

SOME FACETS OF HINDUISM

By

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HEAD, Department of Sanskrit
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Jaffna,
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P R E F A C E

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This publication " Some Facets of Hinduism" consists of ten articles on some aspects of Hinduism written by me during the past few years. Many of these were published in the Hindu Organ. They have been now revised and published in a book form for the benefit of the readers. Due to the high cost of printing, they have been mimeographed. I hope to add some more articles and print these some time later.

Of these ten articles, first two are on two of the important Cults of Hinduism namely, Ganapatyam and Kaumaram. These are followed by three articles on some of the important religious festivals. Thereafter there are three articles of historical interest, one of them on Arumuka Navalara. The last two are reviews- one the great consecration held at Thirukketeesvaram an ancient Sivasthala in

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Sri Lanka and another a Saiva Nāṭya-nataka performed by the artistes from Kalaksetra at Jaffna. As all these articles are on one or other aspect of Hinduism, there is an underlying unity pervading all these articles.

I am very thankful to Mr. N. Selvarajah Librarian of the Evelyn Rutnam Institute for Inter-Cultural Studies, Thirunelveli, who neatly stencilled these articles, duplicated and made these into a handy book. I also wish to thank all others who helped me in this publication.

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GAṆAPATYAM - SOME ASPECTS OF THE WORSHIP OF GAṆAPATI.

The worship of the God Gaṇapati as the Supreme God is called Gaṇapatyam. The God Vināyaka or Pillaiyar as He is popularly known to the Tamils occupies a unique place in Hinduism. He is invoked first, whatever the type of the work that is undertaken by the Hindus. He is given the first place in all rituals whether in the temples or elsewhere. According to the Hindu mythology, He is the eldest son of God Siva and His consort Pārvati. But His parents have given Him a place above them too. It is said that the axle of Siva's chariot was broken, when He went to destroy the castles of the wicked Asuras in the three worlds, simply because He didn't pay homage to Vināyaka. He helped His younger brother God Muruka to get at His Beloved Valliyammai. Such is the greatness of God Pillaiyar.

The origin of the worship of Pillaiyar harks back to great antiquity. Recently, the Finnish scholars like Asco Parpola have opined that Vinayaka was worshipped in the Indus valley civilization. The earliest literary references to Ganapati occur in two of the hymns of the Rig Veda, dedicated to Brahmanaspati and Indra. The former one begins as " Ganānām tvā Ganapatim" and it is repeated in all rituals where He is invoked. As He is the Lord of obstacles, Vighnarāja or Vighnesvara, He is invoked first, lest there be any calamity. There are a few references to Vinayaka in the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and Taittirīya Āraṇyaka which has the important Ganesa Gayatri verse. Later works too refer to Ganapati. Among them, Atharvasiras Upanisad, Ganapati Upanisad, Devipurānam may be cited. The Epics and especially the Purānas refer to this God in detail.

The earliest image of the God Vinayaka is found in the North West India and Afghanistan. This belongs to the age of the Kusanas whose coins also bear the name "Ganesa". Among

the sculptures at Mihintale in Sri Lanka dating to about one or two centuries earlier than the images from Afghanistan (2nd century A.D.), there are some figures of the Ganas identified with Ganesa. If this is so, the worship of Vinayaka was prevalent over a wider area of South Asia from Afghanistan to Sri Lanka at least by the second century A.D. This evidence may throw some light on the history of Ganapatyam in South India. This will be taken up now.

Historians generally take for granted that the worship of Ganapati was introduced into Tamilnadu by the 7th century A.D., during the reign of the Pallava king Narasimhavarman after his successful raid on Vatapi. But it is difficult to accept this, as the contemporary Saiva saints Thirunāvukkarasu and Thirugnanasambanthar refer to God Vinayaka in their "thevārams". The picture and the ideas about Vinayaka that we get in the "thevārams" lead us to the conclusion that this worship was not something new, but part of the Saiva tradition dating back to several centuries earlier. Further, recent archaeological excavations in Tamilnadu have unearthed

images of Vinayaka of the 4th century A.D. In this context, it is well to remember the evidence from Ceylon where this worship was already known atleast by the 2nd or 1st century B.C. It is now reasonable to assume that Gānapatyam was known in Tamilnadu as early as the Sangam Age, as pointed out by Mr.K.V.Jaganathan.

Whatever the antiquity, of Gānapatyam had become an integral part of the Tamil Saiva tradition. The temples of this God all found all over India including Tamilnadu where He is a very popular deity. Recently, Mr. M.Sathasivam from Tamilnadu has collected references to Pillaiyar in 755 Tamil literary works. Pi.Sri a great scholar, has said " No other God has become an integral part of our life like the God Vinayaka". Various names of the God are found in the Astottara nāmāvalī and Sahasra-nāmāvali celebrating His greatness. Of these names, a good number of them are common to the other Saiva deities like Siva, and Skanda. It is generally held that Lord Siva Himself assumed the form of the Lord Vinayaka to destroy the evil symbolized as the Gajāśura.

Vinayaka Symbolizes the sacred syllable "Om". This is said to be the basic, or the primordial sound (nāda) the cause of the Universe. Philosophers, saints and poets have written or sung about the various aspects of the forms of Vinayaka. The Silpa texts describe the various forms of Vinayaka, of which 16 are more popular. One of the most popular of the forms is called the Bhakta Vinayaka with the pāsa, ankusa, tusk and the modaka in each of the four hands and the trunk will touch the modaka in one of the hands.

He is said to be the great scribe who wrote down the Mahābhārata. He is the God of wisdom. When children begin to learn the alphabets, they first worship Him and then only start learning the alphabets. Though He is generally held to be a brahmacāri in Tamilnadu,

He is invoked in prayers as having one consort (Vallabhā) or two consorts (Siddhi and Buddhi). There are sculptures depicting these aspects in Tamilnadu and Sri Lanka too. But in Northern parts of India, He is usually worshipped with His consort or consorts. He is also the God of Love. The name of His consort Vallabhā (love or affection) points out this clearly. This

aspect is not emphasized here but curiously in Japan where He is worshipped as the God of learning and love.

He bestows all types of benefits on His devotees. He could be propitiated with whatever the devotee has within his means. He is worshipped by all classes of people the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate. He will forgive the sins of His devotees. There are small and larger temples of this God in India and Sri Lanka. Besides, along the way side and riverside too, one may note small shrines under the pipal(arasu) tree or the margosa tree.

There are some important vratas of this God. Of these, the monthly caturdhi (the fourth day of the bright half of the month) especially during the month Āvani (Sṛāvana) may be mentioned. The Vinayaka Caturdhi of this month is celebrated with great splendour in many parts of India and Ceylon, particularly in Mahārāstra where it is a great national festival. It is worthwhile to remember that B.G.Tilak the father of the real Indian Inde-

pendence movement made use of the Ganesa Caturdhis to instil a sense of nationalism and religious devotion in the minds of the people. Of the other vratas, the Pillaiyar Perumkatai (the period of 21 days during Kārttikai and Mārkaḷi) culminating on the 6th day of the bright half of the month Mārkaḷi is very important. It is called the Vināyaka Saṣṭi day. According to the Hindu mythology Viṣṇu who was cursed by the Goddess Pārvati to become a serpent for false evidence was freed from curse after propitiating Vinayaka during the 21 days. During the 21 days, Pillaiyar Perumkatai (the stories recounting the greatness of Vinayaka) is read by the devotees in the temples or in houses. The Puranas and stories dealing with His greatness are also recited. In some temples, lakṣārcanas (Repetition of one lakh names of the God) are performed daily during this period.

The worship of Vinayaka has spread to Central Asia, South East Asia, China and Japan especially through Buddhism. As a result, one can notice different names of this God in these countries. In South East Asia,

Ganesa worship was spread by Hindu colonists and traders too. Thus, He is known in many parts of Asia.

KAUMĀRAM - SOME ASPECTS OF THE WORSHIP OF MURUKA.

Kaumāram or the worship of Skanda as the Supreme God has a unique place in the Saiva form of Hinduism. The worship of this God is widely prevalent all over the South Asian countries and at the moment it has spread even to the Western World with the immigration of some pious Hindus to some of the Western countries. There was a news item in one of the Dailies referring to the consecration of the Muruka temple at New York recently.

The God Kumāra, the ever young God is popularly known to the Tamils as Muruka or the handsome God. He is also known by various other names as enumerated in astottara or the Sahasra nāmāvalī celebrating His greatness. Of His other names Kārttikeya (Son of the Pleidas), Skanda, Ārumukam, and Subrahmanya may be cited.

The origin of Kaumāram is shrouded in mystery. One of the most important aspects of this worship is heroism. It might perhaps be connected with the heroic ideals of a distant past, But these ideals had either inspired or fused into this, so that these are still relevant to the bhaktas.

It is quite possible as Asko Parpola and other Finnish scholars have recently suggested, that the worship of Kumāra was prevalent in the Indus Valley civilization. Thereafter, there are a few references to this God in the Vedic literature and the Epics. By about the beginning of the Christian era, some of the foreign rulers who ruled over the North Western part of India, had the emblem or the figure of the God engraved on their coins. One may refer to some Kusāna coins of the first and second centuries A.D. Some Hindu rulers of ancient India like the Yaudheyas of North West India and the Kadambas of South India had Skanda as their tutelary deity.

The worship of Muruka harks back to a hoary antiquity in Tamil Nadu. Archaeological

studies in this part of India especially at Adichanallur have shown that this worship was prevalent as early as the 12th century B.C. An important weapon and emblem of the God, viz. the Vel or Spear and the figure of the fowl another of His emblems were found at this site. A deeper analysis of the evidence from Tamil Literature of the Sangam Age down to the present times shows that Muruka is the God par excellence of the Tamils. He is associated with the Tamil Sangams famed in Tamil literary tradition. Arunakirināthar a devout Muruka bhakta has said that the God Muruka will bless even those who revile Him in Tamil (of three types - Muththamil), Such was His ineffable love for the Tamil language and literature!

In the Saiva Pantheon, Muruka is the younger Son of the Primeval Divine Couple Lord Siva and Pārvati. According to one tradition, it is said that once the God Muruka failed to get the eternal mango fruit promised by His parents for the person who came first after going round the world. The other contestant, the elder brother of Muruka, the God Vināyaka won the race by circumambulating His parents who symbolize

the entire universe. When Muruka returned tired, He found that his elder brother had got the mango fruit and thereby He was disappointed. In order to soothe Him, the parents fondled Him and said " Dear One you are the fruit of eternal wisdom (Gnānappalam Nī)". The devotees of Muruka take this as their most cherished ideal.

The puranas especially, the Sanskrit Skandapurana and the Tamil version by Kacciyappa Svamikal describe vividly the birth of Kumāra and the subsequent destruction of the Asuras headed by Sūrapatman. Saiva scholars like the late Sivapathasundaram interpret this story as an allegory. That is, this Puranic story is meant to convey lofty philosophical ideas in a garb which could be easily understood by the scholars and others, the literate and illiterate alike. In brief, the story symbolizes the victory of wisdom over ignorance, or better the victory of light over darkness typical of the God Muruka and Sūrapatman. The theme of eternal contest between light and darkness is found in all the great religions of the world. Kacciyappar who flourished in the heydays of the Cola empire in

the 12th century has beautifully summed up the highly philosophical and religious ideas concerning the God Muruka, as was known in his time as, "The Supreme Brahman the embodiment of Eternal Light with and without the form, the primeval Being who manifested Himself in various forms has assumed the form of the unique and beautiful Muruka with six faces of ever-flowing mercy and twelve hands for the redemption of the world." It is usually interpreted that Sūran is the egoism in man. And God's Grace in the form of Muruka destroys this and saves the soul in His abundance of mercy.

Though, Kumāra and Vinayaka are said to be the sons of the Divine Parents, in reality they are one and the same God who has manifested Himself in various forms as male or female for redeeming the souls from the malas that fetter them. The eternal love of God for the souls is succinctly expressed by the authors of Sivagnāna-botham and Siththiyār when they say that the Lord Siva Himself will manifest as the Gnānaguru to direct and redeem the souls, Saiva devotees believe that the God Muruka is the God of the Kaliyuga - the present yuga - Kaliyugavaratan.

Kacciyappar, the author of the Tamil Kanthapurānam says in no uncertain terms that the Lord Siva Himself manifested as the young Arumukan.

The details of the worship of Muruka are set forth in the Āgamas and specially the Kumāra Tantra . There are several literary works, besides the Kanthapurānam in Sanskrit and Tamil which describe the greatness and glory of the God Muruka; one may refer to the soul-stirring stotras like the Subramanya Panca-ratnam and the Subramanya Bhujanka Stotram attributed to the great Sankarācārya. The Thirumurukaruppadaḥ and Paripādal belonging to the early stratum of Tamil Literature, the soul-stirring and melodious Thiruppugal and other poems of the great Muruka Bhakta Arunakirinathar or some works of Kumarakurupparar also deserve special mention.

Scholars often opine that the ideas of Muruka worship as found in Thirumurukaruppadaḥ and Paripādal represent a harmonious synthesis of the Northern or Aryan God Subramanyar and the Dravidian Muruka and therefore these two works

belong to a later age. At the present state of our knowledge one cannot easily distinguish what is Aryan from Dravidian especially in religion. Further, since these works are of a religious nature, they cannot be assigned to a later period on that ground alone. The ancient Tamils had noble ideas of religion. The French Savant Prof. Filliozat has lamented that he has not yet seen any complete sculpture in Tamil Nadu representing the scenes associated with Muruka worship as described in Thirumurukaruppadaai in the six sacred places of the God Muruka in Tamil Nadu. In this connection, he has suggested for scholars to look for such sculptures in South East Asia where Indians had carried their culture and religion in ancient times.

The worship of Muruka has a popular appeal to people of all walks of life. He is depicted in various forms of which Muruka with His Sakti or Vel and Subramanya with the two consorts Valliamman and Theivayanaiyanman are more popular. Muruka represented by His weapon, the Vel also is very popular. Of the various festivals and Vratas celebrated or observed in

honour of this God, the Karthasasti (for six days in the month Aippasi); the Karthikai Dīpam (in Karthikai) and the Vaikasi Visākam may be mentioned as of special significance. The first one represents Muruka's conquest of Surapatman after six days of severe fighting. This is symbolic of the soul's constant vigilance against the malas and the final redemption by the Grace of God here symbolized as the Vel or the Sakti of Muruka, According to the Puranic story Sūran didn't die, he became the vehicle and the banner of the God Muruka against whom he fought so hard. This again, they say that God is ever ready to forgive, even the worst of the sinners and save him. The marriage of the God Muruka to Theivayanai after the war was over, represents the final consummation of the soul in God Himself.

Long before the composition of the Thevarams and Thivya prabanthams in Tamil, one of the authors of the extant poems of paripādal has given us a very exalted ideal of the worship of Muruka, namely, "Lord, we beseech thee not for any gold, wealth or enjoyment but for Thy Grace, Love and Virtue (Aram).".

KĀRTTIKAI DĪPAM.

Light has been and continues to be an essential element for all aspects of creation. Man, the crown of creation, has realized its importance long before the dawn of civilization. The early man wondered at the various aspects of natural phenomena. Light whether in the form of the sun, the moon, the stars, the lightning and the fire has drawn his attention. He longed to have the light wherever he lived.

When civilization advanced, man realized the importance of God as the creator, protector and destroyer who is above everything but controls and guides everything in the universe. He thought of the God as having a form or without a form or a Saguna or Nirguna Brahman. A Vedic Seer has said "Truth is one and the sages call it in various names". Man living

in various parts of the world visualized God as light. In this respect as in some others too, there is a fundamental unity among all the great religions of the world.

The seers and saints of Hinduism right from the earliest record of literature, the Rig Veda have very often referred to the God as in the form of light. When one traces the evolution of any religion, he will invariably find that the society and the social thought of a particular locality have an important bearing on that particular religion. To start with, man has wondered at the sun, the moon, the stars etc. He realized the usefulness of these natural phenomena and observed them too closely, as far as, he could. He thought of his God also as light, not merely as the above natural phenomena but above and beyond these.

The idea of God as light did not stop with this. It developed further, when nobler and more sublime ideas developed; knowledge whether worldly or divine too was conceived as light, more particularly, the divine wisdom leading to

the ultimate realization of the divinity in man. As opposed to this, the ignorance was conceived of as the darkness deluding the souls from realizing the Almighty. " Tamaso ma jotir gānaya" (Lead me from darkness to light) is the fervent prayer of an Upanadic seer-thinker. Similar ideas are found in the other religions too.

The idea of God as light has been elaborated in Saivism, Vaisnavism and other cults of Hinduism. With the development of the idea of a personal God and intense bhakti or devotion to this divinity, the devotees yearned to have a vision of the God in the form of eternal light. Puranic stories describe the greatness of the God as Siva or Visnu or Kumāra or any other deity. Some religious treatises describe God in the form of Cosmic light shedding lustre all over the universe.

Social festivals came to be celebrated in the various seasons of the year. In course of time, they were given a religious colouring. In India too, as in other parts of the globe,

social and seasonal festivals were given a religious significance in accordance with the religious thought of the particular society. In this way, some festivals celebrate the greatness of the God as the cosmic light purifying the souls from the sins or malas. Among these, the Dīpāvali and the Kārttikai Dīpam are more popular. These two are celebrated in the Sarad or Autumn season. The former is more popular as a social and religious festival and vrata in the Northern parts of India, whereas, latter is more popular in the South especially in Tamilnadu. It is also to be noted that Kārttikai is a cold month in Tamilnadu and the importance of the fire or the light at this time need not be reiterated.

The Kārttikai Dīpam has a long history possibly from the pre Sangam days. It is referred to in the Sangam classics like the Akananuru and Nedunalvāḍai. This festival is closely associated with the worship of Muruka the God par excellence of the ancient Tamils. Further in the ancient Tamil literary tradition, Muruka is the God of the hilly areas. Some popular Tamil expressions like " the light

(Malai Vilakku),
of mountain", " like the beacon on the summit
of a mountain " (Kunrinmelitta dipam pola) are
also worthy of note.

This festival is celebrated on the full moon day of the month Kārttikai when the lunar asterism Kārttikai also prevails. According to the Saiva mythology, the Gods Visnu and Brahma were unable to see the top or bottom of the cosmic Light assumed by the Lord Siva on that day. This event is also said to have taken place on the **Sivaratri** day. Further the sacred Annamalai Hill in Tamilnadu is said to be the spot where Lord Siva assumed his Cosmic form. Therefore, this festival at Annamalai has greater significance for the **Sāivites**. Muruka the younger son of Siva is closely associated with this festival. Temples dedicated to Muruka are especially sought after on this day. This festival is celebrated in all temples, houses and other buildings used by man. Incidentally, the Cow Pen, the cattle sheds too are lighted on this day. So that everywhere, one can notice a real festival of light. It is celebrated by all people. In the temples, besides the beacons which are lighted, Sökkappanai (a heap of palmyrah

leaves) is burnt and taken around the temples. This probably refers to a custom in the dim past when people got together in a common place and burnt the leaves to have light for the social gathering.

The idea of the God or the divine knowledge as the light within and without is found in Hindu religious works of different ages. The Tamil Saiva Saints refer to Siva as the eternal light (Tuntusutaranaiya soti), the light of eternal wisdom (nānacutar), Light, ever-shedding light (sotiye sūlōlivilakke) the great cosmic light without beginning and end (ātiyum antamum illa arumperum soti) etc. Senthanar speaks of the 'Ever-increasing light' (olivalar vilakke). Sekkilar refers to 'the cosmic light beyond any human imagination' (karpanaikkatanta soti) etc. Tirumūlar refers to the primordial light (mūla oli vilakku). Saint Appar refers to the light of wisdom lit within. Similarly, one of the early Vaisnava saints Poothathālvar speaks of the great light of wisdom lit within for the Lord Nārāyaṇa. Kacciyappar speaks of Muruka as the great Para

Brahman in the form of the great cosmic light. In the astottara Satanāmaḥvali of the Lord Subrahmanya, He is referred to as the Paramjyoti (great light), and Svayamjyoti (natural light). The great Sankara in his Sivanandalahari refers to the God Siva as lustrous as crore of suns (Sūryakotiprabha). In his Saundaryalahari, he refers to the supreme Goddess as lustrous as the lightning and in the form of the sun, the moon and the fire.

The cosmic form of some of the personal Gods in Hinduism are described in some of the religious works. The Bhagavadgītā describes the cosmic form of the Lord Krishna. Similarly, the Sivagītā describes the cosmic form of Siva, the Kanthapurānam the cosmic form of Muruga and the Sivarātri Purānas the the cosmic form of Siva. In all these descriptions, there is a vivid picture of the God in the form of a cosmic light dazzling the human eyes but comprehensible only through the wisdom given by the God Himself.

In Sri Lanka, Kārttikai Dīpam is cele-

brated by all Hindus in the Temples, houses and places of work. Kathirgamam draws a large number of pilgrims on this day.

It may also be pointed out that during the nitya (daily) and particularly the naimittikai (Special festival) puja days, deepa ārāthanai (burning and waving of the lighted oil lamps) and Karpūra ārāthanai (burning and waving of the camphor) form an essential part of the religious ceremonies. The devotees at this time face the oneness of the God and the Soul. Many a devotee enter into rapturous joy as they see these being performed. It is also said that these symbolize the removal of the malas or sins that fetter the soul and the final consummation of the soul in God. Rightly, the deepa ārāthanai whether of the lighted oil lamps or the burning of camphor or both constitute an essential part in the religious ceremonies of Karthikai Dīpam.

MAHĀSIVARĀTRĪ.

Every religion has its festivals and vratas meant to be celebrated or observed for the purification of the soul from within and without and for the realization of the Supreme Being by whichever name He is called by His bhaktas. The Hindus have several festivals and vratas right round the year in every month. Of these, Mahāsivarātri is unique especially for the Saivites. Mahāsivarātri means the Great Night of the Lord Siva, the Supreme God of Saivism.

Mahā Sivarātri usually falls on the 14th day of the dark half of the month Māsi (February-March). This is a very important Vrata in honour of Siva. Siva means great happiness or auspiciousness. Man has always tried to visualize the Supreme Being in the best possible form wherever he lived. This Vrata may be connected with some seasonal or climatic change in very remote times.

But later, it has assumed great religious significance.

There are several legends and stories enumerated especially in the Puranas in Sanskrit and Tamil regarding the greatness of this Vrata. One of the most popular stories relates to the great cosmic light-Jyotirūpa of Siva. Both Brahma the God of Creation and Visnu the God of protection among the Trimūrtis were unable to reach either the top or bottom of this wondrous Jyoti. The story goes on to say that after the end of a Kalpa, Visnu raised the earth from the chaos and created Brahma so that the latter could function as the God of creation. But both of them became arrogant and fought with each other to decide as to who would be the Supreme Being. There was no victory for either of them. At last Lord Siva assumed the form of an unsurpassed cosmic light and appeared between the two and said that he who could reach either the top or the bottom of that Jyoti would be the winner. Both of them took up the challenge, Brahma went up to the high heavens to get at the top of that Jyoti

and Vishnu went down the nether world to get at the bottom of that Jyoti. But they couldn't get at the top or bottom of that Jyoti. In vain, they exhausted their energies and returned to the original place, surrendering themselves to the Sacred feet of Siva who took pity on them and manifested Himself before them. This took place on the great Sivarātri. The symbolism behind the story is very significant. Man being fettered in the malas or arrogance cannot realize the Supreme Being. But God on the other hand redeems him who surrenders himself to Him. It is also said that besides the Sivarātri, Siva appears in the Jyoti form during the day of the Kārttikai Dīpam. Man in various parts of the world has tried to represent God as the Great Light transcending the human limitations. Various devotees of the different religions have referred to this aspect many a time in their sacred books and devotional literatures.

Sivarātri day is observed usually in the Siva temples. The great temple of Siva at Thiruvannamalai attracts large crowds of people during this time. In Sri Lanka, Thirukkoteesvaram and

Thirukkonesvaram attract crowds of devotees. The God Siva is worshipped usually in the linga form. On this day, the devotees fast during the day time and keep awake during the whole night. They pray, meditate, sing and listen to speeches recounting the greatness of Siva and this vrata. It is also said that if one cannot observe other vratas, he could still observe this vrata and realize the God. A hunter who accidentally performed a Bilva pūjā during this night is said to have attained salvation. This is related to emphasize that even the worst of the sinners could realize his salvation at the last moment provided he surrenders himself to God who as Antaryjoti resides in the heart of each being.

The worship of Linga harks back to hoary antiquity. Recent archaeological excavations in West Asia and the Indus valley have unearthed ancient lingas. This worship was prevalent in many parts of the ancient world. In India, specimens of Lingas are found in South India also. Of these, the Linga from Gudimallam (in Andhra) is an important one. This is dated to about the

second century B.C. Various forms of Linga have been discovered during the last 100 years. With the development of the Bhahti movement in Tamil nadu, the Linga worship assumed greater significance. The Saiva Saint Thirunavukkarasar has conveyed some of the most sublime thoughts in one of his sacred songs as follows:

" visualizing my body as the temple,
the recalcitrant mind as the servant
(subdued), truth as the purifier, the
precious heart as the Linga, I have
performed my mānasa worship to the Lord
Siva with the abundance of devotion as
the ghee and milk used for His ceremonial
bathing. "

In Sri Lanka too Linga worship was prevalent from ancient times. The ancient Linga found at Thirukketeesvaram is an important one. There are several Lingas of different times in many of the Saiva temples of Sri Lanka. Various versions of the Sivarātri Puranams written in Tamil are read and explained in the temples on this day. It is interesting to note that about three or more versions of such Puranams were written in Jaffna, in late medieval times.

NAVARĀTRI.

From very early times before the dawn of civilization, man has been thinking about the force or Sakti who creates, protects and destroys the universe. It might be that he looked at the various natural phenomena and being struck with wonder; worshipped them. In course of time, the concept of a powerful force in, behind and beyond the world was evolved. Man thought of this force as male or female in the wake of his own experience in his own country, as a human being living with his family in the society. Historians believe that long before the evolution of the patriarchal society where man dominated over his female counterpart, there had been a time when the female member of the human species played a pre-dominant role. And in such a society, the supreme Being was conceived of as the Mother

Goddess or Sakti as the Hindus would call; the historical sources relating to Hinduism, especially, Saivism also lend support for this view.

The Earth is usually called the Mother and the worship of the Mother Earth would have evolved into that of the Mother Goddess.

The worship of the Great Ambikai (Mother Goddess) is as old as human civilization itself. As one goes through the pages of the history of ancient civilization all over the Ancient World, one will note the worship of the Mother Goddess as a wonderful phenomenon. She was worshipped under various names in Egypt, Crete, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Mexico, Peru and India. But, whereas, the cult of the Mother Goddess had either disappeared or dwindled into insignificance, it continues in full glory in the Southern parts of Asia especially in India and Sri Lanka.

In Hinduism, God is conceived as having a form (Saguna) or not (Nirguna). The Saguna concept of Godhead is very popular. He is known by various names as Siva, Brahma, Vishnu, Pillaiyar and Muruka. In terms of the Female Supreme

Being, She is known by several names like Pārvatī, Kāmāksi, Mīnāksi, Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī. Of the six schools of Hinduism, Saktism gives the most pre-eminent place to the Mother Goddess.

In the Saiva form of Hinduism, the supreme God Siva and Sakthi are conceived of as inseparable. The Sakti is the energy of Siva and without Her, He cannot activate the universe.

Siththiyar says that the Lord Siva does not function without the Sakti (Saktiyinric Civam Illai). More than one Saiva Saint has emphasized the fact that the divine couple is a counterpart of the human couple and the cosmic parents (Siva and Sakti) are so, for the preservation of all the beings of the universe. Ādi Sankara in his Soundarya Lahari clearly brings out the supreme position of the Devi in beautiful compositions. In the first verse itself, he says that even Siva cannot function without the Devi and goes to proclaim that She is above the Trinity - Brahma, Visnu and Siva.

This Sakti is the grace Siva descending on all souls to save them from the mire of sin. The

Siththiyar, one of the most important works on Saiva Siddhanta succinctly says "Sakti is the Grace of Siva and without the Grace there is no Siva and there is no Siva without Sakti." Such a pre-eminent position is given to the Mother Goddess in Saivism; correspondingly, atleast in theory, the woman is held in high esteem in the Hindu Society.

In Saivism, Siva and Sakti are given an equal status. The Ardhanarisvara (half Siva and half Uma) form of Siva clearly indicates this idea. This is best expressed by the poet Kālidāsa who in his Raghuvamsa says that Siva and Parvati are together (and inseparable) like the word and it's meaning.

In the social and religious life of the Hindus, festivals, rituals and religious observances (Vratas) play an important part. Each month of the year is held to be of some significance or other for one or the other God, or Goddess. Of the festivals in honour of Sakti, four Navarātris (celebrated during nine nights) are important in particular. Of these, the Sarad Navaratri celebrated during September -

October and Vasanta Navaratri celebrated during April - March are more popular. They are named after the seasons. Of the two, the Sarad Navaratri is more important. Sarad is not only name of the season but that of Sārada (Sarasvati-Goddess of learning) too. It is no wonder that she is given the pride of place in this festival. This is celebrated for nine nights beginning from the first day of the bright half of September - October. There is always a co-relation between the festivals and seasons in which they are celebrated. After a spell of a long dry summer, rainy season sets in by this time. The parched up land puts forth tender shoots of grass and other forms of vegetation. Trees which have shed leaves begin to have tender leaves. More especially in an agricultural society as ours, the farmer begins to plough and sow his paddy which also sprouts by this time. Thus the whole landscape becomes green and beautiful. It is nothing but fitting that a festival dedicated to the Almighty Mother Goddess is celebrated on a grand scale at this time of the year. It is also worth to remember that this festival has some rites relating to the fertility cult of the dim past. The consecration of the nine types of grain usually grown in this region with the pure water and allowing them to sprout to be taken out on the tenth

day may be cited here.

The first three nights of this festival are devoted to the worship of the Goddess Durgā (the divine embodiment of valour), the next three nights for the Goddess .Laksmi (the Goddess of wealth) and the last three for the Goddess Saras vati (the Goddess of learning). Though they are often referred to as separate deities, they are but different forms of one and the same Supreme Mother Goddess. Each of these Goddesses represents the important ideals of the life cherished by the Hindus. It is sometimes said without proper knowledge of the sources of Hinduism, that Hindus are absorbed more with the things of the spirit than with the material aspects of life. Navaratri festival itself is an adequate answer for this criticism.

According to the Hindu Puranas, this festival is celebrated to commemorate the victory of the Devi the Mother Goddess over the buffalo faced demon Mahisāsura whom She destroyed on the tenth day in the form of Sarasvati. As a result of this, She is called Mahisasuramardani and the tenth day of the festival is called the Vijayadasami (the victorious tenth day). The festival represents the

significant victory of Knowledge (Sarasvati) over ignorance personified as the demon. It is also to be noted that what valour and wealth cannot conquer is successfully conquered by learning represented by Sarasvati of crystal purity. When ignorance or malas or impurities or sins fettering the souls are destroyed, man becomes pure as God Himself. This is one of the lofty ideals behind this festival. Further one may also note that in the onward march of civilization, the significance and the pre-eminent position of learning over other secular pursuits of man.

It also shows that valour and wealth have their relevant significance in the life of an individual. Like many other festivals, this is more than a festival. It has a religious, sociological, cultural and philosophical significance. In fact, in a sense, it also represents a "collective cultural effervescence" of the people, as they celebrate some of the basic ideals of life cherished by their ancestors, during this period. These continue to inspire the later generations down to our times. As pointed out by a recent scholar, "there is no

society which at one time or another does not organise public celebrations designed to mark important religious, civic or cultural events. Feasts played a role in the past and nowadays there is a new interest in their socio-cultural function as : the quest for self - identity and self - assertion unfolds in modern societies".

This festival is popular among all people whether they are poor or rich, young or old, skilled workmen or unskilled workmen, educated or uneducated. As the festival reaches its climax during the last three nights devoted to the worship of Sarasvati, students, teachers and learned men usually go all out to celebrate this on a grand scale. As a result the entire festival is often referred to as the Sarasvati Puja. On the ninth day people worship the Goddess Sarasvati with flowers and offer Her all types of nice sweets meats and other eatables and fruits. They also keep their books, implements and other tools pertaining to their profession or work at their place of worship. Further this festival is celebrated not only in the temples and places of learning but in the house and offices and places of work. As a result, there is great enthusiasm among all sections of the society, especially

among the young.

The greatness of the Devi is described or sung in many Tamil and Sanskrit works, many of which are full of fervant bhakti and poetic excellence. The Sarasvati Anthathy of the great poet Kampar, the Sakalakalavallimalai of Kumarakurupa-rar, the Abhirami Anthathy of Abhiramibhattar . . and the poems of Bharati may be mentioned as some important works in Tamil on this subject. The Devi mahatmyam, the Lalitasahsranama, the Lalitatrishati the Saundarya Lahari and various other stotras and kirttanas on Durga; Laksmi and Sarasvati may be cited as examples of the works in Sanskrit. Many of these or at least some of these are recited and read during this season.

A NOTE ON SOME VISNU TEMPLES OF SRI LANKA

Saivism has a hoary antiquity in Sri Lanka harking back to pre-Buddhist times. This is evidenced by literary as well as archaeological sources. Vaisnavism too has equal claims to antiquity but its development is closely linked up with that of Saivism. Unlike in India, there has been a syncretism - Vaisnavism has now more or less become part of Saivism though there are a few Vaisnavites in Sri Lanka.

Of the ancient Temples of Visnu, those which were at Devinuvara (in the extreme South), Ponnalai and Vallipuram in the North deserve special attention. The temple of Visnu at Devinuvara dates from about the 8th century A.D. The Moroccan traveller, Ihin Batuta who visited Sri Lanka

in 1344 has given a glowing account of the then temple. It is said that there were 1000 brahmins and 500 women (devadasis) to sing and dance before the idol of the temple. The Tamil version of the Galle trilingual inscription also bears testimony to the great influence and wealth of this temple. The Portuguese who destroyed this temple in the late 16th century, have left another good account of the temple and its wealth. It has been the second largest temple of Ceylon, (next to Thirukonesvaram) in the 16th century, if we believe the Portuguese sources.

The Visnu temples at Ponnalai and Vallipuram also were important temples. These temples are referred to in the Kokila Sandesaya, a Sinhalese literary work of the 15th century. There is a good description of the Temple at Ponnalai. According to the tradition, this temple of Krishna is said to have had seven prakaras like the greatest Visnu temple at Sri Rangam in South India. Whatever it might be, this too was an important temple at the time when the Portuguese arrived in Jaffna. They are said to have demolished this and built their own edifices at Chankanai. The importance of both these temples at Ponnalai and

Vallipuram are described in ^{the} Daksina Kailasa Mahātmyam, a section of the Sanskrit Skanda Puranam. According to the section dealing with Vallipuram, Lord Visnu once assumed the form of a fish. The fisherman tried to catch Him. At that time, the fish jumped and fell on the lap of Lavalli. He assumed the form of a child. Lavalli was freed from the curse of a serpent and was blessed with children. The place of Lavalli was called Vallipuram in later times.

Like Devinuvara, Ponnalai and Vallipuram too are situated along the sea-coast and all these temples are located at the sea-ports. There are some important Visnu temples in the Eastern Province. At Vallipuram, some ancient Hindu and Buddhist images also were found some time ago. Recently, a funerary urn of the megalithic culture related to that of South India had been unearthed accidentally. The archaeological significance of the site is yet to be studied scientifically.

Besides, these temples there had been several Visnu temples in the interior of Sri Lanka, especially in Polonnaruva. It is to be noted that Lord Visnu is one of the guardian - deities of Sri Lanka.

A GREAT NATIONALIST AND LEADER OF SAIVA RENAISSANCE.

During the 19th century there was a great religious and cultural renaissance almost all over South Asia mainly due to the foreign domination. A galaxy of leaders who were either educated in their mother tongue or in English and their mother tongue came to the fore-front of a great renaissance. All of them loved their country, religion and language and tried to restore them to their pristine glory. They were conscious of the abuses in their society and religion and tried to reform them. Among these leaders Rajaram Mohan Roy, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo (from Eastern India), Dayananda Sarasvati (from Western India), Arumuganavalar, Migettuvatte Gunananda, Hikkaduve Sri Sumangala and others (from Sri Lanka) deserve special mention.

A major part of Sri Lanka was subjected to foreign domination since the 16th century, successively, by the Portuguese, Dutch and British. Though there was no immediate reaction to foreign rule, as time went on, there was a revival of Buddhism in the South Western Lowlands and especially the Kandyan kingdom, in the 18th century. In the Northern Sri Lanka, there was a parallel Saiva revival which culminated during the time of the great Navalar, in the 19th century. A good number of Tamil literary works mostly of the Saiva faith were written in the 18th and early 19th centuries. Though Saivism lost royal patronage for three centuries, its vitality was not exhausted, in spite of the missionary activities backed by the state.

The Britishers allowed religious toleration. But Christian missionary activities continued with great vigour during the 19th century. In the Southern part of Sri Lanka, there were public debates, publications of tracts and books by the Christians and the Buddhists to vindicate their respective faiths. Towards the last quarter of the 19th century the Theosophical Society

strengthened the Buddhist revival. In the North too, there were similar tendencies. Navalar was the most prominent figure in the Saiva revival. He had to counteract the missionary activities of the Christians by public lectures, publications and reforms within Saivism.

Navalar was born in a pious Saiva family. He became proficient in the Tamil Language and literature and Sanskrit quite early in life. He learnt English in the Wesleyan mission school (present Central College) run by Peter Percival who was impressed so much with the learning of Navalar that he offered him a teaching post. He helped Percival to translate the Bible and Navalar's translation was compared with the translation in India and found to be better and closer to the English original.

When Navalar realized that he had to serve his faith, he left the school and started the Saiva Prakasa Vidyasalai at Vannarponnai to cater to the educational and religious needs of the Saivites who were helpless at this time. He held regular lectures on Saivism at the Sivan temple. He published Catechisms on Saivism for the benefit

of the Saiva students. He tried to reform the Saiva faith from the superstitions and later accretions that had marred its real greatness. For example, he tried to stop animal sacrifice in the temples. In particular, he launched an attack on the abuses at the historic Nallur Temple, like the animal sacrifice, the dance by the nautches etc. He knew very well that unless he reformed his faith, he could not cope up with the vigorous missionary propaganda.

Navalar's religious and literary activities were not confined only to Sri Lanka. He went to Tamilnadu several times to carry on his works there too. He had a wider field there. He was respected and held in high esteem by the leading Saiva Mutts like the Thirugnanasampanthar Adinam in Madura, the Dharmapuram Adinam and particularly the Thiruvavaduthurai Adinam which conferred on him the title "Navalar" for his great eloquence. He is popularly known by this title. Navalar did not hesitate to point out some irregularities and abuses prevailing at the Sithamparam Temple, the holiest place for the Saivites. This provoked the anger of the priests and their supporters. Later, he entered into a controversy with one of his con-

temporary saint Poets Ramalinga Swamikal. This is known as the " Arudpa - Marudpa " Controversy. Navalar established a school and Printing Press at Madras to carry on his activities unabated. One may note of Navalar's recognition in India. Navalar's contributions are manifold. He popularized the "Prasankam" method to spread the tenets of Saivism. Besides the catechisms, prose rendering of the Periyapuram and Thiruvilaiya-dalpuram, the editions of Kantha Puranam, Periyapuram, Thirukkural etc. are worthy of note. His works or edition of classics are free from any mistakes. Navalar editions are still sought after by research scholars. He did every thing as perfect as possible. He is the "Father of Tamil Prose" and his style of Tamil prose has a peculiar charm and accuracy.

He was interested in the welfare of the common man in other respects too. When a severe famine stalked in Jaffna in 1878, people suffered much. The relief measures undertaken by the then colonial government were not adequate. Navalar did his best to alleviate the suffering of the people. Along with Sir Ponnambalam Ramathan and a few others, he appealed to the Governor

Longdon and later sent a petition to the Secretary of State for colonies regarding the abuses in the Provincial administration. But the Colonial government didn't listen to him. He supported the candidature of Sir P. Ramanathan to the Legislative Council and the latter won the elections. Soon after Navalar died and the mantle fell on the shoulders of Sir P. Ramanathan who continued and kept alive the ideals of Navalar.

Judging from the circumstances under which Navalar worked, his achievements are stupendous. There is as yet no unanimity, as to whether circumstances create a great man or a great man makes full use of the circumstances to his advantage and becomes prominent. By whatever standards one may assess, the personality of Navalar is certainly outstanding. He may be compared to Dayananta Sarasvati. Both believed firmly in the Vedic tradition. Both were dynamic figures, in their own way, in the history of Hinduism. Both were great nationalists and have left an indelible mark in their motherlands. All the subsequent Saiva organizations of Sri Lanka draw their inspiration from the exemplary life and works of Navalar.

SOME ASPECTS OF THE HISTORY OF THE NALLUR KANDASWAMI TEMPLE.

Nallur is a place of historical, archaeological, cultural and religious significance in northern Sri Lanka. It was the Capital City of the Tamil kings who dominated the Northern part of Sri Lanka from the 13th to the 17th century A.D., as a Capital City, it was adorned with palaces and big temples. According to the tradition as preserved in one of the Tamil Chronicles, Yālpāna vaipavamālai of Mayilvakanappulavar (18th c. A.D.) there was a great temple of the God Muruka adjoining the Palace of the kings who patronized it. Around this royal temple (if it could be called) there were other temples namely, the Vexilukanta Pillaiyar temple to the East, the Kailasa Pillaiyar the Kayilayanathar and Kayilaynayaki Amman temples to the South, the Vīramā Kāli Amman temple to the West and the Sattanathesvarar (Siva) and Thaiya

Palai Vinayakar
nayaki/Amman temples to the North. Though not mentioned in this work, the Talankāval Pillaiyar temple (in the West) is also generally taken along with the other temples. Besides these, there seem to have been some more temples in this locality. Unfortunately due to the vandalism of the Portuguese, almost all buildings in this Capital had been destroyed. Some of the Portuguese sources refers to these temples and their destruction at the hands of the Portuguese themselves.

Fortunately, the Kokilasandesaya, a medieval literary work in Sinhalese (15th C. A.D.) describes the beauty of Nallur as follows:

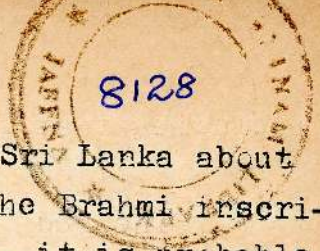
" Yappa patuna (Jaffna - here it refers to Nallur the Capital City) which consists of stately buildings decorated with golden flags and which sheds an extra ordinary brilliance on account of its valuable gems glinting everywhere and which in point of splendour and charm can be compared only to the City of Alakananda of God Vaisravana (Kubera). "

It is quite probable that this description includes not only the secular buildings like the palaces but religious edifices like the temples,

including that of the God Muruka too.

The God Muruka is not only the most popular God of the Tamils but worshipped as a guardian deity of Sri Lanka by the Sinhalese Buddhists too. The worship of this God harks back to great antiquity in India as well as in Sri Lanka. Kathirgamam (Kataragama) in Southern Sri Lanka is a famous centre of Muruka worship. The Muruka temple at Mandur and another at Trincomalee are popular in Eastern Sri Lanka. The Muruka temples at Maviddapuram, Nallur and Thondaimanaru (Selvaccanniti) are more popular in Northern Sri Lanka. Saints Arunakirinathar (15th c.) the famous composer of the soul-stirring and melodious "Thiruppukal" has sung about the God Muruka enshrined at Kathirgamam, Trincomalee and Jaffna (Nallur) in Sri Lanka.

The exact date and origin of the Kandaswami temple at Nallur are not known. It seems to have been perhaps one of the ancient temples of the God Muruka in Sri Lanka. The discovery of Vel - the Sakti and weapon of Lord Muruka among the Megalithic finds at Kantarodai in the Jaffna Peninsula dating to about the time of the Christian era (or still earlier) shows that this God was worshipped at this time in Jaffna. The worship



of this God in other parts of Sri Lanka about this time are attested to by the Brahmi inscriptions of Sri Lanka. Therefore, it is probable that the worship of Muruka was prevalent from very early times especially among the Dravidian Settlers. According to a stray verse found in the Kailayamalai, a Tamil literary work of about the 16th century A.D., the City of Nallar and the Kandaswami Temple were founded by Puvanekavaku (Bhuvanekabahu) during the saka year 870 (A.D. 948). The particulars verse is as follows:

" Ilakiya sakatta mennur reḷupatā mānta tellai
 yalāzpoli mālainārpanām Puvanekavāku
 nalamikum yālppānattu nakari kattuvittu
 nallaik

kulaviya kantavetku kovilum purivittān. "

The date given here corresponds to 942 A.D., but some historians calculate this year 870 differently and arrive at a time about three centuries later (1248 A.D.). This date more or less synchronizes with the founding of the kingdom of Jaffna. Thus the founding of the kingdom and the temple would have taken place more or less at the same time. But, except perhaps the oral tradition, there is no other evidence to corroborate the main content of this verse, namely, the

founding of the City and the temple. Most probably there seems to have been some confusion in the tradition relating to the foundation of the city and the temple. A later king Bhuvanekabāhu who either rebuilt or enlarged the original city and temple seems to have been identified with the real founder who probably flourished centuries earlier. Such instances are not rare in the history of India and Sri Lanka.

Therefore, if the story verse quoted above has a historical kernel, it is quite possible that the original temple was founded by the 10th or the 13th century A.D. By this time (10th c.) there were considerable number of Tamils living in this part of Sri Lanka. In Tamilnadu, there was a resurgence of the worship of the God Muruka at this time (9th century) as evidenced by the Tiruccendur inscription of Varaguna Pandya II. The Pandyas were great bhaktas of the God Muruka also. Further, with the rise of the Colas of the line of Vijayalaya, especially under Parataka I in the 10th century A.D., there had been closer links between the Pandyas and the Sinhalese kings who formed a sort of alliance with the Ceras against the rising Colas. This alliance continued later also. The presence of the Pand

of the Pandyas closely associated with Muruka worship would have helped directly or indirectly, the foundation of this temple. At the same time, this temple would have been founded earlier or later later by some other bhakta also.

This temple would have been later patronized by the Colas who controlled the whole of Sri Lanka for nearly three quarter of a century up to A.D. 1070. Once established, the temple would have continued with the patronage of the people and the rulers. The Cola inscription discovered about 15 years ago at the Jaffna fort refers to some donation to a temple probably at Nallur (as the mutilated part of the word indicating the name of the place ends in ...lūr) during the time of the Cola emperor Rājendra I. The temple referred to might have been the original Nallur Kandaswami temple. Thus, it would have been patronized by the Colas later.

With the decline of the Colas, there was the rise of the Second Pandyan Empire in South India during the 13th century A.D. The Pandya power extended its sway especially over the Northern part of Sri Lanka. Besides other things,

this resulted in the establishment of an independent Tamil Kingdom in Northern Sri Lanka, with its' base in Jaffna. Aryacakravarti, a general of the Pandyan emperor played a significant role in this and he became the founder of a royal dynasty here with Nallur as the Capital of the Kingdom.

The new political set up would have been favourable to the prominence of this temple. This seems to have become the royal temple by this time.

The new dynasty would have either founded or rebuilt this temple if ^{it} had been there earlier. Enjoying royal patronage, it would have continued to flourish with great splendour. As noted earlier the Kokilasandesaya speaks of the great splendour of the City of Nallur,

Sapumal Kumaraya subjugated Jaffna on behalf of Parakramabahu VI., the king of Kotte in A.D. 1450. He was subsequently appointed as the vice-roy of Jaffna. He continued for 17 years in this position. He seems to have rebuilt the Capital City including this temple as it was badly affected during this war with the Tamil King of Jaffna. The rebuilding or enlargement of the temple would have had a political motive too. More than one Portuguese writer has referred to the great devotion of the people to this temple about two centuries

later. So, Sapumal would have patronized this temple to win over the people too. Further, Sapumal himself being of South Indian parentage (his father was from Kerala) would have been a Hindu and therefore tried to identify himself with the interests of the people. Again, even if he had been a Buddhist by this time, he would have been familiar with the Skanda worship as it is accommodated in Buddhism. Anyway, there is a Kattiyam (an eulogy) in Sanskrit recited during one festivals of this temple. It refers to Bhuvanekabahu, the name assumed by Sapumal when he became king of Kotte after the death of Parakramabahu VI. The Kattiyam is as follows:

" Śrīman mahārājādhirāja akhanda bhūmandala
pratyatisundara visrānta kirtti
sri Gajavallī mahāvallī sameta Subrahmanya
pādāravinda janādhirūḍha sodasa mahādāna
sūryakula vamsodbhava sri sanghabodhi
Bhuvanekabāhu".

After Sapumal's departure to Kotte, the
scions of the Aryacakravarti dynasty re-esta-
blished their sway over their ancestral kingdom.
The temple would have continued to enjoy their
patronage. The contributions of Sapumal (known

in Tamil works/^{as}Sanpakapperumal) would have been of immense significance, to this temple that a Kattiyam in his name was not perhaps forbidden by the Tamil rulers who re established their sway over their ancestral kingdom and ruled till 1619 when the Portuguese subjugated the kingdom. Further it is said that Bhuvanekabahu was the name of the minister of the first Tamil king of Jaffna. But there is hardly any evidence to corroborate this from other sources.

Whoever the founder of this temple, it was a great institution, when the Portuguese arrived in Jaffna in the 16th century. The contemporary kings of Jaffna and the people tried their best to safeguard the temple from the attacks of the Portuguese. The people were prepared to give any thing to avert an attack on this temple. Many died in their fight to save the temple from destruction. These references from contemporary writers show that it was ~~very~~ large and popular temple at this time. When the temple was destroyed, some employees are said to have taken some valuables including some copper plates which described the history and details of the temple and fled away. One of them went to Batticaloa. So far, no one has traced the

copper plates.

This temple was spoiled more than once. It was so large, a temple that the Portuguese used it as a huge barrack for some time till it was finally razed to the ground. The conquerors - the Portuguese used the materials of this and other temples, as well as, the palace to construct their own buildings in the present area from Kachcheri to the Jaffna Fort. The Jaffna fort is said to have been built with such materials not only from Nallur but other areas too. There are a few evidences for this view. This includes the discovery of a Tamil inscription of the time of Parakramabahu VI at the Central Cafe in the main Street, Jaffna and another Tamil inscription of the time Rajendra Cola in the Jaffna Fort.

After the complete annexation of Jaffna in 1623, the Portuguese continued to rule till 1658, when the Dutch conquered Jaffna from them. The Dutch rule lasted till the conquest of the British in 1796.

The Dutch continued to patronize only the Protestant form of Christianity professed by them. But they allowed religious toleration in the later

part of the period of their rule in the 18th century, following the age of enlightenment and religious toleration in Europe. As the result, the people in the maritime areas of Sri Lanka, which were under them began to profess their ancestral religions openly.

At about the same time, there was a Buddhist revival in the Kandyan Kingdom and it spread to the Low country which was under the Dutch rule. In the North too, a Saivite revival had started by this time. A number of Saivite literary works were composed in Tamil during the 18th century. This revival later culminated during the time of Sri Sri Arumuka Nāvalar in the 19th century. Hence, people started to build again the Hindu temples that were once destroyed by the Portuguese or the Dutch at the original site or a place nearby, during the 18th century. New Temples also were founded in the various parts of the Jaffna Peninsula. One can cite as examples of the former (those which were rebuilt) the Kandaswamy temples at Maviddapuram, Nallur, and Thondamanaru, the Pillaiyar temple at Maruthady, Manipay and the Nagapooshani Amman temple at Nayinativu. These and several others temples were rebuilt in the 18th century.

The evidence of the Tamil chronicles of Jaffna and the works of some Portuguese and Dutch writings point out that the original site of the Nallur Kandaswami temple might have been some where near Yamunari at Sankilittoppu, Nallur. There could have been a small temple earlier at the present site too. It was at this site a silver Vel (the Sakti of Muruka) which symbolizes His power was worshipped by the pious devotees. From the small beginnings, this temple has once again developed into a very popular religious institution drawing devotees from all over Sri Lanka. The annual festival is held during the months of Āvani (August - September). This is noted for the punctuality in pūjas and in the festivals. This is maintained well and kept clean and is looked upon as a model temple noted for the above aspects. Generally every visitor to Jaffna does not fail to go to and see this temple.

Pious poets and devotees have been inspired by the grace of the God Muruka. They have composed songs and literary works of poetic excellence in Tamil extolling the greatness and grace of the God Muruka enshrined here. Besides the songs some of which were written by Yogar Swamikal, there

are about 40 Tamil literary works of various types describing the greatness and splendour of the temple. As already mentioned, there is one "Thiruppukal" composed by Saint Arunagirinathar. Arumuka Navalar and Swami Vipulananda also have composed some songs on Muruka enshrined here.

The religious and educational activities of Arumuka Navalar were concentrated at this temple and its environs also. Some sages of Jaffna have derived their inspiration here. One may refer to the great Sellappa Swami and his famous disciple Yogar Swami -kal who have carved a niche for themselves. in the saivite world.

Though this temple has a long history, there is hardly anything in the temple or its' surroundings indicating the glorious past. Some years ago, two bronze images of the Goddesses Theivayanai and Valliyamma the consorts of Lord Muruka were discovered in a pond called Pootharayar kulam, north of Nallur. They seem to have been taken and thrown into the pond for safety by the devotees before they were desecrated by the Portuguese. This is mentioned in the Tamil Chronicles too. They could have been from the former temple and therefore

they are now kept in the sanctorum of the temple on either side of the Vel. As noted earlier, the two Tamil inscriptions discovered recently in Jaffna, were perhaps inscribed in the original Temple.

The environs of the temple, especially Sankilitoppu seem to be of significance. There are some buildings like the house of the Ministers of the kings of Jaffna, the arch etc. which have to be preserved. Though this area is a potential archaeological site, hardly anything is done to preserve it. It is now filled with houses and other buildings. The Sacred Yamunari has lost its sanctity long ago.

It is worthwhile to organise a museum by the side of this temple or in the neighbourhood exhibiting the various aspects of the glorious past, that Nallur had. The writer has written ^{two} articles on Nallur about some years ago. Of these, one was on the Earliest images of Nallur now kept in Jaffna Museum and another on the History and Archaeology of Nallur. Some important aspects dealt with in these two are not discussed here.

A RARE AND HISTORIC KUMBHABISEKAM AT AN
ANCIENT SIVASTHALA SRI LANKA.

Thirukketheeswaram is one of the most ancient Saiva sacred places hallowed by the hymns of the Saiva Saints Gnana Sambandar and Sunthara moorthy of the 7 - 8th centuries A.D. The antiquity, beauty and sacredness of this holy place is attested to even by earlier non Saivite works like the Dhatua Vamsa and the late inscriptions from "Anuradhapura" and " Kathirgamam". The ancient temple continued to flourish till the late 16th century when it was finally destroyed by the Portuguese. From that time, till the end of the 19th century, this holy place was not much known to the Saivites of Sri Lanka until the Sri la Sri Arumuga Nāvalar pointed out its great importance to the Saivite world. Thereafter, due to the untiring efforts of the generous patrons and devotees like Pasupati Chettiayar

and Sir Kandiah Vaithianathan and others, this place is gradually regaining its former glory with the rebuilding of the new temple consecrated on the 4th July 1976.

The grand Kumbhabhisekam ceremony was one of the most important and historic of such ceremonies performed in Sri Lanka. The Pūrvanka ceremonies started eight days earlier. In the beautifully consecrated yāgasāla there were 33 homakundas. A number of Brahmin experts in the Āgamic rites performed the ceremonies as enjoined in the Vedas and the Āgamas. The entire procedure was directed and supervised by the Sivācārya from the Dharmapuram Adinam of Tamilnadu. He had come with three others for this purpose. The whole week when this ceremony was on, Thirukketheeswaram became the centre of a great and living Vedic and Āgamic tradition. The recitation of the Vedas, the repetition of the mantras, and the clouds of sacrificial smoke filled the place, purifying, as it were, every one who had come there to see this grand ceremony. The recitation of the hymns from the four Vedas by the four Sivācāryas from India was very mellifluous and

superb. The Sivācāryas of our country were no less inferior to them. Apart from the Vedāgamic rites, there were bhajanai and singing of the Dravida Vedic (Tamil) hymns from the Saivite Thirumurais adding greater life and colour to the whole process.

On the final day, it was a rare and superb sight to see the Kumbhābhisekam being performed on the stupas of the main shrines (of Keteesanātha and Gauriyambā) the two main gopuras, the Sivalingam, the image of the Goddess and the Parivāradēvatas. Thousands of devotees thronged to have a darsan of this. One could not see the consecration of all yet he could see the ceremony performed over many whether the stupas, gopuras or from any point.

Further, expert Nāgasuram, Tavil Vidvāns played beautifully their vādyams. There were sermons on various aspects of Saivaism including the Kumbhābhiseka tattava. Souvenirs were released to commemorate the historic occasion, of these the one by the Thiruketheeswaram Restoration Committee is the comprehensive one.

The souvenirs released by the Nallai Adeenam and the Milk White Soap Limited also are commendable. All these indicate the vitality and the dynamism of Saivism in Sri Lanka.

SUPERB SAIVA BALLET FROM KALAKSETRAM.

The Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation had organized three dance - dramas from Kalaksetram, the internationally reputed centre of Indian dances, especially Bharata Natyam established by Dr. Mrs. Rukmanidevi Arundale in 1936. One of these dance dramas retelling the Soul - stirring devotion of the Saint Kaṅṅappar was staged at the Virasingham Hall, Jaffna on the 18th of August 1980.

Nāṭya - nāṭakas are included in the works on dramaturgy especially the magnum opus Bharata's Nāṭyasāstra. They are called nrtya nāṭakas. The subject of the ballet is too well known to the Tamil world especially the Saivite World. This has a popular appeal. The story of

the hunter - Saint Kannappar had deeply impressed the thought of the Saiva Saints like the Saint Manikkavasakar and the Saint Sekkilar who had canonized him in his master piece, the Periyapurānam. Now Srīmati Rukminidevi has taken the popular theme and retold the entire story in a very fine nāṭya nāṭaka form blending harmoniously the best traditions of both the classical and folk dance styles of Tamil Nadu.

The entire story is retold in five scenes where various characters numbering little more than a dozen from Kalaksetram participated.

The dance-drama started with an invocation to the Lord Siva. Devaratti the wife of the guru of the hunters and other hunter women praise their deities and the natural beauties and resources of the country in the music and dance of their locality. In the second scene, Nagan the hunter king and his queen plan to appoint their son Thinnan (future Kannappar) as the heir apparent.

Devarathi comes and foretells that Thinnan (future Kannappar) will attain distinction in something quite different to the hunter traditions. Thus the future of Thinnan is foretold.

In the next scene, Thinnan goes on hunting and sees a gopuram at Kālati and is attracted by it. He goes into the temple of Kalattināthar and worships Him. Thereafter he is always in the service of the Lord. He worships in music and dance and offers the meat which he eats to the Lord also. The Lord also condescends to accept this type of offering of His bhakta. The parents of Thinnan come and feel sorry for their son. It is a very pathetic scene showing their parental affection for their children. They return home. Sivakocariyar a devotee of Siva who worships Him according to the Āgamic rites is highly worried about the way Thinnan worships Him especially the offering of meat etc. But the Lord Siva in order to demonstrate the incomparable love of Thinnan for Him, One day caused the bleeding of one of His eyes. Thinnan is alarmed to see the bleeding. He tries to stop this with

the various herbs and other things with which he is familiar. But he couldn't. Later, it dawns upon his mind that the bleeding could be stopped with something of the same type. Accordingly, he uproots one of his eyes and places it on the bleeding eye of the Lord and lo! it stops! His joy knows no bounds and the Lord too as if unable to bear the self sacrifice of Thinnan manifests Himself before him and blesses both Thinnan and Sivakocariyar. The ballet reaches the climax. Thereafter both the devotees praise the unbounded Grace of the Lord.

The entire dance-drama took nearly two and a half hours. It was full of rasabhavas familiar to any dance and drama. The abhinayas were superbly rendered. The interest of the rasikas was kept up from the beginning to the end. Bhaktirasa predominated, especially in the latter part. The Classical and folk dances styles blended harmoniously and added nicety to the dance - drama.

Mrs. Krisnaveni Laksman a leading Bharata Natyam artiste acted as the Devarathi and played

her part too well and appropriate to the occasion. Mr. Balagopal who acted as the Thinnan played his role very superbly. All the characters without exception played their parts well and nicely. The make-up was simple and natural. The lighting system too was very appropriate. The vocal and instrumental musicians sang and played their instruments very aptly and nicely. The hall was full of rasikas. There was absolute silence throughout the play interrupted now and then only by loud applauses of appreciation. One has to thank the Kalaksetra artistes for their superb dance-drama and the S.L.B.C. for arranging this.

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