical authors (such as Megasthenes, Ptolemy [the Ālvārs and Nāyaṇmār]). This need not be so because many of the unidentifiable places in Pliny, Strabo and Ptolemy have been identified (e.g. Muziris, Comari and Kolchi with Muciṛi, Kaṇyākumari and Kocci on the Pāṇḍyan and Malabār sea coast [Kalidos 1976: 67] and later Kaḍāram with the Malāya peninsula) and there is no such problem in case of the “sacred geography” of the Ālvārs and the *divyadeśas* listed by them.

Before taking up the problem for an examination it may state at the outset that the twelve Ālvārs are brought under three groups. The

Ālvār is a divinity, one immersed or lost in his love for the Lord Viṣṇu (*āl* “immerse”, *ālvār* “one immersed [in Viṣṇu-*bhakti*]”, cf. Spencer 1970: 234 *ālvārs* “divers”). The Ālvārs are believed to have visited the venues where the temple of the Lord was, composed hymns in praise of those sacred centers, the Mūrti, the *tīrtha*, the flora and fauna, the *pūjās* and festivals, and spread the cult. Though scholars find the rudiments of *bhakti* in the *Paripāṭal*, it is in the hymns of the Ālvārs that we really find the blossoming of the *bhāgavata/bhakti* tradition that germinated in the north during the early centuries of the Christian era. Few Tamil scholars find the rudiments of *bhakti* in Caṅkam lore (*infra* Zvelebil’s view of *Paripāṭal*) and not the pre-Christian Sanskrit literature (cf. cf. Bhandarkar 1995: 4-11). I do not agree with this view. The *Bhāgavata*-based *bhakti* is an import from the north and R.G. Bhandarkar may find the roots of *bhakti* in the Upaniṣadic concept of *upāsana* (means “serving” or “worship” Monier-Williams 2005: 215).

The traditional sequence of the Ālvārs and the hymns composed by them fall as under:

Early Ālvārs: <sup>4</sup>	
Poykai	<i>Tiruvantāti I</i>
Pūtam	<i>Tiruvantāti II</i>
Pēy	<i>Tiruvantāti III</i>
Middle Ālvārs:	
Nam	<i>Tiruvācīriyam, Tiruviruttam, Periya Tiruvantāti and Tiruvāymoḷi</i>
Maturakavi	<i>Kaṅṇinunūcīruttāmpu</i>
Kulacēkarar	<i>Perumāḷ Tirumoḷi</i>
Tiruppāṇ	<i>Amalanātipirāṇ</i>
Toṅṅaraṭṭippoṭi	<i>Tirumālai and Tiruppallēlucchi</i>
Tirumaḷicai	<i>Tiruccantaviruttam and Nāṅmukaṅ Tiruvantāti</i>

<sup>4</sup> The Ālvārs are considered to be the *amśas* (manifestation) of Vaiṣṇava marks of identification; e.g. Poykai – *pañcajanya* (a demon turned *śaṅkha*), Pūtam – *gadā* “mace”, Pēy – *nandaka* (*khadga* of Viṣṇu), Maḷicai – *cakra*, Maturakavi – Vainateya (*Garuḍa*, son of Vinatā), Nam - Śeṣa, Kulacēkarar – *kaustubha* (celebrated necklace of Viṣṇu), Periyālvār - *Garuḍa*, Aṅṅāḷ - Bhūdevī, Toṅṅaraṭṭippoṭi – *vanamālā* (garland of holy basil), Pāṅ - *śrīvatsa* and Maṅkai - *śārṅga* (bow of Viṣṇu). According to another concept Nam and Pūtam were the tiara of the Lord, Poykai and Pēy the eyes, Periyālvār the face, Maḷicai the neck, Kulacēkarar and Pāṅ the hands, Toṅṅaraṭṭippoṭi the chest, Maṅkai (literally means “maid”) the umbilicus and Maturakavi the sacred feet of the Lord (Devanathan 1971: Annexure p. 85).

<b>Later Ālvārs:</b>	
Periyālvār	<i>Tiruppallāṅṅu and Tirumoli</i>
Āṅṅāl	<i>Tiruppāvai and Nācciyār Tirumoli</i>
Tirumaṅkai	<i>Periya Tirumoli, Tirukuruntāṅṅakam, Tiruneṅun-tāṅṅakam, Tiruveḷukūrrirukkai, Ciṅiyatirumaṅṅal and Periyatirumaṅṅal (Kalidos 1999: 223-24).</i>

The chronology of the Ālvārs is a vexed question. The Mutal Ālvārs (early trio) are dated in the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century CE. The Middle Group (totally six) is dated in the 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century CE. The Later Group (totally three) is dated in the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Kalidos 1999: 223–24). Tirumaḷicai in his *Nāṅmukaṅ Tiruvantāti* (v. 93) notes a king called Kuṅṅaparaṅ: *Ākkai koṅṅuttaruḷiya kōṅṅē kuṅṅaparaṅṅē* “Guṅṅabhara, (the King?), who gave me this mortal coil and blessed (me)”. This Kuṅṅaparaṅ (Guṅṅabhara) is identified with Mahēndravarmaṅ I (c. 610-30 CE)<sup>5</sup> and so he is assigned to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century (Pillai 1985: 186). With due reference to an astronomical clue in the *Tiruppāvai* of Āṅṅāl (cf. Hudson 1980: 539-66), she is dated in the early half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>6</sup> Periyālvār and Tirumaṅkai refer to a Pāṅṅya king (*Tamil Lexicon* method: Pāṅṅiyaṅ) and Pallava in their hymns<sup>7</sup>. These two have been aptly identified with Śrīmāra Śrīvallaḅha (815-62 CE) and Nandiṅvarmaṅ II Pallavaṅmalla (690-729 CE). Kulacēkarar (Cēraṅmāṅ Perumaḷ) is considered to be a contemporary of the Śaiva

<sup>5</sup> The title, Guṅṅabhara, appears in the inscription of the upper Pallava cave at Tiruccirāppaḷḷi (Srinivasan 1964: 54).

<sup>6</sup> The reference is: *Vēḷḷiyēḷuntu viyāḷamuṅṅaṅkirru* (the rise of *Vēḷḷi*-Venus and the fall of *Viyāḷaṅ*/Jupiter that astronomically gives the date CE 731 (Kalidos 1976: 104).

<sup>7</sup> Periyālvār notes *kayaḷ poritta pāṅṅiyar kulapati (Tirumoli 5.4.7)* “The Lord of the family of Pāṅṅyas (who bears the banner) of the Fish”. Āṅṅāl calls Periyālvār the king of Putuvaḷ (Villiputtūr): *Putuvaiyarkōṅ Viṅṅucittaṅ* “Viṅṅusiddha, the King of Putuvaḷ” (*Nācciyār Tirumoli* 12.10). Periyālvār is supposed to have been a minister to Śrīmāra Śrīvallaḅha and so called a king. Tirumaṅkai acknowledges the gifts of the Pallava king to the Ciṅṅirakūṅṅam (temple of Viṅṅu) at Citamparaṅ: *Pallavar kōṅ paṅṅinta/cempon maṅṅimāṅkaḷ cūḷṅta tillait/tiruccitirakūṅṅam (Periya Tirumoli 3.2.3)* “The Citirakūṅṅam of Tallai that is fitted with towered gem-like edifices, which the Pallava king worshipped”. Another decad (*Periya Tirumoli* 2.9.1-10) in all its ten verses notes the Paramēccuraviṅṅṅakaram (Vaikuṅṅṅa Perumaḷ temple) at Kāṅci that was worshipped by the Pallava king. The Pallava is called Villavaṅ (an expert in archery) and Mallaiyarkōṅ (King of wrestlers) whose feet was worshipped by several kings”. The Pallava noted in these hymns is Nandiṅvarmaṅ Pallavaṅmalla. To quotes: *Pallavaṅ villavaṅṅerulakil palarāyppalavēṅṅar vaṅṅaṅkukaḷal / Pallavaṅ mallaiyarkōṅ paṅṅintara para/mēccuraviṅṅṅakaramatuvē (Periya Tirumoli 2.9.1).*

saint Cuntarar and may be dated in the early 8<sup>th</sup> century (Zvelebil 1974: 106). The Later Group could be conveniently dated during the 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century CE. The sequence on the basis of historical evidences will have to be Tirumaḷicai, Kulacēkarar, Tirumaṅkai, Periyālvār and Āṅṅāl. There is no clue either epigraphical or literary to date the other Ālvārs.

It is traditionally believed that the saga of Vaiṣṇava lyrical composition began with the Early Group and Lord Viṣṇu himself is said to have given them the first phrase of the *Tiruvantātis* composed by them for the first hymn.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, they are assigned to the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century CE or even the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The other six are supposed to fall in between the two dates 6<sup>th</sup> century and early 9<sup>th</sup> century. In any case all the twelve Ālvārs have crossed the historical meridian by about the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century CE (Rajajaran 2012a). Saint Nāthamuṇi is said to have compiled the *Nālāyiram* into the *divya-prabandham* (*divya* “divine” or “heavenly”, *pra-* “excessively” or “great”, *bandham* “tie” or “chain”), Tamil *tivya* (should be *tivviya*)-*pira-pantam*. He is assigned to the 10<sup>th</sup> century CE (Zvelebil 1974: 91). Nāthamuṇi’s birth-place is considered to be Kāṭṭumaṅgūḍi, near Citamparam. A spurious inscription in that temple assigns his date of birth to *Kaliyuga* 3,624 (522 CE),<sup>9</sup> which could not have been the case because at that time the Middle and Later Ālvārs did not exist and maybe the First Group was busy composing the *Tiruvantātis* (cf. Aiyangar 1940: 260, Jagadeesan 1977: 10–11).

Zvelebil’s (1974: 91-107) date for the Early Ālvārs is 650-700 CE, which is unfair (cf. Rajajaran 2012a). The other Ālvārs are dated as follows: Toṅṅaraṭṭipōṭi (first quarter of the 9<sup>th</sup> century), Kulacēkarar (c. 800 CE), Periyālvār and Āṅṅāl (9<sup>th</sup> century CE), Tirumaṅkai (c. 800-870 CE) and Nammālvār (c. 880-930 CE – the time of Parāntaka I). That means Toṅṅaraṭṭipōṭi, Kulacēkarar, Periyālvār, Āṅṅāl, Tirumaṅkai and Nammālvār are supposed to have lived in the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century CE, which was a troublesome period in the history of Tamilnadu since the Pallavas and Pāṇḍyas were engaged in a deadly conflict for survival. The Imperial Cōḷas and Rāṣṭrakūṭas as renescent powers were peeping into the historical arena around 850

<sup>8</sup> The first phrase in *Tiruvantātis* is *Vaiyamtaḷiyā* (the world is the wick), *Aṅṅetaḷiyā* (love is the wick) and *Tirukkaṅṅēṅ* (I have seen to Auspicious-Śrī).

<sup>9</sup> *South Indian Temple Inscriptions*, Vol. III, Pt. II, no. 1291.

CE. This was also a period of political tribulation, turbulence and transition because the Pallavas and Early Pāṇḍyas exit from the historical scene and the Cōḷas, Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Calukyas of Kalyāṇi come to the forefront with the former commanding an upper hand. Under such chaotic conditions, so many of the Āḷvārs could not have worked peacefully composing their hymns and visiting centers of Viṣṇuism. The Āḷvārs refer to the Pāṇḍya and Pallava in their hymns and not the Cōḷa of the Imperial House that begins with Vijayālaya around 850 CE.<sup>10</sup> That means by about the time of the emergence of the Cōḷas under Vijayālaya (c. 850-70 CE) the Āḷvārs have gone behind the historical curtain. Therefore, the dates suggested by Raju Kalidos 1999 seem to be workable to further proceed with the history of the *divyadeśas* (cf. Rajarajan 2012a).

Coming to the main theme of our investigation, the distribution pattern of the *divyadeśas* in the subcontinent may be listed as follows:<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In fact Tirumaṅkai refers to a Cōḷa. He was a king of the post-Canḱam period that does not belong to the lineage of Vijayālaya (850-70 CE), the founder of the Imperial Cōḷa house. There was a family of the Cōḷas during the Canḱam Age (down to 250 CE) that ceased to rule the Kāviri delta around 250 CE with the advent of the Kaḷabhras. It seems their successors continued to survive as minor chiefs (Sastri 1984: 104-107). One of these kings was Kōcceaṅkaṅṅaṅ whose date is uncertain (may be the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE). He was also known as Kōccōḷaṅ (*Periya Tirumoḷi* 6.6.9). He is said to have built 70 temples (*maṇimāṭakkōyil* “towered gem-like temple”) for Īśvara (*tirumoḷivāy Īcaṅku eḷilmāṭam eḷupatu ceytu ulakam āṅṅa* [*ibid.* 6.6.8] “He built seventy beautifully towered temples for Īśvara, He whose mouth utters the sacred words” - *tirumoḷi* or *tiruvāymoḷi* is the title of several of the poems composed by the Āḷvārs). Some scholars suggest these were temples for Śiva (*Nālāyiram*, Mullai Nilayam ed., Vol. II, p. 236). I am of the opinion all the 70 need not have been for Śiva because Īśvara is an epithet of the common genre that Śiva and Viṣṇu share. The *Viṣṇusahasranāma* (epithet nos. 36, 74) calls Viṣṇu Īśvara and what is more important he is called Śivaḥ (*ibid.* epithets 27, 600). Therefore, the 70 temples assigned to Kōccōḷaṅ by tradition must have been for both Śiva and Viṣṇu. One among them was Naraiyūr (Nācciyārkōyil) in Cōḷanāḍu, which *divyadeśa* Tirumaṅkai extols. These temples are likely to have built of brick and mortar as it was the tradition then and the age of *kaṅṅaḷi* (stone temple) had not yet begun, which was invigorated during and after the time of Vijayālaya. In fact the early Cōḷas seem to have dedicated themselves to convert all brick temples into stone during 850-986 CE (cf. Dehejia 1990).

<sup>11</sup> The list is as it appears in the *Nālāyirativviyappirapantam* (shortly *Nālāyiram*), the Little Flower Company, Chennai 2008.

**Malaināṭu** (Hill Country) – totally 13: Nāvāy, Vittuvakkōṭu (Viccikōṭu or Viñcikkōṭu), Kāṭkarai (or Trikkākkaṛā), Mūlikkaḷam, Vallavāl (or Vallā, Śrīvallaḅha-*kṣetra* - see Clooney 1991: 260-76), Kaṭittāṇam, Ceṅkuṅṛ (Cirrāru), Puliyūr (Kuṭṭanāṭu), Vāraṅvilai (Ārammulā), Vaṅvaṅṭūr (Vamuṅṭūr), Aṅantapuram, Vaṭṭāru and Vaṅparicāram (Tiruppaticāram).

**Pāṇḍināṭu** (the Pāṇḍya country) - 18: Kuṅṅkuṭi (Vāmana-*kṣetra*), Cīvaramāṅkai (Vāṇamāmalai, Nāṅkuṅṛi or Tōṭāḍri-*kṣetra*), (*Navatiruppatis* 1-9, see Rajarajan 2012) 1. Vaikuntam, 2. Varakuṅamaṅkai, 3. Puḷiṅkuṭi, 4-5. Tolaiyillimaṅkalam (Iṛaṭṭaitiruppati – Twin Temples), 6. Kuḷantai (Peruṅkuḷam), 7. Kōḷūr, 8. Teṅṅiruppērai (or Pōrai), 9. Kurukūr (Ālvār Tirunakari), Villiputtūr (Śrīvilliputtūr), Taṅkāl (Taṅkālūr), Kūṭal/Maturai, Māḷiruñcōlai, Mōkūr, Kōṭṭiyūr (Kōṣṭiyūr or Koṣṭi-*kṣetra*), Pullāṇi (Darbhāsāyana) and Meyyam.

**Cōlanāṭu** (the Cōḷa country) - 40: Araṅkam (Śrīraṅgam), Kōḷi (Uṛaiyūr, Nikaḷāpuri or Uṛantai), Karampaṅṅūr (Uttamarkōyil, Kadamba-*kṣetra*), Vellaṛai (Vedagiri or Svetagiri), Aṅṅpil, Pērnakar (Kōyilaṭi or Appakuṭattāṅ), Kaṅṅiyūr (Trimūrti-*kṣetra*), Kūṭalūr (Āṭuturai, Śāṅgama-*kṣetra*), Kavittalam (Kapi-*sthalā*, Kṛṣṇāraṅya-*kṣetra*), Puḷḷampūttāṅkuṭi, Āṭaṅṅūr, Kuṭantai (Śāṅṅapāṇi temple, Bhāskara-*kṣetra*), Viṅṅakar (Oppiliyappaṅkōyil, Mārkaṅḍeya-*kṣetra*), Naṛaiyūr, Cērai (Pañcasāra-*kṣetra*), Kaṅṅamaṅkai (Kṛṣṇamaṅgala-*kṣetra*), Kaṅṅapuram (Kṛṣṇāraṅya-*kṣetra*, Pañcakṛṣṇa-*kṣetra* and Saptapunya-*kṣetra*), Kaṅṅaṅkuṭi (Kṛṣṇāraṅya-*kṣetra*), Nāḅkai (Nakaṅṅaṅṅam), Tañcaimāmaṅṅikkōyil/Tañcāvūr (Dhanavadi 2005), Nantiṅṅuraviṅṅakaram (Nāṅṅkōyil, Dakṣiṅṅajagannāṅṅam and Śrīvāsa-*sthalam*), Vellaṅṅiṅkuṭi, Aḷuntūr (Tēraḷuntūr), Ciṅṅupuliyūr, Talaiccaṅkaṅṅmatiyam (Talaiccaṅkāṅṅu), Intalūr (Mayilāṅṅuturai, Viḷantūr), Kāvalampāṅṅi (Nāṅṅkūr), Kāḷiccīraṅṅaviṅṅakaram (Cīrkāḷi), Arimēyaviṅṅakaram (Nāṅṅkūr), Vaṅṅpuruṅṅōttamam (Nāṅṅkūr), Cemṅoṅceyṅkōyil (Nāṅṅkūr), Maṅṅimāṅṅakkōyil (Nāṅṅkūr), Vaikuntaviṅṅakaram (Nāṅṅkūr), Āḷi/Nakari, Tēvaṅṅāṅṅtokai (Kīḷaiccāḷai), Terriyampalam (Nāṅṅkūr), Vellaḅṅkuḷam (Aṅṅṅaṅkōyil), Pāṅṅṅtaṅṅpaḷḷi (Nāṅṅkūr) and Cittiraṅṅkūṅṅam (Tillai-Citamparam).

**Naṅṅunāṅṅu** (Intermediary country) - 2: Ayintai (Vayintipuram/ Vahīṅṅdrapuram) and Kōvalūr.

**Toṅṭaināṭu** (northern Tamilnadu) - 22: Kacci-Attikiri (Attiyūr, Kāñcīpuram, Satyavrada-*kṣetra*), Aṭṭapuyakkaram (Aṣṭbhujahasta - Kāñci), Taṅkā (Tūppul - Kāñci), Vēḷukkai (Kāñci), Nīrakam (Kāñci), Pāṭakam (Kāñci), Nilāttiṅkaḷtuṅṭam (Kāñci), Ūrakam (Kāñci), Veḷkā (Kāñci), Kārakam (Kāñci), Kārvaṇam (Kāñci), Kaḷvaṇūr (Kāñci), Pavaḷavaṇṇam (Kāñci), Paramēccuraviṇṇakaram (Vaikuṅṭha Perumāḷ temple, Kāñci), Puṭkuḷi, Niṇṇavūr (Tiṇṇavūr), Evvuḷ (Tiruvallūr, Punyāvarttavīkṣāraṇya-*kṣetra*), Allikkēṇi (Bṛḍāraṇya-*kṣetra*), Nīrmalai (Toyādi-*kṣetra*), Iṭavantai (Vaṭantai), Kaṭalmallai (Māmallapuram, Mahābalipura-*kṣetra*, Ardhasetu) and Kaṭikai (Cōḷiṅkar, Cōḷiṅkapuram or Cōḷaciṅkapuram).<sup>12</sup>

**Vaṭanāṭu** (northern country) - 11: Ayoṭṭi (Ayodhyā), Naimicāraṇyam, Piruti (Jyoṣimāṭha, Nandaprayāgā), Kaṇṭameṇuṅkaṭinakar (Devaprayāgā), Vatariyācciramam (Bhadrinātha), Cāḷakkirāmam (Śālagrāma, Muktinātha in Nepal), Vaṭamaturai (Mathurā, Bṛṇḍāvanam, Govardhana), Āyppāṭi (Gokula), Tuvurai or Tuvārakai (Dvārakā), Ciṅkavēḷkuṅṇam (Ahobilam) and Vēṅkaṭam (Tiruppati-Tirumala, Ādivarāha-*kṣetra*).

Though the traditional list brings Vēṅkaṭam under Vaṭanāṭu, it was part of the Tamil country of those times and should be listed under Toṅṭaināṭu; cf. the literary expression (*Tolkāppiyam*, *Pāyiram*; Subrahmanian 1990: 787): *Vaṭavēṅkatam teṅkumari āyīṭait Tamilkūrum nallulakam* (“the good world where Tamil is spoken extends from Vēṅkaṭam in the north to Kumari [the Cape, Comari of classical authors *supra*] in the south”).

**Heavens** - 2: Pārkaṭal “Ocean of Milk” and Paramapadam or Vaikuntam (Vaikuṅṭha).

The total of *sthalas* is 108 of which most are concentrated in the Kāviri delta (totally 40). Next in the order of numerical priority are Toṅṭaināṭu 22, Pāṇḍināṭu 18, Malaināṭu 13, Vaṭanāṭu 11, and Naṭūnāṭu and the Heavens each 2. Those that are said to be unearthly

<sup>12</sup> Vēṅkaṭam and Ciṅkavēḷkuṅṇam during the time of the composition of the *Nālāyiram* fell within bounds of ancient Tamilnadu. These two were ceded to Andhra Pradesh at the time of the formation of linguistic states after independence. This applies as well to Guḍimallam.

are purely mythical and fictitious. Twenty-two of these are concentrated in two particular *sthalas*, i.e. Kāñci fourteen and Nānkūr eight. Totally 22 temples are in two *sthalas* though each is counted as a *divyadeśa*. Actually speaking, the *sthalas* are 88 (cf. the meaning of *sthalā* in n. 1).<sup>13</sup>

Among these the earliest is Māliṛuñcōlai (Grove where Māl/Viṣṇu resides) that appears in the *Paripāṭal* (5<sup>th</sup> century AD – Zvelebil 1974: 31). This collection of poems in its 15<sup>th</sup> long poem talks of the cult of Viṣṇu and notes the *sthalā*, Neṭuñkuṅṅam (Tall Hill), also called Iruñkuṅṅam (Resident Hill) or Māliṛuñkuṅṅam (Resident Hill of Māl/Viṣṇu *Paripāṭal* v. 15, ll. 4, 14, 17, 23). The same work refers to two other *sthalas* that are Irunṭaiyūr and Kuḷavāy<sup>14</sup> (*Paripāṭal-tiruaṭṭu* v. 1). These two places are likely to have been close to Maturai but defy identification (*infra*). It may note the *Paripāṭal* is a poetic compilation in praise of Kūṭal/Maturai, its River Vaikai and the Gods Cevvēl/Murukaṅ and Māl/Viṣṇu. Zvelebil 1974: 49 adds: “on the banks of the Vaikai, that *bhakti* was born”. Māliṛuñcōlai is noted in the *Cilappatikāram* (5<sup>th</sup> century AD) in its *Kāṭukāṅkātai* (ll. 77-116) and presents a lengthy description of its ecology, *tīrthas* and cult details. Besides the *Cilappatikāram* do present a graphic description of Vēñkaṭam in the *Kāṭukāṅkātai* (ll. 41-51). The same work notes Araṅkam. It is interesting Aṅantapuram is called Āṭakamāṭam (“Terrace/Theater for Dancing”?) in the commentary to the *Cilappatikāram* (XXVI. 62: *Āṭakamāṭattarituṅṅai amarntōṅ* “One reclining in the elevated temple at Āṭakamāṭam”, XXX. 51: *Āṭakamāṭattaravaṅkaikkiṅṅantōṅ* “He who reclines on the snake in the elevated temple at Āṭakamāṭam”)<sup>15</sup>. Some raise the question why Āṭakamāṭam could not be Araṅkam (Subrahmanian 1990: 76). We

<sup>13</sup> Āṭṭapuyakkaram and Vehkā fall in close proximity at a place called Āṭicanpeṭṭai in Kāñcīpuram. Vehkā is considered to be the birth-place of Poykai Ālvār and considered a *divyadeśa*. Kaḷvaṅṅūr falls within the Kāmākṣī Ammaṅ temple complex to the right of the garbhagṛha of Devī. These are very small temples when compared with Varadarāja Perumāl in Kāñci, the vaṭakalai base.

<sup>14</sup> It is not clear whether this is Kuḷantai extolled by Nammālvār.

<sup>15</sup> R. Parthasarathy’s (1993: 229, 269–70) translation of the two passages goes as follows: “Viṣṇu who sleeps in a trance at Āṭakamāṭam (and blessed him/Ceṅkuṭṭuvan)”. “Arattāṅ Ceṭṭi...Employed in the service of the Lord resting/On the divine serpent in the golden temple”. *Kiṭattal* could not be strictly brought under “resting”. Viṣṇu just reclines that is a deceitful slumber or *yoganidrā*. For resting one need not recline and may even sit and rest (Kalidos 2006: I, 17-18).

presume it is a reference to Aṅantapuram (cf. Dhanavathy 2003: 37) because the place is noted in the third Canto of the work, called *Vaṅcikkāṅṅam*, in connection with the Cēraṅ king Ceṅkuṭṭuvaṅ on the eve of his expedition to the north to bring a stone for sculpting an image of Kaṅṅaki (for details of the Kaṅṅaki cult see Rajarajan 2000).

Therefore, in the pre-*bhakti* and post-*Caṅkam* literature the Vaiṣṇava *sthalas* noted are Māḷiruṅcōlai, Iruntaiyūr, Kuḷavāy, Araṅkam, Vēṅkaṭam and Āṭakamāṭam/Aṅantapuram. Iruntaiyūr and Kuḷavāy could not be identified. The other 104 places are notified in the hymns of the Āḷvārs. These may be chronologically charted in the order of the Āḷvārs, noted above. Of the six Māḷiruṅcōlai, Araṅkam, Vēṅkaṭam and Aṅantapuram (not Āṭakamāṭam) find a place in the lists of the Āḷvārs. Iruntaiyūr and Kuḷavāy are missing. In any case during the pre-Āḷvār Vaiṣṇava tradition at least four *sthalas* were known. These four cover the regions of Malaināṭu (Aṅantapuram), Pāṅḍināṭu (Māḷiruṅcōlai), Cōḷanāṭu (Araṅkam) and Toṅṭaināṭu (Vēṅkaṭam). Down to the 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century CE no place from the north is listed though the *Paripāṭal* and the *Cilappatikāram* have enough to say on the cult of the Vṛṣṇi heroes Vāsudeva, Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva, including the feminine Subhadrā, sister of Kṛṣṇa and not the spouse (identified with Śrī in Śrīvaiṣṇavism; Śrī here is not Śrīdevī but the lord's "grace"). Viṣṇu (Māl/Tirumāl), Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva are subject of exaltation in the hymns of the Āḷvārs. The Āḷvārs in their hymns extol the praise of the *deśas* where the Lord willingly resides. These may be listed and discussed regarding their historical sequence. The *deśas* by each of the Āḷvārs are the following.

### Early Group (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century CE)

**Poykai:** Araṅkam,<sup>16</sup> Kovalūr, Vehkā, Vēṅkaṭam, Pārkaṭal and Paramapatam (Total 5).

**Pūtam:** Araṅkam, Kuṭantai (for a case study see Meeneshwari 1993-95), Taṅcaimāmaṅṅikōyil, Kōvalūr,<sup>17</sup> Kacci-Attikiri, Pāṭakam,

<sup>16</sup> Araṅkam appears in the hymns of ten Āḷvārs, excepting Maturakavi and Āṅṅāḷ. It is indeed very odd that the she-mystic who is said to have taken the hand of Lord Raṅganātha at Araṅkam according to the *guruparampara* (cf. *Ārāyirappaṭi*) tradition has not even a word to tell about this *kṣetra*. For a case study on this *deśa* see Kalidos 1993-95.



**Tirumaḷicai:** Araṅkam, Aṅṅil, Pērnakar, Kavittalam, Kuṭantai, Pāṭakam, Ūrakam, Vehkā, Evvuḷ, Allikkēṇi, Vēnkaṭam, Kuruṅkuṭi, Kūṭal, Kōṭṭiyūr, Pārkaṭal and Paramapatam (16). Grand total 68.

**Later Group** (8<sup>th</sup>, early 9<sup>th</sup> century CE)

**Periyālvār:** Araṅkam, Veḷḷarai, Pērnakar, Kuṭantai, Kaṅṅapuram, Ayōtti, Kaṅṅameṅṅuṅkaṭinakar, Vatariyācciramam, Cālakkirāmam, Vaṭamaturai, Āyppāṭi, Vēnkaṭam, Kuruṅkuṭi, Villiputtūr, Māḷiruñcōlai, Kōṭṭiyūr, Pārkaṭal and Paramapatam (18).

**Āṅṅāḷ:** Kuṭantai, Kaṅṅapuram, Vaṭamaturai, Āyppāṭi, Tuvāarakai (Dvāarakā), Vēnkaṭam, Villiputtūr, Māḷiruñcōlai, Pārkaṭal and Paramapatam (10).

**Tirumaṅkai:** Araṅkam, Arimēyaviṅṅakaram, Kōḷiyūr, Karampaṅūr, Veḷḷarai, Pērnakar, Kaṅṅiyūr, Kūṭalūr, Puḷḷampṅpūṭṅaṅkuṭi, Āṭaṅūr, Kuṭantai, Viṅṅakar, Naṅṅaiyūr, Cērai, Kaḷvaṅūr, Kaṅṅamaṅkai, Kaṅṅapuram, Kaṅṅaṅkuṭi, Nākai, Taṅcaimāmaṅikkōyil, Nantipuraviṅṅakaram, Veḷḷiyaṅkuṭi, Aḷuntūr, Cīrupuliyūr, Talaiccaṅkaṅāṅmatiyam, Intalūr, Kāvaḷampāṭi, Kāḷiccīrāmaṅṅakaram, Vaṅṅpuru-ṭōttamam, Cemponṅceykoṅyil, Maṅimāṭakkōyil, Vaikuntaviṅṅakaram, Āli/Nakari, Tēvaṅārtokai, Terriyampalam, Maṅikkūṭam, Cittirakūṭam, Ayintai, Kōvalūr, Kacci-Attikiri, Aṭṭapuyakkaram, Taṅkāl, Vēḷukkai, Nīrakam, Pāṭakam, Nilāṭṭiṅkaḷtuṅṅam, Ūrakam, Vehkā, Kārakam, Kārvāṅṅam, Pavaḷavaṅṅam, Paramēccuraviṅṅakaram, Puṭkuḷi, Niṅṅravūr, Evvuḷ, Allikkēṇi, Nīrmalai, Kaṭalmalai, Kaṭikai, Ayōtti, Naimicāraṅyam, Piruti, Vatariyācciramam, Cālakkirāmam, Vaṭamaturai, Āyppāṭi, Cīṅkaṅvēḷkuṅṅam, Vēnkaṭam, Mūḷikkaḷam, Vallavāḷ, Puliyūr/Kuṭṅāṅaṅṅu, Kuruṅkuṭi, Vaikuntam, Taṅkāl, Kūṭal, Māḷiruñcōlai, Mōkūr, Kōṭṭiyūr, Pullāṅi, Meyyam, Pārkaṭal and Paramapatam (82). Grand total 109.

All the twelve Ālvārs refer to 210 that means many of the *sthalas* are redundant 102 times. Tirumaṅkai tops the list having extolled 81 *sthalas*. Nammālvār comes next with 35. Others in the order of numerical priority are Periyālvār 18, Tirumaḷicai 16, Pēy 15, Pūtam 13, Āṅṅāḷ 10, Kulacēkarar 9, Poykai 6 and Toṅṅaraṅṅipṅoṭi and Tiru-ppāṅ each 4. If one wants to fix the *divyadeśas* in an evolutionary

process, it could be done as follows, giving due credit to the number of *sthala/kṣetra* extolled by them: Tiruppāṇ (4), Toṇṇaraṭṭipoti (4), Poykai (6), Kulacēkarar (9), Āṇṭāḷ (10), Pūtam (13), Pēy (15), Tirumaḷicai (16), Periyāḷvār (18), Nammāḷvār (35) and Tirumaṅkai (81). Maturakavi finds no place in this sequence. These will totally upset the sequence of historical development because according to the original scheme Poykai, Pūtam and Pēy were the earliest among the Āḷvārs and not Tiruppāṇ and Toṇṇaraṭṭipoti. Āṇṭāḷ was a junior who predeceased her foster father, Periyāḷvār, the veteran, goes earlier in point of time. Therefore, this could not be the yardstick to fix the dates of the Āḷvārs.

It is a point for consideration why the Āḷvār prefers to talk of a *sthala* and not all that existed in his time. For example, Kōvalūr, Tañcāimāmaṅikkōyil, Kacci-Attikiri, Pāṭakam, Nīrmalai, Kaṭalmallai, Taṅkāl, Kōṭṭiyūr, Viṇṇakar, Aṭṭapuyakkaram and Vēḷukkai existed during the time of Nammāḷvār and he has no hymn on these *sthalas*. Even though his concentration is on those in Pāṇḍināṭu and Malaināṭu, he has nothing to say on Taṅkāl and Kōṭṭiyūr that were important in the Pāṇḍan zone. Similarly, all the 108 must have existed by about the time of Tirumaṅkai, last among the Āḷvārs. He has chosen to consider 82 and concentrates more on the *sthalas* in Cōḷanāṭu and Toṇṇaināṭu. The reason for omitting 26 is an enigma and it is not clear that a particular Āḷvār chose to talk of a venue that he personally visited and not talk of others that he did not visit. Tirumaḷicai is supposed to have been born at a place of the same name, near Cheṇṇai (*tāluka* Śrīperumputūr [this was the place where Rājiv Gāndhi was assassinated]), but his nativity is not one among the 108. Now, there is a temple for Viṣṇu in that place called Jagannātha. Āṇṭāḷ's primary concern is not Araṅkam, which place she is said to have visited with Periyāḷvār, her foster father, took the hand of the Lord and merged with eternity according to *guruparampara* (*Ārāyirappaṭi* pp. 45-50) mythologies.<sup>19</sup> We must keep in mind that the *guruparampara* mythologies are of a later date and were not known at the time of Āṇṭāḷ and so these are likely to have been fabrications of those Ācāryas that composed them. Therefore, one will have to be very

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<sup>19</sup> Raju Kalidos (1989: 261-73) has listed 64 Viṣṇu temples for his study of the temple cars of which 18 appear in the Āḷvār list and one in the *Śrītattvanidhi*. That means 45 were not canonized.

careful while dealing with the data of the Ācāryas as sources of Vaiṣṇava/Śrīvaiṣṇava history, especially the hagiological details and dates assigned to the Ālvārs are spurious on part of compilers of the *guruparampara* annals. It is precisely at this point that Indian, especially those from Tamilnadu, Vaiṣṇava scholars differ from the Indian-American Vaiṣṇava scholars (the school led by A.K. Ramanujam) who seem to be deep-rooted in their sectarian affiliation to the *vaḍakala*-Śrīvaiṣṇavism (*brāhmaṇa*-dominated and propagators of the Sanskritic lore), a vicious group that is practically castrated in the scholarly circle in Tamilnadu today (*infra*).

**Consolidated List** of the *sthalas* (alphabetically arranged):

Abbreviations: Poykai (Po), Pūtam (Pu), Pēy (P), Nam (N), Maturakavi (Ma), Kulacēkarar (Ku), Tiruppāṇ (PA), Toṇṇaratippoti (TTP), Tirumaḷicai (TM), Periyālvār (Per), Āṇṭāḷ (Ā) and Tirumaṅkai (Maṅ).

Allikkēni (P, TM & Maṅ), Āli/Nakari (Ku & Maṅ), Aḷuntūr (Maṅ), Aṇantapuram (N), Aṇpil (TM), Araṅkam (10, excepting Ma & Ā), Arimēyaviṇṇakaram (Maṅ)<sup>20</sup>, Ātaṇūr (Maṅ), Aṭṭapuyakkaram (P & Maṅ),<sup>21</sup> Ayōtti (N, Ku, TTP, Per & Maṅ), Āyppāṭi (Per, Ā & Maṅ), Cālakkirāmam (Per & Maṅ), Ceṅkuṇṇūr (N), Cērai (Maṅ), Cemponceykōyil (Maṅ), Ciṅkavēḷkuṇṇam (Maṅ), Ciṇpuliyyūr (Maṅ), Cittirakūṭam (Ku & Maṅ), Cīvaramaṅkai (N), Evvuḷ (TM & Maṅ), Kacci-Attikiri (Pu, P & Maṅ), Kāḷiccīrāmaviṇṇakaram (Maṅ), Kaḷvaṇūr (Maṅ), Kaṇṇamaṅkai (Maṅ), Kaṇṇaṅkuti (Maṅ), Kaṇṇapuram (Ku, N, Per, Ā & Maṅ), Kaṇṇameṇṇumkaṭṭinakar (Per), Kaṇṇiyūr (Maṅ), Kapittalam (TM), Kārakam (Maṅ), Karampaṇūr (Maṅ), Kārvāṇam (Maṅ), Kavittāḷam (N), Kāṭkarai (N), Kaṭalmallai (Pu & Maṅ), Kaṭikai (P & Maṅ), Kāvalampāṭi (Maṅ), Kōḷiyūr (Ku & Maṅ), Kōḷūr (N), Kōṭṭiyūr (Pu, P, TM, Per & Maṅ), Kōvalūr (Poy, P & Maṅ), Kuṭantai (N), Kurukūr (N), Kuruṅkuṭi (TM, N, Per & Maṅ),

<sup>20</sup> This and the following nine *kṣetras* are within the city of Nāṅkūr: Cemponceykōyil, Kāvalampāṭi, Maṅikkūṭam, Maṅimāṭakkōyil, Pārttanpaḷli, Terriyampalam, Tēvaṇār-tokai, Vaikuntaviṇṇakaram and Vanpuruṭottamam.

<sup>21</sup> This and the following thirteen *kṣetras* are within the city of Kāñcīpuram: Kacci-Attikiri, Taṅkā, Vēḷukkai, Nirakam, Pāṭakam, Nilāttiṅkaḷtuṅṅam, Ūrakam, Vēḷkā, Kārakam, Kārvāṇam, Kaḷvaṇūr, Pavaḷavaṇṇam and Paramēccuraviṇṇakaram.

Kūṭal (TM & Mañ), Kūṭalūr (Mañ), Kuḷantai (Pu, P, N, TM, Per, Ā & Mañ), Māḷiruñcōlai (Pu, N, Per, Ā & Mañ), Maṇikkūṭam (Mañ), Maṇimāṭakkōyil (Mañ), Meyyam (Mañ), Mōkūr (N & Mañ), Mūḷikkaḷam (N & Mañ), Naimicāraṇyam (Mañ), Nākai (Mañ), Nantipuraviṇṇakaram (Mañ), Naraiyūr (Mañ), Nāvāy (N & Mañ), Nilāttiṅkaḷtuṅṭam (Mañ), Niṅṇavūr (Mañ), Nīrakam (Mañ), Nīrmalai (Pu & Mañ), Paramapatam (Po, P, N, Ma?, TM, PA, Per, Ā & Mañ), Paramēccuraviṇṇakaram (Mañ), Pārkaṭal (all excepting Ma & N), Pārttanpallī (Mañ), Pāṭakam (Pu, P, TM, N & Mañ), Pavaḷavaṇṇam/Kāñci (Mañ), Pērunakar (N, TM, Per, Mañ), (Teṅṭiru)Pēreyil or Pērai (N), Piruti (Mañ), Puḷiṅkuṭi (N), Puliyūr/Kuṭṭanāṭu (N & Mañ), Puḷḷampūttanṅkuṭi (Mañ), Pullāṇi (Mañ), Puṭkuḷi (Mañ), Talaiccaṅkanāṇmatiyam (Mañ), Tañcaimāmaṇikkōyil (Pu & Mañ), Taṅkā (Pu & Mañ), Taṅkāl (Pu & Mañ), Terriyampalam (Mañ), Tēvaṇārtokai (Mañ), Tolai villimaṅkalam (N), Tuvārakai (TM, N, Per, Ā & Mañ), Ūrakam (TM & Mañ), Vaikuntam (N), Vaikuntaviṇṇakaram (Mañ), Vallavāl (N & Mañ), Vaṅparicāram (N), Vaṅpuruṭōttamam (Mañ), Vaṅvaṅtūr (N), Varakuṇamaṅkai (N), Vāraṅvilai (N), Vaṭamaturai (TTP, N, Per, Ā & Mañ), Vatariyācciramam (Per & Mañ), Vaṭṭāru (N), Vayintipuram (Mañ), Vehkā (Po, P, N, TM & Mañ), Veḷḷakkuḷam (Mañ), Veḷḷarai (Per & Mañ), Veḷḷiyaṅkuṭi (Mañ), Vēḷukkai (P & Mañ), Vēṅkaṭam (10 excepting Ma & TTP), Villiputtūr (Per & Ā), Viṇṇakar (Mañ), Vintaḷūr (Mañ), Viṭavēntai (Mañ) and Vittuvakkōṭū (Ku).<sup>22</sup>

*Kṣetras* of the pre-Āḷvār time are Māḷiruñcōlai, Araṅkam, Vēṅkaṭam and Aṅantapuram. The total is four.

The list of *deśas* notified by the Early Āḷvārs (6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century) is: Allikkēṇi, Aṭṭapuyakkaram, Kacci-Attikiri, Kaṭalmallai, Kaṭikai, Kōṭṭiyūr, Kovalūr, Kuḷantai, Nīrmalai, Vehkā, Pārkaṭal, Paramapatam, Pāṭakam, Tañcaimāmaṇikkōyil, Taṅkāl, Vēḷukkai and Viṇṇakar.<sup>23</sup> The total is seventeen (4 + 17 = 21). Most *deśas* are concentrated in Toṅṭaināṭu.

The *deśas* that come to prominence during the period of the Middle Āḷvārs (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century) are: Aṅantapuram, Aṅpil, Ayōtti,

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the list prepared by Raju Kalidos 2006: 304-305.

<sup>23</sup> Māḷiruñcōlai, Araṅkam and Vēṅkaṭam appearing in earlier literature (e.g. *Paripāṭal* and *Cilappatikāram*) are not included.

Ceṅkuṅṅūr, Cittirakūṭam, Cīvaramaṅkai, Evvuḷ, Tolaivillimaṅkalam, Kaṅṅapuram, Kaṭittāṅam, Kāṭkarai, Kavittalam, Kōḷiyūr, Kōḷūr, Kuṭantai, Kurukūr, Kuruṅkuṭi, Kūṭal, Maṅimāṭakkōyil, Meyyam, Mōkūr, Mūlikkaḷam, Naimicāraṅyam, Nāvāy, Niṅṅavūr, Pērnakar, Puḷiṅkuṭi, Puliyūr/Kuṭṭaṅaṭu, Pullāṅi, Puṭkuḷi, Teṅtiruppērai, Āli/Nakari, Vallavāl, Vaṅṅaricāram, Vaṅṅvaṅṅūr, Varakuṅamaṅkai, Vāraṅṅiḷai, Vaṭamaturai, Vaṭṭāru, Vittuvakkōṭu and Ūrakam. The total is forty-one (4 + 17 + 40 = 61).

The *deśas* that entered the scene in the last round of the Later Āḷvārs (8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century) are the following: Aḷuntūr, Arimēyaviṅṅakaram, Āṭaṅūr, Āyppāṭi, Cālakkirāmaṅ, Cemponṅceyḷkōyil, Cērai, Ciṅkavēḷkuṅṅam, Ciṅṅupuliyūr, Intalūr, Kāḷicīrāmaṅṅakaram, Kaḷvaṅūr, Kaṅṅamaṅkai, Kaṅṅaṅkuṭi, Kaṅṅamenuṅkaṭiṅakar, Kaṅṅiyūr, Kārakam, Kaṅṅampaṅūr, Kārvaṅam, Kāvalampāṭi, Kūṭalūr, Maṅikkūṭam, Nākai, Nantiṅpuraviṅṅakaram, Naṅaiyūr, Nilāṭṭiṅkaḷ-tuṅṅam, Nīrakam, Pavaḷavaṅṅam, Paramēccuraviṅṅakaram, Pārtṭaṅpaḷḷi, Piruti, Puḷḷampūṭṭaṅkuṭi, Talaicṅkaṅaṅṅamatiyam, Taṅkā, Terriyampalam, Tēvaṅṅārtokai, Vaikuntam, Vaikuntaviṅṅakaram, Vaṅṅpuruṭṭamam, Vatariyācciramam, Vayintipuram, Vehkā, Veḷḷakuḷam, Veḷḷārai, Veḷḷiyaṅkuṭi, Villiputtūr and Viṭaventai (4 + 17 + 40 + 47 = 108).

This is the traditional list of 108 *divyadeśas* that ardent Vaiṅṅavas would like to visit. However, the *Śrītattvanidhi*, a compilation of *dhyānaślokas* from various sources, compiled by Kṛṅṅarāja Uṭaiyār (19<sup>th</sup> century), gives a list of 117 (Kalidos 2006: I, 307), citing the *Brahmāṅḍa Purāṅa* (c. 350-950 CE, O'Flaherty 1994: 17) as the source of its authority. For classification it follows the traditional order in the ensuing pattern: Heavens (total number of *deśas* 2), North India (11), Toṅṅaināṭu (22), Naṅṅaṅaṭu (4), Cōḷaṅaṭu (43), Pāṅḍiṅaṭu (19), Malaiṅaṭu (13) and Karnāṅaka (3). In the original list of 108 none from Karnāṅaka is counted. The *Śrītattvanidhi* adds Janārdana, Maḷiṅśāsūrasthāṅ (modern Mysore) and Mēḷukōṭevādiṅamrāyaṅapuram (Mēḷkōṭe). The other newly added places are Yadottakāri, Śrīperumputūr,<sup>24</sup> Śrīmuṅṅam, Taṅcaiyāḷimaṅi, Reṅṅaṅtai and Maṅṅārkuṭi/Campakāraṅyam. The Sanskrit intonation of the names appears odd: e.g. Aṭṭapuyakkaram/Aṣṭa-

<sup>24</sup> This is the birth place of Ācārya Rāmānuja. The temple on the site goes after the name Ādi Keśava Perumāl.

bhujūr, Paramēccuraviṅṅakaram/Pamameśvaravaṅṅahanūr, Tiruvāli-Tirunakari/Tirnālatirnagari, Pullāṅṅi/Pullāranyam, Pulīṅkuṭi/Kuṅṅuḍi and so on.

To a modern tourist with all the sophisticated travel facilities by air, road or rail it might appear the Ālvārs could not have visited all the *sthalas* listed by them, especially those in the distant north (e.g. Śālagrāma in Nepal), but why not by walk is the question? It was their avowed ambition to visit all the *kṣetras* because they considered the *kṣetra* the Lord Viṣṇu himself, cf. the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* epithet: *Kṣetrajñah* (no. 16) that considers the Lord himself the sacred temple.<sup>25</sup> Paramapatam (the Vaiṣṇava heaven, Vaikuṅṅha) and Pāṅkaṭal (Ocean of Milk) are purely mythical (*vide*, Attachment). No mortal could hope to visit these places.<sup>26</sup> Those who have faith in Viṣṇu may hope to visit these places only after demise. Again it is a moot point that only a few *sthalas* alone existed during a particular point of time that was canonized by the Ālvārs. More could have been there that were not canonized. When attain popularity, they could have been canonized. For example, one may ask whether Śrīmuṣṅam or Maṅṅārkuṭi existed only at the time of the *Brahmāṅḍa Purāṅa* (say 10<sup>th</sup> century CE). There could have been a small temple there during the pre-10<sup>th</sup> century that came to be canonized later when popularity increases. Epigraphical sources in the temple date since the Middle and later Cōḷa period (10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century - Rajarajan 2006: I, 64). More pronounced evidences come during the period of the Nāyakas of Taṅcāvūr in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Rajarajan 2006: I, 64-65). In any case it could not be definitely stated that this *sthala* existed during the Ālvār period.

Several temples (*kṣetras*) existed in one *sthala*, e.g. Kāṅci (14) and Nāṅkūr (8). In both the cases the *sthala* is Kāṅci or Nāṅkūr and what the Ālvārs considered was the temple, the *kṣetra*. In such a case total number of *sthalas* could not have been more than 88. The Hindu

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the beautiful Tamil expression, *tiruttaḷiyāṅ* “Lord Sacred Temple” (*Tēvāram* 6.290.3), *Ōṅkuṅyarkōyilurāivār* (*ibid.* 1.26.3) “He is frozen in the form of the Temple” or “he who resides in the tall-rising temple”. These references pertain to a sacred Śaiva venue in Pāṅḍināṅu at Puttūr (Place of the Anthill) on the way from Maturai to Kāraikkuṭi via Mēlūr.

<sup>26</sup> The *Tiruvāḷiyāṅ Purāṅam* records a myth of Varaguṅa Pāṅḍya (CE 862-80) visiting the Śivaloka (Jeyapriya 2013: Chap. II) and presents a description of how it was.

faith is that each temple is situated on the Meru, the *Axis mundi*, and that the temple was the Lord himself transformed in the form of an architectural edifice (*supra*. cf. n. 26). If such a lofty imaginary vision of a *sthala* is considered, then we may have faith in 108 in which case the temple may fall within a radius of 5-7 kms in case of Kāñci or Nāñkūr.

Another important point is that what the Ālvārs saw during the 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century were not the temples that we find today. A good case of phenomenal growth is the Tirumala/Tirupati (Vēñkaṭam) temple. There are several temples for Viṣṇu at the base of the seven hills, Saptagiri,<sup>27</sup> named after Śrīnivāsa, Govindarāja (supposed to have been built by Rāmānujācārya; Aiyangar 1940: 262), Godaṇḍa-Rama, Alamēlu-Maṅgammā (Tiruccāñūr) and so on and it is not clear which temple the Ālvārs note. It is a point for serious consideration whether it is the temple on the hill top (Aiyangar 1940: 4) because Rāmānujācārya is said to have rolled his body on the hill to reach the temple. He did so because the hill was an abstraction of Ādiśeṣa himself (cf. n. 22) and that he should not set his foot on him, the hill, Śeṣasaila. The Ālvārs consider Māḷiruñcōlai the Tiruppārkaṭal and Vēñkaṭam the Vaikuṅṭha (*Tiruvāymoli* 10.7.8). Nammālvār beautifully says Tirumāḷiruñcōlai is the Pārkaṭal that is his head. The Vaikuṅṭha of Tirumāl is Tiruvēñ-kaṭam that is his body:

*Tirumāḷiruñcōlaimalaiyē Tiruppārkaṭalē yeṅṅralaiyē*  
*Tirumāl Vaikuntamē taṅṅtiruvēñkaṭamē yeṅṅatuṭalē*  
 (*Tiruvāymoli* 10.7.8).

The temple that the Ālvārs did see during the 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries has undergone spectacular changes today (Figs. 16-18). The inner part of the temple, i.e. what lay inside the *tirumatil* as it was 100 years ago, has not undergone any drastic change. What all done is to cover the pillars and *vimāna* with golden plates. The original structures such as the *garbhagṛha*, *Garuḍa* shrine, chapels for Yōga-Nṛsimha, Varadarāja, Rāmānuja, *Ainamahāla*, *kalyāṇa-maṇḍapa*, *tirumañjana*-

<sup>27</sup> The seven hills are extolled in a hymn of the Veñkaṭeśvarasuprabhātam v. 15: *Śrīśeṣasaila garuḍācala veñkaṭādri nārāyaṇādri vṛṣabhādri vṛṣādrimukhyām / Ākhyām dvadīyavasateraniśam vadanti Śrīveñkaṭācalapate dava suprabhātam*. This hymn gives the names of the hills Śrīsaila, Śeṣasaila, Garuḍācala, Veñkaṭādri, Nārāyaṇādri, Vṛṣabhādri and Vṛṣādri.

*maṇḍapa*, Tirumalanāyaka-*maṇḍapa*, Raṅganāyaka-*maṇḍapa* and so on remain intact (Sitapati 1972: Plan). Forty years back, a devotee had to wait outside the prime *gopura* till 4-5 PM (having been closed after midday services) for reopening of the Gateway to get into the temple.<sup>28</sup> A crowd of some 200-300 pilgrims was waiting for *darśana*. Today several thousands wait for hours if one pays money and days for a free *darśana* (cf. the mega-queue that waits at the Gate of the St. Peters Church in Rome, the bustle of tourists in the Pompeii Pago Martittimo or Herculaneum in Naples and the crowd in Sistine chapel or Vatican Museum). The difference is that the bustle comes down within a few hours in Rome and Naples whereas it lasts for days together in Tirumala/Tirupati. The additions to the Tirumala temple outside the wall are beyond imagination. How many free-feeding boarding houses both at the foothills and atop the hill; how many paid lodging cottages; what a scenic addition to the temple structures; jewels worth how many billions of dollars to the Lord and the *vāhanas* that one saw in 1940 may not be the ones that he sees today (Figs. 1-7).<sup>29</sup> What was once a simple brass-plated *Śeṣavāhana* is today in molten gold (cf. Figs. 6-7). I am sure no temple on earth would have seen such a tremendous growth within a period of 50

<sup>28</sup> Interview with Raju Kalidos, who visited the temple in 1966 when a student of bachelor's study. See photos (Figs. 1-2, 6-7) that were shot in the later 1930s (source Aiyangar 1940). See in photo 6 the priest seated to the left of the *vāhana* may have been 20 and the same person in photo 7 is more than 80 years old. We will have to verify whether both are the same.

<sup>29</sup> While working on this part of the article, I happened to note a fantastic, rather "shocking", newspaper report (contributor's name not given) in a popular Tamil daily, called *Tiṇamalar* (dated 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2010), on the splendors of the Lord of the Tirumalai temple (Figs. 4-5) that may be summarized as follows (facts subject to verification): 1) The golden *pītāmbara* of the Lord is six kg in weight. Any one could offer such a *vastra* to the Lord by paying Rs. 12,500 (US \$ 250) and will have to wait in reservation for three years on paying the money. This is called *mēlcāttuvastram* (upper garment). 2) The *uḷcāttuvastram* (inner garment) is worth Rs. 20,000 (\$ 400) and after paying the due one will have to wait for 10 years. 3) The cosmetics for the Lord are brought from Amsterdam (roses), Spain (*kumkum*), Nepal (*kasturi*), China (*punuku*) and Paris (aromatic scents). 4) The jewels are worth several billions of dollars. The *sālagrama* golden shoulder hang is twelve kg in weight and three priests are required to lift it and place on the Lord's image. They say there is no time to put on all these ornaments on the sacred image of the Lord in a recurring process during yearly days. The latest news (February 2011) is that they a Museum of Jewels is to be set in the temple. Cf. the Exhibits in the Vatican, Rome. 5) A blue gem alone is worth 20 million dollars (?).

years (cf. Parker 1992: 121n). If Tirumaṅkai Ālvār were alive today and visit the temple, he would not believe his own eyes and say it was the same Vēṅkaṭam that he saw in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Tirupati/Tirumala is the only venue of a temple on earth that shows stages of development at a bullet-train-speed within a time bracket of 50 years.

Māliuruñcōlai and Mōkūr fall within a distance of 15 kms in the north-south direction. In both the cases the present temples are of Vijayanagara-Nāyaka period as the style of architecture and iconography would prove (Rajarajan 2006: I, 44-47; II, Plan II). In between these two another center of early medieval art, Āṅaimalai, is found that houses an image of Ugra-Nṛsimha in the cella of a rock-cut cave (Kalidos 2006: I, 224-25). Again the north-facing group of caves in Tirupparaṅkuṅṅam consists of a rock-cut cella for Viṣṇu-Vaikunṭha-mūrti (Rajarajan 1991: figs. 1-2), which is not a *divyadeśa*.<sup>30</sup> We may recall here that the *Paripāṭal* has references to Iruntaiyūr and Kuḷavāy. It is not clear these two refer to the Paraṅkuṅṅam and Āṅaimalai. In any case the Meyyam or Māliuruñcōlai of the Ālvār time are not those that we find today. Through the historic periods, these temples have undergone drastic changes and added with several *maṅḍapas*, shrines for Āvaraṅamūrtis, *gopuras*, *tirukkuḷams*, *vāhanas* and so on (Plan 1). These could not be those of the time that the Ālvārs composed their hymns.<sup>31</sup> Shrines for Āvaraṅamūrtis peep into the temple arena only after the time of Kulōttuṅga I (AD 1070-1120). Early medieval temples, cave or structural, do not accommodate separate chapels for Lakṣmī or

<sup>30</sup> It was a seat of the Murukaṅ cult as told in the *Tirumurukāṅruppaṭai* (250 CE, Zvelebil 1974: 50). It has been proved with authentic evidence that the present group of northern caves at Paraṅkuṅṅam accommodates no house for Murukaṅ (Rajarajan 2001). In two instances temples for Viṣṇu and Murukaṅ are said to have coexisted. They are Paraṅkuṅṅam, Māliuruñcōlai, called Paḷamutircōlai in Kaumāra tradition. Vēṅkaṭam was also considered a temple for Śiva (Aiyangar 1940: 266). The tug-of-war between the Vaiṣṇavas and Kaumāras was so intense that they went to the court of law claiming the present Saunrarāja Perumāl temple at Aḷakarkōyil was their original Murukaṅ temple. The same fight existed in case of Tirupati-Tirumala also (Aiyangar 1940, Vol. I).

<sup>31</sup> Tirumaṅkai talks of tanks, pools, forts, towered edifices and pavilions: *poḷilum vāviyūm matilum māṭamāḷikaiyūm maṅṭapamum* (*Periya Tirumōḷi* 2.3.10). These might have been some early edifices built of brick and not the pillared halls that we find during the Cōḷa or Vijayanagara-Nāyaka time. All structures of the present temple, the holy of holies, *maṅḍapas*, *gopura*, *tirumatil*, *tirukkuḷam* and *vāhanas* (including *tēr*) are of Vijayanagara-Nāyaka time.

Bhūdevī.<sup>32</sup> These come to the scene only during the Vijayanagara-Nāyaka period (Rajarajan 2006: II, Plans I & II). The Āṇaimalai early medieval rock-cut cave temple for Nṛsimha (Fig. 8) is added with a *mahāmaṇḍapa*, shrine for *Garuḍa* and Lakṣmī that are structural and Vijayanagara-Nāyaka additions (Figs. 9-11). Similarly the present day temple complex of either Māliaruñcōlai or Meyyam (Rajarajan 2006: II, Plan VIII of Meyyam) did not exist during the Āḷvār times.<sup>33</sup> The temple tank in the plan of Rajarajan was built du-ring the Vijayanagara time whereas the Āḷvārs sing the natural water reservoirs (Fig. 12). The rock-cut *mūlabera* in Meyyam is of the Āḷvār time and not the *balibera* (Fig. 13).

In any case all that is told by the Āḷvār is not imaginary or idealized vision of a temple that he saw in his mental eye. His aim was to extol the Mūrti as he found him in *sayana*, *sthānaka*, *āsana* or dancing mode (cf. Kalidos 1999: 223-50)<sup>34</sup>, the *sthala*, the *kṣetra*, the *vṛkṣa* (flora and fauna), the *tīrtha*, the *utsavas* (cf. Younger 1982) and so on. There may be an iota of poetic imagination of what the Āḷvār say (e.g. references to towered edifices and golden forts in small villages) but the *divyadeśa* is a reality because we find all the 108 today. One may locate the nine and fourteen temples of the Āḷvārs' time in the cities of Nānkūr and Kāñci of the 9<sup>th</sup> century in separate

<sup>32</sup> Vasudha Narayanan (1998: 88) says separate chapels for Śrīdevī appear in Viṣṇu temples since the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE. It is not so. In none of the Pallava structural temple (e.g. Vaikuṅṭha Perumāl) or rock-cut caves (e.g. *Varāhamaṇḍapa* and *Ādivarāha-Viṣṇu-gr̥ha*) do we find a chapel for Devī. The same is the case with that of the Western Calukyās of Badāmī (e.g. Caves III & II), early Pāṇḍyas, Rāṣṭrakūṭas and Eastern Calukyās. If in case one finds a chapel for Devī (e.g. Āṇaimalai Fig. 10) it is a later addition. The Malaiyaṭippaṭṭi early medieval cave finds some ruined structural additions for Devī, *Garuḍa* and the Ācāryas. These are of the Nāyaka period (Kalidos 1988: 57-69). The *Kont-guḍi* complex in Aihole is a cluster of temples for gods and none for Devī (see a recent book, Soundararajan 2009).

<sup>33</sup> For example the present day Allikkēṇi temple is a macro-complex with the following falling within a *tirumatil* (sacred wall): Five *garbhagr̥has* for *pañcavīras* (*infra* Attachment), chapels for Varadarāja, Raṅganātha, Nṛsimha and Śrī Rāma, shrines for Devīs, an enclave for Āḷvārs, *ardhamaṇḍapa*, *mukhamaṇḍapa*, *mahāmaṇḍapa*, 32-pillared *maṇḍapa*, *ūñjalmaṇḍapa* (swing pavilion), *vasantamaṇḍapa* (pavilion for the spring festival), *kalyāṇamaṇḍapa* (marriage pavilion), a pavilion that falls outside the wall in the east, two *gopuras*, *balipītha*, *dvajastambha*, *Garuḍapītha*, *teppakkuḷam* and so on (Radhakrishnan 2006: Chap II).

<sup>34</sup> Especially the Lord in the *divyadeśas* of Pāṇḍinātu region is viewed mostly in dancing form (Rajarajan 2010).

zones but today these are found within the congested city and streets of contemporary time within a range of walkable distance. Overall, we are thankful to the mystics of the 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries for presenting us an overview of the Vaiṣṇava temples and venues that existed in their times. To get back to the question posed at the commencement of the essay, “landscape of myth” or “landscape of history”, it may be affirmed the Ālvārs deal with the landscape of history and not myth. To say simply why it is “history”, I may add all the 108 exist today and these have evolved over a long period of time during the 6<sup>th</sup> - early 9<sup>th</sup> century CE down to the contemporary time. What I mean is Allikkēṇi of today (Figs. 14-15) is totally different (Figs. 14-15) from what Pēyālvār saw in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE but the *deśa* is a reality, its topographical setting and ecology (*vide*, Attachment). A *sthala* could not be imagined and described. The aim of the Ālvār was to visit the *sthala* and describe the Mūrti, the *kṣetra*, *tīrtha*, *vrkṣa* and above all its sacred geography with its flourishing flora and fauna as they found it (for a graphic description of these details see Rajarajan 2012a). Pārkaṭal and Vaikuṅṭha are exceptions (*vide*, for case studies see Attachment). More *sthalas* seem to have been added during the subsequent periods (e.g. the *Śrītattvanidhi* version) down to the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE and several of these are not brought under *divyadeśas* (e.g. Ādi Keśava at Śrīperumputūr, Varadarāja at Kāñcīpuram, a stronghold of *vaṭakalai Śrīvaiṣṇavism*),<sup>35</sup> Kodaṇḍa Rāma at Madhūāntakam and so on see Kalidos 1989: 261-73).

## Argument

This part of the article is added to reply certain questions that rose during discussion when presented in an elite audience. I am to emphasize that most Indian-American and American (I mean the US) scholars working in American Universities writing on Śrīvaiṣṇavism are prejudiced of the fundamentals of its basic philosophy and that of Viṣṇuism (*supra*). I want to emphasize Śrīvaiṣṇavism is a philological approach to Viṣṇuism and Viṣṇuism/Vaiṣṇavism is a major religion in India, counted one among the *ṣaṇmatas* (Tamil *aṟuvakaiccamayam*).

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<sup>35</sup> For a case study on Teṅkalai Śrīvaiṣṇavism in South India, see Lester (1994: 39-53) and Mumme (1987: 257-266).

I should emphasise Śrīvaiṣṇavism in which Śrī (the Lord's "grace" *supra*) is given greater importance than Viṣṇu is not the main focus of attention here. Some American scholars employ unhistorical phrases such as "Śrīvaiṣṇava poems", "Śrīvaiṣṇava *divyadeśas*" and so on. The Āḷvārs' works are not poems.

They composed hymns that generate sanctity, which when recited arises from the depth of the bosom of a devotee, melts his tissues: *kātalāḱik kacintu kaṇṇīr malki* "I am in love [My Lord Śiva], I melt and shed tears" *Tēvāram* 3.307.1; *ūṇṇai urukki uḷḷoḷi perukki* "melt the tissues and arouse the inner light" *Tiruvācakam: Piṭṭapattu* v. 9; *aṇṇāḱik kacinturukum* "[I] liquefy due to love of you" *Tiruvācakam: Civapurāṇam* l. 57; he/she being in a state of frenzy. It is not something like a movie song or pop music.

The sublime in the Tamil hymnists is so unfathomable that John Bunyan (*vide, Pilgrim's Progress* 17<sup>th</sup> century CE) is a *baccā* before Nāṇacampantar, the child prodigy, and Māṇikkavacakar (7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century CE), a veteran.<sup>36</sup> The *divyadeśas* were not Śrīvaiṣṇava at about the early 9<sup>th</sup> century CE and no true Vaiṣṇava brings them under this category.

Śrīvaiṣṇavism as a codified system of thought/philosophy developed after the time of Śrī Rāmānujācārya (e.g. his *Śrībhāṣya*)<sup>37</sup> in the 12<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> This is merely a point in comparison of poetic excellence and need be viewed in terms of Christianity vs. Hinduism. As an ardent student of British English literature, I consider Bunyan a great poet. See his words: "The gentleman's name was Mr Wordly Wise-Man". "My great grandfather was but a waterman, looking one way, and rowing another". We may also look into the hymns of Cardinal Newman (1801-1890): "Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom/Lead Thou me on". These citations have been given for comparison with those of the Āḷvārs (cf. Ramanujam 1981, Ganeshram 2011); if the poems of Bunyan and Newman are hymns why not those of the Āḷvārs? S. Ganeshram is a novice in the field. Guided by Raju Kalidos he has presented the summary of all the hymns bearing on the *divyadeśas* of Malaināṭu in his article, presented in an international conference, organized by the Universita di Roma and ISIAO in Rome 2011.

<sup>37</sup> Basically the *Śrībhāṣya* is a commentary to the *Brahmasūtra* in which the ideas of the *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads* and above all the *Tiruvāymolī* of Nammālvār were employed in the process of explication. Therefore, the rudiments of Śrīvaiṣṇavism may be found in it. It is not explicitly a work on Śrīvaiṣṇava doctrines that developed after the time of

century CE whereas all the twelve Ālvārs are dated during the 6<sup>th</sup> – early 9<sup>th</sup> century CE. A ray of Śrīvaiṣṇava ideology may be found the hymns of Āṅṅāl *et al* who emphasize the importance of the Feminine Principle (*śrī* “grace” transformed) as one may find in *Tiruppāvai*.

The subject-matter in the hymns of the Ālvārs is Viṣṇu, the foremost of the millions of gods: *muppattumūvar amarar: Tiruppavai* v. 20. The Ālvārs consider Śrī, Bhū and Nappiṅṅai, Viṣṇu’s three consorts as secondary or tertiary principles: *uṭaṇamar kātāl makaḷir tirumakaḷ maṇmakalāyar/maṭamakaḷ enṇivar mūvar* “the three consorts are Srīdevī, Bhūdevī and the *āyar[gopi]*-girl, Nappiṅṅai” *Tiruvāymoḷi* 1.9.4; *vide*, Kalidos 2011. Āṅṅāl in another place categorically declares it is her aim to sing the praise of the Lord Viṣṇu: “As on today and the seven more births to come I am for you and for you only I shall offer my obeisance”: *erraiikkum ēḷēl piṇavikkum unṇaṇṇōṭu urrōmē āvōmuṇakkē nāmāṭceyvom* (*Tiruppavai* v. 29). She also advises her fellow maidens to sing the praise of the Lord Nārāyaṇa, also called Keśava: *Nāyakap penpiḷḷāy Nārāyaṇamūrṭti Kecavaṇai pāṭavum ni* (*Tiruppāvai* v. 7). “He is the god of gods”, Āṅṅāl says, “let us go and worship him, He will shower his blessings scrutinising our demands”: *Tēvāti tēvaṇic ceṇṇunām cēvittāl/āvāveṇṇārāyataruḷēlōr-empāvay* (*Tiruppāvai* v. 8). In the *Nācciyār Tirumoḷi* 1.1 she declares: *Unṇaiyu mumpiyaiyum toḷutēṇ* “I worship you and your brother (Bala-deva)”, a hint at the Vṛṣṇi hero-worship.

The Śrīvaiṣṇava concept > Viṣṇu without *śrī* is a naught<sup>38</sup> < developed due to some religious upheavels in the 12<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>39</sup>

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Rāmānuja. Śrīvaiṣṇavism is an interpretative philosophy on part of the Ācāryas. These interpreters are not the end-point in Vaiṣṇavism.

<sup>38</sup> In the Śrīraṅgam temple one visits Tāyār (Mother Śrī) first and then goes to the main *sanctum* of Lord Raṅganātha. It is due to the popular belief the Lord may not shower his mercy unless the devotee has obtained the blessings of the Goddess. This idea should have come to the ritual picture only after the Vijayanagara time when the shrine for Tāyār was erected.

<sup>39</sup> Tele-interview with a Śrīvaiṣṇava scholar, Prof. J. Rangaswami of the Tamil University of Thanjavur (this scholar has translated the *Śrīvacanabhuṣaṇam* and *Ācāryahṛdaya* of Piḷḷai Lokācārya in English) who on 17-2-2011 told me: > It is sheer idiosyncrasy to talk of Śrīvaiṣṇavism before the time of Nāthamuni (10<sup>th</sup> century CE) who codified the *Nālāyiram* into a canon. For the Tamil Vaiṣṇavas the *Nālāyiram* is the *Veda* and not the commentaries of the Ācāryas who came after Rāmānuja. Śrīvaiṣṇavism as a cultivated system developed during and after the time of Rāmānuja, popularized by his disciples <

Śrīraṅgam (Raṅganātha temple – *divyadeśa*) and Kāñcīpuram (Varadarāja temple) at that point of time were the bases of Śrīvaiṣṇava mode of approach after the time of Rāmānuja, the former emphasizing the *Pāñcarātra*- and latter *Vaikhānasa- āgamas* respectively for the *teṅkalai* (Tamil/*Nālāyiram* dominated) and *vaṭakalai* (Sanskrit/*Vedas* dominated) schisms (Rangasvami 1993-95: 107-22). Therefore, the usage of phrases such as “Śrīvaiṣṇava poems (meaning the *Nālāyiram*)” and “Śrīvaiṣṇava *divyadeśas* (of the Ālvārs)” is mere fallacy. I may also add here in the early medieval temples (c. 550-850 CE, contemporaneous with the Ālvārs), rock-cut or structural, Viṣṇu rarely appears with Devīs, Śrī and Bhū,<sup>40</sup> and never with Nappiṅṅai (cf. Kalidos 2011 cites K.R. Srinivasan 1972: 51 who finds Nappiṅṅai in the Govardhanadhāri relief of Māmallapuram). Good examples are Trimūrti-*maṇḍapa* in Māmallapuram, Kīlmāvilāṅkai cave temple, Tiruccirāppaḷli Pāṇḍya (lower) cave (west-facing cella) and so on (Kalidos 2006: pls. LXI. 1, LXXXII. 1). Though not approved *divyadeśas* by the Ālvārs, these are archaeological evidences to show the not-so-well-known concept of Śrīvaiṣṇavism during a time contemporaneous with the Ālvārs as reflected in the temple arts.<sup>41</sup>

I have cited a newspaper report only to show how tremendously the assets of the Tirumala have increased during the past 50 years. It may be “anonymous” (see n. 28) to very serious to an American or American-Indian and they may look “spuriously” in understanding the ideas behind the interpretation of photo nos. 6 & 7. Coming to the

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<sup>40</sup> Śrī and Bhū may or may not be present with the Lord Śeṣaśāyī; e.g. Uṇḍavalli in Āndhradeśa (without Devīs), ruined image in the middle cella of the Shore temple at Māmallapuram (without Devīs), Ciṅkāvaram, Nāmakkal, Malaiyaṭippaṭṭi, Tirumeyyam and Tankāl (*divyadeśa*). In the *maṇḍapa* of the Malaiyaṭippaṭṭi rock-cut cave for Raṅganātha Śrī and Bhū appear with seated and standing Viṣṇu but these two are not cult images (Kalidos 1988: Pl. Ia). The *garbhagṛha* in the Tirupparāṅkuṅṅam (west facing cella) north group of caves accommodates seated Viṣṇu with Devīs (Rajarajan 1991: figs. 1-2). It is an example of a Śrīvaiṣṇava image in the early art of Tamilnadu that is placed in the *garbhagṛha*. The image of Bhūvarāhamūrti in the Ādivarāha-Viṣṇu-*gṛha* is with Bhūdevī (Champakalakshmi 2001: fig. p. 80), placed in a cella-like apartment on the backwall of the cave. *Sthānaka*-Viṣṇu appears alone in the Trimūrti-*maṇḍapa* of Māmallapuram, Kīlmāvilāṅkai cave and Tiruccirāppaḷli lower cave (west facing cella). In my view the presence of Devī/s is not the only criteria for Śrīvaiṣṇava status.

<sup>41</sup> If any one wants to dispute these arguments, he/she is most welcome to India to any one of the research centers, particularly the Tamil University of Thanjavur or the Adyar Research Centre, where we shall meet and debate.

anonymous newspaper report, I may add now there is a school that gives importance to “contemporary history” (cf. a Department of Contemporary History in the School of Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi) and “oral history” in Europe. Scholars on contemporary history depend mainly on Newspaper reports (Diehl 1978: 123-27, Rajaraman 1988: 314-15) and personally biased interviews.<sup>42</sup> Anita Diehl’s work is a doctoral thesis of the University of Lund.<sup>43</sup> Are we to treat these “anonymous” theses? Several American scholars produce calendar posters for illustration in their scholarly publications on religion and Hinduism (Hawley 1988: fig. 1, Narayanan 1988: figs. 10-11,<sup>44</sup> McDermott 1988: figs. 28, 30-31). Are

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<sup>42</sup> If you write a thesis on a contemporary politician in Tamilnadu who had been in the field for the past 60 years, the investigator invariably depends on newspapers and personal interviews that belong to his party cadre. Do you think such a person will open his mind regarding number of wives/concubines of their leader, their children (how many and to whom born?), and personal assets in 1950 and 2010? Under such circumstances, methodology could not be uniform in all historical investigations. We find historians of religion, historians of art and those deals with both. Could any one bring them into a compartment or fence their thoughts by talking of methodology? There is an Indian saying: for Vālmīki (and Shakespeare) there is no grammar; what they write is grammar. I am neither Vālmīki nor Shakespeare but their student. I very well remember Shakespeare’s advice to a scholar of my standing, a Humboldtian if not a Harvardian: “Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice; Take each man’s censure, but reserve thy judgement” (*Hamlet* Act I, Scene 3). I also keep in mind Shakespeare’s words: “I have immortal longings in me” (*Antony and Cleopatra*, Act V, Scene 2). These citations are irrelevant to the problem under study but may serve to answer the precarious questions that arise in course of discussion. I want to point out here that in a Harvard publication (Parker 1992: 110-123) the data presented could be found in any contemporary newspaper in Tamil or English. Scholars interested may refer to newspapers during 1979-1987.

<sup>43</sup> These scholars cite third-rate newspapers such as *Tinattanti* (popular among the unlettered mass) and *Viṭtalai* (that fanatics of DK political lineage read) that no decent man, not to speak of the educated, reads in Tamilnadu. The news agency that I have cited is on a better level read by the elite. I do not say it does not talk nonsense. It does. This standard as well applies to news media all over the world, whether the Times of India or New York. I am giving this an example and it has not relevance to the main discussion on *divyadeśas*. When I cite a newspaper report on the subject, it was questioned by an American. It is my counter-question how they permit scholars in contemporary history quoting newspapers. Do not scholars from Harvard work on contemporary Indian or American history? If these scholars take a double-stand in historical research Harvard will be hollow-ward.

<sup>44</sup> If you want historical images Śrī/Lakṣmī go to Ellora Cave XVI, the Nandi-*maṇḍapa* part of its monolithic section or the dark hole-like pathway that leads to the Lakṣeśvara in the same group of cave temples (Kalidos 2006: III, pl. XVI. 1). You do

they historical or what authority do they command in the sphere of Indian art? Are not these “anonymous”? The pinnacle of these cheap illustrations is by Jacobson (2004: 237-64, figs. 1-8) who offers a justification for this type of unhistorical idioms in art. The most fantastic visuvalization is that child-Śiva is found sleeping in fig. 8 of Jacobson 2004.<sup>45</sup> To my knowledge there is no iconographic form of Śiva in the canons or myth that view Śiva in reclining mode whether as a child, lad or grown up man (see the *virutta-kumāra-pālaṅ* [Sanskrit *vṛddha-kumāra-bāla*] in *Tiruvilaiāṭṭar Purāṇam*). It is typical of the Buddha (chronologically earlier) and Viṣṇu-Śeṣaśāyī. The calendar posters are wild imaginations and fantasies on the part uneducated street painters/printers. Going to the other extreme, an art historian may justify he is investigating the sociological setting of these new entrants in the realm of Hindu iconography, which traditional scholars view with apathy (cf. Dallapiccola ed. 1989) and in my view such illustrations are unscrupulously art historical.<sup>46</sup> These

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find her in the *Varāhamaṇḍapa* of Māmallapuram (*ibid.* III, pl. XLVIII. 1). Why do some illustrate calendar posters?

<sup>45</sup> His justification is fascinating on the negative side. He says Rāja Ravivarma did it and so all calendar posters are of that standard. Ravivarma imitated the classical traditions and chalked out a path for himself. He did it for money because he was in dire need of it. It is foolish to equate a calendar poster with Ravivarma. What do most contemporary, the so-called modern art[ists] do? Do they work for name or money? The painting-artists of Ajaṅṭa and the Kaṅgra are anonymous and do not even have their names written below each painting. What do the modern artists down to M.F. Hussain do? Most of them are after millions of dollars and Hussain went to such a low level that he found Sarasvatī nude, leading to his (scholarly ?) excommunication from India (cf. Kalidos 2010: 43-48). I do not find any difference between Hussain’s Sarasvatī and the calendar posters. This article was published by Brill. What will Brill do if the article is recommended by an American referee? Some talk of Harvard and all that. A genuine Harvard should come forward to recognize the erudition of a scholar. For an egalitarian professor Cambridge and Heidelberg, Lund, Harvard and Tribhuvan are universities, no more any less.

<sup>46</sup> At this juncture, I would like to point out a blunder caused on Indian Art by some foreign scholars. See Indrof 2004: fig. 17, the figure caption says it is Chola, 1010 CE. But in reality it is a pure Vijayanagara-Nayaka (16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Century) master piece work Subramanya temple, with in Bṛhadeśvara temple complex of Tañcāvūr. Using the modern clander art to study the Hindu iconographic forms, knowingly or unknowingly dating a monument, having sectarian notions and dating Indian literatures. White (pp. 127-129) “a classical Tamil poem, the circa 100-300 C.E. *Neṭunalvātai*, depicts the relationship between warrior king and warrior goddess by describing the royal bedroom situated at the symbolic heart of the Pāṇḍya kingdom. In this bedroom is a round bed, symbolizing the round Vedic fire altar and the earth, and

scholars construe their own methodology of art history vis-à-vis religion that is against the injunctions of the *śāstras* as told in Dallapiccola ed. 1989.

Coming to my illustrations Figs. 6-7, carefully examine the legends for these figures in which it is clearly stated photo 6 was shot in the 1930s and photo 7 in September 2010. Therefore, my proposition that the priest in photo 6 (maybe aged 20) is the same in photo 7 (aged above 80). I have prudently added the motifs are subject to verification. In endnote 27 I have only said Prof. Raju Kalidos visited the Tirumala temple in 1966. Our entire family was on the hills in 2000 on the occasion of my marriage. The hill-temple at Tirumala was entirely different in 2010 when compared with 2000 and 1966.

It may be shocking to some who read endnote 28. Let me give a small statistics of the budget of the Tirumala temple as reported in scholarly journals. In 1978-79 the Budget estimate of the temple was Rs. 1,755.26 lakhs (Venugopal 1978: 571-72). Within a period of three years during 1982-83 it rose to several millions, the fixed deposit alone being 45.97 crores (more than a million American dollars) of Indian rupees (Reddy 1983: 953-56). This is what statistics says. Who knows what the actual figure was if you do not depend on newspaper reports? And who knows how many lakhs of rupees were swindled?<sup>47</sup> If you ask for today's budget estimate of the *Devasthānam* nobody will give you the genuine figures and even if told they may be fake. If one wants to know the truth behind the citations given in endnote 28 no one may come forward to divulge the secret. There may or may not

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this bed is the queen, who lies naked, awaiting the oblation of soma-semen from her husband. Known as "The Clan-founding Goddess" (*kula-mutaltēvi*), she embodies the Mother goddess to whom her maidservant prays for victory, as well as the *aṇṇku* (a Tamil term whose semantic field corresponds to that *śakti* in Sanskrit) that pervades the royal capital-fortress. That *aṇṇku*, transmitted by her to the king each time they have sexual intercourse (*kūṭal*), is carried inside of him as the energy that wins him victory in battle. Nearly all of the elements of the later *kuladevī* cults appear to be present in this early Tamil poem.

<sup>47</sup> Sir, this is India, home of black-money and politico-religious public robbery (keep in mind 2G-Spectrum hot-news and a Central Indian minister and his paramour jail days. Some time back there was a hubbub regarding the missing jewels in the Tirumala temple. Where there is wealth, there is ample opportunity for banditry. I hope the Vatican is free from these malices. But when we visited the Church one of my friends found 2,000 euro pickpocketed. From time immemorial the region around Tirupati was the home of *kaḷḷans* (literally "robbers"). Today these original *kaḷḷans* have disappeared, giving place for the modern politician/*kaḷḷan*.

be any reality if one says a blue gem is worth 20 million US dollars (cf. endnote 28). See Fig. 17 and find out the jewels that could not be valued in terms of millions of euros and dollars.

### **Acknowledgement**

I am obliged to Prof. Raju Kalidos for having given a final touch to the article as it stands in its present format, especially note 43.

## Attachment

### Allikkēṇi and Pārkaṭal in the Ālvār hymns

Allikkēṇi and Pārkaṭal are the two earthly and unearthly celestial abodes of Viṣṇu. It may be of some value to see how the Ālvārs view these two *deśas* in their hymns (for case studies of Araṅkam and Kuṁbhakōṇam see Kalidos 1993-95: 136–52, Meeneshwari 1993-95: 95–106). A. Karkuzhali 2005 has presented the summary of the hymns on temple studied by her, e.g. Nācciyārkkōyil and Naraīyūr. M. Kannan 2006 has presented a summary of the Ālvār hymns in his doctoral thesis on Viṣṇu temples of the Kāviri delta around Tiruvārūr, e.g. Kaṅṅapuram. Similarly, several other scholars working on Śaiva *tirutalams* (e.g. *Aṣṭavīrattānams* and *Sapataviṭaṅga-sthalas*) have presented the summaries of the *Tēvāram* hymns on the temples related to their studies.

### Allikkēṇi

(Tiru)Alikkēṇi appears in the hymns of Pēy (*Tiruvantāti* III, v. 16), Maḷicai (*Nāṅmukaṅ Tiruvantāti* v. 35) and Maṅkai (*Periya Tirumoli* 2.3. 1-10). The total number of hymns is 12. Tirumaṅkai in his *Cīriya Tirumṭal* ll. 137–152 (Little Epistle) and *Periya Tirumṭal* ll. 225–266 (Long Epistle) presents a collective list of select *divyadeśas* but Allikkēṇi does not figure in these accounts.

Pēyālvār finds the waves of the ocean dashing against the wall of the temple at Allikkēṇi (modern Triplicane), *vantutaitta veṅṅiraikaḷ* (*Tiruvantāti* III, v. 16). Today it is not the case. The Bay lay at a considerable distance say about a km from the temple. It is likely it was the case at the time of Pēy in the 6<sup>th</sup> century CE. Maḷicai views Mayilai (modern Mylapore) and Allikkēṇi in close quarters: *Māmayilai māvallikkēṇiyāṅ* “He of the great Mayilai and the great Allikkēṇi” (*Nāṅmukaṅ Tiruvantāti* v. 35). It seems in that time both the venues were viewed as one and the same. Today there is a temple for Kāpālīśvara at Mayilai or Mayilāpūr. Nobody views it a Vaiṣṇava *divyadeśa*. On the other the Nāyaṅmār view Mayilai a *talām* of the Śaivas (*Tēvāram Tirumuṇai* 2, *Patikam* 183).

Maṅkai talks of the festivals that take place in the temple, *viṅperuviḷa* (big festival *Periya Tirumoli* 2.3.1). He also views Mayilai

and Allikkēṇi as one and the same (*ibid.* v. 2). Today the name of the temple is Pārthasārathi, the Lord Kṛṣṇa who drove the chariot for Arjuna at the time of the Great Bhārata War. The *Periya Tirumōḷi* (2.3.1) notes the Lord as driver of a chariot. He is said to have visited the Gaurava court on the eve of the war as *dūta* on behalf of the Pāṇḍavas (*ibid.* 2.3. 5). The clear notation of a charioteer appears in another hymn (*ibid.* 2.3.6):

*Intiraṇ ciṟuvaṇ tērmuṇ niṉṟāṇait tiruvallikkēṇi kaṇṭēṇē*

“I found him (Kṛṣṇa) by the side of a chariot with the little one (son) of Indra (Arjuna) at Tiruvallikkēṇi”.

The *Tiruvāymōḷi* (7.8.3) designates Kṛṣṇa the driver of a carved chariot, *cittirattēṟvalavā*.

The venue was in an enchanting grove where the cuckoo and peacocks do fly. The Mayilaittiruvallikkēṇi was full of towering edifices and pools with fishes and groves (with plants) dripping honey (*ibid.* 2.3.7). Besides the ponds and pools, there was a fort (*tirumatil?*), towered palaces and pavilions (cf. n. 22). The Lord is *sthānaka* (standing mode) in the temple at Mayilaittiruvallikkēṇi that was built by the southern King Toṇṭaiyaṇ (*ibid.* 2.3.10). The Toṇṭaiyaṇ (cf. Aiyangar 1940: Chap. I) noted here is the Pallava king, Nandivarmaṇ II whom Tirumaṅkai converted to Vaiṣṇavism. It was he who built the Vaikuṅṭha Perumāl (*deśa* Paramēccuraviṅṅakaram) temple at Kāñci (*Periya Tirumōḷi* 2.9.1-10).

To say crisply Mayilai and Allikkēṇi went together as one *deśa*. The waves of the Bay of Bengal dashed against the walls of the temple (cf. Rabe 2001: pl. 2 of the Shore temple at Māmallapuram, photo taken in 1797). The venue was full of towered edifices and a wall (called fort) surrounded the temple. The temple was fitted with pillared halls. It was a grove with water reservoirs where peacocks and cuckoo generated a rhythm of sweet voice. Above all the Lord, the *mūlabera* was in *sthānaka* mode.

K.V. Soundararajan (1993-95: 26) has the following to say on the organization of the present temple: It is an example of the Pañcavīra concept. “It was in the suburb of Mayilai. What we see in the *sanctum* is a group of images, all standing (*supra*, *Periya Tirumōḷi* 2.3.10) except for one, and which represent the Pañcavīra cult group of hero gods of the Vṛṣṇi clan to which Kṛṣṇa belonged and shows the

images of Vāsudeva or Kṛṣṇa (called Pārthasārathi in local tradition), Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Subhadra (called Rukmiṇī in local tradition), Sātyaki and Balarāma (or Saṁkarṣaṇa) seated at the southern end facing north. Such temple of the Bhāgavata Vaiṣṇavism reached Tamilnadu in the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD”.

R. Radhakrishnan 2006 finds the following shrines today: Pārthasārathi (east facing), Gopālakṛṣṇa (east facing), Varadarāja (east facing), Nṛsimha (west facing) and Āṅṅāl (east facing) as named by the temple administration. Though the *vyūha* and *pañcavīra* concepts were familiar to the Āḷvārs, they do not link these with the Allikkēṇi temple, which means the organization of five *mūlaberas* in separate *garbhagr̥has* in the temple is of later imposition. This is to confirm not only the original format of the *sthala* but also its organization had undergone radical changes since the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century CE. The Agramanḍa of the temple and the rāyagopura (Figs. 14-15) did not exist during the Āḷvār period and Āḷvārs had no known idea of these.

### **Pārkaṭal**

Of all the *deśas* those that the Āḷvārs view close to the sea are Kaṭalmallai (Mallai of the Sea) and Allikkēṇi. Pārkaṭal (Kṣīrābdhi “Ocean of Milk”) is in the heavens. What all the Āḷvārs have to say on this fictitious *deśa* is purely imaginary. Ten of the twelve Āḷvārs, excepting Maturakavi and Pāṇ, have found the Lord in this mythical *deśa*. The sea or ocean is called Pārkaṭal (*Perumāḷ Tirumōḷi* 4.4, *Tiruppāvai* 2, *Nācciyār Tirumōḷi* 5.7, *Periyāḷvār Tirumōḷi* 4.10.5, *Periya Tirumōḷi* 1.6.6, *Tiruvāymoḷi* 2.5.7 and so on). It is also called Kaṭal “ocean” (*Perumāḷ Tirumōḷi* 2.8, *Nācciyār Tirumōḷi* 2.3, *Periya Tirumōḷi* 5.6.1, *Periya Tiruvantāti* v. 77). It is also called *Paṅikkaṭal* “misty (icy) ocean” (*Periyāḷvār Tirumōḷi* 5.4.9) and *Neṭuṅkaṭal* “long (extensive or deep) ocean” (*Periya Tirumōḷi* 1.6.9). The Lord is supposed to be in the reclining mode in the Ocean of Milk:

*Kaṭalkiṭantavaṅ* “one lying on the ocean” (*Perumāḷ Tirumōḷi* 2.8)

*Pārkaṭaluḷ paiyattuyiṅra* “reclining on the Ocean of Milk” (*Tiruppāvai* 2)

*Poṅkiya pārkaṭal paḷḷikoḷvāṅ* “reclining on the erupting Ocean of Milk” (*Nācciyār Tirumōḷi* 5.7)

*Kaṭar̥kiṭanta karumaṇi* “the black gem that lies on the ocean” (*Periya Tirumōḷi* 5.6.1)

*Kārkaṭaluḷ kiṭantu* “reclining on the gloomy ocean” (*ibid.* 9.9.1)

*Pārkaṭal cērnta paramaṇ* “the Eternal that reached the Ocean of Milk” (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 3.7.1).

By reclining it is meant he closes the eyes and sleeps or pretends to sleep, *pārkaṭaluḷ kaṇṭuyilum* (*Perumāl Tirumōḷi* 4.4).

The Lord pretends to recline on the gushing Ocean of Milk upon a bed provided by the white snake:

*Vellai vellattiṇ mēloru pāmpai mettaiyāka virittu ataṇ mēlē kaḷḷa nittirai* (*Periyālvār Tirumoli* 5.1.7).

The snake is called *Aṇantaṇ* (Ananta “the Eternal” *Periya Tirumōḷi* 7.8.1) or *aravam* (*ibid.* 8.10.7), *pāmpu* (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 2.5.7) and *nākam* (*ibid.* 8.1.8).

Periyālvār says it is a deceitful slumber, *kaḷḷa nittirai*. Nammālvār says it is a yogic slumber, *yōka nittirai* (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 2.6.5).

It is said in another context the Pārkaṭal is Araṅkam as the venue is surrounded by the waters of the Rivers Kāviri and Kolliṭam (Kalidos 1993-95: 136–52), *paḷḷiyāvatu pārkaṭalarāṅkam* (*Periya Tirumōḷi* 1.8.2, cf. *Tiruvāymoḷi* 10.7.8 *supra*). Talking of Velliyaṅkuṭi, a *divyadeśa*, it is said the Pārkaṭal is the venue where the Lord is pleased to sleep and that it is a temple: *Pārkaṭal tuyiṇra paramaṇār paḷḷikoḷ kōyil* (*Periya Tirumōḷi* 4.10.4). The she-mystic, Āṅṭāl, views the reclining Lord with an erotic eye and wants to cohabit with him (Kalidos 1997: 117-38):

*Pārkaṭal paḷḷikoḷvāṇip puṇarvatōrācaiṇṇāl* “It is my desire I shall cohabit the reclining Lord” (*Nācciyār Tirumōḷi* 5.7).

Āṅṭāl may be okay in imagining the venue of sleep is the bedroom for her sexual freeplay, which symbolically means milk is the sustaining element as is Lord Viṣṇu where as Śrī offers wealth and progeny to her devotees. This fundamentally speaking is the symbolism of Viṣṇuism (sustenance) and Śrīviṣṇuism (that assures plenty).

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## Illustrations

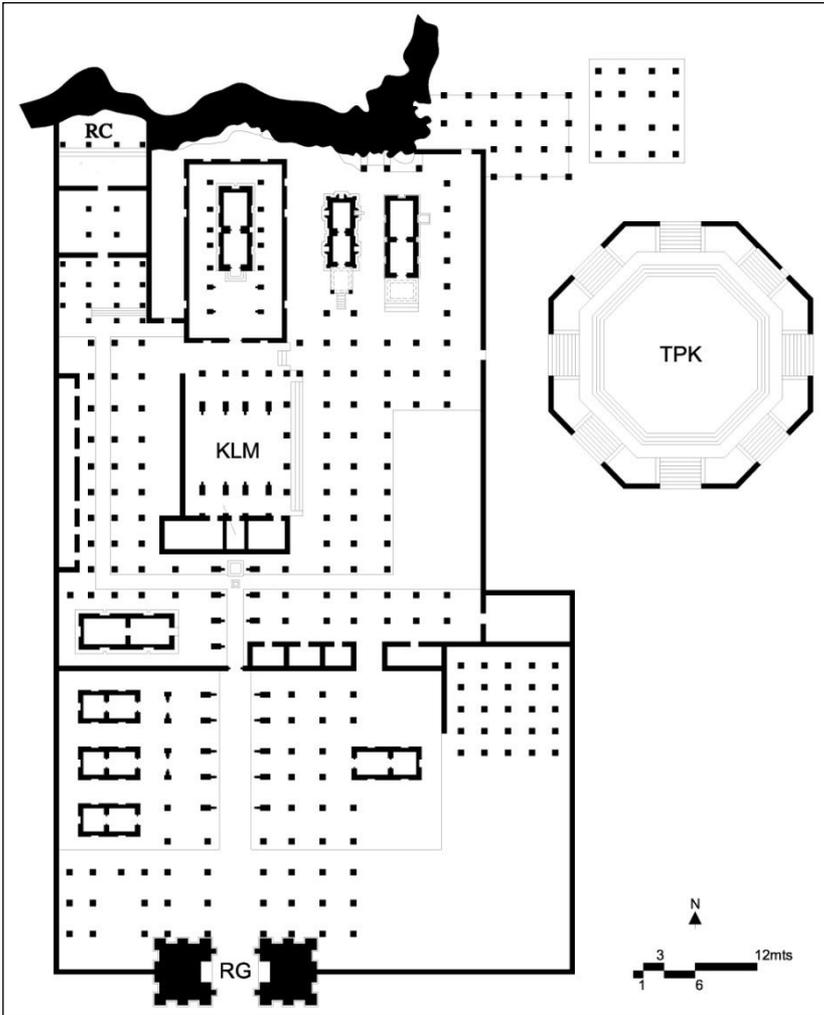
**Map:** Broad view of the location of *Divyadeśas*

**Plan 1** Satyamūrti temple, Meyyam (after Rajarajan 2006: Plan VIII)

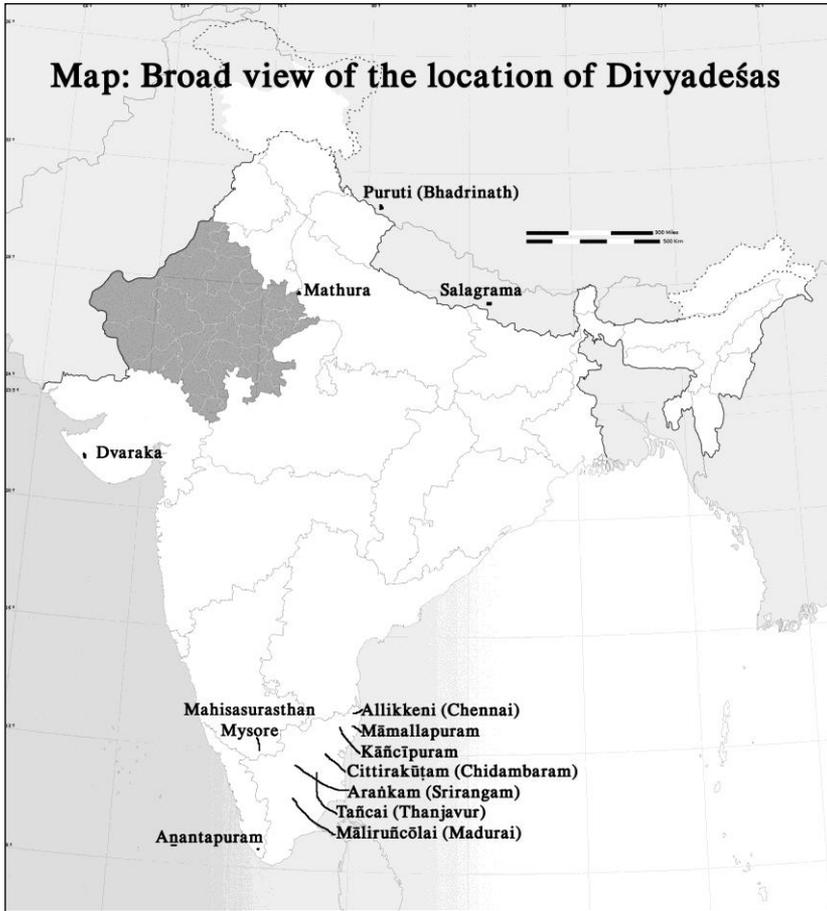
RC	Rock-cut Shrine
KLM	<i>Kalyāṇamaṇḍapa</i>
RG	<i>Rāyagopura</i>
TPK	<i>Teppakkuḷam</i>

## Figures:

1. *Gopura* of the Tirumala temple (photo 1930s)
2. Aerial view of the Tirumala temple (photo 1930s)
3. Aerial view of the Tirumala temple (photo 2000 © AUTHOR)
4. Lord Vēṅkateśvaraji-Tirumalai (written in *devanāgarī* at the base of the image) in *garbhagrha* of the Tirumala temple (photo 1930s)
5. *Balibera* of Vēṅkatēśvara (1930s)
6. The *balibera* on *Śeṣavāhana* with attending priests (1930s)
7. The *balibera* on *Śeṣavāhana* (2010 *Brahmotsavam*)
8. Rock-cut shrine, Āṇaimalai © AUTHOR
9. Structural additions to the Āṇaimalai cave temple for Nṛsimha © AUTHOR.
10. Chapel for Lakṣmī, Āṇaimalai © AUTHOR
11. Chapel for *Garuḍa*, Āṇaimalai © AUTHOR
12. Temple tank (Vijayanagara period), Tirumeyyam © AUTHOR
13. Rock-cut *mulibera* (early Pāṇḍya), Tirumeyyam rock-cut temple for Viṣṇu © AUTHOR
14. *Agramaṇḍapa*, Allikkēṇi
15. *Gopura*, Allikkēṇi
16. The present golden *vimāna*, called *Ānandanilayam*, and *gopura* of the temple, Tirumala © Tirumala Temple
17. The gem-decorated *balibera* of Veṅkateśvara, Tirumala (how may billions worth?) © Tirumala Temple
18. *Rathotsava* (Car Festival) and the temple in the background (2010), Tirumala © Tirumala Temple



Plan 1 Satyamūrti temple, Meyyam (after Rajarajan 2006: Plan VIII).



**Map:** Broad view of the location of *Divyadeśas*.

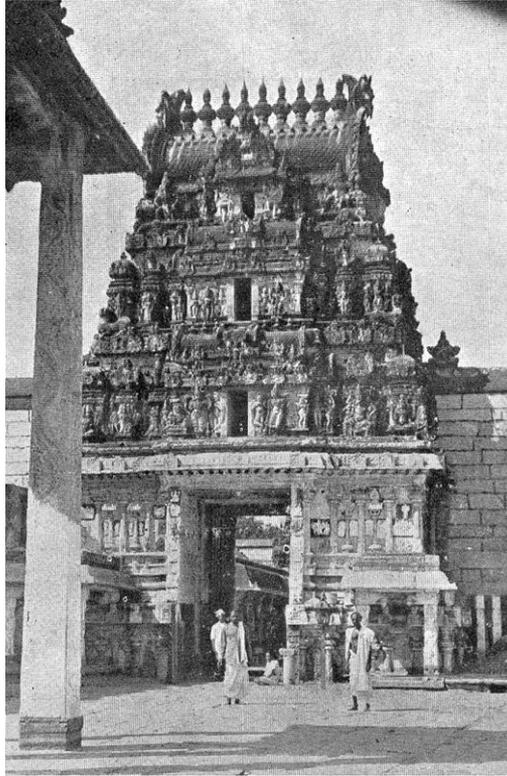


Figure 1. *Gopura* of the Tirumala temple.

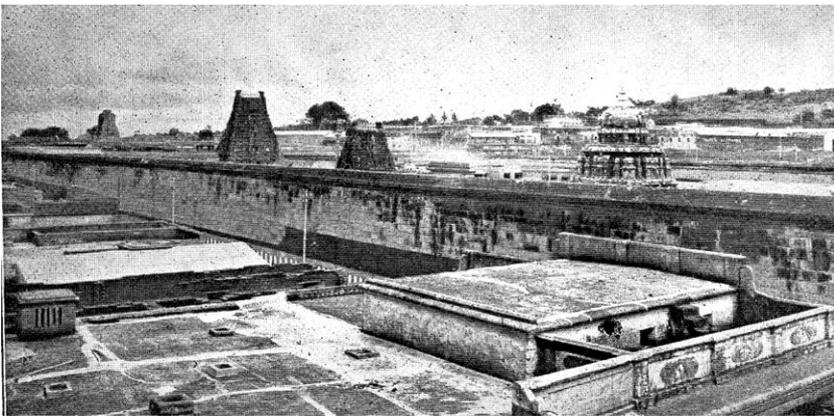


Figure 2. Aerial view of the Tirumala temple (photo 1930s).



Figure 3. Aerial view of the Tirumala temple (photo 2000 © Rajarajan).



Figure 4. Lord Vēṅkateśvaraji-Tirumalai (written in *devanāgarī* at the base of the image) in *garbhagṛha* of the Tirumala temple (photo 1930s).



Figure 5. *Balibera* of Vēṅkatēśvara (1930s).

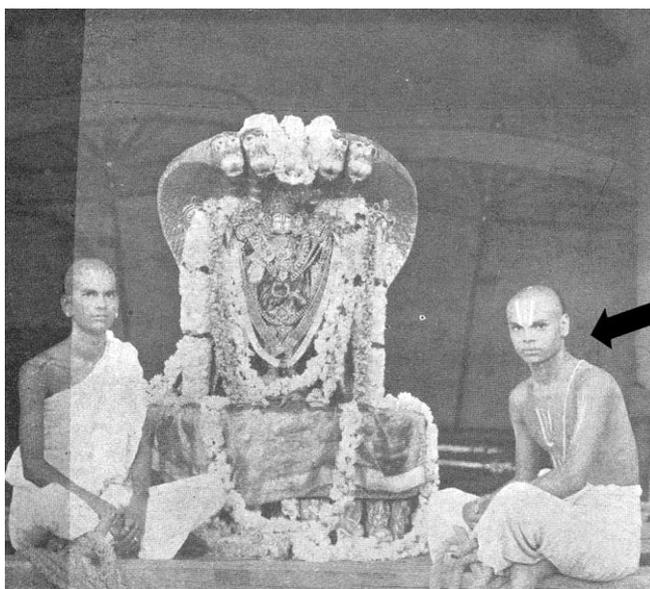


Figure 6. The *balibera* on Śeṣavāhana with attending priests (1930s).



Figure 7. The *balibera* on *Simhavāhana* (2010 *Brahmotsavam*).



Figure 8. Rock-cut shrine, Āṇaimalai.



Figure 9. Structural additions to the Āṅaimalai cave temple for Nṛsiṃha.



Figure 10. Chapel for Lakṣmī, Āṅaimalai.



Figure 11. Chapel for *Garuḍa*, Āṅaimalai.

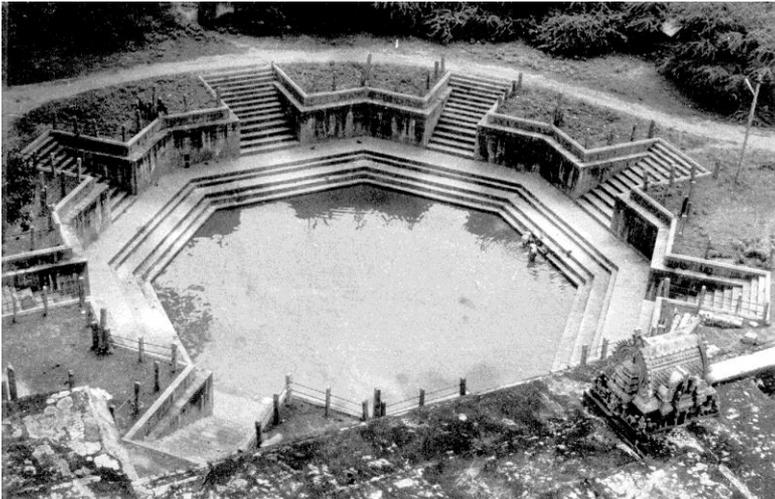


Figure 12. Temple tank (Vijayanagara period), Tirumeyyam.

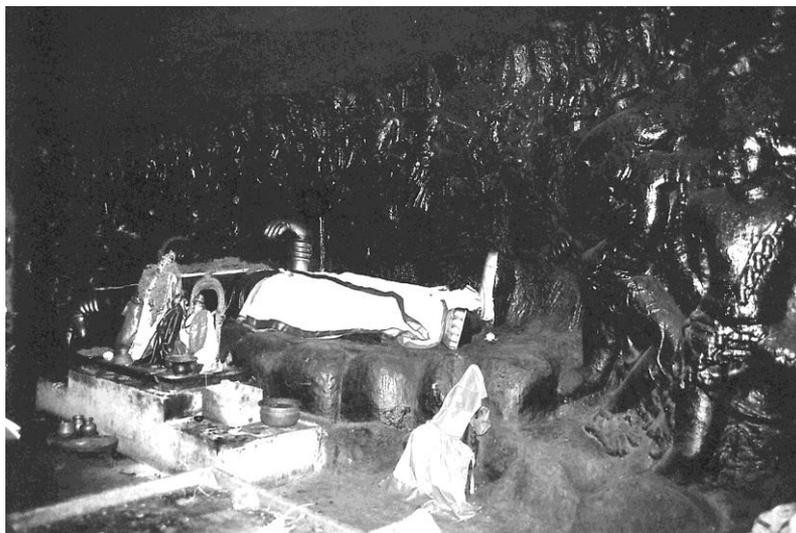


Figure 13. Rock-cut *mulabera* (early Pāṇḍya), Tirumeyyam rock-cut temple for Viṣṇu.



Figure 14. *Agramaṇḍapa*, Allikkēni.



Figure 15. Gopura, Allikkēni.



Figure 16. The present golden *vimāna*, called *Ānandanilayam*, and *gopura* of the temple, Tirumala.



Figure 17. The gem-decorated *balibera* of Veṅkaṭeśvara, Tirumala (how may billions worth?).



Figure 18. *Rathotsava* (Car Festival) and the temple is the background (2010), Tirumala.