



*Religious
Festivals in
South India
and
Sri Lanka*

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Gary R. Welbon &
Glenn E. Yocum

Exciting celebrations in special time, religious festivals are more than colorful public spectacles. They are mirrors and windows in and through which a full range of human values and concerns—religious, aesthetic, social, economic and political—can be seen.

In this volume, twelve scholars explore various dimensions of meaning in some of the many festivals that are vigorously conducted in contemporary South India and Sri Lanka.

Approaching their subjects from several disciplinary perspectives, the authors base their descriptions and interpretations on primary sources: literary documents, their own first-hand observations, and, frequently, a productive combination of textual and contextual data.

The essays included help to unravel the technical intricacies and symbolisms of festival calendars; analyze representative festival cycles; and vividly describe and comment on individual festival performances—from the spectacular Citrā Festivals in Madurai, Mahāśivarātri, and the Kataragama and Kandy Āsala Perahāras to less familiar instances of village festivals, temple festival drama, and festive ritual art forms.

Collectively, these essays document some of the richness of festival performances in certain parts of South Asia. Further, through the questions that are posed and the answers that are given in them, they suggest fruitful ways of reconsidering the significance of religious festivals wherever they are observed.

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RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS IN SOUTH INDIA AND SRI LANKA

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Edited by
Guy R. Welbon and Glenn E. Yocum

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Each author has acknowledged by name those individuals and institutions most helpful in his or her research. It remains for us to thank the administrations of Haverford College and the University of Pennsylvania for their assistance. And to the hundreds of South Indians and Sri Lankans who shared festival experiences and thereby made this volume possible we add special thanks.

G.R.W.
G.E.Y.



PREFACE.

COLOR, NOISE, CROWDS, ceremony. The sensuous impact of public pageantry is undeniable. For travelers to Mexico, Greece, Japan, and many other countries around the world, it is probable that the most vivid and enduring memories concern festivals witnessed or participated in. Possibly only sunsets are more frequently photographed.

However, to assert that festivals are among the most attractive and memorable features of a tourist's itinerary is not yet to answer the question of their importance for those who celebrate them or for students of social and religious behavior. The contributors to this volume examine selected festivals in South India and Sri Lanka from several perspectives. It emerges from these studies that festivals—special performances (or complexes of performances) at special times—provide vital insights into the religious, aesthetic, social, economic, and political values and concerns in the societies in which they occur. It is not always the case that the most attractive aspects of a subject under investigation are the most consequential; but in the case of festivals it would seem that the intrinsic appeal of the material is matched by its significance.

Each article included here is an inquiry into the meanings of 'special time', the time set apart from the ordinary. The very idea of 'time' itself has long fascinated scholars; and those extraordinary periods of 'time transformed' have been particularly intriguing. By posing and responding to some major questions about the quality of festival times, the present essays contribute to the ongoing discussions and controversies concerning the category of time. What is the nature of 'special' time? What is affirmed? What is denied? What transcended and what ignored during these 'breaks' in 'ordinary' time? Are special times periods of return to the sources of all creativity, spontaneity, and meaningful activity? Are they 'escape valves'—times when the anxieties and the pressures of daily life are relieved? Do they relieve tension or enhance it? Do festivals confirm social structure or dissolve it? Do they 'create time' or annul it?

Despite the apparent trivializing (a notion implicit in the loosely-employed term 'secularizing') of festivals in many places, it is not

clear that any festival has utterly lost either its role or its meaning. Though the following essays provide specific details only about certain festivals in South India and Sri Lanka, they are not merely ethnographically interesting. To be sure, the data organized and illumined by each author constitute important additions to our understanding of particularities. But beyond that, each article invites the reader to reconsider the nature of time, extraordinary and ordinary, sacred and profane. And, we suggest, if there are quintessential displays, if there are epitomes, if there are true cultural microcosms, then they are to be found in festival performances.

By way of introducing the essays, we recount briefly some of the major themes explored by the individual authors. In an important sense, Karen L. Merrey's paper prepares the way for the succeeding essays. In as straightforward a manner as possible, she sets forth the leading principles underlying the various Indian calendars. As all students of Indian chronometry are aware, this subject is an intricate and frequently confusing one. Merrey's is not an easy paper to read, but it is valuable in itself and as a reference for subsequent presentations.

In his essay on references to festivals (*utsava-s*) in the literature of the Vaiṣṇava, Pāñcarātra ritual school, H. Daniel Smith presents the most strictly textual study in this collection. His paper is highly appropriate in this volume of studies based primarily on first-hand observations of festivals, however; for he reminds us that festivals have 'histories' and, more important, are frequently based on and informed by written ritual traditions of long standing. James L. Martin, on the other hand, by and large restricts himself to a description of contemporary festival performances at a major Viṣṇu temple in Madras City. Performances in this temple are governed by the Vaikhānasa tradition, the other major school of ritual practice adhered to in South Indian Vaiṣṇava temples. Together, Smith's and Martin's papers establish the necessary textual and contextual parameters for the study of festivals.

The essays by Guy R. Welbon, J. Bruce Long, and Dennis Hudson combine, each in its own way, a consideration of textual authority and close examination of the actualities of present-day performances. Welbon translates the *Kaiśika Purāṇa* and describes its festival enactment in a Tamil Nadu village. He suggests that the text is a veritable compendium of Vaiṣṇava religious and social

values and that the drama is a public, festival celebration of a community transcending age, sex and caste distinctions.

J. Bruce Long deals both with textual prescriptions and contemporary practice in his study of *Śivarātri* as observed in an urban setting. In his conclusion, Long attempts a structural analysis of this festival night in terms of 'category oppositions' and mediating principles.

D. Dennis Hudson's paper, virtually a short monograph, encompasses textual authority and modern practice; and, in addition, comprehends both Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva phenomena. Hudson concentrates on two simultaneous festivals in the Tamil month of Cittirai: one celebrating the wedding of the principal deities at Madurai's Mīnākṣī Temple and the other the journey of Aḷakar from his temple twelve miles north of Madurai to the Vaikai River. The essay concludes with a discussion of the popular, oral myth that links these two otherwise unrelated festivals. In a way, Hudson's paper integrates the poles of data and interpretation around which many of the articles in this collection turn: text and performance, Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva traditions, history and contemporary social practice.

While Fred W. Clothey's study of the complex nature of the ritual calendar in the cult of Murukan is occasionally concerned with the historical development of calendrical traditions, his major contribution to our understanding of festivals lies in his attempt to correlate various calendrical sequences with cosmological and theological themes. In his paper on *kaḷam eḷuttu*, a ritual art form in Kerala, Clifford R. Jones also attends to questions of historical development. Although it may seem unusual in a work such as this to find an art historian's study of a specific kind of ritual painting, Jones' essay calls attention to the fact that a study of texts and the observation of performances and the social roles of the participants do not in themselves comprehend the many-sided phenomenon that is a festival. This paper is also significant for its conclusions concerning the integration of 'high', canonical art and 'folk' art in *kaḷam eḷuttu*—conclusions which could well be extended to the interpretation of other aspects of festival performance exhibiting an integration of various levels of cultural expression.

Suzanne Hanchett and Jane M. Christian interpret cycles of festivals in particular villages in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh respectively from their viewpoint as anthropologists. In addition

to her description of the festival calendar of a Karnataka village, Hanchett also gives a valuable treatment of the ways in which festivals can function to resolve or to intensify social conflict and to restructure status. Christian, taking her interpretive model from semantics, contends that the festivals she observed in Andhra Pradesh can only be adequately understood holistically, in the context of a total festival sequence or cycle.

The two essays dealing with Sri Lanka are united by their geographical focus and by a common interest in the intersection of ritual events with social themes. Nevertheless, the type of 'festival' examined in each is quite different. Donald K. Swearer in his study of the *perahāra*-s at Kandy and Kataragama argues that the several religious elements juxtaposed in these large-scale festivals are integrated not by means of explicitly Buddhist or Hindu themes but rather by the notion of a Sri Lankan national identity. Thus, Swearer claims that these festivals primarily express a kind of civil religion, being fundamentally celebrations of the nation. Glenn E. Yocum offers a critique of some anthropological interpretations of *an-keḷiya*, maintaining that this rite is best understood against the background of Tamil traditions about the deity for whom it is performed. Yocum emphasizes the methodological point that observation of ritual behavior should be supplemented by the consideration of relevant texts and historical records.

The twelve papers in this collection stem from presentations and discussions at the 1971 Workshop of the Conference on Religion in South India* held at Haverford College. The contributors have read the page-proofs of their articles; but, at our insistence, they have limited themselves to minor corrections and adjustments. Undoubtedly, they would all express themselves rather differently now were they to write these studies afresh. In our judgment, however, as the information presented here is not out-of-date, further attention to stylistic, expository, and argumentational refinements would only be at the sacrifice of the freshness and immediacy of the treatments overall. We appreciate our colleagues'

*The Conference (CRSI) was organized in 1970 to assist in increasing the fund of information available on all aspects of religious life in South India and Sri Lanka. Through its annual workshops and its special projects, the Conference provides an international forum for interested scholars in several disciplines and also mechanisms for encouraging the preparation and distribution of translations and special studies such as those contained in this volume.

patience and continuing support of our efforts to see this volume into print as the first of a series of publications intended to realize a major objective of the Conference.

As editors, we have attempted to regularize the transliteration of terms and to correct any typographical errors in the original manuscripts. In other regards, the individual contributors (including the editors as contributors) are responsible for the accuracy of their descriptions and citations and for the cogency of their arguments. Inclusion of an essay does not imply our endorsement of or agreement with the interpretations and views expressed in it. Indeed, there are passages that we should have liked to rewrite because of substantial disagreement with the views set forth. That sort of tampering, however, could not be reconciled with our understanding of the editorial function. Furthermore, we suspect that all cases of disagreement among the contributors will helpfully underscore our own thesis: Festivals are not bland, superficially interesting commemorations or displays. On the contrary, they are complicated and multivalent occurrences at the heart of social and religious life.

A word about transliteration in conclusion. Insofar as practical, we have regularized the transliteration of Indo-Aryan and Dravidian language references throughout in accordance with generally accepted scholarly conventions. The Dravidian retroflex fricative is represented by 'ɻ' (e.g., *Āɻvar* and *aɻakiya*). Isolated terms are commonly presented in their uninflected forms, and plurals are Anglicized (e.g., 'many *utsava-s*'). In the case of loanwords, we usually have employed the Sanskritic form, hence *svāmin* rather than the Tamil *cuvāmi* or *cāmi*. And certain deviant forms in 'āgamic Sanskrit' have been left 'uncorrected' where intelligibility did not seem to be at issue.

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THE HINDU FESTIVAL CALENDAR

Karen L. Merrey

TIME IS A perpetual flow of undifferentiated moments with no inherent structure of its own.¹ Nevertheless, every culture imposes a structure upon time, dividing the flow into comprehensible and culturally meaningful units. The calendar of a people incorporates and reflects principles of their cosmology on an ideational plane. In the various Hindu calendars, time loses its homogeneity, and individual moments are defined as qualitatively non-equivalent. Points in time have inherently auspicious or malevolent characteristics, related to the relative positions of the sun, moon, planets, and stars. Within this system of non-homogeneous time, Hindu festivals act as temporal markers, by which the latent potentialities of the moment are actualized or controlled. Ritual activity on the socio-cultural plane manifests Hindu conceptions of human and cosmic time on the ideational plane. Thus, Hindu festivals and the calendar correspond to what Lévi-Strauss has called the 'lived-in' and 'thought of' orders of reality.² In this paper, we are concerned with the 'thought of' order—the Hindu festival calendar. Our purpose is first to explain the basic elements of the Hindu calendar, including principles of dating festivals, and, secondly, to elucidate aspects of the structural logic underlying the rhythm of ritual activity.

The Lunar Month

In all parts of India, cyclical Hindu religious festivals are timed primarily with reference to lunar months (*candra māsa*), which are known even in Vedic and early Tamil literature.³ One lunar month corresponds to a synodic revolution of the moon, in other words, a complete series of lunar phases between two new moons or two full moons. The bright fortnight (*śukla pakṣa*) is the fifteen-day period of the moon's waxing, between the new and full moons. The period of the moon's waning, between the full moon and the following new

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moon, is known as the *kṛṣṇa pakṣa*, or dark fortnight.⁴ Each fortnight includes fifteen lunar phases (*tithi*), one *tithi* representing the time required for the moon to travel twelve degrees on the ecliptic in its revolution around the earth. Thus, a complete lunar month includes thirty *tithi*-s, which are designated by numbers from one to fifteen during each fortnight.⁵ The fifteenth *tithi* of the bright fortnight is commonly referred to as *pūrṇimā*, 'full moon', rather than by its numerical designation. Similarly, what is conventionally considered the thirtieth *tithi* is called *amāvāsyā*, 'new moon'.⁶ Dates of festivals are expressed by giving the name of the month, the fortnight (*śukla* or *kṛṣṇa*), and the number of the *tithi*. For example, *Śayanotsava*, the sleeping festival of Viṣṇu, is celebrated on *Āṣāḍha* (month) *śukla* (fortnight) *ekādaśī* (the eleventh *tithi*). Should a festival fall on a new or full moon of any given month, then either 'amāvāsyā' or 'pūrṇimā' is alone sufficient to indicate the date. Thus, *Kārttikai Dīpam* occurs on *Kārttika* (Tamil *Kārttikai*) *pūrṇimā*.⁷

Clearly, a lunar month may be reckoned either between successive new moons or, alternatively, between two full moons. The former system prevails in South India, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Nepal,⁸ and is known as the *amānta* system. The first fortnight of an *amānta* month is the *śukla pakṣa*, when the moon is waxing. According to the alternate *pūrṇimānta* system, prevalent in North India and Telangana,⁹ the month ends with the full moon, and the first fortnight of the following month is the *kṛṣṇa pakṣa*.

Foreign scholars might be confused in dating an Indian festival because of the different starting and ending points for lunar months of the *amānta* and *pūrṇimānta* systems. The two systems share the same month's name only during the bright fortnights. During the dark, the *pūrṇimānta* system is one fortnight in advance of the *amānta* (cf. Charts 1 and 3). It is therefore important to know which system is operative in any given geographical area.

For example, the festival of *Vijaya Daśamī* takes place on the tenth *tithi* during the bright fortnight in *Āśvina*, after the nine day *Navarātri* celebrations. Thus, according to both the *amānta* and *pūrṇimānta* reckoning *Vijaya Daśamī* occurs on *Āśvina śukla daśamī*. On *amāvāsyā*, during the ensuing dark fortnight, Hindus celebrate the festival of lights, *Divāli*. For areas using the *amānta* system, *Divāli* is on *Āśvina amāvāsyā*. However, according to the *pūrṇimānta* system, the same festival is celebrated on *Kārttika amāvāsyā*. It must be emphasized that the actual observances take place on the same

new moon throughout India, regardless of the fact that the fortnight falls in different months as determined by the system of reckoning. Both *amānta* and *pūrṇimānta* areas celebrated *Divāli* on 9 November 1969, even though this date came during the *amānta Āśvina* and the

Chart : 1

The Relationship of Amānta and Pūrṇimānta Months and Festivals

Festivals	Amānta	pakṣa	Pūrṇimānta	
	Bhādrapada			○ Full moon
Vijaya Daśamī		śukla	Āśvina	● New ..
	Āśvina			○ Full ..
Dīvāli		śukla	Kārttika	● Full moon
	Kārttika			○ New ..

pūrṇimānta month of *Kārttika* (cf. Chart 1). The danger of confusion is greatest when dealing with festivals which occur during the dark fortnights. *Divāli* is celebrated during *amānta Āśvina kṛṣṇa*, which comes a full month later than the *pūrṇimānta* fortnight of the same name, at which time nobody celebrates *Divāli*.

The Solar Year

The Indian solar year is sidereal,¹⁰ meaning that the revolution of the earth around the sun is calculated with reference to fixed stars. The sidereal solar year lasts slightly more than 365 days and includes twelve solar months (*saura māsa*), which correspond to the twelve signs of the zodiac (*rāśi*). Each *rāśi* encompasses 30 degrees of the ecliptic, is named, and has a pictorial representation very similar to the corresponding Greek sign.¹¹

The point in time at which the sun leaves one *rāśi* and enters another is called 'samkrānti'. The *samkrānti* on which a solar month begins, derives its name from the new month. Thus, the *Meṣa* (Aries) *samkrānti* ushers in the *Meṣa rāśi* (cf. Chart 3).

There is a retrograde motion of the equinoxes among the stars. Consequently, a complete cycle of seasons, known as a tropical year

and equalling the time between two successive vernal equinoxes, is shorter than a sidereal solar year. Although Hindu astronomical texts recognized and calculated the rate of this precession of the equinoxes, the *sāyana* ('with movement') *saṃkrānti* has not been in practical use in India for a long time. Instead a *nirāyana* ('without movement') *saṃkrānti* is employed; it is calculated with reference to fixed stars in the *Meṣa rāśi*. Therefore, the traditional Hindu calendars make no allowance for the precession of the equinoxes and regard the *nirāyana Meṣa saṃkrānti* as the vernal equinox. In relation to the *Meṣa saṃkrānti*, the actual vernal equinox precedes 50.264 seconds annually, and now occurs in the *Mīna rāśi*.¹² In 1969, the *Meṣa saṃkrānti* occurred on 12 April, twenty-two days after the actual vernal equinox on 21 March.¹³ As a result, the sidereal solar and the luni-solar months are slowly moving through the seasons as the *Meṣa saṃkrānti* advances from spring into summer. 25,800 years¹⁴ will elapse before the festivals make a complete cycle through the seasons. Although the Indian National Calendar, adopted in 1957, corrects for the precession of the equinoxes, the new calendar has not yet been generally accepted for religious purposes.¹⁵ Ritual observances and festivals continue to follow the traditional modes of reckoning.¹⁶

The Luni-Solar Year

Indians have long recognized the need to synchronize the shorter lunar year with the longer solar one. Whereas the sidereal solar year is 365-366 days in duration, the synodic lunar year lasts only about 354 solar days. The most general rule for synchronizing the two cycles is stated in the *Kālatattva Vivecana*: 'The twelve lunar months, at whose first moment the sun stands in *Mīna* and the following (signs), are called *Caitra* and the others (in succession).'¹⁷

An alternate rule is given in the *Brahmā Siddhānta*: 'That lunar month which is completed when the sun is in (the sign) *Meṣa*, etc., is to be known as *Caitra*, etc. (respectively); when there are two completions the latter (of them) is an added month.'¹⁸

In other words, the solar year begins with the *Meṣa saṃkrānti*. However, the luni-solar year in most areas begins with the preceding new moon in *Caitra*,¹⁹ for both the *amānta* and *pūrṇimānta* systems. These conventions ensure that the lunar months correspond roughly

to the same solar months each year. Ideally, the *Meṣa samkrānti* always falls in *amānta Caitra*, the *Vṛṣabha samkrānti* in *amānta Vaiśākha* and so forth. The correspondence of solar *samkrānti*-s with *pūrṇimānta* months is less regular; thus, the *Meṣa samkrānti* may occur during *pūrṇimānta Caitra* or *Vaiśākha*, and so on for the remaining *samkrānti*-s and months.

Because the apparent motions²⁰ of the sun and moon vary, solar and lunar months vary in length. A solar *rāsi* ranges from 29 + to 31 + days in length; a lunar month averages 29.5 solar days.²¹ Discrepancies between the lengths of solar and lunar months are corrected by the device of adding and deleting lunar time units in order to keep the two systems synchronized. The determination of added and deleted months is based solely upon the *amānta* system.²² A natural month (*nija, śuddha, or prakṛta māsa*) is an *amānta* month in which one *samkrānti* occurs. If a lunar month begins and ends between two *samkrānti*-s, and therefore no *samkrānti* occurs during that time, then the month is added (*adhika māsa*) and receives the name of the following natural month of the *amānta* system. An added month in the *pūrṇimānta* system occurs at the same time as the *adhika māsa* of the *amānta*, but comes between the two fortnights of the natural month of the same name (*cf.* Charts 2 and 4).

Chart : 2

Adhika Āsādha in the Amānta
and Pūrṇimānta System in 1969 (Śaka 1891)

Samkrānti	Amānta	pakṣa	Pūrṇimānta
Vṛṣabha	Jyaiṣṭha	śukla	Jyaiṣṭha
Mithuna	Adhika Āṣāḍha		Nija Āṣāḍha
Karka	Nija Āṣāḍha		Nija Āṣāḍha
Siṃha	Śrāvaṇa		Śrāvaṇa

Should two *saṃkrānti*-s fall within one lunar month, then the lunar month receives two names, of which the latter is deleted (*kṣaya māsa*) from the year. Thus, whereas the names of the solar months annually appear in unvarying order, any given lunar month may not appear in certain years or may occur twice in *nija* and *adhika* forms.²³ When an *adhika māsa* follows a *kṣaya māsa*, that added month is not considered suitable for the performance of most religious rites.²⁴

Similarly, *tithi*-s are added and deleted from the months. A solar day, reckoned from sunrise to sunrise, is slightly longer than a *tithi* of approximately 21.5 hours. Normally, a *tithi* begins on one solar day and ends on the next. However, when a *tithi* begins and ends between sunrises, the *tithi* is deleted. If a *tithi* endures through two sunrises, it is added, meaning that, for practical purposes, two consecutive *tithi*-s will have the same numerical designations.

For civil and for many religious undertakings, the *tithi* is associated with the solar weekday on which it is current at sunrise. However, some ritual occasions, such as *śrāddha* (offerings to ancestral spirits), require that the exact lunar *tithi* be calculated.²⁵ Solar days on which no *tithi* or more than one *tithi* begins are considered inauspicious.²⁶

Solar Reckoning

The discussion above has been concerned with the luni-solar calendar in which a system of synodic lunar months is synchronized with longer, sidereal solar months and a sidereal solar year. The luni-solar reckoning prevails in most of India for both civil and religious purposes.²⁷ However, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bengal and Orissa employ solar days and sidereal solar months (*rāśi* or *saura māsa*). Luni-solar calendars probably antedated the use of completely solar reckoning in these areas.²⁸ Tamil Nadu, Orissa and Bengal continue to designate solar months by lunar month names, which were originally derived from the conjunction of the full moons with different constellations (*nakṣatra*).²⁹ Only Kerala uses *rāśi* names for the solar months (*cf.* Chart 3).

Local celebrations of festivals in different parts of India may occur a day or two apart because of the use of *pañcāṅga*-s (manuals) based upon different astronomical authorities (*Siddhānta*-s).³⁰

However, the basic principles for scheduling cyclical Hindu festivals are common to all areas. Significantly, even areas using solar reckoning for civil purposes time their festivals largely according to lunar phenomena and celebrate pan-Indian festivals synchronously with areas employing luni-solar calendars.³¹ However, the celebration of luni-solar festivals within a framework of solar months leads to occasional anomalies in timing.

Chart 4 shows the actual alignment of Tamil solar months, *amānta* luni-solar months, and the occurrence of festivals during the year 1969 of the Gregorian calendar. It is clear from the chart that each Tamil month spans three lunar fortnights and two *amānta* months. In the cases of the *Mahāśivarātri*³² and *Śrī Jayanti*³³ festivals, the *amānta* dates of the festivals fell within the equivalent Tamil months. Thus, there was no discrepancy between the solar and luni-solar months, and the festivals were celebrated everywhere more-or-less synchronously.³⁴

Rāmanavamī illustrates the anomalous timings which may occur when the *amānta* month does not coincide with the equivalent Tamil month. In 1969, *Rāmanavamī* was celebrated twice within Tamil Nadu: once on 27 March and again on 26 April. The earlier observance coincided with the ninth *amānta Caitra śukla* (*navamī*) and the pan-Indian celebration even though it came during the Tamil month of *Paṅkuni*. One month later, the festival was celebrated by persons following the *Śrīraṅgam* reckoning. The 26 April *Rāmanavamī* fell within the Tamil *Cittirai*, on the ninth *tithi* of the only *śukla pakṣa* during that solar month. The date corresponded to ninth *amānta Vaiśākha śukla* and was not celebrated *Rāmanavamī* anywhere else. Although the two observances of the same festival occurred fully one month apart on the western calendar, both were scheduled according to the same principles: namely that as *Rāmanāvamī* is to be celebrated on the ninth *tithi* of the bright fortnight in *Caitra* (*Cittirai*). The Mylapore reckoning chose *amānta Caitra* and its point of reference regardless of the current solar month, while the *Śrīraṅgam* reckoning chose the solar month *Cittirai*. Hypothetically, if the *amānta Caitra śukla* had come during *Cittirai*, then there would have been only one celebration. The two *Rāmanavamī* observances in Tamil Nadu have given rise to month long celebrations there, where elsewhere the festival is a one day affair during a nine day festival.³⁵

Festivals timed according to lunar phenomena regularly occur

during specific luni-solar months. However, the same luni-solar festivals may fall into either of two solar months depending upon when the *samkrānti*-s occur in relation to the lunar months. For example, *Navarātri* is celebrated from the first to the ninth *tithi*-s of *Āsvina śukla*. In 1969, the *Tūla samkrānti* occurred on fifth *Āsvina śukla*. As a result, *Navarātri* began during the Tamil month of *Puraṭṭāci* and ended in *Aippaci* (cf. Chart 4). Similarly, *Skanda ṣaṣṭhī* occurred on the last day of *Aippaci* in 1969; while the festival will always take place on sixth *amānta Kārttika śukla*, it clearly could fall within either *Kārttika* or *Aippaci* on the Tamil calendar.

The examples given indicate that the lunar principle is dominant in the timing of most festivals, even in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bengal and Orissa where the calendars employ solar months. It appears, however, that solar months may occasionally cause 'interference', as in the case of *Rāmanavamī*. Any major, inter-regional discrepancies in festival celebrations seem to occur between areas using strictly luni-solar calendars and those using solar ones. Furthermore, Bengal and Tamil Nadu also celebrate their festivals synchronously, though the names of their respective solar months are discrepant by one month (cf. Chart 3). Thus, in 1969, Bengal observed *Navāratri* (*Durgā Pūjā*) during *Āsvin* and *Kārttik*,³⁶ at the same time as the Tamil celebration in *Puraṭṭāci* and *Aippaci*, rather than a month earlier as the nomenclature of the months would suggest.³⁷

The Quality of the Moment

Manuals, known as *pañcāṅga*-s ('that which has five limbs'), are prepared from the different astronomical texts³⁸ and are printed in the vernacular languages for local usage. *Pañcāṅga*-s invariably include at least five items: *nakṣatra*, *vāra*, *yoga*, *karāṇa*, and *tithi*. Additionally, the *pañcāṅga*-s may include information on the signs of the zodiac (*rāśi*), movements of the planets, the date according to the Gregorian calendar, as well as the festivals to be celebrated on any given date. In areas where a luni-solar calendar is used, the *pañcāṅga* is organized by lunar fortnights, and the days are given as *tithi*-s numbered consecutively in each fortnight. Where solar reckoning is in use for civil purposes, the *pañcāṅga* is organized by solar months, with solar days numbered consecutively from 1 to 29, 30 or 31. Information about the full and new moons, *tithi*-s, and

Chart 3
Relationships of Solar, Luni-solar,
Vedic 39 and Gregorian Months

Solar Months				Luni-solar Months					
Sanskrit	Malayālam	Tamil	Bengali	Amānta	Purnimānta	Fort-night	Nakṣatra-s	Vedic Months	Gregorian Months
Mīna (Pisces)	Mīnam	Paṅkuni	Coitro	Caitra	Caitra	Sukla	citrā svāti	Madhu	March —
	MESA	SAMKRĀNTI Cittiral			Vaiśākha			'honey'	April
Meṣa (Aries)	Meḍam		Baisāk	Vaiśākha			visākha anurādhā	Mādhava	April —
	VR̥ṢABHA				Jyaiṣṭha			'sweet one'	May
Vṛṣabha (Taurus)	Eḍavam	Vaikhasi	Jyoiṣṭho	Jyaiṣṭha			Jyēṣṭhā mulā	śukra	May —
	MITHUNA				Āśādhā			'bright'	June
Mithuna (Gemini)	Midunam	Āṇi	Assar	Āśādhā			pūrvāśādhā uttarāśādhā (abhijit)	śuci	June —
	KARKA				Sṛāvaṇa			'bright'	July
Karka (Cancer)	Karkadakam	Āṭi	Shrāban	Sṛāvaṇa			(abhijit) sṛāvaṇa dhanīṣṭhā	Nabhas	July —
	SIMHA				Bhādrapada			'mist'	August
Siṃha (Leo)	Ciṅgam	Āvaṇi	Bhādro	Bhādrapada			śatatārakā pūrvā- uttara- bhādrapada	Nabhasya	August —
	KANYĀ				Āśvina			'rainy'	Sept.
Kanyā (Virgo)	Kanni	Purattāci	Āssin	Āśvina			revatī asvini bharaṇī	lṣa	Sept. —
	TŪLA				Kārttika			'fertile'	October
Tūla (Libro)	Tuḷām	Aippaci	Kārttik	Kārttika			kṛttikā rohiṇī	ūrja	October —
	VR̥ṢCIKA				Mārgasīrṣā			'vigor'	Nov.
Vṛṣcika (Scorpio)	Vṛṣcikam	Kārttikai	Āghrān	Mārgasīrṣa			mrgasīras ardrā	Sahas	Nov. —
	DHANUS				Pauṣa			'strength'	Dec.
Dhanus (Sagittarius)	Dhanu	Mārkali	Paus	Pausa			punarvasu puṣya	Sahasya	Dec. —
	MAKARA				Māgha			'strong'	Jan
Makara (Capricorn)	Makaram	Tay	Māgha	Māgha			asleṣa magha	Tapas	Jan. —
	KUMBHA				Phālguna			'heat'	Feb.
Kumbha (Acquarius)	Kumbham	Māci	Fālgūn	Phālguna			pūrvā- uttara- phaigunī hasta	Tapasya	Feb —
	MĪNA				Caitra			'produced by heat'	March
Mīna (Pisces)	Mīnam	Paṅkuni	Coitro						

Chart 4
Comparison of Tamil Solar Months and Amānta Months
for 1969 A.D. (Śaka 1891)

Tamil Festivals	Western Date (days)	Tamil Dates (days)	Fort - nights	Amānta Dates (tithi-s)	Samkrānti-s
	Jan. 1	Mārkali 18	śukla 13		
Pongal	3	20	●	Pauṣa	
	13	30	●	10	Makara Samkrānti
	18	5	●		
	Feb. 2	Tay 20	○	Māgha	
Mahāśivarātri	11	29	●	9	Kumbha
	16	5	●		
	Mar. 4	Māci 21	○	Phālguna	
	13	30	●	10	Mīna
Telugu New Year	18	5	●	9	
Rāmanavamī (Mylapore)	April 27	Pan̄kuni 20	○	Caitra	
Tamil New Year	12	30	●	11	Meṣa
	16	4	●		
	May 2	Cittirai 20	○	Vaiśākha	
Rāmanavamī (Śrīraṅgam)	13	31	●	12	Vṛṣabha
	16	3	●		
	June 31	Vaikhasi 18	○	Jyaiṣṭha	
	14	32	●		Mithuna
	July 29	Āṇi 15	○	Adhika Āṣāḍha	
	14	30	●		
	15	31	●	1	Kark.
	Aug. 29	Āṭi 14	○	Nija Āṣāḍha	
Malayali New Year	13	29	●		
	16	32	●	3	Siṃha
	27	11	○	Śrāvana	
Śrī Jayantī	Sept. 11	Āvaṇi 19	○	8	
	16	26	●		
	25	31	○	6	Kanyā
	Oct. 25	Pūrattāci 9	○	Bhādrapada	
Navarātri	11	25	●		
Vijaya daśami	15	30	●	5	Tūla
	25	9	○	10	Āśvina
	Nov. 9	Aippaci 24	○		
Divāli	15	30	●	6	Vṛścika
Skanda Ṣaṣṭhi	23	8	○	Kārttika	
Kaiśika Ekādaśi	Dec. 9	Kārttikai 24	○		
	15	30	●	8	Dhanus
	23	Mārkali 8	○	Mārga-śiṛṣa	

festivals is presented alongside the solar dates. Both solar and luni-solar *pañcāṅga*-s give the information required to determine the ritual quality of the moment.³⁹

The 27 or 28 *nakṣatra*-s, ‘asterisms’ or ‘lunar mansions’, are the stars and clusters of stars along the moon’s path, and probably functioned originally as points of reference for fixing the moon’s position.⁴⁰ Although the major stars (*yoga tāra*) of the different *nakṣatra*-s are not equally spaced, an ‘equal space’ system of reckoning is in general use presently.⁴¹ Thus, a *nakṣatra*, more broadly defined, is the time required for any heavenly body to travel 13° 20’ or 1/27th of the ecliptic. Because the earth revolves about the sun in one year, the sun passes through all of the *nakṣatra*-s in a year’s time, or at the rate of 2.25 a month. On the other hand, the moon traverses one or more *nakṣatra*-s daily. Annual conjunctions of the sun and moon with certain *nakṣatra*-s are associated with events in the lives of gods and commemorate the birthdays of revered teachers (*ācārya*) and poets (*ālvār*). For example, every month Murukan temples in Tamil Nadu observe the conjunctions of the moon with the *Kṛttakā nakṣatra*, which myths associate with the *Kṛttikā* maiden who suckled the infant god Murukan, also known as Kārttikeya.⁴² The same *nakṣatra* day in the month of *Kārttika* is the occasion of a major festival of lights—*Kārttikai Dipam*—celebrated by both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples in South India.⁴³

Vāra-s are the seven solar days of the week, and are respectively named after the Sun, Moon, Mars, Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Saturn.⁴⁴ The *vāra* is measured from sunrise to sunrise. The general character of the *vāra* is determined by the planetary ruler. Thus, *Somavāra*, ruled by the Moon, is very auspicious, while the day ruled by Mars, *Maṅgalavāra*, is inauspicious.⁴⁵ Various moments during the *vāra* differ in ritual quality, especially in relationship to the relative influences of Rāhu and Gulika.⁴⁶

A more technical measure, *yoga* (‘addition’), is the period of time during which the combined motions of the sun and moon are increased by 13° 20’. *Yoga*-s vary in length, and each of the twenty-seven *yoga*-s is named.⁴⁷ The word *yoga* has another meaning—‘conjunction’—which is used to refer to the co-occurrence of two or more phenomena, such as certain *vāra*-s, *nakṣatra*-s, *tithi*-s, or *rāśi*-s. A *pañcāṅga* also indicates the occurrence of this second type of *yoga*, which is named and which may be ritually marked according to its auspicious or inauspicious nature.⁴⁸

Finally, the *pañcāṅga* gives information on the current *karāṇa*, or half-*tithi*. There are sixty *tithi*-s in a month; the first *karāṇa* of the month and the last three have unique names. The remaining fifty-six share seven additional names which appear serially. The fifth element of the *pañcāṅga*, the *tithi*, has been discussed above.

The *nakṣatra* and the *tithi* are two of the basic principles in the timing of cyclical religious festivals. Additionally, *karāṇa*, *yoga* and *vāra*, as well as the planetary movements and the influences of Rāhu and Gulika, must be accounted for when planning non-cyclical events such as the rites of passage (*samskāra*).⁴⁹ Though the *pañcāṅga* gives the information necessary for determining the ritual quality of the moment and is sufficient for mundane purposes, specialists are generally consulted about the timing of important non-cyclical observances, in order to ensure the maximum efficacy of the ritual.

For ritual purposes it is necessary to know the *nakṣatra*, *karāṇa*, *yoga* and *tithi* current at sunrise. However, the moment of true sunrise varies daily and regionally according to latitude and longitude.⁵⁰ Consequently, *pañcāṅga*-s may differ on such matters as the addition and deletion of *tithi*-s as well as which *tithi*, *nakṣatra*, *karāṇa*, and *yoga* are current at sunrise. As a result, the ritual quality of any given moment varies regionally and depends upon the locally accepted astronomical authority. Nevertheless, the principles of determining the quality of time are constant, and these principles interact to enhance the inherent nature of the temporal divisions within the context of a more dramatic, all-embracing structural opposition of light and dark units of ritual time.

Structural Logic of Ritual Units of Time

Indian texts explicitly identify the major units of ritual time as logical equivalents. Thus, the solar year is said to be a day of the gods.⁵¹ A lunar month makes up a day of the ancestors, and a cycle of lunar oblations equals a yearly sacrifice.⁵² Though the ritual equivalences of the solar day, year, and lunar month are priestly constructs, their mutual identification is based upon observable qualities which are shared by these three units of time—qualities which do not characterize the seven-day week or the solar month, temporal units which are far less significant as organizational

principles for ritual activity. The logical identity derives from the perception of the day, year, and lunar month as units composed of complementary, but diametrically opposed, light and dark periods which combine to form coherent wholes. Daytime, the bright fortnight when the moon is waxing, and the annual six-month period between January and June (*Makara-Mithuna rāsi-s*) when the sun travels northward in relation to the equator (*uttarāyana*—‘northward going’), are symbolically and structurally analogous periods. These periods of light are diametrically opposed to nighttime, the dark fortnight of the moon’s waning, and the six month southward course of the sun (*dakṣiṇāyana*—‘southward going’). Indian textual sources are explicit about the opposing natures of the light and dark periods, and reiterate the theme in numerous metaphors.

CHART 5³

TEXTUAL REFERENCES TO THE LIGHT/DARK OPPOSITION

4842EY

Light Categories		Dark Categories	
SUN		MOON	
1. Thunderbolt that drives away demons		1. <i>Vṛtra</i> , a demon killed by Indra, chief of the gods	
2. Hostile to the moon and consumes it		2. Consumed by the sun	
3. Kisses all creatures while travelling from east to west			
4. Guardian of everything			
5. Sustainer of the gods			
DAY		NIGHT	
6. Sun		6. Moon	
7. Indra		7. <i>Vṛtra</i>	
8. Agni (deity associated with fire and the Vedic sacrifice)		8. Soma (intoxicating substance often sacrificed; it is considered the food of the gods and is associated with the moon)	
9. Endless		9. Endless	
10. Priests sing by day		10. Warriors sing by night	
11. Combines with night to worship Agni		11. Combines with day to worship Agni	
12. Made of daylight present at the creation of gods		12. Made of darkness at the creation of demons	
13. Quality of goodness predominates		13. Darkness is evil which must be dispelled	

(Contd.)

14 *Religious Festivals in South India and Sri Lanka*

CHART 5—(Continued)

Light Categories		Dark Categories	
DAY		NIGHT	
14. Gods are most powerful		14. Demons are most powerful	
15. Good deeds		15. Evil deeds	
16. Viṣṇu (i.e., the male principle)		16. Lakṣmī (Viṣṇu's consort, and the female principle)	
17. North		17. South	
BRIGHT FORTNIGHT (<i>śukla pakṣa</i>)		DARK FORTNIGHT (<i>kṛṣṇa pakṣa</i>)	
18. Sun		18. Moon	
19. Agni		19. Soma	
20. Daytime		20. Nighttime	
21. Moon nourishes the gods		21. Moon nourishes the spirits of the dead	
22. Night for the spirits of the dead (i. e., they are inactive)		22. Day for the spirits of the dead	
23. Those who die attain supreme bliss		23. Those who die are reborn	
24. Auspicious time for domestic rites		24. Suitable for funeral ritual	
UTTARĀYANA		DAKṢINĀYANA	
25. Day of the gods		25. Night of the gods	
26. Those who die go to heaven		26. Those who die go to hell.	

References: (for abbreviations see note 53):

1. *S. Br.*, VII. 3.2.10; I.6.4.18; 2. *S. Br.*, I.6.3.24; I.6.4.18; 3. *S. Br.*, VII.3.2.12; 4. *S. Br.*, XIV.1.4.9; 5. *S. Br.*, XIV.1.4.8; 6. *S. Br.*, I.6.3.24; 7. *S. Br.*, I.6.4.18; 8. *S. Br.*, I.6.3.24; 9. *S. Br.*, VI.7.2.3; 10. *S. Br.*, XIII.1.5.5; 11. *S. Br.*, VI.7.2.3; 12. *S. Br.*, XI.1.6.11; 13. *V. P.*, I.5, p. 35; *S. Br.*, VII.2.1.12; 14. *V. P.*, I.5, p. 35; 15. *Kaus. U.*, I.4; 16. *V. P.*, I.8, p. 53; 17. *V. P.*, II.8, p. 180; 18. *S. Br.*, I.6.3.24; 19. *Ibid.*; 20. *Ibid.*; 21. Underhill, 1921 : 31; 22. *Ibid.*; 23. *Kaus. U.*, I.2; 24. *Kha. G. S.*, I.1.2; *Asv. G. S.*, I.4.1; *Hirany. G. S.*, I.8.27.1; *Apas. G. S.*, I.1.1.7; 25. *V. P.*, I.3, p. 21; 26. Stevenson, 1920:272; *Bh. G.*, VIII.24-26; *B.A. U.*, 6.2.15-16; *Chan. U.*, 4.15.5-6; 5.10.3.

Light periods are auspicious, and periods of darkness are pervasively dangerous and unlucky. According to the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

Fire, light, day, and the bright (lunar fortnight),

The six months that are the northward course of the sun,
Dying in these, go

To Brahman Brahman-knowing folk.

Smoke, night, also the dark (lunar fortnight),
 The six months that are the southward course of the sun,
 In these (when he dies) to the moon's light
 Attaining, the disciplined man returns.

For these two paths, light and dark,
 Are held to be eternal for the world;
 By one, man goes to non-return,
 By the other he returns again.⁵⁴

The ritual consequences of the light/dark opposition are illustrated in a passage from the *Khādīra Gr̥hya Sūtra*, which states that the best time for domestic sacrifices is 'During the northern course of the sun, at the time of the increasing moon, on auspicious days, before noon: this is the time at which constellations are lucky, unless a special statement is given'.⁵⁵

Both the frequency and the nature of ritual observances vary according to the inherent qualities of a temporal unit. A *śukla pakṣa* generally enjoys many more festivals than a *kṛṣṇa pakṣa* in which relatively few occur. Furthermore, religious observances during dark fortnights tend to be of a dangerous and inauspicious nature. For example, in parts of the subcontinent, the eighth *tithi* of each fortnight is sacred to the goddess. However, while the eighth *śukla* is devoted to Durgā, a benign mother figure, the eighth *kṛṣṇa* is sacred to Kālī, a fierce and terrifying aspect.⁵⁶ Similar patterns of ritual intensity characterize the light and dark periods of the solar day and year.⁵⁷

The solar day, year and lunar month—the major units of Hindu ritual time—exemplify the conceptualization of time as, what Leach has described, 'an oscillation of vitality between two contrasted poles', a 'discontinuity of repeated contrasts'.⁵⁸ These oppositions operate within a wider context of what Clothey calls 'concentric cyclicity'.⁵⁹ Each light/dark cycle operates largely independently and on its own logical plane. Thus, daily temple rituals continue to be performed during dark fortnights and during the southward course of the sun.

The oscillation between light and dark times within even larger temporal units implies a third principle; namely, the meeting points of the light and dark poles to form coherent units. The moments when these diametrically opposed entities come together are critical intervals in the Hindu ritual calendar. Dawn and sunset, the new and full moons, as well as the summer and winter solstices (*Karka*

and *Makara samkrānti-s*) are all times of intense ritual activity concerned with bridging the moment of conjunction of *saṃdhyā*.⁶⁰ Underscoring the dangers of *saṃdhyā* times, a legend in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* warns that at dawn and sunset terrible fiends, called *Man-dehas*, try to devour the sun, and that only rites performed by Brahmans can protect the sun from certain harm.⁶¹ Daily temple rituals are structured around the dawn and sunset *saṃdhyā* times as well as a series of intermediate *saṃdhyā-s*, the most important of which are noon and 'half-night'.⁶²

The new and full moons are recognized as transitional times in Vedic literature, which prescribes regular oblations at these critical moments.⁶³ The characteristics enumerated in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* highlight the uncertainty inherent in such transitional times. On the one hand, the new moon is a single *nakṣatra* and therefore inauspicious.⁶⁴ Similarly, it belongs to the spirits of the dead, and is a good time for building sepulchral mounds.⁶⁵ At new moon, food moves away from the gods.⁶⁶ On the other hand, *amāvāsyā* is said to be of the character of day,⁶⁷ of the sun,⁶⁸ and to represent the slaying of the demon *Vṛtra*.⁶⁹ While the new moon itself partakes of the character of darkness, it is also the harbinger of light and marks the beginning of the bright fortnight. Similar ambiguity surrounds the full moon.⁷⁰ Analogously, all solar *saṃkrānti-s* are to some extent critical boundaries, though the most intense ritual activity tends to center about the traditional solstitial and equinoxial points.⁷¹

The critical nature of transitional times is underscored by the perceived qualities of the preceding and following times. *Pradoṣa-kāla* refers to approximately one-and-a-quarter hours before and after sunset.⁷² The Sanskrit word *pradoṣa* has a range of meanings of which 'evening' is secondary. As an adjective, *pradoṣa* signifies 'corrupt' or 'wicked'. The noun means 'defect' or a 'disordered condition' as well as 'rebellion'. *Pradoṣa* comes from the verb root *duṣ*, meaning to 'become worse', 'deteriorate', or 'be polluted'. *Pradoṣa* also characterizes the thirteenth or fourteenth *tithi* of each fortnight⁷³—in other words, the day or two days before the new and full moons. *Mahāpradoṣa* ('great *pradoṣa*') occurs annually at *Śivarātri*, a major Śaiva festival which takes place during the penultimate dark fortnight prior to the traditional vernal equinox. According to the *Ratnakośa*, the daily period of *pradoṣa* is followed by *Vijaya* ('victory'), the time when the stars begin to shine, and is

auspicious for all undertakings.⁷⁴ Annually, *vijaya* is celebrated at the end of *Navarātri* or *Durgā Pūjā*, just after the traditional autumnal equinox (*Kanyā samkrānti*) and the *Pitṛ Pakṣa*, or 'fortnight of the fathers', which is considered the darkest and most dangerous time of the year.

In *Purity and Danger*, a cross-cultural study, Mary Douglas has pointed out the power, danger, and ambiguity inherent in transitional states:

So many ideas of power are based on the idea of society as a series of forms contrasted with surrounding non-form. There is power in the forms and other power in the inarticulate area, margins, confused lines, and beyond the external boundaries.

The danger which is risked by boundary transgression is power. Those vulnerable margins and those attacking forces which threaten to destroy good order represent powers inherent in the cosmos. Ritual which can harness these for good is harnessing power indeed.⁷⁵

The Hindu festivals and rituals described in the following papers take place within this universe of non-homogeneous time. The polarities of the light/dark, day/night, bright/dark fortnight, the northern/southern course of the sun, and good/evil, as well as the critical points at which these polar entities conjoin, are two of the fundamental temporal organizing principles of Hindu ritual.⁷⁶ Since Hindu ritual is basically instrumental, that is, performed to bring about results,⁷⁷ both the timing and the intent of regularly observed rituals and festivals reflect the qualities of the times at which they occur. Though many cyclical rituals and festivals are celebrated over wide geographical expanses, their contents, in other words their stated goals and modes of expression, vary greatly according to local tradition and sectarian affiliation. Therefore, they can often be understood as temporal markers. The moment itself lends unity and meaning to diverse celebrations. The rituals function to control or actualize the inherent tendencies of the moment, and thereby to maintain the equilibrium of the cosmos.

Therefore the universal Brahman

Is eternally based on worship

(BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ, III.15)

Notes

1. E. R. Leach suggests that our category 'time' encompasses two distinct notions: repetition and non-repetition. From these basic types of time come such related concepts as rate, duration and sequence. Furthermore, time may be conceived as linear, cyclical, or as a pendulum going back and forth. Leach's main point is that: 'The idea of time, like the idea of God, is one of those categories which we find necessary because we are social animals rather than because of anything empirical in our objective experience of the world' (E.R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*, London: The Athlone Press, University of London, 1961, pp. 125, 132, 133).
2. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, trans., George Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966, (originally published as *La Pensée sauvage*, Paris: Librairie Plon, 1962), p. 306.
3. The Vedic calendar seems to have included a lunar cycle of 360 lunar phases and a cycle of tropical months (*cf.* Chart 3 above and note 39 below). There is evidence for lunar months beginning with the full moon as well as with the new moon, and in the *Yajur Veda* and the *Brāhmaṇa-s*, a five year *yuga* is mentioned as including two added months. It is not evident whether any clear distinction was made between the tropical solar year and the sidereal solar year, which was later adopted. However, as T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal points out, the distinction is not necessary. Intercalation can be done automatically, whenever the full moon occurs too far behind the constellation (*nakṣatra*) with which it is supposed to conjoin (T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal, A. R. Tathacharya in *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, Madras: University Press, 1968, pp. 51-55, 108-10.) On the history of the Vedic calendar, also see Arthur B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1925, p. 79.
 P. N. Appuswami notes that lunar terms, such as *pakkaṃ* (Sanskrit *pakṣa*) and *tithi*, are present in the earliest as well as the later Tamil literature (P. N. Appuswami in *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, 1968, p. 92).
4. The *kṛṣṇa pakṣa* is also known as the *asita-*, *bahula-*, or *vadya-pakṣa* and has other names in the vernacular languages. *Śukla pakṣa* is also called *sita-*, *śuddha-*, or *pūrva-pakṣa*.
5. Though the *tithi-s* are now generally known by their numbers, some evidence suggests that previously each had a separate name (T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal in *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, 1968, p. 46).
6. *Amāvāsyā* is conventionally considered the thirtieth *tithi* for both the *amānta* and *pūrṇimānta* systems of reckoning, even though the new moon comes in the middle of the *pūrṇimānta* month. (R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co. Ltd., 1896, p. 13).
7. In modern usage abbreviations might be used; e. g., *su di* for *śukla* or *śuddha dina* (day), and *va di* for *vadya dina*. In past times there have also been other conventions for giving dates, including giving the season (*ṛtu*), number of the month, the solar day; or the season, number of the fortnight, and day. For additional information, see P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1958, pp. 669-70.

8. M. M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year*, Calcutta: Association Press, 1921, p. 22.
9. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1, p. 641.
10. There are different ways in which to measure a solar year. A *sidereal* year is the time required for the earth to make a complete revolution around the sun in reference to fixed stars. A *tropical* year corresponds to a complete cycle of seasons, and is shorter than the sidereal year. An *anomalous* year measures the time during which the earth returns to either the point in its orbit most distant from the sun (aphelion) or to the point closest to the sun (perihelion); the points in the orbit which are most distant or closest to the sun (line of apsides) shift eastward about 11.5 seconds annually (R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, p. 5).
While the Vedic solar year may have been tropical or sidereal (see note 3), the sidereal year has been in use for a long time now. However, the calculated duration of the year according to some *Siddhānta*-s approaches the length of an anomalous year (*ibid.*, p. 7).
11. The *Veda*-s do not mention the *rāṣi*-s nor do they associate the movement of the sun with the *nakṣatra*-s. (A. R. Tathacharya in *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, 1968, p. 110). The *rāṣi* names seem to have come into general usage after the lunar month names (R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, p. 10).
12. For additional information on precession of the equinoxes, see P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1, p. 645. Also see Louis Renou and Jean Filliozat, *L'Inde classique*, Hanoi: École Française d'Extrême-Orient, 1953, pp. 721-22; and R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, pp. 5, 9, 10-11.
13. *Hoe and Co.'s 1886 Premier Diary No. 19*, Madras: Hoe and Co., The Premier Press, 1969, p. 18.
14. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1, p. 645.
15. The Calendar Reform Committee, headed by Prof. M. N. Saha, was appointed by the government in 1952. The calendar which the committee proposed sought to bring the months into line with the seasons, while retaining the popular names of the luni-solar months (e. g., Caitra, etc.), employing the Śaka era's system of numbering the years, and synchronizing the lunar months with the new year. Since the Indian National Calendar corrects for the precession of the equinoxes, it corresponds regularly to the western calendar: Caitra 1=22 March; Vaiśākha 1=21 April; Jyaiṣṭha 1=22 May; Āṣāḍha 1=22 June; Śrāvaṇa 1=23 July; Bhādrapada 1=23 August; Āśvina 1=23 September; Kārttika 1=23 October; Agrahayana 1=22 November; Pauṣa 1=22 December; Māgha 1=21 January; and Phālguna 1=20 February (Census of India, 1961, Vol. V, Gujarat, Pt. VII-B, *Fairs and Festivals*, by R. K. Trivedi, Superintendent of Census Operations, Gujarat). Though the new Indian calendar corresponds regularly to the western calendar, it does not relate consistently with the traditional Hindu festival calendars. According to T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal, the new calendar is little used except on All India Radio (T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal in *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, 1968, p. 44).
16. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1, p. 642. Also, T. S.

Kuppanna Sastrigal in *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, 1968, p. 45; and R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, p. 11.

17. As quoted in R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, p. 27.

18. Ibid.

19. Different parts of India, following various eras, begin their years at different times of the year. In Tamil Nadu and Bengal, which have solar calendars, the new year begins with the *Meṣa saṃkrānti*. Parts of Bengal, Orissa, and North Malabar begin the year with the *Kanyā saṃkrānti*, while the rest of Kerala and Tinnevely District celebrate the *Siṃha saṃkrānti* as new year. Furthermore, the use of mean and apparent timings for the *saṃkrānti* vary regionally (R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, pp. 31-32). There is also evidence that, formerly, the Tamil year began at the winter solstice (*Makara saṃkrānti*) (Brenda E. F. Beck, *Peasant Society in Koṅku*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1972, p. 52, n. 70).

For areas using luni-solar calendars, the year generally begins with the new noon preceding the *Meṣa saṃkrānti*, and is known as a *Caitrādi* year, i.e., 'beginning with *Caitra*'. However, in parts of Gujarat, the year is *Kārttikādi*, while in Kāthiāwād it is *Āṣādhī*. The year of the Amli Era in Orissa starts on twelfth *Bhādrapada śukla*.

The numerous areas which have been adopted during the course of Indian history differ from each other greatly in their starting points for numbering successive years, in the time for beginning the year, and in the use of solar or luni-solar calendars. The Vikrama Era is presently employed in North India, while the Śaka is prevalent elsewhere. The intricacies of the eras need not concern us here, because they do not influence the order of the months or the principles by which festivals are timed. For details on Indian eras see R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, pp. 40-45, also, P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1, pp. 647 ff.

20. Apparent or true time takes account of the variation in the movements of celestial bodies and, therefore, calendars based on apparent or true time have temporal units of unequal length. Apparent time is contrasted to mean time, in which the movement of the sun is taken as the mean velocity of the true sun. Therefore, the mean solar day is the average of all apparent solar days (R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, p. 19).

21. Ibid., pp. 4, 10.

22. Possibly, the *pūrṇimānta* system calculated additions and deletions separately from the *amānta* system at one time. However, there would have been a 14 to 17 month discrepancy between the added months of the two systems (ibid., p. 30).

23. In a 19-year cycle, added months tend to come in the third, fifth, eighth, eleventh, fourteenth, sixteenth and nineteenth years. The intervals between deleted years range from 19 to 141. Furthermore, months are not added and deleted with equal frequency. For example, in 1600 years *Mārgaśīrṣa*, *Pauṣa*, *Māgha* have never been added months. (ibid., p. 29).

24. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1, p. 665. Not all religious rites are permitted even in added months which come before deleted ones, and the *Dharmaśāstra* literature gives detailed and explicit instructions about the performance and avoidance of rituals during added months (ibid., pp. 671-74).

25. Although the *tithi* begins at the same time all over India, the time of true sunrise varies according to latitude and longitude. Because sunrise is the point of reference, the addition and deletion of *tithi*-s may vary regionally when a particular *tithi* ends very close to sunrise (R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, pp. 18-19).
26. Ibid., p. 18.
27. Ibid., p. 11.
28. Ibid., p. 10; also, T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal in *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures* (1968), p. 45. Each of the four areas now using solar calendars has a different convention for fixing the first day of the month; the rules vary according to when the *saṃkrānti* falls within the solar day (R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, p. 12).
29. The full moon of any given luni-solar month may conjoin with one of two or three *nakṣatra*-s (cf. Chart 3). Originally, the months' names probably changed annually, depending upon the *nakṣatra* conjoining with the full moon. However, the names have long been standardized; each of the present lunar month names comes from the names of one of the *nakṣatra*-s (ibid., pp. 24-25).
30. Tamil Nadu and Kerala rely on the first *Ārya Siddhānta*; Gujarat, Rajasthan, and northwestern India employ the *Brāhma-pakṣa*. The remaining parts of India rely on the present *Sūrya Siddhānta*. (Ibid., p. 9). The *Siddhānta*-s vary on the length of the year and on the number of revolutions of the moon and planets within the larger time units—the *kalpa*, *yuga*, and *mahāyuga*.
Pañcāṅga-s are prepared on the basis of these different *Siddhānta*-s. The usage of various *pañcāṅga*-s also varies according to sectarian affiliation. For example, the *Śrīvaiṣṇava*-s use the *Śrīraṅgam pañcāṅga*, while the *Mādhva*-s, another *Vaiṣṇava* sect, have yet another. A discrepancy between *Śrīraṅgam* and Mylapore reckoning is illustrated in Chart 4.
 Nowadays, there are also *pañcāṅga*-s based upon nautical almanacs. However, even these modern *pañcāṅga*-s retain the traditional *nirāyana saṃkrānti* and therefore do not account for the precession of the equinoxes (P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1, p. 642; also, L. Narayana Rao in *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, 1968, p. 105).
31. Some solar festivals are also celebrated on a pan-Indian basis, notably the solstices and equinoxes (M. M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year*, pp. 38-41). See also P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1, pp. 211-25.
32. *Mahāśivarātri*, 'the great night of Śiva', involves a fast and worship of Śiva throughout the night. *Śivarātri* is celebrated to a lesser extent on the fourteenth of the dark fortnight of every month (ibid., p. 225).
33. *Śrī Jayantī* celebrates the birth of Lord Kṛṣṇa (cf. ibid., pp. 128-43).
34. Even Bengal seems to celebrate festivals at the same time as Tamil Nadu, even though the Tamil and Bengali months' names are discrepant (cf. Chart 3).
35. In 1970, the *Hindu*, a Madras daily newspaper, carried advertisements for Rāmanavamī celebrations for nearly a month, even during the dark fortnight.
36. *Census of India*, 1961. *District Census Handbook, Malda*. (by B. Ray, Deputy Superintendent of Census Operations, West Bengal), p. 245; and *Census of India*, 1961. *District Census Handbook, Bankura*. (by B. Ray, Deputy Superintendent of Census Operations, West Bengal), p. 374.

37. In this article, we have been concerned primarily with those temporal units which are directly involved in the festival calendar, namely the day, month and year. There are even larger supra-annual temporal units. The five year *yuga*, known since Vedic times, coordinates the lunar and solar cycles (M. M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year*, p. 29). The movement of Jupiter through one sign of the zodiac annually is the basis of twelve-year cycle; in the Kollam Era of Kerala, the years are named successively by this twelve-year cycle. The combination of the five-year luni-solar *yuga* and the twelve-year cycle of Jupiter results in a larger sixty-year period. Each of sixty years is named, and in North India the shorter Jovian year is synchronized with the longer solar year by the device of deletion, as in the case of lunar months. Though the sixty-year Jovian cycle is also in use in the South, there the deletion of Jovian years (*saṃvatsara*) is neglected. As a result, the South lags 12 years behind the North in its naming of years (R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, pp. 32-33, 36, 39). Of these larger units of time, the twelve-year cycle in particular is reflected in ritual activity. The conjunction of Jupiter with other phenomena—such as *rāśi*-s, *nakṣatra*-s, and lunar months—once every twelve years is recognized in festivals all over India, as for example at Ujjain, Hardwar and Kumbhakonam (J. H. Dave, *Immortal India*, Bombay: Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan, 1957-1961, Vol. I, pp. 61-68; Vol. II, pp. 49-57, 123-29).

Finally, there are the units which embrace eons: the four *yuga*-s, *mahāyuga*-s, *kalpa*-s, and *manvantara*-s. These enormous spans of time are not directly relevant to the festival calendar and cannot be elaborated upon here. It is important to note, however, that they reflect important Hindu notions about the cyclical nature of time, and about the ever changing quality of both time and the human condition. For further details about these larger units, see P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1, pp. 686-93.

38. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 642-43; also, T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal in *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, (1968), pp. 48-49.
39. Most scholars believe that the Vedic months were named after the seasons. Louis Renou suggests that this explanation does not adequately explain why the winter months should be named *tapas*, or 'heat'. Instead, Renou suggests that the months were named not according to the current season, but according to the position of the full moon in the sky. The regions of the sky would be designated by the characteristics of the season prevailing when the sun traversed that part of the sky. Thus, the months were named after the position of the full moon, whose position was exactly opposite that of the sun during any given season (Louis Renou and Jean Filliozat, *L'Inde classique*, p. 724).
40. R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, p. 21. During the Vedic period, the influence of the *nakṣatra*-s was not considered as ritually significant as in later periods. The *nakṣatra*-s were first mentioned in the *Atharva* and *Yajur Veda*-s, where they were the 27 or 28 stations in which the moon spent successive nights (Arthur B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, pp. 25, 200-1). Though the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* recognizes the efficacy of certain *nakṣatra*-s for the timing of *agnyādheya* fires (II.1.2.1-11), another verse warns that timing one's sacrifices by the *nakṣatra*-s, rather than by the moon, is like attempting to "...enter a strong-

hold, when the gate is closed” (XI.1.1.1-3). (Julius Eggling, trans., *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, according to the text of the *Mādhandina* School, 5 Vols. [*Sacred Books of the East*, Vols. XII, XXVI, XLI, XLIII, XLIV] Varanasi: Motilal Banarsidass: 1963). Since Vedic times, however, the *nakṣatra*-s have become major determinants in the timing of festivals.

41. R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, p. 22.
42. The association of the *Kṛttiāk nakṣatra* with *Murukaṇ* is discussed more fully below by Fred W. Clothey in ‘Chronometry, Cosmology, and the Festival Calendar in the *Murukaṇ* Cult’, see pp. 157-188 below.
43. Ibid.
44. Common Sanskrit names for the days of the week are:
Sunday—*Ravivāra*; Monday—*Somavāra*; Tuesday—*Maṅgalavāra*; Wednesday—*Budhavāra*; Thursday—*Guruvāra*; Friday—*Śukravāra*; Saturday—*Śanivāra* (for additional names, see R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, p. 2).

The seven-day week is not generally considered to be indigenous to India and was probably adopted in the early centuries AD (T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal in *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, 1968, pp. 47-48). Kane, however, suggests the possibility of independent invention (P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. 5, Pt. 1, pp. 675-85).

45. Ironically *maṅgalavāra* means ‘auspicious day’.
46. *Rāhu* and *Guliku* are discussed in detail by Fred W. Clothey in ‘Chronometry Cosmology, and the Festival Calendar in the *Murukaṇ* Cult’, pp. 157-188 below.
47. R. Sewell and S. B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, p. 3 and Table VIII, col. 12.
48. Ibid., pp. 3, 22. See also P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. 5, Pt.1, pp. 704-7.
49. Hindu festivals may be broadly classified as *nitya* or ‘regular’; *naimittika* or ‘occasional’; and *kāmya* or ‘optional’.
50. Cf. note 25 above.
51. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*—the sage *Uddālaka Āruni* imparts to his disciple the mystical import of the year: ‘The whole year is just that day after day.’ (XII. 2.2.13-23).

The *Sūrya Siddhānta*, an astronomical text, states that the *daiva* year, ‘year of the gods’, corresponds to 360 human years. (Samuel Davids, ‘On the Indian Cycle of Sixty Years’, in *Asiatick Researches*, Vol. 3, 1793, p. 210).

52. Ibid. Speaking of the new and full moon oblations, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* equates the monthly and annual ritual cycles:

Verily *Prajapati*, the Sacrifice, is the Year; the night of the new moon is its gate, and the moon itself is the bolt of the gate (X.1.1.1).

The other (real) horse sacrifice, they indeed perform (only) the year after (the starting offering), but this month (of the full and new-moon sacrifice), revolving, makes up a year; thus a sacrificial horse comes to be slaughtered for him year after year (XI.2.5.4).

53. The following abbreviations have been adopted in Chart 5 and in the footnotes below it:

<i>Apas. G. S.</i>	<i>Āpastambha Gṛhya Sūtra</i>
<i>Asv. G. S.</i>	<i>Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra</i>
<i>B. A. U.</i>	<i>Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad</i>
<i>Bh. G.</i>	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i>
<i>Chan. U.</i>	<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i>
<i>Hirany. G. S.</i>	<i>Hiraṇyakeśin Gṛhya Sūtra</i>
<i>Kaus. U.</i>	<i>Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad</i>
<i>Kha. G. S.</i>	<i>Khādīra Gṛhya Sūtra</i>
<i>S. Br.</i>	<i>Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa</i>
<i>V. P.</i>	<i>Viṣṇu Purāṇa</i>

54. *Bh. G.*, VIII. 24-26. Franklin Edgerton (trans.), *Bhagavad Gītā*, New York and Evanston: Harper and Row Publishers, 1964, p. 44.
55. *Kha. G. S.*, I.1.2. Hermann Oldenberg (trans.), *The Gṛihya Sūtras: Rules of the Vedic Domestic Ceremonies*, 2 Vols., (*Sacred Books of the East*, Vols. 29-30), Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1886, 1892.
56. M. M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year*, pp. 136-37.
57. Brenda Beck has suggested that in the Koṅku region of Tamil Nadu, aside from the rituals performed by specialists in temples, right-hand communities concentrate their rituals during the six month period when the sun is travelling northward (*uttarāyaṇa*). Left-hand communities, on the other hand, concentrate their ritual activity during the period of the southward course of the sun (the *dakṣiṇāyaṇa*). (Brenda E. F. Beck, *Peasant Society in Koṅku*, p. 54).
Fred W. Clothey treats the question of the homology of temporal units with each other, with the god, and with the cosmos (see below, pp. 157-188).
58. E. R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*, pp. 129, 134.
59. Compare Clothey, pp. 157-188 below.
60. *Samdhyā* means 'union' or 'junction' and especially refers to dawn and sunset, the union of day and night, and to noon. *Samdhyā* also is used for the rites performed by Brahmans at these times. More generally, *samdhyā* can mean 'boundary' or 'limit'.
61. *V. P.*, II.8. H.H. Wilson (trans.). *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, (3rd ed.), Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1961, pp. 182-83.
62. Some details on daily temple ritual will be found in Clothey, pp. 157-188 below.
63. *S. Br.*, I.6.4.12; X.1.1.1; X.1.4.6-7; XI.25.4.
64. *S. Br.*, XIII.8.13.
65. *S. Br.*, XIII.8.1.3.5.
66. *S. Br.*, I.6.4.16.
67. *S. Br.*, XI.2.4.4.
68. *S. Br.*, XI.2.4.2.
69. *S. Br.*, I.6.4.12.
70. *S. Br.*, I.6.4.12; XI.2.4.1-6; *Hirany. G. S.*, II.7.17.2.
71. M. M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year*, p. 39.
72. A *ghaṭika* (Tamil: *nālikai*) equals twenty-four minutes. According to Renou, *pradoṣakāla* corresponds to the six *ghaṭika*-s after sunset (Louis Renou and Jean Filliozat, *L'Inde Classique*, p. 735).
73. M. M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year*, pp. 93, 136.
74. R. Anantakrishna Sastry (trans.), *Lalitā Sahasranāma (Mantra Śāstra) with Bhās-*

kararāya's Commentary (2nd ed.), published by the Author, 1925, p. 165.

75. Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*, Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1970, pp. 118, 190-91.
76. We do not wish to imply that these are the only organizational principles, for certainly the seasons constitute another on the annual festival calendar. Nor do we believe that all festivals are explicable in terms of these principles. Rather, the light/dark opposition and the transitional points between them are concepts which transcend regional differences of season and variations in local practices, and which constitute a conceptual apparatus for focussing on different levels of reality (*cf.* Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, pp. 75-76, 136, 153). Thus, the light/dark opposition in the calendar is reflected in the rhythm of ritual activity, and in the division of society into right- and left-hand communities in Tamil Nadu (*cf.* note 57). Similarly the concept of *saṃdhyā* is manifest in ritual activity at transitional times, and in rites of passage (*saṃskāra*) during a person's lifetime.
77. Carl G. Diehl treats the instrumentality of ritual at length in *Instrument and Purpose*, Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1956.

FESTIVALS IN PĀÑCARĀTRA LITERATURE

H. Daniel Smith

IT IS PROBABLE that at least one-quarter of all temples in South India dedicated to Viṣṇu are guided in their routine worship by injunctions outlined in the Pāñcarātra literature. While the canon of Sanskrit works known as the *Pāñcarātrāgama* is traditionally said to contain 108 titles, the actual number of texts must once in fact have exceeded 200. However, only some thirty of those extant are currently printed.¹ Of them, approximately two dozen contain appreciable materials relating specifically to the study of festivals in South Indian temples. It is mainly passages from those texts—a bibliography of which is appended as an Addendum—which constitute the basis for the discussion below.

Utsava: The Focus in This Study

The term translated as 'festival' is *utsava* in the works considered. There, *utsava* is variously said to mean that activity which serves as a 'remover of misery', as a 'remover of obstacles', as 'that which takes away *samsāra*' and the like (*ut + sava*). Obviously we are dealing with fanciful etymologies; yet what the weight of the several definitions seems to indicate is that piety associates with certain celebrations, when properly performed, a power able to affect psychic and cosmic forces. So it is, then, that when—in the worship cycles honoring Viṣṇu and/or his entourage—an *utsava* is performed at a temple, something good will happen; the celebration of a festival will redound to the welfare of the sponsors and/or the community.

According to the texts² there are three classes of *utsava*-s—all of which are treated more or less at length. In the first place, there are *nitya* rites which are to be celebrated daily or monthly in a temple (*nityotsava*). Such liturgies are elsewhere called *pūjā* or *arcana*, and, in addition to daily honors afforded the temple deities, include all other regular rituals celebrated in observance of the new moon, of *ekādaśī* and *dvōdaśī* days, and of certain star-days each month

(*māsotsava/amāvāsyotsava*).³ References to *utsava*—in this sense of the on-going,⁴ regular, daily or monthly rites celebrated in a temple—are plentiful in Pāñcarātra literature; they are found diffused throughout the texts, too numerous in their occurrences to record here. ‘Festival’ in this *nityotsava* sense—continuously sustained, regular celebrations—is not in any case the phenomenon in particular we are seeking here to illuminate; we are for the present more concerned to focus on the elaborate, extraordinary celebrations commonly associated with ‘festivals’ in the popular mind.

The other two classifications of *utsava-s* are those which are called *naimittika* and those which are called *kāmya*. Annual observances of special occasions—like marriages or birthdays of the deities or of temple patrons, or to mark the advent of spring, or of the hot season, the harvest, and the like—are known as *naimittika-utsava-s*. And festivals undertaken for special purposes—such as washing away the sins of believers, atoning for errors in worship, offering thanksgiving and the like—are referred to as *kāmya-utsava-s*. In both cases, these are elaborate undertakings which require preliminary activities of various kinds in almost every case, as well as certain, standard concluding observances. Moreover, the normal temple staff is often augmented for the special *utsava-s* by priestly specialists and by other professionals with various skills. For, it is important to remember that the regular, on-going daily and monthly *nityotsava* routines persist and prevail; indeed, those must be attended to first, regardless of whatever other, extraordinary celebrations may be added to the liturgical calendar. So, the temple teems with activities—particularly when a special *utsava* is scheduled, and when it is going to last longer than three days. At such times, and utilizing an enlarged staff comprised of specialists and their assistants, as well as musicians, cooks, artisans and other participants, one observes construction or refurbishing of special *mandapa*-pavilions; various exercises relating to the purification of the precincts and of the personnel who will serve in some official capacity; the preparation of a flag (*dhvaja*), and the raising of it on the flagpole (*dhvajārohana*); various extraordinary offerings to the directional deities (*balidāna*); the ritual germination of seedlings (*aṅkurārpaṇa*); special invocations *āhvāna*; a number of fire-offerings (*homa-s*); and special attentions directed to the temple images (*snāna*, etc.). Among the standard, concluding rites one may expect to observe are such activities as paying the participating Brahmins, sponsoring

feasts, and conducting final bathing rites of the temple deities. All these matters are carefully prescribed at length in Pāñcarātra passages dealing with *utsava-s*.

We shall here focus exclusively on the central rites of several *naimittika-* and *kāmya-utsava* celebrations for which there seem to be ample textual directives for those temples adhering to the Pāñcarātra liturgies. By limiting our focus in this way we may hope to be able to discern more clearly what are the typical concerns of that wide range of celebrations ordained and described for Pāñcarātra-oriented temples. Stripped of details, these descriptions may emerge with an imagery not unlike that associated in the popular Hindu mentality with the various, specific 'festivals'. Whether there is any further 'meaning' or 'intention' that will become clear from this presentation of examples remains to be seen.

Three All-Important Annual Festivals

Few texts that treat *utsava* at all fail to mention three festivals. These are, apparently, all important in the annual liturgical calendar. The first of these is the annual 'great festival', or *mahotsava*. Indeed, several Pāñcarātra texts treat this festival—or parts of it—at some length.⁵ According to the literary evidence, this celebration may last nine or ten days, with characteristic events scheduled on specific days and nights of that period. Theoretically, at least, a *mahotsava*—sometimes also called *brahmotsava*, and, less often, *śraddhotsava*—may be shorter or longer than this (PADM 'car' X: 22b-23; PMES XVII: 505-512), ranging from 1 to 3 to 5 to 7 and, beyond, to 12 to 15 to 30 days. Usually, the big, annual festival is celebrated to mark the star-day of the temple-image, or to commemorate when the temple was consecrated; but special *mahotsava-s* may be instituted to avert a natural disaster, or to contravene celestial portents, or to celebrate the renovation of the temple. It is not unknown for a *mahotsava* to be celebrated in memory of an institution's acknowledged patron (*yajamāna*), or in honor of a local saint's birthdate. At some Śrī-Vaiṣṇava temples, more than one 'great' festival is celebrated annually. At Śrīraṅgam, for example, there are three such major holiday periods each year. For obvious reasons, because the event(s) celebrated may come at various times of the year, there is no fixed date among the temples following

Pāñcarātra rules on which the *mahotsava* celebrations must fall; they may, theoretically at least, come at any time during the year.

In almost all of the treatments of the *mahotsava*, prime attention is given to the daily processions. In these the movable, festival image (*utsavabera*) of the temple deity is taken through the streets, using a different *vāhana* for each outing as stipulated, for example, in PMES, XXII: 123-252. In many cases, one or two events during the usual nine or ten-day period stand out as especially important. For example, the single, biggest procession of a *mahotsava* season is often called the *rathotsava* ('car' festival). In this, various, special observances are enjoined.⁶ Or, for another example, on one of the morning of the *mahotsava* period, the portable image is bathed with powders, water and oil either before (in some cases) or after (in other cases) being taken on a 'pilgrimage' to the site of water (such as a tank, reservoir, lake or river) some distance from the temple. In some texts it is stipulated that those true believers who bathe at the same time as the image of God is immersed will have their sins washed away and will win eternal bliss. This is variously called *avabhṛthotsava*/*tīrthotsava*/*tīrthayātrā*/*tīrthayātrotsava*.⁷ In all cases, the annual *mahotsava* celebrations usually attract large crowds of pilgrims and sightseers, and the festivities are normally colorful, elaborate and spectacular.

The second of the three all-important, annual Pāñcarātra temple festivals appears from the literature to be the 'birthday' rite for the presiding deity of the temple. According to the texts, it is so important to mark this anniversary that, should it fall during *caturmāsa*, when most other festival routines are suspended, it is to be celebrated nonetheless with great eclat. So it is, for example, that the highly auspicious *Kṛṣṇa-jayanti* is observed in Śrāvaṇa.⁸ In general, *jayanti* festivities may last 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 15 or 30 days (ANRD XXV: 1-4). The extended celebrations honor the presiding deity's birthtime, or that of his consort's; the more abbreviated celebrations mark the *jayanti* of subsidiary divinities, and, in some cases, the *jayanti* of a revered saint.⁹ Pāñcarātra literature offers explicit directions for celebrating the *jayanti*-dates of Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, . . . Vāmana, Trivikrama, Nṛsiṃha, . . . Hanumān, Lakṣmī, *et al.*¹⁰ The most lengthy and elaborate treatments seem to be reserved for Kṛṣṇa.

The third of the three, presumably all-important, annual festivals in the Pāñcarātra liturgical year is the 'thread' ceremony

(*pavitrāroḥaṇa* or *pavitrārohaṇa*). This, too, is a celebration that lasts from 1 to 3 to 5 to 7 to 9 to 11 and so on up to 30 days. It is said that by undertaking these ceremonies—which are of the nature of penitential rites—all other ceremonies are ‘validated’. For, by garlanding the Lord with the purifying *pavitra* (‘thread’), all lapses during the past year in worship and in morals are rectified. It is as if, by a single act, one festival equals the effect of worshipping throughout the entire year. (Indeed, by so doing, it is said, all ‘sins’ committed in pursuit of the four stages of life may be atoned for.) Some texts point out that it provides an appropriate *prāyaścitta* for any unintentional ‘sins’. According to other sources, it also serves as an act of thanksgiving and, when correctly done, is a fitting end to the liturgical year. It is specified that *pavitrāroḥaṇa* be done during *dakṣiṇāyana*; in fact, the texts usually enjoin that this thread-rite be done sometime during *caturmāsa*—which alone testifies to its importance, since most other *utsava*-s are forbidden during that four-month period. This solemn celebration is clearly one of the more significant ones found in the Pāñcarātra literature,¹¹ where it is quite evidently highly regarded and minutely discussed. As an *utsava* it deserves careful analysis not only for its role as ‘validator’ for all other rites during the year, but also for the way it effects a new purity in the worshipper (as symbolized by his receipt of pieces of the garlanding threads at the end of the *utsava* period).

Of the three preceding *utsava*-s, the first two—*mahotsava* and *jayanti-utsava*—are normally concerned to celebrate an anniversary related in some way to the deity housed in the temple. The third one, *pavitrāroḥaṇa* garlanding, has as one of its chief aims the rectification of all worship directed to that deity. There is not much more beyond this that can be said in summary about them, except that, in comparison with all other *utsava*-s, the attention given to these three in the texts and the length of time in each instance given over to their actual celebrations in temples is unusually long. Also, the first two are of the nature of *naimittika* acts, while the third is a *kāmya* undertaking. It is necessary to move with great caution beyond these summaries towards conclusions, for already we have stripped these celebrations of the many, alternate motives which may permissibly also prompt them. Quite clearly, data from site-studies at temples directed by Pāñcarātra traditions are necessary to augment the purely literary evidence. The living traditions

of temple *arcaka*-s who currently perform such *utsava*-s should also inform us further as we attempt to probe the meaning or intention of these three, all-important annual festivals in the Pāñcarātra liturgical cycle.

Ten Other Significant Celebrations in the Course of the Liturgical Year

Over fifty other *utsava*-s are also mentioned by name in the literature surveyed. Of these, half are mentioned only once or twice, and then briefly, so that little can be said of them. We shall, therefore, not deal, with them. Of the remainder, for which significant descriptions are found in no less than two texts or, in most cases, in several texts, the actual count dwindles to ten, discrete events which are being celebrated once allowances are made for synonyms and for *utsava*-s which may otherwise be grouped together. A review of these may be informative, and may help to sharpen our insights in regard to what may be some other concerns isolated and celebrated in the course of a 'liturgical year' at a temple adhering to Pāñcarātra rules.

Before we trace the contours of the Pāñcarātra liturgical year, we must first address ourselves to two problems. The first concerns when, according to the lunar calendar, the liturgical year commences. The texts are not clear on this point. Some (e.g., PSOT XXVII: 1, 4) explicitly state that the 'year' starts with *Caitra* [April-May], while others (e. g., PADM 'car' XIV: 11 et passim) imply that this is the case by the way they list the annual *utsava*-s. On the other hand, throughout the literature dealing with *utsava*-s, the determination of when festivals may occur is guided by one overriding consideration. That, as already suggested, has to do with the Lord Viṣṇu's period of rest (*yoganidrā*). This occurs during the four-month period between mid-July and mid-November (*caturmāsa*). As has already been noted, during that period no major festival is to be conducted. Of course, there are exceptions to this—recall that the very important *pavitrāropana* and *kṛṣṇa jayanti* celebrations may be scheduled during this period, when, in addition, the daily and monthly rites of on-going *nityotsava* continue. Generally, however, for purposes of the liturgical year, *caturmāsa* is a prohibited period. Thus, if there is any overall mythology which gives 'meaning'

to the various celebrations throughout the Pāñcarātra year—and that is only suggestive—it is that activities may only begin when the Lord ‘wakes up’ and his ‘day’, as it were, commences. For this reason, the festival of rousing the Lord from his slumber—*utthāpanotsava* (described below)—would take on great significance. It would seem, for all practical purposes, to mark the commencement of the liturgical year from the Pāñcarātra perspective. But no text is explicit about this. Yet, if this may be assumed, then we may say that the liturgical year commences when the Lord rouses from his slumber—a rite that is to be performed on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of *Kārttika* (which, in 1971, for example, was on 14 November). One text (PADM ‘car’ XV: 124) states that the year may ‘start’ either in *Caitra* or in *Mārgaśīrṣa*. We have opted to follow the weight of the implicit evidence in the texts—despite the negative evidence of an explicit nature—and assume, in what follows, that the liturgical year commences when the Lord wakes up after his rest during *caturmāsa*.

The other problem concerns the variables to be acknowledged in charting the ten discrete and individual *utsava*-s within that liturgical year. Due to the number of options often given in the texts regarding when each festival may be celebrated, only an approximate schedule for these festivals can be given from textual evidence alone. No doubt, local temples have longstanding traditions for when each routine is to be observed at that place. Our order, given below, is only indicative, then, of what the texts, for the most part, enjoin.

A review of the ten *utsava*-s is suggestive of some ‘meaning’ and ‘intention’ by the very pattern of their sequential order. But that evidence is by no means conclusive. Let us commence with waking up the Lord.

1. Here, after the Lord’s four-month rest, he is petitioned to rouse himself for the protection of the world. After a feast and a vigil on the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of *Kārttika*, the image of the Lord is bathed and dressed on the twelfth day and then taken out in a procession through the streets. It is a very auspicious occasion, and the streets will have been decorated for it. The Lord’s presence there is believed to avert famine, disease and death. Once the Lord returns to the temple, all the elaborate functions suspended during his repose may be resumed. The ceremony of waking up the Lord¹² is variously called *utthāpanotsava*/*prabodhotsava*/*bodhanotsava* (and, once, *parivartana*).

2. Soon after the temple activities have returned to normal after the hiatus of *caturmāsa*, the Lord having been roused from his rest, a 'lamp' festival is to be scheduled. This is variously called *kṛttikotsava*/*dīpotsava*/*dīpāroḥaṇa*/*kārttikadīpotsava*.¹³ It is also to be done during *Kārttika* and the preparations for it are elaborate. Temple renovations are to be made, the village is to be decorated. As part of this, *snāpana*-s are given to the Lord's image. Lamps are ignited as a central and characteristic element of this festival which may (according to MARK XXV: 55b-60a) last as long as fifteen days. Some sources indicate that part of the celebration includes taking the *utsava-bera*-image out into the streets in a chariot decorated with lights. Elsewhere, the liturgies are confined to presenting lighted lamps to the deity within the temple, and to decorating the sanctuary and superstructure with burning lamps. One text (SPSN XLIV: 1-56 *passim*) relates this celebration to the wicked king Bali, who was overcome by Viṣṇu as Trivikrama; in that context, the distinctive feature is to construct a small hut around a huge, standing pole erected in front of the temple and upon which a light is placed. The festival culminates as the hut is ignited and burned down around the pole, whereupon the pole itself is chopped down.
3. Not long after, in what the texts call *Dhanurmāsa* (December-January), a festive exercise requiring most of the month—twenty days in some texts, twenty-two in another—is enjoined. The purpose of it is, simply, 'to please God'. During the afternoons of this cycle, referred to as *adhyayanotsava*, daily recitations are made from the Vedas and other scriptures.¹⁴ The cycle commences on the first day of the bright fortnight. A special feature of this festival (according to SPSN XLVI: 43-83a) comes on the eleventh day, and is called *mokṣotsava*. At that time a special door leading out of the porch-like *ardhamaṇḍapa* is opened, and through it the Lord and His devotees ritually pass, 'recalling the wonder of salvation', in a way not unlike Vaikuntha *ekādaśī* is currently celebrated in many places.
4. At another time, God's image is taken on a horse 'into the forest'. There, in a celebration that is called *mṛgayotsava* or *mṛgayātrā*, the image is placed in the shade of a tree while the chief priest takes the Lord's bow and shoots arrows in all

- directions. This is followed by a special pūjā, and, according to one text at least (SPSN XLIII: 1-23), the left-over prasāda is duly distributed to *vānaprastha*-s who, thereby, are allowed a glimpse of the Lord. The texts vary on when this festival is held. Some authorities indicate that it is an *utsava* in its own right celebrated either in January-February or, as the case may be, in October-November.¹⁵ Other sources indicate it is part of the *mahotsava* cycle and performed on the eighth day as part of it.¹⁶ Still other texts treat it as a concluding pageant on the tenth day after observance of the nine-day *Vijayalakṣmyutsava*, which is celebrated in October-November.¹⁷ In any case, the celebration gives the impression that it is a 'hunting festival'.
5. A 'swing' festival (*ḍolotsava*) is also stipulated in a number of Pāñcarātra texts.¹⁸ This, too, is done in the spring season—if it is performed as an independent *utsava* to ward off evils—and may last 3, 5, 7, or 9 days. Otherwise, it is done as part of the *mahotsava* cycle on the night of the eighth day, or as part of *kṛṣṇa jayantī* in *Śrāvaṇa*. In all cases, a suspended plank is prepared. On it is placed the Lord's image, usually alongside his consort. This is performed in a special *maṇḍapa*—pavilion, and *homa*-s, elaborate *snāna*-s and 'entertainments' are constituent elements of a picturesque celebration. The rewards for those who witness this event are stated to be great, and the rites are often followed by a procession of the image(s) through the streets.
 6. The 'spring' season—which ranges in the texts from as early as *Māgha* (January-February) to *Vaiśākha* (April-May)—is also, typically, a time for offering the Lord flowers, or fragrant leaves, or fruits for his pleasure. A number of *utsava*-s with this seasonal motif are recommended in the texts. In one group of these, the Lord's image is taken in procession to a garden, where he is allowed to enjoy a restful interlude in a natural setting. Flowers are gathered and offered to him, along with entertainments and food. All who witness these *vasantotsava* ministrations will be richly blessed.¹⁹ In another group of *utsava*-s with a springtime seasonal motif, called *damanotsava*/*damanikotsava*/*damanāropana*,²⁰ fragrant leaves are offered in or near the temple sanctuary to the deity following an elaborate bath. How the textual injunctions seem to be sustained in a small village temple is depicted in the film, 'Hindu Temple

Rites: Bathing the Image of God [*abhiṣeka*],²¹ for, the details in that filmed celebration were determined by the *arcaka*-s to accord with Pāñcarātra liturgical texts. To be distinguished from the foregoing is yet another 'springtime' *utsava*, called *kalhārotsava*.²² While similar to what has just been described, due to the fact that flower garlands and other fragrant offerings are presented to the Lord, this festival differs in two ways from what we have seen. For one thing, it is longer: it takes three days; and, for another, the motive for undertaking it is to avert disaster or to provide an expiation for wrong-doing. One text suggests it is suitable for bringing relief from famine, from enemy attack, and from a number of other stressful situations, while another text tells how the emperor Ambaiṣa atoned for killing a brahmin by performing *kalhārotsava*. Those who subsidize the performance of this celebration are promised the best of both worlds.

Also in the 'spring' season, but specifically on the full-moon day of *Vaiśākha* (April-May) when the *Vaiśākha*-star appears, the festival called *vaiśākhotsava* is to be celebrated.²³ As with the other spring-celebrations, the *utsava* is marked by offerings of seasonal flowers and/or fruits presented to the Lord. These presentations are accompanied by rituals and entertainments, and preceded by an *abhiṣeka*-bath in a special pavilion.

7. As spring gives way to summer, and as the phases of nature progress from flower to fruit, and as the agricultural cycle moves from sprouting season to harvesting season, and—not insignificantly—as the year advances from *uttarāyaṇa* toward or into *dakṣiṇāyaṇa*, we note that the spring-type festivals of flowers are replaced by summer and autumn celebrations featuring food-stuffs and other fruit-offerings signifying the harvest of the fields and trees. One such is the *phalotsava*, a festival marked in either *Jyeṣṭha* (May-June) or *Śrāvaṇa* (July-August), a prominent part of which is fruit-offerings and decorations of various kinds. Perhaps most typical of these 'harvest' festivals, however, is what is called variously *āgrāyaṇotsava*/*āgrenotsava*.²⁴ This falls invariably in the *dakṣiṇāyaṇa* half of the year, different texts allowing it to be undertaken anytime from *Āṣādhā* (June-July) to *Pauṣa* (December-January). In it, after a procession to the fields with the image of Hanumān or Viṣvaksena or Garuḍa, the priests ceremoniously cut grain and bring it back

to the temple where they pound (some of?) it into powder, make that into a food-offering, present it to the Lord and, afterwards, distribute it to devotees (while the remainder of the original harvest is stored?). One text states that the purpose of this festival is to promote future crops.

8. Meanwhile, during the 'summer months', attention is turned to what is variously called *kalahotsava*/*pranayakalahotsava*/*madhumā-sotsava*, a celebration enjoined by several Pāñcarātra texts.²⁵ This festival event celebrates a quarrel between the Lord and his consort. In the course of this *utsava*, priests—some of whom, standing on one side of the temple-door, impersonate the Lord who is 'locked out' by his aggrieved spouse, and others of whom, on the other side of the temple-door, take the Goddess' role—carry on a lively, dialogue-like dramatic exchange. Sometimes, a part of the exchange includes throwing flower-balls, water, powders, etc., through the door. In all, the Goddess refuses her Lord entry thrice before relenting. This festival is altogether a picturesque and quite charming, as well as colorful, celebration.

9. Another celebration that should be attended to in the summer or autumnal season, prior to the termination of the liturgical year when most festivals are suspended during the four-month *caturmāsa* period, is the so-called floating festival, known as *plavotsava*.²⁶ This is a visually memorable event, and most persons who have ever witnessed it recall it vividly. For, in it the image of God is placed on a barge and floated around the temple tank, or, alternatively, carried to a nearby reservoir or lake and there paid royal homage in a decorated barge that floats around the perimeters of the watery area. The barges carry not only the image of the Lord and his consort(s) but also a priestly company, some musicians, and, not uncommonly, a number of local dignitaries or temple trustees. At night, if the floating festival continues past dark, it will nowadays be stridently emblazoned with neon tubes of several hues, or it will be draped with strings of colored, carnival-like light bulbs—both innovations being modern substitutes for the gently flickering oil lamp illumination suggested by the texts. After the float is brought back to dock, the Lord disembarks and is carried in procession back to the sanctuary. The 'floating festival' usually lasts a day

and, although it is clear that it may be regarded as an independent celebration, most temples choose to incorporate it as a part of their *mahotsava* cycle.

10. The cycle of the Pāñcarātra liturgical year approaches full circle with the observance of the 'sleeping festival', called *śayanotsava* or *svāpotsava*.²⁷ This is done near the beginning of *dakṣiṇāyana*, the commencement of the generally inauspicious half of the year. It is an observance that lasts four months—already referred to before as *caturmāsa*, the period from *Āṣāḍha* (June-July) to *Kārttika* (October-November)—marking that part of the human year/Lord's day when Viṣṇu is believed to be 'at rest'. As already noted, during that time no grand (*naimittika* or *kāmya*) festivals are undertaken—except for *pavitropāṇa*, as, for example, at Kanchipuram on 5 September 1971—although the continuity of daily (*nitya*) temple-*pūjās* are maintained. It is a time when worshippers are urged, instead, to undertake and fulfil certain personal *vratas* ('vows'). This 'sleeping festival' is to be preceded by an elaborate bath of the Lord's image, during which it is divested of its ornamental plates and prepared for its 'rest'-period. This part of the celebration is called *jyēṣṭhyabhiṣeka*, and it was marked—for examples—on 4 July 1971 at Śrīmushnam, on 6 July 1971 at Śrīraṅgam, and on 10 July 1971 at Kanchipuram. The actual period of 'repose' commences a bit later, and is marked by a one-day observance.

At the end of two months of 'rest', a minor festival is permitted in order to 'turn God over', and it is called *parivartanotsava*. When the four-month period has elapsed, a major festival occurs—as already noted, above—known as *utthāpanotsava*/*prabodhotsava*/*bodhanotsava*—and the cycle of festivals (liturgical year?) starts all over again in the order just enumerated.

Concluding Remarks, and Some Unresolved Problems

The preceding review is advanced simply as a contribution to what is—in the West, at least—a nascent enterprise, the study and interpretation of *utsava* performances in South Indian temples. The limitations of the present, modest exercise are obvious. The resources used are exclusively literary; and future studies should

include comparison of textual prescriptions with actual performances at various temples. Moreover, the literature examined here is only that of the *Pāñcarātrāgama*, and hence is directly relevant only to ceremonies in Śrī-Vaiṣṇava temples adhering to Pāñcarātra rules (that is, to about one-fourth to one-third of South Indian temples dedicated to Viṣṇu). What prevails in Viṣṇu temples adhering to the *Vaikhānasāgama* (or to other Vaiṣṇava-oriented ritual traditions) will perhaps be rather different; and there may be little significant correlation here with what defines practices in Śaiva, Śākta, or Vaidika-type temples. Also, it remains to be documented that there are important continuities linking the so-called high, literary traditions and what may be observed in countless village shrines and sanctuaries of the popular, folk cults.

Even within the confines of its given focus, the foregoing survey mediates only some general impressions derived from a cursory reading of the *primary* texts of the *Pāñcarātrāgama*. No attempt has been made here to indicate any details or to translate specific passages. Nor has there been reference to the enormous—and almost entirely unexplored—secondary literature attached to the Pāñcarātra school: the *nibandha*-s ('digests') that serve as manuals and guides for local temple *arcaka*-s. These works supposedly summarize, but evidently supplement, the primary *āgama* texts. If turned to, they would considerably increase the data at our disposal concerning local, variant practices at particular temples.²⁸

Finally, the literature alluded to in the preceding survey is closed to the reader familiar only with Western languages. The citations given are truly useful only to those who can read Sanskrit in a variety of scripts and who have, in addition, access to works that are, more often than not, available only in out-of-print editions or in unprinted, manuscript form. Yet, for such persons this compendium of references provides the raw materials for further research.²⁹

With these limitations in mind, the staggering dimensions of certain unresolved problems become apparent. The ones mentioned here are confined to those that emerge from the materials at hand only—the data found in the primary texts of the *Pāñcarātrāgama*. Once these are recognized, it remains only to be cautious generally in regard to the larger framework of South Indian temple studies.

First, there is the problem of when the Pāñcarātra 'liturgical year' commences. The foregoing review has ordered the material *as if* the liturgical year indeed commences at the end of *Kārttika* (October-November) when the Lord commences his 'day' by being 'awakened' in the *utthāpanotsava* celebrations at the end of his *yoganidrā*-sleep during the four-month hiatus of *caturmāsa*.³⁰ By so doing, a suggestive structure was afforded the various *naimittika* and *kāmya utsava*-s enjoined by the texts for observance throughout the year, commencing with *dīpotsava* and *adhyayanotsava* upon the Lord's 'waking' and culminating with the all-validating *pavitṛāropana* rites at the end of his 'day' once he has retired by means of the *śayanotsava* rites. But, while this order satisfies a structural scheme in some details, it goes counter to what seems clearly to be indicated in at least two texts—PSOT XXVII:1, 4 and PADM 'car' XIV:11 et passim, both already cited in the body of this paper—that the 'year' starts in *Caitra* (April-May). To choose between two traditions, both derived from the texts, is to invoke criteria concerning preferences that are, at best, problematical.

Second, assume we do choose one or the other of the two traditions. For example, suppose *Caitra* is the commencement of the liturgical cycle: we are then faced with the consequence that there seems to be no clear pattern emerging in the *utsava*-s enjoined by the texts. Yet, on the other hand, should we choose the other, alternate tradition—namely that the end of *caturmāsa* marks the beginning of the liturgical year—is it clear, even then, that what follows in the pattern of prescribed *naimittika* and *kāmya utsava*-s suggests anything more convincing? That is, do the events enjoined for celebrations, starting in *Mārgaśīrṣa* and progressing through the year conceived as the 'Lord Day', point to any *story* being 'played out', or to a *history* being 'remembered', or to a *myth* being 'recapitulated', or to *mundane concerns* being 'cultivated in microcosm' in the temple? The situation here, also, is not quite clear. While there are clues towards viewing the various routines as 'bio-fests' of some kind—either in terms of the concerns, writ large, of a human day (viz., getting up in the 'morning', bathing, hearing Vedic recitations, taking exercise, entertainment and refreshment, and retiring, etc.), or in terms of the concerns, also writ large, of repeatable events (viz., of 'hunting', 'swinging', 'quarreling', etc.), or in terms of *both*—yet elements are obviously missing. To

take only a single example, one is struck by the absence in the foregoing compendium of festival events of citations to any *utsava*-s pertaining to the marriage of the Lord—there simply are no autonomous celebrations like *vivāhotsava* or *kalyāṇotsava* retrievable in the literature at hand. (To be sure, marriage celebrations are mentioned in association with *pratiṣṭhā* procedures at a temple upon completion of its construction, and as part of the honor given to Śrī or Lakṣmī in cycles of worship devoted to her.) Just as one finds ‘bio-fests’ commemorating the Lord’s birthday and some other biological or biographical events, one would expect likewise to see ‘marriage’ elevated to a special *utsava*. Such references are not found in the *Pāñcarātrāgama utsava* materials. To impose a structural framework on what is available in the texts is simply to encounter other, perhaps more complicated, problems. And, to suggest that what is missing *ought* nevertheless to be there, or that, because what we now have is somehow ‘defective’, what is missing was *probably* once there, is to venture beyond the limits of caution.

A third problem: assume for a moment, again; that the evidence points to a liturgical year that commences in *Mārgaśīrṣa*. Does the sequential order of the *naimittika* and *kāmya utsava*-s, indeed, appear to celebrate events in the on-going calendar of the God’s ‘life’? Perhaps our difficulty in seeing a convincing pattern lies only in restricting ourselves too rigidly to a cycle that spans a ‘human’ year; perhaps the cycle of reference that will make sense out of our data is a time span that is longer than the single ‘human’ year. But no matter how flexible we may attempt to be on the matter, questions still remain, hence the problem is still unresolved. For, because the texts give so many options in each *utsava* recommended in regard to *when* it should be celebrated, it is in fact very difficult to set down with any assurance a preferred schedule for a festival calendar. Perhaps such a ‘schedule’ will emerge only after collecting what is—after prolonged site-studies at temples adhering to Pāñcarātra traditions—observed to occur at temples during extended periods. But, even then, will such a schedule—the actual sequential order of *naimittika*- and *kāmya-utsava*-s observed in a number of temples—uphold or controvert a ‘bio-fest’ interpretation of Pāñcarātra festivals? We cannot at this point say. We can only observe, for the present, that if the texts at hand once had a preferred time *when* the *utsava*-s were to be celebrated, this

is now remarkably unclear; the importance in the texts received seems to be, rather, *that* the *utsava-s* be performed—the many options as to *when* they may be done seem to serve the simple purpose of insuring their performance.

A fourth problem concern the score, or more, of *utsava-s* mentioned in the texts only once or twice. Of the many festivals mentioned by name in the texts, only some are described at length. The rest—although they may at one time have been, or in some places still may be, popular—are alluded to only in passing, and in such abbreviated terms as to render their interpretation extremely hazardous. Again, both site-studies and recourse to the *nibandha-s* may enlighten us here, and lead us eventually to a fuller comprehension of the meaning of *utsava* in the Pāñcarātra context.

Until such problems as the preceding can be adequately resolved for the Pāñcarātra tradition, and until analogous text-surveys and site-studies for Śaiva, Smārta and other traditions are supplied and carefully compared, our conclusion must be that the *meaning* of ‘festival(s)’ in South Indian temples remains elusive of safe characterization.

ADDENDUM Bibliography of Primary Texts Cited

Note: Citations to textual sources in the foregoing article were regularly made by using a four-letter abbreviation for the title, followed by a Roman numeral (to indicate the chapter-number) and Arabic digits (to refer to śloka-numbers). The following entries, below, provide a key to the abbreviations used in the article, and will provide to the interested reader access to the original texts. The entries preceded by an asterisk will prove to be the most rewarding sources for further study.

AGST¹: *Agastya-saṃhitā*, a rare, unpublished manuscript (leaf/Telugu) containing portions of an “authentic” Pāñcarātrāgama work by this title, pieced together with additional fragments found in two other manuscripts, *Prāyaścittapaṭala* (paper/Grantha) and *Pūjāsaṃgraha* (leaf/Telugu)—all of which are housed at the Madras Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, *mss.* D. 5191, R. 2996 and R. 2856 respectively. (A copy of the reconstructed *Agastya-saṃhitā*¹ text, transliterated into Devanāgarī script, is also available in the Smith Āgama Collection, Syracuse, N.Y.) Relevant passages of a general nature pertaining to *utsava* will be found in VI:1-175 (entire chapter); śls. 1-2 define *utsava* as “remover of misery”. This work is to be carefully differentiated from AGST²—an apocryphal Pāñcarātrāgama work which has undergone four printings (Lucknow, 1898; Calcutta, 1910 [Bengali]; Ayodhya, n.d. [Nāgarī]; and Mysore, 1957 [Kannada]).

- ANRD: *Aniruddha-saṃhitā*, Mysore published by A. Srinivasa Iyengar 1956 [Devanāgarī]. In this work, according to XXV:1-4, five annual festivals are obligatory in all Pāñcarātra temples, failure to observe which nullifies monthly and regular offerings. The five: *jayantī-utsava* (Kṛṣṇa's birthday), *kṛttikotsava* (lamp festival), *āgrāyanotsava* (harvest festival), *adhyayanotsava* (scriptural recitations), and *pavitṛāropana*—and nowhere else in the literature are these same five so conjoined and isolated for emphasis. See also XVII:9-16a for propitiation purposes of an *utsava*; XX:1 where *utsava* is defined as a “remover of inauspicious things” and as the “remover of misery,” 3-9 and 14-16 for occasions, 11-13 for durations; and XXI-XXVIII for specific festivals.
- BRBR: *Bṛhad-brahma-saṃhitā*, published in three editions: (a) Tirupati, Srivenkateshwara Press, 1909 [Telugu]; (b) Banaras, 1909 [Devanāgarī]; (c) Poona. Anandāśrama Press (A. S. S. No. 68), 1912 [Devanāgarī]. This work has little to do with overt, public worship, but in I:viii-ix there are some data re: special, annual worship of Lakṣmī that provide useful corollaries to temple-routines.
- HAYA (“Ādi”): *Hayaśīrṣa-saṃhitā*, of which only the “Ādi-kāṇḍa” until now is in print (2 vols.), Rajshahi (East Pakistan [now Bangladesh]), Varendra Research Society, 1952/1957 [Devanāgarī]. “Ādi” chapters XXXVI-XXXIX rehearse details of the elaborate baths and other celebrations consequent to the installation of images and the commencement of worship in a newly-constructed temple; in passing, some data generally applicable to “festivals” are encountered.
- *ISVR¹: *Īśvara-saṃhitā*. an important work of the P⁰ canon, available in two printed versions: (a) Mysore, Sadvidya Press, 1890 [Telugu], and (b) Conjeevaram, Sudarsana Press, 1923 [Devanāgarī]. For materials on *utsava*, see X-XIX *passim*; esp. X: 4a-10 for general discussion, 14f. for duration (*cf.* XIV); also XII: 1-223 (entire chapter) for lists of festivals with descriptions; and XIX: 469-743 for *prāyaścittas*.
- JAYA: *Jayākhyā-saṃhitā*, Gaekwad's Oriental Series Vol. 54, Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1931 (re-issued 1967) [Devanāgarī]. This work is focussed on domestic and personal piety, and has only oblique relevance to *utsava*-concerns. For *pavitṛāropana* used as a *prāyaścitta* for *pūjā*-lapses, see XXI.
- KPJL: *Kapīñjala-saṃhitā*, available in two printed editions: (a) Cuddapah, K.C.V. Press, 1896 [Telugu], and (b) Bhadracalam, The Publication of the Literary Pride of India, No. 1, 1932 (?) [Telugu]. See XXII: 3-5 for *nitya/naimittika/kāmya* classification, 8-9 for duration; XXIII: 1-84 (entire chapter).
- *MARK: *Mārkaṇḍeya-saṃhitā*, Yadagirigutta, published by the Executive Officer of the Śrī Lakṣmī Narasiṃhasvāmivan Devasthānam, 1975 [Devanāgarī]. See Ch. XXI for classifications (1ff.) and for rules of routine festivals (5-173); XXII:1-127, general procedures for *utsavas*; XXIII:1-150, *pavitṛārotsava*; XXIV:1-178, *ḍolāropana*; XXV:1-60a, *dīpāropana*.
- NRDY: *Nārādīya-saṃhitā*, Tirupati, Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, K.S.V. Series No. 15, 1971 [Devanāgarī]—although in this study, use was made of *ms.* R. 2503 of the Madras Government Oriental Manuscripts

Library (paper/Grantha), to which all citations refer. For nitya/naimittika/kāmya classification (*utsava* defined as the “source of yajña”), see XVIII: 3-7; also 8-10 states *utsava* is preceded by añkurārpaṇa, dhvajārohaṇa and devatāhvāna; 11 for duration, 12-15 for occasions; and XXV:146 as prāyaścitta.

- *PADM: “car”: *Pādma-saṃhitā*, “caryāpāda” section only. This currently most widely-used and highly respected work of the Pāñcarātrāgama canon is divided into four sections, the fourth and last one, the “caryāpāda” containing 33 chapters. The work has undergone several editions, two being most accessible at this writing: (a) Mysore, Sadvidya Press, 1891 (reprinted 1912) [Telugu]; (b) Mysore, The International Academy of Sanskrit Research, 1965/1969 [Telugu, a reprint of an edition dated 1887?]. One or more additional versions are available in Telugu script; an edition in Devanāgarī (Madras, Pāñcarātra Pariśodhana Pariṣad, 1974) will be complete when the second volume containing the “caryāpāda” appears. This is an important source for further study of *utsava*. See “car” X:6 where *utsava* is defined as “remover of misery,” 7-19a for nitya/naimittika/kāmya classification, 24-27 for miscellaneous rules during festival occasions; XI:1-292 (entire chapter) on mahotsava; XIV: 1-185 (entire chapter) on *jayantī*-s for Rāma, *et al.*
- PARA: *Parama-saṃhitā*, Gaekwad’s Oriental Series Vol. 86, Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1940 [Devanāgarī]. Only Ch. XXII has anything to do with *utsava*-matters.
- PAUS: *Pauṣkara-saṃhitā*, Bangalore, published by A. Srinivasa Aiyengar & M.C. Thirumalachariar, 1934 [Devanāgarī]. Chapters XXX-XXXI contain some materials relating to pavitrāropaṇa and to the four-month period of hiatus in worship during the Lord’s *yoganidrā*.
- *PMES: *Pārameśvara-saṃhitā*, Śrīraṅgam, Śrī Vilasam Press, 1953 [Devanāgarī]. See XVI:1-551 (entire chapter), 2-3 defines *utsava* as “remover of misery,” 3b-8 *et passim* for nitya/naimittika/kāmya classification; XVII: 550 for “dōt’s.”
- PRMP: *Paramapurūṣa-saṃhitā*, Bhadracalam, Publication of the Literary Pride of India, No. 4, 1938 [Telugu]. See IV:123-130 for “dō’s” and “dōt’s” in *utsava*-s, 131-147 for spiritual and mundane benefits.
- PRSR: *Parāśara-saṃhitā*, Bangalore, V.M. Śāla Press, 1898 [Telugu]. Only the end of Ch. XXI deals with *utsava*-matters, and then only obliquely, before a break in the text.
- PSOT: *Puruṣottama-saṃhitā*, Bhadracalam, The Publication of the Literary Pride of India, No. 2, 1932 [Telugu]. See XXIII:2b-3a *utsava* as “best yajña,” 5 defines *utsava* as “that which takes away saṃsāra,” 6 for nitya/naimittika/kāmya classification; XXVII:1-66 (entire chapter) for outline of the liturgical year, starting in Caitra-month.
- SATT: *Sāttvata-saṃhitā*, Conjeevaram, Sudarsana Press, “Sāsthra-mukta-vali” No. 15, 1902 [Devanāgarī]. Chapters XIV & XV concern themselves with pavitrārohaṇa-rites.
- SESA: *Śeṣa-saṃhitā*, Mysore, 1935 [Devanāgarī]. This source was not referred to at all in the preceding article, and it is of oblique relevance only to

the study of *utsava*. However, Ch. IV-X deal with mantras to be utilized during domestic celebrations of the *jayantī*-s of Narasiṃha, Matsya...and Balarāma.

- SDLY: *Śāṅḍilya-saṃhitā*, Banaras, The Princess of Wales Saraswati Bhavan Texts No. 60, 1935/1936 [Devanāgarī]. This is a work divided into four sections. See I:xv:1-87a for monthly festivals, 87b-126 for kāmya celebrations. (Another publication under this title, published in Bombay in 1887 [Devanāgarī] claims to be the “fifth khāṇḍa” of 15 chapters to this work.)
- SNTK: *Sanatkumāra-saṃhitā*, Adyar, Adyar Library and Research Centre, 1967 [Devanāgarī]. Although this work was not referred to at all in the preceding article, it is nonetheless an important text, because old. Its second section, called “Śiva-rātra,” contains a chapter (IX) in which all 82 śloka focus on general procedures during *utsava*, particularly the preliminaries.
- *SPSN: *Śrīpraśna-saṃhitā*, available in two editions: (a) Kumbakkonam, Mangalavilāsa Press, 1904 [Grantha]; and (b) Tirupati, Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, K. S. V. Series No. 12, 1969 [Devanāgarī]. See XXIX: 1-112, esp. 79-87 for what constitutes nityotsava; XLIX:251-382 for prāyaścittas in atonement for mistakes in *utsava* routines. Chs. XXX-XXXVII deal with mahotsavas, Chs. XXXVIII-XLVIII with other utsavas in reasonable detail.
[Note: our chapter-numbers accord with the Devanāgarī edition’s arrangement.]
- VKSN: *Viṣvaksena-saṃhitā*, Tirupati, Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, K.S.V. Series No. 17, 1972 [Devanāgarī]. See Ch. XXVII:1-12 for occasions and durations; 13-24a for fifteen steps required in all proper celebrations; 59-177 for further description of preliminary and winding-down activities. See also Chs. XXVIII, XXIX and XXX
- VSNU: *Viṣṇu-saṃhitā*, Trivandrum, T.S.S. No. 85, 1925 [Devanāgarī]. See XX: 1-102a *passim* for general rules, XXI:1-33 for tīrthotsava.
- VTLK: *Viṣṇutilaka-saṃhitā*, Bangalore, Bangalore Book Depot, 1896 [Telugu]. Chapter VIII:1-255 lists preliminaries and procedures, 256-298 lists miscellaneous festivals, giving times for each.
- *VVM: *Viśvāmitra-saṃhitā*, Tirupati, Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, K.S.V. Series No. 13, 1970 [Devanāgarī]. See XVII:1-248a; XVIII:1-179, utsava; XIX-XX, snapana; XXIV:1-101a, XXV:1-188a, XXVI: 1-88, various garlanding celebrations.

Notes

1. See H. Daniel Smith, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Printed Texts of the Pāñcarātrāgama*, Baroda: Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, 1975 (Gaekwad’s Oriental Series, Vol. 158).
2. Attention should be called to a complementary approach to the matter of festivals, that offered by the *Census of India*, 1961, Vol. IX, Madras. Pt. VII-B, *Fairs and Festivals*, *passim*.

3. The daily worship in a temple following Pāñcarātra liturgies will be found described in various texts in chapters with titles bearing such elements as: *nityotsava*, *pūjā*, *arcana*, *abhyārcana*, *agnikārya*, *aṣṭāṅgapūjā*, *ārādhana*, *āsana*, *dravya*, *ijya*, *nityārcana*, *nityayāga*, *balidāna*, *samārādhana*, *upācāra*, *yāga*, etc.—e. g., ISVR¹, II-VI; PADM 'car' II:1-157; SPSN XXVIII-XXIX (consult the Addendum for references and a key to abbreviations). For monthly celebrations of the regular variety, see chapters with sections entitled: *māsotsava*, *pakṣotsava*, *pratisamvotsava* and *amāvāsyotsava*. Two specific references may be cited that provide an insight into the degree of respect afforded to the *ekādaśī* traditions in the texts—PRMP X:1-75 (which includes a myth concerning the origins of the *ekādaśī*-vow, rewards for observing it, and step-by-step directions for how to do it) and BRBR IV:v:1-135 (a eulogy of *ekādaśī* rites). *Devādaśī*-festivities, following immediately upon the conclusion of the fast and night-watch of *ekādaśī*, are discussed in ISVR¹ XII:1-24a; PRPM X-41-44; and PAUS XXXI:293-309. Both are celebrated in distinctive ways during *Mārgaśīrṣa*, vide PADM 'car' XV:25-46. For *Amāvāsyā* celebrations, see VKSN [XXVIII:1-105, passim; and for star-days that are recurring, see ISVR¹ XII:1-10 and VKSN, XXVIII, passim; see also SPSN, XLVII:59-68. For a continuing cycle of a 30-day celebration to each in turn of the Lord's *mūrtin*-aspects, commencing with *Keśava* in *Mārgaśīrṣa*, *Nārāyaṇa* in *Puṣya*, et al., see PADM 'car' XV:121b-136a and SATT, VIII:46-116 et passim; and compare VKSN XXI:1-24 passim. Reference to these and other topics will be found in this author's *A Descriptive Bibliography of Pāñcarātrāgama, Vol II. An Annotated Index to Selected Topics* (Baroda: Gaekwad's Oriental Series, 1979)].
4. Even during the hiatus of *caturmāsa* (mid-July to mid-November), when most other festive celebrations are suspended, the *nityotsava* routines continue in uninterrupted regularity.
5. ANRD XXI:1-112 (entire—a 10-day festival); ISVR¹ X:1-412 (entire—a 9-day festival) XI:1-439 (entire); NRDY XVIII:8-95, XIX:1-174 (entire), XX-XXII passim; PRMP, IV:131-134; PADM 'car', XI:1-292; PMES, XVI:1-551 (entire), XVII:1-620a; PSOT XXIII:1-96a, XXIV:1-202 (entire, with an interesting optional schedule given for the 9-day event, 82-197), XXV:1-66 (entire); MARK, XVII:13 (*śraddhotsava* identified as *mahotsava* done without *aṅkurārpaṇa*-rites); XXII:1-127 (entire); VVMT XVII:1-257a, XVIII:1-189; VTLK, VIII:122-225 et passim; VSNU XX:1-102a (entire), XXI:1-30; SNDY, I:xv:33b (done on Hari's 'birthday'); SPSN XXX:8 (defined), 9-37, and XXXII-XXXIV passim, XLIX:217-220, 228, 229, 239, 262-64.
6. See ISVR¹ XI:278-311; VVMT XVIII:95-124 et passim; VTLK VIII:154ff. and SPSN XXXVI:86-106.
7. See ISVR¹ etc. XI:317-356; KPJL, XXIII:44-70; NRDY, XIX:112-126a; PADM 'car', XI:201b-230; PMES, XVII:363-418; PSOT, XXIV:182-197; MARK, XXI:4; VVMT, XVIII:123-180; VTLK, VIII:79-86; VSNU, XXI:1-33; and SPRS, XXXVI:122-140. Compare with *cūrnotsava*, in which the image of God is smeared with powders and oils on one of the latter days of *mahotsava*: KPJL, XXIII:71-74; NRDY, XIX:93-111, XX:107 et passim; PMES, XVII:324-347; VTLK, VIII:136ff.; VSNU, XX:58-64 et passim; and SPSN, XXXVI:67-83. According to two texts, this *avabhṛtha*-

snāna-bathing rite is a festival quite independent, however, of the *mahotsava* season: see ISVR¹, XXII:6ff, in which it may be done on 'special occasions'; and PARA, XXII:4-43, in which it is an independent 12-day festival in its own right.

8. See ANRD, XXV:5-27; ISVR¹, XIII:1:86; NRDY, XXIV:8b-22 (fasting recommended); PRMP, IX:1-82; PADM 'car', XIV:30b-33a; PSOT, XXVII:17-20a; VVMT, XVI:65-103; VTLK, VIII:289-292; VKSN, XXX:1-55; and SPSN, XLI:1-77a (53-68: *Sikyotsava*, a special festival connected with *Kṛṣṇotsava* in which people reenact some of the frolics of Kṛṣṇa and hit pots suspended from pulleys; reminiscent of the festival performed at Manargudi).
9. A 'birthday' celebration at the famous Vaiṣṇava temple in Śrīperumbudur has been captured, in part, on film in 'Pilgrimage to a Hindu Temple' (14 minutes, color/sound, distributed by Syracuse University, 1968); it is the *jayantī* of Ācārya Rāmānuja, a revered Śrī-Vaiṣṇava saint of the twelfth century.
10. ISVR¹, XIII:86-90; PRMP, IX:1-82 passim; PRSR, XXVI:61-71 (Haṃsa); BRBR, I:xi:40 passim (Lakṣmī); PADM 'car', XIV:3-11a (Rāma and Nṛsiṃha); PSOT, XXVII:4-21 (Rāma, Nṛsiṃha, Vāmana, Hanumān, ...Varāha); VVMT, XVI:103-111a (Rāma, Nṛsiṃha); VTLK, VIII:290-292 (Rāma, Nṛsiṃha); VKSN, XXIX:1-22a (Rāma); and SPSN, XLVII:39-58 (Rāma, Varāha, Nṛsiṃha, *et al.*). For *vrata*-s associated with various deities and their *jayantī*-s see SATT, VIII:46-116.
11. See ANRD, XXIV:1-159; ISVR¹, XIV:1-274; KPJL, XXXII:1-87a (different from most treatments); JAYA, XXI:1-119 et passim; NRDY XXIII:1-84a, XXV:201ff.; PRMP, IV:75-84 passim; PADM 'car', XIV:54-147 et passim; PMES, XII:45-507 et passim; PSOT, XXVI:1-67a; MARK, XXIII:1-150a (entire); VVMT, XXIV:1-102a (entire); VTLK, VIII:206-255 (part of *mahotsava*, on the evening of the tenth day); VSNU, XXVIII:68b-94; SPSN, XLII:23-132a; and SATT, XIV:1-35 (entire), XV:1-34 (entire).
12. See ISVR¹, XII:231 et passim; KPJL, XXVIII:14ff.; PADM 'car', XV:3b-7; PMES, XIII:126-190 et passim, 212 (for *phala*); PSOT, XXVII:37-39a; BRBR, I:xi:20bff. (for Lakṣmī); VVMT, XVI:55-65, 110bff. (called *parivartana*); SPSN, XL:37-53a (called here *utthānotsava*). Compare SPSN, XXVIII:13-15 (for the *daily* routine of waking up the Lord).
13. See ANRD, XXV:1-4 (in Āśvina), 28-49 (desc.), XXVI:1-7 (cont'd.), also XXII:16-17 (in *Kārttika*); ISVR¹, XIII:147-207; PRMP, IV-180 (*phala*), IX:71b-80 (when done); PADM 'car', XV:8-24; PMES, XVII:612 (briefly described, but not mentioned by name); PSOT, XXVII:39b-45 (lights lit, God taken on *vāhana*); MARK, XXV:1-60a (entire); VVMT, XVI:112-121a; VTLK, VIII:272-273; SPSN, XLIV:1-56 passim (related to the story of Bali, 1-10; hut is burned as part of celebration, 28-56); SATT, VII:11-37a (discussed in context of *vratas*); mentioned in passing during a brief survey of celebrations in HAYA 'Ādi', XXXVI-XXXIX.
14. See ANRD, XXVI:18-24; PMES, XVII:60b (implied, as part of *mahotsava*); PSOT, XXVII:47b-50 (20-day festival in *dhanurmāsa*); and SPSN, XLVI:7-42 (22-day festival in *dhanurmāsa*), 74-83 (*mokṣotsava*).
15. AGST¹, VI:145 (called *mṛgayātrā*, as an *utsava*); ISVR¹, XIII:254-262; VTLK,

- VIII:275b; SPSN, XLIII:1-23 (on the tenth day of bright fortnight of *Nabhasya*).
16. ISVR¹, XI:312-314a; PADM 'car', XI:180-209; PMES, XVII:348-361 (eighth day); PSOT, XXIV:174-181 (eighth day); MARK, XXII:57-62; VVMT, XVIII:129-132; and VTLK, VIII:152-153 (eighth day).
 17. ISVR¹, XIII:127-146; PRMP, IX:51b-60; and PSOT, XXVII:25b-30.
 18. For this as an independent festival, see ISVR¹, XII:161-205a; MARK, XXIV:1-178; SPSN, XLV:1-45a. For this as a constituent of *mahotsava*, see ISVR¹, XI:312; PSOT, XXIV:128b-134 (fourth day); MARK, XXIV:1-2. For this as a part of *jayantī*, see ISVR¹, XIII:59, and appropriate passages elsewhere on *Kṛṣṇa jayantī*.
 19. See PADM 'car', XIV:11b-13 (called here, confusingly, *madhumāsotsava*); PMES, XVII:565; PSOT, XXVII:1-3 (*snāpana* and ornaments offered along with flowers); SDLY, I:xv:14a (*vasantakṛīḍanotsava* in February-March); SPSN, XXXVIII:1-32. See, also, SPSN XXXVII:102-111, a celebration similar to *vasantotsava*, called *śayanotsava*, in which, at the end of the *mahotsava*, the *utsavabera*-image of the Lord is allowed to 'rest up' in a cool place.
 20. ANRD, XXII:7, XXIII:1ff.; ISVR¹, XII:63-92; PADM 'car', XIV:14-15; PMES, XVII:565-95; PSOT, XXVII:66-68; VVMT, XXIV:101b, XXVI:1-91; and VTLK, VIII:261.
 21. Distributed by Syracuse University Film Rental Library, 1455 East Colvin Street, Syracuse, New York.13210 (13 minutes color/sound, produced in 1968).
 22. PADM 'car', XIV:17-18; PSOT, XXVII:10b-12a; MARK, XXVIII:2b, 7a; VVMT, XXIV:101a, XXV:1-186 (the most lengthy treatment), XXVI passim; VTLK, VIII:259-60; and SPSN, XLVIII:1-41a (a peculiar element introduced here, having to do with repaving the streets used by the Lord's procession from the river back to the temple).
 23. See ISVR¹, XII:93-110a; and SPSN, XLVIII:33-53a.
 24. For *phalotsava*, see ANRD, XXII:9b, XXIII:10b-26; and PADM 'car', XIV:19-21a. For the other 'harvest' festivals, see ANRD, XXVII:1-36a (entire chapter; done in *Pauṣa*); ISVR¹, XII:143b-160 (said to equal 1000 *aśvamedhas*; in *Āṣādhā*); PADM 'car', XIV:168-85 (in *Śrāvāṇa* or in *Kārttika* or in *Āśvayuja*); PMES, XVIII:316 (an occasion where it is proper to offer *mahāhavis*); and VTLK, VIII:278-82 (called *āgrenotsava*).
 25. See ISVR¹, XII:24b-40 (here, confusingly, equated with *vasantotsava*; cf., PADM 'car', XIV:11b-13); VTLK, VIII:256-58 (no details); and SPSN, XLVII:2-18 (here, Viṣṇu left Lakṣmī to save a *bhakta*; the festival is called *praṇayakalahotsava*). See also ISVR¹, XI:312ff. Compare with ISVR¹, XII:41-60, describing *jalakṛīḍotsava*.
 26. See ISVR¹, XII:110b-143a; PSOT, XXIV:114-128a (part of *mahotsava*); VTLK, VIII:283; and SPSN, XL:1-46 (entire chapter).
 27. See ISVR¹, XII:205b-234a; KPJL, XXVIII:1-13 et passim; PADM 'car', XIV:25-28 (called *śayanotsava*); PMES, XIII:1-125; PSOT, XXVII:14b-16 and XXXI passim; VVMT, XVI:1-54; and SPSN, XL:15-36 (called *śayanotsava*).
 28. Countless handbooks of this type exists, in unpublished manuscript form as well as in cheap, locally available printed versions, in temples throughout South India operating according to Pāñcarātra traditions. A few manus-

cripts have found their way into libraries, but they have not been studied with an aim to augment our understanding of the meanings of temple festivals. See, for example, *Utsavasamgraha*, ms. R. 3286 at the Madras Government Oriental Manuscripts Library. The many printed versions seem not to find their ways into libraries, and unless systematically collected by scholars such ephemera will not be available for reference to future generations.

29. Although balanced, 'text and context' studies of temple festivals in South India remain to be written, the interested, non-specialist will find helpful information in several sources. For a discussion of festival performances at one Vaikhānasa temple in Madras, the reader may refer to J. L. Martin's essay, 'The Cycle of Festivals at Pārthasārathī Temple', included in this collection (pp. 51-75). Jan Gonda considers aspects of the Vaikhānasa literature on *utsava*-s in his *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, Utrecht: N. V. A. Oosthoek's Uitgevers Mij, 1954, pp. 244-62; and a complete translation of the festival section of the Vaikhānasa text—the *Kāśyapajñānakāṇḍaḥ*—is conveniently available in *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, translated by T. Goudriaan, The Hague: Mouton and Company, 1965, pp. 270-82. Extending Gonda's discussions, G. R. Welbon analyzes festival directives in the Vaikhānasa *samhitā*-s and *paddhati*-s with references to contemporary performances and to material in the Śaivāgama texts in his 'Under the Flag of Garuḍa: Religious Festivals in Vaikhānasa Literature and Practice', Philadelphia: Department of South Asia Regional Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 1979 (mimeographed). Additional information about the festival calendar and procedures according to the Śaivāgama is found in C.G. Diehl's *Instrument and Purpose*, Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1956, pp. 158-80.
30. Or, effectively, the start of *Mārgaśīrṣa* (November-December). Support for construing *Mārgaśīrṣa* as the beginning of the liturgical year is found in a vow in SATT, VIII:46-99. In this, special honor is to be paid for thirty days, starting in *Mārgaśīrṣa*, to each of the twelve *mūrtin*-forms respectively of the Lord, starting with Keśava and ending up with Dāmodara in *Kārttika*. Cf. ISVR¹, XIII:212-250 and PADM 'car', XV:121b-136a.

THE CYCLE OF FESTIVALS AT PĀRTHASĀRATHĪ TEMPLE

James L. Martin

THE PĀRTHASĀRATHĪSVĀMĪ TEMPLE in Triplicane, an old section of Madras, is a Śrī-Vaiṣṇava temple which follows the Vaikhānasa¹ rituals. The chief deity of the temple is Pārthasārathī, Kṛṣṇa in the form of Arjuna's charioteer. Kṛṣṇa is represented with two arms, the right holding the *Śaṅkha* (conch), and the left in the *varada mudrā*, a pose indicating the conferring of a boon.² Appearing with Pārthasārathī in the temple are his consort, Rukminī; his brothers, Sātyaki and Balarāma;³ his son, Pradyumna; and his grandson, Aniruddha. Although authorities of the temple claim that the grouping of these four images with Kṛṣṇa is unusual, none of the attendant deities is important in the festival cycle.

Viṣṇu appears in four other forms in this temple: Rāma, Nṛsimha, Gajendra-Varada, and Raṅganātha. Rāma⁴ is the *avatāra* who, with his consort, Sītā, is familiar as the central figure of the *Rāmāyana*. Nṛsimha⁵ is the man-lion *avatāra* who, by virtue of his mixed form, was able to slay the demon Hiraṇyakaśipu, who was vulnerable to neither man nor beast. Nṛsimha is portrayed in the act of eviscerating the demon. Viṣṇu, as Varadarāja (or Gajendra-Varada), is said to have saved Gajendra, the lord of elephants, from a crocodile.⁶ This form of Viṣṇu is found in the Varadarāja temple at Kāñcīpuram, one of the most important of the Vaiṣṇava temples. Raṅganātha, the fifth form of the deity, is Viṣṇu recumbent on Śeṣa the serpent, with Brahmā seated on a lotus growing out of his navel.⁷

Of these five forms of Viṣṇu, Pārthasārathī, as the chief deity, figures in far more festivals than the other four. Festivals common to all Vaiṣṇava temples will, at this temple, feature Pārthasārathī as the festival image. Such festivals include *Rathasaptamī* (known as *Ponkal* in Tamil Nadu),⁸ *Vaikunṭha Ekādaśī*, and *Dīpāvalī*.

Pārthasārathī also figures in monthly festivals at new moon, full moon, the two *ekādaśī* days (the eleventh day after the new and full

moons), and the first day of the Tamil month. A monthly festival is held for each of the five forms on the star-day appropriate to the form; two monthly festivals are held for Pārthasārathī—one on the star-day common to all forms of Viṣṇu, and one on Kṛṣṇa's star-day, *Rohiṇī*.⁹ Monthly festivals are held also for Śrī Vētavaḷḷi Tāyar, the consort of Raṅganātha; for Śrī Cēṇaimutaliyār (the chief of Viṣṇu's host, known also as Viṣvaksena); and for each of twelve *Ālvār*-s and ten *Ācārya*-s. The annual festivals are both more elaborate and more popular than the monthly festivals.

At the Pārthasārathīsvāmī Temple, during the Tamil year beginning 14 April 1971, some festival was in progress for a total of 345 days, a much higher figure than for most temples.¹⁰ Festivals ranged in length from one to ten days and frequently two or more festivals were scheduled for the same day. Fifteen annual festivals of from two to ten days in duration and eleven one-day festivals were held for deities. Ten-day festivals were held for nine of the *Ālvār*-s and *Ācārya*-s, and one-day festivals for the remaining thirteen.

Factors Influencing the Cycle

Among the factors determining the cycle of festivals, first place must be given to the fact that the *āgama*-s prescribe that festivals shall be observed and that certain rituals shall be followed in their observance.¹¹ Adherence to these authoritative writings is always cited by priests as the principal reason for holding festivals. The wealth of a given temple will be a major factor in determining the number, the length and the elaborateness of festivals. Money is needed to construct and maintain *vāhana*-s (processional vehicles for the images), to provide illumination for the processions, to hire bearers, to erect *pantal*-s, to employ musicians and, of course, simply to maintain the temple establishment which plans and administers the festivals. The longer a temple has been in existence, the more likely it is that it will have acquired sizeable endowments for the support of festivals.¹² Moreover, the size and wealth of the constituency will determine the amount of available funds. A temple such as Pārthasārathī, located in a large city with a large number of devotees, receives numerous gifts designated for festival expenses. Donors are eager to share in the benefits believed to accrue to

Festival sponsors¹³ and such donors are listed by name in the annual temple almanac.

In Vaiṣṇava temples, the number of forms of Viṣṇu there enshrined will affect the number of festivals, since each form must be shown proper respect. The mythology of the specific forms will affect the nature of the proceedings. For instance when Viṣṇu appears as Kṛṣṇa, he may be represented as the infant stealing the butter ball or as the mischievous youth hiding the *gopī-s'* clothing.

The sectarian tradition of the temple has some bearing on festivals, especially on those held for *Ācārya-s*. The Tenkalai affiliation of the Pārthasārathī Temple is reflected in the fact that a full ten-day festival is held for Maṇavāḷa Māmūnikaḷ a leading Tenkalai teacher. The Tenkalai emphasis on Tamil devotional literature is seen in the cycle of festivals held for the *Ālvār-s*. Both the sectarian and the local importance of certain *Ālvār-s* may be factors determining the longer festivals given to them as discussed below. Such festivals, however, are only part of a more inclusive tradition which venerates prominent figures in the school of Rāmānuja followed by Vaṭakalai-s as well as Tenkalai-s.

Dates of festivals are determined astrologically,¹⁴ and hence will occur at varying times on the Western calendar. The concluding day of the festival is always determined first, then the days are counted back from that, if it is to last longer than one day. The concluding day may be set either by reference to a designated day in the light or dark half of the phases of the moon in a given Tamil month, or by reference to one of the twenty-seven star-days (*nakṣatra-s*) in each month.¹⁵

Characteristics of the Festivals

Festivals at the Pārthasārathī Temple are genuine religious rites and by no means mere 'festivities'. There are relatively few commercial or frivolous activities attached to these festivals; the carnival atmosphere effected at some temples by merchants' stalls and children's rides is notably absent. Although both Carnatic and Western music accompanies the festivals, the music is viewed as an offering to the deity and is an integral part of the festival.¹⁶

One element of play seen at major Pārthasārathī Temple festivals is the creation of toy *vāhana-s* by small boys. The boys carry

their small replicas of the *vāhana*-s through the processional streets in the wake of the temple procession and solicit funds which they say will be used to employ a musician on the last day of the festival. According to the chief priest, this activity is not an official part of the festival but is organized by the children themselves.

The procession is the chief public feature of temple festivals in Tamil Nadu. The god of the temple in his *utsava*, or movable, forms¹⁷ is taken from the temple and carried in a clockwise direction through the main streets on the four sides of the temple. The streets used for this purpose are known as 'car streets' (*tērvīti*). At the Pārthasārathī Temple, the procession moves on streets immediately adjacent to the east, south, and west of the temple, then one street beyond the temple on the north. The image is carried on decorated palanquins or on *vāhana*-s, elaborate vehicles made in the form of animals or mythological beings. At the Pārthasārathī Temple, the *vāhana*-s are always carried on the shoulders of several men, but at some temples they are put on a wheeled carriage which can be pulled by two or three men. The procession stops frequently so that people may bring offerings to the god, who is attended by temple priests standing on the *vāhana*. Stops may be made at any point on the street, and stops are always made under temporary canopies (*pantal*) erected for major festivals,¹⁸ and at permanent pavilions (*maṇḍapa*), which have been provided by pious individuals as resting places for the god as he makes his circuit.¹⁹

Festival ceremonies held inside Vaiṣṇava temples are usually open only to devotees. These rites include the raising of a banner on the temple flagstaff (*dhvajastambha*), the growing of sprouts from several types of grain, the kindling of sacrificial fires, and the making of offerings.²⁰

Intention and Meaning

Priests questioned as to the meaning of festivals usually will say that festivals are prescribed in the *āgama*-s, and that the intent is to fulfil these requirements. Priests and other devotees sometimes describe festival activities as a repetition of acts of the gods, a meaning which would appear obvious to anyone acquainted with Vaiṣṇava mythology. There appear to be deeper levels of meaning, however, about which no comments are made.

The mere fact that the image of the god comes out of the temple is significant. Devotees ordinarily visit the temple for the specific purpose of looking upon the face of the deity, and they behave as if they are paying a visit to a royal household. But when the deity leaves the temple to move through the streets, there is a renewal of the god's gracious manifestation of himself to his devotees at various times in the past; the procession is a new theophany. But in another sense, the god is 'brought out'; he is taken on a journey. Like a royal personage coming out of his palace, he is greeted, presented with offerings, and welcomed by those who live along the processional streets or who have come there especially to see the god. The grace of God and service to God seem to be intertwined.

In contrast to festivals of Western religions, there is little of historical memory in Vaiṣṇava festivals. While Jewish, Christian, and Muslim festivals generally call to remembrance events in the history of the People of God (as in Judaism), or of the life of the historical founder, or founders, of the faith (as in Christianity and Islam), Vaiṣṇava festivals are primarily repetitions of the acts of the gods. Moreover, Vaiṣṇava festivals are not concerned with martyrdoms or passions. In these festivals, the god enjoys life: a sojourn in a garden on a summer day, a trip to the seashore, or the smelling of an aromatic herb. There seems to be no element of sorrow, no stress on penance for sins, no lament over even a temporary loss of divine sovereignty. The god is arrayed in splendor, and there is no question of his supremacy.

The festivals for *Ālvār*-s and *Ācārya*-s might be compared to Christian saints' festivals where the human approach to God is the focus of attention. Here, too, the observances are singularly free of somber elements. The Vaiṣṇava saints have overcome error and doubt, and have expressed their faith and devotion in teachings which are still followed unquestioningly by the faithful. Intellectual and devotional vigor, rather than moral strength, are called to mind. The Vaiṣṇava saints are paragons of wisdom and heroes of devotion. Such festivals call the devotee to renewed commitment.

Types of Festivals

We shall look first at four types of festival that are held for at least two of the five images in the temple: *brahmotsava*, *tavanotsava*, *teppam*,

and *vasantotsava*. Next, we shall consider festivals held exclusively for Pārthasārathī, or exclusively for other images. Finally, we shall describe festivals dedicated to *Ālvār-s* and *Ācārya-s*.

The Brahmotsava

Brahmotsava festivals are held for three deities: Pārthasārathī, Varadarāja, and Nṛsimha.²¹ Each festival lasts for ten days. A nine-day festival for Rāma is referred to as *Rāmanavamī*, rather than as *Brahmotsava*.

The term *Brahmotsava* is reserved, in common usage, for those festivals during which a banner is hoisted. It should be noted that the *āgama-s* teach that a banner is to be hoisted during festivals; there is no implication that the banner is reserved for certain festivals.²² There are differences in the degree of opulence of the three festivals. Only for Pārthasārathī is the great temple car pulled through the streets; otherwise the same *vāhana-s* are used for Pārthasārathī and Nṛsimha. Since Varadarāja is accorded only evening processions, his festival does not make use of all the *vāhana-s*.²³ The Nṛsimha *Brahmotsava* has the special purpose of celebrating the construction of the temple, which is supposed to have occurred during the month of *Āṇi* at the request of the ṛṣi Atri.

A description of the *Brahmotsava* for Pārthasārathī follows. Although details will vary, the general features are the same for all festival processions.

Each procession, morning or evening, is led by the temple elephant which bears a Tenkalai *puṇḍra* (sectarian mark) on its head. The elephant is ridden by a mahout, who sometimes receives coins placed in the elephant's trunk, as small children are given brief rides. A bull follows bearing drums which are beaten by the attendant who walks beside him. A horse comes next; his rider, a temple employee, also beats drums. Both preceding and following the palanquin, or the *vāhana* of the deity, are choirs of *brahmin* men chanting Tamil hymns from the *Nālāyirappirapantam*, a collection of Vaiṣṇava devotional poetry by the *Ālvār-s*. To be selected as an *adhyāpaka* is considered a mark of special recognition. At this temple they are not paid, but they have rights to cooked food distributed daily in the temple after it has been offered to the god. Pious individuals venerate the chanting *adhyāpaka-s* with bows or prostrations.²⁴

The procession moves only a few yards before pausing. From twelve to twenty non-brahmin men are paid a few paise for bearing the *vāhana*-s on their shoulders. Huge umbrellas top the *vāhana*. The *vāhana* rests under each of five *pantal*-s erected for the festival. During these stops offerings are made to the god by the faithful, especially by residents of houses adjacent to the processional route. Stops are also made at *maṇḍapa*-s, sometimes for as long as an hour (one was made during every procession at a *maṇḍapa* at the north-west corner of the circuit). The evening procession at Pārthasārathī is illuminated by pressurized gasoline lamps which are carried on poles by men or women. These lamps are a recent innovation, replacing the oil-soaked torches which are still used in rural temple processions. Some of the processions are graced by musicians, especially *nākasvaram* players, who face the deity while playing. The chief priest of the temple commented that, prior to 1950,²⁵ music and dance were performed by *devadāsi*-s (temple dancing girls), but that they have now been replaced by professional musicians.²⁶

On the eve of the first day of the festival, Viṣvaksena,²⁷ the chief attendant of Viṣṇu, makes a circuit of the processional streets, and the banner is raised in the temple. Sand is brought from the nearby Pēyālvār Temple, where cobras are said to live, and is placed in twelve pots in which nine different kinds of seed are planted. These are placed on a cement platform in the *yāgasāla*, which is near the flagstaff, not far from the entrance to the temple. A sacrificial fire is kindled here and offerings are made daily throughout the festival, but later offerings are on a smaller scale than those of the first day.²⁸

Images used in processions are only a few inches high, and since they are made according to precise and unvarying specifications²⁹ they do not give an opportunity for artisans to show originality or imagination in their creation. Creativity is displayed, however, in the making of *vāhana*-s, the conveyances on which the images are carried.

The *vāhana*-s used in temple processions are of extraordinary beauty, especially in the larger and wealthier temples. Often gold or silver-plated, they are carefully preserved as part of the temple treasure, and some are reputed to be more than one hundred years old. *Vāhana*-s will vary from temple to temple in nature, in elaborateness, and in order of appearance. Some *vāhana*-s are

clearly related to the mythology of the god, but the significance of others is less certain. Gonda has noted that, although various animals are associated with gods in the *Veda*-s, it cannot be demonstrated that they served as mounts for the gods, as in the present theriomorphic *vāhana*-s.³⁰

On the first morning, the vehicle for the deity is a rather simple arch, beneath which the image of Pārthasārathī stands. In the evening it is in the form of a tree with glistening artificial leaves, the image being placed above. One might possibly see this as an instance of a sacred tree,³¹ but the tiny figures of nude women appearing at the base of the *vāhana* probably mean that it represents the episode of Kṛṣṇa's stealing the *gopī*-s' clothes and hiding himself in a tree to await results.

On the second morning, the Śeṣa *vāhana*³² is used, the god seated on the coils of the cobra, the hood raised protectively over him. Śeṣa appears in Vaiṣṇava mythology as the primordial serpent on which Viṣṇu sleeps. In the evening the *simha* (lion) *vāhana* is used.

On the third morning the Garuḍa *vāhana* is used; Garuḍa is the traditional eagle-like mount of Viṣṇu.³³ In the evening the *vāhana* is *Hamsa*, the goose; the goose is usually considered to be the vehicle of Brahmā and a symbol of knowledge.³⁴

On the fourth morning, the *vāhana* is Sūrya. The sun is represented by a large gilt circle, and the myth that Sūrya 'moves through the sky in a chariot drawn by seven ruddy horses or mares',³⁵ is indicated by small images of horses at the front of the *vāhana*. Viṣṇu himself may originally have been a solar deity.³⁶ In the evening of the fourth day, the Candra (moon) *vāhana* is used. Although treated as a deity in Hindu mythology,³⁷ the moon has no special relationship to Viṣṇu.

On the morning of the fifth day no *vāhana* is used. The image is dressed in women's clothes and jewels to represent Mohinī and is carried in a small litter. Further, to accentuate the feminine role, a mirror is placed before the image. The legend of Mohinī is that Viṣṇu assumed the form of a woman at the time of the churning of the Milk Ocean, in order, with feminine wiles, to deprive the Asura-s of *amṛta*, the nectar of immortality. Other versions have Mohinī seducing Śiva or becoming one with Śiva.³⁸ Hanumān is the evening *vāhana*; the *Rāmāyaṇa* is the source of the familiar story of Hanumān's rescue of Sītā from Rāvaṇa. Today, especially in North India, Hanumān himself is treated as a divinity. Gonda

notes also the primitive cult of the monkey deity presiding over the maize crop, which he also threatens to destroy.³⁹

On the morning of the sixth day, a *vimāna*, a high gilt structure representing the superstructure of a temple, serves as the god's vehicle. In the evening the *vāhana* is an elephant, which in Indian tradition is a mount for royalty.⁴⁰ On this occasion, a man dressed in flowing white robes and a brimmed hat, quite unlike anything worn by priests (or anyone else) in South India today, sits astride the elephant image.⁴¹

Rathotsava, the car festival, takes place on the seventh day. The seventh day seems to be the most frequently scheduled time for the car festival, although the time may vary. It takes place on the tenth day, for instance, at the Tenkalai temple in Tirukkurungudi, a village in the Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu. The car festival has been described often,⁴² and the Pārthasārathī event does not differ essentially from others of the type. A huge elaborately decorated vehicle on solid wooden wheels about eight feet in diameter is pulled through the streets. The god, accompanied by priests, musicians, and others, rides high in the interior of the vehicle. Since the streets around the temple in Triplicane are well paved, the car moves very rapidly. The entire procession takes only forty minutes to an hour, the only lost time being at the corners where turning the vehicle is something of an engineering problem.

On the eighth morning there is again a simple palanquin, in which the deity is dressed to represent Bālakṛṣṇa, (Kṛṣṇa with the butter ball). Several people mentioned that the buttocks of the baby Kṛṣṇa are particularly adorable and that one should strive for a glimpse of them. The image of Pārthasārathī has added to it a hand with a metal ball (representing the butter ball), and in the rear, behind the usual mass of flowers, the leg and buttocks of a crawling infant are visible; a mirror is placed behind the image to provide a better view. In the evening of the eighth day, the horse *vāhana* is used, a magnificent golden horse with small carved figures standing beneath it at the front and sides. The horse has several meanings in Vaiṣṇava mythology; one of the legends has it that Viṣṇu himself assumed the horse form as Hayagrīva.⁴³

The ninth day is the climax of the festival, both morning and evening providing spectacles which attract large crowds. In the morning, the image is brought forth in a palanquin with small

figures sculptured at the four corners as if they were the bearers. Inside the palanquin, the figure of the deity is almost completely covered with a cloth. This represents the concealment of the deity, for the episode symbolized here is the dalliance of the deity with someone other than his consorts.⁴⁴ When the deity returns to the entrance of the temple, after having paused in a *maṇḍapa* to have the covering removed, he is denied entrance by his consorts. A dialogue ensues, chanted by the priests, between the deity and his consorts, and a ball of flowers is tossed back and forth between the parties standing at opposite ends of the temple porch. When reconciliation is finally achieved, the images of the two consorts are brought and placed beside the deity; they eventually re-enter the temple together.⁴⁵ On the ninth evening an unusually long palanquin, extravagantly decorated with mirrors and colored glass, is the deity's vehicle. It is said by local people that only two or three such *kannāṭippalakai* are in existence. The sprouted seeds are distributed to the people, the banner is lowered, and the gods are prayed to return to their respective places.

On the tenth morning the deity rests. In the evening he is taken in procession in a small palanquin with a screen of cooling roots. The five forms of the deity are then given *abhiṣeka* in a *maṇḍapa* near the flagstaff, and the twenty-one images of the *Ālvār-s* and *Ācārya-s* are brought to witness this event. The concluding act is the ritual of *prāyaścitta*, rectification of any inadvertent mistakes made during the festival.⁴⁶

Tavanotsava, Teppam and Vasantotsava

Tavanotsava is held for four of the deities. *Tavaṇam* is the Tamil name of an aromatic plant (Sanskrit, *damanaka*), *artemisia abrotanum*,⁴⁷ of the same family as American sagebrush. The plant is used to decorate the god's vehicle and the *Tavaṇa maṇḍapa*, located just off the west car street. Gonda cites Purāṇic passages which identify the *damana* plant with Kāma, the god of love, and also Kāma with Viṣṇu.⁴⁸ Meyer cites sources connecting the plant with Śiva worship, especially in the legend that Śiva burned Kāma at a glance when Kāma interfered with his meditation, the plant springing from Kāma's ashes.⁴⁹ During this festival, the image rests for several hours each day in the *Tavaṇa maṇḍapa*.

Although *Teppam*, or the Floating Festival, appears to be a

single seven-day festival, the chief priest holds that it is five festivals—the first three days being devoted to Pārthasārathī and the remaining four days being devoted for Nṛsiṃha, Varadarāja, Raṅganātha, and Rāma, respectively. A float, supported on pontoons made of empty barrels, is constructed in the large tank which lies to the east of the temple. The float is large enough to accommodate not only the image but also a number of attendants, musicians, priests, and priests' children. It is electrically illuminated by wires brought from a small artificial island in the center of the tank. Each evening it is pulled around the tank with ropes by men standing on the steps of the tank or on the island and guided with poles by men on the float. The priest said that the festival was held because the *āgama*-command that the god be given a festival on water, but he gave no specific references. Singer notes that one explanation given for the floating festival is that it is assumed that the gods enjoy boat rides just as human beings do.⁵⁰ Another interpretation is that aquatic creatures should be given an opportunity to worship the deity as land creatures are.⁵¹ Observers of the festival sit on the steps on the four sides of the tank.

Vasantotsava, or the spring festival, is held for Pārthasārathī and for Raṅganātha and his consort Vētavaḷḷi Tāyar. It may be noted here that Holī, widely celebrated in North India and at least in some respects a spring festival,⁵² is not celebrated in Madras. With the exception of a symbolic beating⁵³ of temple officials (*āpis mantakapatti*) on the day following Pārthasārathī's *Brahmotsava*, there seem to be no such frolicsome elements in Madras festivals as the reversal of caste roles which takes place in Holī.⁵⁴

Vaikunṭha Ekādaśī

Of all Vaiṣṇava festivals, *Vaikunṭha Ekādaśī* is the most sacred and at Triplicane is attended by as many as 100,000 people. The twenty-day festival is held in *Mārkaḷi*, the first half called *Pakarṇattu* (day *utsava*), beginning ten days before the *ekādaśī* day in the bright half, and the second half called *Irappattu* (night festival). Several myths⁵⁵ claim to account for the special holiness of *Vaikunṭha Ekādaśī* and for the strict austerities, such as abstinence from rice, which accompany it. One of these has it that sweat flowing from the forehead of Lord Brahmā assumed the form of a demon. The demon was directed by Lord Brahma to take up his abode in the

particles of rice consumed by human beings on *ekādaśī* day, then to transform himself into worms, destroying their health and happiness. Another relates to the destruction of the demon Mura. The *deva*-s being desperate, appealed to Viṣṇu; Viṣṇu fought the demon for a thousand years, then retired exhausted to rest in a cave. He sent out his energy in the form of a beautiful damsel, and she succeeded in killing the demon on *Vaikunṭha Ekādaśī* day. Viṣṇu named her 'Ekādaśī' and granted the boon that whoever worshipped Viṣṇu with concentration and austerity on that day would be freed from all his sins.

Two stories emphasize the merit to be gained by observing *Ekādaśī*. The first has the sage Jabala giving King Rukmāṅgada herbs to burn in his garden to discover the thieves who had been stealing his flowers. The culprits are revealed to be the gods themselves, but when made visible they cannot return to heaven unless someone will surrender his merit to them. An old washerwoman tells them that she has observed *Ekādaśī* with strict austerity, and that if this has any merit, she will give it to the *deva*-s. The *deva*-s immediately return to heaven, and the washerwoman is transported there when she dies. The second story concerns Viṣṇu's *cakra* defending King Ambarīṣa, who observed *Ekādaśī* devoutly, but by doing so had aroused the jealousy of a powerful sage. The *cakra* pursued the sage until he apologized and appealed to the pious king for mercy.

Powerful as the merits of observing ordinary *Ekādaśī* days may be, the merits of strict observance of *Vaikunṭha Ekādaśī* are said to equal thirty million ordinary *Ekādaśī*-s.

Other Festivals for the Deity

The festival of *Māci Makam* is so named because it is held on the *Makam* star-day during the month of *Māci*. The god is taken down to the seashore at about 6:30 A.M. on *Garuḍa vāhana*. He is accompanied by *Cakrattālvār*, the deified form of the discus of Viṣṇu.⁵⁶ The men carrying the *Garuḍa vāhana* with the main image wade only knee-deep into the surf, but the *Cakrattālvār* is subsequently completely immersed, and at this point many devotees also take a dip in the sea. At some places, e.g., Śrīperumbudur, *Māci Makam* is observed with *abhiṣeka* in a *maṇḍapa*. Every twelfth year at Kumbakonam a special festival called *Māha Makam* is observed.

Pavitrotsava, a seven-day festival, is observed by evening processions of Pārthasārathī. The distinguishing feature of this festival is the placing of silk-yarn garlands on each of the images at the beginning of the period. At the end, these are removed and given to Śrī-Vaiṣṇava-s who want them.⁵⁷

Three other festivals are held specifically for Pārthasārathī. The first is a seven-day *Kōṭai*, or summer festival, during which the image is taken daily into a garden. The second is *Kṛṣṇa Jayanti*, a one-day birthday festival.⁵⁸ The third is the wedding of the god to Śrī Vētavaḷḷi Tāyar, celebrated with full Vedic rituals.

Two other major festivals are dedicated to other images of the deity: *Rāmanavamī* and *Pallavotsava*. *Rāmanavamī* is a nine-day festival for Rāma—celebrating his birthday—and is similar to *Brahmotsava* for the other deities. *Pallavotsava* is a five-day festival during which the *sthalapurāṇa* of the temple is read. Dedicated to Raṅganātha, it concludes with a marriage ceremony for the deity. Each evening, two chapters of the *sthalapurāṇa* are read, and Raṅganātha rides forth on the Śeṣa *vāhana*, accompanied by Śrī Devī and Bhū Devī. In brief, the *sthalapurāṇa* teaches that the greatness of the temple is due to seven ṛṣi-s, whose work in setting up images, inaugurating festivals, and establishing the temple is described.⁵⁹

Included in the temple's published list of festivals, although not specifically designated as *utsava*, are two rest periods (*viṭāyārri*), following the *Brahmotsava* for Pārthasārathī and for Nṛsimha. The rituals and processions for these periods take place only inside the temple. As in the daily cycle of sleep and waking of the gods, there is suggested the alternating creation and dissolution of the world.

Non-Sectarian Festivals

Five non-sectarian festivals (i.e., festivals celebrated by all Hindus in Tamil Nadu) are celebrated at Pārthasārathī Temple: *Dīpāvalī*, *Kārttikai*, *Rathasaptamī* or *Poṅkal*, *Navarātri*, and *Mahālaya Amāvācai*. *Dīpāvalī*, which in North India is a feast of lights, is celebrated here on the day before the full moon in the month of *Aippaci*. There is a simple evening procession of Pārthasārathī without *vāhana*-s or lights. *Kārttikai*, however, seems to be the Madras substitute for *Dīpāvalī*. On the full moon day of the month of *Kārttikai*, lights are placed before the god, and clay lamps are lighted in houses.⁶⁰

Poṅkal, supposedly held at the winter solstice, is observed in January or February rather than in December and is generally considered to be a celebration of the rice harvest.⁶¹ It is held for one day only at Pārthasārathī Temple, with the god appearing on the arch *vāhana*; and temple authorities referred to it as *Rathasaptamā* rather than as *Poṅkal*. André Bêteille observes that *Poṅkal* has become a celebration of Tamil culture and has taken on a secular character; it may have political overtones associated with the D.M.K. party.⁶² No such elements appear in the temple observance of the festival.

Navarātri is a rather ecumenical celebration, with three nights of the nine devoted to each of three goddesses: Lakṣmī, Pārvatī, and Sarasvatī.⁶³ The chief priest notes that since there are no images of either Pārvatī or Sarasvatī in the temple, it is in effect a festival to Lakṣmī. The image of Vētavaḷḷi Tāyar, the consort of Raṅganātha (considered to be another form of Lakṣmī), is taken in procession during each of the nine nights, but only inside the temple. The *vāhana*-s for these internal processions are the lotus, the parrot, Śeṣa, Yāḷi (a mythological animal having features of both the lion and the elephant), the horse, the goose, the elephant, and, on the ninth day, Raṅganātha and Tāyar on separate wooden bases. There are *yāga*-s and celebrations of the 100,000 names of the goddess (*lakṣārcana*). Outside the temple, the festival is celebrated by women in every household who place numerous dolls on display, representing the ten *avatāra*-s, other gods, and even national heroes.

The last of the non-sectarian festivals is *Mahālaya Amāvācai* held on the new moon in *Purattāci* month, when people of all castes gather at the temple tank to offer prayers to their forefathers.⁶⁴

Festivals for Ālvār-s and Ācārya-s

The last group of festivals is that honoring the Vaiṣṇava Ālvār-s and Ācārya-s. The Ālvār-s are the twelve poet-saints of the Tamil-speaking Vaiṣṇava-s,⁶⁵ whose 4,000 hymns, the *prabandha*-s (Tamil, *pirapantam*), are chanted, especially by Tenkalai brahmins, in honor of the deity, both within the temple and during festival processions. The Ācārya-s are other great teachers of the faith. In the Pārthasārathī Temple, as in Vaiṣṇava temples generally in Tamil Nadu, this means primarily Rāmānuja, his teachers, and his successors.

Both the *Ālvār-s* and the *Ācārya-s* are treated as deities in temples following the Tenkalai tradition; they are enshrined in the temples and they are taken out in processions.⁶⁶ It is notable, however, that the processions are not as elaborate as those for the deities. The Pārthasārathī temple authorities claim that this temple gives fuller recognition through festivals than any other temple to the *Ālvār-s* and *Ācārya-s*.⁶⁷

The *Ālvār-s* are enshrined as a group in the temple and, in addition, shrines are erected outside the main temple for Nammālvār and Pēyālvār, and one inside for Tirumaḷicai Ālvār.⁶⁸ It is for these three *Ālvār-s*, plus Tirumaṅkai and Āṅṅāl, that ten-day festivals are held; for each of the others only one-day festivals are held.⁶⁹ The processions for both *Ālvār-s* and *Ācārya-s* represent them as worshipping the deity; the *utsava* image of the *Ālvār* or *Ācārya* is placed facing the image of the deity as the procession moves through the streets. The dates of the festivals are established by the star-day of each personage.

The ten-day festival for Āṅṅāl, the sole female *Ālvār*, is known as Tiruvaṭi Pūram, a festival observed in all Vaiṣṇava temples in Tamil Nadu.⁷⁰ Unlike the other *Ālvār-s*, Āṅṅāl proceeds alone through the streets on each of the ten evenings (without a *vāhana*), except on the final evening, when she is accompanied by Pārthasārathī. The special importance attached to Āṅṅāl is explained in the legend of her marriage to Lord Raṅganātha. According to the legend, she was found by Periyālvār as an abandoned infant and brought up in his household. She was so pious that at an early age she expressed the desire to marry the Lord. Her father scolded her one day when he discovered that she was putting *tulasī* garlands on herself before giving them to the god. When the god failed to receive the garland, he complained at being deprived of the pleasure of gifts that had been touched by his devotee. The garland worn by Āṅṅāl was found not to have withered. Periyālvār became convinced that Āṅṅāl was indeed no common mortal but an incarnation of Lakṣmī. Subsequently, when the god ordered the nuptials to proceed, Āṅṅāl went to the temple, was received into the open arms of the image, and dissolved into it. On the final day of Āṅṅāl's festival, a wedding is celebrated between Āṅṅāl and the deity.⁷¹ Regardless of the legend of her marriage to Raṅganātha, the groom is Pārthasārathī.

Four other *Ālvār-s* are honored with ten-day festivals. In view

of the importance of Nammālvār's *Tiruvāymoli* among the *prabandha*-s, it is not surprising that Nammālvār should be given a ten-day festival. A Śūdra, Śaṭhagopa was so seriously devoted to the Lord that the Lord himself referred to him as 'Our Ālvār' (*Nam Ālvār*), thus the name by which he is now generally called. He is considered to be an incarnation of Viṣvaksena, the commander-in-chief of Viṣṇu's army.⁷² Both Pēyālvār and Tirumaḷicai Ālvār are associated with Madras, Pēy with Mylapore,⁷³ and Tirumaḷicai with Triplicane.⁷⁴ Both are worshipped as *avatāra*-s, Pēy of the sword of Viṣṇu and Tirumaḷicai of the discus Sudarśana.⁷⁵ Tirumaṅkai Ālvār is reputed to have restored the temple of Raṅganātha at Śrī-raṅgam to its present form from the proceeds of highway robbery.⁷⁶

The Pārthasārathī Temple holds festivals for ten *Ācārya*-s.⁷⁷ It is to be expected that the *Ācārya*-s selected for this honor would reflect the Teṅkalai sectarian affiliation of the temple. Six of the ten are Rāmānuja and his teachers or disciples. Two are the founder and the chief exponent of the Teṅkalai dogmas. But, surprisingly, the tenth of the *Ācārya*-s is Vedānta Deśika, the chief *Ācārya* of the Vaṭakalai school, which differs markedly from the Teṅkalai school on important theological points (especially the doctrine of grace) and on a number of minor matters.⁷⁸

In brief, the significance of each of the *Ācārya*-s is as follows: Rāmānuja (1017-1137 A.D.) is the founder of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school of philosophy.⁷⁹ More important to the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava-s is the fact that he was a devout *bhakta* who propagated the form of devotion sung by the *Ālvār*-s, which was developed in ritualistic form in the Pāñcarātra literature and taught by some of his predecessors, notably Yāmuna. He is revered as an incarnation of the deity and is closely associated with Śrīraṅgam, the holiest place of the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava-s. Rāmānuja's importance is indicated by the fact that he is taken out in procession on each of the ten days of his festival (an honor shared only by Maṇavāḷa Māmuṅikaḷ and Āṅṅāḷ), and on his birthday proceeds unaccompanied by the god—a recognition given only to him and to Āṅṅāḷ. He is also one for whom all 4,000 *prabandha*-s are sung (the others being Pēyālvār, Tirumaḷicai Ālvār, Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, Yāmuna, and Maṇavāḷa Māmuṅikaḷ). Local legend has it that the father of Śrī Rāmānuja prayed to Pārthasārathī in this temple for a son, and the Lord promised him that he himself would be reborn as his son Rāmānuja, in order that the true teachings of the Lord's *Gītā* might be imparted to humanity.⁸⁰

Five of the *Ācārya*-s who figure in the festivals were personally close to Rāmānuja. Yāmuna was Rāmānuja's predecessor as the chief teacher at Śrīraṅgam, and his teachings were so acceptable to Rāmānuja that Rāmānuja left Yadavaprakāśa to become a disciple of Yāmuna; Yāmuna died, however, before Rāmānuja could see him. Yāmuna is reputed to have had a high regard for Rāmānuja and his teachings.

Mutaliyāṅṭāṇ and Kūrattālvār are the first and second disciples, respectively, of Rāmānuja. Mutaliyāṅṭāṇ was also a nephew of Rāmānuja.⁸¹ Kūrattālvār was amanuensis to his master and suffered by having his eyes put out by the Cōḷa King Koluttunga I (ca. 1078 A. D.) during a persecution of Rāmānuja's followers.⁸² Empār, a cousin and another favorite disciple, had studied with Rāmānuja under Yadavapakāśa. He is also credited with saving Rāmānuja's life by warning him of a plot by the jealous Yadavaprakāśa to have him drowned.⁸³ Empār is considered by Tenkalai-s to be the immediate successor to Rāmānuja in the line of *Ācārya*-s.⁸⁴ Tirukkaci Nampī, or Kāñcīpūrṇa, was a disciple of Yāmuna and teacher to Rāmānuja.⁸⁵

Nāthamuni is reputed to have collected, in the tenth century, the writings of the *Ālvārs*.⁸⁶

It is striking that Piḷḷai Lokācārya, the thirteenth-century founder of the Tenkalai sect, is honored with only a one-day festival, while Maṇavāḷa Māmunikaḷ (1370-1443), a commentator on Lokācārya, is honored with a ten-day festival.⁸⁷ In fact, even Vedānta Deśika, the founder of the rival Vaṭakalai sect, is recognized with a one-day festival. The difference in honor may be due to the fact that there are more of Maṇavāḷa Māmunikaḷ's writings extant than those of Lokācārya, and that an exceptionally large number of his disciples became notable representatives of the faith.⁸⁸

Concluding Remarks

We have seen that certain festivals are re-enactments of episodes from stories of the gods: marriages, lovers' quarrels, infantile pranks, travels about the world, or enjoyment of seasons, plants, feasts, hunting. These are the types of festivals that Eliade would call 'the eternal return'.⁸⁹ They are not based upon history but refer to the divine acts which establish and continue the factors which

figure importantly in life itself. Thus, they are a return to and a participation in the primordial acts which give life meaning. Their times are calculated by reference to the stars, the progression of which is beyond human control. The recurring motion of the stars, unvarying and predictable, is a symbol of the eternal cycle—a symbol which participates in and yet points beyond itself. The annually re-enacted dramas of these heavenly acts both reaffirm the devotees' acceptance of their changeless meaning and renew their reality.

In the Hindu festival of this type, there is a spatial as well as a temporal element. The participants recognize in the temple the center of the world; the temple is the residence of God. Most Indians consider their natal villages as home, no matter how far they may live from them. And the temple is the center of a village. When former residents return to participate in a village's major festivals, it is more than a social homecoming; it is a return to the sacred center of life. In this case it does not matter that the Pārthasārathī temple is located in the large city of Madras; the area of Triplicane is in fact an old village which has been incorporated into the city. It lacks ties to the soil, but there is a definite sense of place, seen especially in its location by the sea.

But in addition to these festivals which re-establish the divine center in time and space, there are other occasions, also called festivals, which are related to historical personages, notably the *Ālvār-s* and the *Ācārya-s*. These are the saints of the faith, the people who have taught the truth about the gods and have become, in turn, manifestations of the gods. An important question in regard to these occasions is whether they are festivals in the same sense as those previously mentioned. They generally are not observed on as grand a scale, and this would seem to indicate that the participants do not consider them to be as important. Yet the *Ālvār-s* and *Ācārya-s* are never honored simply as individuals; they are represented as worshipping the deity. There is a certain ambivalence here, for both the historic personage and the eternal god are recognized.⁹⁰ Such festivals are celebrations in which the devotion of specific persons is recognized and held up for emulation and admiration. They are secondary in importance since they focus on human response rather than on a hierophany. They approach the status of festivals for deities as the human personage is more closely identified with the god, as in the case of *Āṅṅāḷ*.

ANNUAL FESTIVALS AT PĀRTHASĀRATHISVĀMI TEMPLE

Month	Name of Festival	Concluding Day	Duration in Days
CITTIRAI	Brahmotsava for Pārthasarathi	Aviṭṭam	10
	Viṭṭyāiri ('rest')	Tiruvātirai	10
	Mutaliyāṇṭān (Ācārya)	Punarvasu	1
	Uṭaiyavar (Rāmānuja)	Tiruvātirai	10
	Uṭaiyavar Viṭṭyāiri	Pūcam	2
	Maturakkavi	Cittirai	1
	Nammālvār	Vicākam	10
	Vasanta for Pārthasarathi	Uttiram	6
	Gajendra Varadarāja Brahmotsava	Aviṭṭam	10
	ĀNI	Śrī Rānganātha Vētavāḷi Tāyār Vasantotsava	Pūraṭṭali-Uttirāṭam
Narasimha Brahmotsava		Aviṭṭam	10
Periyālvār		Cuvāi	1
Viṭṭyāiri for Narasimha		Uttirāṭam	3
Katai ('summer') Utsava for Pārthasarathi		Day between Makam and Pūram	6
Śrī Nātharuni		Aruṣam	1
Tiruvāḷi Pūram (Āṇṭal)		Pūram	10
Śrī Alavantiār (Yāmuna)		Uttirāṭam	10
Pavitrotsava for Pārthasarathi		Pūraṭṭaci-Uttirāṭam	7
Śrī Jayanti		Mirukacāriṭam	1
PURATTIACI	Navarātri	Uttirāṭam	9
	Vedānta Deśika	Tiruvōṇam	1

Month	Name of Festival	Concluding Day	Duration in Days
AIPPACI	<i>Maṇavāla Māmunīkal</i>	<i>Mūlam</i>	10
	<i>Pūtattālvār</i>	<i>Avittam</i>	1
	<i>Pēyālvār</i>	<i>Catayam</i>	10
	<i>Cēnaimutaliyār</i>	<i>Purātam</i>	1
	<i>Maṇavāla Māmunīkal Viṭṭāyāri</i>	<i>Tiruvōṇam</i>	3
	<i>Poykai Ālvār</i>	<i>Tiruvōṇam</i>	1
	<i>Pillai Lokācārya</i>	<i>Tiruvōṇam</i>	1
	<i>Tirumaikai Ālvār</i>	<i>Kiruttikai</i>	10
	<i>Tiruppanālvār</i>	<i>Urākiṇi</i>	1
	<i>Toiṭaraiṭṭipoti Ālvār</i>	<i>Kēṭṭai (second)</i>	1
MĀRKALI	<i>Pakarpathu Utsava</i>	<i>Acuvāni</i>	10
	<i>Śrī Vaikuṇṭha Ekādaśī Utsava</i>	<i>Pūram</i>	10
TAI	<i>Āṅṅāl Neraṭṭam Utsava</i> (<i>Tirukkalyāṇam: marriage</i>)	<i>Purātam</i>	10
	<i>Rathasaptamī</i>	<i>Irvati</i>	1
MĀCI	<i>Tirumaliyai Ālvār</i>	<i>Makam</i>	10
	<i>Embar</i>	<i>Puṇarvasu</i>	1
	<i>Kūratālvār</i>	<i>Attam</i>	1
	<i>Teppam for Pārthasārthi</i>	<i>Catayam</i>	3
	<i>Teppam for Narasiṃha</i>	<i>Pūratāci-Uttirātam</i>	1
	<i>Teppam for Raiganātha</i>	<i>Irvati</i>	1
	<i>Teppam for Rāma</i>	<i>Acuvāni</i>	1
	<i>Teppam for Gajendra Varadarāja</i>	<i>Parāni</i>	1
	<i>Tavanotsava for Pārthasārthi</i>	<i>Puṇarvasu</i>	5
	<i>Kulacēkara Ālvār</i>	<i>Puṇarvasu</i>	5

<i>Śrī Vetavalli Tirukkalyāṇam</i>	1
<i>Māci Makam</i>	1
<i>Tavanotsava for Gajendra Varadarāja</i>	1
<i>Tavanotsava for Narasiṃha</i>	3
<i>Tavanotsava for Raṅganātha</i>	1
<i>Tiruktacci Nampikal</i>	1
<i>Śrī Rāmanavami Utsava</i>	9
<i>Pallotsava</i>	5
<i>Vtavalli Tirukkalyāṇam</i>	1
<i>Puṣyam</i>	
<i>Makam</i>	
<i>Attam</i>	
<i>Aruṣām</i>	
<i>Mūlam</i>	
<i>Mirukacīriṭam</i>	
<i>Puṇarvasu</i>	
<i>Uttiram</i>	
<i>Uttiram</i>	

PĀṆKUNĪ

Notes

1. The Vāikhānasa and the Pāñcarātra are the two traditions followed by Śrī-Vaiṣṇava-s. The Vaikhānasa-s hold that their rituals are a continuation of Vedic fire-sacrifice. For a discussion of the origins of the school, see T. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom: A Ritual Handbook of the Vaikhānasas*, Mouton: The Hague, 1965, pp. 7ff.
2. T. A. Gopinatha Rao notes that the usual form shows Pārthasārathī with a bow in his left hand and his right hand in the *vyākhyāna-mudrā*, or *chin-mudrā*, a posture of explanation or teaching. See T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, 1914 (reprinted. New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1968), Vol. I, Pt. 1, pp. 210-11.
3. Ibid., p. 201.
4. Ibid., p. 186ff.
5. Ibid., p. 145ff; cf. also A. B. Keith, *The Mythology of All Races*, Boston: Marshall Jones Co., 1971, Vol. VI, p. 123.
6. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Pt. 1, pp. 266, 269; cf. also Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, New York: Harper & Brothers, Harper Torchbooks, 1962, p. 77ff.
7. The form is also known as Anantaśayana. Cf. L. A. Ravi Varma, 'Rituals of Worship', in Haridas Bhattacharyya (ed), *The Cultural Heritage of India* (2nd ed.), Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1956, Vol. IV, p. 475ff; and T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, op. cit., Vol I, Pt. 1, pp. 90, 269. This form appears in the temple of Śrīraṅgam, the most important Śrī-Vaiṣṇava temple.
8. Cf. *Census of India*, 1961, Vol. IX, Madras. Pt. VII-B, *Fairs and Festivals*, ed. P. K. Nambiar and K. C. Narayana Kurup, Madras: Government Press, 1968, pp. 7-8.
9. Star-days for the other forms are *Revatī* for Raṅganātha, *Punarvasu* for Rāma, and *Aviṭṭam* for Varadarāja.
10. See *Utsava Vivaram 1971-72*, Triplicane: Śrī Pārthasārathī Swāmī Devasthānam—the festival almanac for the year.
11. See T. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, pp. 270-304.
12. The Executive Officer and the Superintendent of the temple said that the real estate endowment yielded Rs. 72,000 per annum; offering boxes yielded Rs. 39,000; income from Rs. 1,250,000 worth of invested capital is Rs. 60,000; sale of cooked food for offerings, Rs. 36,000; and other sources Rs. 23,000. In addition to this general income, Rs. 46,000 is contributed specifically for the support of festivals.
13. T. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, p. 282.
14. The calculations do not make use of certain modern astronomical knowledge. One instance of this is the failure to take account of the precession of the equinoxes; hence the festival of *Rathasaptamī* or *Poṅkal*, marking the winter solstice, is twenty-three days late. Cf. P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra (Ancient and Medieval Religious and Civil Law in India)*, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1958, Vol. V, p. 222.
15. M.M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year*, Calcutta: Association Press, 1921, p. 17; R. Sewell and S.B. Dikshit, *The Indian Calendar*, London: Swan Sonnen-

- schein and Co. Ltd., 1896; and Robert Sewell, *Indian Chronography*, London: George Allen and Co. Ltd., 1912. A summary of the date-setting process appears in Ruth S. and Stanley A. Freed, 'Calendars, Ceremonies and Festivals in a North Indian Village', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, XX, No. 1 (Spring, 1964), pp. 67-90. And see Merrey above, pp. 1-25.
16. T.A. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, p. 273.
 17. There are at least two images of the god in a Vaiṣṇava temple—a *mūlava mūrti*, or fixed image, and an *utsava mūrti*, or processional image. There may also be a *snāna mūrti* to receive baths given to the god. Gonda asserts that the two types of images represent the primeval (*niṣkala*) form of the deity and the form visible in his various manifestations (*sakala*); J. Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism: A Comparison*, London: Athlone Press, 1970, p. 78.
 18. J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, Utrecht: N.V.A. Oosthoek's Uitgevers Mij, 1954, p. 247.
 19. Cf. Carl Gustav Diehl, *Instrument and Purpose*, Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1956, p. 168.
 20. For a fuller description see J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 247ff. See T. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, op. cit., 270ff, for a description of the banner.
 21. This festival is referred to as *Brahmotsava* by the chief priest, but is not designated as such in the temple almanac.
 22. T. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, p. 271. Cf. J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 250ff; and for an extended commentary on the tree of Indra, which Gonda sees as possibly a precursor of the banner, see J. J. Meyer, *Trilogie Altindischer Mächte und Feste der Vegetation*, Zurich: Max Niehans Verlag, 1937, Vol. III, p. 61ff.
 23. On succeeding nights of the festival, Varadarāja's *utsavamūrti* is carried in procession on the following *vāhana*-s: Haṃsa, Yāṭi, Garuḍa, Śeṣa, palanquin, elephant, small car, horse, hollow squares (one atop the other) and *vimāna*.
 24. Maṇavāla Māmuṇikaḷ praises the practice of prostrating before another Śrī-Vaiṣṇava in his commentary on Lokācārya's *Śrīvacana-pūsan*, Par. 217, p. 118—Part II in *Vicatavāk Cikāmaṇikalāṅ Maṇavālamāmuṇikaḷarūḷiceyta Sakala Śrīsūktikaḷaiyūṅkoṅta. Śrīmat Varavaramuṇintra Krantamālai* (Mutal sambuṭam), Śrīkāñci: Pirativātipayankaram Aṅṅankarācāriyar Patippu, 1966.
 25. See *Triplicane Śrī Pārthasārathī Temple Sthalapurānam*, Triplicane: Śrī Pārthasārathīswāmī Devasthānam, 1953.
 26. The training and employment of *devadāsī*-s (dancing girls) was outlawed in that year by the Madras Legislative Assembly.
 27. Cf. T. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, p. 276. Alain Daniélou (*Hindu Polytheism*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1964, p. 163) mentions Viṣvaksena but gives little information about him.
 28. J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 249ff. discusses āgamic references to this practice.
 29. See T. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, for detailed information on image-making in the Vaikhānasa tradition. Passages dealing with Pāñcarātra iconography have been collected (with brief commentaries in English) by H. Daniel Smith and K. K. A. Venkatachari in *Vaiṣṇava Iconography*, Madras: Pāñcarātra Paṛisodana Paṛiṣad, 1969.

30. J. Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, The Hague: Mouton, 1965, p. 71ff.
31. Cf. M. Eliade, *Traité d'Historie des Religions*, Paris: Payot, 1964, p. 231ff.
32. Zimmer (*Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, p. 72ff) maintains that Viṣṇu's association with both the serpent and Garuḍa, the enemy of the serpent, symbolizes the inclusion of all dichotomies in the Absolute.
33. Cf. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Pt. 1, p. 283ff; and J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 101ff.
34. Alain Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*, p. 237.
35. John Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology* (10th ed.) London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1961, p. 301ff.
36. Cf. J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 97ff.
37. Cf. Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*, p. 301ff.
38. J. Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, p. 124ff. The myth of Viṣṇu's union with Śiva was one of the episodes portrayed in an obscene fashion in an antibrahmin parade at Salem, Tamil Nadu, during the 1971 election campaign. The incident became an issue in the Tamil Nadu elections.
39. J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 153. Cf. Alain Daniélou, *Hindu Polytheism*, p. 173.
40. H. Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, p. 102ff.
41. On the occasion of the procession in 1971, the elephant *vāhana* retraced its steps after reaching the corner of North Car Street. A death had occurred in one of the houses of this street, and no processions could move past it until the corpse was removed. For the same reason, the next day's car festival was postponed for several hours.
42. Cf. Marguerite Allen, 'The Jagannath Car Festival', *Mārg*, VIII, No. 4 (September 1955), p. 68ff. Here the journey is interpreted as a world tour for the god.
43. Cf. J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 147ff, on the various relationships of the horse to the Viṣṇu cult.
44. At Tirukkurungudi, in 1964, this episode was symbolized by a brief pause of the procession before a *devadāsī*'s house.
45. The lovers' quarrel also appears in Śaiva festivals; cf. Carl Gustav Diehl, *Instrument and Purpose*, p. 165.
46. Cf. T. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, pp. 302-4.
47. A. W. Lushington, *Vernacular List of Trees, Shrubs and Woody Climbers in the Madras Presidency*, Madras: Superintendent of Government Press, 1915, Vol. II-B, p. 26. The shrub is also called *marukkoḷuntu* or *maruppuntu* in Tamil.
48. J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, p. 17.
49. J. J. Meyer, *Trilogie Altindische Mächte*, Vol. III, pp. 38-53. Meyer identifies *damanaka* with mugwort, and he cites magical uses of the plant in the West.
50. Cf. Milton Singer, 'The Rādhā-Krishna *Bhajan*s of Madras City', in Milton Singer (ed.), *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*, Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966, p. 100.
51. *Census of India*, 1961, Madras: *Fairs and Festivals*, p. 36.
52. Cf. N. K. Basu, 'The Spring-Festival in India', *Man in India*, VII, Nos. 2 & 3 (April-September 1927), p. 115ff. Basu notes that since the god of love is

- no longer féted independently, his festival has been absorbed into Holi. Cf. also S. S. Mehta, 'Holika Celebration', *Journal of Anthropological Society of Bombay* X, No. 1 (1913), p. 31ff; and S. S. Mehta, 'The Origin of Holi Holidays, Traced to Rig Vedic Times', *Journal of Anthropological Society of Bombay*, XIII, No. 2 (1925), pp. 225-35.
53. The chief priest indicated that in the past this farce was performed by *devadāsī*-s. The writer has observed the "beating" of temple officials by *devadāsī*-s with plantain stalks at the Vaiṣṇava temple in Tirukkurungudi. Said to represent punishment for the officials' connivance in the god's dalliance on the preceding day, this custom has an interesting parallel in the beating of Śiva at the Śucīndram temple as recounted in K. K. Pillay, *The Śucīndram Temple*, Adyar, Madras: Kalakshetra Publications, 1953, p. 223.
 54. Cf. McKim Marriott, 'The Feast of Love', in Milton Singer (ed.), *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes* p. 200ff.
 55. *Census of India*, 1961, Madras: *Fairs and Festivals*, pp. 18-19; and *Sthalapurāṇa*, p. ix.
 56. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Pt. 1 p. 290ff.
 57. Cf. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. V, Pt. 1, p. 339.
 58. *Census of India*, 1961, Madras: *Fairs and Festivals*, p. 15.
 59. The *Sthalapurāṇa* appears in Tamil in *Triplicane Śrī Pārthasārathī Sthalapurāṇam*, Triplicane: Śrī Pārthasārathīswamī Devasthānam, 1953, Introduction in English.
 60. *Census of India*, 1961, Madras: *Fairs and Festivals*, p. 21.
 61. Although *Poṅkal* is sometimes referred to as the Tamil New Year, it is not 'the first day of the Tamil year', as P. V. Kane maintains, (*History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. V, Pt. 1, p. 222). The first day of the Tamil year is 1 *Cittirai*.
 62. André Bételle, 'A Note on the Poṅgal Festival in a Tanjore Village', *Man*, LXIV (1964), p. 73ff.
 63. *Census of India*, 1961 (*Madras: Fairs and Festivals*, p. 16), interprets the festival as worship of the Divine Mother in three different forms. J. Gonda, *Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism*, (p. 228), notes that Sarasvatī is sometimes related to Viṣṇu.
 64. Also known as *Pitṛpakṣa*; cf. *Census of India*, 1961, Madras: *Fairs and Festivals*, p. 14.
 65. Cf. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940, Vol. III, p. 63ff.
 66. The sixty-three Śaiva saints (*Nāyanārs*) are similarly treated in Śaiva temples.
 67. *Sthalapurāṇa*, p. ix.
 68. *Ibid.*, p. viii.
 69. The *Ālvārs* are here listed in the order in which their festivals are held (dates and star-days are given in the table of annual festivals). Maturakkavi Ālvār, Nammālvār, Periyālvār, Āṅṅāṭ, Poykai Ālvār, Pūtattālvār, Pēyālvār, Tirumaṅkai Ālvār, Tiruppāṇ Ālvār, Toṅṅarāṭṭippoṭi Ālvār, Tirumalīcai Ālvār, and Kulacēkara Ālvār.
 70. *Census of India*, 1961, Madras: *Fairs and Festivals*, p. 38.
 71. For the legends, see Ramakrishnananda, *Life of Śrī Rāmānuja*, Mylapore, Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1959, p. 19ff; and A. M. Esnoul, *Rāmānuja etala Mystique Vishnouite*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1964, p. 39.
 72. A. M. Esnoul. *Rāmānuja*, p. 35ff.

73. Ramakrishnananda, *Life of Sri Rāmānuja*, p. 14.
74. S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, p. 68.
75. Ramakrishnananda, *Life of Sri Rāmānuja*, p. 1; and T. A. Gopinath Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Pt. 1, p. 287ff.
76. Ramakrishnananda, *Life of Sri Rāmānuja*, p. 32ff.
77. The ten *Ācārya*-s, with alternative names, are listed here. (In each case the name first given is that used by temple personnel at Pārthasārathī Temple. Ramakrishnananda, [*Life of Sri Rāmānuja*, p. 267], lists a number of Sanskrit-Tamil equivalents of names of *Ālvār*-s and of persons associated with Rāmānuja. Their festivals are listed in the table of annual festivals.): Rāmānuja (Ilaya Perumal, Yatirāja, Uṭaiyavar); Mutaliyāṅṅān (Dāsarathi, Vaiṣṇavadāsa); Srīman Nātamuṅikaḷ; Yāmuna (Āḷvantār); Vētāntācāriyār (Vedānta Deśika, Veṅkaṭa, Veṅkaṭanātha); Maṇavāḷa Māmuṅikaḷ (Saumya Jāmātr muni, Ramyajāmātr muni, Varavara muni, Yatīndrapravana, or Periyajiyar); Piḷḷai Lokācārya (Vāraṇādrīśa); Tirukkaci Nampi (Kāñcīpūrṇa); Empār (Emperumāṅar, Govinda); and Kūrattālvār (Kureśa, Kuranātha).
78. Cf. D. B. K. Rangachari, 'The Sri Vaishnava Brahmans', *Bulletin of the Madras Government Museum*, n. s. II, Pt. 2 (1931), p. 37ff. See S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, p. 374ff, for a discussion of the doctrine of grace in the two schools. Cf. also A. Govindacarya, 'The Astadasa-Bhedas, or the Eighteen Points of Doctrinal Differences Between the Teṅgalais and the Vaḍagalais', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1910, p. 1103ff.
79. S. Dasgupta (*A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III) discusses the rise and development of the Rāmānuja school in some detail.
80. *Sthalapurāṇa*, p. x.
81. Ramakrishnananda, *Life of Sri Rāmānuja*, p. 153ff; and S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, p. 102.
82. Ramakrishnananda, *Life of Sri Rāmānuja*, 193; and S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, pp. 102-3.
83. S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, p. 101ff; and Ramakrishnananda, *Life of Sri Rāmānuja*, p. 183ff. The name Empār is a short form of 'Emperumāṅar', a Tamil name meaning 'lord, god, or chief'. The name was given to Govinda by Rāmānuja after his conversion from Śaivism to Śrī-Vaiṣṇavism.
84. D. B. K. Rangachari, 'The Sri Vaishnava Brahmans', p. 42.
85. S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, p. 102; and Ramakrishnananda, *Life of Sri Rāmānuja*, p. 99.
86. Cf. S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, pp. 94-6.
87. Maṇavāḷa Māmuṅikaḷ and Rāmānuja are the only *Ācārya*-s given *viṭṭāyāṅṅi* (rest) following their festivals.
88. S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, pp. 138 and 374ff.
89. M. Eliade, *Cosmos and History*, New York: Harper and Row, 1959, p. 21ff.
90. T. Goudriaan (*Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*), observes that the Vaikhānasa-s do not worship *Ālvār*-s and other religious teachers. However, the veneration given these personages in practice seems to be more than the *doulia* accorded to saints in Roman Catholicism.

THE CAṆḌĀLA'S SONG*

Guy R. Welbon

THE HINDU RELIGIOUS year is defined and ordered by special days. And for devotees of Viṣṇu no days are more important than *ekādaśī*: the eleventh day (*tithi*) in each half of a lunar month. Indeed, on this 'day of Hari', Vaiṣṇava-s proclaim themselves to be Vaiṣṇava-s by virtue of their observances. They are enjoined to fast, to maintain vigils (*jāgara-s*), and to sing praises to Viṣṇu.¹ Traditionally, two of the year's *ekādaśī-s*—the one in the fortnight of the waxing moon in the month of *Āṣāḍha* and the *ekādaśī* four months later in the bright half of *Kārttika*—have had special significance. Delimiting a sacred *caturmāsa*, they are respectively the days on which Viṣṇu annually falls asleep (*śayani-ekādaśī*) and awakens (*prabodhini/bodhini-ekādaśī*).²

A surviving temple festival drama performed each year on the *ekādaśī* of Viṣṇu's awakening is the subject of this paper. Popularly called *kaiśika-ekādaśī* throughout South India,³ this *tithi* is probably the most important 'eleventh' in the Vaiṣṇava religious year.⁴ On this day, Viṣṇu rises from his slumber—the world is fresh and all good things are possible.

The antiquity of the special festival performances on *kaiśika-ekādaśī* cannot be determined with certainty. However, the Pāñcarātra *Pārameśvara Saṃhitā* (possibly eleventh century) prescribes observances on the 'bright eleventh in the month of *kṛttika*, that are essentially those kept today: fasting, maintaining a vigil, and offering songs and 'sacrifice'. In this text the importance of singing is particularly stressed: 'No one can describe the meritorious results obtained by those who sing and those who listen at that time.'⁵

The textual basis for the drama under discussion here is the

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Kaiśika Purāṇa,⁶ a short composition embedded in certain South Indian manuscripts of the *Varāha Purāṇa*.⁷ Here also the efficacy of singing, keeping vigils, and fasting on this special day is emphasized. The *kaiśika* story is a great favorite among South Indian Vaiṣṇava-s, and each year it is recited with considerable ceremony in major Viṣṇu temples. An adaptation, produced by Dr. V. Raghavan, is successfully broadcast annually by the southern stations of All-India Radio.

Only at the *Alakiyanampirāyar Kōvil* ('Temple of Beautiful Nambi, the King') in Tirukkurungudi (Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu), however, is the *Kaiśika Purāṇa* dramatically enacted every year. In the following pages, I describe the setting, the actors, the preparations, the audience, and the mechanics of that annual performance. Then I comment briefly on some features of the text and the performance that seem to me to be particularly noteworthy. Finally, I offer a translation of the core Sanskrit text.

The Story and the Setting

As a translation of the text is provided, only an outline of the story is necessary here. A *caṇḍāla*⁸ devotee of Viṣṇu is assaulted by a *brahmarākṣasa* (a 'demon' who had been a brahmin in a previous birth) while on his way to sing before the Lord. After some argument, the demon is persuaded to release the untouchable so that the latter's vow to sing to Nārāyaṇa can be fulfilled. For his part, the *caṇḍāla* pledges to return to the *rākṣasa* immediately thereafter.

Although tempted to flee along the way by a man who turns out to be Viṣṇu in disguise, the singer goes back to the cannibal demon. The latter, however, now demands not the singer's flesh but rather the merit (or a portion of it) accruing from singing praise to Viṣṇu. Eventually, the *caṇḍāla* grants the demon's request, offering that merit gained in singing the *kaiśika paṇ*.⁹ Both singer and demon are released thereby from their low estates, assured of rebirth as brahmins, and promised the ultimate attainment of Vaikuṅṭha.

The geographical setting for this simple drama is described in the ninth and part of the tenth *śloka*-s in the published text.¹⁰

“[9] ‘In the South is a mountain called Mahendra. From it a holy river of milk flows southward to the sea.

“[10] ‘During vigils, a resolute *caṇḍāla* would go there from a great distance to the hermitage of the blessed...’”¹¹

Throughout South India, pious Vaiṣṇava-s believe that this site is present-day Tirukkurungudi.

Located in Tamil Nadu's extreme south, just 25 miles north of Cape Comorin, Tirukkurungudi¹² (1971 population: 4232)¹³ and its temples lie against a backdrop of the Western Ghats. The highest eminence of this southernmost spectacular rise of the Ghats (known regionally as the Agastya Hills)¹⁴ is the mile-high, dome-peaked Mahendragiri.¹⁵ From that mountain and the catchment area around it, streams flow and join others to form the Nambiyar River which courses generally eastward into and through Tirukkurungudi and, thence, south-southeast to the Gulf of Mannar.¹⁶

The larger of Tirukkurungudi's two major brahmin temples is the one dedicated to 'Beautiful Nambi', and it is the locus of the annual performance of the *Kaiśika* drama. Within the temple, a hall known as the *Kaiśika maṇḍapa* (located just south of the main shrine but off the second corridor) is reserved for that performance. Unfortunately, there are no inscriptions in this structure or elsewhere in the temple compound that would help to date either its construction or the commencement of elaborate performances of the *Kaiśika* story. It may be safely assumed that the performance hall itself is no older than the mid-eighteenth century; but that, of course, tells us nothing about the age of the dramatic tradition.¹⁷

Performers and Preparations: The Demon's Fast

The company for the enactment of the *Kaiśika* story is small: three actors (or 'mimes') and a prompter. All four are non-brahmins. That brahmins are not to participate in the drama (though they may certainly recite the *Purāṇa*) is not surprising. However, it is interesting that tradition insists that only certain non-brahmins may take part in the performance and that dire consequences will follow on a performance by unsanctioned actors.¹⁸

Even more interesting is the fact that two of the three mimes are women. Both take the heroic parts: the *caṇḍāla* singer and

Viṣṇu in the guise of a man. The women who play these roles are the Nambi Temple's two *devadāsi*-s.¹⁹ Appearing annually in the drama constitutes one of only two 'obligations' of their temple service, the other being participation in some processions during the *Brahmotsava*.²⁰ Neither woman makes any special preparations for her role in the drama.

The case is quite different for the man who plays what must, in any dramatic sense, be termed the starring role in the play, that of the *rākṣasa*. This role is clearly the most demanding during the actual performance; and the preliminary fast undergone by this person is far and away the most complicated and controlled of the preparatory rituals.

The senior male in one household of traditional temple functionaries is the villain of the play. From 1948 through the 1968 performance this man was Suṭalaimuttu Kuṛuṅkuṭiyā Piḷḷai. Dedicated to temple service by his family, 'Kuṛuṅkuṭi' worked in the temple until his death in 1969.²¹ His father and grandfather had been the demon previously; and Kuṛuṅkuṭi emphasized to me (and, I suppose, to others) that the role ought not to be performed by anyone other than a male representative of his household. Currently, his son portrays the demon; and, I am told, he does so with great pride and gusto.

Kuṛuṅkuṭi obviously relished his role in the dramatic rendering of the *kaiśika* tale and the spotlight it put him in each year. It seemed, however, that his delight had little if anything to do with the 'redemption motif' at the heart of the story. Rather, he gloried in his ecstatic transformation into the uncontrollable *rākṣasa*. 'On that day', he told me several times with a smile, 'no one will be able to hold me'. It would be a time of deliverance from arduous, routine duties, a time of freedom. But through the untouchable's virtue and charity, the demon would be released; the play would end; and Kuṛuṅkuṭi would return to his usual status and obligations. For him, I think, the 'meaning' of the story was upside down.

In the *Kaiśika* (*śloka* 19), the demon tells the *caṇḍāla* that he has gone without food for ten days.²² And, indeed, ten days before the festival performance, Kuṛuṅkuṭi began a fast. For ten days his routine was suspended, and he did not leave the temple precincts. In 1967, that fast began at 2:00 P.M. on Sunday, December 3rd, at which time Kuṛuṅkuṭi entered the temple by the

north gate with nearly all the goods and accessories he would need for the ensuing ten days. These supplies included cloth, vessels, and an amount of pre-boiled rice. They were deposited at a small *maṇḍapa* above the western steps to the temple tank. Throughout the fast, this *maṇḍapa* was the demon's camp.

On the first day of fasting, Kuṛuṅkuṭi bathed in the tank at mid-day, then cooked a quantity of rice at the *maṇḍapa*. He was permitted to take a single, modest serving from the vessel but not more. (Had he noticed himself being observed by a brahmin, Kuṛuṅkuṭi would have been obliged to cease eating immediately.)²³ After this simple meal, he again bathed in the tank. The vessel and the rice remaining in it were taken from the *maṇḍapa* to Kuṛuṅkuṭi's house. The next day the cleaned vessel would be returned together with a small amount of rice and vegetables.²⁴

In the evening, Kuṛuṅkuṭi's fast was eased by a snack of *prasāda* from the temple consisting of a single *appam* and a small amount of boiled milk. Thereafter, Kuṛuṅkuṭi was permitted to sleep. Usually he rested in a *maṇḍapa* at the entrance to the Tiru Jiyar Maṭha in the temple compound rather than at the *maṇḍapa* by the temple tank. The second and each succeeding day of the fast began with pre-dawn baths in that tank.

Three daily baths, two simple meals each day, and restriction to the temple confines—these were the elements of the fast regimen. Whenever he was not involved in the tasks attending the fast procedure itself, Kuṛuṅkuṭi assumed his regular temple duties insofar as they did not require him to leave the temple. And, in our frequent discussions through the course of the fast, Kuṛuṅkuṭi repeatedly insisted that he was giving no particular thought to the coming dramatic performance. In fact, he refused to provide any details about the nature and significance of the drama. He would not offer even a sketch of the action. Asked any question about the drama, he responded with a smile, saying simply, 'it must be seen'.

Five days before the performance, Kuṛuṅkuṭi took down the *rākṣasa's* black costume from a bundle suspended in a small *maṇḍapa* in the innermost confines of the temple. As the weather permitted, he dried and aired this clothing on the temple roof. (Normally, the lingering northeast monsoon still provides some showers at this time of the year, and this turned out to be a particularly frustrating task.)

On the day of the drama, Kuṛuṅkuṭi's fast became severe. He took no food other than a thin gruel of gram and water at noon. Throughout the day he did not work and avoided any contact with people. At about 11 P.M., the other male, non-brahmin temple functionaries assembled to assist him with his costuming. First, the black cloth was put on: heavy, loose-fitting shirt and trousers of sorts and a pair of 'gloves' that transformed Kuṛuṅkuṭi's hands into claws. Then, the demon's mask was set out, and a *pūjā* was offered to it.²⁵ The slumping Kuṛuṅkuṭi—apparently so faint and weak that he could not stand without assistance—was then supported by a man under each arm as his head was swathed with an unbleached cloth. Finally, the great mask, the crowned and leering visage of the demon, was lowered over his head. Kuṛuṅkuṭi shrieked and began to flail wildly and powerfully as the mask enclosed him. Two, three, four other men joined to help restrain him. He was no longer a man. He was the *brahmarākṣasa*.

Following this masking ceremony, Kuṛuṅkuṭi was armed with an outsized cudgel. Still unable to stand or to walk unassisted, and still roaring and struggling, he was then half carried half dragged in procession to the festival hall. Once there, he was taken to the festival images of Lord Nambi/Viṣṇu and his consorts now set in a pavilion at the extreme western end of the *Kaiśika maṇḍapa*. After receiving the blessings of the Lord, he was carried to the other end of the hall and helped to the temporary, raised platform that served as a stage. The children in the audience greeted the quivering, club-brandishing demon with delighted screams. The play had begun.

The Performance

There are actually two performances of the *Kaiśika Purāna* at Tirukkurungudi: one public, the other quite private. While the former commands our attention here, it is well to recount at least briefly the details of the latter. In doing so it will also be possible to survey the other festival proceedings leading up to the grand entrance of the demon on to the public stage.

Early on the night of the major performance, two to three hours before the commencement of the costuming ceremony,

the *Kaiśika* celebrations begin with a gala procession within the temple. Lord Nambi and his consorts are conducted from the main sanctuary to the pavilion in the *Kaiśika maṇḍapa*. As is customary in every ceremony involving the transporting of the festival images of the enshrined deity and his two consorts, there is much laughter, shouting, and singing among the followers (mostly women and children on this night) as the vehicle bearing the sacred family lurches along the temple corridors to the thunder of drums and the wailing of *nāgasvara*-s.

Shortly after the images are set in the festival pavilion, the Jīyar of the Maṭha proceeds from his quarters in the temple to the *Kaiśika maṇḍapa*. With his entourage, the great *saṁnyāsin* appears before the Lord and, as first among devotees, he offers first to the divinity. Thereupon the Jīyar receives 'honors' from the god and then retires straightaway to his apartment. He does not witness the popular, dramatic performance of the *Kaiśika*. After the conclusion of the drama (on occasion as late as 3:30 or 4:00 A.M.), the Jīyar returns to the hall, and in the company of a few brahmins he listens as the *Kaiśika Purāṇa* is recited in its formal Sanskrit and Maṇippravāḷa version by the Śrikāryam of the temple.²⁶

After the first 'visit' of the Jīyar, the popular enactment commences with a sort of musical overture. The ensemble of flute and percussion that provides the instrumental background throughout the performance improvises hauntingly as the audience stabilizes and the prompter prepares to begin the drama.

In 1967's performance, the temple institution's principal musician acted as the prompter for the very first time. For many years previously, this responsibility had fallen to a learned, non-brahmin villager. But the man died following a short illness only a few weeks before the performance; and Kampar, the temple's *nāgasvara* virtuoso, was pressed into service. He took up the prompter's duties with enthusiasm but without any formal tutoring and with only a few hours available to familiarize himself with the text and the procedures.

The enactment of the popular version of the *Kaiśika* story proceeds in this manner: The prompter-cum-narrator recites from a bulky, palm-leaf manuscript while standing on the stage. (In fact, he remains on the stage throughout the performance except when escorting the singer to the pavilion to offer the *Kaiśika* song to the deity.) The dialogue of the characters in the play is first quoted

in short phrases by the prompter and then repeated by the performers. Because the demon's mask extends around the mime's ears, it is often necessary for an attendant to repeat the prompter's words, shouting at close range into the back of the demon's head. Thus is the dialogue delivered, twice and frequently three times. Even the most inattentive in the audience are unlikely to lose their way.

Movement in the course of the performance is very restricted. With the exception of each actor's entrance to and exit from the stage and the demon's swinging of his club at irregular intervals, there seems to be no dramatic movement on stage. Perhaps the generous witness would notice a hint of *abhinaya* as the *Kaiśika paṇ* is offered to the deity. Nothing more.

This popular, Tamil version of the *Kaiśika Purāṇa* can take several hours in performance. In 1967, the performance was considerably shorter than usual, lasting only about two hours.²⁷ The audience of between 150 and 200 present at the start remained intact throughout, though scarcely two dozen appeared to be paying more than token attention. Occasionally, some children would giggle as the demon swung his club. Otherwise, the women who made up the majority of the audience grouped themselves in small, conversational *maṇḍala*-s, only infrequently glancing toward the stage.

Reflections

A survival of temple drama? Some of my colleagues have called my affirmative response into question. According to them, this static performance by untrained 'actors' in undistinguished costumes does not constitute more than a feeble echo of temple drama. And, they assert, this is all the more pathetic when it is recalled that Tirukkurungudi is situated in a region close to the classical centers for Bharatanāṭya, Kāṭhakaḷi, and Kūṭiyāṭṭam.²⁸

Granting that the enactment of the *Kaiśika Purāṇa* at Tirukkurungudi does not rank as dance-drama in the sense that its distinguished cousins do, I think that it would be to lose the point if one were to maintain on those grounds that the Tirukkurungudi performance is not true temple drama. To be sure, we have no records concerning the performance beyond the memory of the living. Possibly the enactment has been an annual, festival event in Tirukkurungudi

for a century, a century and a half, or longer. It is conceivable (even likely, I believe) that the dramatic performance has become less exciting; less spectacular, less 'theatrical' in recent times, partly because of the impoverishment of the sponsoring temple. On the other hand, the performance may only be a recent affair, its beginnings traceable only to the early part of this century. It may never have been an event to thrill the aesthete or to delight the champion of the major classical and folk drama traditions in India.

Though I cannot document the point to my satisfaction, I believe that the origins of the Tirukkurungudi performance go back at least to the nineteenth century and probably earlier. But even if I were to be convinced that this festival drama is a tradition of only a few decades, I should still maintain that it is a survival of temple drama. It is 'true' or 'genuine' survival in that it continues to provide in a quite modest, but never trivial, way what dramatic performances in temples have always provided: edification and entertainment.

The *Kaiśika Purāṇa* is a laud that almost demands to be acted out as a pious offering to Viṣṇu. The plot is uncomplicated and entertaining, if predictable. But it is the fact that this story is the vehicle for the presentation of matters of paramount concern to Vaiṣṇava-s that makes it so engaging. In fewer than 100 stanzas, many Vaiṣṇava values and aspirations are celebrated; so many, in fact, as to justify referring to the *Purāṇa* as a Vaiṣṇava primer.

Although the *Kaiśika* tells the story of the 'rescue' of a *brahmarākṣasa* (a familiar motif in Vaiṣṇava myths), that is not its most important element. The central figure is the *caṇḍāla* singer, and the pivotal action consists of two tests of his virtue. The singer vows (elaborately!) to return to the demon and certain death after singing to Viṣṇu in accordance with an earlier vow.²⁹ In the morning following the vigil, the untouchable is accosted by a man who urges him to flee. This is the first, gross, temptation; and the singer's response is the expected one:

[61] 'I can't do what you suggest. If I did, I'd not be acting in accordance with truth; and virtue's grounded in truth.'

The second temptation is subtle. When the *caṇḍāla* returns to the *rākṣasa*, the latter radically alters his demand: now, instead

of a meal of human flesh, he insists on having the *merit* acquired by the *caṇḍāla* through his singing vigil. Has the *caṇḍāla*'s 'unexpected' adherence to his apparently suicidal vow initiated a reform in the demon's behavior? Or is the *rākṣasa* simply altering the terms of the agreement in order to obtain greater power than mere physical sustenance could provide? For 'good' or 'evil', however, he has posed the supreme challenge to the *caṇḍāla*'s virtue.

And, at first, the singer refuses the new request. A contract is, after all, a contract. The demon attempts to bargain: if not *all* the merit, then one-half or even less. Abide by our agreement: devour me, the untouchable responds. 'Release *me* from *my* bondage', the demon pleads, thus becoming the *caṇḍāla*'s suppliant (*śaraṇāgatin*). After hearing the unhappy circumstances that brought the demon to his present condition, the *caṇḍāla* grants the petition and the demon is saved. More important, the untouchable has resisted the second temptation and is himself released; for, in the selfless act of giving merit acquired in his singing he demonstrates his perfect virtue.

I should not detain the reader who wishes to read the text, but a few of the more important personal and social virtues emphasized in it may be noted here. There is, of course, the significance attached to the adherence to vows, to singing the Lord's praise, to the maintenance of vigils, to fasting (even unintentional), and to truthfulness and selflessness. Also, one cannot overlook the stress placed on vegetarianism, sexual propriety, cleanliness, the humane treatment of men and beasts, and a particular Vaiṣṇava exclusivism about which the final *śloka*-s in the *caṇḍāla*'s oath to the *rākṣasa* provide unambiguous testimony:

[49] 'If I don't return, I go the way of those who abandon Vāsudeva and worship another god.'

[50] 'If I don't return, may I be stained with the evil of one who considers other gods the equals of Nārāyaṇa.'

Although the text is richer in meanings, I shall not go further here. Of course, many of the virtues praised directly and indirectly in the *Kaiśika* are not exclusive to Vaiṣṇava-s. But their ordering and the manner in which they are emphasized convey a characteristic, Vaiṣṇava attitude about god, man, and society. Infusing this work is the sense of community, a community based on truth,

steadfastness, and devotion. It is a social universe in which a simple song in praise of Viṣṇu transcends in power and significance all distinctions between men. A song refreshes and affirms the commonweal; it restores the universe. Is this *Kaiśika Purāṇa* a drama? Indeed, it is opera—musical drama of a kind that Richard Wagner would have understood well. The rich complexity of Vaiṣṇava thought and practice is not easily epitomized; yet this simple celebration of the potency of song and the regular, festival enactment of the story together constitute an eloquent statement of personal and social values held in common by all Vaiṣṇava-s.

The Translation

My translation of the *Kaiśika* story is based on the published text³⁰ collated with transcriptions of manuscripts in the collections of the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras, and of the Adyar Library.³¹ I have also consulted the manuscript (*ṛ̥tu*) presented to me by the authorities of the Tiru Jīyar Maṭha in Tirukkurungudi. Although these several sources differ at a number of places, the story is essentially the same in all.³² Therefore, given my intentions in this paper, I have not provided a critical edition of the *purāṇa*.

Accuracy and a faithfulness to the spirit of the work are the principal aims of this prose translation of a text in meter. My rendering neither aspires to literary distinction nor, I fear, even accidentally achieves it. Wherever possible, the simple, repetitive, and stylized nature of the text is preserved. As the translation will be read rather than heard, I have occasionally omitted transitional elements in the narrative. And, here and there, I have distinguished—as the Sanskrit does not—between the idiom of an untouchable and that of a brahmin-become-demon. There is a sort of litanesque quality about the *Kaiśika Purāṇa*—I hope it survives the translating.

The *caṇḍāla's* song itself does not appear here at all. None of the Sanskrit manuscripts includes it, and I have chosen not to translate the Tamil lyric as it is sung at Tirukkurungudi. There the song is a simple, though quite lengthy, recitation of Viṣṇu's names, a vernacular *sahasranāma*. No translation could convey this song's power, for that lies in the combination of word and music

and in the spirit in which the song is sung. A song is to be heard, not seen. Here, then, it seems best to keep silent and to listen.

The Kaiśika Purāṇa

Śrī Varāha said (to *Bhūdevī*):

- [1] 'O Lovely-eyed One, during a vigil³³ kept by anyone, knowledgeable or ignorant, he who sings what should be sung to me is secure by virtue of his devotion to me.
- [2] 'As many syllables as are in his song, Splendid One, so many are the millenia he prospers in Indra's heaven.
- [3] 'Handsome, virtuous, pure, the best of the dutiful. There is no doubt that he will perceive bolt-wielding Śakra eternally.
- [4] 'My devotee could be born at Indra's side in an instant. But even there this completely virtuous one will yearn for me.
- [5] 'Straying from Indra's paradise, wholly dedicated to singing to me, he is released from his wanderings³⁴ and proceeds to my world.'
- [6] Because of the sacred importance of those words, the Goddess Earth exclaimed to Him who had taken the form of a boar:
- [7] 'There is such grace in your statement about song's power! What great ascetic attained perfection through the efficacy of a song?'
- [8] 'Listen carefully', He replied, 'I shall tell you an excellent story about a great ascetic who attained perfection through the power of song.
- [9] 'In the South is a mountain called Mahendra. From it, a holy river of milk flows southward to the sea.
- [10] 'During vigils, a resolute *caṇḍāla* would go there from a great distance to the hermitage of the blessed. He was secure because of his devotion to me.
- [11] 'And so did ten years pass for that virtuous untouchable, my devotee.
- [12] 'Then, on the twelfth³⁵ of the month of *Kaumuda*, in the bright fortnight while the people passed the night in sleep, he took up his *viṇā* and set forth.
- [13] 'On the way, he was seized by a *brahmarākṣasa*. The singer was frail; the demon powerful.

- [14] 'Overcome with pain and unable to free himself, that singer gasped:
- [15] ' "During this walking vigil, I go to offer song to lotus-eyed Viṣṇu. Demon: Release me!"
- [16] 'To that the mighty and impatient demon responded, "No!"
- [17] 'Again the untouchable spoke to the vicious monster: "What do you want, attacking me like this?"
- [18] 'Lusting to eat a man, the demon spoke the following horrible words:
- [19] ' "A period of ten days has elapsed since I have eaten. Destiny³⁶ has put you here; my food is in hand!
- [20] ' "So, I shall devour you—marrow, flesh, blood . . . everything. And having filled myself, I shall go my way."
- [21] 'The *caṇḍāla*, dedicated to singing and secure by virtue of his devotion to me, entreated the demon:
- [22] ' "Listen carefully, majestic one: You will eat me. That's necessary; destiny has given me to you.
- [23] ' "(But) consume me later, after the vigil. My main vow is to please Viṣṇu.
- [24] ' "Save me, demon, from breaking this vow to Nārāyaṇa. Following the vigil, consume me at your pleasure."
- [25] 'Having endured the *caṇḍāla*'s pleas, the hunger-tormented demon replied in a low voice:
- [26] ' "Caṇḍāla, you speak in vain: 'I shall come back.' Once escaped from a demon's jaws, *who*, indeed, returns to those jaws?
- [27] ' "Many are the roads, and the countries are just as many. Quitting this place, you will want to go far away.
- [28] ' "No one proceeds (knowingly) to his own slaughter. Having slipped away from the jaws of a demon, you will desire to come back?"
- [29] 'Having heard the demon out, the righteous *caṇḍāla* mildly addressed the flesh-eating monster:
- [30] ' "Even though I'm an untouchable, defiled by former acts, I've become a human because I know the inner self.
- [31] ' "Hear this oath, demon. By it, I'll return after completing my long vigil for the pleasure of the lord of the world.
- [32] ' "The root of the entire universe is truth. The world rests on truth. I'm not a liar. I speak only the truth.
- [33] ' "Now here's my oath. Listen to it, demon. Truly, I curse (myself) if I go and don't return.

- [34] ‘ “If I don’t return, may I be stained with the evil³⁷ of the lustful and deluded man who would go to the wife of another.
- [35] ‘ “If I don’t return, may I be stained with the evil of one who’d prepare *pākabheda* and then eat it himself.
- [36] ‘ “If I don’t return, may I be stained with the evil of one who gives some land and then snatches it back.
- [37] ‘ “If I don’t return, may I be stained with the evil of one who, after enjoying a beautiful woman, then reviles her.
- [38] ‘ “If I don’t return, may I be stained with the evil of one who performs the *śrāddha* on new-moon day and then propositions a woman.
- [39] ‘ “If I don’t return, may I be stained with the evil of one who enjoys the hospitality of another and then cruelly censures him.
- [40] ‘ “If I don’t return, may I be stained with the evil of one who says, ‘I give my daughter (in marriage)’, and then does not give her.
- [41] ‘ “If I don’t return, may I suffer eternally like those who don’t bathe on the sixth or eighth day in a fortnight or on new-moon day or on the fourteenth.
- [42] ‘ “If I don’t return, may I suffer like one who promises to give and then doesn’t.
- [43] ‘ “If I don’t return, may I be stained with the evil of that slave of Kāma’s arrow who’d approach the wife of a friend.
- [44] ‘ “If I don’t return, I go the way of those fools who approach the wife of a teacher or the wife of the king.
- [45] ‘ “If I don’t return, I walk the path of one who takes two wives but loves only one.
- [46] ‘ “If I don’t return, may I be stained with the evil of one who would spurn a young bride who has no other refuge.
- [47] ‘ “In not returning, may there be the evil of him who sets an obstacle in front of a thirst-maddened herd of cattle running to water.
- [48] ‘ “In not returning, may there be that evil the virtuous assign to one who kills a brahmin, to one who drinks liquor, to a thief, and to one who breaks vows.
- [49] ‘ “If I don’t return, I go the way of those who abandon Vāsu-deva and worship another god.
- [50] ‘ “If I don’t return, may I be stained with the evil of one who considers other gods the equals of Nārāyaṇa.”

- [51] 'Satisfied by the *caṇḍāla*'s oath, the demon responded softly, "Go swiftly. I salute you."
- [52] 'Released by the demon, the resolute *caṇḍāla* again sang for me, firm in his devotion to me.
- [53] 'At daybreak, the vigil concluded, the untouchable said, "Hail, Nārāyaṇa", and started back again.
- [54] 'As he was hurrying along, a man³⁸ appeared before him and asked gently:
- [55] ' "Caṇḍāla, where are you going so swiftly and purposefully? Tell me honestly what you are thinking about."
- [56] 'Hearing his words, the untouchable replied sweetly and without hesitation:
- [57] ' "I swore an oath in the presence of a *brahmarākṣasa*. I want to go there to him."
- [58] 'Hearing that from the untouchable, the man quickly replied to test his resolve:³⁹
- [59] ' "Caṇḍāla, do not go there! Yonder is a demon, blameless and strong-vowed one. He is evil, a flesh-eater dangerous to approach."
- [60] 'Hearing the man's advice, the untouchable—true to his agreement and having decided to die there—replied sweetly:
- [61] ' "I can't do what you suggest. (If I did) I'd not be (acting in accordance with) truth; and virtue is established on truth."
- [62] 'The man, his eyes like lotus petals, responded, "If that is your resolve, *tāta*, good luck!"
- [63] 'Reaching the demon's lair, that one whose resolve was fixed in truth, gently addressed the flesh-eating demon:
- [64] ' "By your leave, I've offered song to Viṣṇu, the Lord of the world, as I wished. My desire is accomplished. Now, consume these limbs of mine according to your own desire."⁴⁰
- [65] 'Having listened menacingly to that declaration, the *brahmarākṣasa* spoke gently to this untouchable who had been faithful to his vow:
- [66] ' "Caṇḍāla, during the night you observed a vigil for Viṣṇu. Give me the fruit of the songs if you wish to live."
- [67] 'The *caṇḍāla* spoke again:
- [68] ' "I am true to your original demand. Eat me as you will. I should not give the fruit of my songs."
- [69] 'It was a reasonable statement. Hearing it, the demon quickly replied, but in a soft way:

- [70] ‘ “All right. Then give me half the virtue issuing from your singing. If you do, I shall be released from this horrible behavior.”⁴¹
- [71] ‘The untouchable, secure in his vows, noticed the gentle nature of the demon’s petition and responded:
- [72] ‘ “You said you’d eat me, I heard it. How is it you now want something else: my song?”
- [73] ‘ “Give me the merit which results from singing in a single watch of the night.⁴² After that, dear chap, you can go to your sons and wife.”⁴³
- [74] ‘This *caṇḍāla*, who was so devoted to singing, listened to the demon’s words and replied mildly but firmly:
- [75] ‘ “I should not give the fruit of a watch as you desire, O demon. Drink my blood as you earlier threatened.”
- [76] ‘The flesh-eating *rākṣasa* listened and spoke as follows to the truthful *caṇḍāla* who knew merit:
- [77] ‘ “Give me (the fruit of) one song you sang in Viṣṇu’s presence.
- [78] ‘ “Please deliver me from this bondage by the fruit of that song.” And so speaking, the demon became the untouchable’s suppliant.⁴⁴
- [79] ‘Sweetly, the resolute *caṇḍāla* asked the monster:
- [80] ‘ “Demon, what did you do wrong previously through the fault of which you ended up in a demon’s womb?”
- [81] ‘Thus questioned by the untouchable, this demon, who had sought refuge with his intended victim, reflected on his previous deeds and replied:
- [82] ‘ “I was Somaśarma, a *caraka*, brahmin-born. Neglecting the *sūtra*-s and *mantra*-s,⁴⁵ I engaged in preparing the *yūpa*.⁴⁶
- [83] ‘ “Then, tormented by greed and delusion, I performed a sacrifice. While it was in progress, I felt a stabbing pain.⁴⁷
- [84] ‘ “And on the fifth night, the rite incomplete, I died not having done many acts.
- [85] ‘ “Because of the flaw in that sacrifice, untouchable, listen to what happened to me. I, a brahmin, was born a demon, a *brahmarākṣasa*.
- [86] ‘ “So, because of the flaw in that sacrifice, I have obtained this wonderful body!” Having said that, the demon took refuge with the untouchable.
- [87] ‘Impelled by the demon, the resolute *caṇḍāla* said: “So be it.

[88] ' "The final song I sang was the *Kaiśika*. It is the best. It is blessed. By its fruit I'll release you from your offense". '

The Lord concluded :

[89] 'Anyone who, out of devotion, sings the *Kaiśika* in my assembly rescues evil-doers just as the untouchable rescued the demon.

[90] 'In this instance, the demon received the boon and became a brahmin. Born in a stainless family, he came to my world.

[91] 'And the untouchable, my songster, became a brahmin because of faultless action.

[92] 'These, O goddess, are the results of singing on the twelfth of *Kaumuda*.⁴⁸ He who sings is blessed and proceeds to my world.'

Notes

1. *Ekādaśī* observances are discussed at some length in P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. V, Pt. 1, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1958, pp. 95-121.
2. For additional information about *cāturmāsya*-s, their Vedic background and the vows and performances associated with them, consult Suvira Jaiswal, *The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism*, Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1967, pp. 146-8; P.V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, II. 2:1091-1108 and V. 1:122-3; and Louis Renou and Jean Filliozat, *L'Inde classique*, Vol. I, Paris: Payot, 1947, pp. 353-4. Also compare H.D. Smith's discussion above, pp. 32-3.
3. The day is also 'mistakenly' called '*Kauśika-ekādaśī*'.
4. *Vaikunṭha-ekādaśī* (classically, *mokṣadā*), which is observed one (lunar) month later, is also an occasion for rather elaborate festival performances. These celebrations climax with a procession within a Viṣṇu temple along the corridors just outside the walls that protect the inner-most confines. The procession halts in front of the northern door (*vaikunṭha-dvara*/*mokṣa-dvara*). The door opens, and the Lord confers 'release' on the assembly.
5. The complete passage in the *Pārameśvara* (as cited in His Holiness Śrī Yatirāja Sampatkumāra Rāmānujamuni of Melkote, *Śrī Pāñcarātre Mahopaniṣadi Utsava Saṃgraha*, Mysore: Coronation Press, 1956, p. 77) is as follows:

kṛttike māsi viprendra śuklaikādaśikā tu yā |
tasyāmuṣya rātryāṃ tu jāgareṇa jagatpatim || 1 ||
tatkālocitarāgotthaisstosayitvā tu gītakaiḥ |
brāhme muhūrte saṃprāpte viśeṣeṇa yajetprabhum || 2 ||
saṃśrāvayedgītakāni stotrāṇi vividhāḥ kathāḥ |
homavasānam sarvaṃ tu saviśeṣaṃ samācaret || 3 ||

tatkāle ye ca gāyanti tacca śṛṅvanti ye janāḥ |
 teṣāṃ puṇyaphalāvāptiṃ kaḥ śaknotyabhivarnitum || 4 ||
 iti śrīpāñcarātre pārameśvare kriyākāṇḍe
 mahotsavādhyāye kauśikapurāṇavidhiḥ (sic)

6. Known also as the *Kaiśika Māhātmya*, the *Viṣṇuseva Māhātmyā*, the *Viṣṇustava Māhātmya*, and, as seen in the preceding note, the *Kauśika Purāṇa*.
7. Colophons of the manuscripts consulted variously declare it to be the seventh, fortieth, forty-eighth, sixty-sixth, and seventy-sixth *adhyāya* of the *Varāha Purāṇa*. Additional manuscript information is available in V. Raghavan (ed.), *New Catalogus Catalogorum*, Vol. V, Madras: University of Madras, 1969, pp. 83a-b.
8. Or *cāṇḍala*: *pratiloma* untouchables who are the issue of the union of *sūdra* males and brahmin females. The most common epithet for this group (and one used most frequently in the text of the *Kaiśika Purāṇa*) is *śvapāka*, 'cooker (and presumably eater) of dogs'. Quite obviously, this has been traditionally the most despised 'class' in or at the fringes of Indian society. See P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. II, Pt. I, 1941, pp. 81-2.
9. The 'mode' or 'melody' (*paṇ*, *pāṇ*) called '*kaiśika*' seems to have clear associations with passion and romantic love in a broader context than the specifically sacred. Consideration of technical details concerning the music falls outside the scope of this paper. For a further comment on the song, see below, pp. 87-8.
10. Madras: Rattilam Press, 1955 (for the Granthamala Office, Kancipuram).
11. *Siddhāśrama*, 'retreat (or hermitage) of the blessed/accomplished', is a common regional appellative for the sacred complex at Tirukkurungudi. The Tamil paraphrase accompanying the published Sanskrit text refers expressly to *Kuṛuṅkuṭi* as do the Tamil *ṭikā*-s of four of the manuscripts examined.
12. Spelled in various ways—including 'Thirukarangudi' and even 'Tricknaungoody'—on road signs and maps and in government documents, the name of the village has been troublesome not only for the western ear. Strictly transliterated from the Tamil, it is 'tirukkuṛuṅkuṭi'; but Tamilians dispute its meaning. The Sanskrit *sthala purāṇa* (or *māhātmya*: 'glorification of the place') renders the name *śrī-kurāṅga-kṣetra*, suggesting the analysis '*tiru(k)-kuṛuṅ-kuṭi*'. However, that does not resolve the issue of meaning. Some argue that Tirukkurungudi is the 'southern equivalent' of *kurukṣetra*. Others insist that because the village is, according to legend, the site of Viṣṇu's adventures as *vāmanāvatāra*, 'kuṛuṅ' must somehow mean 'dwarf'. It is more probable, I think, that the puzzling '*kuṛuṅ*' is a corruption of the Tamil *kuṛaṅku* ('monkey'). A very widespread legend concerning the sanctity of the site has it that Hanuman strode forth from the mountains above the village to Laṅkā in quest of Sītā (see below, note 15). Hence it is at least plausible that the current village name *tirukkuṛuṅkuṭi*, is a conflation of an earlier '*tiru(k)-kuṛaṅku-kuṭi*': 'place of the great monkey.'
13. This is the population of the 'revenue village' properly so-called, comprising the *agrahāra* and contiguous streets. The population of the Tirukkurungudi panchayat approaches 9,000.
14. It is said locally that the sage Agastya and his disciples still wander and meditate

in these mountains; and, just at dawn on the sixth morning of Tirukkurungudi's major annual festival (the *Brahmotsava*), this belief, too, becomes living drama. After a full night of carrying the five festival images of Nambi-Viṣṇu through the *agrahāra*, the litter bearers round the corner of the western-most street and dash down its length with their sacred burden. The procession stops abruptly and the images are turned to face the mountains in the west. Thereupon, Viṣṇu bestows blessings and *mokṣa* upon Agastya and his entourage, all of whom are traditionally known as devotees of Śiva.

15. This would appear to be the most famous of the several *Mahendragiri*-s in South India. From it, Hanuman stepped to Laṅkā (see above, note 12). There is a modest amount of confusion in this connection, however. The mountain skyline west of the village is dominated not by Mahendragiri but rather by another peak in the foreground. This is *tiruwannamalaimoṭṭai*, a mountain whose sheer-faced and canted summit locates Tirukkurungudi for pilgrims as far away as Cape Comorin, 25 miles distant. And this it does despite the fact that it is nearly 1,000 feet less in altitude than its frequently cloud-swathed neighbor, Mahendragiri. Local legend explains its odd profile as the consequence of the enormous pressure applied as Hanuman strode South. Two mountains and a myth that mysteriously makes them one.
16. Situated almost directly at the river's bank in Tirukkurungudi is the Tiruppārkaṭalnampi Kōvil ('Temple of Nambi of/on the Ocean of Milk'). Now, at least, it is simply a satellite of the town's larger Nambi temple. But, despite the absence of confirming records, many villagers insist that it is the older of the two.
17. I have already suggested above (p. 77 and note 5) that the history of special *Kaiśika-ekādaśī* observances in South India remains conjectural. Helpful inscriptional evidence is meagre. Two inscriptions at Tirupati, however, do provide a modest amount of interesting information from the mid-sixteenth century. One (No. 404-T. T.)—in the Govindarājasvāmī Temple in the town of Tirupati—directs the offering of some cooked food to the enshrined deity (and the subsequent distribution of a portion to certain devotees as *prasāda*) on the recitation of a *Kavucika Purāṇam*. The other inscription (Nos. 505 and 667-T. T.) is found in the Tirumalai ('Hill') Temple and can be dated 26 November 1545. It orders the presentation of cash, sandal, areca, and betel to the reciter of a *Kavucika Purāṇam* on *Utthāna-dvādaśī*—that is, on the *twelfth* day in the bright fortnight of *Utthāna* (= *Kārttika*). For texts and translations of both inscriptions, see Pandit V. Vijayaraghavacharya (trans. and ed., *Inscriptions of Sadasivaraya's Time (Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Series, Vol. V, Madras: Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanam's Press, 1937)*, pp. 95-6 and 150-4. And compare Sadhu Subrahmany Sastry, *Report on the Inscriptions of the Devasthanam Collection (Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Report, Pt. I)*, Madras: Tirupati Sri Mahant's Press, 1930, p. 64.

Pandit Vijayaraghavacharya reads '*Kaiśika Purāṇam*' in those inscriptions; and I surmise that the reference is to 'our' *Kaiśika Purāṇa*, though the issue may never be conclusively settled. Moreover, at least two other questions are raised by the inscriptions: Why is the twelfth rather than the eleventh lunar day specified in one; and, in a rather different vein, was Tirupati's '*Kavucika/Kavucika Purāṇam*' in the sixteenth century a Sanskrit, a Tamil, or possibly a Telugu 'text'?

- The puzzle of 'eleven *vs.* twelve' receives some attention in note 35 below. Whether the Sanskrit text of the *Kaiśika* now on my desk is an 'original' or a legitimizing translation from the vernacular is a question that can be pondered here. Certainly no story intended for audiences including all strata of Indian society has ever been available exclusively in a Sanskrit version. Informally, then, the Sanskrit *Kaiśika Purāṇa* has always been accompanied by a vernacular 'gloss'. Further, this tale of a blessed *Nampāṭuvan* singer clearly owes much to non-Sanskritic inspiration, particularly to that issuing from Tamil Vaiṣṇava traditions as old as those associated with the *Ālvār*-s and perhaps older. Quite probably, we shall never be sure which is the oldest *text*. We can be confident, however, that the story itself is rooted in popular tradition.
18. The danger is brought home to villagers in a rather spectacular way by means of a frequently-repeated story concerning three itinerant actors who were hired to perform the *Kaiśika* at Tirukkurungudi in the late 1950s. All three are said to have 'died mysteriously' within a year of the performance. The accuracy of the story is suspect—records to confirm it are wanting—but the moral is clear and effective.
 19. Various statutes (e.g., the Bombay Devadasis Protection Act, 10 of 1934, and the Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act, 31 of 1947) have by and large eliminated a formalized, traditional *devadāsī* institution in India. In several South Indian temples, however, there are pious women who perform in one or more annual festival celebrations. Such services in temples is restricted to singing and dancing before festival images during processions; activities, it should be noted in passing, that are more central to the *devadāsī*-s' role traditionally than the more notorious ones which presumably inspired the legislative prohibitions.
 20. The two welcome the festival images returning to the Nambi Temple on the sixth morning of the *Brahmotsava* (see also note 9 above). And on that festival's seventh night they lead a splendid procession of the divine images through the *agrahāra*, representing and dancing and singing for the Lord and his consorts in celebration of the holy wedding.
 21. For half of every month, Kuṟuṅkuṭi worked in the main Nambi Temple, spending the other fifteen days stationed at the associated hill temple: the Tirumalainampī Kōvil five miles up into the Ghats. Two to three times each week he transported provisions and ritual apparatus between the two shrines. I was much saddened to learn of the death of this imaginative and apparently tireless man who had so cheerfully assisted me in my own work since 1964.
 22. According to the *Kaiśika* story, of course, the demon's fast is quite unintentional; but it is nonetheless an absolutely essential precondition to his eventual 'rescue'.
 23. I am not clear about the exact significance of this prohibition against eating in the presence of brahmins.
 24. Kuṟuṅkuṭi was not allowed to consume mustard, garlic, onion, ginger, oils, or coffee during the fast.
 25. This ceremony I was unable to witness, and I have only vague summaries of the proceedings. The *pūjā* is offered in the principal sanctuary, within the view of the major, fixed image of Lord Nambi.
 26. The small audience for the second performance includes the few pilgrims

who have made the journey to Tirukkurungudi for this event. Throughout Tamil Nadu, many people with whom we talked expressed the hope that they would be able to attend at least one performance at Tirukkurungudi. Unhappily, for most that will remain only a dream. In 1967, the most distinguished pilgrim who attended the *Kaiśika* festival and this intimate performance was Tiru L.C. Alaṅkārapaṭṭar, a renowned Vaikhānasa *vidvān* and the teacher of the chief *arcaka* of the Nambi Temple. He was also the one who had come from the greatest distance, about 85 miles.

27. Unfamiliar with the manuscript, the prompter often lost his way in the difficult-to-read palm leaves. (In fact, more than once, the bulky manuscript threatened to cascade on to the stage like a tired venetian blind.) The performance was salvaged in large measure because of the impromptu assistance that the prompter received from the actors. They had memorized most of their parts over the years. Frequently, they prompted the prompter, thus enabling him to truncate the work without losing the story line.
28. Several elements in the enactment to parallel structural features of Kūṭiyāṭṭam, though admittedly only in a simplified way. Comparative study in the future could possibly show to what extent the *Kaiśika* performance at Tirukkurungudi is logically or historically derived from other genres. Such investigations also should not overlook further, interesting parallels with *Śivarātri* observances. See Long, pp. 191-219 below.
29. Nowhere among the offenses cited by the *caṇḍāla* in his pledge to the demon is the evil (*pāpa*, *doṣa*) incurred by breaking a fast mentioned. In fact, the text does not declare that the untouchable is himself fasting during his singing vigil, though that may be fairly confidently postulated. Is it not possible, however, that the 'fasting' demon (see note 22 above) and the singing *caṇḍāla* as a pair illustrate completely the efficacy of the *ekādaśikavrata*?
30. See note 10 above.
31. From the Government Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras, I have used *Mss.* D. 2394, D. 2397, R. 4073 (a), and R. 4679. To Tiru R. K. Parthasarathi, former Head of the G.O. M.L., and to Pandit C. N. Subramaniasastry, Pandit S. Viswanatha Sarma, and other members of the Library staff, I am most thankful for their unfailingly efficient and cordial assistance.
Four *Mss.* from the Adyar Library were also consulted: Nos. 66790, 67650, 70808, and 73966. The Library's Curator, Seetha Neelakantan, and Pandits K. Parameswara Aithal and N. Srinivasan helped me in many ways, and they have my warmest thanks for that aid.
32. The manuscripts differ most obviously in the matter of including or excluding certain *śloka*-s. Indeed, one version tells the story in but 50 *śloka*-s, only half the number found in the published text. This suggests simply a variation in the intensity of the local elaboration of a common core story. Variant readings abound, but they do not affect the thrust of the story. And, there is a good deal of grammatically indefensible Sanskrit in these manuscripts. However, it is not Pāṇini but Viṣṇu who is the issue in these re-tellings; so I have kept the *apparatus criticus* minimal.
33. 'Vigil' is an apt synecdoche. The circumstances and behavior of 'hero' and 'villain'—singer and demon—as well as the happy resolution of the drama, are clearly anticipated in this initial stanza.

34. *Samsāra*.

35. That the twelfth and not the eleventh *tithi* is expressly mentioned here and also again at *śloka* 92 poses something of a problem. All the manuscripts agree that the events in the *Kaiśika* story 'took place' on the twelfth; but, in modern times at least, they are invariably celebrated on the eleventh. One of two Tirupati inscriptions referred to above (note 17) implies that in the mid-sixteenth century a *Kavīcika Purāṇam* was recited regularly on the twelfth of the lunar month *Utthāna*. Yet the *Pārameśvara Saṃhitā*—a text presumably older in the main than those inscriptions—prescribes *Kauśikapurāṇavidhiḥ* for the eleventh (note 5 above). What is to be made of these discrepancies?

Perhaps that is another question which cannot be answered entirely satisfactorily; still, one or two observations may provide some help. In the first place, the eleventh and the twelfth are often linked in connection with special observances; and certain texts state that a strictly observed *ekādaśivrata* for Vaiṣṇava-s ought to begin on the tenth *tithi* and extend into the twelfth. (An important technical consideration here can be the relationship between 'lunar days' and 'solar' or 'civil days' in the matter of the timing and duration of *vrata*-s. For more detailed information concerning these complicated subjects, see P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. I, pp. 68-9, 675-6 and especially, 113-21.)

A second consideration to be kept in mind is the possibility that originally the *Kaiśika* story may have been central to a festival separate from *ekādaśi* observances. The emphasis of such a discrete festival would, in my view, have been the celebration of Viṣṇu's rising from sleep and the conclusion of the annual *cāturmāsya*vrata which, as Kane observes (*History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. I, p. 122, 'whenever it may be begun . . . is to be finished on *Kārtika-śukla* 12'. The linking of the temporally juxtaposed *Kārtika-ekādaśivrata* and the climax of the *cāturmāsya*vrata over time is understandable and is, I think, a credible conjecture. *Kaiśika* celebrations would then be the *pārāṇa* ('fulfillment') of two vows. And see Smith above, pp. 32-3.

36. *Dhātṛ*.

37. The untouchable's oath (*samaya*) begins here and continues through the succeeding 16 *śloka*-s. In the majority of those stanzas there is the refrain: *tasya paṇena lipyeyaṃ yadyahaṃ nāgame punaḥ*. That refrain could be rendered accurately in more than one way; and I have simply chosen one that seems situationally and idiomatically appropriate.

38. This 'man' (*puruṣa*) is, of course, Viṣṇu (see *śloka* 62).

39. The text refers to the man as *bhāvaśodhaka*, 'clarifier of thoughts', a compound word with more than one sense. In the next *śloka*, the man urges the *caṇḍāla* to flee. Superficially, at least, that would seem to be the practical counsel of one who is 'purifying' the untouchable's mind by reminding him of the dire consequences of returning to the demon. But, in fact, the man is tempting the untouchable, testing his dedication to his oath, as, analogously, one might test the purity of a metal or the genuineness of a jewel. And this man is Viṣṇu, the Lord who gracefully purifies 'beings'.

40. Here, and for the following dozen *śloka*-s, I depart slightly from the numbers assigned in the published text. There the editor solved the problem of what to do with partial stanzas (interpolations or fragments) either by incorporat-

ing them under one number with the preceding, complete *śloka* or by allowing them to stand independently. As I translate the entire text, reference to the original should not be impeded.

41. The manuscripts prefer *mokṣyasi*, 'you will release (me)', while *mokṣyāmi*, 'I shall release you', is found in the printed version.
42. *Yāma*.
43. *Samgamaṃ putradāraḥkaiḥ*.
44. *Caṇḍālaṃ rākṣasaśśaraṇaṃ gataḥ*.
45. *Sūtramantraparibhraṣṭaḥ*. An Indian colleague suggests an alternative reading: 'ignoring the sacred thread and the *gāyatrī*'.
46. *Yūpakarmaṇyadhiṣṭhitāḥ*.
47. *Yajñe pravartamāne tu śūladoṣastvajāyata*.
48. See note 35.



TWO CITRĀ FESTIVALS IN MADURAI

D. Dennis Hudson

THE GODS WHO 'dwell' in the temples of South India spend most of the year inside their palace-temples, where they receive the daily service of priests and the homage of devotees. They are divine royalty who graciously give audience to those who gain entrance to their presence. But on specific occasions throughout the year, they leave their temples and travel throughout the mundane realm, transforming it temporarily into the divine realm by virtue of their presence. The purpose of this paper is to describe two such festivals which occur every year in the city of Madurai, an ancient religious center of Tamil Nadu (formerly Madras State).

These two festivals—one primarily a wedding (*tirukkalyāṇam*) and the other a journey (*yātrā, valīnaṭai*)—take place in the hot season and center around the full moon of the month of *Citrā* or *Cittirai*, corresponding to the four weeks from mid-April to mid-May. In the popular mind, the two festivals are understood as connected with one another, while in the traditions maintained by the respective Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava temples which conduct the festivals they have in common only the month of *Citrā* and its full moon. This paper will describe both festivals from the point of view of each temple's tradition and will sketch the popular tradition which connects them together, concluding with a few suggestions about how the existence of the popular myth might be understood. The following descriptions are based on Tamil poems which tell the myths enacted in these festivals, on temple calendars published for recent festival performances, and on observations of these performances.¹ Both festivals need considerable study, for they are complex dramas and are important not only for the people who celebrate them but also as extravagant examples of the festival (*utsava*), one of the most characteristic features of Hindu India.

The City of Madurai and the Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara Temple

The city of Madurai dates from the early centuries of this era, if not earlier, but its present form derives from the sixteenth century.² Although today Madurai spreads far beyond its sixteenth-century boundaries, these old boundaries remain important in the enactment of the festivals. The original Madurai, which is the densely populated center of the present city, lies on the south bank of the Vaigai River which flows east from the Western Ghats to the Bay of Bengal. The temple of Sundareśvara (Beautiful Lord) and his wife Mīnākṣī (Fish-Eye)—forms of Śiva and his Śakti—has always dominated the city. Fourteenth-century Muslim invaders destroyed all of the temple complex except the central shrines,³ but in the fifteenth century a new line of Hindu rulers under the rule of the Vijayanagara empire began extensive rebuilding which continued for several generations.⁴

The temple and the fortified city as rebuilt and expanded in these centuries were conceived of as a single unit, the plan of which is the ritual diagram known as a *yantra*—a square pattern of concentric lines which both delineates and embodies the divine presence (*sannidhi*). At its core the Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara (M-S) Temple consists of a stone *liṅga*, the remains of a tree, a tank of water, and the image of Mīnākṣī, all, according to local tradition, results of the Lord's divine self-revelatory 'amusements' or 'sporting' (*līlā, viḷai-yātal*). From this core, buildings, streets, and walls spread out in the cardinal directions to encompass about fourteen acres of land. High red-and-white-striped outer walls enclose the temple and each wall has a majestic gateway (*gopura*) at each cardinal direction, the tallest of which stands 160 feet high. Outside these walls, three rectangular streets continue the concentric expansion of the *yantra*. Originally the whole temple-city complex was surrounded by a rampart, the gates of which repeated the orientation of the temple, and by an outer ditch.⁵ This well-protected city also included the king's palace in the southeastern corner next to the temple, originally a building complex of immense size of which only a portion remains today.⁶ Local tradition aptly likens this temple and surrounding city to a lotus, the temple forming the center and the surrounding streets forming the petals.⁷

Looking at the sixteenth-seventeenth century city of Madurai

from a religious point of view, it was a clearly defined spatial realm (*maṇḍala*)—a microcosm of the universe ruled by Śiva and Śakti, where the divine and the human mingled intimately. Out of their compassion, the divine Lord (Īśvara) and Lady (Amman) dwelled in their concrete visible forms (*mūrti*) within their palace-temple (*kōyil*), while the human king (*rājan*) who patronized their temple dwelled within his palace (*kōyil*) nearby, and the general populace lived within the city rampart protected by the joint rule of both.⁸ The bond between the gods, the king, and the people was understood to be *dharma*: the inherent order of the cosmos permeating all aspects of the divine, human, and natural realms, an order sustained by the compassion of Śiva and Śakti, by the proper rule of the king, and by the faithful adherence of the people to the social, moral, and ritual order.

The *yantra* pattern of the city is not obvious today, for drastic changes were made in the city during British rule. In the nineteenth century, the rampart was pulled down, the ditch was filled in, and houses were built over it. Today the city expands northwards across the Vaigai River, and the Madurai municipality now encompasses the Muslim village of Gōripālaiyam, the village of Tallākuḷam, and newly built suburbs. But none of these modern changes are recognized by the rituals of either the wedding or the journey festival.

The Temple of Aḷagar in the Aḷagarmalais

The second temple involved in this study lies about twelve miles northeast of Madurai at the base of a hill, one of the many hills in the ridge called the Aḷagarmalais.⁹ There are several shrines and sacred springs (*tīrtha*) in these hills, but the temple of Aḷagar (Beautiful Lord) is by far the most important *tīrtha*. As a shrine of Viṣṇu and a pilgrimage site it dates from at least the seventh century; but like the M-S Temple its present form derives from the expansion activities of the Madurai Nāyaks in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries.

In contrast to Madurai, which has grown beyond its original boundaries, the temple and fortified city of Aḷagarkōyil have declined. Only a rampart wall, the temple, ruins of the palace, and a village of 3000 inhabitants remain from what was once a grand

fort and pilgrimage center covering about one hundred acres, patronized by the kings of the Vijayanagara empire through the Vaiṣṇava Nāyaks of Madurai. Behind the inner chamber of the temple runs a stream, the Cīlampāru (River of the Anklet), originating two miles above the temple in a waterfall springing out of the rocks and regarded as the most sacred *tīrtha* in the hills. But even this waterfall and stream have diminished and are now 'in a way a Kaliyuga disappointment', though thousands of pilgrims continue to bathe there yearly.¹⁰ A road runs from the temple past the palace ruins and out of the south gateway of the rampart to the Vaigai River opposite Madurai twelve miles away. It is along this connecting link between these two sacred places that the annual journey of Aḷagar takes place.

Hindu temples make a distinction between the immovable images, or forms of God permanently placed in the inner chamber of the temple, and the movable images used for worship, festivals, and bathing rituals.¹¹ In the Aḷagar Temple, the Lord residing in the inner chamber is called Paramasvāmī (Supreme Lord), a small iconic form of Viṣṇu made of black *kāyāmpū* wood with the goddesses Śrī and Bhū on either side. The movable image for festivals is made of gold and bears the name Aḷagar or Sundararājan (Beautiful King); it is this image which is the focus of devotion during the journey festival, and some devotees consider it to be 'the most beautiful idol in India'.¹²

There are many names for deities in South Indian Hindu shrines, each with a specific referent, and the most common one used for Viṣṇu residing in the Aḷagar Temple connects him specifically with an element in the local social structure. He is known as Kaḷḷāḷagar (Beautiful Lord of the Guardians), a name referring to a local caste called the Kaḷḷar, or 'Guardians', who play an important part in his journey festival.¹³ The Kaḷḷar, or more precisely the branch of the caste which bears the title Ambalakkārar, once dominated the countryside north of Madurai extending up to the Aḷagarmalais and had their center around a fort at Mēlūr. Until the middle of the nineteenth century they served as soldiers for the king at Madurai, provided guards for the villages, and were feared for their systematic thievery and banditry. Prior to British rule, any travellers between Madurai and the royal cities of Tiruccirāppaḷli (Trichy) and Tañjāvūr (Tanjore) to the north had to take special care while passing through this Kaḷḷar

country (Kaḷḷar *nātu*) and usually avoided it if possible.¹⁴ Any king who sought political unity between these cities could attain it only by bringing these independent Kaḷḷar under his control.

The family or caste god (*kuladeva*) to whom the Kaḷḷar are attached is Kaṟuppannacāmi (Black Lord), a regional deity of fierce temperament, black colour, and non-vegetarian appetite, who serves as chief soldier and guardian for Aḷagar's temple.¹⁵ For the Ambalakkārar Kaḷḷar and other castes in the region, Kaṟuppannacāmi's chief shrine is the main gateway (eastern *gopura*) of the Aḷagar Temple or, more precisely, its doors. Next to Aḷagar himself, he is the most popular deity at the temple, but there is no iconic representation of him there. *Pūjā* to him is performed directly on the doors by a *pūjāri* from the Potter (Kusavar) caste. Kaṟuppannacāmi's role as guardian of the temple is thus made quite explicit, a divine role which parallels the human role the Kaḷḷar traditionally played for the king at Madurai and for the local villages.

The presence at the Aḷagar Temple of this important Kaṟuppannacāmi shrine and of other shrines of similar regional and village deities¹⁶ accounts for the many animal sacrifices once performed there, a phenomenon not usually associated with a Śrī-Vaiṣṇava temple. Animal sacrifices are now banned in Tamil Nadu, but in 1942 one author reported about sacrifices at Aḷagarkōyil as follows: 'Every year sheep are slaughtered in their thousands besides other kinds of sacrifices such as fowls etc., within the Temple area. . . . If the devotee is questioned about this, he would say, "I made a vow to Padinettampadian [Kaṟuppannacāmi]. My prayers were heard by him and I am offering the sheep in sacrifice in fulfilment of my vow."¹⁷ Today, goats accompany the non-brahmin devotees from the rural area when they go to the Vaigai River to meet Aḷagar, presumably to be sacrificed and eaten as a festival meal. Like the Aḷagar Temple, the journey festival incorporates non-vegetarian deities along with their vegetarian Lord Viṣṇu. The divine king proceeds with brahman priests as his personal attendants and receives strictly vegetarian hospitality and honors along the way. His soldiers and guardians, however, are led by Kaṟuppannacāmi who is non-vegetarian, and he is served by non-brahmin devotees who perform vows for him and to whom he speaks directly by possessing 'god-dancers' (*cāmi-yāṭi* or *kōṭaṅki*). Throughout the journey festival, both Aḷagar

the King and Karuppannacāmi the Guard are present, and each appears to receive the mode of cultic attention appropriate to his status and his own desires from devotees of parallel status and desires in the human realm.¹⁸

In contrast to this, the wedding festival of M-S appears to be almost entirely Brahmanical in its myth and ritual. Most of its processions are confined to the boundaries of old Madurai, and in fact delineate those boundaries. The rituals follow the *āgamic* prescriptions, and the Lord and the Lady are themselves models of dharmic rule. As far as I can tell, no non-vegetarian deity has any significant role in the wedding festival of the M-S Temple.¹⁹

The Two Festivals Summarized

The Calendar

The month of *Citrā* (*Cittirai* in Tamil) is the first month of the Tamil year, the 'universal' or *sādhāraṇa* year, which follows a lunisolar calendar beginning on the vernal equinox (*meṣa samkrānti*).²⁰ The temples, however, follow a lunar calendar based on the divisions (*pakṣa*) of the month caused by the new moon and the full moon. In Tamil Nadu, the lunar month begins the day after the new moon. The two weeks from the first day of the lunar month through the full moon is the 'light half' (*śukla pakṣa*) of the month, while the two weeks from the day after the full moon through the new moon is the 'dark half' (*kṛṣṇa pakṣa*). According to this temple calendar, the first lunar month of the year does not coincide exactly with the first solar month of the Tamil year, though they always overlap.

For the festivals studied here, the important point of reference is the full moon which appears in the asterism (*nakṣatra*) of *Citrā*, from which both the solar and the lunar months receive their name. This *Citrā* full moon usually falls after the vernal equinox (the first day of the Tamil year), and during five or six days surrounding it the Madurai populace celebrates what is commonly referred to as 'The *Cittirai* Festival', a festival popularly interpreted as a single drama but which in fact is composed of the climactic days of two distinct festivals: the wedding of Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara and the journey of Aḷagar. The wedding festival of M-S begins on the second day of the lunar month (two days after the new

moon) and lasts for twelve days, ending usually in the period understood astrologically as the day of the full moon. The journey festival of Aḷagar does not begin until four days prior to the full moon and lasts for nine days, extending four days into the 'dark half' of the lunar month.²¹ The last three days of the wedding festival and the fourth through seventh days of the journey festival overlap to form the single five-or-six-day 'Cittirai Festival' of popular thought, fusing the climax of Sundarēśvara's marriage to Minākṣī with Aḷagar's entrance into the Vaigai River.

For the populace the most auspicious time during the wedding festival is the two-day period when the marriage ceremony takes place in the morning, the newly married couple processes in palanquins around the outer boundaries of the old city on the same evening, and the time when they process again around the same streets early the following morning, this time in two huge cars (*ratha*, *tēr*). It is estimated that in this period the festival participants number about 500,000.²² In the journey festival, the most auspicious period for the populace is when Aḷagar reaches the village of Tallākuḷam, the full moon day when he enters the dry Vaigai riverbed and proceeds eastwards along it until reaching a small village in the evening, the next day when he retraces his steps and presents an all-night portrayal of his ten *avatāra* forms to assembled devotees, and the following day when he presides in Tallākuḷam as a king. On the full moon day, the crowd in the riverbed is also estimated to number about 500,000 people.²³ The Madurai municipality swells by an incoming population of several hundred thousand during these 'Cittirai Festival' days and the municipality makes extensive sanitary and regulative preparations for them, while devotees transform the streets where the gods process into festive realms by decorating *maṇḍapa*-s, and by building thatch *pantal*-s which they decorate with banana trees, colored paper and cloth, banners, and neon lights.

The Wedding

The Stories of the Wedding Festival: The stories of the M-S wedding festival (*Tirukkalyāṇa Peruvilā*) are told in the M-S Temple *sthala purāṇa*, the *Tiruviḷaiyāṭal Purāṇam* (The *Purāṇa* of the Sacred Amusements), which narrates the sixty-four times the Lord bestowed protection and prosperity on the city of Madurai and its inhabitants.²⁴

Those sacred acts of Śiva which the wedding festival celebrates suggest the theme of beginnings appropriate to the first month of the year, for they include the origin of the temple and the city, the beginning of the royal dynasty, and the establishment of the religious tradition which provides the true knowledge of Śiva (Śaiva Siddhānta Samayam). The following is a brief summary of stories about the 'Sacred Amusements' relevant to this festival.

In the Kṛta Yuga,²⁵ Indra, king of the gods, suffered from the sin of having killed a brahmin demon, and, having left his kingdom, he wandered about seeking release from his suffering. When he reached a forest of *kaṭampu* trees, he sensed that he had been cleansed and discovered this to be due to a Śiva *liṅga* standing under a *kaṭampu* tree near a tank of water. As an act of thanksgiving, Indra had Viśvakarman, the divine architect, build a shrine for the *liṅga* and one for Śakti. When Indra first performed *pūjā*, golden lotuses appeared on the tank for his use. He named the *liṅga* Sundarar (Beautiful Lord). Indra wanted to worship there daily, but Śiva insisted he return to his rule over the gods and assured him that if he worshipped there once a year on the *Citrā* full moon he would obtain the same merit as if he had worshipped there daily. In this way the Śiva *liṅga*, the Śakti shrine, the *kaṭampu* tree, and the Golden Lotus Tank began as the core of the M-S Temple (first story).

The Śiva-Śakti shrines were discovered by a merchant who informed the Pāṇḍyan king who ruled east of the forest; and, as directed in a dream, the king, Kulaśekhara Pāṇḍyan, went there, built a temple and a city, installed brahmins from Kāśī (Benares) as priests, and appointed his own son as the city's king. Śiva sprinkled the city with nectar, for which reason it is called 'sweetness' (*madhura*). In this way the M-S Temple, the walled city of Madurai, and the Pāṇḍyan dynasty began (third story).

According to the fourth story, the Pāṇḍyan dynasty received a divine infusion when the city was given a divine queen. Madurai's first king, Malayadhvaja, had a wife and many concubines but was unable to have a son. To solve this problem, he performed the appropriate, son-producing Vedic sacrifice (*yajña*) in the temple and out of the sacrificial fire appeared an *avatāra*²⁶ of Śiva's Śakti, Umā, but in the form of a three-year-old child with three breasts.²⁷ The royal couple was alarmed, but they were divinely assured that the third breast would disappear when

the girl became a young woman and met the man meant to be her husband. In the meantime, Śiva said in a voice from heaven that she was to be fully educated as a prince and her study was to include the *dharmaśāstra*-s and the arts of war.²⁸ Her name was Taṭātakai (Irresistable Valor), an appropriate name for a martial queen, but as the divine Mother, Umā, she was called Mīnākṣī. This name literally means 'Fish-Eye' and is glossed in a way which expresses the compassionate theology of Śakti: 'She who has eyes which watch the souls she has brought forth and in so doing brings them to their salvation, just as a carp watches and nourishes its eggs to bring them to their maturity.'²⁹ Taṭātakai was consecrated queen, her father died, and under her benign rule Madurai became the greatest of the sixty-four Śakti centres (*piṭha*).

The main events of the wedding are told in the fifth story. Taṭātakai sets off to conquer the world (*digvijaya*) and to relieve it from its sorrow and also to find a husband. She went with an army of female warriors and, like the Goddess of Victory (*Korravai*), conquered all the lands and the Lords of the Eight Directions. Finally she approached Kailāsa for an attack, but when Śiva appeared before her, Taṭātakai's third breast disappeared. Śiva then told her that since the time she had set out to conquer the world he had resided on Kailāsa without her, but now they would marry. In accordance with the four *Veda*-s, the wedding would take place at an auspicious hour (*muhūrta*) on the coming Monday (*Somavāram*) and she should return to the city and prepare for it.

According to the myth, this occurred only six days before the wedding and the city had to make rapid preparations. Taṭātakai sent messengers with invitations to all the earthly kings and Śiva sent Rudra, Viṣṇu, and Brahmā to notify the gods in heaven. The wedding guests were an impressive group. The bride's party consisted of all human kings, listed as those kings who rule in the Tamil realms, those who aid the former, and all others. They proceeded to Madurai where the queen extended to each of them the hospitality which was his due. The bridegroom's party consisted of divine guests and included everyone: all of Śiva's personal retinue plus Viṣṇu, Brahmā, the Lords of the Eight Directions, all divine beings revealed in the *Veda*-s, and *Purāṇa*-s, the many divisions of Time (from the Year down to the Moment), all the physical realms including the Five Elements of Matter, all revealed knowledge, all modes of knowledge, and all states of

perfection.³⁰ These divine guests first met Śiva at Kailāsa, and together they proceeded to Madurai on the wedding day.

With all the guests, human and divine, assembled in the wedding *mandapa* of the temple, the ceremony began at the auspicious moment. It was conducted in perfect accordance with the prescribed rules. Viṣṇu, acting on his authority as Umā's brother,³¹ performed the ritual of giving the bride as a gift to the bridegroom (*dhārāvār*). First he poured water over Śiva's feet, performed *arcana* before him and then, in the words of the *purāṇa*:³²

Viṣṇu stood there and raising up onto the red [right] hand of the Primordial Being a *kāntal* flower which had blossomed among lotuses [he] placed the palm of the Lady's [right] hand [on it] and poured a [golden] pot of water [over the hands] while reciting precious *mantra*-s.³³ The gods, who held clusters of blossoms, worshipped [the couple] and poured forth a rain of flowers.

The guests regarded this as the high point of the ceremony:

The celestial damsels danced. The learned demigods sang nectar-like songs. The *muni*-s bellowed out 'Hara' in praise. The gods attained the climax of their horripilation. [Śiva's] hosts joined their red hands together over their tufts of hair [in veneration]. Everyone sank into the ocean of wedding joy.

Within themselves they said, 'The Father with the Mother, inseparable as the flower and its fragrance, appear by the play of their grace so that we, who are like people who have long been destitute, may see them. When performing their marriage the three worlds are saved.'

Then Brahmā conducted a perfect Vedic sacrifice, and Śiva, the Supreme Yogi, tied the *tāli* around Taṭātakai's neck and completed the rituals:

Then the Lord with the moon in his hair-tuft, together with his wife, took fine parched grain in [his] hand and poured it onto the tongue of the red fire. He bestowed the proper gifts upon the Veda sages who know all his forms, [their] inner joy overflowing and circumambulated the fire according to tradition. With his hand the Eminent One [then] took the lotus-flower foot of his bride, with her anklets tinkling, and [reciting] *mantra*-s lifted it onto an auspiciously decorated mortar of pure gold. They then asked, 'Where is [the star Arundhatī] the wife of the meritorious

[R̥ṣi] Vaśiṣṭha?', joined their red hands together in veneration and turning towards her cast their eyes of grace upon her.

All the sacrificial acts were fulfilled without the slightest deviation from the prescribed order, and in this way the world encircled by the pounding sea was able to have faith [in the Vedic path]. [Then] with the four Vedas resounding and women with teeth like jewels of light blessing [them], the Supreme Being who had burned up Kāma entered the bed-chamber with the woman who has the moon on her forehead.

The commentator on this *purāṇa* notes that the statement about one who has burned up carnal desire (*kāma*) entering the bed-chamber with his bride is intentionally contradictory and can mean either that the Lord is not lascivious or that *kāma*, the power which stimulates his desire for souls, wastes away except when the Lord is in union with the Lady.³⁴ As a wedding ritual, however, this first sexual union is for the purpose of producing a son.

The wedding ceremonies finally concluded when the bride and bridegroom returned to the wedding *maṇḍapa*, where they sat in state and gave all the guests permission to leave. From this time on, Śiva ruled Madurai as Sundara Pāṇḍya together with his queen Taṭātakai, and the kingdom flourished under the perfect execution of *dharma*.

Within the framework of this wedding account, several other 'Sacred Amusements' of Śiva took place which account for certain features of the temple and the city. At the request of several wedding guests, Śiva danced in the Silver Hall of the Temple and as a boon to them promised to do so daily (sixth story). After the wedding feast was over, there was a tremendous quantity of food left over and, in order to dispose of it, Śiva caused one of his attendants to become so hungry that he consumed it all even though he was a dwarf (seventh story). But then he became so thirsty that Śiva caused the Vaigai River to flow on the north side of the city in order to assuage his thirst, now a bathing place (*tīrtha*) more holy than the Ganges with the power to cleanse all sins for those who bathe in it (eighth story).

The remainder of the sixty-four stories are not directly connected with the wedding festival, except for the last two, but a summary of certain events in the stories will be useful for understanding these. Taṭātakai gave birth to a son, Ugra Pāṇḍya, who became consecrated as the ruler of Madurai. She and Śiva then withdrew into

their respective shrines and the Pāṇḍyaṅ dynasty from this point on continued as a human line, ruling Madurai in the divine presence (*sannidhi*) of Śiva and Śakti (or, as they are more commonly referred to, Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara). After thousands of years and many kings, a flood covered the entire earth.³⁵ Everything in the heavens and on the earth was destroyed except for the shrines of Mīnākṣī and Sundareśvara, the Golden Lotus Tank, and the surrounding five hills. Śiva then restored all that was lost (forty-ninth story), began a new Pāṇḍyaṅ dynasty, and had the city of Madurai rebuilt according to its original boundaries. This he did by having a giant cobra measure out the original city and encircle it where the rampart wall should be built. The new king rebuilt the wall, and the city became just as it had been before in the days of the first Pāṇḍyaṅ king.

The final saving acts of Śiva which are included in the wedding festival took place in the present Kali Yuga, the degenerate character of which is reflected in the rise of the *śramaṇa*-s or Jain ascetics. According to the *sthala purāṇa*, the whole of Tamilnad and the Śaiva tradition was threatened by these heretics, for they managed to convert a Pāṇḍyaṅ king who imposed Jain teachings and practices on the Madurai populace. But his queen, Maṅkaiyārkkaraci, was faithful to Śiva and called in the Śaiva devotee Campantar (Sambandar) to reconvert her husband to the true path which leads to *mokṣa*. Campantar was peculiarly endowed to do this, for at the age of three he had nursed at the breast of Umā and had thereby received divine wisdom (*tirujñāna*). He went to Madurai and successfully defeated the *śramaṇa*-s through the power of his *mantra*-s so that all who did not become Śaivas were impaled (sixty-third and sixty-fourth stories).

Enactment of the Wedding Festival: The sequence of rituals which enact these stories is published every year by the M-S Temple governing board (*devasthāna*) in a program listing the times and places of the major events and giving important information for devotees. The following description is based upon the published programs for the years 1968 and 1970 and upon my own and others' observations.³⁶

The first day of the lunar month of *Citrā* was spent propitiating the demonic powers (*vāstu śānti*) in preparation for the festival. The actual festival began on the following day, during the period

(*muhūrta*) judged by astrologers as auspicious for raising the temple banner (*koṭiyērram*) on the flagpole which stands in front of Śiva's shrine.³⁷ From this point on, according to tradition, no one already in the city was supposed to leave and on other festival was to be celebrated until the banner was lowered twelve days later.³⁸

There are three characteristics of the M-S wedding festival performance which are important to note. One is the use of three festival images for all the processions to represent the two deities, Sundareśvara and Mīnākṣī. Śiva must always be represented with his Śakti, I was told, so Śiva is represented with Umā seated to his left as one unit, while Mīnākṣī is represented separately. During the wedding ceremony, these three images sit side by side in the wedding *maṇḍapa*, a fact which seems a bit awkward to an outsider, for Śiva appears to have two consorts. In fact, however, they are both images of the same Śakti, and this duality of female images neatly expresses the theological point that Taṭātakai is an *avatāra* of Umā, a particular manifestation of Śakti in Madurai who is also the primordial power of the universal Śiva and mother of the universe.

The second characteristic is the procession (*purappātu*) of the Lord and Lady around their realm almost every morning and every night. They always move in the direction of circumambulation (*pradakṣiṇa*), keeping their right side toward the temple, are accompanied by royal umbrellas, fans, and instrumental music, and usually process around Māsi Street, the outer boundary of the old city. In the morning procession, occurring at 7:00 or 9:00 A.M., the divine couple tours in golden palanquins, while at night, usually at 7:00 P.M., they process on a variety of vehicles (*vāhana*) depicting aspects of their qualities and deeds.³⁹

The third characteristic is that the Lord and Lady spend a large portion of each day 'graciously abiding' in specific *maṇḍapa*-s either within the temple itself or in the city. These *maṇḍapa*-s are open-sided structures, a plinth surmounted by a roof supported by stone pillars, built by devotees for the occasional repose of the gods. The decorations and the offerings and refreshments given to the divine couple there are financed by endowments (*maṇṭakappati*) made by groups or by wealthy individuals.⁴⁰

Judging from the two programs of 1968 and 1970, the M-S *Citrā* festival includes ritual performances and celebrations which occur in the same pattern every year as well as some which occur

only according to the astrological calendar for a particular year. In this latter group, for example, the lunar asterism sacred to Śrī Maṅkaiyārkkaraci (*Rohiṇi Nakṣatra*), the Pāṇḍya queen who invited Campantar to Madurai to defeat the Jain *śramaṇa*-s, fell on the second day of the 1968 festival and was celebrated with a special procession. In 1970, the Tamil New Year (the 'universal' or *sādhāraṇa* year) began on the fifth day of the festival and was celebrated by a reading aloud of the new year's almanac (*pañcāṅkam*) in the temple.

Among the performances which occur in the same order every year some do not appear to have direct bearing on the wedding, and these occur during the first half of the festival. On the fifth evening at 9:00, a 'play' was performed in a *maṇḍapa* within the temple—'The Līlā of the Hunter's Plunder' (*vēṭar pari līlai*). This is the story of Śiva's servants disguised as hunters who attacked his devotee Cuntaramūrṭti Nāyaṇār as he was crossing the Western Ghats from Cēra into Pāṇḍya country. C. G. Diehl learned from a temple priest that in this performance, 'two men of the shepherd caste (*kōṇār*), who have free use of some land belonging to the temple, dance in front of the god, disguised, one as a village headman and the other as a hunter-robber'.⁴¹ On the evening of the sixth day prior to the night procession, the story of Campantar's defeat of the Jain *śramaṇa*-s and the establishment of the Śaiva tradition for the present age was recited by the Ōtuvār—non-brahmin reciters of Tamil Śaiva scriptures. This was in front of the Elephant Hall within the temple.⁴²

It was on the seventh day, beginning the second half of the festival, that the performance moved more explicitly toward the wedding ceremony and the purāṇic stories connected with it. On that day, Sundareśvara alone was the focus of attention. He processed in the morning as Kaṅkālanātha without Mīnākṣī, bearing the skeleton (*kaṅkāla*) of Viṣvaksena on a stick.⁴³ In the evening, they processed together again, but then Sundareśvara alone went for special purificatory honors and homage in the Eight Śakti Maṇḍapa at the entrance to the temple.⁴⁴ This attention to Śiva without Mīnākṣī suggests a focus on him as Lord of the Universe on Mt. Kailāsa, and events on the following day carry out this theme. The 1970 program notes that on the morning of the eighth day, the 'Lord of the Assembly' (*Sabhānāyaka*) or Naṭarājā processed and then there was a love-quarrel (*ūṭal*) between himself

and his Lady. This recalls Śiva's statement to Taṭātakai in the *Tiruviḷaiyātal Purāṇam* that since the time she had set out to conquer the world he had resided on Kailāsa without her. On the evening of this same day at a precise period (*muhūrta*), Mīnākṣī was consecrated queen (*paṭṭābhiṣeka*) on her Six-Legged Throne inside her own shrine and now was ready to conquer the universe while looking for a husband.

On the ninth day, Mīnākṣī's conquest of the universe (*digvijaya*) took place and though the festival programs give no details about it, one observer described the 1970 enactment of this story as follows:⁴⁵ In the late afternoon the two sets of festival images, Śiva-Śakti and Mīnākṣī alone, were carried in two large carts (Indra *vimāna*) out the east gate of the temple to the outer boundaries of the city (Māsi Street). In the hands of both Śakti and Mīnākṣī were placed bows and arrows, and a small girl rode in the cart with Mīnākṣī while a boy rode in the cart with Śiva-Śakti. Each of them also held a bow and arrow. The only other deity in the procession at this point was Indra. When they reached Māsi Street a 'battle' took place between Mīnākṣī and Indra. The carts bearing each of the two images were moved towards and then away from each other while the girl with Mīnākṣī aimed her arrow at Indra who immediately retreated. Mīnākṣī, the victor, was garlanded and given *ponkal*, and she proceeded to travel around Māsi Street in the direction of circumambulation. As Mīnākṣī processed she defeated the Lords of the Eight Directions, one at each of the eight points of the city,⁴⁶ until at the northeast corner of Māsi Street she again met the images of Śiva-Śakti, who had moved to that position in the meantime. Here, after a series of advances and retreats, Śiva (and the boy in the cart) defeated her and with that defeat her third breast was understood to have disappeared. The two sets of images with the girl and the boy then processed together back into the temple.

The next morning, the tenth day, was the day of the wedding ceremonies and the guests began to arrive, the chief ones being forms of Lord Subrahmaṇya and Lord Viṣṇu who reside at the Tirupparaṅkunram Temple, five miles southwest of Madurai. They arrived in the city early in the morning and were present at the ceremonies in their iconic forms.⁴⁷ Sundarēśvara and Mīnākṣī spent the early morning of their wedding day receiving honors at one halting place and three *maṇḍapa*-s within the temple,⁴⁸ and then

they made their morning procession around the first street outside the temple (Cittirai Street). This procession gave a full display of their royal status. The two sets of images wore gold and silk wedding garments and were accompanied by images of Subrahmanya and Gaṇeśa, by images of two of their chief devotees, and by elephants and by temple servants bearing royal umbrellas. The procession stopped periodically and the divine couple received hymns of adoration from the accompanying priests and temple personnel. After this they went to a *maṇḍapa* in the temple and were swung in a swing as is traditionally done to a bride and bridegroom (*kanni ũñcal*) at the beginning of the wedding ceremony.

The marriage rituals took place in the wedding *maṇḍapa* in the temple and were conducted according to Brahmanical rites by priests before a sacrificial fire. Distinguished men and women from the city were present as guests. The programs are careful to note that 'the sacred marriage of Śrī Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara takes place in the Mithuna Lagna', the period astrologically determined as auspicious for the couple. In 1968, it was between 9:15 and 10:30 A.M. This ceremony marked the most auspicious period of the festival, and the crowd in the city reached its peak during this and the following day when the newly married divine king and queen were placed on display for these devotees in several different ways.

Following the ceremonies, the wedding garments of the divine couple were changed; they received consecration (*abhiṣeka*); and their garments were changed again for their evening procession, their first appearance on the Madurai streets as a married couple.⁴⁹ This procession took place around the outer boundary of the old city (Māsi Street), the Lord riding his Elephant Vehicle and the Lady carried in a flower-decorated palanquin.⁵⁰ Along the way they stopped frequently at *maṇḍapa*-s and halting places where devotees offered them *pūjā* and offerings of flowers and cloth.⁵¹

During this evening and night, the streets of the city were crowded with people in the areas where the Lord and Lady processed, but were quiet in other places. In 1968, musicians played the oboe-like *nākasvaram*-s and drums along Māsi Street and crowds gathered to hear these street-corner concerts,⁵² but the temple itself was quiet. This was one of the few nights in the year when the temple remained open to the public all night long, for usually it closes at about 10:00 P.M. and opens at 6:00 A.M. People wandered quietly

through the cool halls, chatted in groups in the corridors or slept near the Golden Lotus Tank. As the night wore on, the whole city became quiet, for the Lord and Lady returned to the wedding *mandapa* and people sought a few hours of sleep before the next major event.

One place where some activity went on all night (apart from some all-night coffee bars) was around the portion of East Māsi Street where the temple cars are kept. These cars or chariots (Skt. *ratha*; T.: *tēr*) are characteristic of South Indian Hindu temples, and the M-S Temple is unusually well-endowed with two of almost equal immensity, the larger carrying Śiva and Śakti together, the smaller carrying Mīnākṣī alone. Basically, the car consists of a heavy wooden block set on four solid wood wheels. The wood block is massive and richly carved, shaped somewhat like a four-sided mountain set upside down, the broad base forming a large platform or stage. The thrones of the gods are placed upon an elevated platform on this stage and in front of them on the larger car sits Brahmā as charioteer driving four white horses. This structure alone stands over one story high and over it is placed a decorative frame made of wood and brightly patterned cloth which adds about two more stories to the height. The top portion ascends in successively narrowing levels reaching a peak at the summit. From the divine point of view, the car is pulled by horses and from the human point of view the car is pulled by men dragging two long ropes of enormous girth. By this time of the night, the cars were completely decorated and the long ropes connected to them were stretched out down the street. Around these cars people slept or performed private acts of devotion to the cars and the deities residing on them.

The car is rather like a cosmos in itself. The deities of the universe are made by the priests to take their appropriate places on the cars, beginning from the wheels and the axles to the peak of the throne, and are duly worshipped there by the priests and devotees.⁵³ Early in the morning the Lord and Lady were brought out of the temple to the cars in a royal procession and ascended them at an auspicious moment, and were carefully placed on their thrones in each car.⁵⁴ *Pūjā* was then performed to the various gods on the different levels of the two cars, at the top of which sat either Mīnākṣī or Śiva-Śakti with umbrella and fan bearers at the sides and several priests in attendance. At 6:00 A.M., they set out

on the grandest procession of all, with Gaṇeśa and Subrahmaṇya preceding the divine couple in small cars of their own.

Prior to changes in local tradition brought about by British rule, each village in the area was required to provide a set number of men to pull these cars,⁵⁵ but now men do it voluntarily as acts of devotion. The men, numbering several hundred, picked up the heavy ropes at a certain signal, pulled together at another signal, and continued pulling until they received another signal to stop. It was hard and hot work and people in the street provided them with water for refreshment. As the procession moved, firecrackers announced its coming. The motion of these cars is awe-inspiring; they sway from side to side, rush quickly forward and then suddenly stop, shaking at times as if they are about to fall apart. Turning a corner is particularly startling, for the axles do not turn. The entire vehicle has to be jerked around by placing wedges under the appropriate wheels so that when the *ratha* is pulled it slides at an angle. It takes a number of these attempts to turn a corner. Wherever these cars moved, the streets were packed with people. Many offered prayers to the gods as they passed and others performed brief *pūjā* rituals in the streets just before the procession arrived. But most stood on the sidewalks or on the balconies and rooftops and enjoyed the whole spectacle. It was an auspicious and glorious climax to a long festival, well worth waiting for. Now the crowds could turn their attention to the second *Citrā* festival, the Journey of Aḷagar; for he had begun his trip to the Vaigai River the same morning.⁵⁶ But before considering that festival, we should note how the M-S *Citrā* festival ends.

The remaining ceremonies of the final two days were relatively quiet. After the Lord and Lady finished their car procession they sat in state in the wedding *maṇḍapa* where visitors could have *darśana*, a 'viewing' of them analogous to an 'audience' in a royal court. Many of these visitors were people who had come to Madurai for Aḷagar's Journey Festival. That night, the couple processed once again around Māsi Street in a car which circumambulates the temple seven times at the conclusion of the festival (*saptāvaraṇa capparam*).⁵⁷ The next morning, the twelfth and final day, the Lord and Lady did not process. At midday, a bathing festival (*tirtha*) took place in the Golden Lotus Tank, and Indra's *pūjā* to the *liṅga* (*Devendra Pūjā*) as told in the first of the *sthala purāṇa* stories was celebrated.⁵⁸ That night the Lord and Lady made

their final procession around Māsi Street, after which they went to the Sixteen Pillar *maṇḍapa* inside the temple. There the divine guests, Śrī Subrahmaṇya and Śrī Pavaḷakkaṇivāy Perumāl, received permission to leave and presumably this was the time when the temple banner was taken down, thereby officially ending the festival. The two divine guests returned to Tirupparaṅkunram the following day.⁵⁹

The Journey

The Stories of the Journey Festival: Unlike the *sthala purāṇa* of the M-S Temple, the Aḷagar Temple *sthala purāṇa* is not a single work by one author, but a collection of excerpts purported to be from four Sanskrit *purāṇa*-s.⁶⁰ This *sthala purāṇa*, the *Vṛṣabhagiri Māhātmya* (The Māhātmya of the Bull Hill), does not mention the journey of Aḷagar at all but does provide the stories of the beginning of the temple and its *tīrtha*-s which serve as a background for the festival. The relevant portions of these stories are summarized as follows.

Viṣṇu, or as he is more specifically called in the *purāṇa*, Nārāyaṇa, first manifested himself on the Bull Hill in the time of Trivikrama, the *avatāra* of Viṣṇu who measured out the three worlds. It was then that the hill became the locale of a *tīrtha*, a spring more sacred than the Ganges around which gods and ascetics gathered for devotion to Viṣṇu. The *sthala purāṇa* gives two accounts of its origins: in one,⁶¹ the waters of the Ganges River which runs through the three worlds (heaven, atmosphere, and earth) fell onto the top of the hill when Trivikrama's anklet of gold and gems shook; in the other,⁶² the water fell from the foot of Trivikrama when Brahmā bathed it during his *pūjā* to the Lord's 'lotus-like feet'. For these reasons, the *tīrtha* bears the name 'Nūpura Gaṅgā' (Ganges of the Anklet).

Out of compassion for the world, the Primordial God Nārāyaṇa himself descended to this hill and took up residence there in the form of Sundararājan or Aḷagar, 'The Beautiful King'. In the previous Kṛta Yuga, this Lord was worshipped by Brahmā, Indra, and all the gods and *ṛṣi*-s at the eastern side of a tree on the bank of the Nūpura Gaṅgā Tīrtha, but at that time there was no shrine for him. One day, the god Dharmadeva or Yama came to the *tīrtha*, sang the praise of the Beautiful King, and was requested by him to build a shrine where he could be worshipped. Dharmadeva did

this by drawing up a plan for a 'Somacandra Vimāna' and having Viśvakarmān build it to perfection. The first shrine on the Bull Hill was thus built by the gods, and through his grace the Lord, with his two consorts Śrī and Bhū, took up residence in it. Though at this time, in the Kṛta Yuga, the only worshippers were celestial beings, the Lord promised Dharmadeva that eventually human beings would be able to worship him there also.

Before considering how this came about, we should give some attention to the story of Sutapas or Maṇḍūka, for he plays an important role in the journey festival. The story of this sage of great austerity (*sutapas*) who was turned into a frog (*maṇḍūka*) is related twice in the *sthala purāṇa*,⁶³ one version elaborating the details of the other. Sutapas, the story says, desired *mokṣa* intensely and in order to attain it engaged in ascetic practices at the Nūpura Gaṅgā Tīrtha on the Bull Hill. One day while he was praying and immersing himself in the spring, a group of great sages led by Durvāsas, an irascible ṛṣi, came to the *tīrtha*, but Sutapas was so involved in his prayers and immersions for the sake of *mokṣa* that he did not see them. Thereby he failed to give them the immediate honors of hospitality which they deserved. Durvāsas and the others were angered and cursed him: Sutapas was to turn into a frog. Presumably the curse fits the crime, i.e., an inordinate concentration on immersion in water.

Needless to say, Sutapas was upset, and the ṛṣi-s had compassion on him and modified the curse: he should go to a waterfall on the eastern side of a hill near the Bull Hill,⁶⁴ perform the proper baths, and then he would lose his frog form and would be surrounded and honored by many sages. But Sutapas respectfully told them that he had made a vow to bathe in the Nūpura Gaṅgā Tīrtha and worship Aḷagar until he attained *mokṣa*. The ṛṣi-s were delighted with this fact and assured him that Aḷagar and the Nūpura Gaṅgā would come there to him. All the ṛṣi-s then went with Sutapas, now Maṇḍūka, a frog, to the waterfall, where he bathed, regained his form, and resumed his ascetic practices and devotion. The Beautiful King then manifested himself at the *tīrtha* and bestowed a vision of himself upon Sutapas who responded to it with a song of praise. The Lord also made him a promise: remain here with your disciples as ascetics until the deluge of the universe (*pralayakāla*) and I will give you the union with me (*sāyujya*) which you desire. From that time, the story says, Sutapas was called 'Maṇḍūkamuni'

and dwelled at the Maṇḍūka Tīrtha together with many ascetic sages.

Now we should observe how people began to worship Aḷagar at the Nūpura Gaṅgā Tīrtha. It started with the first Pāṇḍyaṅ king, Malayadhvaja, whom we met in the story of Mīnākṣī's birth. Though in both stories the same king is meant, the two accounts differ in details and the *sthala purāṇa* gives its own version of Mīnākṣī's appearance and conquest of Śiva. Malayadhvaja, according to this account,⁶⁵ was born to the king of the ancient Pāṇḍyaṅ capital Maṇalūr as a result of Vaiṣṇava sacrifices. Thus he was like a child to Viṣṇu. Malayadhvaja lived and ruled in Madurai, but travelled every morning in a miraculous aerial car (*vimāna*) to the confluence of the Ganges and the sea for his morning bath and to the shrine at Gayā to worship Kṛṣṇa for his morning *pūjā*. One morning, the shadow of his aerial car fell on the Bull Hill and the car stopped in mid-air whereupon a voice instructed Malayadhvaja in the virtues of the Nūpura Gaṅgā Tīrtha for bathing and in the glories of the Bull Hill for *pūjā* to Viṣṇu. The Pāṇḍyaṅ king immediately began performing ascetic devotions at the *tīrtha* and eventually received a vision of the Lord who also granted him a boon. For his boon the king asked that the Lord make himself available on the hill to all people and gods and to grant all boons to those who perform the proper worship there. Aḷagar graciously granted this request and ordered Malayadhvaja to expand his shrine into a proper temple, to bring in the proper brahmins for the ceremonies in the temple, and to establish the proper order of festivals, which he described (no mention of the journey festival is made). All of this the king did. In addition, he expanded another divinely established shrine of the Lord on the south bank of the Vaigai River, which is probably the temple of Kūḍalaḷagar inside the walls of Old Madurai. For these reasons, the presence of the Beautiful King is now available to all people as well as to all celestial beings.

According to this *sthala purāṇa*, Mīnākṣī appeared in Madurai⁶⁶ in connection with Malayadhvaja's grandson Kubjasundara and not in connection with Malayadhvaja himself as in the M-S Temple *sthala purāṇa*. Being unable to produce a son, Kubjasundara went to the Bull Hill and performed ascetic devotions to Aḷagar until he received the assurance from the Lord that he would receive a son. While the Lord was granting this boon, Śiva appeared at the hill

to receive Aḷagar's *darśana*, and the Lord asked Śiva to relieve the problem of his Pāṇḍyan by descending as his son. Śiva happily agreed to do it, remarking that he had already assured the Pāṇḍyan's wife that he would do so and that Pārvatī had agreed. Eventually, Śiva asked Pārvatī to be born to the king as a girl with three breasts, which she did. After a long while Śiva then instructed his incarnate wife Taṭātakai that he would be dwelling among the hunters in the Vindhya Mountains and that she should set out with her army to conquer the universe (*digvijaya*) and come there to conquer him. After she had conquered him, he said she should grasp him as in a marriage ceremony and as soon as she looked at him one of her three breasts would disappear. Then they would go to Madurai and she would enjoy all pleasures with him.

This account parallels the M-S Temple *sthala purāṇa* version until Śiva adds the information that because of his love for Lord Viṣṇu he is going to reside on the Bull Hill on the Lord's left side and serve the Beautiful King as the protector of his realm (*kṣetra-pāla*). There he, Śiva, will fulfill all the desires of his own devotees.⁶⁷ All of this happened just as he said and thereafter Pārvatī (i.e., Mīnākṣī) also joyfully performed her daily worship of Viṣṇu at the temple on Bull Hill. The Aḷagar Temple myth thus neatly affirms the basic myth of the M-S Temple while at the same time modifying it so that Śiva and Mīnākṣī become loyal servants and devotees of Viṣṇu.

Though the story of Aḷagar's journey is not told in the *sthala purāṇa*, it does appear in several devotional poems which date from the last few centuries. One of these, the *Aḷakar Varuṇippu* (Praising the Beautiful Lord),⁶⁸ was for sale on the Madurai streets during the 1968 celebration, and I was advised to consult it for answers to my questions regarding the festival performance. The author and date of the *Aḷakar Varuṇippu* are unknown and the poet has combined frequent allusions to the classical Vaiṣṇava sources—the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*—with very colloquial expressions and regional practices. It assumes the background of stories provided by the *sthala purāṇa* as described above, but with some variations.

The temple began, the poem says, when Kṛṣṇa completed all his deeds in northern Madurai (Mathura), came to the Aḷagar Hills, and slept on the banyan leaf (as the Primordial Unmanifest Nārāyaṇa). When he awoke, Kṛṣṇa wanted to graze cattle, so he

brought forth lakhs of milk cows. Then, while they were herded off by Balarāma to graze on the hill, causing the earth to shake and tremble, Kṛṣṇa went to sleep again on the banyan leaf. Meanwhile, the cattle wandered off into the forest, and when the Beautiful King awoke he could see none of them. But when he stood at the foot of a tree and played his flute for all the worlds to hear, the cows, drawn together by the sound, swiftly came to him. But several remained missing. The Lord then summoned the Eighteen *Siddha*-s or Perfected *Yogin*-s (adept in miraculous powers) and ordered them to bring the missing cows to him immediately. The *Siddha*-s wandered throughout the forest without seeing them until, by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, they beheld the cows, who had wandered off the mountain in search of their calves and became lost in the sugarcane. The *Siddha*-s herded the cows back, acknowledged their own impotence, and bowed down before the Lord with faith. Without the grace of Kṛṣṇa, the myth seems to be saying, even the miraculous powers of perfected *yogin*-s are useless in the jungle of existence.

In the evening, Kṛṣṇa decided to milk the cows and took on a form (*mūrti*) dark like the Kāyā flower. He then danced and sang while milking fifteen lakhs of cows. All the herdsmen gathered to worship Kṛṣṇa's dark form and kept him there among themselves, placing his new shrine so that the hill with the Nūpura Gaṅgā Tīrtha was to the north of him. There he presided in great majesty. While people of the world went up to the hill (two miles above him) to bathe themselves in the Nūpura Gaṅgā Tīrtha, Kṛṣṇa invited the *tīrtha* to come down to him so that he could drink of it when thirsty. He fashioned the Eighteen *Siddha*-s into steps for his temple, placed Kaṛuppannacāmi in front of the Eighteen Steps as his guard, and completed the rest of his palace in splendor.

The celestials worshipped Aḷagar morning and evening and once, while doing so, requested him to visit Vaṇḍiyūr, a village north of Madurai on the western bank of the Vaigai River, in order that all could see the Lord himself and rejoice. The *Citrā* full moon was discerned as the auspicious time for the journey and the Lord decided, 'We will go while journeying to bestow *mokṣa* on the great sage Maṇḍūka.' The journey thus has two purposes according to this story; to bestow a purifying vision (*darśana*) of himself on the gods and people and to grant Sutapas or Maṇḍūka the fulfillment of his ascetic devotions.⁶⁹

The festival program adds another purpose: Aḷagar also makes the journey because he wants to receive from his female devotee Āṇṭāḷ a flower garland which she wore around her own neck. Āṇṭāḷ was one of two Ālvār-s from Srīvilliputtūr, about forty miles southwest of Madurai, who sang hymns in praise of Kṛṣṇa in the Aḷagar hills. She exemplifies in devotion the *nāyaka nāyikābhāva*: a love between God and the soul analogous to the erotic relation of a hero and heroine. In her devotions, she identified herself with the *gopi*-s and eventually became the bride of Viṣṇu in his form at Śrīraṅgam.⁷⁰

Enactment of the Journey Festival: Like the M-S wedding festival, the sequence of rituals which portrays this journey of Aḷagar is published every year by the Aḷagar Temple governing board for use of devotees: 'The Program of the *Citrā* Festival of Perumāḷ (Viṣṇu) the Beautiful King.' The following description is based on the published programs for 1969 and 1970,⁷¹ on my own observations in 1968, and on the detailed descriptions given in the *Aḷakar Varuṇippu* and in another poem of a similar nature, *Tirumāliṟuñ-cōlaimalai Periya Aḷakar Varuṇippu*.⁷² In comparison to the wedding festival, Aḷagar's journey festival is rather simple. He travels from his temple to the Vaigai River and then back again, performing several 'divine amusements', along the way. These include 'conquering' the Kaḷḷar, bestowing *mokṣa* on Sutapas and portraying his ten *avatāra* forms to his devotees. There is not much story in the journey, at least as related in the poems. The emphasis is more on the Lord's glory and actual presence and procession among his devotees. Much attention is given to the decorative details of the Lord's costumes, horse and vehicles, to the places at which he stops, to the refreshments he receives, and to the devotion shown to him by the populace. In order to describe the events it will help to break the account into the successive days of the festival.

First, Second and Third Days: The journey festival lasted for nine days, but the first three days were quiet, all the processions taking place inside the temple without the extravagant popular participation which began on the fourth day. Aḷagar resided for these three days in a *mandapa* and processed within the temple precincts on a light palanquin.⁷³

Fourth Day: Aḷagar set out for Vaṇḍiyūr before sunrise on the fourth day, the day on which the M-S car procession normally takes place in Madurai. He rode in a golden palanquin with both hands holding a spear (*vallayam*) before him. In front of him, the poem says, processed the gods, the herdsmen carrying royal umbrellas and fans, and *devadāsi*-s who danced. At the main temple gate, Kaṟuppannacāmi was told by the Lord to guard everything in his absence, but another Kaṟuppannacāmi accompanied him also, serving as guard over the money chests, though not represented iconically. Aḷagar made the journey in a series of palanquins and cars constructed by the divine architect Viśvakarmān and stopped frequently along the way at *maṇḍapa*-s to receive honors, offerings, and refreshments from the local people. The route he followed carried him directly from his fort through the area formerly dominated by the Kaḷḷar to the border of Tallākuḷam, a village not far from the Vaigai River and now a part of Madurai municipality. Aḷagar crossed this area, the poem notes, and 'removed the fear inspired by the Kaḷḷar'.⁷⁴

The way in which Aḷagar conquered the Kaḷḷar is told early in the poem. Shortly after the royal procession left the Aḷagar fort it stopped at the Kaḷḷar-owned Kaḷḷantiri *Maṇḍapa*, where the Kaḷḷar, with swords (*vallayam*) in hand, blocked his way and created a disturbance. But Aḷagar defeated them. Surrounded completely by the herdsmen he took a Māyā arrow and shot the Kaḷḷar, deluding them so that they could not see. In fright the Kaḷḷar all cried out, 'We and our lineage (*vamśa*) will serve you. Open our eyes that we may see the light.' The Lord had mercy and said, 'O Kaḷḷar, come with me now and carry the money chests while I go to Vaṇḍiyūr to perform my sacred amusements (*tiruvilaiyāṭal*) and until I return to my hill.' This the Kaḷḷar did with Kaṟuppannacāmi serving as their divine guard, and in turn Aḷagar donned the costume (*tirukkōlam*) of a Kaḷḷar and played the role of Kaḷḷaḷagar, 'Beautiful Lord of the Guardians.' This story clearly expresses the relation of the Kaḷḷar to Aḷagar and their connection with the money chests during the journey festival. These money chests (*kopparai unṭival*) were carried on carts everywhere Aḷagar processed, and devotees placed their money offerings in them along with a prayer to their Lord. Today the chests are guarded not only by the Kaḷḷar and Kaṟuppannacāmi but also by the civil police (the amount of money collected during this

festival is said to be quite large).

By late afternoon the procession reached the old border of Tallākuḷam village at Mūnumāvaḷi and Aḷagar was received as a king by crowds of people shouting 'Govinda! Govinda!', and by the sound of drums and horns and exploding fire works. The crowds were dense, but no one except 'Europeans' appeared on the roofs of the adjacent buildings to watch, for, I was told, no one is supposed to stand higher than the Lord when he processes.⁷⁵ Until now he had been processing in a closed palanquin set on wheels, but here he was lifted out and carried on the shoulders of men. As this procession entered Tallākuḷam it was led by a temple elephant wearing the Tenkalai Śrī-Vaiṣṇava *nāma*, followed successively by two men dressed in monkey and lion or bear costumes, who acted as clowns (*kōmāḷi*), by several men carrying paintings of the *Āḷvār*-s, by the umbrella and fan bearers, by two priests carrying silver rods, by carts carrying money chests guarded by the police, by a priest holding a magenta cape which people devoutly touched and another priest holding the Lord's silver 'footstool' which he placed on the heads of devotees, and by a priest carrying a large silver vessel containing water from the Nūpura Gaṅgā Tīrtha. This water would later be used for the consecrations of Aḷagar. On the palanquin carrying Aḷagar's festival form, a large mirror stood before the image in order to reflect the Lord's form to his devotees. He wore the black costume of the Kaḷḷar disguise, which contrasted nicely with the gold of his face, and he was heavily garlanded with flowers. To the right of the Lord stood a brahmin priest who kept the Lord's clothes in order, changed the garlands around his neck, and tried very hard to retain his own balance as the palanquin jostled its way along through the dense crowds. The palanquin bearers were bare-chested, bare-footed men, sweating and straining in the extreme heat of the day.

The procession moved through Tallākuḷam quite slowly, for Aḷagar stopped at many *maṇḍapa*-s and *pantal*-s to receive food offerings and veneration, including at the Māriyamman Temple. By evening he reached the Kaḷḷar-owned Ambalakkārar *maṇḍapa* where he remained for about an hour while a fireworks display took place as the full moon rose over the tank. The length of his stay there and the elaborateness of his reception reflected the importance of these Kaḷḷar in this festival. Among the other

maṇḍapa-s and *pāntal*-s at which he stopped were those sponsored by the Madurai University, the Pandyan Hotel, the Circuit House, the District Inspector General of Police, and the Collector of Ramnad District. Eventually, Aḷagar reached the small Śrī Pracanna Venkaṭeśa Perumāḷ Temple in Tallākuḷam where he spent the night.

During this full moon night, while Aḷagar slept, the many villagers who came for the following day's proceedings were visible on the Tallākuḷam side of the river. Many had come for the M-S car procession early that morning as well. They came on foot, by bus, and in covered ox carts, and camped in empty lots and along the dry riverbed. Among these people were many men and boys completing the performance of vows (*vrata*) which they had begun fourteen days before at the beginning of the 'light half' of the month. From that time they had fasted and recited special prayers, and now they had come in special costumes for the climax of the vow tomorrow, the full moon day.⁷⁶ Groups of them from the same village or family processed up and down the street with drummers, frequently shouting 'Govinda! Govinda!'

These performers of vows all wore a basic costume—brightly colored pantaloons of silk or cotton extending from the waist to the ankles, with bells tied in both places; bare feet; bare torso, often smeared with sandal paste; and a turban on the head wrapped in a cone shape, sometimes with peacock feathers sticking out and a picture of Kṛṣṇa at the base. Many wore flower garlands around their necks, some of them so large they extended down to their knees. Some groups had a virile looking bull with them, wearing a colored cloth over its back and decorations on its head, which they trotted along the street accompanied by drumming and shouting. It was my distinct impression that these men and boys were dressed as if they were Kṛṣṇa, and the fact that they wore garlands suggests that they were playing a divine role in these costumes; they looked like the cowherd Kṛṣṇa as he commonly appears in popular art.

Variations of this basic costume reflected the different vows being fulfilled by those men and boys. One type carried structures made of wood and paper on their turbans. Usually the structure portrayed a male image standing up with a large spread of peacock feathers behind, or a male image riding a peacock, or tableaux of Viṣṇu with his consorts Śrī and Bhū on either side.

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Some structures were so large and elaborate they had to be supported by wooden poles running down the man's head and side and held by his arm, though appearing to be sitting on his turban.

Another type were those who carried a goat-skin bag full of water at their side, which they could squirt by pressing their elbow. This bag was formed out of the viscera of a newly sacrificed goat, according to one authority, and the water in the bag had been perfumed or colored with turmeric.⁷⁷ Their main purpose in the festival was to squirt Aḷagar with water at a certain point in his journey along the riverbed, but sometimes they just squirted it playfully at other people.⁷⁸ These people were often identified to me as *kōṇār*, the caste title of the herdsmen (*Āyar*, *Iṭaiyar*),⁷⁹ but in 1970 William Harman interviewed eight performing this vow and five were males of the *Kaḷḷar-Tēvār jāti* and three were 'harijans'.

A third type carried sickles, iron rods, ropes, and a coil of tightly packed cloth (*tiriyāttam*). The sickle and rod are common offerings to *Karuppannacāmi*, and the rope is used to beat oneself with periodically throughout Aḷagar's journey. The coil of cloth is soaked with oil to make it smoulder and is held under the left arm with the large smouldering end close to the body so that the heat and fumes add considerable discomfort to the already hot days and nights. These coil-bearers (*tiriyāttakkārar*) were usually those who became possessed by a god, probably by *Karuppannacāmi*, who then told devotees of their faults, how they could be corrected, and what would be the fruits of devotion. A clown (*kōmāḷi*) often went along with the coil-bearer, and the two danced a 'battle' to a drum beat as part of the 'god possession' ritual.

Fifth Day: Early in the morning of the full moon day, while it was still dark, Aḷagar awoke and prepared for his entrance into the river. He was dressed in white and mounted the golden horse with which he would make the trip to *Vaṇḍiyūr*. Surrounded by torches and shouting followers he left the *Pracanna Venkaṭeśa Perumāḷ* Temple and headed south towards the river. Though the distance is not great, his progress was slow, for several stops occurred along the way. First he halted and received a garland from *Āṇṭāḷ*, also called *Nācciyār*, thus fulfilling one of the purposes of his journey. The flower garland was brought from *Śrī-*

villiputtūr, Āṇṭāl's home and site of a major Śrī-Vaiṣṇava temple.⁸⁰ Crowds of devotees praised both Aḷagar and his consort and received sandal paste from him as *prasāda*. Then the procession proceeded to the outskirts of Tallākuḷam village, where Aḷagar dismounted from his horse and rode in a car covered with cooling cuscus grass (*veṭṭivār capparam*) while his horse followed behind. But this procession went only a short distance to a Kaṛuppannacāmi Temple where Aḷagar entered yet another car, the Āyirampon Capparam, a wide structure of enormous height built of cloth and wood and divided into three parts. Aḷagar moved into the middle portion, on his right was the Sun and on his left the Moon, while overhead hung a huge monster face (*nācittalai*) indicating his position of eminence.

While the sun rose, this enormous and cumbersome car was lifted and pulled by devotees,⁸¹ accompanied, according to the *Aḷakar Varuṇippu*, by Kaṛuppannacāmi and the Kaḷḷar bearing the money chests, resounding drums, dancing *devadāsī*-s, Vaiṣṇava Śūdra ascetics (*tātar*), coil-bearers, omen-tellers (*kuricolvār*), and dancing herdswomen. 'It flies through the air', the poem says, 'like Indra's aerial car,' and while it 'flew' Aḷagar was given refreshments by devotees of a Kāmākṣī Amman Temple.⁸² The car crossed the Muslim village of Gōripālaiyam and reached the river bank where the Beautiful King descended and mounted his golden horse. Then, carried on the shoulders of the bearers, the Lord, accompanied by a brahmin priest standing at his right, moved into the dry bed of the Vaigai River.⁸³

The procession in the riverbed proceeded slowly, for the crowd was dense. When it reached the middle of the river, Aḷagar was met by Kūḍalaḷagar riding on a silver horse, the form of Viṣṇu residing in his own Śrī-Vaiṣṇava temple within old Madurai, known also as Virarāghava Perumāḷ.⁸⁴ The two festival images rested under *pantal*-s, and through his priest Aḷagar bestowed a sandal garland on Kūḍalaḷagar, who then circumambulated him and returned in a grand royal procession to his own temple inside the city. At this point, however, Aḷagar did not cross the river to the old city of Madurai, but turned back and headed northeast down the riverbed toward Vaṇḍiyūr, and the poem notes that he urged his devotees to perform their vows and acts of devotion on the way.

The vows and acts of devotion to be performed in the riverbed

on this full moon day are described in the poem and were observable in the festival performances. One is the ritual of giving the first tonsure and name to a child, which was performed, along with the first ear-piercing by small family groups sitting together with a barber (*ampattar*) on the sand of the dry river. Some women also had all their hair shaved off.⁸⁵ Another is the ritual of bathing from head to toe in small pools of water formed by scooping sand out of the riverbed. A third, *bhajana*, was performed by groups of Śrī-Vaiṣṇava male devotees, and an occasional Śaiva devotee, who moved about with festival umbrellas, bells, and clappers chanting 'Hari, Rām Rām' and singing devotional songs. These men were prosperous looking devotees dressed in white *veṣṭi*-s with bare chests smeared with sandal paste. Some wore yellow cloths printed with the names of Viṣṇu or Śiva. As Aḷagar moved down the river, the money chests went with him, and along the way many people performed a fourth devotional act. As the poem describes it, a devotee would drop his or her money offering (*kāṇikkai*) in a money chest and then stand before the Lord in a reverent posture and ask him for a boon (*varam*). The common request is a child for a barren woman, and if it is granted, the devotee says that similar large gifts will be given again. With this, the poem notes, Aḷagar is pleased.

Among the rituals of most compelling interest to the outside observer were those of 'god-dancing' or 'god-possession' (*cāmiyāṭi*, *kōḷaṅki*) and the poem gives a brief description of how these take place. Those who want certain information (*kuri*) come to a coil-bearer, ask him to tell the *kuri*, and fall at his feet. He tells one of them to get up and then invites the *Cāmi* (Lord—Skt.: *Svāmin*) to descend upon himself. Suddenly, the coil-bearer becomes possessed, stares with a burning look, and through his mouth the *Cāmi* tells the inquirer, now standing in a reverent posture before him, of his errors (*kurram*) and of the means for their removal:

You have fallen away from the order of conduct followed by your ancestors and, fellow, you do not daily think of me as great. If a calf were born, your ancestors would think of me, give me milk, and revere me. For the sake of a wedding they would give me *poṅkal* in the house and long for me. On the day the land was cleared they would revere me and build a fire. On a day in *Āṭi* [July-August] they would prepare an offering for me. But you, fellow, have not done any of this and have forgotten me, and I myself am the one who has bestowed milk itself, like the

cow of a faithful wife.

If you remove this fault, fellow, I will give a child to that girl. All of what has been said now Lord Aḷagar himself says is true. Lord Aḷagar himself says he will pay heed according to what has been said now. O fellow, if you fasten a coin to your family deity (*kula teyvam*) I will pardon all the many faults done by your own child. Do not fear, I will give you a male child. With devotion, you also make a large offering (*kāṇikkai*) to me.^{85a}

The 'Cāmi' who descends and speaks through the coil-bearer seems to be Kaṟuppannacāmi. As far as I know, Aḷagar and other 'Brahmanical' gods, do not possess people. Possession is done by their servants, the same deities who delight in blood and meat offerings but, as seen here at least, the word of the servant is guaranteed by the master.

By early afternoon, Aḷagar had processed along the northern bank of the river to the large Rāmarāyar *maṇḍapa* where he was to receive consecration (*abhiṣeka*) from gods and men. Here, those who carried the goat-skin water bags fulfilled their vow in the following manner. In front of the Rāmarāyar *maṇḍapa* stands a smaller *maṇḍapa*, and between the two the palanquin bearers carried Aḷagar on his golden horse. Hundreds of water bag carriers dressed in their splendor surrounded him and on a given signal simultaneously squeezed their filled goat skins, drenching the Lord, the priest, and the palanquin.⁸⁶ Aḷagar then entered the Rāmarāyar *maṇḍapa* in a characteristic manner—three times he was rushed forward to the entrance and three times was backed away to the small *maṇḍapa*, but gained entrance on the fourth attempt.⁸⁷ There he sat in royal state and received his consecration with the water brought from the Nūpura Gaṅgā Tīrtha⁸⁸ and afterwards fed his retinue.

From this point on, the procession consisted of a series of stops for refreshment and honors until Aḷagar reached the small village of Vaṇḍiyūr on the bank of the river where he was to spend the night in a small Śrī-Vaiṣṇava temple. He arrived about 11:00 P.M. and at 1:00 A.M., the program notes, Aḷagar was bathed to cool and refresh him and then processed within the temple, carried backwards and forwards as if taking a walk.⁸⁹

Sixth Day: Now the festival proceeded to celebrate the Lord's journey back to his temple. At sunrise he was bathed again and

left the Vaṇḍiyūr temple on the cobra Ādiśeṣa, processing to the place where he was to meet Sutapas or Maṇḍūka. This place is now represented by the Tēnūr *maṇḍapa*, a covered stone plinth which stands in the middle of the river east of Vaṇḍiyūr and by the Madurai Teppakuḷam on the opposite bank. There Aḷagar spent three hours, shifted from the cobra Ādiśeṣa to the enemy of all snakes, Garuḍa, the kite who is the king of birds. While on that vehicle, Aḷagar removed Maṇḍūka's curse and gave him a vision of himself.⁹⁰ Thus he fulfilled another of the stated purposes of the journey.

While mounted on Garuḍa, Aḷagar moved back up the river, stopped at various places along the way until he came to the Rāmārāyar *maṇḍapa*, the place where he had been consecrated the day before. Here he displayed the ten descents (*avatāra*) he had made in previous times for the sake of the world. These displays or 'acting' (*nāṭṭiyam*) took place between 8 P.M. and 5 A.M. on the *maṇḍapa*, while devotees sat in front of it under a large *pantal* erected for the event. The gold image of Aḷagar standing on the gold image of Garuḍa served as a base on which different metal plates and cloths were hung and draped to represent the different *avatāra*-s. The 'dressing' was done by priests behind a curtain on which was hung a picture and the name of each *avatāra* being prepared. The same information was given over a loudspeaker. Each preparation took about thirty minutes.

The display began with Aḷagar dressed in an elaborate costume of pearls and precious stones (*muttaṅkicēvai*). A priest placed a silk magenta shawl around his shoulders and at his feet a magenta footstool. This was a display of Aḷagar in his royal splendor and not, as I was told, technically an *avatāra*. The first *avatāra* display was of the Fish (Matsya) followed by the Tortoise (Kūrma). Only about seven of the ten would be shown that night, I was told, for each display took about an hour and Aḷagar had to leave early in the morning for Tallākuḷam. The climax was to be the display of Mohinī, the erotic female form Viṣṇu took several times. Judging from the frequency of reference to her that night, she was clearly the most interesting *avatāra* to the people with whom I talked.⁹¹

The audience watching these displays was very large but quite orderly, and followed the directions of the police and boy scouts. Each time the curtain was drawn to reveal a form of the Lord, a priest to the Lord's left lit colored powder which flared brightly

for a few minutes and the devotees patted their cheeks, formed the posture of reverence (*añjali mudrā*) and muttered prayers (*japa*). Just prior to each display a small group of wealthily attired men, women, and children entered from the audience's right accompanied by *nākasvaram*-s and drums. These were identified to me as the descendants of Śrī Rāmarāyar, a former Dēvan under the Nāyak rulers of Madurai who had endowed this *maṇḍapa* and this display as well as a palanquin. This small group was the first to go before the image and offer its homage, after which the audience filed by, men and women strictly segregated. It was like an audience before a king. People performed the *añjali mudrā* in front of him, sometimes turned around in a symbolic *pradakṣiṇa* movement, performed *japa*, and lifted their children up over the heads of the crowd to see their Lord. This 'royal audience' (*darśana*) took about thirty minutes each time.

Seventh Day: At 5:00 A.M., the program notes, there was a procession inside the *maṇḍapa* of Aḷagar in the form of Mohinī, and then the Lord was bathed and dressed. This time he wore the costume of a king who possesses the full requisites of rulership (*rājāṅga*: army, subjects, wealth, ministers, allies, and fortress) and processed in the gold Ānantarāyar Palanquin. This procession back through Tallākuḷam lasted from 11:00 A.M. until 9:00 P.M. while devotees paid homage to this their fully empowered king (*rājāṅga sevā*). That night he stayed in the Mysore *maṇḍapa*.⁹²

Eighth and Ninth Days: In the morning at 3:00 Aḷagar set out for his own hill, riding in a flower-decorated palanquin. For the previous three days he had been dressed in white while travelling, but now he resumed the costume of a Kaḷḷar and carried the sharp weapon which he received at the Kaṟuppannacāmi Temple. He stopped at the same *maṇḍapa*-s where he had stopped when he began the journey and paused at the major ones for two or three hours of rest and refreshment. The poem notes that crowds of people accompanied him to the border of Tallākuḷam shouting 'Śaraṇam, Śaraṇam' [I take] refuge [in you]), and that at the Maṟavar *maṇḍapa* he watched village dancing (*kūttu*) in the evening. After a two-hour midnight stop at Appantiruppati, he journeyed on to his hill, reaching Kaḷḷantiri at about 2:00 A.M.⁹³ and the audience hall in his own temple at 7:00 A.M. The poem says that when he

arrived here he was welcomed grandly and lifted onto his Lion Throne where virgins waved flames before him (*ārati*) as an act of veneration and purification. The money boxes carried by the Kaḷḷar and protected by Kaṛuppannacāmi were brought before him, opened, examined, and then taken to the temple treasury. The journey was over, but it had polluted the Lord, the poem notes, and he required a bath. He ascended the hill to the Nūpura Gaṅgā Tīrtha, bathed, took an oil bath to remove his weariness, restored the *nāma* to his forehead, and ate light refreshment followed by areca nut and betel leaf. Then, the poem says, Aḷagar as Nārāyaṇa resumed his slumber on the cobra Ādiśeṣa.

The Popular Myth

It is clear from the above descriptions that in their official myths and in their ritual enactments these two *Citrā* festivals in Madurai are quite distinct from one another. The temples which participate in the rituals of the M-S wedding play no important role in the Aḷagar journey and the reverse is likewise true. The only Vaiṣṇava cult playing a role in the wedding festival is that of Pavaḷakkaṇivāy Perumāḷ at Tirupparaṅkunram who comes with Subrahmaṇya as a guest. But this has nothing to do with Aḷagar's journey. Similarly, Kūḍalaḷagar, who resides quite near the M-S Temple within the old city boundaries, apparently plays no role in the M-S wedding, but he does make a special trip to greet Aḷagar in the middle of the Vaigai River.⁹⁴

The myths of the wedding say nothing about Aḷagar's journey or about the events connected with it despite the fact that, according to the M-S *sthala purāṇa*, Viṣṇu is Mīnākṣī's brother. But this role of Viṣṇu is not mentioned in the myth connected with the Aḷagar Temple. The myths of the journey likewise say nothing about the wedding, and the Aḷagar Temple *sthala purāṇa* incorporates Śiva and Mīnākṣī at a level subordinate to Viṣṇu and incidental to the existence of the temple.⁹⁵ It seems clear, therefore, that the two festivals involve separate systems of temples and cults which overlap to a very small degree.

However, there is a popular and pervasive oral myth which links the two festivals together quite explicitly. There are variations on this story, but its major outline is as follows.⁹⁶ Aḷagar is Mīnākṣī's

brother and is invited to her wedding with Śiva. For some reason, however, the exact time of the wedding is not made clear to him so that when he reaches the Vaigai River and meets Kūḍalaḷagar in the middle, he learns from him that the ceremony has already taken place. This performance of the wedding without him, the brother of the bride, he rightfully regards as an insult, and though he passes his wedding present on to Kūḍalaḷagar to be taken to his sister, he refuses to enter the city. This suggests that his anger is directed less towards his sister than towards Sundarēśvara, the king of Madurai and his brother-in-law. Instead, he turns around in anger and proceeds along the north bank to Vaṇḍiyūr where he spends the night and, according to popular tradition, has sexual union with Tulukka Nācciyār, his Muslim consort who was the daughter of a Delhi Sultan.⁹⁷ After he bestows the boon on Maṇḍūka the next morning and after he displays his ten *avatāra* forms, he returns to his own hill but is still angry. This popular myth thus explains why Aḷagar comes all the way but never crosses the river or enters the city; it incorporates the M-S *sthala purāṇa* version by assuming it as background.

There are interesting sub-stories within this framework. The reason why the wedding is repeated every year, it is said, is because during the marriage ceremony in the M-S Temple someone sneezes or performs some other inauspicious act at a crucial moment which calls a halt to the ritual. Therefore it has to be repeated again next year. Aḷagar's visit to Vaṇḍiyūr is probably an act of pique in response to the insult from his brother-in-law, for the popular tradition says that Tulukka Nācciyār is a Muslim dancing girl or prostitute. Aḷagar is polluted by his carousing with her and it is for this reason, one version says, that when he returns to his temple on Aḷagarmalai he must first bathe in the Nūpura Gaṅgā Tīrtha before entering his inner shrine. This is a more specific account of the source of pollution than that given by the *Aḷakar Varuṇippu* or by Śrī-Vaiṣṇava ritual texts, which assume that any journey by the Lord will result in pollution—the bathing of the Lord is normally done on the last day of any long festival.⁹⁸ It is also said by some that Aḷagar's licentious behavior angers his wife who will not allow him into their chamber until he has gone through purification ceremonies.⁹⁹ This story may have some basis in the 'mock battle' between the god and the goddess (*yuddhakriḍā*), a ritual prescribed for Śrī-Vaiṣṇava festivals.¹⁰⁰

This popular myth fits the two festivals together so that the transition from the wedding to the journey in the five or six days around the full moon of *Citrā* is perceived as a single divine drama in which the actors behave rather like royal human beings. The popular mythology blurs the distinctions—which are quite clearly articulated in the actual performance of the festivals—by explaining the crucial ritual events of the journey in terms other than those expressed in the ‘official’ story itself. This allows the two festivals to function as an apparent whole for the general populace. Within this popularly conceived large performance, the many different cycles of myths and rituals described above are given a vague connection with each other while retaining their precise significance for smaller groups of participants. Not all the hundreds of thousands of people who are present in Madurai for these celebrations pay attention to the recitation of Campantar’s defeat of the *śramaṇa*-s, for example, or to the vows of the goat-skin bag carriers, or to the utterances of the ‘god-possessed’, but these events are of considerable significance to the limited groups who do. Most people, however, do pay attention to the ‘*Cittirai* Festival’ as it is outlined in broad strokes by the popular myth with its auspicious periods and interlocking stories.

The popularity of the ‘*Cittirai* Festival’ is paralleled economically in several important fairs held in the Madurai area around the *Citrā* full moon. The 1961 *Census of India* reports that 300,000 people attended a cattle and fruit fair in North Madurai which met four times in two weeks at the time of the Aḷagar Festival. A three-day fair at Vaṇḍiyūr involved 140,000 people, and there was a seven-day ‘*Cittirai* Festival’ fair held in West Madurai. Smaller fairs were held along Aḷagar’s journey route. For example, at Appantirupati or Velliyakkunram, the old Kaḷḷar center eight miles north of Madurai, 3,000 people attended a two-day fair, presumably at the time when Aḷagar visited there.¹⁰¹ Obviously, these festivals mean a good deal to many people economically as well as religiously.

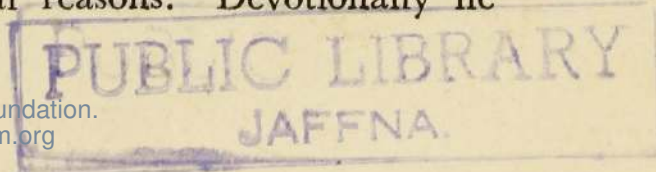
Though it is impossible here to unravel all the meanings these two festivals have for their celebrants, some understanding of the persistence and universality of the popular myth which fuses the two festivals together can be gained, I think, by viewing the ‘*Cittirai* Festival’ from two angles—that of history and that of local social structure.^{101a} From the angle of history, a Tamil scholar, A. Ki. Parantāmaṅār, has provided insight into how the two festivals

came to be celebrated around the same full moon. He observes in an article on the M-S Temple,¹⁰² that before the temple was expanded architecturally in the early seventeenth century by the Nāyak king Tirumala (1623-1659), the wedding and the car-driving took place in the month of *Māci* (February-March) and not in the month of *Citrā* (April-May). When he expanded the temple, Tirumala Nāyak had two large cars constructed for the festival, but then found that because *Māci* was a time of harvest there were not enough men available to pull them.

The king did note, however, that when Aḷagar made his journey to a village called Tēnūr near the river at the time of the *Citrā* full moon, he attracted thousands of people, because *Citrā* occurred during the hot season when the major harvesting was over. Therefore, the Nāyak switched the time of the wedding and the car-pulling from *Māci* to *Citrā* and moved the then-existing *Citrā* festival to *Māci*.¹⁰³ Furthermore, he added the celebration of Mīnākṣī's Coronation to the eighth day of this new *Citrā* festival and moved the goal of Aḷagar's journey from the village of Tēnūr to the present site at the Tēnūr Maṇḍapa near Vaṇḍiyūr. Large numbers of people were now able to come to both festivals, to pull the enormous cars, and to provide the kind of splendid celebration the Nāyak desired.

The existence of the Aḷagar journey festival prior to the time of Tirumala Nāyak is confirmed by the Sanskrit poem '*Divya Sūri Carita*', which is to be dated prior to the fourteenth century, where the meeting of Āṅṭāl with Aḷagar at Tallākuḷam is described.¹⁰⁴ A devotional poem of the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, after Tirumala, confirms that Aḷagar's journey extended to Vaṇḍiyūr and made a stop at a '*Tēnūr maṇḍapa*' on his return, as is the case today. The poem does not mention why he goes there though there is no reason to doubt that it was for the sake of Maṇḍūka.¹⁰⁵ The Kaḷḷar seem to have been connected with the Aḷagar Temple from at least the early seventeenth century, and possibly also with the journey festival; for, inscriptions of 1605 record that a group of merchants built a temple for Aḷagar at Appantirupati, one of Aḷagar's important stops on the journey today. This village was once the chief of thirteen villages constituting the Appantirupati Zamindari, which was also known as Aḷagar's '*Southern Home*'.¹⁰⁶

If it is true, as the evidence suggests, that Tirumala Nāyak intentionally joined these two festivals together, he probably did so for political as well as for devotional reasons. Devotionally he



was Vaiṣṇava and may have desired to express his devotion to Viṣṇu and to enhance the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava tradition in the predominantly Śaiva region of Madurai. The sixteenth and seventeenth century ruins of Aḷagar town indicate that these had long been interests of the Madurai Nāyaks. Moreover, from his Hindu point of view, patronage and expansion of both festivals, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava, would not only build up his personal merit, but also would increase the spiritual and material well-being of his kingdom and of his reign. Flourishing festivals would strengthen *dharma*, make divine powers present in the kingdom, stimulate the cosmic flow of gifts and fertility, and nourish the faith and devotion of his subjects.

Politically, the new combination of festivals would be a yearly statement of the unity of the northern part of the region over which he was sovereign, a unity depending on a positive relationship between himself and the Kaḷḷar. Such a ritual expression of unity would be important for Tirumala, for he was the first Nāyak of Madurai to gain the political independence of the old Pāṇḍya kingdom from the Vijayanagara empire.¹⁰⁷ In this regard, it would be interesting to know when the 'conquest of the Kaḷḷar' ritual during the journey festival originated. Could it possibly be a reflection of a political fact (Nāyak conquest of the Kaḷḷar) expressed as a religious fact (Aḷagar's conquest of the Kaḷḷar)?

But having gained independence and having united the kingdom, the social tensions within it did not disappear, and this, too, may have had its ritual expression. The fact that Aḷagar never enters the old city of Madurai may be a reflection in ritual of the political, cultural, and religious tensions existing within the northern portion of Tirumala's kingdom. These tensions would be between the predominantly low-caste villagers, politically dominated by the Kaḷḷar, and the high-caste non-brahmins and brahmins of the city, politically dominated by the Nāyaks; between the non-brahmin cults which focus on severe vows, god-possession, and animal sacrifices performed in accordance with local and family custom (*deśācāra*, *kuladharmā*) and the vegetarian brahmin-led rituals of the M-S Temple which follow classical Sanskrit prescriptions (*śruti*, *smṛti*, *āgama*);¹⁰⁸ and between the sectarian Hindu traditions centering around Viṣṇu and those others centering around Śiva-Śakti. Thus, the present form of the 'Cittirai Festival' may be viewed as a cultural creation by the king and populace of Madurai and of the region

to its north during the first half of the seventeenth century—a creation not *ex nihilo*, but out of pre-existing festivals, rearranged to effect and to express the essential political, social, and religious unity of a variety of different social components.

From the angle of local social structure, the pervasiveness of the popular myth may be partly explained by reference to the structure of the family. The Tamil Hindu family is patrilineal, but modified by a strong matrilineal tradition,¹⁰⁹ with the result that two descent groups are aligned with each other through the married woman. She plays the pivotal roles of wife, mother, and sister simultaneously. She aligns the two patrilineal descent groups of her father, brother, and nephew, and of her father-in-law, husband, and son, both of which have a certain claim on her. The married woman thus stands at the center of a single family (*kulam*), its two lineages symbolized by her husband on one side and her brother on the other.¹¹⁰ This family naturally experiences tensions between the two patrilineages, but it seeks to maintain structural unity through the inter-marriage of cross-cousins while it seeks to maintain harmony through adherence to clearly defined patterns of behavior for all of its members (*kula-dharma*). This large family is the basic component of Tamil society, and its unity and harmony are expressed ritually at the major domestic festival, the wedding.

The popular myth of Alagar's journey to the wedding of his sister may derive its existence and popularity from this Tamil family structure, for it illustrates on the divine level the same alignment of lineages through the married woman, including the tensions between them, as found on the human level. Śiva and Viṣṇu are brothers-in-law aligned with one another through Mīnākṣī and as brothers-in-law they have natural rivalries with one another. This widely expressed element of the myth implies that the 'family' which Śiva, Mīnākṣī, and Viṣṇu constitute through this alignment is a basic whole, and for mythic thought this whole would be the entire divine realm, a realm composed of the two lineages of the gods. This divine realm is a unity, but a unity within which there is structured tension between Śiva and Viṣṇu, and a unity at the center of which stands the goddess Mīnākṣī, 'Mother of the Universe'. Such, it would seem, are the implications of the popular myth which sees the two supreme gods, Viṣṇu and Śiva, related as brothers-in-law through a third supreme god, Mīnākṣī. Whether these implications are ever made explicit in popular thought remains to be

investigated.

But other applications of this model of the family (*kulam*) can be made, I think. The Pāṇḍyan kingdom is also understood traditionally as a whole, and the sectarian rivalries between the temples and devotees of Śiva and Viṣṇu within that kingdom can be seen as the rivalries of patrilineages within the same 'family', i.e., the kingdom. As head of this 'family', the king has the duty (*dharma*) to patronize both religious traditions in his kingdom for the sake of his kingdom's well-being even though one of the patrilineages' is not his own. Thus, just as the right conduct of the family (*kuladharmā*) mitigates the tensions between patrilineages for the sake of harmony of the family, so the right conduct of the king (*rājadharmā*) mitigates the tensions between the 'patrilineages', of Śiva and Viṣṇu for the sake of the harmony of the kingdom. It may also be said that the fundamental order of the cosmos (*dharma*) mitigates the rivalry of the gods for the sake of the harmony of the divine realm, a harmony upon which all other realms in the manifest universe depend for their continued existence.

Given these factors, it is understandable that the chief ritual occasion through which the Tamil family creates and expresses the alignments of two descent groups in a single unity, the wedding, would be the chief ritual through which popular mythology creates and expresses the basic unity of society and of the gods. Furthermore the fact that in the popular myth the wedding takes place before Aḷagar, the brother of the bride, arrives is a breach of family practice (*kuladharmā*) potent enough to symbolize the historical and existential experience that this ideal unity is only imperfectly realized in society, if not in the divine realm, and must therefore be striven for repeatedly.

But though only ever imperfectly realized, the dharmic concern for the harmony of the whole unit (family, kingdom, divine realm) is the primary concern of kings and of common people, for upon this harmony depend prosperity and well-being. A few Hindus, like Maṇḍūka, may desire release from the tensions and the harmony of the dharmic order altogether, but most Hindus are householders who find that the goals of their life lie on some level within it (*dharma, artha, kāma*). In Madurai every year, hundreds of thousands of such householder Hindus celebrate the two *Citrā* festivals, but perceive them as one, a great wedding in which Śiva and Viṣṇu are aligned into one family. They see it

this way, I suggest, because they assume that the blessings of fertility, prosperity, spiritual well-being, and devotion, which they hope for from the festivals, come to them when all the constituent parts of the divine and of the social realms are related to one another as parts of a harmonious whole.¹¹¹ The crucial question then is, how harmoniously do these components of the whole relate to one another? That is certainly the crucial question for the well-being of the family, as it is for the well-being of the kingdom and of the divine realm.

The fact that harmony is never fully realized in the 'Cittirai Festival' because of Aḷagar's late arrival may be more than merely the result of an attempt to explain why two major and different festivals occur in the same region with reference to the same full moon. It may also be a way of stating that in our age perfect harmony of the contending parts of a whole is not achieved among either the gods or in society,¹¹² any more than it is in the family. Despite the fact that Śiva and Mīnākṣī are the paradigms for the perfect marriage, even their family experiences the tension between husband and brother-in-law; and their 'lineages' in the Pāṇḍya kingdom have a long history of conflicting claims. If this is the case among the gods, how much more must it be among humans. And it is because in this age perfect harmony is never fully realized in any realm compounded of parts, that prosperity, well-being, and spiritual development are always tenuous and transitory gains. But for the populace of Madurai the 'Cittirai Festival' is the closest possible approximation to this harmony, and therefore people delight in repeating it year after year.

Notes

1. These observations were made while doing research in India over 1967-69, under the sponsorship of the Kent Fellowship Program of the Danforth Foundation and the Fulbright in India Program. I will occasionally draw upon my 1962 observations of the festivals while I was a Teaching Fellow of the Oberlin Shansi Memorial Association in Madurai. Barbara C. Johnson, who also observed aspects of the festivals in 1962 and 1968, has provided me with a number of observations as has William Harman, who witnessed both festivals in 1970. This study was used by Mira Reym Binford and Michael Camerini as a guide in filming the two festivals for the contemporary South Asia Film Series produced by the South Asian Area Center, University of Wisconsin—Madison. The film, "Wedding of the Goddess,"

was produced in two parts and was released for distribution in 1976.

2. This description of Madurai and the temple is based on the following sources: B. S. Baliga, *Madurai: Madras District Gazetteers*, Madras, 1960, pp. 394-403; *Census of India*, 1961, *Temples of Madras State*, Vol. VI: *Madurai and Ramanathapuram*, ed. P. K. Nambiar and K. C. Narayana Kurup, Madras, 1969, pp. 128-163; and W. Francis, *Madura: Madras District Gazetteers*, Vol. I, Madras, 1914, pp. 257-78. Historical perspectives on both the city and the temple are given by J. H. Nelson, *The Madura Country: A Manual*, 5 Parts, Madras, 1868; K. Thiagarajan, *The Madurai Temple (A Short History)*, Madurai: Sree Meenakshi Sundareshwarar Temple Renovation Committee, n.d. [early 1960's]; and P. T. Rajan (ed.), *Madurai Sri Meenakshi Sundareshwarar Mahakumbabhishhekam Souvenir*, Madurai: The Thiruppani Committee, Sri Meenakshi Devasthanam, 1963. Maps of the temple's floor plan and of the city in 1757 are given in W. Francis, *Madura*, and reprinted in a pamphlet, *Know Madurai* (six editions between 1956 and 1965), published by T. V. Sundaram Iyengar and Sons Private Ltd. of Madurai. Another floor plan of the temple is given in *Census of India*, 1961, *Temples of Madras State*, Vol. VI.
3. See *Maduraittala-Varalāru*, a traditional history of the city reprinted in English translation in Sathyanatha Aiyar, *The History of the Nāyaks of Madura*, Madras: University of Madras, 1924, p. 374.
4. B. S. Baliga, *Madurai*, pp. 395-99; and *Census of India*, 1961, *Temples of Madras State*, Vol VI, p. 131.
5. The rectangular streets begin with Ādi Street, which runs inside the temple wall along all four sides; but, as the temple expanded, portions of this street have been covered over. The second street is Cittirai (Citrā) and it lies immediately outside the temple wall, followed farther out by Avaṇimūla and Māsi Streets. The rampart stood outside Māsi Street and beyond the ditch ran the Veḷḷi or Outer Street. Since British rule two other streets have been added, Marrett Street and Perumal Maistry Street.
6. The palace was built by Tirumala Nāyaka in the first half of the seventeenth century and was later pulled down by his grandson who shifted his political center to Tiruccirāppaḷḷi. See B. S. Baliga, *Madurai*, p. 400.
7. *Census of India*, 1961, *Temples of Madras State*, Vol. VI, p. 131.
8. Presumably, only the 'clean' castes were allowed to reside within the city walls, and Māsi Street formed the boundary of the *yantra* or ritually pure realm. This boundary is still marked off every year during the wedding festival when the Lord and Lady process in their enormous cars (*ratha*). According to G. R. Welbon, in some Tamil villages *ratha*-s are pulled around the boundaries of the *agrahāra* in which the temple is located and within which only brahmins are usually allowed to live (discussions at CRSI workshop, 1971).
9. The basic source for information about the Aḷagar Temple is K. N. Radha Krishna, *Thirumalirunjolaimalai (Sri Alagar Kovil) Stala Purana*, Madura: Sri Kallalagar Devasthanam, 1942. It contains a long English introduction on the temple, the Sanskrit *sthala purāṇa*, and a Tamil translation of it together with the major Tamil devotional poems in which the temple appears. It also contains a detailed floor plan of both the temple and the fort. Additional material and plates are given by *Census of India*, 1961, *Temples of Madras State*,

Vol. VI, pp. 106-8, and B.S. Baliga, *Madurai*, pp. 406-8.

10. K. N. Radha Krishna, *Thirumalirunjolaimalai*, p. 242.
 11. See T. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom (Kāśyapa-Jñānakāṇḍaḥ): A Ritual Handbook of the Vaikhānasas*, The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965, p. 161.
 12. K. N. Radha Krishna, *Thirumalirunjolaimalai*, p. 168.
 13. The definitive study of the Kaḷḷar is Louis Dumont's *Une sous-caste de l'Inde du Sud: Organisation sociale et religion des Pramalai Kallar*, Paris: Mouton, 1957, though, as the title indicates, Dumont's chief concern is with a branch of the Kaḷḷar which does not have very much to do with the Aḷagar Temple today. Other descriptions of the caste are given by B. S. Baliga, *Madurai*, pp. 329-30; W. Francis, *Madura*, pp. 88-96; J. H. Nelson, *The Madura Country*, Pt. II, pp. 44-56; and Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Madras, 1909, Vol. III, pp. 53-91.
- The Kaḷḷar of Madurai District are divided into two major regional groups—one on the eastern side of Madurai city near the Aḷagarmalai (the Ambalakkārar), and the other on the western side of Madurai city (the Tēvār). It is the Ambalakkāra, Kaḷḷar who hold Aḷagar in great esteem and who serve him during his journey festival. As will be noted below, the regional god to whom they are traditionally devoted is Alagar's chief temple servant.
14. See the seventeenth-eighteenth century letters of French Jesuit missionaries who travelled and lived in the Madurai area, translated in Sathyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nāyaks of Madura*, especially pp. 252, 253, 289, and 305.
 15. Kaṟuppannacāmi is described by K. N. Radha Krishna (*Thirumalirunjolaimalai*, pp. 210-15), treated briefly by B. S. Baliga, (*Madurai*, pp. 98-99) and W. Francis (*Madura*, p. 85); and described as found among the Pramalai Kaḷḷar by Louis Dumont (*Une sous-caste*, pp. 368-72).
 16. Listed by K. N. Radha Krishna, *Thirumalirunjolaimalai*, pp. 206-7.
 17. K. N. Radha Krishna, *Thirumalirunjolaimalai*, p. 267. When the author says animal sacrifices are made 'within the Temple area' it is not clear exactly where he means. His map of the fort and temple area does not show any shrines of these local village and regional deities. It is highly unusual for animal sacrifices to take place within the temple area of a Śrī-Vaiṣṇava temple, that is, within the main gateways. It is significant, therefore, that Kaṟuppannacāmi's shrine is on the exterior side of the main *gopura*.
 18. J. Sharrock, an English missionary of the late nineteenth century, is quoted by Thurston to the effect that when Aḷagar goes to the Vaigai River in Citrā, there are two to three lakhs of worshippers, a large proportion of whom are Kaḷḷar. 'At this festival the Kallans have the right of dragging with a rope the car of Alagarswāmi, though other people may join in later on. As Alagarswāmi is a vegetarian, no blood sacrifice is offered to him. This is probably due to the influence of Brāhmanism, for, in their ordinary ceremonies, the Kallans invariably slaughter sheep as sacrifices to propitiate their deities.' Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. III, pp. 85-86. This distinction between vegetarian and non-vegetarian deities is usually adhered to in ritual in South India. In the case of this temple it also is paralleled, it seems, by a distinction between those deities who possess men in certain rituals and those who do not, the vegetarians being the latter.

19. The vegetarian nature of the M-S Temple is illustrated by a story Louis Dumont relates about Karuppannacāmi as told among the Pramalai Kaḷḷar. It accounts for his having left the Aḷagar Temple and for his residence among them. Originally, the story says, there were four Karuppannacāmi-guarding the gates at Aḷagarkōyil, three of whom went with Aḷagar on his trip to the Vaigai River. The fourth one demanded a blood and rice offering to compensate for his having to remain at the temple, but was not given it. He then left and went to the Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvara Temple but did not stay long, for the food was vegetarian there too and not to his liking. So he went west and resides now among the Pramalai Kaḷḷar where he receives the blood and rice he likes. See Louis Dumont, *Une Sous-caste*, p. 369.
20. In addition to K. Merrey's article above, a basic source for the Hindu calendar is M.M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year* (The Religious Life of India Series), Calcutta: Association Press, 1921, especially chapter one. Benjamin Walker, *The Hindu World: An Encyclopedic Survey of Hinduism*, 2 Vols., New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968, provides a useful summary under the heading 'Calendar', Vol. I, pp. 195-98. For specific details about the Tamil calendar I have consulted an astrological handbook for the year 1968-1969: C. Govindarajan, *Śrī Cintāmaṇi Tirukkanṭa Pañcāṅkam*, 1968-1969, Cennai [Madras]: Śrī Cintāmaṇi Jōtiṭa Malar, 1968. The use of this kind of astrological handbook is conveniently explained by C.G. Diehl, *Instrument and Purpose: Studies on Rites and Rituals in South India*, Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1956), pp. 58-63; 197-211.
21. There are many complications which arise from the astrological attempt to fuse solar and lunar calendars and one emerged clearly in the 1968 festival performances. In that year, the vernal equinox (13 April) and the *Citrā* full moon fell on the same solar day with the result that two full moons occurred in the solar month of *Citrā*. This presented calendrical problems which specialists resolved by observing the last full moon of the solar month (12 May) as the reference point for the festivals, though technically it was the 'wrong' full moon. It occurred in the *Vaiśākhā nakṣatra* and was called the Buddha full moon (*Butia Paurṇamī*).
22. *Census of India*, 1961, *Madras: Fairs and Festivals*, ed. P. K. Nambiar and K.C. Narayana Kurup, Madras: Government Press, 1968, p. 32.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 33. In 1969, a Tamil newspaper article estimated the number of people in the river together with Aḷagar at about six lakhs (600,000).
24. There are three versions of the M-S Temple *sthala purāṇa*, according to R. Dessigane *et. al.* in *La Legende des jeux de Civa à Madurai: d'Après les textes et les peintures*, 2 Vols., Publications de l'Institute Francais d'Indologie No. 19, Pondichéry: Institut Français d'Indologie, 1960, Vol. I, pp. ii-iv. The earliest dates from the twelfth century and is *Tiruvālavāyutaiyār Tiruvallaiyāṭarṭpurāṇam* by Perumparrappuliyar Nampī, edited by U. Ve. Sāminātaiyār (2nd ed., Madras, 1927). The second version dates from the early sixteenth century and is *Tiruvilāiyāṭarṭpurāṇam* by Parañcōtimuṇivar, consisting of 3363 verses. It is related closely to the third version, a Sanskrit work entitled *Hālāsyamāhātmya*, divided into seventy-one *adhyaṅga*-s.

The sixteenth-century version by Parañcōtimuṇivar is the most important for a study of *Citrā* wedding festival, for it is the most widely known as seen,

for example, in the fact that at least three editions of the text with commentaries have been published in this century, and in the fact that its narrative is the basis for the paintings illustrating the *sthala purāṇa* which hang in two of the corridors facing the Golden Lotus Tank within the temple. In their present form these paintings date from 1894 (Dessigane *et al.*, *La Légende des jeux de Cive*, p. ii.). Diehl notes that instructions for the enactment of one of the 'Sacred Amusements' of Śiva celebrated during the festival (Campantar and the impalement of the Jain *śramaṇa*-s) are given in *Tiru Ālavāy* (or *Madurai Mānmiyam*), a Tamil 'translation' of the *Hālāsyamāhātmya* published in 1951 by the temple *devasthāna* (C.G. Diehl, *Instrument and Purpose*, pp. 63-64; 162).

Several summarized translations of Parañcōtimunivar's work have appeared in western languages. The first was by William Taylor, 'Madura Stalla Purāna (Abstracted)' translated and published in 1835 along with his own comments on it in his *Oriental Historical Manuscripts in the Tamil Language*, 2 Vols., Madras, 1835, Vol. I. Diehl (*Instrument and Purpose*,—p. 64), notes that in 1844 E.A. Rodrigues published a version of the *purāṇa* based on Taylor's translation together with sixty-four traditional hand-painted drawings of the 'Sacred Amusements' in *The Complete Hindoo Pantheon: With a History and Description of the Idols*, Madras, 1844. In 1868, J. H. Nelson published another English abstract 'which, with the assistance of a Pundit has been carefully compared with a Sanskrit manuscript said to be the best procurable....' He notes that his version varies considerably from that of William Taylor. Nelson's 'Abstract of the Mad'hura St'hala Purāna' was published in *The Madura Country*, Pt. III, pp. 4-38, and has been reprinted in B. S. Baliga, *Madurai*, pp. 432-56. In 1960, Dessigane *et al.* published their French summary of each 'Sacred Amusement' along with plates and explanations of the *sthala purāṇa* paintings inside the temple.

25. This Kṛta Yuga occurred in the Manu era prior to the one we are now in. According to the traditional 'Pandion Chronicle' dating from *ca.* the eighteenth century, the temple and the city were founded by Śiva in the Kṛta Yuga of the thirty-fourth 'Sathura Yuga' of Raivata's rule, the seventh Manu. See 'Pandion Chronicle' in William Taylor's *Oriental Historical Manuscripts*, Madras, 1835, Vol. I, pp. 7, 13, 19, 21, 27. Another author observes that, from the point of view of the life-span of Brahmā, we live in a period which corresponds to a portion of the first day of the first *pakṣa* of the first month of his fifty-first year. This seems to suggest that our age is the first day of the month of *Citrā* (i.e., the first day of the year) from the point of view of Brahmā. See K. N. Radha Krishna, *Thirumalīrunjolaimalai*, pp. 134-35.

These stories are told here with reference to the edition of the *purāṇa* by T. Mu. Veñkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār, *Tiruviḷaiyāṭar-purāṇam*, 2 Vols., Tirunelvēli: Tirunelvēli South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing House, 1965. Subsequent citations of this work will refer to the relevant chapters, each of which relates one of Śiva's sacred amusements', followed by the number of the specific verse or verses.

26. Often scholars make a distinction between the Vaiṣṇava stress on the 'descents' or *avatāra*-s of Viṣṇu as 'historical' figures (especially Rāma and Kṛṣṇa) and

the Śaiva focus on Śiva's *mūrti* forms in which he manifests himself temporarily for specific purposes and which are not 'historical'. But the *Tiruvīlaiyāṭar-purāṇam* entitles the story of Mīnākṣī's appearance as 'The Chapter of the Sacred Avatāra of Taṭātakai the Queen' (*Taṭātakai pirāṭṭiyar tiruvavatārappāṭalam*), and the term 'avatāra' is used throughout the work. The fact that her descent is to be understood 'historically' is made clear in her role as queen of Madurai and mother of the succeeding line of Pāṇḍya-s.

27. *Tiruvīlaiyāṭar-purāṇam*, Vol. IV, p. 19.
28. William McCormack (personal communication) has noted that the number three is often a masculine symbol, which fits in this case. In all things except her sex Taṭātakai is male until she meets Śiva, whereupon she assumes the female role of being 'conquered' and her third breast disappears.
29. *Tiruvīlaiyāṭar-purāṇam*, Vol. VI, p. 76 and the explanation (*urai*) by T. Mu. Veṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār, Vol. I, p. 343. W. Norman Brown devotes an article to 'The Name of the Goddess Mīnākṣī, "Fish-Eye" (*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXVII [1947], pp. 209-14), in which he approaches the topic from the Sanskrit sources. When he asked traditionally-educated Indians for the meaning of this Sanskrit name, he received three versions: (i) her eyes are like the eyes of a fish, large and brilliant; (ii) the shape of her eyes compare to the shape of a fish's body (the most common explanation he received); and (iii) her eyes dart about like fish in the water. But he notes that there is another significance for those who regard her as Śakti: her eyes do not close, like those of a fish. According to Sanskrit tradition, gods do not wink; moreover, the opening and closing of the eyes of the primordial cosmic being correspond to the manifestation and dissolution of the universe. Thus, as Brown notes, 'The Great Mother, all mighty and all merciful, keeps her eyes ever open, as does a fish, because only then does the world exist and the creatures over whom she watches with a blend of infinite power and pity continue to live. The name under which she is honored at Madura recalls to the informed worshipper the basis of his deepest devotion.' The Tamil gloss of Veṅkaṭacāmi Nāṭṭār adds another dimension to this. The simile is more specific (a carp watching her eggs) and stresses the role of Śakti or Umā in bringing the souls which she herself 'begets' (as Prakṛti) to their own maturity and final release from *samsāra*. This not only reflects the stress on Śakti by tantric Hindus but also the specific theological emphasis in Śaiva Siddhānta on the process of entanglement in *samsāra* as itself an act of divine grace leading to *mokṣa*.
30. Listed for ten verses, *Tiruvīlaiyāṭar-purāṇam*, Vol. V, p. 80-90.
31. According to K. A. Nilankanta Sastri, Durgā is identified in one part of the *Mahābhārata* as the virgin sister of Kṛṣṇa while in another part as Umā, the wife of Śiva. He also notes that in the *Smārta Pañcāyatana Pūjā*, two Śaiva and two Vaiṣṇava male images are used, and the fifth, the Goddess, is common to both, 'as mythology makes her the wife of Śiva and the sister of Viṣṇu'. See *Development of Religion in South India*, Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1963, pp. 61 and 65. This suggests her role as mediator between two rival male lineages as will be discussed below.
32. These verses are from *Tiruvīlaiyāṭar-purāṇam*, Vol. V, pp. 178-79, 181, 187-89.
33. This ritual of pouring the water is described as part of the brahmin wedding

ceremonies by B. S. Baliga (*Madurai*, op. cit., pp. 103-4). He notes that the father of the bride normally does the pouring and that 'it forms the binding portion of the marriage ceremony among Telugu brahmins and some non-brahmin castes' (p. 104). The attention this ceremony receives in the *purāṇa* and in two sculptures in the M-S Temple may reflect this Telugu brahmin emphasis, for the Nāyaks themselves were Telugus.

34. *Tiruvilaiyārtapurāṇam*, Vol. I, p. 450.
35. This flood marked the shift from the sixth to the seventh Manu Era. See note 25.
36. The 1968 program is entitled, 'Madurai Śrī Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvarar Kōvil Cittirai Peruviḷā Pattirikai' and consists of eight pages. I am indebted to Dr. K. R. Sundararajan of the Punjabi University in Patiala for his clarification of certain points in this program. The 1970 program gives the same information on a large sheet. Diehl describes portions of 'The Festival Calendar' (*Instrument and Purpose*, op. 158-180), and provides a useful comparison and explanation.
37. In 1968 it was between 1:00 and 1:24 P.M. and in 1970 between 10:04 and 10.28 A.M.
38. This is described in an article, 'Brahmotsavam' published in *Siddhanta Deepika* in 1909, and reprinted in P. T. Rajan (ed.), *Madurai . . . Souvenir*, pp. xxii-xxiv. Note also Kāśyapa's statement in the Vaikhānasa tradition: 'When the banner has been erected, the inhabitants of that village should not go to another village before the ablution after that festival has taken place. A serious illness will come over those who have (yet) gone.' T. Goudriaan, *Kāśyapa's Book of Wisdom*, p. 274. The reasoning seems to be that all the gods of the universe are invited to be present during the festival and they are there as guests between the time of the raising and the lowering of the flag. The physical realm is unusually sacred during this time and unusual degrees of purity must be maintained which is best done by remaining within the clearly delineated sacred realm.
39. For example, on the first night the Lord was on the Wish in Tree *vāhana* (*kalpaka vrkṣa*) and the Lady was on the Lion (*siṃha*). On the second night, the Lord rode the Demon (*bhūta*) and the Lady rode the Haṃsa (*annam*), a type of goose. On the third night, he rode the Kailāsa *vāhana* and she rode the Wishing Cow (*kāmadhenu*). Each of them processed on a horse on the fifth night and on a bull on the sixth.
40. The 1968 program notes state that those who run the festival *maṅṭakappati*-s should purchase fine silk for adorning the Lord and Lady and on the day previous to their appearance at the *maṅḍapa* should show it to the Temple Manager to obtain his approval. After that, the Lord will be brought to the *maṅḍapa*. Similarly, those who erect halting places (*tirukkan*) in the street and want to adorn the Lord and Lady with cloth offerings (*parivaṭṭam cātta*) must give an offering of not less than three cubits of fine silk. Raw and unbleached cloth will not be accepted as adornment offerings (*cāttuppati*). The fees for making cloth garland offerings (*mālai parivaṭṭam*) and cloth adornment offerings (*cāttuppati*) should be given to the Devastānam Recorder, who accompanies the Lord, and a receipt taken.
41. C. G. Diehl, *Instrument and Purpose*, pp. 164-65.

42. Two other fixed events listed by both calendars occurring in the first half of the festival involve processions to and from specific *maṇḍapa*-s outside the temple and time spent there 'graciously abiding'. At 9.00 A.M. on the fourth day, the Lord and Lady processed in golden palanquins out of the Temple along the road that formerly ran through the south gate of the rampart wall (Ter̥kuvācal) to the bank of the Villāpuram Tank where they presided in a *maṇḍapa*. They returned that evening at 6.00. On the fifth day, the divine couple spent the day in the Rāmāyaṇa Cāvaṭi, a choultry on North Māsi Street, returning to the temple at 4.00 P.M.
43. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1968, Vol. II, pp. 295-309.
44. *Ṣoḍaśopacāra dīpārādhana*, sixteen 'attendances' (*upacāra*) on Śiva together with (?) the waving of light (*dīpārādhana*). According to Jan Gonda, these sixteen *upacāra*-s consist of invocation; the offerings of a seat, water for washing the feet, *arghya* water, water for rinsing the mouth, a bath, a garment, the sacred thread, perfumes, flowers, incense, a lamp, food, and homage; and a circumambulation and dismissal. Jan Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism: A Comparison*, London: Athlone Press, 1970, p. 186, note 196.
45. From a personal communication by Mr. William Harman, University of Chicago, who was in Madurai as an Oberlin Shansi Representative from Oberlin College.
46. On the southeast corner she met Agni accompanied by boys with long spears and defeated him after three advances; then she defeated Yama at the south, Niruti at the southwest, Varuṇa at the west, Vāyu at the northwest, and Kubera at the north. The programs of 1968 and 1970 note only that 'the Digvijaya of Śrī Mīnākṣī Ammai takes place at the Lālā Śrī Rangacattiram Halting *maṇḍapa* (*tirukkan maṇṭakappati*) where North and East Māsi Streets meet'.
47. On the programs, Subrahmaṇya bears the name 'Tirupparaṅkuṅṅam Āṇṭavar Śrī Cuppiramaṇiya Suvāmi' and Viṣṇu bears the name "Pavaḷakkaṇivāy Perumāl'. In 1968, they were to come at 6.30 A.M. and in 1970 at 7.00 A.M.
48. The 1968 programe notes that at 4.00 A.M. Śrī Mīnākṣī-Sundareśvarar visit the Śrī Aḷagarsāmi Nāyūṭu Halting Place inside the temple, and then process to the *maṇḍapa*-s of Curāvaḷi Cuppayyar, Puṇaiyūr Cuppayyar, and Kalyāṇacuntara Mutaliyār, where they receive honors. The 1970 program lists the same places, but gives no time. The swinging ceremony mentioned below took place in the Mutturāmayyar *maṇḍapa*.
49. Both program notices state that at 5.00 P.M. a curtain will be put up in front of the couple while their dress is prepared for the evening procession (and therefore *darśana* will not be possible). The consecration (*abhiṣeka*) is given only brief mention in the notes to the 1968 program and is not mentioned at all in the 1970 program.
50. This is the Ānanda Rāyar Pallak which starts out from the A. Cokkalingam Piḷḷai Trust.
51. See note 40.
52. Some say that these *nākasvaram* concerts replace street-corner dances by *devadāsī*-s which occurred prior to the government's ban on these temple dancers.

53. This ceremony is described from a Śrī Vaiṣṇava point of view in *Īśvarasamhitā*, Conjeevaram: Sudarśana Press, 1923, XI: 278-311 (pp. 211-214).
54. In 1968, this enthronement took place between 4:00 and 4:15 A.M. and in 1970 between 5:48 and 6:00 A.M. (*Meṣa Laghna*).
55. J. H. Nelson, (*The Madura Country: A Manual*, published in 1868, p. 154) says about Madurai and this festival: 'Immense numbers of men were required to drag along the gigantic cars of the gods on holy days; and accordingly each village had to provide a certain number of men for this service, which was called the *tēr-ūliyam* or car service.'
56. That is the normal timing and the way it occurred in 1970. But in 1968, due to the peculiar calendrical problems arising from astral positions that year (see note 21 above), Aḷagar began his journey the day after the M-S car procession rather than on the same day.
57. *Tamil Lexicon*, Vol. III, p. 1249, under '*cattāvaraṇam*'.
58. Diehl understands '*Devēndira pūjai*' to mean 'Indra is worshipped', but it refers to the enactment of the first 'Sacred Amusement' in which Indra is instructed by Śiva to worship his *liṅga* every *Citrā* full moon. As Vittuvāṇ Nī. Cī. Cuntarāraman observes, 'On the day of the *Citrā* full moon takes place the festival of Indra revering Somasundara Perumān who has graciously removed his sins.' See 'Maturait Tiruviḷākkal' *Madurai* . . . *Souvenir*, p. 181. Due to the calendrical complication of 1968, this ceremony did not occur on the full moon day, but prior to it. In 1970 it was held on the usual schedule.
59. The programs give precise information about Subrahmaṇya's departure for the benefit of devotees. The 1970 program notes that at 9:00 A.M. Śrī Āṅṭavar Suppiramaṇiya Suvāmi will be at the *maṇḍapa* of the Devastānam Office and, after Light Waving Honors (*dīpārādhana*) are completed, he will go to the Deyvāṇai-yammāl *maṇḍapa* of the Trustee Śrī K. N. Rāmasāmi Ceṭṭiyār on South Āvaṇimūla Street, and at 9:00 P. M. will process around Āvaṇimūla Street in a flower-decorated palanquin and return to Tirupparaṅkunram (Deyvāṇaiyammāl is a wife of Subrahmaṇya).
60. The source for this *purāṇa* is N. K. Radha Krishna, *Thirumalirunjolaimalai*, op. cit., which contains the Sanskrit version, based on three manuscripts, and a Tamil translation. Radha Krishna notes that this twelve-part *purāṇa* of 794 *śloka*-s is 'not a single work of a single author, but a congeries of works by various Rishis, collected and arranged in a single work' (p. 141). The *purāṇa* itself states that the various chapters form parts of other *purāṇa*-s: chapters 1 and 10 are from *Śrī Vārāha Purāṇa* (Kṣetra Kāṇḍa); chapters 2 and 5-8 are from the *Śrī Vāmana Purāṇa* (Kṣetramāhātmya Kāṇḍa); chapters 3-4 and 9 are from the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*; and chapters 11-12 are from the *Vārāha Śeṣa Purāṇa* (pp. 131-34; 142).
61. III:39-53, said to be from the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, Kṣetramāhātmya Kāṇḍa, XCI.
62. VIII:37-42, said to be from the *Vāmana Purāṇa*, Kṣetramāhātmya Kāṇḍa, XLVI.
63. III:54-74, said to be from the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, Kṣetramāhātmya Kāṇḍa, XCI; and XI-XII, both *Adhyāya*-s said to be from the *Vārāha Śeṣa Śrī Vārāha Purāṇa*.

64. The *sthala purāṇa* identifies this hill as one of the hills which lie northeast of 'Malaya Parvata', the site where Agastya engages in *tapas*. This hill it calls 'Dharmādri' or 'Maṇḍūka Parvata' and says that it lies in an area called 'Śrī Vārāha Kṣetra' which extends east of the hill, two *yojana*-s from its center. In that *kṣetra*, Nārāyaṇa is continually present and there ascetics attain their goal without any effort (see XI:11-12). This 'Vārāha Kṣetra' is identified with the area around Śrīvilliputtūr in that temple's tradition. There Viṣṇu assumed the boar (*vārāha*) form to rescue the earth, and in the hills west of the town is a stream called Maṇḍūkanadi where Sutapas received his vision of Aḷagar. An Aḷagar temple (Kaṭṭāḷagar) stands on the slope, and behind and above it there is a 'frog-stone' which covers a hollow in which Sutapas is believed to be engaged in *tapas*. See V. Srinivasan, 'Srivilliputtur History and Epigraphy', *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society*, XLIII, Nos. 3-4 (January-April 1953), pp. 102-3, 108-9.
65. Malayadhvaja is mentioned in II:77-81 and described in detail in IV and X:14-132.
66. Told in IV:1-59.
67. Within the *garbhagrha* of the Aḷagar Temple there is a shrine for Bhairava located next to the shrine for Viṣvaksena, the usual Vaiṣṇava *kṣetrapāla*. Radha Krishna notes that at this Bhairava shrine the priests give worshippers *vibhūti prasāda*, 'which may look as a rather strange phenomenon in this most orthodox Vaishnavite temple of the Thiruppathi'. He attributes it to an alleged influence of Lingāyats in the region (*Thirumalirunḱolaimalai*, pp. 172-74).
68. *Aḷakar Varuṇippu*, Madras: Śrī Makaḷ Company, n. d.
69. This twofold purpose is made explicit in a poem by Rāmacāmi Kavirāyar, *Tirumāliṛuṅcōlaimalai Periya Aḷakar Varuṇippu*, Madurai: Ji. Rāmacāmikōṇ, 1970. When he is about to leave on his journey, Aḷagar addresses his guard Kaṛuppannacāmi, 'In the coming full moon of *Citrā*, when the Dharma which has been bound expands, we will graciously set forth and give *mukti* to Māṇḍuka the Great Sage and bestow upon man a vision [of ourself].' (1.32) When the procession reaches Appantiruppati the poet makes the benefits of this vision clear: 'The Primordial Great Cause affectionately comes to Appantiruppati, removes the sinful deeds of the people who have seen him, and distributes sacred *tulasī* himself; Sundarāja, who is supremely pure, comes himself to the village, gives to the *bhakta*-s . . . rests there happily, and then ascends the palanquin and proceeds rapidly on.'
70. See J. S. M. Hooper, *Hymns of the Āḷvārs*, Calcutta: Y. M. C. A. Publishing House, 1929, pp. 14-15; and V. Srinivasan, 'Srivilliputtur History and Epigraphy', p. 107.
71. *Śrī Sutararājap Perumāḷin Caittirōtsavap Pattirikai*, Aḷakarkōvil: Śrī Kaḷḷalakar Dēvastānam, 1969, 1970.
72. See note 69. In addition to these poems, I have consulted Palapaṭṭatai Cōkanāta Piḷḷai, *Tirumāliṛuṅcōlaimalai Aḷakar Killaiviṭu Tūtu*, ed. by T. Caṅku Pulavar (Tirunelvēli: South India Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing House, 1967), a work of the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. I am greatly indebted to Dr. K. R. Sundararajan, Lecturer in Hindu Studies, Punjabi University, who has clarified many points about the *Aḷakar Varuṇippu*

and the enactment of the festival. He was born and raised in Madurai in a Vaṭakalai Śrī-Vaiṣṇava family connected to the Kūḍalalaḡar Temple within the old city, and he attended the journey festival as a child. When I observed the festival in 1968 I was given great assistance by Mr. V. Srinivasan, Professor of Physics at American College, Madurai. He belongs to a Tenkalai Śrī-Vaiṣṇava family and knows the festival well. When in doubt about certain points he asked his mother who provided several oral traditions. I wish to express my gratitude to both of these gentlemen for their very kind help.

73. The program notes that the Lord rests in the Kalyāṇa *maṇḍapa* and K. N. Radha Krishna (*Thirumalirunḡolaimalai*, p. 225) says that the 'first three days of the Chaitrothsavam' are performed in the Kōṭai Tirunāḡ *maṇḍapa* (*maṇḍapa* of the Sacred Day of the Hot Season, i. e., *Citrā* full moon).
74. 'Cuntarājamūrṭti velliyakkunḡramviṭṭu aḡḡivarukutaṅkē ātimūlanātan appanuṭa pallakku kāraik kiṅarkaṭantār naraciṅkamūrṭti kaḡḡarpayamē tīrntār', *Aḡakar Varuṅippu*, 7. Velliyakkunḡram is located by Baliga (*Madurai*, p. 405) as a village eight miles northeast of Madurai. The festival programs note that between his temple and Mūnumāvali (Tallākuḡam), Aḡagar stops of Koṅḡappa Nayakkar *maṇḍapa* Kaḡḡantiri, Appantiruppati and Maḡavar *maṇḍapa*.
75. Mr. V. Srinivasan, who gave me this information, noted that his uncle who has a house facing a temple tank in a Tamil Nadu town, was prevented from building a second story to it by the *agrahāra* community. The deity processed around the tank, and a second story would tempt people to watch the processions from a position higher than him. It is interesting to compare this absence of people on the roofs when receiving Aḡagar with the crowds of people on the roofs and balconies when watching the *ratha* procession of M-S. It is not at all clear to me why there is this difference in practice.
76. These *vrata*-s are variously described by Diehl (*Instrument and Purpose*, pp. 218-32); Dumont (*Une Sous-caste*, pp. 347-54); and Radha Krishna (*Thirumalirunḡolaimalai*, pp. 252, 269-71), who notes the fact that these *vrata*-s began at the beginning of the 'light half' of the month. When they performed for the *Āṭi* (July-August) festival at the Aḡagar Temple and are focused on the new moon, they begin on the first day of the 'dark half'.
77. N. K. Radha Krishna, *Thirumalirunḡolaimalai*, p. 269.
78. When I first saw this festival in 1962 I observed such men running in the *pradakṣiṅa* direction around the Perumāḡ Temple in Tallākuḡam where Aḡagar was sleeping, squirting the temple walls all the while.
79. Nelson (*Madura Country*, Pt. II, p. 60), writing in 1868, comments on the tradition that the low-caste status of the herdsmen was raised in the eyes of high-caste Hindus by the fact that Kṛṣṇa was raised among herdsmen: 'It is said by some that in ancient times men of this caste ranked only a little above Pareiyans, and that the Idei-chēri or Ideiyans' suburb was always situated close to the *Parei-chēri* or Pareiyans' suburb in every properly constituted village; but after the god Krishna was brought up by a cowherd, the caste rose in importance, and nowadays even 'brahmins will not hesitate to drink buttermilk received at the hands of an Ideiyan.' According to the

Śrī-Vaiṣṇava saint Periyālvār, Kṛṣṇa was raised in Tamilnad in the village of Tirukkōṭṭiyūr. See T. P. Meenakshisundaram, *A History of Tamil Literature Annamalaiagar*: Annamalai University, 1965, p. 145.

80. This information was obtained in an interview with a priest at Aḷagar Temple in 1970 conducted by William Harman.
- The Tamil Lexicon explains 'Nācciyār' as (i) lady; queen; mistress; (ii) goddess; (iii) the Vaiṣṇava female saint of Śrīvilliputtūr, i.e., Āṇṭāl. Nilakanta Sastri observes that it means 'the Lord's consort' and reflects the practice among Pāñcarātra Śrī-Vaiṣṇava-s of consecrating Āṇṭāl and other women devotees whom they believed attained the status of the Lord's consort by the practice of the *nāyikā-nāyaka* (loved and lover) type of bhakti. He says that this is an innovation 'unknown to the older and more conservative Vaikhānasa tradition' (*Development of Religion in South India*, p. 67).
81. J. Sharrock observed that 'at this festival the Kallans have the right of dragging with a rope the car of Alagarswāmi, though other people may join in later on'. Quoted by Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes*, Vol. III, pp. 85-86.
82. Mentioned in the poem, but not in the program.
83. In 1970 the entrance of Aḷagar into the riverbed on April 21 was delayed by two and one-half hours due to labor disputes on the part of the vehicle bearers. (*Cīpātan tāṅkiko!*: supporters of the sacred feet [of God]). According to an English-language newspaper report of that week, the delay was due to a refusal of the vehicle bearers to carry the image from the Kōṇār *maṇḍapa* in Gōripaḷaiyam to the river, because there were insufficient men. Among the four sections of bearers traditionally heir to the service of carrying Aḷagar from his temple to Vaṇḍiyūr and back, one section refused to do so because the weight of the load was too great. The other three sections refused to carry it without more assistance and the problem was not resolved until the police transported more men from the city to help. This news item was brought to my attention by William Harman.
84. *Census of India*, 1961, *Temples of Madras State*, Vol. VI, pp. 128-63. There are three Aḷagar temples in the Madurai area which should be studied for their interconnections—those of Kaḷḷaḷagar who resides on Aḷagarmalai, Kūḍalaḷagar who resides within old Madurai, and Kaṭṭaḷagar who resides in a small temple on a hill above Śrīvilliputtūr.
85. The first shaving of a child's head usually occurs within the first two or three years and is a popular *vrata* performed at the Aḷagar Temple throughout the year. See B. S. Baliga, *Madurai*, p. 100; and for tonsure and ear-piercing see C.G. Diehl, *Instrument and Purpose*, p. 185.
- 85a. Translated from Aḷakar *Varnippu* (Madras: Śrī Makal Company, n. d.), pp. 12f.
86. Radha Krishna describes this in the following (slightly incoherent) manner: '. . . and on the day of the Purnima when the Lord enters the river Vaigai at Madura these devotees, composed of all classes of people without any distinction of caste such as approachables or unapproachables, touchables or untouchables, gather at a certain Mandapam known as Ramaraya Mandapam and by pressing the bag of water syringe the water therein through the nozzle so that the water so forced out bathes the Lord, his Vahana and

- the Priest, when he in procession enters the said Mandapam. This generally goes on for 5 or 6 minutes. When thousands of bags are so syringed simultaneously from all around, the whole area would appear to have undergone a cloudburst as it were' (*Thirumalirunjolaimalai*, p. 269).
87. I owe the description of this whole ritual to Dr. Leonard Dart of Claremont Men's College, California, and to Mr. V. Srinivasan.
 88. The tradition at the Aḷagar Temple states that if the gold *utsava mūrti* of the Lord is bathed with any other water it will turn black. See Radha Krishna, *Thirumalirunjolaimalai*, p. 245.
 89. These rituals are called 'ekānta cēvai patti ulāvutal'.
 90. This event is not mentioned in the poem. The program says Aḷagar is there between 8 and 11 A. M.
 91. The *Periya Aḷakar Varuṇippu* by Rāmacāmi Kavirāyar lists the *avatāra*-s to be shown in the Rāmarāya *maṇḍapa* as Fish (Matsya), Tortoise (Kūrma), Boar (Vārāha), Man-Lion (Narasimha), Dwarf (Vāmana), Rāma with the Axe (Paraśurāma), Rāma of Ayodhya (Śrī Rāma), Kṛṣṇa's Elder Brother (Balarāma), Kṛṣṇa, and Mohinī, in that order.
 92. That was true in 1968 and 1969. The 1970 program lists the 'Rāmanāthapuram Rājā Setupati *maṇḍapa*' as the place where he stayed.
 93. The *Aḷakar Varuṇippu* does not mention this, but I was told that on his way back to the hill he stops again at the Kaḷlantiri *maṇḍapa* where he had first encountered the Kaḷḷar and had 'conquered' them. Here he allows the head of the Kaḷḷar community, an Ambalakkārar, to reach into one of the money chests and take out a handful of money. Nowadays, however, a ring is placed around his hand to limit the amount he can grasped (a sure sign of the Kali Yuga).
 94. Śrī-Vaiṣṇava non-brahmin ascetics (*tātar*) and devotees do process in the *ratha* procession for the wedding festival carrying umbrellas and fans. This was noted by Mr. William Harman who observed the festival in 1970. They may be connected with the Kūḍalaḷagar Temple, and their presence suggests the all-city nature of this festival. Whether Kūḍalaḷagar himself is understood to be present as well needs to be investigated.
 95. The parallel to Mīnākṣī as a figure connecting Viṣṇu with Śiva in the Vaiṣṇava myth is Mohinī, the embodiment of delusive lust. Viṣṇu assumed this guise for specific purposes in the past, one of which was sexual union with Śiva and the begetting of deities descending from both, such as Śāstā or Aiyānār. According to Vaiṣṇava myth, Śiva is inferior to Viṣṇu, for he is deluded by and trapped in lust because of Mohinī's form. This aspect of Mohinī's power over Śiva was pointed out to me by Śrī K. A. Venkaṭācāri of Triplicane, Madras, a Tenkalai Śrī-Vaiṣṇava scholar. It might be useful to explore further the connection, if any, in popular myth between Mohinī and Mīnākṣī.
 96. The pervasiveness of the myth is illustrated by Dr. K. R. Sundararājan who was told it by his father as an explanation for Aḷagar's journey, despite the fact that his father was quite learned in his own Śrī-Vaiṣṇava tradition. It is probably the only myth any 'outsider' hears about 'The *Cittirai* Festival'. In 1914, W. Francis (*Madura*, pp. 285-86) briefly outlined the popular story and then said, 'This has no canonical authority. There is no real connection between Aḷagar's journey and the wedding; and before Tirumala

Nāyakkan's reign they took place at different times, the former occurring in the month *Chittrai* (April-May) and the latter in *Māsi* (February-March). Tirumala combined the two for the convenience of the numerous pilgrims by fixing the wedding festival in *Chittrai*, in which month it still occurs.' But few have ever given any attention to this distinction. In 1916, for example, J. P. Jones related this popular version of his article, 'Madurai', in *Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (Vol. VIII, pp. 239-40) without any suggestion of its not being 'canonical'. Lowell Thomas visited Madurai about the year 1929 on the day Aḷagar entered the river and he gave this popular myth as the explanation (see *India: Land of the Black Pagoda*, New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1930, pp. 60-61). The same story was told in 1968 in an English-language newspaper in India (see N. Padmanabhan, 'Chithra Festival', *Sunday Standard Magazine Section*, 12 May, 1968), and refuted in a subsequent letter to the editor by G. Sundararaja Rao of Madurai who stated that Aḷagar's purpose is to bestow *mokṣa* on Maṇḍūka, not to attend the wedding.

97. When I visited the Śrī Virarāghava Perumāḷ Temple in Vaṇḍiyūr just prior to Aḷagar's arrival, several onlookers near the *garbhagrha* confirmed this tradition for me, including a brahmin lady who was embarrassed when telling me about it. There is no symbol anywhere, either in the temple or in its *garbhagrha*, indicating the Islamic identity of the Nācciyār with whom Aḷagar spends the night, but the tradition is popular and pervasive. It is probably connected with the Tulukka Nācciyār tradition of the Śrīraṅgam Temple about eighty miles to the north. According to the traditional history of the Śrīraṅgam Temple, when 'Turks' (Tulukka, Turuṣka) connected with the Delhi Sultanate plundered the temple in 1310-1311 A. D. they carried the image of Perumāḷ and his consort back to Delhi. There the daughter of the Sultan (Sultāni) took the Perumāḷ image to play with and kept it in her bedroom. The Lord stayed there for two years, 'capriciously playing with the Sultāni . . . , in the form of an idol, during the day time and in His Vibhava manifestation, in the night, in all splendour'. Finally, his temple servants retrieved him and took him back to the South. Sultāni pursued them, suffering from her separation from the Lord, but died before she could find him. After Perumāḷ was restored in his image form within the Śrīraṅgam Temple he ordered that a room be built for her, that her picture be painted on the wall, and that daily offerings be given to himself and to her according to the style of food served in Delhi. The shrine is there today and the picture shows 'a seated Hindu goddess with buds held in her two hands' (see V. N. Hari Rao, *Kōil Olugu: The Chronicle of the Srirangam Temple with Historical Notes*, Madras: Rochouse and Sons Private Ltd., 1961, pp. 24-31, 33; and V. N. Hari Rao, *The Śrīraṅgam Temple: Art and Architecture*, Tirupati: The Sri Venkateswara University, 1967, p. 104.
98. See, for example, *Īśvara-samhitā*, XI:314-72, which describes the ceremony for bathing an image in a *tīrtha* at the end of a festival (*avabhṛtha*), in this case on the ninth day.
99. One source said his purification took forty-eight days, but I do not know to what this might refer.
100. See *Īśvara-samhitā*, XII:34-51, for a description of such a 'mock battle'.

101. See *Census of India*, 1961, *Madras: Fairs and Festivals*, pp. 493, 495.
- 101a. Further consideration of this popular myth can be found in my article, "Śiva, Mīnākṣī, Viṣṇu—Reflections on a Popular Myth in Madurai," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. XIV, No. 1 (March, 1977), pp. 107-18.
102. A. Ki. Parantāmānar, 'Tirumalai Nāyakkar Tiruppanikal 1623-1659', in P. T. Rajan (ed.), *Madurai . . . Souvenir*, pp. 91-95. Similar information is given by Francis, *Madura*, Vol. I, p. 273. Unfortunately, neither scholar cites his sources for this information.
103. This may have been the 'Maṇḍala-utsava' which is celebrated today in *Māci* and during which honors are paid to the forms (*murti*) of Candrasekhara, Vināyaka, Murukan, Caṇḍeśvara and Nandideva. See Nī. Cī. Cuntararāman, 'Maturait Tiruviḷakkal', in P.T. Rajan (ed.), *Madurai . . . Souvenir*, pp. 180, 182.
104. See Radha Krishna, *Thirumalirunjolaimalai*, p. 91, for the reference to this meeting. The dating of Garuḍa Vāhana Paṇḍita's *Divya Sūri Caritā* is derived from the fact that Pinpaḷakiya Perumāl Jīyar used it as one of his sources for his Maṇipravāḷa work, *Kuruparāmparapṛāvam*, and he lived at the end of the thirteenth century according to Mu. Aruṇācalam, *Tamiḷ Ilakkiya Varalāru: Patinmūṇṇam Nūṇṇaṇṇu* (Tiruccirampalam: Kānti Vittiyālayam, 1970), p. 348. See also Pinpaḷakiya Perumal Jīyar, *Āṇṇyirappati Kuruparamparāpṛāvam*, Patippācīriyar: Sri Kirusnasvāmī Ayyaṅkār. Zāvatu Patippu (Tirucci, 1975), p. 412, n. 52 and *passim*.
105. Cokkanāta Piḷḷai, *Aḷakar Kilḷaiṇṇu Tūtu*, p. 66. Of the 480 lines of the poem 84 (lines 286-375) relate to the journey festival. This same information about the shift from the village of Tēnūr to the Tēnūr maṇḍapa was also given in a letter to the editor of the *Sunday Standard Magazine Section*, 12 May, 1968. The journey by Aḷagar to the Vaigai is probably a local example of the portion of Śrī-Vaiṣṇava festivals called the 'amusement of saving a devotee' (*bhaktasantrāṇalilā*). Viṣṇu's act of mercy towards the elephant Gajendra, who was caught by a crocodile, is a common example of this. During the *Citrā* festival at the Śrīraṅgam Temple, in fact, the god is processed on the full moon day to a maṇḍapa on the bank of the Kāvēri River and ceremonies there re-enact Gajendramokṣa. See Hari Rao, *The Śrīraṅgam Temple*, p. 134, and *Īśvara samhitā*, XI:313.
106. B. S. Baliga, *Madurai*, p. 405, and N. K. Radha Krishna, *Thirumalirunjolaimalai*, pp. 41-42 and 208.
107. N. K. Radha Krishna, *Thirumalirunjolaimalai*, pp. 49-50; and K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958, p. 294.
108. Milton Singer makes this distinction in his analysis of the 'cultural performance' in *When a Great Tradition Modernizes*, New York: Praeger, 1971, p. 240 ff.
109. This kinship system is described by Alan R. Beals as it is found in one South Indian village; see *Gopalpur: A South Indian Village*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1962, pp. 24-28.
110. For a description of matrilineal societies and their structural tensions, see David M. Schneider and Kathleen Gough (eds.), *Matrilineal Kinship*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967, pp. 1-29. This angle

of approach was first suggested to me by Louis Dumont's comment about the stress on renewed affinity in the South Indian kinship system, which 'is illustrated in the well-known iconographic motif of the great Brahmanical temples, which show Vishnu giving his sister in marriage to Shiva: a pair of brothers-in-law is there made to sum up Hinduism as a whole (in Madura and elsewhere)'. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, VIII (October 1965), p. 93.

111. The connection of harmony, ceremony, and prosperity in Hindu life is described by Alan R. Beals, *Gopalpur*, pp. 54-57.
112. During the Aḷagar festival, social harmony is often disrupted by groups contending with each other about which should receive the *prasāda* of Aḷagar before the other, earlier reception of *Prasāda* reflecting a position of primacy (*mutalmāi*) in the hierarchical rank of those present. At least one fight broke out in a *maṇḍapa* where Aḷagar was to be received in 1968. Dumont notes that the *mutalmāi* honor is much sought after and that there is a proverbial tendency in the great Hindu temples of South India to develop conflicts and law suits because of it (see *Une Sous-caste*, p. 318).

CHRONOMETRY, COSMOLOGY AND THE FESTIVAL CALENDAR IN THE MURUKAN CULT

Fred W. Clothey

TIME AND ITS measure are important dimensions of ritual observance throughout Hinduism. Chronometry does not only dramatize the relationship of religious man and his world to bodies that are extraterrestrial. The dividing of the cosmic rhythm into measurable units also serves to focus in manageable segments the character of that rhythm itself. Each segment of time thereby becomes a microcosm of the cosmic rhythm, and appropriate junctures within that segment become 'tempocosms' or points of access to the larger dimensions of existence. The beginning, apex, and end of various segments, for example, are such tempocosms since they serve as points of breakthrough to the larger process of the cosmic rhythm; they illustrate and reproduce on a miniature scale the beginning, apex, and end of cosmic cycles. The measure of time and the ritual observances which occur at important tempocosms thus reflect a basic cosmology or vision of the world, at least for those for whom the pattern is intelligible.

To outline aspects of that chronometric pattern and, in the process, to suggest ways sacred time intimates a basic cosmology is the intent of this essay. We choose to examine the pattern as it is apparent in a particular Śaiva cult popular in Tamil Nadu—the cult of Murukan, known also as Skanda, Subrahmanya, Kumāra, and Kārttikeya.¹ The chronometric pattern of ritual as practised within this cult in Tamil Nadu is particularly suggestive. To what extent other religious communities participate in similar patterns is left for the reader to ponder over and decide.

At the outset, it is useful to note that Murukan-Skanda has traditionally had special associations with time and season. Myths and allusions to the deity in both Tamil and Sanskrit literature refer to this association. Tamil references point out that Murukan presided over the coming of the rains and the blossoming of such trees as *vēnkai*, *kāntal*, and mango. The *Paripāṭal*, for example,

a work variously ascribed to a period spanning from the late third to the early fifth centuries A.D., describes in more than one extensive hymn (*Paripāṭal* 6, 7, 10) the coming of the monsoon and the concomitant flooding and fecundation of the earth as the coming of Murukaṅ with his entourage of elephants and army. The association with time is even more explicit in Epic mythology, and particularly in the myth of *Mahābhārata* III: 223-32. Herein we read that Skanda is born on *amāvāsyā* (the new-moon day) when sun and moon are conjoined; his birth is equated to the rising of the sun; and he is suckled by the Kṛttika maidens, whom he later sends into the heavens to become a constellation by which time would thereafter be measured. Indra declares Skanda to be the lord of time and a new era of chronometry to have been initiated.²

However one interprets the meaning of this Epic allusion, it does intimate that by the late Epic period the worship of Skanda is cognizant of at least two elements of the *pañcāṅga*—namely, the notion of *tithi*-s, or stages of the moon's waxing and waning; and of *nakṣatra*-s, or lunar asterisms or regions of the sky through which the moon passes during its orbit. Skanda is, at the same time, associated with the movement of the sun in the heavens and his career homologized to the cycle of the moon. Further, as made explicit by the early references in Tamil literature, Murukaṅ is associated with the blossoming of certain trees and the coming of the rain, that is, with the agricultural and seasonal cycle. All of these elements continue to be reflected in the ritual times which the contemporary cultus of Murukaṅ celebrates.

The Daily Calendar

Before coming to the solar, lunar, and seasonal calculations around which the festival calendar is scheduled, it would be useful to look at the temporal structure of the ritual day. The ritual pattern—not only during festivals but throughout the year—includes a daily cycle of sacred hours (*tirukkālam*). Most Śaiva temples share this schedule or variations of this schedule of *tirukkālaṅkaḷ*.³ All Śaiva temples observe some of these periods, though apparently no temple observes them all. This daily cycle is made explicitly homologous to the solar year in some temples, as we shall discuss briefly.

Three sacred periods (*tirukkālaṅkaḷ*) fall after midnight and

before the pre-dawn hours: *pūtarāttiri* (Skt.: *bhūtarātri*—life's night or the night of earth); *kālarātri* (Skt.: *kālarātri*—nighttime) and *mahānici* (Skt.: *mahāniśi*—great darkness). Very seldom, if ever, are these nighttime periods observed in Śaiva temples. That very inactivity suggests that the periods represent a time of cosmic darkness and inactivity.

There follows a series of significant periods: One of the most important is the *ucākālam* (Skt.: *uṣaḥkāla*—daybreak or dawn). This is the period extending from some two hours before dawn up to the rising of the sun, roughly 4:00 or 4:30 to 6:00 A.M. For most Śaiva temples this is the time for the first *pūjā* and often includes the ritual of rousing the deity from the bed chamber (*tiruppaḷḷi elucci*). The *tiruppaḷḷi elucci* is related to an ancient custom in which damsels arose early in the morning and sang while parading through the streets. It is frequently followed by the *viśvarūpa* (omnipresent form), in which the icon is explicitly identified with the cosmos and is symbolically made to encompass the universe. In the ritual performed an association is depicted between the dawn of the day, the start of the deity's daily life, and the creation of the cosmos.

Four morning periods follow which depict the growing dynamism of the cosmos: *Pirātaḥkālam* (Skt.: *prātaḥkāla*—daybreak) is the period shortly after sunrise, between approximately 6:30 and 7:15 A.M. This period is observed with rituals in those temples which observe only six *pūjā*-s a day. *Kālamattyacanti* (Skt.: *kālamadhyasandhi*—junction of the middle time) is approximately 7:30-9:00 A.M. and is the 'halfway house' between dawn and mid-morning. *Vittyakālacanti* (Skt.: *Vidiyakālasandhi*) comes between 9:00 and 9:30 A.M. and is followed by *mattyacanti* (Skt.: *madhyasandhi*—mid-morning or, literally, the 'time of the middle'). The latter occurs generally around 10:00 A.M., but may, in some temples, come as late as 11:00 A.M. Virtually all temples observe this latter period, even those which observe only four periods a day.

The next sacred period is *mattyānam* (Skt.: *madhyāhna*—noon). An important symbolic hour observed by almost all Śaiva temples, *mattyānam* represents the zenith of the day and marks the culmination of the ritual observances of the daytime. There follows a period of ritual abstinence when for three hours no significant *pūjā* is observed. The dark side of the day is said to start when the sun 'enters' the western skies.

In the evening, three more periods follow. *Cayaṅkālam* (Skt.: *sāyamkāla*—evening) falls between 4:30 and 6:30 P.M. Like the dawn, mid-morning, and noon, this is a significant period celebrated by almost all Śaiva temples, even those which can afford to observe only four of the periods. As with other periods, the approach of dusk is a tempocosm which suggests the cyclicity of the cosmos; darkness is homologous to the waning fortnight of the lunar cycle, to the winter half of the earth's journey around the sun, and to the primordial and chaotic dimensions of the cosmos. Nighttime rituals follow that are designed to bring to a full circle the daily calendar. *Rāttiricanti* (Skt.: *rātrisandhi*—junction or time of night) or *irākkālam* (nighttime) follows around 7:30-9:30 P.M. The final sacred period of the day is the *arttacāman* (Skt.: *ardhajamam*—half-night). The hour which falls between 9:45 and 10:30 P.M. is highlighted in many temples by the ritual of the *paḷḷiyārai* (bed-chamber), also known as *ēkāntam* (privacy), when the deity is put to rest and the ritual day ends.

While these sacred periods are prescribed in the *Śaivāgama*-s, not all Śaiva temples of Murukaṅ observe them all, as indicated. At Tiruchendur, for example, nine of the ritual periods are kept, with only the three hours of the early morning neglected; at Tirupparaṅkunram, seven of the *pūjā*-s are observed with two of the mid-morning times being omitted. Most Śaiva temples observe six *pūjā*-s a day: dawn, early morning, mid-morning, noon, early evening, and late night; but in smaller temples only four hours are observed, with the post-dawn and post-dusk rituals usually omitted. It should also be stressed that these hours are universally Śaivite. Virtually no priest or scholar within the Murukaṅ tradition considers the observance of these daily sacred periods to be unique to his tradition.

In discussing the cycle of daily times that are ritually significant, one must add that certain further elements determine the significance of these periods. One of these is the alleged influence of various asterisms, particularly the 'sub-planets', Rāhu and Gulika. Rāhu, for example, is considered to be a demonic force whose influence each day at particular hours must be countered or avoided⁴, while Gulika's influence is benevolent and is believed to enhance the sacrality of hours when it is dominant. Astrologers have charted the times when these two asterisms are influential each day. Rāhu is believed to be influential especially at these

times : Sunday, 4:30-6:00 P.M.; Monday, 7:30-9:00 A.M.; Tuesday, 3:00-4:30 P.M.; Wednesday, 12:00-1:00 P.M.; Thursday, 1:30-3:00 P.M.; Friday, 10:30-12:00 A.M.; and Saturday, 9:00-10:30 A.M. Gulika's hours of special influence are said to be Sunday, 3:00-4:30 P.M.; Monday, 1:30-3:00 P.M.; Tuesday 12:00-1:30 P.M.; Wednesday, 10:30-12:00 A.M.; Thursday, 9:00-10:30 A.M.; Friday 7:30-9:00 A.M., and Saturday, 6:00-7:30 A.M.⁵

Another factor which is important in calculating sacred times during a day is the *lagna* or position of the earth vis-à-vis the zodiac. Just as a particular sign of the zodiac is said to be dominant in each month, so, in a given day, as the earth rotates, a particular sign of the zodiac is said to be important—namely, that one which appears first on the eastern horizon. Such rituals in a temple as flag raisings and lowerings and sacred marriages will be held at the time that the appropriate constellation dominates. Each of these periods, when combined with other calculations, such as the influence of Rāhu and Gulika, become known as a sacred *muhūrta* the *muhūrta* extends for a period of one-and-one-half hours. An auspicious *muhūrta*, for example, must be found to perform a couple's wedding. The sign of the bridegroom determines the sign which must preside during the *muhūrta* in which a wedding may occur. Only those signs which occur between 4:00 A.M. and 12:00 noon may be considered, as after 12:00 noon the sun is no longer in the eastern sky. Hence, a couple may wait for several months to be married until the correct sign appears in the eastern horizon between 4:00 A.M. and 12:00 noon.⁶

We shall return to the religious significance of the daily schedule in due course, but, for now, it is enough to suggest that the ritual cycle is repeated faithfully in the temple every day of the year with the main icon of the temple serving as the focal point. At points in the day—for example, at the dawn *pūjā* when *tirupallī elucci* (rousing of the god) is performed—it is apparent that the day's temporal cycle is homologous to a day in the life of the god. Further, the day is explicitly homologized, particularly at such junctures as dawn, mid-morning, noon, and dusk, with the cycle of the solar year. And, moreover, because of the symbolic association of dawn with creation and dusk with the advent of cosmic night, the day epitomizes the cyclic rhythm of the cosmos itself. We shall explore these relationships later but move now to a description of those larger cycles, of which the day is a part.

The Lunar Cycle

The importance of lunar chronometry in the cultus of Murukan is unquestionable. Beyond the pan-Hindu character of lunar calculations on the ritual calendar, Murukan-Skanda has been mythologically associated with the moon in special ways. We have observed that Skanda was born on *amāvāsyā*, the new-moon day ; he came to youthful manhood and overcame the troublesome *asura*-s on *ṣaṣṭhī* day, the day of the sixth stage of the moon in its waxing fortnight. Thus, the waxing of the moon is homologized in several ways to the career of Murukan. So close is this association between moon and Murukan that it has moved N. Subramaniam to suggest the cult of Murukan may, in fact, have originated as a cult of the moon in the Middle East.⁷ While we cannot rule out the possibility of Epic India being influenced by Middle Eastern sources, it seems more likely to me that the emergence of Skanda as a prominent deity for such Epic dynasties as the Śakas and Guptas and the growing significance of lunar calculations in chronometry were happening conjointly and perhaps, at first, even coincidentally in the period between the Mauryan and Śakan dynasties. Whatever the sources of lunar chronometry and its relationship to the Skanda-Murukan cult, we can affirm the following points:

1. Lunar chronometry is used on regnal inscriptions for the first time by the Śātavāhanas during the first century A.D. These inscriptions (unlike the inscriptions of Aśoka, or of the Śuṅgas, Kāṇvas, and Kaliṅgas, all of whom used the seasonal solar year) make reference to *pakṣa* (fortnight) and *tithi* (lunar stage).⁸
2. The Śaka inscriptions, unlike the Śātavāhana inscriptions, mention the names of months rather than seasons, and these names have lunar rather than seasonal connotations, apparently given because each month received the name of the asterism which presided on or near the full moon. The Śaka inscriptions also mention the two fortnights: *bahula* (dark) and *suddha* (light). More references to the *tithi* are found in Śaka inscriptions than in Śātavāhana inscriptions.⁹ The conclusion is difficult to resist that lunar chronometry comes of age in those centuries of the Epic period just preceding the

Gupta period and that the luni-solar calendar is operative in India by that time.

3. From coins and seals, we know that Skanda was a significant deity for princes of the Yaudheya, Kuṣāṇa, Śaka, Ikṣvāku, and Gupta dynasties.¹⁰ It is more than likely, then, that lunar calculations were used in the ritual life of the cultus of Skanda by the time of the late Epic period.
4. The significance of the moon was at least commented on in early Tamil civilization, and to some extent the *tithi* was used. The *Purānanūru*, a Tamil work of about the second century A.D., observes the moon situated amid the stars (cantos 13 and 396). In canto 400, lines 1 and 2, the same work mentions the fifteenth *tithi*. It seems likely that lunar measurement was operative to some degree in early Tamil society.

Be that as it may, the lunar cycle is an important determinant in the festival life of Śaivism today, especially in rural Tamil Nadu, and in the Murukaṅ cultus. Of particular significance is the concept of the *tithi* or stage in the lunar cycle. The *tithi* is literally a segment of the sun's reflection on the moon, as the latter is in orbit. Each fortnight is divided into fifteen *tithi*-s or graded segments of light (though the moon's orbit is actually 29.53059 days).¹¹ Four such stages are especially important in temples dedicated to Murukaṅ in Tamil Nadu today.

Amāvācai: The first *tithi* is the new moon itself (*amāvācai* or Skt.: *amāvāsyā*).¹² The new moon constitutes the start of a new unit of time. It is said that Brahmā started the creation process on a new moon day, a day which was therefore called a *yugādi* (the beginning of a *yuga*).¹³ The new-moon day serves as the beginning of the ritual month in the Telugu year, though in the Tamil year the month starts when the sun enters a new sign of the zodiac. In the cultus of Murukaṅ, however, *amāvāsyā* also coincides with the 'birth' of the deity. Certain new moon days become particularly crucial throughout Śaivism in Tamil Nadu when they coincide with important junctures of the solar year or the seasonal-agricultural calendar.

Tai amāvāsyā in January-February and *Āṭi amāvāsyā* in July-August are significant new-moon days, usually accompanied by ritual bathing and other purification ceremonies of a special order.

They are the new moons of the first full months after the winter and summer solstices respectively and constitute the lunar beginnings of the bright and dark halves of the solar year. At the same time, these new moons relate to the agricultural season, as in January-February the winter rice crops have just been harvested and in July-August the summer rains have come and the new crops recently planted. These two new-moon days, therefore, are popularly celebrated perhaps more than any other by pilgrimages to sacred waters where ritual bathing and other forms of purification are observed. These ceremonies will be observed in *Tai* and *Āṭi* months even in those brahmin homes which do not take the other new-moon days as seriously as orthodox brahmins do.

In addition, each year there occurs at least once, and more likely three times, a phenomenon known as the *potayāna* new moon.¹⁴ Most days are divided into sixty *nālikai*-s, or periods of twenty-four minutes. But for the purpose of intercalation—to synchronize the lunar and solar months—some days of sixty-four *nālikai*-s are calculated. When these longer days fall at the time of the new moon, it becomes known as a *potayāna* new moon, after a *ṛṣi* who is said to have first noticed the phenomenon. These *potayāna* new-moon days are observed at some temples, such as at Paḷaṇi, but not necessarily with rituals of an unusual kind. It means primarily there are a few extra minutes of special significance in which rituals appropriate to the new moon may be carried out.

Each year there is a *mahālaya amāvācai* which falls late in the month of *Purattāci* (September-October) or early in *Aippaci* (October-November). Literally, the term means the new moon of the great immigration and is characterized traditionally by the visitation of the *pitṛ*-s or manes. The start of this lunar cycle is a day of special penitence, falling as it does just after the autumnal equinox and representing the start of the 'winter' and 'nighttime' months. The new-moon day is accompanied in Śaiva temples, by fasting and exchange of vows particularly by women. The *Navarāttiri* festival—the festival of nine nights—follows immediately. In this particular cycle of the moon, and no other, the ninth *tithi* or Mahāravamī (the great ninth stage of the moon) assumes importance in Śaiva temples and is marked by consecration of books by the learned and of tools by laborers. Then in the dark fortnight (*mahālaya pakṣa*) of the lunar cycle of this month, originally called Bhādrapada, the manes are said to visit. Lights are lighted to show the ancestors back to their

world. It is from this early practice that the festival of *Tīpāvali* has developed.¹⁵

Finally, the new moon of *Aippaci* (October-November), which immediately follows the *mahālaya pakṣa* (the fortnight of the great immigration) and which follows the last day of *Tīpāvali*, serves an important function in the cultus of Murukan. It precedes the first day of the Skanda-Ṣaṣṭhī festival, during which the birth, maturation and triumph over the *asura* is ritually re-enacted. That new-moon day becomes not only the day of Murukan's conception, as we shall argue later, it also becomes a virtual midnight of the ritual year in the cultus of Murukan.

Ṣaṣṭhī: A second *tithi* or lunar stage important to the cultus is *ṣaṣṭhī*, the sixth stage of the waxing moon. *Ṣaṣṭhī* takes its name from the goddess Ṣaṣṭhī, mentioned in several Epic texts. Ṣaṣṭhī was one of the malevolent attendants of Skanda, who was a giver of lingering (*yaspa*) diseases. The *Devībhāgavata Purāṇa* (IX:46) says she is called Ṣaṣṭhī because she is the sixth part of Prakṛti. The same text suggests she is the deity presiding over children, a spouse to Skanda, also known as Devasenā, and grants progeny to the childless. On the sixth day after childbirth her worship is to be performed in the *Sutikāgrha*.¹⁶ Ṣaṣṭhī apparently came to personify all the goddesses and forces believed to cause diseases of the mother and child, and particularly such as whose favor was sought on the sixth day of the child's life. From this background, the sixth day of the lunar cycle on which Skanda conquered the *asura* is known as *ṣaṣṭhī*.

This mythical slaying of the demons by Skanda-Murukan is remembered every month on the *Ṣaṣṭhī tithi*. It assumes special significance in the festival of Skanda-Ṣaṣṭhī. The day and the event re-enacted on it celebrate the triumph of Skanda-Murukan over the cosmic forces of evil and personal malaise.

Piratōṣam: A third lunar calculation with significance in all Śaiva temples including those of Murukan is *piratōṣam* (Skt.: *pradōṣa*), a period falling on the thirteenth *tithi* after the new or full moon. Actually, the term *piratōṣam* refers to a time of the day: it is a period of three *nālikai* or units of twenty-four minutes divided by the sunset two evenings before the new or full moon.¹⁷

The basic myth behind the significance of *piratōṣam* is that an *asura* named Taṇṭan, after faithful observance of *tapas* and *pūjā*,

implored Śiva to grant a vision of himself. Śiva, it is said, told him that he would grant a vision during the *muhūrta* in which the sunset fell on the thirteenth *tithi* of the moon.

Thus, each *piratōṣam* serves as a time for penitence, frequently accompanied by ritual bathing, preparatory to the coming juncture of the lunar cycle. As with other lunar events, *piratōṣam* becomes particularly important when it falls at times significant according to other chronometric techniques. For example, two *piratōṣaṅkal* stand out as having special importance: the first of these occurs in the month of *Māci* (February-March) just prior to the last new moon before the spring equinox. In this context, the *piratōṣam* becomes associated with the observance of *mahācivarāttiri* (the great night of Śiva) when all Śaiva temples encourage penitential acts. The second especially important *piratōṣam* occurs in the dark fortnight of the lunar cycle in the month of *Aippaci* (October-November) in the context of the *Tīpāvali* celebrations. This *piratōṣam* is associated with the *naraka caturttaci*. The *naraka caturttaci* is related to the appeasing of Yama on the fourteenth day of the dark half of this month, known as *Aśvina* in northern India. According to the *Bhaviṣyottara Purāṇa*, persons afraid of the nether region known as Naraka take an oil bath and perform *tarpaṇa* to Yama or light lamps to avoid Naraka.¹⁸ In time, *naraka caturttaci* became associated with Viṣṇu's slaying of the *asura* Naraka. To this day, this *piratōṣam* is celebrated in such Murukaṅ temples, as that at Paḷaṅi, by bathing in sacred waters. The new moon which follows is a significant one not only in the Murukaṅ cultus but still serves as a new-year day for merchants, and also is celebrated in portions of North India.¹⁹

The Full Moon (*paurṇamī*)

The *paurṇamī* or full moon is important in all orthodox Śaiva temples. In the lunar cycle, the full moon served a variety of functions. It was on the basis of the full moon and, specifically, the asterism in whose house the full moon was located, that some of the months were given their names. For example, *Caitra* and *Vaiśākha* were names given to months because the star groups known as *Citrā* and *Viśākhā* were those suitable or in appropriate locations when the moon was full in a particular month of the year.²⁰ Further, in some parts of northwestern India, the months are still reckoned from full moon

to full moon, a practice which apparently occurred even in Vedic times.²¹ However, in Tamil ritual, and particularly in the cultus of Murukan, the full moon connotes completion, fulfillment, and total maturity. It is on or near the full moon that the climatic functions of most festivals occur. Insofar as the lunar cycle is homologized to the cosmic rhythm, the full moon connotes the zenith of the cosmic cycle, and in its association with the Murukan cultus, in which the waxing of the moon and the career of the deity are explicitly homologized, the full moon suggests the deity's attainment of full maturity and powers.

As with other lunar moments, full moons assume particular significance when they conjoin with sacred moments in other measures of time. In particular, it is the conjunction of full moon, appropriate asterism, and appropriate portion of the solar year that determines when a festival is held. We shall discuss these special full moons and the festival calendar in due course, when the cycle of stellar and solar calculations are being described.

Other Lunar Moments

Before leaving the concept of lunar cyclicity, we should note that certain other *tithi*-s are celebrated within the Murukan cultus by virtue of its participating significantly in the chronometry of Śaivism. We have already mentioned that once a year, during the first full lunar cycle after the autumnal equinox, the *navamī* or ninth stage after the new moon is celebrated as Mahānavamī or ninth night of the *Navarāttiri* festival, when *pūjā* to Sarasvatī and to the tools and instruments of one's trade is performed. Similarly, during the last lunar cycle prior to the autumnal equinox, the *caturthī* or fourth stage of the moon is celebrated as the 'birthday' of Gaṇeśa and becomes known as *Vināyaka caturthī*.²²

Another dimension of lunar calculation, which is a part of the *pañcāṅga* or five-fold ritual calendar, but not particularly significant in the calculation of temple festivals, is the *karāṇa* or half-*tithi*. There are sixty *karāṇa*-s in a lunar month, and because they are only half *tithi*-s they need no special calculations. The *karāṇa* is used in fixing auspicious times for marriage or agricultural operations. Further, the *karāṇa*-s which commence with the fourteenth *tithi* of the dark fortnight and continue into the bright fortnight are useful in measuring off the new-moon period.²³

The Cycle of Asterisms (*nakṣatra-s*)

So the moon is an important element in the measuring of ritual time not only within the Tamil cultus of Murukan but also within Hinduism as a whole. But we move now to a different form of chronometry, dependent nonetheless on the movement of the moon in orbit around the earth. This is known as the cycle of asterisms or *nakṣatra-s*. The *nakṣatra-s* were determined by observation of the path of the moon in the heavens. It was noted in due time that nearly once in twenty-seven days the moon came to practically the same point in its path, so that the path could be divided into twenty-seven parts marked by prominent stars or star-groups. The precise history of this method of reckoning time is unclear. T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal insists that this system is known and used in the R̥g Vedic period, on the basis of a passage in *R̥g Veda* (X:85-13) which, he suggests, shows that individual days derived their names from the asterism in which the moon is found on that particular day.²⁴ Similarly, passages in the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* (XIX:2.1.3 and V:1) suggest that the lunar months were named on the basis of the asterisms near which the respective full moons occurred.²⁵ Further, inscriptions of the Aśokan reign do include an occasional reference to *nakṣatra* days.²⁶ On the other hand, Y. Subbaralu states that of the *pañcāṅga* elements only the *tithi* had come into regular use prior to 500 A.D. Indeed, references to the *nakṣatra* system occur very infrequently in Śātavāhana, early Śaka, and Gupta inscriptions. However, in the regnal era, which became known as the Vikrama era by the eighth century A.D. and became popular in Rajasthan and western Madhya Pradesh, the *nakṣatra* is mentioned now and then.²⁷ During the Śaka era, as used in the Bombay-Karnatak area, the *nakṣatra-s* are mentioned irregularly after the eighth century.²⁸ Eastern Cālukya inscriptions mention the *nakṣatra-s* rather regularly; and in Tamil Nadu a Ganga inscription in Salem, attributable to the Śaka year 693, and an increasing number of Pāṇṭiyan and Cōlan inscriptions after the tenth century mention the *nakṣatra-s*.²⁹ The conclusion that *nakṣatra-s* do not become a significant measure of time until after the Gupta period is difficult to escape. At the least, it seems unlikely that all twenty-seven *nakṣatra-s* were known and utilized before the Epic period; as such, asterisms as Kṛttikās and Viśākhā are phenomena which come into prominence only in the Epic period.³⁰

Whatever the date that the *nakṣatra*-s become important in chronometry, they are associated with the Skanda cultus in Epic mythology and are an important dimension of the contemporary ritual calendar. On the day of each asterism a significant event or events is believed to have happened which is remembered and re-enacted each time the day of that asterism returns. These mythical events often vary for each deity, so the cultus of each deity may observe certain *nakṣatra*-s in unique ways. Further, each asterism is believed to have certain powers which make its influence on the day of its prominence particularly effective for the occurrence of good or ill. Particular asterisms are important in determining the sacrality of the Śaiva ritual year and of the festival life of the cultus of Murukan.

Kārttikai (Skt.: Kṛttikā): Two *nakṣatra*-s are of particular significance in the Murukan cultus; these are Kārttikai and Vicākam. Kārttikai is the most important of these two, as it is celebrated popularly each month. Kārttikai is the third *nakṣatra* in the series, and it was this one which was sent into the heavens by Skanda after his triumph over the *asura*-s. The Kṛttikās were the six maidens that suckled the six infants who were eventually integrated into the one deity Skanda. Commonly, Skanda is said to be the son of the Kṛttikās, as in the name Kārttikeya. Celebrations on Kārttikai day thus commemorate Skanda's coming into being, his being nurtured to maturity, and his lordship over time. In popular imagination, Kārttikai is called the 'birthday' of Murukan.

While Kārttikai is celebrated each month, once a year the celebration takes on particularly significant proportions. In the month of *Kārttikai* (November-December), which takes its name from the fact that the asterism Kārttikai falls on or near the full moon, the one or two-day celebration of *Tirukkārttikai* occurs. In addition to its association with Skanda's relation to the Kṛttikās, there is some evidence that *Tirukkārttikai* is associated with an ancient Tamil festival of lights. Miss R. Champalakshmi has suggested that references to the lighting of lamps in such early Tamil works as the *Kār Narpaṭu* (26:1), *Kaḷavali Narpaṭu* (17:3), *Ākanānuru* (141:8, 11), and *Jīvakacintāmaṇi* are to a practice still observed, not so much at Tīpāvali as at Tirukkārttikai; for it includes the lighting of lamps on hills in a manner still done, for example, in Tiruvannāmalai Tīpam and the lighting of rows of lamps commonly done at

Tirukkārttikai.³¹ We shall return to the significance of this occasion in the context of the solar year.

Vicākam (Skt.: Viśākhā): The asterism *Vicākam*, the sixteenth in the cycle, is said to have been presiding on the day of integration when Skanda became one being from several diverse heritages. As such, *Vicākam* is also said to be the 'birthday' of Skanda.³² More precisely *Viśākhā* is associated with Skanda in the Epic myths as one who springs from the side of Skanda and is depicted on several seals of the Epic period as standing besides Skanda. Such scholars as D. R. Bhandarkar and V. Raghavan have suggested that *Viśākhā* is one of several folk deities of the Epic period who are eventually integrated into the one deity Skanda.³³

The observance of *Vicākam* is not so universal in *Murukan* temples as that of *Kārttikai*, but some temples do observe the day in each month. But once a year in the month of *Vaikāci* (May-June), which takes its name from the asterism, the *Vicākam* asterism falls or or near the full moon and the day becomes the climax of the *Vasanta Vicākam* festival. In that festival, among other things, the deity's birth and ascendancy to a place of supremacy amongst the gods is re-enacted.

Cittirai (Skt.: Citrā): Three other asterisms assume importance in the cultus of *Murukan*, as in Śaivism as a whole, but not because of unique associations with Skanda-*Murukan*. For example, the asterism *Cittirai* lends its name to the month, *Cittirai* (April-May), which serves as the first month of the Tamil year. Accordingly, the first lunar cycle which falls in that month—the first full month after the vernal equinox—is the first lunar cycle of the year as is climaxed by the *Cittirai paurṇamī* (full moon of *Cittirai*), on or near which the *nakṣatra* *Cittirai* also falls. According to one myth, a curse placed on the sun by a *ṛṣi* was relieved on *Cittirai paurṇamī*,³⁴ and hence the new year is said to start at that time. However, while the new moon of that lunar cycle does mark the start of the Telugu new year, the Tamil new year starts not on the new-moon day, nor on the full moon day, nor even on the appearance of the *nakṣatra* *Cittirai*, but rather on the day the sun enters the sign of Aries after the vernal equinox. It is that day on which the month *Cittirai* starts.

Pūcam: The *nakṣatra* Pūcam is also observed in the Murukan cultus. Of particular significance is the Pūcam that falls on or near the full moon in the month of *Tai* (January-February). The asterism Pūcam is said to be that of Taṅṭapāṇi (Skt.: Daṇḍapāṇi). This is a name used for Murukan or for Viṣṇu (and even for Yama) and has two connotations attributable to Murukan. First, *taṅṭapāṇi* can mean one with a staff in hand, as *taṅṭam* can mean staff or walking stick. In this sense, the term suggests the role of an ascetic, as the staff is a symbol of the ascetic. Murukan is called Taṅṭayutapāṇi at Paḷaṇi (and also at Swamimalai), where he is enshrined as an ascetic. But almost paradoxically, the term *taṅṭam* can also mean 'army' or 'punishment'; hence, *taṅṭapāṇi* can connote military prowess. It is this connotation which relates to Viṣṇu and to other deities with a military heritage, including Skanda-Murukan; in this sense of the term, allusion is made to the virility and strength of the respective deities. The term *taṅṭapāṇi*, thus, identifies the relationship made explicit within the Murukan tradition between ascetic and military leader. The latter subdues the enemy with an army; the former subdues the passions with a staff. The festival of *Tai Pūcam*, therefore, while observed throughout Śaivism, has more specific meaning when celebrated at Murukan temples and especially at Paḷaṇi.

Uttiram: The asterism Uttiram is said to be auspicious for marriage. On the day of Uttiram's influence, virtually all the gods and goddesses are said to have married, including Rāma and Sītā, Śiva as Sundareśa and Mīnākṣī, and Murukan and Vaḷḷi. According to one myth popular in the Tamil cultus of Murukan, Nambirājan, who is thought to be the 'first man' and who was the mythical hunter-father of Vaḷḷi, is said to have believed that the star Uttiram was especially auspicious for marriage and insisted that his daughter marry Murukan on that day.³⁵

When Uttiram falls on or near the full moon in the month of *Paṅkuni* (April-May), a month also believed to be auspicious for marriage—especially in the Tamil tradition inasmuch as such trees as the *vēṅkai* and the mango are blossoming—the day is particularly auspicious for marrying and re-enacting the marriage of the god. The festival that results—the Paṅkuni Uttiram, observed in virtually all Śaiva temples—is highlighted, in the Murukan cultus, by the re-enactment of Murukan's marriage to Vaḷḷi (or Devasenā). The

festival is taken especially seriously in such temples as that at Tiruparaṅkunram where Murukaṅ is said to have married Devasenā.

The Solar Year

It is apparently not until the Epic period that the solar year is divided into twelve lunar units which are used regularly in chronometry. Prior to that the Vedic year had been divided into three seasons: summer (*grīṣma*); rains (*varṣā*); and winter (*hemanta*), which were, in turn, divided into six tropical periods: *vasanta* (spring); *grīṣma* (summer); *varṣā* (rains); *śarad* (autumn); *hemanta* (dewy); and *śīśira* (cold). Eventually, these were again subdivided into twelve tropical months: Madhu, Mādhava, Śukra, Śuci, Nabha, Nabhasya, Iṣa, Ūrja, Saha, Sahasya, Tapa, and Tapasya.³⁶ As we observed earlier, the solar year operative throughout India now and since the Epic period at least, is a luni-solar year—a year of twelve units whose names and calculation are based largely on the movement of the moon in relation to the *nakṣatra*-s. Despite this fact, there is still a cognizance in ritual chronometry of the orbit of the earth around the sun. In fact, the Tamil month begins not with the new moon or full moon but with the day on which the sun ‘enters’ the new sign of the zodiac. Of the twelve zodiacal constellations, each is said to be dominant, by virtue of its position on the eastern horizon, for the duration of a month.³⁷ Each entry of the sun into a new zodiacal house is known as a *samkrānti*.

More significant for understanding the meaning of the solar year in the ritual calendar is the fact that the year is intended to represent a day in the life of the gods.³⁸ This homology is made explicit in the Murukaṅ cultus especially at certain times of the year. In general, it can be said that the start of the month after the winter solstice represents a ritual dawn. The start of the month after the vernal equinox represents a ritual mid-morning (as well as being the Tamil new year). The time of the summer solstice represents a ritual noon, and the time of the autumnal equinox is homologous to dusk.³⁹ The ritual year is given specific nuances of meaning because of this relationship, which, though more explicit at certain points than at others, is nonetheless operative in the festival calendar. In effect, the ritual ‘daytime’ runs from pre-dawn to noon, when the sun is in the eastern skies, while the ritual evening and night runs

from noon to pre-dawn—the Tamil term *cayan̄kalam* (evening) encompasses that time from noon to dusk and *rāttiri* (night) from dusk to pre-dawn.

Similarly, the ritual year has its ‘daytime’ (actually ‘morning’) during the six months between the winter and summer solstices when the sun is in its northern course, whereas the ritual ‘evening’ is represented by the period falling approximately between the summer solstice and the autumnal equinox, and the ‘night’ by the period falling approximately between the autumnal equinox and the winter solstice.⁴⁰

Given this rhythm of the solar year, it becomes apparent that virtually all major festivals addressed to Murukan observed in Tamil Nadu fall between the period we have designated as being homologous to the period running from pre-dawn to noon in the ritual day. Thus, Skanda-Ṣaṣṭhī in October-November becomes the first festival to the god, and—in addition to all else that it represents—in the context of the solar year, this festival represents his rising in the pre-dawn hours and subduing the forces of chaos and darkness. His overcoming of the *asura* thus becomes a creative act, assuring the coming of a new cosmic ‘day’ and a new created order. Conversely, the last major festival to Murukan celebrated universally in Tamil Nadu is the Vasanta Vicākam, the climax of which falls in May-June on the last full moon prior to the summer solstice.⁴¹ The new moon which starts the Skanda-Ṣaṣṭhī festival represents a cosmic mid-night, while the full moon of Vasanta Vicākam is said to represent the cosmic noon.⁴² Further, this festival calendar from Skanda-Ṣaṣṭhī to Vasanta Vicākam suggests that the six-day career of the god is rendered homologous to the growth and maturation of the cosmos from the ‘pre-dawn’ period of the year to ‘noon’. We shall sketch in some of the highlights of this festival calendar which suggest this homology between day, year, and deity’s career, remembering all the while that each festival has a specific significance quite apart from the solar year, derived largely from the myth which is said to have occurred at the time of the *nakṣatra* and lunar cycle on which the festival falls.

We have observed that the ‘nighttime’ of the ritual year encompasses approximately that period between the autumnal equinox and the winter solstice—or, more precisely, the months of *Purattāci* (September-October), *Aippaci* (October-November), and *Kārttikai* (November-December). The festivals of these months are night-

time festivals, starting with *Navarāttiri*, the festival of nine nights, and including *Tīpāvali* (festival of lights), Skanda-Ṣaṣṭhī, and *Tirukkārttikai*, noted for its lighting of lamps. The lunar cycle in which Skanda-Ṣaṣṭhī falls is one of the most significant of the year. That it constitutes the first lunar cycle after the cosmic 'midnight' and a new year of sorts is apparent. Many merchants throughout India celebrate the new year on *Tīpāvali* day, that is the day before the new moon starting Skanda-Ṣaṣṭhī.⁴³ That same new-moon day is thought to be the day of Viṣṇu's slaying of Bali, a personification of malevolence, and *Tīpāvali*, in part, celebrates that triumph.⁴⁴ Further, we have seen that the *Tīpāvali* season is associated with the return of the spirits of the dead, spirits which are assisted in their return to the world of Yama by the light of lamps and fire-crackers.⁴⁵ The nature of this season is further reflected in the purpose of *Tīpāvali*, a purpose which V. Raghavan summarized in these words:

. . . as rejoicings, they [the observances of *Dīpāvali*] have probably their ultimate roots in the Season, in the passing away of the darkness and the rains and in the break of light, the onset of autumn, the resumption of cultivation and commerce and the activities of gain and pleasure. The lamps of *Dīpāvali* not only light the path of our ancestors, but they shine forth as symbols of the eternal prayer of the Soul '*tamaso ma jyotirgamaya*'—'Lead me from darkness to light'.⁴⁶

Skanda-Ṣaṣṭhī, then, for all else it celebrates, marks, for Murukan *bhakta*-s, the coming of the deity into existence, the conquest over darkness and evil, the passing of the midnight of the cosmos, and the watershed of the northeast monsoon. *Tirukkārttikai*, which follows in the month of *Kārttikai* (usually in late November), represents the suckling and nurture of the deity by the Kṛttikas and is associated with the lighting of rows of lights on or near the full moon just prior to the 'dawn' of the ritual year.

The month of *Mārkaḷi* (December-January), which follows, when the sun enters the sign of Sagittarius, is a highly significant one. In all Śaiva temples it is homologized to the dawn, *ucākālam* (Skt.: *uśahkāla*). On the eve of *Mārkaḷi* the dawn ritual of *tirupaḷḷi elucci* (rising from the bed-chamber) is performed in a number of temples. It is a month sacred to Naṭarājan as his *nakṣatra*, Tiruvātirai or Betelguese, falls on or near the full-moon day. Kṛṣṇa himself is

quoted as saying: ‘. . . of the months, I am *mārkaṣi*.’⁴⁷ *Mārkaṣi* is the prelude to daytime and creation.

The month of *Tai* (January-February) follows. It is homologized to *pirātakkālam* (Skt.: *prātaḥkāla*), the post-dawn early morning hours. Throughout Tamil Nadu, the month starts with the *Pōṅkal* festival. Not only does *Pōṅkal* celebrate the harvest; it celebrates the sun’s entering the sign of Capricorn and starting its journey in the northern skies. The start of the sun’s apparent northern journey is known as *Uttarāyaṇa* or *Udagayana*, and was mentioned in some Upaniṣadic and Brahmanic texts and in the *Gṛhyasūtra*-s.⁴⁸ The festival of *Tai Pūcam*, which follows at the conjoining of the star *Pūcam* and the full moon of *Tai*, celebrates, in the cultus of *Murukan*, the god’s conquest of the passions and malevolence. Coming as it does at this period in the solar year, the god’s youthfulness, virility, and creativity relate it to a similar stage in the waxing of the cosmic cycle, and of the year and the day.

The *Māci* festival follows in some, but not all, *Murukan* temples.⁴⁹ Climaxed on the last full-moon day before the vernal equinox, it celebrates, in effect, the total life and youthful exploits of the god, including his slaying of the *asura*-s, his conquest of the ram, his fulfilling of the five functions of godhead, and his reigning in triumph. The month of *Māci* (February-March) which comes just prior to the sun’s reaching the midway point on its journey in the northern sky, is homologized to the sacred time preceding mid-morning.⁵⁰

On the full moon day of *Paṅkuni* (March-April), which occurs near the vernal equinox, the festival of *Paṅkuni Uttiram* is celebrated in most temples. *Paṅkuni Uttiram* is universally observed as the festival of marriage. The month in which it falls, *Paṅkuni*, is homologized to the mid-morning hours of daily ritual, the *mattyacanti* (Skt.: *madhyasandhi*). The climactic day of *Paṅkuni Uttiram* is said to mark winter’s becoming summer and cold’s turning to hot.⁵¹

The Tamil month of *Cittirai* (April-May), which starts the new year, follows when the sun enters the sign of Aries. No festivals to *Murukan* are observed in this month. It is in *Vaikāci* (May-June) that the final major *Murukan* festival occurs. The festival *Vasanta Vicākam* celebrates the god’s reaching his full maturity, his integration into a single supreme god, and his dominion over the cosmos. It is that full-moon day of *Vaikāci* which marks for most temples the zenith of the year, inasmuch as the sun ‘starts its journey southward’ in a matter of days.⁵²

The start of the 'dark half' of the solar year is marked in Tamil temples by the start of the month of *Āṭi* (July-August), when the sun enters the sign of Cancer. The cosmic evening has started, and, as in the ritual day, a ritual kind of abstinence is observed. With one exception, there are no major festivals addressed to *Murukan* in this period. Not coincidentally, this is the period of the south-west monsoon which brings light summer rains to Tamil Nadu and causes a shift in the agricultural pattern. Accordingly, most of the significant festival occasions are agriculturally oriented. The festival of *Āṭippūram* in the month of *Āṭi* is a case in point.⁵³ The festival may actually begin late in *Āṇi* (June-July) when newly planted paddy shoots appear. The highlight of the festival is the ritual transferring of shoots (even though in some districts of Tamil Nadu transferring of shoots may actually occur a month or two later). Similarly, also in *Āṭi*, on the eighteenth day, the ritual commemoration of the 'overflowing of the Cauvery' occurs. The eighteenth of *Āṭi* marks the traditional date when the rivers crest, swollen by the summer rains. Treated as a goddess, the river is offered garments, bangles, winnowing baskets, or other paraphernalia appropriate to feminine use. Purificatory bathing is appropriate on that day. It is clear that the festivities of *Āṭi* eighteenth have roots in rather early Tamil civilization, for the *Paripāṭal*, a text which may be as old as the fourth century, has at least three hymns addressed to the river Vaikai. These hymns describe the river in flood, while people bathe and play in its waters and celebrate the fertility of the land which the rains will bring. Strikingly, the coming of the rains are likened to the coming of *Murukan* and his host, routing drought and want.⁵⁴

The one festival to *Murukan* which does occur in a few temples of Tamil Nadu during these months takes place in the month of *Āvaṇi* (August-September). Climaxed on the last full-moon day prior to the autumnal equinox, this festival is a virtual duplicate of the *Māci* festival in which the total career of the god is re-enacted, including his conquest of the *asura*-s, his fulfilling the functions of divinity, and his triumphal reign over the cosmos. However, this festival is probably a vestige of a new year festival in the old Cera kingdom, brought to Tiruchendur (which temple is the primary celebrant of the festival) by *potṛ*-s from Kerala in the sixteenth or seventeenth century.⁵⁵ Therefore, this festival does not appear to fit into the solar scheme outlined above with respect to the Tamil

festivals addressed to Murukan.

Thus, the solar year and day are intelligibly homologous, though more explicitly so at some points than others. That this pattern is also consistent with the rhythm of the cosmos is evident, especially at such moments as dawn and the beginning of a new year, which, like the new moon day, are likened to the creation of the cosmos. Further, the career of the god is apparently homologized to this movement of the earth in relationship to the sun. This temporal association of Skanda-Murukan and sun need not surprise us, as numerous references to Skanda's equation with the sun can be found in Epic myths of his birth. The solar motifs ascribed to Skanda in the myths of his birth, also suggested by the ritual year, include his being the primordial demiurge and the creator and sovereign of the cosmos. Like the sun, the god is an embodiment of the rhythm and pattern of the cosmos.

Other Measures of Time's Sacrality

Most of the chronometric measures discussed thus far have for centuries been part of Brahmanic chronometry. Three elements discussed—the *tithi*, *nakṣatra*, and the less important *karana*—are three of the five components of the *pañcāṅga*, the five-fold calendar. Two other elements of the *pañcāṅga* have a place, though not very significant, in temple ritual. The first of these is the *vāra* (Tamil: *vāranāl*), the weekday, and the other is the *yoga* (Tamil: *yōkam*)—a unit of astrological calculation.

There is considerable evidence that suggests the concept and use of the *vāra* was imported from the Middle East, perhaps from Babylon or Greece. The first regnal inscription bearing reference to the weekday is an Eran Stone Pillar of Buddha Gupta, datable to 484 A.D. Inscriptions in the Bombay-Karnatak region, where the Śaka era was used, carry names of weekdays rather regularly from the eighth century on. Some inscriptions in the north and northwest (from Madhya Pradesh to Rajasthan), where the Vikrama era was used, include infrequent references to weekdays by the eleventh century. In Andhran inscriptions, the weekday is mentioned by the end of the seventh century. In Orissa, inscriptions of the later Gaṅgas, after the eighth century, include references to the weekday. In Tamil Nadu, the weekday is first mentioned on a

Gaṅga inscription ascribed to the late ninth century found in Salem and is also increasingly mentioned on Pāṇṭiyaṅ and Cōlāṅ inscriptions after the ninth and tenth centuries.⁵⁶

Similarly, there are virtually no references to the weekday in literature prior to the Christian era, if one can assume that the *Purāṇa*-s, *Dharmaśāstra*-s, and *Siddhānta*-s were written later. At the same time, in the literature of Tamil Nadu, few references to the *vāra* occur before the *Tēvāram*, a collection of bhakti poetry that cannot be dated prior to the eighth century. Therein, the first stanza of Tiruṅānacampantar's *Koḷaruḷ Patikam* refers to the seven days of the week. Prior to that, the term *vāra* does appear in the *Cilappatikāram*, an epic that may have been written as late as the sixth century, but the term refers to a kind of dance or dancing gesture rather than a chronometric device.⁵⁷ Rather, the notion that the sun, the moon, and five planets rotate in dominance over the days of the week is more consistent with Middle Eastern numerology and astronomy than with the traditional systems of India, in which the numbers three, nine, twenty-seven, etc., become prominent.⁵⁸

Be that as it may, one day of the week has become particularly associated with Murukaṅ: Tuesday (*cevvāykkilamai*), literally the day of the planet Mars, or of the 'red one'. The association between Murukaṅ and Mars appears to rest on at least two factors: the fact that both are red (in the case of Murukaṅ, associating him with sun, fire, lotus, etc.), and the fact that both are associated with military prowess. In some Murukaṅ temples, appropriate rituals are observed on Tuesdays.

Another element of *pañcāṅga* is the *yoga*. Scarcely significant in festival ritual, three *yoga*-s are used in particular to calculate the hours sacred for ritual in a given day. Two of the *yoga*-s—*amirtaiyoga* and *sittayoga*—are auspicious, and when they fall at particular hours render such occasions as marriage auspicious. Another set of *yoga*-s, known as the *maraṇayoga*, are inauspicious and are to be avoided. The hours and days on which a *yoga* falls remain constant and are determined by the conjunction of particular days of the week with particular *nakṣatra*-s. For example, at those times that certain *nakṣatra*-s are operative on a Monday, the *amirtaiyoga* falls, and so on.

Further, we have mentioned the *muhūrta*. The *muhūrta* is a period of three and three-quarter *nāḷikai*-s. A *nāḷikai* is a space of twenty-four minutes, of which sixty occur in a day, except on those

days which have sixty-four for the purpose of synchronizing the lunar and solar months. The *muhūrta* is the sacred period of one-and-one-half hours during which such rituals as a marriage must occur, as it marks the point of coincidence between the appropriate *lagna* (zodiacal sign), *nakṣatra*, *yoga*, and other measuring devices.

Other measuring units used in the Brahmanic system measure increasingly minute periods of time, each a segment of and a cycle within the larger units. These smaller units include: a *kalai* of which twenty equal a *nālikai* and two equal a *vikalai*; a *parai* of which two equal a *kalai*; a *tatparai* of which two equal a *parai*; and a *nimiṣam* or eye wink, of which three equal one *tatparai*.

However, quite apart from this highly formalized chronometric system, preserved and calculated by specially-trained Brahmanical *śāstrī*-s, certain other elements are used in the Tamil ritual year to observe sacred moments. Those we have commented upon are the coming of the two monsoons, the blossoming of certain trees, and the balance of the agricultural cycle with its planting and harvesting. These factors are particularly reflected in the festivals of *Ponkal* in mid-January and *Āṭippūram*, the festival celebrating the planting and transferring of summer crops and the coming of the summer rains. In some rural areas, certain other festivals are said to be popular (or even scheduled in the first place) because people are relatively free from their agricultural toil and need an opportunity for rejoicing and worship.⁵⁹

Another factor playing an increasingly important part in determining the sacrality of time is the growing observance of the western year. This is particularly evident, of course, in urban centers, where it takes such forms as providing a 'reason' for the early morning and evening *pūjā*-s. These *pūjā*-s are held at these times, we are told, to provide working persons an opportunity to worship at the beginning and end of their working day.⁶⁰ Even more striking in this respect is the festival held at Tiruttani on New Year's Eve—that is, on December 31—especially for Madras. The Tiruppaṭi Bhajanai (concert on the sacred steps) is a festival started by T. M. Krishna-swami Ayer in 1923 at which pilgrims bearing musical instruments and singing such hymns as Aruṇakiri's *Tiruppukal* converge on Tiruttani for an all-night vigil of musical worship. The night is spent in a ritual climbing of the steps to the temple, with pauses at each step for worship and the singing of appropriate verses. The new 'English' year is thus greeted with penitence and purification.

A similar combination of traditional and modern chronometry—and of Brahmanic and non-Brahmanic perspectives—is to be seen in the creation of new festivals to commemorate the lives of saints. For example, a two-day festival in August at Tiruvannāmalai, started in 1954, celebrates the date that Aruṇakiri (fifteenth century Murukan poet and *bhakta*) received grace at the spot. A similar centenary festival held in November 1970 at Vallimalai commemorated the birth of Śrī Vallimalai Satchidananda Swami, who helped popularize Aruṇakiri's songs in this century. Both of these festivals, like an increasing number of traditional ones, schedule concerts and lectures less on the basis of appropriate chronometric calculations as on the basis of convenience for devotees. At least one of the factors involved in this process is that executive officers of temples are often non-brahmins who are sometimes less concerned with the observance of traditional chronometry with which they are scarcely familiar, at any rate, than with public relations and the availability of the temple's facilities to the public.

Conclusions and Observations

In the foregoing we have observed and articulated a sense of what we might call concentric cyclicity. One cycle of time operates within another and besides others. Had we chosen, we might have followed this concentric pattern to still smaller patterns: to the cyclicity of rituals observed within one *tirukkālam*, for example, or to the specific ritual acts wherein a certain cyclic structure is discernible, e.g., the *abhiṣeka* (anointing of the icon), the *ārati* (adoration with lamps) or the *aṣṭotra* (recitation of 108 names). Or we could have pursued the pattern to increasingly large units: the sixty years which comprise a unit in which lunar, stellar, and solar measurements are synchronized; or even to the Purāṇic concept of an era or *yuga*, the fourth of which (Kali Yuga), we are said to be experiencing. Almost every astronomically calculated unit in traditional ritual use becomes a microcosm of the cosmic rhythm, waxing to a climax in one half, waning to a new beginning in the other. Further, in at least some instances—at some junctures more than others—the chronometric unit becomes associated with the mythic life of the deity. This is especially explicit during the day at dawn in the *tiruppalli elucci* and *viśvarūpa*; in the lunar cycle,

particularly at new moon, *ṣaṣṭhī*, and full moon; and in the solar calendar, particularly at the times of Skanda-*Ṣaṣṭhī*, *Tirukkārtikai*, and Vasanta Vicākam.

The implications of this cyclicity are several. Suggested is a concept of history which views time as repetitive, homogeneous, perhaps even relentless. Time would be tyrannical if it were not for the fact it can be understood and measured, indeed even ritually transcended, especially at those moments we have called 'tempocosms', when the possibility of breakthrough is dramatized in the conjunction of chronometric units. And, more, the very repetitiveness of the cycles suggests the world's eternal renewability.

Further, the role of the priest becomes no less than that of ritually maintaining the cosmos and assuring its constant renewal. Whether or not devotees are present, the priests must perform their functions. Like chemists combining elements by precise formulae to make new compounds, the priests are technicians seeking by the repetition of ritual formulae to re-create the world temporally. They preside over each new beginning and endeavor to make each 'tempocosm' an appropriate portrayal of ultimacy. The relationship of the deity to the priest seems ambivalent, for the priests, on the one hand, are invoking the god's creativity and sovereignty over the cosmos and are re-enacting the god's work. Yet, on the other hand, the god himself reflects the rhythm of the cosmos, and his vitality and power are dependent on the instrumentality of the priest. That many priests are nonetheless unaware of these dimensions of their work is clear from their inability to articulate the intricate nuances of the calendar.

It may also be suggested from the foregoing discussion that more than one kind of festival is observed in the cultus of Murukan. This festival life is difficult to categorize because the exigencies of history and regional change have brought overlapping and interchange of types. Nonetheless, we suggest two terms that might serve as working categories: theofest and ecofest. A theofest is theological in nature; it is a festival designed explicitly to commemorate some aspect of the god's career. Most frequently, it is celebrated in the light half of the year, during the 'daytime' of the deities. Its character is largely determined by the mythical event or events being re-enacted during the festival. The festival is generally of several days' duration, *Tirukkārtikai* being an exception in the cultus of Murukan. The festival's myth is usually said to have occurred

on the *nakṣatra* which serves as the climax of the festival, though, in the case of Skanda-Ṣaṣṭhī, the myth occurs on a particular *tithi* rather than on a *nakṣatra*.

The ecofest, on the other hand, is primarily a festival of seasonal or calendrical significance. True, the theofests are set by the calendar and the ecofests often are associated with myths that have developed about the exploits of a deity with respect to that occasion. But, basically, the ecofest marks an important moment in the agricultural season, as *Āṭippūram* or the eighteenth of *Āṭi* does; or it may be a significant moment in the solar or lunar calendar. These include the *samkrānti* or entrance of the sun into a new zodiacal sign; the Uttarāyaṇa or start of the northern journey of the sun; the *amāvāsyā* or new moon, which, though in the case of Skanda also relates to the day of his birth, remains in much Tamil ritual an astronomical rather than a theological event.⁶¹ Occasionally, festivals such as *Poṅkal* may combine both agricultural and astronomical features, but still fulfill the characteristics of what we are calling an ecofest.

If the complex system of Brahmanic chronometry we have outlined does indeed have cosmological implications, one can only wonder whether the increasing de-Brahmanization of temple and calendar, alluded to earlier, also implies that differing conceptions of time and cosmos are becoming increasingly operative. In other terms, for those for whom Brahmanic chronometry is no longer applicable either because it is not understood or because it is being deliberately rejected, what views of time and cosmos are operative? Part of the answer to this may be that, for some devotees, re-affirmation of time and cosmos is occurring in a manner not inconsistent with that found in early Tamil literature. In that literature we find little concern for transcendence or ultimacy, little evidence that ritual or chronometry serve as openings to larger temporal realities. Each moment, measured largely in terms of the season—the coming of rains, vegetation, foliage—is itself; it is celebrated as a sign that life and fertility will continue and flourish. Time, measured in those terms, is less an astronomical unit used to calculate the rhythm of the universe than it is a biological unit which affirms that the processes of human growth and agriculture are proceeding in anticipated ways. As such, it is celebrative time—moments which affirm the festive, the fertile, and joyous in life. Yet, for still others living in the context of urban and technological

change—where both the astronomical and biological senses of time have become remote even for those middle classes which remain devout—the ritual calendar poses a question: will the calendar invite subtly meaningful combinations of differing visions of time found in the past; or will it remain a challenge from suggestive yesterdays to modern communities to discover new meaning in the potential homogeneity and tedium of demythologized time?

Notes

1. Murukan was the name given to a deity originally of the hills, extolled in early Tamil literature. Skanda was the name given to an Epic god. The traditions associated with these deities who have disparate histories were amalgamated in Tamil Nadu into a single cultus no later than the fourth and fifth centuries A.D.

2. The significance of this suggestion is puzzling. At least four possible interpretations present themselves:

(i) The birth of Skanda may be intended merely to be the inaugural event of the Kali Yuga or modern era. Popular tradition insists that Murukan was brought into existence just prior to the start of the Kali Yuga for the express purpose of presiding over it.

(ii) The myth may be the product of myth-makers of the Śaka dynasty by whom Skanda becomes associated with the Śaka rulers' efforts to start the calculations of a new era from the start of their dynasty. It is true that Skanda is a patron deity of the Śakas, and it is also true that the myth could have been written as late as the first or second century A.D. when the Śaka rule commenced.

(iii) The new time initiated by Skanda's exploits could be simply that the Kṛttikās enlarge the number of known *nakṣatra*-s to twenty-seven and thus make it necessary for chronometricians to recalculate the calendar on that basis. There is an occasional indication that the *nakṣatra* system of reckoning time was known and perhaps operative late in the Vedic period. For example, the *Rg Veda* (X:85:13) refers to a lunar day (*adhāsu arjunyoh*) as though it were the equivalent of a *nakṣatra* (T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal in an untitled paper given at a seminar on 'Calendar in Hindu Tradition' on 7 October, 1967 at the University of Madras and published in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, Madras: University Press, 1968, p. 52). Yet even if the *nakṣatra* system was already operative, there is no reason to believe all twenty-seven *nakṣatra*-s were known so early (this is the suggestion of Narayana Aiyangar in *Essays on Indo-Aryan Mythology*, Vol. II, Madras: Addison & Co., 1901, pp. 40ff).

(iv) The myth may allude to the combining of lunar and solar calendars, the former becoming more crucial in the division of the year than had been true earlier. The Vedic year had been divided into three seasons, which were, in turn, divided into six tropical periods and, eventually, sub-divided again

into twelve tropical months (T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, op. cit., p. 55, citing *Taittsam*, VII:5-1). However, while the use of lunar calculations—for example, of *tithi*-s and *nakṣatra*-s—may have been known as early as that astronomical work known as the *Vedaṅga Jyauṣṭha*, lunar data are not included consistently on regnal inscriptions until the Śakas did so in the second and third century A.D. It is striking that these inscriptions give to the months names that are derived from lunar calculations rather than seasonal ones—e.g. *Vaiśākha*, *Śrāvaṇa*, *Bhādrapāla*, *Mārgaśīrṣā*, *Phālguna*, etc. Even more than the Śātavāhana inscriptions before them, they make more detailed mention of *tithi*-s (lunar stages), *pakṣa*-s (fortnights), and *nakṣatra*-s (celestial regions through which the moon passes while in orbit) (T. V. Mahalingam, 'Calendar in Hindu Tradition' in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures* (1968), pp. 63-67). It seems clear from such inscriptions that the moon became much more important in chronometry between the time of the Mauryas and that of the Śakas. If this is indeed true, we are forced to conclude that lunar chronometry receives impetus, perhaps from Middle Eastern influences or from the agricultural communities of the Gangetic valley, and is brought to greater sophistication during the Epic period.

3. The pattern herein outlined was provided by the former chief Śivācārya of the Śrī Subramaniaswamy temple in Tiruchendur. His interpretation was the most consistent with daily rituals observed throughout Tamil Nadu. Priests at other temples did use varying patterns, but they were usually abbreviated versions of this pattern.
4. The Vedic Svarbhāṇu is apparently the precursor of the *graha* who becomes known as Rāhu by the Epic period. Svarbhāṇu 'struck the sun with darkness', perplexing people, until Atri restored the sun again (T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal, in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, p. 52, citing *R̥g Veda*, V:40).
5. V. A. K. Ayer, *Everyday Astrology*, Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons & Co., Ltd., 1966, p. 155. Ayer suggests that Rāhu's more erratic schedule may be remembered by an easily memorized formula: 'Mother Saw Father Wearing Turbans too Slowly'. Starting from 7.30 A.M. and giving one-and-one-half hours for each day, the order of the days is indicated by the first letter of each succeeding word. A similar formula exists in Tamil, as indicated to me by Dr. V. Raghavan in a conversation. Each of the following phonemes starts the name of the day of the week in Tamil: Ti-Sa-Ve-Pu-Vi-Se, with Sunday omitted because everyone is supposed to know the time of Rāhu's influence Departon Sunday.
6. I am indebted to Prof. A.S. Gnanasambandan, former chairman of the Tamil department, Madurai University, for this description of the *muhūrta* and the daily significance of the zodiac.
7. N. Subramaniam, 'The Moon in Hindu and Human Tradition', in V. V. Deshpande (ed.), *Hindu Viśva Pariṣad*, Patna: Souvenir Volume, 1969, p. 68.
8. T. V. Mahalingam in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, pp. 63-67.
9. *Ibid.*
10. J. N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, Calcutta: University of

- Calcutta Publications, 1921, pp. 140-45.
11. T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, p. 46.
 12. For records of most of the following schedules, I am indebted to the festival calendars of the Śrī Tantayutapani Suvami temple in Paḷaṇi (*Urcavaṅkalin Vivaram*, Paḷaṇi: SRKV Press, 1966-1967), and to conversations with priests at the Śrī Subramaniaswamy temple in Tiruchendur.
 13. P. V. Jagadisa Ayyar, *South Indian Festivals*, Madras: Higginbothams Ltd., 1921, p. 68.
 14. This phenomenon was explained by an astrologer in Madurai.
 15. T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, p. 111, citing a phrase from an unspecified text: 'ulka hasta narāḥ kunyuh pitṛṇām mārgadarśanam'.
 16. P. K. Agrawala, 'Skanda in the Purāṇas', *Purāṇa*, VIII, No. 1 (January 1966), pp. 135-58.
 17. On occasion the *piratōṣam* is the evening before the new or full moon.
 18. R. Champalakshmi in 'Calendar in Hindu Tradition', *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures* (1968), pp. 89-91.
 19. *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 91.
 20. T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, p. 46.
 21. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
 23. *Ibid.*
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 52, citing the passage as reading: 'Sūryasyavahatuḥ prāgāt savitā ya mavāsṛjat aghāsuhanyante gāvo'rjunyoḥ parhuhyate'.
 25. *Ibid.*, p. 53, citing 'taisasyāmāvāsyāya ekāha upariṣṭāddīkṣeran māghasya vetyāhuḥ' and 'mukhaṃvā etasamvatsarasya yat phālguniḥpūrṇamāsi'.
 26. T. V. Mahalingam in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, p. 63.
 27. Y. Subbaralu in 'Calendar in Hindu Tradition', *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures* (1968), p. 76.
 28. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
 29. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
 30. Cf. the myth of Skanda's birth in *Mahābhārata* (III:223-32).
 31. R. Champalakshmi in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, p. 91.
 32. This was the observation of chief priests at the temples at Tiruchendur, Kunṛakuṭi, and Vaṭapaḷaṇi. There is a certain inconsistency about this claim inasmuch as both Kārttikai and Vicākam are said to be the god's 'birthday', but are situated at the opposite 'ends' of the cycle of asterisms, some thirteen days apart. Yet the myths of Skanda's birth tell us the god grew up in six days. How then could Skanda have been 'nurtured' on Kārtikkai and then 'integrated' on Vicākam, some thirteen days later, and, at the same time, 'born' on both days? Is it possible that the two asterisms are intended to represent 'poles' in the cycle—something like the new and full moon or the winter and summer solstices—thereby suggesting the concept of fullness or completion?

33. Cf. D. R. Bhandakar, *Lectures on Ancient Indian Numismatics*, Calcutta: University of Calcutta Publications, 1921, pp. 22-23.
34. This myth was told to me by the chief priest of the Vaṭapaḷaṇi temple in Madras City.
35. This myth was narrated by the former chief priest at the Śrī Subramania-swamy temple at Tiruchendur.
36. T. S. Kuppanna Sastrigal in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, p. 55, citing *Taittsam. Br.*, VII:5-1.
37. There are two schools of chronometry extant. The first, known as *caurna-mānam*, measures the year by solar means, determining the start of each month by the day on which the earth, in its orbit around the sun, sees the sun in the eastern horizon for the first time in juxtaposition with one of the twelve constellations—that is, on the day the sun ‘enters’ the house of the constellation. This system is used in Tamil chronometry. The alternate system, known as *cantiramānam*, is based on lunar calculations by which the month starts with the new moon. This system has been used in Andhra for some centuries.
38. This was expressed in conversations by such priests as the former chief Śivācārya at Tiruchendur and by such scholars as Prof. A. S. Gnanasambandan, formerly of the University of Madurai.
39. Note that neither the Tamil nor the Telugu year actually observes the solstices and equinoxes, but rather marks these four junctures either by the start of the month or the lunar cycle respectively *after* these junctures.
40. This is consistent with the pattern suggested by the former chief Śivācārya at Tiruchendur. If one were to label the Tamil seasons on the basis of the cycle of heat and cold, they would be roughly as follows: ‘Spring’: December 21-March 21 (a period of increasing heat during which semi-annual crops are planted and annual blossoms bud); ‘Summer’: March 21-June 21 (the hottest months); ‘Autumn’: June 21-September 21 (a period of cooling marked by the southwest monsoon, the planting of semi-annual crops, and the harvesting of some crops); and ‘Winter’: September 21-December 21 (the coldest, rainiest months).
41. Such temples as the one at Tiruchendur do celebrate a festival to Murukan in the month of *Āvani* (August-September), but this is not celebrated throughout Tamil Nadu. This exception will be discussed later.
42. This was made explicit by the former chief Śivācārya at Tiruchendur.
43. V. Raghavan, ‘Festive India’, Unpublished paper read at the University of Chicago in May 1963, p. 34.
44. V. Raghavan, ‘Dipavali Down the Ages’, *The Hindu* (Madras), 7 November 1961, p. 14.
45. *Ibid.* It is worth noting that this phenomenon of spirits’ returning from the dead marks the time immediately preceding the new year in several religious communities.
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Bhāgavadgītā* X:35.
48. R. Champalaksmi in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, p. 87.
49. Tiruchendur, for example, observes this, but Paḷaṇi does not. This festival clearly does not fit neatly into the pattern outlined!

50. It may not be coincidental that the Tiruchendur temple, but not many others, celebrates the *Māci* festival, inasmuch as the Tiruchendur temple is virtually alone in celebrating the homologous *pūjā*-s: the *kālamattyacanti* (7.30-9.00 A.M.) and *vittyakālacanti* (9.00-9.30 A.M.).
51. Jagadisa Ayyar, *South Indian Festivals*, op. cit., p. 59. It is striking that the festival celebrating Murukan's marriage comes after the festivals celebrating his triumph over evil and before the festival celebrating his final reigning in triumph, as consistently, in the Tamil festivals associated with Murukan, the god's marriage follows his conquest of the *asura* and precedes his reigning in final triumph. Should we conclude that the series of festivals is intended to re-enact the career of the god in a manner consistent with the intent of each festival?
52. Note again that Tamil months start with the entrance of the sun into a new sign of the zodiac, whereas the Telegu month starts with the new moon. However, the distinctions are often blurred in the minds of devotees and priests. Hence, Tamil priests and devotees can think of new-moon days starting important solar periods and such full moons as that of *Vaikāci* as climaxing or terminating the 'daytime' months.
53. For some Śaiva temples, more generally, the *nakṣatra Pūram* is sometimes associated with a mythical event in the life of Śiva, so the festival of this occasion may be theological in nature for such temples. For example, at Tiruchuli, a village some seventy miles south of Madurai, the *Āṭippūram* is a festival in which the betrothal of *Mīnākṣī* to *Sundareśvara* occurs. The theme of *Āṭippūram*, nonetheless, is usually associated with fertility.
54. *Paripāṭal*, 6, 7, 10. Bathers are described as gamboling in the waters, garlanded and smeared with sandal, often astride elephants or horses. One crop of rice has been harvested and gathered in sheaves, while new paddy has been planted. There is the drinking of intoxicating beverages. The waters cause the *vēṅkai* and the mango to blossom. The rivers are described as like human passions or like militia in motion. One might add that there are one or two hints in these passages suggesting that winter rains as well as summer rains are being referred to. The *vēṅkai* and the mango, for example, blossom in April-May not August-September. And the *Vaikai* today is more nearly flooded by northeast monsoon rains than by rains from the southwest monsoon, though, to be sure, reference is made to water's flowing from the hills where the southwest monsoons are severe; further, dams today impede the flow of water in July-August. However, if winter rains are indeed referred to, the festival may have been incorporated into the *Skanda-Ṣaṣṭhī* festival which occurs at the height of the northeast monsoon.
55. The former chief Śivācārya at Tiruchendur made this claim. *Madhvan potṭ*-s were brought from Kerala in the sixteenth or seventeenth century, either by the prime minister of Tirumalai Nayak (1623-1659) or by Mahārāja Marthanda Varma (1729-1758) (J. M. Somasundaram Pillai, *Tiruchendur: The Seashore Temple of Subramanyam*, Madras: Addison Press, 1948, p. 25). Further, Kerala's new year does start in *Āvaṇi*, when the sun enters the new sign of the zodiac after the autumnal equinox rather than after the vernal equinox when the Tamil new year starts. It may not be coincidental that in Kerala the southwest monsoon from June to August tends to be particularly

- severe (as compared with the northeast monsoon in Tamil Nadu) and that Kerala still celebrates a significant festival at the same time that the *Āvaṇi* festival is celebrated in Tiruchendur.
56. This summary of regnal inscriptions is derived from the discussion by Y. Subbarālu in the *Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures*, pp. 70ff.
 57. N. Subramaniam, *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index*, Madras: University of Madras, 1966, p. 753, citing *Cilappatikāram*, III:20, 49, 50, 136, 137, 153; VI:19, and XIV:155.
 58. The myth of the origin of astronomic calculations in the Brahmanic tradition is as follows: In the beginning was primordial light. Light evolved into three components called Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Rudra. These three gave birth to the nine planets, which in turn gave birth to the twenty-seven *nakṣatra*-s (recited in a conversation by an astrologer in Madurai.)
 59. The Kuṇṛakkuṭi Aṭikaḷ, for example, was inclined to 'demythologize' the festivals held at Kuṇṛakkuṭi in Ramnad district. Such demythologizing implies a dismissal of much of the significance of Brahmanic chronometry and of Brahmanic influence generally in the cultic life of the temple.
 60. This was a comment made to me by a number of priests and devotees in Madras city.
 61. See V. Raghavan, 'Festive India', for an extensive description of the kind of festival I am calling an ecofest.

MAHĀŚIVARĀTRI: THE ŚAIVA FESTIVAL OF REPENTANCE*

J. Bruce Long

Introduction

THE MOST AUSPICIOUS religious observance among the devotees of Śiva—and one which marks the high point of the Śaiva religious year—is Śivarātri (also called Śivarātri-vrata and Mahāśivarātri). Śivarātri is celebrated annually over a twenty-four to thirty-six hour period (depending upon the elaborateness of the ritual system in any given place) on the fourteenth lunar day (*tithi*) during the dark half of the month of *Phālguna* (February-March). In its simplest form this observance consists of keeping a vigil (*iāgara*) throughout the night and performing continuous worship of Śiva during the day through the repetition of his divine names. If the rites are performed correctly and with a pure heart, they secure for the devotee the goals (*artha*) most desired during this lifetime: union (*sayujya*) or communion (*sālokya*) with Lord Śiva in his heavenly realm (*śivaloka*) on Mt. Kailāsa and, thereby, final emancipation (*mokṣa*) from sin and all its consequences including rebirth and redeath. The three essential religious activities which constitute the Śivarātri rites are: fasting during the entire lunar day; holding a vigil; and worshipping the *liṅga* during the night with

*The present account of Mahāśivarātri is based on two personal observations of the ritual, both made in Madras city in 1968. The extensive notes taken at the time have been supplemented by research done in the field again during the summer of 1971. I should like to record my gratitude to the late Professor V. Raghavan for giving many hours to discussions of the material in classical texts and to Mr. K.P. Aithal, formerly Pandit at the Adyar Library and Research Centre, Madras, for his constructive criticisms of my interpretation of various facets of the ritual. A word of special appreciation goes to Pandit Kāśī Ghaṇapati of the Sringeri Math, Madras, who most willingly shared his wealth of knowledge of the classical tradition by chanting in Sanskrit a lengthy description of the entire observation, and to Mr. K. K. A. Venkatachari who acted as interpreter. Finally, a word of thanks to the Ford Foundation whose special gift to Haverford College to develop teaching in the humanities made this research project possible.

offerings of flowers, leaves, cooked food, and *mantra*-s, either in the temple or in the home. (This pattern is often reversed today in certain locales, with fasting and vigil occurring during the night and the worship taking place during the day.)

In what might be called its classical form, *Mahāśivarātri* has been described somewhat cursorily by P. V. Kane in his monumental work *History of Dharmaśāstra*.¹ In numerous other small volumes dealing with Indian festivals and sacrifices, brief treatments of this observance, without interpretation or commentary, may also be found.²

The primary objective of this essay is to present, in some detail, all the facts concerning *Śivarātri* which this author has been able to gather through field work and research. Realizing that the deeper meanings of any religious matter cannot be exhibited merely by cataloguing its 'objective effects', we shall try to draw out some 'deeper meanings' by referring to certain *symbolic significations* which lie within the broader structures of Hindu mythology and symbolism.

Śivarātri as a Religious Vow

While *Śivarātri* may manifest many traits of the festival (*utsava*) in certain locales where it is accompanied by song, dance, and drama, it is not a festival in the strictest sense of the term. It is, rather, a religious vow (*vrata*) or a duty (*niyama*), an obligatory rite freely undertaken by all faithful adherents to the Śaiva tradition (*sampradāya*). There are many different types of *vrata*-s in Hinduism (Kane mentions approximately 1,250 distinct vows)³ serving a variety of functions and promising a wide diversity of benefits. Almost every conceivable type of human endeavor appears under this rubric, from such rigorous feats as fasting for lengthy periods of time or meditating naked in the heat of the summer sun, to such less austere vows as performing *pūjā* to Lakṣmī (*varalakṣmī-pūjā vrata*) for the procurement of peace and well-being in the household. For this reason, it is difficult to formulate a definition of *vrata* of sufficient breadth to accommodate all the different types of activities which are classified under this heading.

What, then, does it mean to classify *Śivarātri* as a *vrata* and what are the basic elements which distinguish it from all other kinds of social and religious activities? The word *vrata*, according to

P. V. Kane, is derived from the Sanskrit root $\sqrt{\text{vr}}$, which means 'to will' or 'to choose'.⁴ The word itself means 'what is willed' or simply 'will' and, by extension, has such diverse senses as 'command', 'law', 'duty', 'obedience'; 'a moral or religious practice of any sort'; and 'any vow, religious obligation, or pattern of conduct'.

In the strictest technical sense of the term, a *vrata* is a vow or a sacrifice, in which one offers a part of oneself (through fasting, prayer, meditation, etc.) or a portion of one's goods, to God as a thank-offering and as a petition for some desired boon. Or it might take the form of a discipline engaged in for the purpose of promoting physical and mental self-control.⁵ One can see many different types of motivation at work in the *Śivarātri vrata*: acts of penance and contrition, acts of thanksgiving and praise, and acts of a 'magical' manipulation to please the deity and to persuade him to recompense the devotee for his efforts with appropriate benefits.

Such vows are observed regularly (weekly, monthly, quarterly, or annually), occasionally (when a special boon is desired or on a special date), or, in the case of extremely rigorous undertakings, once in a lifetime (such as a pilgrimage to a distant holy place). Reasons for undertaking these vows vary widely; the acquisition of general happiness and well-being in this world, additional religious merit (*puṇya*), some especially desired boon (health, longevity, progeny, etc.), or spiritual liberation (*mokṣa*) during this lifetime.

It will be our contention that by means of the various sacred acts of *Śivarātri*, the devotees, individually and communally, testify to the mutual interdependence of the human and divine realms. By performing this rite a proper relationship with the heavenly realm is maintained. The rite involves much more than a simple barter between man and God; and it is not simply a homage paid to God on the order of that offered to an earthly prince. It is, rather, a way of giving support and sustenance to the heavenly realm in the form of acts of physical and spiritual discipline, cooked-food offerings and hymns of praise. In return, God grants life, fecundity and well-being to the world of both men and animals. While man receives from God the power to praise him in the first place, God, on his part, requires that man redistribute the power residing in the various offerings and praises for the well-being of the world of divine beings.

The Origin of Śivarātri

The precise date of the origin of Śivarātri as a distinct religious observance is unknown and is possibly undiscoverable. As is the case with so many other Hindu institutions and practices (e.g., the introduction of the practice of writing down sacred texts and the origin of *bhakti* movements), the determination of the *terminus a quo* of Śivarātri depends largely upon educated estimates. The earliest appearance of the word Śivarātri occurs in the *Mahābhārata* and in certain of the Purāṇas (notably the *Garuḍa*, *Padma*, and *Skanda*). Since, according to P. V. Kane, the ‘Śivarātri-māhātmya’ makes its earliest appearance in the *Śāntiparvan* (considered by most authorities as one of the latest parts of the Great Epic), the origin of this observance probably does not pre-date the fifth century and it may have come somewhat later. The first substantial presentation of the legend concerning the origin and the constituent elements in the rites appears in the *Garuḍa*⁶ and the *Padma*⁷ Purāṇas, placed by M. Winternitz⁸ between the eighth and twelfth centuries. There is also a very brief *māhātmya* or hymn of praise in the *Agnī Purāṇa* (193). The account in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* contains the greatest wealth of information, while additional material is provided in some of the medieval liturgical digests: viz., *Tithitattva*,⁹ *Kālatattvavivecana*,¹⁰ and *Puruṣārthacintāmaṇi*.¹¹

The Question of the Chief Element in Śivarātri

There has been a long-standing debate among classical authors as to the precise nature and function of this *vrata*. The *Tithitattva* claims that the fast (*upavāsa*) is the principal activity in Śivarātri and quotes Ādi-Śaṅkara as proof: ‘On that *tithi* I am not so pleased with the bath (of the *liṅga*), nor with clothes offered (to the *liṅga*), nor with incense, nor by worship, nor with offerings of flowers, as I am pleased by a fast.’¹² In contradiction, Hemādri and Mādhava, the most famous composers of ritual digests, claim that the fast (*upavāsa*), worship (*pūjā*), and the vigil (*jāgara*), are the basic elements (*svarūpa*). ‘He who keeps the fast and worships Śiva for twelve years and keeps awake the whole night (of the 14th) will reach heaven; he will not be born again, like the Niṣāda (that is, the woodsman in the Purāṇic legend). For the Niṣāda

unknowingly worshipping a self-existent (*svabhāva*) *liṅga* . . . became free from sin and attained the position of the attendant of Śiva'.¹³ As early as the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, the various activities drawn from many sources have become so thoroughly intermingled and standardized that the determination of the original core of the ritual is well-nigh impossible. The element that is stressed will differ from temple to temple. Also, some of the observances of the ritual will be solemn and austere (with fasting and wakefulness holding the dominant position), while others in large and wealthy temples will often be colorful and celebrative (with the telling of stories, listening to music, etc., being primary).

The Astrological Context for Śivarātri

Celebration is carried out in time. For the truly formative events in human life, there is a definite time, a given time, or the best time—'the time of the due situation, *kairos*, the time of grace.'¹⁴ It is as crucial to the meaning of life for man to be able to plot his way through the passage of time, as it is to localize his position in space. Temporal orientation is provided for by constructing (or should we say 'discovering') a system of religious chronology based upon the special designation of important asterisms (*nakṣatra*-s), lunar days (*tithi*-s), and historical or mythological events (such as the birthday of a god or a saint). The ritual calendar does not so much measure the passage of time in objective form, as it delineates the appearance of 'the Sacred' in time.¹⁵ For, the continuation of the presence of divinity in the world, in one sense, is not automatic; the continued presence and activity of the sacred must be promoted by celebration—prayer, fasting, meditation, singing praises, etc. Therefore, for the pre-ordained results of any religious act or ceremony to be forthcoming, the most auspicious time must be established.

According to classical texts, Śivarātri falls on the fourteenth lunar day (*tithi*) of the dark half of the lunar month of January-February or February-March (Skt.: *caturdaśi-kṛṣṇapakṣa-Māgha* or *Phālguna*). While the *tithi* and the calendar date normally coincide, they occasionally diverge. For this reason, the lunar calculation is decisive, not the calendar date.

Both the time of the month and the nighttime itself, supposedly,

are inauspicious and filled with dangers.¹⁶ But this *tithi*, paradoxically, is the time most sacred to Śiva. 'When creation had been completed, Śiva and Pārvatī were living on the peak of Kailāsa. Pārvatī asked, "O Venerable Lord! Which of the many rituals observed in Thy honor doth please Thee most?" Śiva replied, "The 14th night of the new moon during the dark half (of the lunar month) of *Phālguna* (Feb.-Mar.) is *Mahāśivarātri*, my favorite *tithi*."¹⁷

The fourteenth *tithi* of the dark half of each month is *Śivarātri* but the dark half of *Māgha* (or *Phālguna*, according to the *pūrṇimānta* or full-moon reckoning) is *Śivarātri* par excellence and is often designated as *Mahāśivarātri*. The evening (*pradoṣa*) of each day is set aside for Śiva-worship, especially the evening of the *caturdaśi-kṛṣṇapakṣa* and particularly that of the months just mentioned. The *tithi* should occur so as to extend before and after midnight. In fact, according to the *Śabda-kalpa-druma*, it should actually cover both the evening and the night, extending, at least, a little beyond the midnight hour (*niśītha*).¹⁸ For all devout persons (especially Śaivas) it is a time reserved for fasting, meditation, confession of sins, and worship of Śiva. It is the zenith of the year in both a chronological (*Ādi* month comes immediately after *Phālguna*) and a religious sense.

Given the sinister character of this period, why was this time designated as the favorite time for Śiva and the most auspicious time for his favorite ritual? To cite, again, the *Śabda-kalpa-druma* (a modern source that draws upon many classical and medieval Sanskrit texts): 'the nighttime was chosen for the worship of Śiva because it is his favorite time'.¹⁹ This is the time when he comes and goes among men and takes up his residence in the world for worship. In the *Mahābhārata* and many Purāṇas, he is addressed as the 'night-goer' (*niśācara*); for his retinue he chooses ghosts (*bhūta-s*), fiends who eat the flesh of corpses (*piśāca-s*), mongrel-men (*kimpuruṣa-s*), etc. His choicest haunt is the crematorium (from which he derives his epithet, *śmaśānavāsīn*—'he who resides in the burning-grounds') and his chosen time for meditation as Mahāyogin is midnight (*niśītha*, *ardharātri*). The *Īśānasamhitā* says that on this night Śiva manifested himself to the world as *līṅga*. The performance of this vow is established upon this self-willed (*svasamkalpita*) revelation of God in *līṅga*-form.

Many other ancient sources could be invoked in support of the choice of this time for *Śivarātri*. Quotations from two of them will

suffice. Hemādri quotes the Nāgarakhaṇḍa of the *Skanda Purāṇa* as follows: ‘Śiva said, “on the 14th of the dark half of Māgha I shall go in the Kaliyūga on the surface of the earth at night and not by day. I shall without doubt embody myself in all *līṅga*-s, whether movable or immovable, for the removal of the sins committed during the (preceding) year: therefore, the man who offers worship to me at night with these *mantra*-s will be free from sin.”’²⁰ It is stated in the *Īśānasamhitā* that, ‘The first God (Ādi-deva: Śiva) appeared in the form of Śivalīṅga, whose radiance was equal to that of a crore of suns, on the 14th of Māgha dark half.... A man should perform this *vrata* on this *tithi* when the 14th covers the time before and after midnight.’²¹

Since there is a great deal of conflicting data in the classical texts on this *vrata*, no unanimous agreement has ever been reached by the authorities, ancient or modern, as to the precise date and time for the *vrata*. Some works, like the *Nirṇāyamṛta*, emphasize the word *pradoṣa* (evening), while others emphasize the word *niśītha* (midnight). The conclusions drawn by Mādhava are quoted here verbatim:

If *caturdaśī* covers both *pradoṣa* and *niśītha*, then the *vrata* should be observed on that day. If it spreads over two days (i.e., is mixed with 13th and also with *amāvāsyā*) and 14th exists at the time of *niśītha* on both days or if it does not so exist on any of the two days, then covering *pradoṣa* is the determining factor; where 14th covers *pradoṣa* on two days or does not cover *pradoṣa* on any of the two days, then existing at *niśītha* is the determining factor; if *caturdaśī*, having extended over two days covers only one out of the two (*pradoṣa* or *niśītha*) on each day, then conjunction with *Jaya* (i.e., 13th *tithi*) is the decisive factor.²²

In other words, the primary requirement is that the observance should fall upon the fourteenth *tithi* and, if possible, continue throughout the night. If both evening and midnight cannot be covered, then one of them should be.

The Setting and Accoutrements of Śivarātri

The elaborateness of the setting and complexity of the rituals

performed will depend upon the relative size and wealth of the temple in question. A brief description of the setting and the paraphernalia used in the observance witnessed by this writer will suffice for present purposes. The principal rites, which are observed by the mass of worshippers, occur in the great hall (*mahāmaṇḍapa*) of the temple. In the *mahāmaṇḍapa*, two ritual sites are constructed; in the middle of this expansive area is a three-tiered platform, representing the three levels of the universe, on which the offerings of leaves and flowers are placed. To the north and west of this area, in the sacrificial chamber (*yāgaśāla*), a small circular pit is dug to contain the sacred fire (*yāgāgni*) into which the various sacrificial offerings (*homa*) are poured. It is in this *yāgaśāla* that most of the preparatory and secondary (*aṅga*) rites are performed.

Returning to the central area around the raised platform, we find that eleven earthen vessels (*kalaśa*, *kumbha*) are established, representing the eleven forms (*ekādaśa-mūrti*) in which Rudra-Śiva manifests himself in the world.²³ Ten of the pots are placed on the middle tier (the middle region of the cosmos) and are filled with water perfumed with sandalwood and rose-water. Two of these are placed on the eastern side, two on the western, three on the northern, and three on the southern according to an eighteenth-century source.²⁴ A larger vessel, representing Śiva as Ādityāt-maka (the soul or essence of the Sun or etherial regions), is enthroned upon the topmost level and will be the recipient of a major portion of the praises and offerings. Each of the pots is wrapped in a string-netting, is decorated with *bilva* (*bael*, *bel*, wood-apple, or *aegle marmelos*)²⁵ and mango leaves, and is garbed in a simple strip of cloth. A coconut is placed over the mouth of each vessel to represent the god's head. A golden or silver plate, marked with a *liṅga*, is placed inside the larger pot to complete the symbolism.

As required by ancient scripture, eleven brahmins seat themselves in a circle around the platform (*vedi*) while chanting twenty-four to twenty-five hours without interruption the *Śatarudriya* litany and tossing *bilva* leaves onto the altar.

The presence of Śiva in his diverse *mūrti*-s is drawn (*ākarṣa*) into the water-pots by the repetition of their particular *mantra*-s. Additional prayers (*mantra*-s) and recitations (*japa*-s) are intoned to intensify their presence in that place and to obtain the various boons which result inevitably from a proper performance of the rites.

Benefits Gained from Observing Śivarātri

Almost all the Śaiva Purāṇas and Āgamas declare the benefits of all the *vrata*-s and *utsava*-s in highly exaggerated terms. Many of the Vedic *vrata*-s had gone out of use almost entirely during the centuries just before the Christian era. Kane suggests that in order to wean the populace away from the two advancing schisms—Jainism and Buddhism—‘the learned followers of the Vedic system hit upon the glorification of *vrata*-s and promised heaven and other-worldly and spiritual rewards to those who performed *vrata*-s that were comparatively easy and within reach of all instead of sacrifices which were available only to the few.’²⁶ The *Īśānasamhitā* declares: ‘When after observing a fast on that day, Śiva is worshipped with *bilva* leaves and a vigil for the whole night is observed, Śiva saves man from hell and bestows enjoyment of happiness and *mokṣa* and a man becomes like Śiva himself. Gifts, sacrifices, austerities, pilgrimages, and observances of *vrata*-s are not equal to even one ten-millionth part of Śivarātri.’²⁷

To state the matter succinctly, the observance of *Śivarātri*, according to the scriptures, bestows upon the devotee the following boons: (i) enjoyment of great happiness and the realization of the objects of all one’s desires in this world—fame, progeny, longevity, kingdom; (ii) passage over the ocean of hells; (iii) liberation from the round of death and rebirth; (iv) acceptance as an attendant of Śiva (*śivagaṇa*); (v) companionship with Lord Śiva in his heaven of Mt. Kailāsa (*sālokya*), (vi) assumption of the same form or essence as Śiva (*sārūpya*); or (vii) complete union with the Godhead (*sāyujya*).

According to the classical Vedic definition or rituals, *Śivarātri* is both *nitya* (obligatory, regular) and *kāmya* (desirable, optional). It is *nitya* or indispensable because certain sins and their dire effects will result from the failure to observe the rite; the texts require that it be performed annually without fail. It is *kāmya* or desirable because certain rewards and blessings may be obtained therefrom.

Legends Concerning the Origin of Śivarātri

Accompanying almost every *vrata* and *utsava* is a myth or legend which relates the circumstances in which the rite originated, its religious impact in the present, and the goal to which the practice

brings the devotee in the future. By listening to (*śravaṇa*) or telling (*samkīrti*) these stories, the will of the devotee is strengthened in its resolve to carry out the vow to the end.

According to the *Garuḍa Purāṇa* (I. 124), the most ancient account concerning the origin of *Śivarātri*, a king of the Niṣādas named Sundarasenaka was seated on Mt. Abu resting after a day of hunting. Having hunted with his dog the entire day without success, his body was wracked with hunger and thirst. To relax and take his mind off his wretched condition, he lackadaisically tossed leaves of the *bilva* tree onto a raised area below the tree without knowing that it was a *liṅga*. To keep the dust from rising, he sprinkled the area with water from a nearby tank. One of his arrows accidentally fell upon the *liṅga* and as he bent over to pick it up he accidentally fell on his knees before the sacred spot—still without any sense of the significance of his deeds. The great hunter died in time and his soul was seized by the fearsome troops of Yama, the lord of the dead. At that time, Śiva and his troops (*śivagaṇa*-s) overtook Yama and his armies, defeated them, and abducted both the hunter and his dog to *śivaloka* on Mt. Meru where he granted the hunter the honor of becoming a *śivagaṇa*. The hunter had collected merit without knowing it; for, his unconscious acts of devotion, rather than subtracting from, actually procured for him the merits of the rites. The text concludes: 'If one worships the *liṅga* in this way, knowingly and willfully, then the merit accrued therefrom will be limitless and inexhaustible.'

The *Skanda Purāṇa* (I. 1. 33) presents an even more detailed and informative version of the same story. Once upon a time, a wicked Kirāṭa (woodsman) named Caṇḍa (fierce, cruel) who killed birds, fish, and animals with his net for a livelihood, went deep into the forest in the hope of making a large kill. His wife watched his cruel deeds for many years with great delight. After days of wandering through the forest without any luck, he climbed a tree in order to kill a boar. He passed the night without food or sleep. In order to stave off sleep and to protect himself from the wild animals, he cast *bilva* leaves and water which he had used to rinse his mouth onto a *liṅga* below the tree. Therefore, he bathed the *liṅga* with water, dropped *bilva* leaves, remained awake all night, and fasted. His wife passed that night anxiously, without food or water. The next day she brought food to her husband on a river bank where he was bathing. She left the food on the further bank and crossed

the river to join her husband. Meanwhile, a dog came and stole the food. The wife was infuriated by the dog's action. Flying into an uncontrollable rage, she raised her hand to kill the dog. She was unexpectedly restrained by her husband whose heart, for reasons unknown to him, had been softened through the unconscious performance of the rites of Śivarātri. By now it was noon (on the new-moon day, *amāvāsyā*) and the attendants of Śiva came to take to heaven the man and his wife who had unknowingly worshipped him and fasted on the fourteenth. The Kirāṭa and his wife reached *śivaloka* and were released from all future births by continually fasting and offering a few *bilva* leaves. Pārvatī, the faithful consort of Śiva, was greatly impressed with the sanctity of Śivarātri and proclaimed its efficacy to her friends. In turn, they spoke of it to the ruling princes of the earth. In this manner, the sanctity of Śivarātri was broadcast over the entire earth.

Swami Śivānanda relates a slightly different version which adds a number of significant items.²⁸ This story concerns King Chitrabhanu of the Ikṣvāku race, ruler over all Jambudvīpa, who in a previous life was a hunter named Suswar. Like the hunters in the previous versions, he hunted without success. Like them, he climbed a tree, cast *bilva* leaves onto a *liṅga* and shed tears upon it for the hungry family anxiously awaiting his return. At dawn, he managed to kill a deer, sold it, and obtained food for himself and his family. Before breaking his fast (*pāraṇa*) he was approached by a stranger who begged for food. He served the beggar first and only then fed himself and his family. Due to all the merit he had obtained from worshipping Śiva, he enjoyed years of bliss in *śivaloka* and was reborn as King Chitrabhanu.

This story concerning the 'discovery' of the sacred acts which constitute the Śivarātri observance is basically *didactic* in nature and intention. The recitation of the story gives public expression to the central truths of the Śaivasampradāya, to the universality of the performance of the rite and to the benefits that are to be derived therefrom. It exhibits the 'democratic' spirit of Śivarātrivrata by declaring that all persons, regardless of caste or sect, have equal access to God's atoning grace. Furthermore, it established the fact that even a low caste person (*caṇḍāla*) who inadvertently worships Śiva can achieve the same material and spiritual benefits as the greatest of princess and holy men. As the *Īśānasamhitā* declares, 'All persons of whatever birth or station may celebrate Śivarātri

on the 14th *tithi*, even *caṇḍāla*-s and women.’

Theologically speaking, the story of God’s glorious and benevolent deeds toward mankind in the past (*in illo tempore*) stands as firm testimony in the *hic et nunc* that God will continue to destroy our sins and distresses as before. The recitation of the story within the context of this ritual, quickens God’s salutary powers to new life in the heart of the believer, such that the burdens and sorrows experienced in profane time are transcended. The believer enters into the sacred realm of that time (*illud tempus*), the right time (*kairos* as distinct from *chronos*) or ‘no-time’, i.e., eternity.²⁹ Thereby, the ‘apparent’ line of division between heaven and earth is obliterated and the ‘essential unity’ of the two worlds (the microcosm and the macrocosm) is reinforced.

Moral and Spiritual Preparation for Śivarātri

Because the celebration of a festival or the performance of any religious ritual demarcates a boundary between ordinary or profane time and sacred time, it is crucial to the successful outcome of the rituals that each devotee prepares himself physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually by cultivating certain virtues which are conducive to the realization of the goals of the observance.³⁰ Certain injunctions, therefore, are laid down by scripture which, when practiced with fervent devotion and perseverance, ‘will transform the worshipper—heart, mind, and body—into a dwelling-place fit for divinity’.

The injunctions (*niyama*) as set forth in the *Kālanirṇaya* are as follows:³¹

1. Non-injury (*ahimsā*) to any living creature; this includes not only injury to the body but violence of any sort to that creature’s being or essence.
2. Truthfulness (*satya*)—abstaining from bearing false witness willfully and from speaking ill of another person in a slanderous manner.
3. Freedom from anger (*akrodha*)—keeping the mind free from feelings of wrath, jealousy, and hatred, which tend not only to provoke moral or spiritual violence (*himsā*) but also to upset the spiritual equilibrium so necessary to the proper performance of the vow.

4. Celibacy or continence (*brahmacarya*)—even the sexual potencies must be conserved and applied to pious worship of God. This includes mental celibacy as well, for the mind must not be allowed to wander from thoughts of God.
5. Compassion (*dayā*)—a constant sense of the oneness of the entire created order and of all living beings. This is both a precondition and a direct result of total concentration upon and devotion to God. All other sins will be avoided, provided this injunction is fulfilled.
6. Forbearance (*kṣama*)—patience, quietude, and tranquility are the foundations of undivided devotion.
7. Calmness of mind (*śāntātman*)—as the goal of *Śivarātri* is complete surrender to God and the achievement of equality or union with him, the mind of the devotee must be purified of all distracting thoughts, attitudes, and desires. He should cling firmly to the command of the *Bhagavadgītā* (II. 38): ‘Hold equal pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat; then gird thyself for battle; thou shalt not gather to thee guilt.’
8. Devoid of fits of passion (*krodhahīna*)—again, the mind must be completely stilled and focused upon God’s being and graciousness.
9. Austerities (*tapas*)—fasting, wakefulness, prayer, concentration, worship—all these are indispensable ingredients of ‘God-consciousness’.
10. Free from malice (*drohahīna*)—in keeping with all the other injunctions, all corrupting influences must be destroyed to make room for unalloyed devotion to God.

Description of Śivarātri in Classical Literature

Before presenting a general interpretation of *Śivarātri*, we shall present three slightly different descriptions of the so-called ‘order of service’—two from classical Sanskrit literature (*Garuḍa Purāṇa* I.124.11-23 and *Dharmasindhu*, 1.54ff) and one from a present-day performance observed by the author.

The *Garuḍa Purāṇa* prescribes that, after fulfilling the ten injunctions described above, the worshipper should make the usual resolution (*saṃkalpa*) to accomplish, without faltering, all the acts

of the ritual.³² He must say, 'O God, I will keep awake the whole night on the 14th *tithi*. I shall make according to my ability worship, gifts, austerities and cooked-offering (*homa*). O Śambhu! On the 14th I shall take no food and shall take food only on the next day. Oh Lord! be thou my refuge (*samāśraya*) for securing the enjoyment of happiness (*ānanda*) and liberation (*mokṣa*).' Approaching his personal or familial guru, he should obtain permission to perform the rites, then bathe the *liṅga* (*abhiṣeka*) with the five sacred gifts of the cow (*pañcagavya*)³³ and the five foods of immortality (*pañcāmṛta*),³⁴ all the while repeating the *pañcākṣara* or *mūlamantra* to Śiva.³⁵ He must then worship Śiva with the sixteen services (*upacāra-s*),³⁶ offering into the fire (*yāgāgni*) sesame (*tīla*), grains of rice (*tanḍula*), and boiled rice (*poṅkal*) mixed with clarified butter (*ghṛta*, 'Ghee'). Next he performs the '*pūrṇāhuti*'³⁷ while muttering (*japa*) the *Vasodhārā Mantra-s*.³⁸ At some time during the night he will listen to music and stories (*itihāsa-s*) concerning the powers and heroic deeds of Śiva, taking care to make appropriate offerings during the other three segments of the night.³⁹ At daybreak he mutters the *pañcākṣara* an additional 108 times and prays for forgiveness of sins: 'O God! I have worshipped in this *vrata* without obstacles (*aviḥna*) through your favor; O Lord of all worlds! O Śiva, pardon me! Whatever merit I have won this day and whatever has been offered by me to Śiva, I have finished this *vrata* today through your favor. O Bountiful One! be pleased with me and go to your abode. There is no doubt that I have become pure by merely seeing (*darśana*) you.'

Having completed the principal rites of *Śivarātri*, the devotee now presents gifts (*dāna*) and donations (*dakṣiṇā*) to the officiating priests and the other devotees. The text declares: 'He who observes the rites for twelve years will obtain fame (*kīrti*), wealth (*dhana*), sons (*putraka*), and kingdom (*rājya*), after which he will go straight to *Śivaloka*.'

The *Dharmasindhu* declares that after taking only one meal (*ekabhakta*) on the thirteenth *tithi* and after completing the usual sacrificial duties (*pañcayajña*) of the householder on the fourteenth, the worshipper should go to the temple. First, he must make the vow (*samkalpa*) to perform the rites. If the officiant be a brahmin, he should recite the verses from the *R̥g Veda* (X.127) invoking the Goddess of the Night to take pleasure in the rites

and to bless the fruits of the worship. The devotee then bathes in black sesame seeds, applies the *tripuṇḍra* mark to his forehead with ashes made of burned cow dung, rinses his mouth (*ācamana*), and washes his feet (*pādya*) with pure Ganges water while repeating the *mūlamantra*. Then, taking the Rudrākṣa seed (*elaecarpus ganitrus*) rosary in hand, he should reverence Śiva with the *mūlamantra*, the metre Anuṣṭubh, and the Devatā (*Sadāśiva*), while he performs the *nyāsa* (mental assignment of various parts of the body to tutelary deities), *pūjā* (worship), and *japa* (muttering *mantra*-s and divine names). He next establishes the jar (*kalaśa-sthāpana*) and contemplates Śiva who now resides in all his majesty within the jar. He must establish a *liṅga* (probably from sand, clay, or turmeric powder) by performing the *prāṇapratiṣṭhā* (establishment of life-breaths), praying for Śiva's presence in the *liṅga* throughout the ceremonies. He then offers veneration (*añjali*) of flowers and the remaining sixteen *upacāra*-s to both the jar and the *liṅga*, while repeating the *mūlamantra*, and the *mantra* 'āpyāyasva' (RV; I.91.6-10). Finally, he washes both *liṅga* and vessel with pure water while reciting verses from the *R̥g Veda* (X.9.1-3). The priest now performs *abhiṣeka* with water perfumed with sandalwood, saffron, and camphor while muttering the *Śatarudrītya* and the *Puruṣasūkta* (RV; X.90) either one or eleven times. Then in succession he offers to the vessel (*kalaśa*), *sahasranamajapa*, *naivedya*, *ācamana*, and *phala*, *tāmbūla*, and *dīpa* with the *mūlamantra*. He presents *nāmaskara*-s to the eight forms of Śiva and to each of his eight wives,⁴⁰ together with *añjali*-s of flowers to the twelve names of Śiva.⁴¹ Lastly, the priests and devotees join together in doing a *pradakṣiṇa* around the *vedi* and the *liṅga*, while, once again, muttering the *mūlamantra* 108 times. Each worshipper prays to Śiva for forgiveness with a final declaration: 'May Śaṃbhu Sadāśiva be pleased with this *pūjā*.'

Contemporary Performance of Sivarātri in Madras city⁴²

Contemporary performances of Śivarātri differ in certain important respects from those described in classical literature. Even among selected contemporary examples, actual practices will differ from place to place depending upon the circumstances—e.g., the mixture of the tradition adopted in each locale, the size and wealth

of the temple, and the availability of personnel. Indeed, in modern times few, if any, people go through all the rites prescribed by the ancient texts. They usually limit themselves to fasting, keeping awake, listening to stories of Śiva's exploits and worshipping him in the temple. In certain parts of India people still drink a concoction called *bhaṅg*, prepared by pouring water over hemp leaves and adding almonds, rose leaves, opium, etc. It is supposed to be a favorite beverage of Śiva.

The worship service proper customarily begins shortly after sunrise (about 5 A.M.) on the fourteenth. In larger and wealthier temples, forty-four brahmins divide themselves into four groups of eleven singers each, in keeping with the numerical symbolism of eleven. Each group of eleven seats itself in a circular pattern around the central altar (*vedi*) in the great hall (*mahāmaṇḍapa*) of the temple. Each group chants the *Śatarudriya*,⁴³ (the most sacred hymn to Rudra-Śiva) eleven times during a three-hour segment (*yama, prahara*) of the day. The priestly singers, representing the entire religious community, worship Śiva—who, once invoked with appropriate *mantra*-s, will take up residence in the eleven vessels on the altar⁴⁴ by reciting various Śiva *mantra*-s (primarily the *rudra*, the *bijākṣara*, *mūlamantra*, *śivasahasranāma*, and sometimes selected *śivastotra*-s) and by tossing *bilva* leaves onto the altar.

Here, then, is a brief sketch of the procedure followed in the performance witnessed by this author in Madras city. The basic structure can be elaborated upon according to the needs and facilities in any given instance:

1. Getting permission (*anujñā*) from the assembled brahmins to perform the rites of *Śivarātri*. Before the main rites are begun, a gift of pure water is given (*arghyapradāna*) to the family of Śiva. In addition, water offerings are made to Nandi and *bilva* leaves are given to the *liṅga*. Next, gold coins (*dakṣiṇapradāna*) are distributed to all the brahmin priests and official permission is received to begin the ceremonies. Finally, offerings of sandalwood paste, *bilva* leaves, flowers, and even *tulasī* leaves⁴⁵ are made to the outer shape of the altar.
2. A general resolution (*samkalpa*), customarily made in preparation for any major religious observance, is performed with these words: 'I am now going to perform this rite in *Bhārata-Varṣa* (i.e., India), in Tamil Nadu *deśa*, in the—

year of the Śaka era, residing south of Mt. Meru, during the——th year of the (sixty year) cycle, on this—— asterism (*nakṣatra*). Now I am performing this rite for the procurement of enjoyment of happiness and spiritual liberation.⁴⁶

3. Worship of Gaṇapati, Lord of Wisdom and Good Fortune, with *pūjā* (offerings of flowers, water, coconuts, plantains, etc.) or *homa* (cooked food and ghee poured into the fire) ending with the *pūrṇāhuti* and the *Vasordhārā Mantra*-s (otherwise known as the *camaka*).⁴⁷ (This rite is preliminary to any undertaking). Specifically, Gaṇapati is offered in succession *alamkāra*, *yajñopavīta*, *arcana* with *Gaṇapatināmajapa*, *dhūpa* and *dīpa*, *naivedya*, *tāmbūla*, and *karpūra*.
4. Resolving (*saṃkalpa*) to undertake this *vratā* in particular and see it through to the end, with the words: 'Now I am going to perform this rite of Śivarātri to get rid of any sins and for the general welfare of my family on *Māghacaturdaśī*. I am performing the *Maheśvara-pūjā* as a limb or secondary rite (*aṅga*) of Śivarātri and also *Kalaśapūjā*.⁴⁸ It is here also that the so-called *mahānyāsa rudrasya* is enacted, renouncing every concern for worldly affairs and transforming the heart and mind into an abode fit for divinity.
5. Establishment of the water-pots (*kalaśa-sthāpana*) which are filled with water, *pañcāmṛta*, and other ingredients. The chief priest invokes various gods (Indra, Varuṇa, Agni, Rudra, Śakti) inviting them to take up their places in the pots, while touching water. After washing his hands and mouth (*ācamana*), he decorates the pots with sandalwood paste, turmeric, etc., in all four directions. He also invokes the three river goddesses—Gaṅgā, Yamunā, and Sarasvatī.
6. Here again the main rites are composed of worship (*pūjā*) of the vessels for twenty-four hours from approximately 6 o'clock one morning until 6 o'clock the next morning, accompanied by continual recitation of the *rudra*.⁴⁹ At the conclusion of each cycle of eleven recitations, the priests recite the *chamaka* and then chant the *pañcākṣara mantra* repeatedly as they present the five *upacāra*-s to Śiva in the larger vessel.⁵⁰ During the waving of the camphor light, a portion of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (*Adhyāya* III) is recited. Finally, to conclude this round of rites the customary benediction (*aśirvāta*)

is intoned:⁵¹ 'May there be welfare for the people; may rulers protect the world, following the righteous path; to cows and Brāhmaṇas, may there always be good; may the whole world be happy.'⁵² The devotees approach the *vedi* one by one and receive *prasāda* of camphor, sacred ashes (*bhasman*), *kumkum* powder, and flower petals.

7. Simultaneous and continuous *abhiṣeka* to the *liṅga* is performed in the central shrine (*garbhagr̥ha*) during which time various sacred substances (i.e., *pañcāmṛta* and *pañcagavya*) are poured over the idol. To make this procedure clear, we shall simply present a list of the substances with the time-periods during which they are offered:

- A. PAÑCĀMṚTA
- Milk
 - Curds
 - Clarified butter (ghee) 9:00-11:00 A.M.
 - Honey
 - Sugar
- B. PAÑCAGAVYA
- Sweet milk
 - Coagulated or sour milk
 - Butter 11:00 A. M.-1:00 P.M.
 - Cow's urine
 - Cow's dung
- C. PAÑCĀMṚTA (five kinds of sweets)
- Fruits
 - Honey
 - Sugar 1:00-3:00 P.M.
 - Dried grapes
 - Candy
- D. DHĀRĀPATRIM (liquids poured through a shallow pan with 'one thousand' holes punched in the bottom to provide the *liṅga* a kind of shower-bath)
- Milk
 - Curds
 - Honey 3:00-5:00 P.M.
 - Coconut milk⁵³
 - Sugar water

8. Provided the resources of the temple allow for it, *Rudra-homa* is offered into the altar in the *yāgaśāla*. It is accompanied by continual repetition of the *rudra*, together with offerings of ghee, sesame, etc. Śiva is asked to accept the gifts with his blessings. The offerings, among other things, consist of silk

- garments, precious stones, gold coins, umbrellas, etc. These are first dipped into ghee and then placed in the fire. (This is a separate ritual comprised of its own preliminary and concluding rites—always ending with *pūrṇāhuti* and *Vasordhārā Mantra-s.*)
9. Concluding ceremony, customarily attended by a great throng of people; it may also include the *Rudra-homa* described above. Essentially, it is composed of six, more or less, distinct sacred acts: pouring out of the waters in the eleven pots onto the *śivaliṅga* (*abhiṣeka*); elaborate worship of the *liṅga*, ending with the waving of the camphor lamp; offerings of flowers to all the devotees (*mantra-ṣuṣpa*), chanting various benedictions (*aśirvāda*), distributing the 'holy water' (*tīrtha*) which has been poured over the *liṅga* and caught in a special vessel; and distribution of flowers (*ṣuṣpa*), fruits (*phala*), and sacred ashes (*bhasman*, *vibhūti*) which have been offered to God during the worship.
 10. Finally, the feeding of the brahmins, the poor, the blind, the deaf, etc.⁵⁴ After this, everyone present breaks his fast (*pāraṇa*) and partakes of the leftover food (*ucchiṣṭa*).

Śivarātri as a Symbolism of 'Religious Totality'

Viewed structurally, numerous binary polarities at various levels of experience and reality are merged and, finally, transcended in the rites of Śivarātri (see Table 1). Take, for example, the coalescence of various zones of time. The observance is performed on *caturdaśi-kṛṣṇapakṣa-phālguna* (i.e., the fourteenth lunar day of the dark fortnight of the month *Phālguna*). *Phālguna*, the month during which the full moon stands in the asterism (*nakṣatra*) of *Phālgunī*, is the last month of the lunar year and, therefore, is the point of mediation between the years. The dark fortnight, when the moon is on the wane (and, hence, is 'dying') is the transition period linking the successive 'rebirths' of the moon at the beginning of each new month. The fourteenth lunar day (*tithi*) is, of course, the final segment of the dark fortnight. Furthermore, *Śivarātri* is situated at the median point between the end of the cool season (*śiśra*) and the beginning of the hot season or springtime (*vasanta*). In Tamil Nadu (where we witnessed the performance of *Śivarātri*)

TABLE 1*

<i>Negative Pole</i>	<i>Mediating Principle</i>	<i>Positive Pole</i>
Night	Evening	Day
Profane world outside	Permission from brahmins to perform rites plus various preliminary rites of physical and spiritual purification	Sacred world inside
Cool, wet season	Period of transition which is neither hot nor cool, neither wet nor dry	Hot, dry season
Old year	Month of <i>Phālguna</i>	New year
Dark half	14th <i>tithi</i>	Light half
Man as giver	Giver and receiver meet in the gift	God as receiver
Man's sins	Man's worship—God's forgiveness	God's grace
Lower castes and women	Mediated in ritual celebration	Upper castes
Heat of <i>śivaliṅga</i>	Mediated in ritual celebration	Coolness of flowers, leaves and water
Rudra's uncontrollable anger	Mediated in ritual celebration	Śiva's inexhaustible grace

*The essential religious meaning of the vow of *Śivarātri* can be elicited most clearly by analyzing it in terms of certain mythic and ritualistic structures represented in this Table. The two extreme polarities are merged and transcended in a third 'ambiguous' middle term, which designates the domain of 'holiness' or 'sacrality'.

each month begins with the bright fortnight (*śuklapakṣa*) and the waxing of the moon and concludes with the dark fortnight (*kṛṣṇapakṣa*), such that the fourteenth night of the *kṛṣṇapakṣa* marks the terminal point of the lunar calendar. That night, the night of Śiva is the so-called darkest time of the year in that it comes at the darkest time of the month and at the end of the lunar year. Mythologically speaking, it is the dark night which immediately precedes the dawn of a new day, the death of the old world and the birth of the new.

Numerous other polarities are mediated by a third, so-called 'anomalous' principle which does not belong generically to either of the two 'extreme' categories, but which, nonetheless, serves as a point of mediation and transcendence of both extremes. The devotees (or the priests representing the entire community of worshippers) pass from the 'profane' world outside the area consecrated for worship into the sacred area itself, by gaining permission to perform the rites from the brahmins, protectors of the sacred lore, and by undergoing preliminary rites of physical and spiritual purification with 'holy water' and sacred *mantra*-s. Man as the giver of gifts and God as the receiver of those gifts meet in the acts of giving and the gifts which are given, such that a channel of power and mutual relatedness is opened up between God and man. Within the context of the *Śivarātri* rites, both men and God play the roles of both giver and receiver, such that 'it is quite impossible to say who is actually donor and who recipient. Both participate in the powerfulness of what is being presented and hence it is neither the giver nor the receiver, even though he be a God or a divine being, who occupies the focal point of the action.'⁵⁵

Again, all class and caste distinctions are obliterated on this day to the effect that, through common participation in the ritual activities and entry into the divine reality which such rites embody, all men, irrespective of birth, social status or sectarian identity, stand before God as equals among equals. Other sets of opposites which are merged in the rites are: man's sinfulness (i.e., bad *karma*) and God's grace (*devaprasāda*, *śivānugraha*); the heat of Śiva's *liṅga* and the coolness of the flowers, leaves, water, and even cooked-offerings bestowed upon the deity; Rudra's uncontrollable anger which is expressed so graphically in the *Śatarudriya* and Śiva's inexhaustible grace expressed in the various *nāmajapa*-s and *kirtana*-s; denial of essential sustenance in the form of food and sleep by

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fasting and keeping awake and the acts of providing sustenance and pleasure to the deity in the form of hymns of praise and various vegetal and food offerings; and, finally, at the upper levels of man's spiritual attainments (*siddhānta*), the realm of pain, ignorance, and death (i.e., *samsāra*) is transcended and the realm of bliss, absolute wisdom and eternal life (i.e., *mokṣa* or *śivaloka*) is realized.

That this ritual observance represents 'totality' at so many levels of meaning (social, religious, cosmic) is confirmed, again, by the significance given to the numbers five and eleven. Regarding the number five, Śiva is said to possess five faces, five names, and five modes of manifestation (*mūrti-s*).⁵⁶ That the set of five names⁵⁷ possesses great ritual significance is attested to by the fact that their earliest appearance (in the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad*, third century B.C.) 'constitutes a series of formulas addressed, in fixed order, to Śiva'.⁵⁸ They are intoned (*japa*) one by one in a low voice in order to increase the devotees' powers of meditation and to produce supranormal knowledge.⁵⁹ In time, Śiva's five faces were made the basis of an elaborate classificatory system. The five modes were identified with the parts of the body,⁶⁰ with the ontological principles, organs of sense and action, the subtle and gross elements. This system was a means of explaining how Śiva is the entire universe and that, conversely, the cosmos is composed of the different facets of Śiva's being. As Gonda remarks: 'That means that each of Śiva's five faces corresponds to, or is identical with, one of the components of the five groups which, in the Sāṃkhya school of thought, constitute the twenty-five *tattvas*. . . . In his five-fold nature Śiva is therefore identical with five times five elements of reality.'⁶¹

Yet another expression of that idea is the doctrine of Śiva's fivefold activity (*pañcakṛtya*) which makes frequent appearance in the Mahāpurāṇas. These are *sṛṣṭi* (creation, evolution), *sthiti* (preservation, support), *samhāra* (destruction, involution), *tirobhāva* (veiling, deluding), and *anugraha* (granting favors or grace, salvation). Taken together these five primordial acts of Śiva constitute the totality of the natural process in both the human and divine, in the macro- and microcosmic, realms.

Again, with regard to the number eleven, we should recall that during the rites eleven brahmins chant eleven-fold *mantra-s* eleven times in succession, seated around a group of eleven vessels, addressing praises to the eleven *mūrti-s* of Śiva. While no one explanation for the meaning of a sacred number is exhaustive, we suggest that

the meaning of the number eleven can be understood as representing the 'superplus' or overabundance of reality which stands beyond, so to speak, the limits of 'the Real'. If the system of numbers is constituted basically by the digital sequence of 1, 2, 3 . . . 10, then the number eleven is the first number in the second series. The tenth unit is not merely the last in the series; it corresponds to the first and is, at the same time, the fulfilment of the nine and signifies the transition point between the old order ending with nine and the new order beginning with ten plus one. In other words, ten represents numerical totality and eleven signifies 'totality plus'.

This same idea is expressed mythologically, we believe, in the *Puruṣasūkta* (*Rg Veda*, X. 90) in the statement that the Divine Person (*Puruṣa*) is 'all that yet has been and all that is to be', who 'pervading the earth fills this space and goes ten fingers (*daśāṅgula*) beyond'. The hymn continues, 'yea, greater than this [world] is *Puruṣa*'. It seems obvious that the same numerological principle is applied in both cases. The numerical system is exhausted in numbering from one to ten; eleven is the 'one' beyond the whole, or, as the Vedāntins state it, 'the One within and beyond the many'. Eleven represents the totality of a ten-fold universe, just as in Hindu numerology the number five signifies 'the totality of the fourfold division of the universe'.⁶²

Indeed, *Śivarātri* unifies many different levels of life and experience in the lives of the worshippers. It reintegrates the segments of their individual and communal lives, both morally and spiritually. The performance of the vows serves to solidify social ties in the family and community. At the cosmic level, it re-establishes the devotees' spiritual bond with the divine presence which establishes the cosmos on a firm foundation and provides for the welfare of all who serve him. Looked at from the negative side, without the performance of *Śivarātri* and its attendant benefits, the life of the devotees would become more and more fragmented and weakened until, finally, they would find themselves isolated from that which once gave meaning and direction to their lives.

As for the effects of the rites upon the inner life of the devotee, we suggest that through fasting, keeping the vigil, and worshipping God, the devotee experiences a renewal of life and faith. A regeneration of his very life-force (*élan vital*) enables him to continue living with a renewed sense of purpose. What had become weak with the passage of time has now been made strong. What had become

lifeless has been revitalized. What had become tasteless and filled with drudgery has been enriched. The channels between God and man which may have been clogged up with selfish desires and false notions are reopened by renewed contact with the Lord. Ties of mutual support between the human and divine realms are re-established. The negative forces of sin and guilt are destroyed by the production of auspicious forces through acts of penance, contemplation, gift-giving, and worship.

Śivarātri commences with a solemn vow to 'mend one's ways' and to persevere in the performance of the vow. It concludes with a prayer of repentance, a petition for forgiveness, and a prayer of thanksgiving for the grace to repent which itself is founded upon the love of God which enabled the devotees to repent in the first place. This idea is expressed most dramatically in the benediction laid down in the *Garuḍa Purāṇa*: 'O God! I have worshipped in this *vrata* without obstacles through your favour; O Lord of all Worlds! O Śiva, pardon me! Whatever merit I have won this day and whatever has been offered by me to Śiva, I have finished this *vrata* today through your favour . . .'

We conclude with a brief glance at some of the main symbols in the rites which signify this process of reunification of man with society and with God. The word *rātri*, for example, signifies not only the nighttime in a literal but also in a spiritual sense—the withdrawal of the senses into the mind, the mind into the soul, and the surrender of the soul to the supreme divinity, Śiva, Lord of the *Jīva*. It is the dazzling light of Śiva-consciousness that emerges out of the 'heart of darkness'. Again, the physical act of keeping a vigil (*jāgarana*) is symbolic of the cultivation of an inner wakefulness, an opening up of the conscious and unconscious mind to the descent of God into the human realm. The divine energy, which supports and fertilizes human and cosmic life, emerges only after the human ego awakens to its absolute dependence upon and identity with God, which is the Self (*ātman*). The act of fasting (*upavāsa*) is merely a means of promoting control of the senses and of restraining them from wandering in search of deluding objects. The withdrawal of food from the physical body is conducive to the starvation of lust, greed and envy, so that the mind and heart may become pure abodes for divinity.

Finally, a word about worship (*abhiṣeka*). There is a Sanskrit saying, '*alamkārapriyaḥ Viṣṇuḥ, abhiṣekapriyaḥ Śivaḥ*' (Viṣṇu favors

ornamentation, Śiva favors ablutions). The most graphic confirmation of this is the practice in South Indian temples of allowing water to drip continually onto the *liṅga* in the *garbhagr̥ha*, through a hole in the bottom of a copper or brass pot. It is said that constant *abhiṣeka* cools his third eye. Pandit Kāṣī Ghaṇapati of the Sringeri Math, Madras, expressed the esoteric meaning of *abhiṣeka* to this author in these words: 'The greatest and highest *abhiṣeka* is the pouring of the waters of purest love onto the *ātmaliṅga* of the lotus of the heart which is the eternal abode of Śiva. The external *abhiṣeka* with various substances and the precious gifts that are offered will cultivate the devotion and adoration of Lord Śiva and eventually will lead to internal *abhiṣeka* with a pure abundant flow of love.'

Notes

1. P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra (Ancient and Mediaeval Religious and Civil Law)*, 5 Vols. in 7 Books, Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1930-1962, Vol. V, Pt. 1, pp. 225-36.
2. Consult the following works: 'Festivals and Ceremonials,' *Census of India*, 1961, New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1964; E. Denison Ross, ed., *An Alphabetical List of the Feasts and Holidays of the Hindus and Mohammedans, Imperial Records*, Calcutta; Superintendent, Government Printing, India, 1914; B.A. Gupta, *Hindu Holidays and Ceremonials*; and rev. ed., Calcutta and Simla: Thacker, Spink and Co., 1919; special issue on 'Festivals of India', *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 29 July 1962; P. V. Jagadisa Ayyar, *South Indian Festivities*, Madras: Higginbothams Limited, 1921; A. C. Mukerjee, *Hindu Feasts and Fasts*, Allahabad: Indian Press, 1916; Raja Sir Radhakant Deb Bahadur (ed.), *Śabdakalpadruma*, 5 Vols., (reprint ed., Varanasi: Chowkhamba, 1961); Swami Śivānanda, *Lord Śiva and His Worship*, Rishikesh: Yoga Vedānta Forest Academy, 1962, and M. M. Underhill, *The Hindu Religious Year, The Religious Life of India*, Calcutta: Association Press, 1921, pp. 91-98. Much valuable information concerning Hindu festivals and vows may be found in the *Indian Calendar Reform*, 2 Vols., Delhi: The Manager of Publication, Publication Branch, Civil Lines, 1953.
3. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. V, Pt. 1, pp. 253-462.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-21.
5. The *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* (ed. Priyabala Shah, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1958-1961), states in the third *khaṇḍa* that 'those who perform a fast (*upavāsavrata*) should inaudibly mutter (*japa*) the *mantra*-s of that deity, should mediate (*dhyāna*) upon that deity, should listen to stories (*itihāsaśravaṇa*) about that deity, should worship the image (*pratimāpūjā*) of that deity, should take the names of that deity and listen to others singing the names (*nāmajapa*)'.
6. *Garuḍa Purāṇa*, ed. Ramaśankārabhaṭṭācārya, Vārāṇasī: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, 1964, I. 124.

7. *Padma Purāṇa*, 4 Vols., ed. Viśvanātha Nārāyaṇa Maṇḍālika, Poona: Ānandāśrama Press, 1919, I.1.33.
8. M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1927, Vol. I, p. 517ff.
9. The *Tithitattva*, a section of the *Smṛtitattva* by Raghunandana Bhaṭṭācārya, contains a wealth of information from the medieval period on various religious observances in popular Hinduism.
10. Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, *Kālatattvavivecana*, ed. N. K. Sharma, Prince of Wales Saraswati Bhavana Texts, No. 40, Vārāṇasī: Government Sanskrit Library, 'Saraswati Bhāvana', 1932-1933.
11. Viṣṇubhaṭṭa Āṭhavale, *Puruṣārthacintāmaṇi*, ed. Bhāskara Śāstri Pāvagī, Poona; Ānandāśrama Press, 1907, No. 55. This is a voluminous work on *kāla*, *saṃskāra*-s, *vrata*-s, and *utsava*-s which relies rather heavily up on Hemādri and Mādhava for its sources of information.
12. Quoted in P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. V, Pt. 1, p. 227.
13. Mādhavācāryya, *Kālanirṇaya* (Kāla Mādhava), ed. M. M. Chandrakanta Tarkalankara, Bibliotheca Indica, Vol. 101, Nos. 540 and 548, Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1890. Cited in P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, Vol. V, Pt. 1, p. 227. *Kālanirṇaya* is a treatise on the proper time for all major religious observances.
14. G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, 2 Vols., trans. J. E. Turner, New York: Harper & Row, 1963, p. 384.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
16. The fourteenth *tithi* of the dark half is the darkest part of every month, coming as it does just before the 'rebirth' of the moon. The nighttime is, generally, a period of foreboding, of evil and of death in Hindu mythology and symbolism.
17. Quoted in Swami Śivānanda, *Hindu Fasts and Festivals and their Philosophy*, p. 110.
18. Radhakant Deb Bahadur (ed.), *Śabdakalpadruma*, Vol. V, p. 96.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
20. Hemādri, *Caturvargacintāmaṇi*, Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1895, p. 304.
21. As cited in P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmaśāstra*, V. I: 229-30 and note 592.
22. Mādhavācāryya, *Kālanirṇaya*, pp. 297-98. and cited in Kane, *Ibid.*
23. The eleven *mūrti*-s of Rudra are: Mahādeva, Śiva, Rudra, Śaṅkara, Nīllohita, Īśāna, Vijaya, Bhīma, Devadeva, Bhavodbhāva, and Ādityātmaka, according to the *Vratacūdāmaṇi*, composed by Devanjñā Śarma, alias Saṅgameśwaram, son of Gopāla, of Sāṅḍilya Gotra, who resided at Durgāghaṭṭa in Kāśī (ed. by T. M. Nārāyaṇaśāstri, Kumbakonam, 1935). Most of the material which Pandit Kāśī Ghaṇapati chanted concerning *Mahāśivarātri* is located in this text.
24. *Ibid.*, 'Śivarātri-skanda'.
25. Since Śiva favors the *bilva* leaf, it is associated primarily with the cults of Śiva and Śakti. Its trifoliate leaf pattern, as well as Śiva's three eyes, signifies the three functions of Lord Śiva, i.e., creation, preservation, and destruction. The leaf may also be linked to various other triads such as the three points of the trident (*triśūla*) which he always carries, the three *guṇa*-s or strands of reality of Sāṃkhya, and the three phonemes in the sacred syllable *OM* (divisible into *A*, *U*, and *M*). In addition, the flowers of the *datura* (*datura alba*) and the

- jati* (*murraya exotica*) as well as the rose are especially favored by Śiva.
26. Devanjñā Śarma, *Vratacūḍāmaṇi*, p. 43.
 27. Quoted in P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, Vol. V, Pt. 1, p. 229.
 28. Swami Śivānanda, *Hindu Fasts and Festivals and Their Philosophy*, Rishikesh: The Śivānanda Publication League, 1947, pp. 118-20. He, like P. V. Kane, claims that this version of the myth appears in the *Śāntiparvan*, but neither V. Raghavan nor I were able to discover it in any of the extant sources.
 29. See John E. Smith, 'Time, Times and the Right Time; Chronos and Kairos,' *The Monist*, LIII, pp. 1-13; Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1958, chapter XI; and G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, pp. 384-88.
 30. The *Agniṣurāṇa* (175.10-11) sets forth a fairly standard set of virtues which must be cultivated as common to all *vrata*-s.
 31. Mādhavācāryya, *Kālanirṇaya*. II.72.
 32. When a person once undertakes a vow, he must see it through to a successful completion. Disastrous consequences rebound upon him who abandons the discipline heedlessly. 'When a person, having first undertaken a *vrata*, does not carry it out, being led away by some desire, he, while alive, becomes a dog' (*Garuḍa Purāṇa* I.128.19). When such a lapsed person breaks his *vrata* because of greed, infatuation, or distraction, he must submit himself to a three-day fast, shave his head, and begin the *vrata* all over again.
 33. I.e., milk, sour milk, butter, cow's urine, and cow dung.
 34. I.e., milk, curds, ghee, honey, and sugar.
 35. I.e., 'OM! Namaḥ Śivāya'.
 36. There is no unanimity among ancient writers concerning the question of the exact number of the *upacāra*-s and their names and order of succession. The order of the sixteen *upacara*-s (five and sixteen being the standard numbers) given in the *Nṛsiṃha Purāṇa* (62.8-14) are: (i) invocation or invitation (*āvāhana*); (ii) a cushion to sit on (*āsana*); (iii) washing the deity's feet (*pādya*); (iv) pure water (*arghya*); (v) rinsing the mouth with water (*ācamana*); (vi) bathing the deity (*snāna*); (vii) clothing (*vastra*); (viii) sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*); (ix) anointing the body with unguents (*anulepana*) or perfumes (*gandha*); (x) flowers (*puṣpa*); (xi) incense (*dhūpa*); (xii) light (*dīpa*); (xiii) cooked-food offering (*naivedya*); (xiv) betel nut and leaf (*tāmbūla*); (xv) gifts of clothes, umbrellas, etc. (*dakṣiṇa*); and (xvi) circumambulation of the image (*pradakṣiṇa*). If a person is unable to offer all sixteen services, he is enjoined to offer five; if unable to offer five, then he should offer two (viz., sandalwood paste and flowers); and if unable to do even that, then he may offer devotion (*bhakti*) only.
 37. I.e., the act of pouring ghee into the fire in an unbroken flow along a piece of scooped-out bamboo or plantain sheath like an open pipe.
 38. Consult V. Raghavan (ed. and trans.), *The Indian Heritage*, Bangalore: The Institute of World Culture, 1956, p. 24, for a rendering of the *Vasordhārā* or *Camaka Mantra*-s.
 39. The *Tithitattva* adds these details: 'During the first watch of the night, offer milk with the *mantra*, "hrīm Īśānāya namaḥ"; during the second watch, offer curds with "hrīm aghorāya namaḥ"; during the third watch, offer ghee with "hrīm vāmadevaya namaḥ"; and during the fourth, honey with "hrīm sadyojātāya namaḥ".

40. The eight forms (*mūrti*-s) of Śiva, according to the *Śāṅkhyāyana Brāhmaṇa* (VI.2-9) are: Bhava (Progenitor), Śarva (Wielder of the Arrow), Īśāna (Lord), Paśupati (Lord of Cattle or Human Souls), Ugra (Violent, Impetuous), Rudra (Fierce, Terrible), Bhīma (Formidable), and Mahādeva (Great God).
41. The twelve names of Śiva are: Śiva, Rudra, Paśupati, Nīlakaṇṭha, Maheśvara, Harikeśa, Virūpākṣa, Pinakin, Tripurāntaka, Śaṃbhu, Śūlin, and Mahādeva.
42. As the rites are presently performed in the city of Madras, they have taken on a form that is distinctively different from that observed in remote rural areas—reflecting, no doubt, the urban situation in which this performance is set and certain modernizing influences which have acted upon it. In any case, the most significant performances of *Śivarātri* are held in cities and at certain temple sites sacred to Lord Śiva. The most notable sites are: Vārāṇasī, Tarakeśwar, Vaidyanāth, Walkeśwar (near Bombay), and Rameśwaram. Such famous Śaiva shrines as Mahākāla at Ujjain, Candranātha (Sitakund near Chittagong), Paśupatinātha in Nepal, Mallikārjuna at Śrī Salilam in Kurnool District, Ekaliṅga in Udaipur and the sites of the ‘elemental images’ at Tiruchirapalli, Chidambaram, Tiruvannāmalai, Tiruvallūr, and Kālahasti attract great masses of pilgrims on festival days. See B. Bhattacharya, ‘Festivals and Sacred Days’, in H. Bhattacharyya (ed.), *Cultural Heritage of India*, Calcutta: The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1956, Vol. IV, p. 486.
43. This hymn is found in the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* (IV.5.1-11) and in the *Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā* of the *Śuklayajurveda* (*khaṇḍa* XVI). It consists of sixty-six *śloka*-s or couplets addressed to the hundred Rudras, or the hundred forms of Rudra, representing the powers of life and death in their terrible phases. The *Taittirīya* recension of the text—which has come to be regarded as an independent Upaniṣad—has been translated and annotated by A. Weber in *Indische Studien*, Vol. II, Berlin: Ferd. Dummler’s Buchhandlung, 1853, p. 14-47, and the *Śuklayajurveda* text by J. Muir in *Original Sanskrit Text on the Origin and History of the People of India, their Religion and Institutions*, 5 Vols., (2nd ed., London: Trubner and Co., 1868-73), IV: 322-31. There is also a complete translation of the formulas in Julius Eggeling, trans., *The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Part 4 (*Sacred Book of the East*, Vol. XLIII, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1879), pp. 150-55.
44. The larger pot situated on the summit of the altar represents Śiva in the form of Śrī Kedāreśvara because of the special connection between this ‘Śiva-Viṣṇu Temple’ in Madras and the Śaiva shrine at Kedarnath in the Himalayas.
45. The use of *tulasī* leaves in this rite is unexpected, in that this leaf is customarily favored by Viṣṇu. We may have here another example of ‘sectarian syncretism’ by means of which all ‘accidental’ distinctions between the two sects and the deities who are venerated are obliterated and their essential identity asserted. Cf. J. Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism: A Comparison*, London: Athlone Press, 1970, p. 110ff, for a detailed list of these gods’ associations with the vegetable kingdom.
46. Devanīña Śarma, *Vratacūḍāmaṇi*, see note 22 for details.
47. While the *Śatarudrīya* is called ‘*Namaka*’ due to a predominance of the word, ‘*namah*’ (obeisance), this hymn (*Kṛṣṇayajurveda*, IV, vii. 1-11; *Śuklayajurveda*, XVIII. 1-17) due to a preponderance of the word ‘*ca*’ (and) is called ‘*Camaka*’.

- By means of the latter invocation the devotee prays that the gods will provide him and his family with every domestic, social, and material benefit.
48. Devanjña Śarma, *Vratacūdāmaṇi*, see note 22.
 49. To recite the *rudra* once requires fifteen to twenty minutes. With a few brief pauses, the hymn can be chanted comfortably in about four hours.
 50. The five standard *upacāra*-s offered to a deity are: washing the god's feet with pure water, perfuming his body with sandalwood paste, giving gifts of flowers, bathing his abode with incense, and filling it with light from an oil lamp. A sixth offering is *naivedya*, cooked-food.
 51. This part of the rite is performed in both domestic and public rituals at the end of worship. While the benedictory formulas vary from occasion to occasion, they usually ask for the granting of prosperity and well-being for the *yajamāna* and for the people in general.
 52. Consult V. Raghavan, *The Indian Heritage*, p. 447.
 53. The same set of items is used here as in the first time period except for the substitution of coconut milk for ghee.
 54. Many ancient texts (notably, the *Kālikapurāṇa* and the *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa Uttarakāṇḍa*, 22.33-34) provide that on the day of the *vrata* 'tasteful and well-favored food and drink without stinting should be distributed to the helpless, the blind and the lame'.
 55. G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, pp. 353-54.
 56. One also finds *śivasya svarūpāṇi* (Maharshi Vedavyasa, *Liṅga Purāṇa*, ed. Pandit Jibananda Vidyāsagara, Calcutta: New Valmiki Press, 1885, 2, 14, 2) and *mūrtayaḥ pañca* (ibid., 2, 14, 5) or 'the five embodiments'. The term *mūrti* is often translated as 'face', 'persona', or 'mode of manifestation'. Agni, who everywhere in the Vedic literature is identified with Rudra, is addressed as *viśvatomukha* (*Rg Veda*, I, 97, 6), the one reality above all as 'facing all directions', and Brahmā's epithet *caturmukha* is too well known to require comment. Cf. R. Pettazzoni, *The All-Knowing God*, London: Methuen, 1956, p. 125. For the 'face' as a mode of divine revelation, consult H. Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966, p. 163.
 57. The names representing the five aspects of Śiva are: Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, Tatpuruṣa, and Īśāna, who appears unvaryingly in every list of Śaiva epithets.
 58. J. Gonda, *Viṣṇuism and Śivaism*, p. 42.
 59. Ibid.
 60. *Liṅga Purāṇa*, 1, 17, 89ff; 2, 25, 91ff, as cited in J. Gonda, ibid., p. 161, note 141.
 61. J. Gonda, ibid., p. 44; see pp. 42-48 for an elaborate survey of the textual and ritual uses of the number five, with particular reference to Śiva's faces.
 62. Ibid., p. 43.

THE FESTIVAL INTERLUDE: SOME ANTHROPOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS*

Suzanne Hanchett

THE ANNUAL CYCLE of Hindu festivals is a colorful and dramatic aspect of life in a Mysore village. Beginning with the lunar new year and the early rains, villagers mark the passage of time with the sequence of locally important festival periods. These occasions provide a series of breaks in the usual routine. Agricultural and business responsibilities are temporarily set aside so that villagers can prepare special foods, attend feasts, organize ceremonies, and exchange gifts with friends or relatives.

Festivals in urban or pilgrimage centers are also occasions of spectacular ritual performance. Travelers to India can witness these elaborate celebrations, and many have marvelled at the splendor of such ceremonies as the Jagannāth at Puri or Gaṇapati in Maharashtra State. As Ortiz has stated from an anthropological point of view, the sheer complexity and force of numbers should convince us that if we are to capture the 'style' or 'feeling tone' of a culture, it is in such dramatic events.¹

In this paper I shall first outline some principles of a social anthropological approach to the structure of festivals as ritual events viewed in their social aspect. Then I shall describe the types of festivals which occur in the rural area of Mysore where I have done ethnographic research. In the concluding section I will present a series of suggestions about the ways in which festivals can articulate with social structure in Hindu communities.

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A Social Anthropological Approach to Festival Activity

Since the late nineteenth century, anthropologists have been struggling to comprehend religious practices and the beliefs on which they are based. Our observations have covered a broad range of phenomena, extending from 'animistic' beliefs through totemism, shamanism, rites of passage, and primitive ceremonial activity to the religions of the Semites, Hindus, and other complex cultures or societies.

From all of this a few principles to guide the study of religious activity have emerged. Before presenting my observations on Mysore village festivals, I shall discuss some of these principles, which are basic to my study of such ceremonies.

(1) In the anthropological view of any specific religious activity, this activity is considered to be a part of a social context.

It is possible to learn a great deal about a social system by observing communal ritual activities. In the first place, certain components of social life can become clearer at the time of ceremonial performance than they are at other times. For example, caste divisions and ranking can become quite clear as different castes are assigned tasks in a temple cart procession (as I shall discuss below). Gluckman has suggested that in some small, face-to-face societies a series of different types of rituals serves to help people sort out the various involuted or 'multiplex' principles according to which they are related to each other.²

We also assume that '...ritual actions...serve to "say something" about the social situation and the social condition of the parties involved....'³ What any ritual 'says' varies, of course, with the particular social structure itself and the role that ritual plays in its social context. Ceremonial activities can express a wide variety of things about social categories and their relationships. Certain cooperative activities may be interpreted to express solidarity or unity of purpose, as Durkheim so carefully explained.⁴ For India, this point of view is demonstrated in Srinivas' book on Coorg.⁵ On the other hand, deep structural divisions and conflicts may also be evident in ritual actions, as Gluckman has shown in his studies of certain African cultures.⁶ Ritual teasing or ritual battles, as in the Holi festival of North India, can also be seen as expressing certain types of conflicts or contradictions in the social structure.⁷

In his book *The Gift*, Mauss demonstrated the usefulness of studying exchange, especially the exchange of prestations in ritual

situations.⁸ As Rosman and Rubel have shown for the 'potlatch' type of society, such exchanges can indicate that a competitive relationship exists.⁹ In the case of the potlatch, competition is between affines vying for high position at times of change in the rank order of their relations.¹⁰

(2) At the heart of the anthropological approach, as I am defining it, is the study of ritual events themselves. That is, it is essential to understand certain details of specific performances before proceeding to interpret their meanings in a larger social context. The event is the locus of social action, the original source of data on the relationship between religious and social structures.

A ritual event is limited in personnel, space and time.¹¹ When observing rituals, we are obliged to determine as accurately as possible who is involved in the activity—whether these be priests, other participants, or other types of beneficiaries. We also try to understand as much as possible about their relations to each other outside of the ritual context, as well as within it. For example, if the giving of a token gift is part of a particular ceremony, we attempt to understand the identities of the giver and receiver as fully as possible.

Many rituals take place in carefully delimited spaces. In this case, it is the responsibility of the anthropologist to determine the boundaries of such spaces and their special characteristics (e.g., rules of behavior inside and outside of them, such as removal of shoes in many sacred Hindu spaces). I have suggested elsewhere that the route of a festival procession through one neighborhood or another may be a significant social and symbolic element of some Hindu festival ritual.¹²

There are two major problems in determining the time position of a given ritual: (i) to place it in a larger cycle of ritual or other activities; (ii) to define ritual times in the same way that we define ritual spaces. Different ceremonies seem to have different periods or cycles, some being calendrical: annual (all other things being equal), biennial, or otherwise determined astrologically or astronomically.

Agricultural activities may also decide some dates. Others seem to occur less regularly: in 1966-1967 I was led to expect certain festivals that never did occur in the village that I was studying. Ortiz has suggested that we should be aware of what he calls 'triggering mechanisms' that signal the beginning of ritual periods.¹³

The ritual times themselves are never the same as usual times.¹⁴

Generally there are ways of delineating them—of giving them formal beginnings and conclusions. For example, the annual Nara-simha *jātra* festival which I observed in a village in Mysore State in 1967 began officially when reddened raw rice (*akṣate*) was distributed to invite several Vedic deities to come and guard the village, and when a group of men tied turmeric-colored threads (*kankana*) to their right wrists as a sign of commitment to complete the twelve-day festival no matter what else happened. These men were also committed to certain restrictions on their behavior (such as sexual abstinence) for the time of the festival. The formal conclusion of the festival was marked by the sending-off of the Vedic deities. There was also a solemn nighttime procession of three men to the boundary of the village to offer rice cooked with turmeric to the local demons (*bhūta*), who were kind enough to stay out of the village for the twelve days. Perhaps in this case the ‘demons’ represent the ordinary, non-ritual activities which must be resumed after the festival is finished.

The Festivals of Two Mysore Villages

From June 1966 through November 1967 I studied the social and cultural organization of two Mysore villages together with my colleague, Dr. Stanley Regelson. The two villages shall be referred to by the names Bandipur and Chinnapura. They are approximately two miles apart, both being located in Hassan District. Both are diversified villages with significant proportions of the three major multi-caste groupings of *jāti*-s—brahmins, non-brahmin middle castes, and Harijans (formerly known as ‘untouchables’). Both villages are primarily agricultural units, dependent on the cultivation of rice and millet (*rāgi*), though Bandipur rice lands are entirely dependent on rainfall-filled tanks for irrigation. Though their social contours are similar, Chinnapura is significantly smaller than Bandipur: the population of Chinnapura was 406 persons in 86 households, according to our 1967 census; while Bandipur had 1506 persons in 262 households at that time.

During our stay in these villages, we observed a great many festivals. The more important ones are listed in Table 1. As anthropologists, we found that these events presented us with both physical and intellectual challenges. Their frequency and duration—

some lasting a week or more—make a field study of them especially difficult. The ethnographer must, like the villagers, set aside routine activities and tax his or her strength to its limit in observing a sequence of temple ceremonies, processions, feasts, market activities, and household rituals that seem to go on almost around the clock day after day.

There are a good many differences among the festivals which Regelson and I observed in Mysore. Not only are there different gods, myths and ceremonies associated with the festivals, but there are also differences in their social aspects. Viewing these events in terms of the two anthropological principles outlined above, it is possible to see that each of them is relevant to a special social unit. And each festival ritual seems to symbolize different things about the relations of the categories involved in it.

It is possible to distinguish several different types of village festival rituals from a social point of view (*cf.* Table 1). One type of festival is performed by an extremely limited group of households, either a village *jāti* unit or an even smaller subcaste or lineage group within the *jāti*. This type of festival includes the Prāti festival and Nāgarapañcami in the forms observed in our two villages.

Another type could be called a 'neighborhood' or 'friendship' festival. This type of festival may be limited to one section of a village, or it may be observed simultaneously in different sections of a village. But, in either case, cooperative ritual activities and most exchanges do not seem to extend beyond the boundaries of the major social-physical divisions of the village community, except for specific patron-client exchanges. (In Chinnapura and Bandipur, the three major neighborhoods were brahman streets, non-brahman sections, and the Harijan colony). The festivals of Dipāvali, Subrahmaṇya Ṣaṣṭhī, and Gauri are among those celebrated in this fashion in our two villages.

A third type—the 'village-level' festival—is the only one in which all groups and sections of a village participate. It is the village as a unit which is important in this type of celebration and which is thought to benefit from proper performance of the festival rites. Exchanges or competitive games with other villages may also occur as part of these events.¹⁵ The Narasiṃha *jātra* of Bandipur is an example of this type, as is the Gaṇapati celebration as uniquely performed in that village.¹⁶

The social units required to participate in festivals seem to vary

depending on demographic and political factors relevant in the territorial groups performing the festivals.¹⁷ In Bandipur, for example, the brahmin-non-brahmin-Harijan distinction is quite significant for the political, economic and ritual affairs of the village: this is partly due to the recent influence of land reform legislation on the village patronage system. In other villages, however, particular castes might be the basic units to be represented in festivals. In single-caste villages, or in other type of small villages, representatives of all households or descent groups might be necessary to the completion of the festival in question.¹⁸ In situations of extreme factional division, there seem to be two possibilities. Either (i) representatives of different factions participate in a single festival in a competitive manner; or (ii) competing festivals develop. I have discussed the competition between the Bandipur village Nara-siṃha *jātra* and Gaṇapati processions in these terms.¹⁹

Festivals and Social Structure

Now that I have outlined some basic principles of the social anthropological approach to religious ritual and classified the various types of festivals encountered in a South Indian Hindu community, I will discuss the role of the festival in the social life of a peasant village. Briefly stated, my hypothesis is as follows: festival rituals can provide opportunities for members of a community to determine what their relations with each other shall be for a specified period of time. It seems as if certain fluctuating aspects of community are often discussed and 'debated' at such times, with the help of a concealing idiom of ritual symbols. These symbols may be manipulated to 'say' a variety of different things about the relations in question. I shall discuss the following four propositions, which are derived from this hypothesis:

1. The continued performance of festivals by all members of a social unit must be reaffirmed year after year, even though (or, perhaps, because) this performance is considered to be compulsory.
2. The social and symbolic form of the ceremony itself is affected by the relations among participants.
3. Festival events are sometimes associated with quarrels among

participants; and these fights may result from the deeper implications of the rituals for social relations of those performing them.

4. The various elements of which a festival ritual is composed are more 'negotiable' than an observation of any one ceremony would suggest; and the ultimate outcome of such negotiations may have a lasting impact on village social structure.

The view of social structure implicit in this approach assumes that conflicts or contradictions are part of social life itself. Every community of persons just as frequently exhibits tensions between social and political categories as stabilizing and unifying factors.²⁰ The small Hindu village community is no exception to this rule, as studies of factionalism and other types of conflict demonstrate so well.

To return to my hypothesis about festival ceremony, then, such ceremonies may provide important turning points in the ongoing life of the social unit or units performing them. Rather than being celebrated in a routine and unchanging manner, they can be meaningful experiences for the various persons and groups who are involved in them. First, I suggest that even their continued performance by all members of the village or other social units must be reaffirmed year after year.

It seems that compulsory participation is common to many South Indian village-level festivals. That is, representatives of all significant social elements of a village or other territorial unit must attend the ceremony and perform their locally-defined duties. Not to do so is considered disruptive, and it is assumed that the festival in question must not be performed without the cooperation of all relevant units.

Several other ethnographers have suggested that the festival is an important occasion for gathering together all relevant social units of a territory—perhaps the only such occasion in the annual round of village activities. For the village he studied in Tanjore District of Madras, Bêteille states that, '... religious festivals provide occasions for the coming together of different castes in the village.... Once a year when the deity of the main Kali temple is taken around the village, even Adi-Dravidas join the procession.'²¹ Among the Kallar of Madras, Dumont suggests a similar

importance for the *Mandaiamman* or *Māriamman* festival in September or October, and the festival cycle of *Aiyanār-Karuppan* in May or June.²² Beals discusses the benefits to be derived from the successful and cooperative performance of what he calls an 'inter-local' *jātra* festival in northern Mysore.²³ And Srinivas emphasizes the central importance of the village-deity and other festivals to continuing relations among local descent groups in Coorg, all of whom must be represented at certain festivals.²⁴

While in many villages participation of all relevant elements of the social unit is imperative, a Bandipur case illustrates (i) a belief that withdrawal of any element may actually stop the ritual, and (ii) the possibility that a defiant group may withdraw from the event.

In Bandipur village it is generally assumed that the village temple cart cannot move around the village in its annual procession of the god *Narasimha* unless all three categories of the village social order are pushing and pulling according to their assigned roles. It is considered essential, both mechanically and sociologically, that (i) Harijans should push the cart by means of a pair of logs used as levers under the back wheels; (ii) brahmins should pull the cart by means of two ropes as well as steer it; and (iii) that non-brahmin middle castes should pull on the ropes ahead of the brahmin contingent (i.e., farther away from the cart itself than the brahmins are). I was told in 1967 that once, a few years before, the Harijans had boycotted the procession, and that the other groups could not move the cart at all, no matter how great their numbers. It is difficult to determine whether this story is true or not. But it is told and believed by a number of villagers of this region. And its mythical value is indisputable; all three groups are somehow necessary to please the god in his procession and thus ensure the well-being of the village.²⁵

This Bandipur procession serves also to demonstrate my second point regarding the role of festivals in peasant village life: the social and symbolic form of the ceremony itself is affected by the relations among participants. Festival rituals, such as the above-mentioned procession, can reveal distinctions and divisions among their performers as clearly as they can show unity among them. Though the Bandipur temple-cart procession does not include any form of ritual conflict, this also is a possibility in festival performances.

In a Hindu village, the distinctions between the castes are among the most evident points of social cleavage. During my stay in

Mysore, I was interested to note the following fact: even the local caste system of *jāti* relationships is defined to a certain extent in terms of festival ritual. (Though much has been written on caste identity, ranking, and relations, this point is rarely mentioned in general studies of the phenomenon of Hindu caste.) Each of the major *jāti* units in the villages studied has duties and rights (*hakku*) in one or another local festival, as well as having a traditional administrative occupation, duties, and individual *jajmani*-like contracts with households of other castes. For example, certain members of the fisherman (*bēstaru*) *jāti* in each village had (i) the obligation to assist the local tax collector as message-carriers and traveling companions, and (ii) the right to carry an umbrella over the head of a deity in procession through the village streets. In Bandipur, the fishermen also had (i) the duty of providing persons to wash vessels used to prepare feasts at the annual Narasiṃha *jātra* festival after the harvest, and (ii) the privilege of being honored and garlanded at a ceremonial fireworks display performed as part of the Narasiṃha *jātra*. Similarly, the Harijan (*holeyru*) or Ādi-karṇāṭaka *jāti* represented in our two villages had a *jajmani*-type of contract with specific households to provide diggers of graves and other services. But they also had the privilege of having some members garlanded before the dramatic procession of the temple cart in the Bandipur Narasiṃha *jātra* and the obligation to play music at the head of the procession of the god Gaṇeśa in the Bandipur Gaṇapati festival. Nearly every other caste in both villages also has specific festival duties as part of its local identity.²⁶

At a different level of social organization, Beals has demonstrated the ways in which villages can emerge as distinct and competing units in some festivals.²⁷ In his study of 'interlocal' festivals in northern Mysore, he found that villages might engage in competitive wrestling and other kinds of games. I observed that there might be some gift exchange between villages on the occasion of the Narasiṃha *jātra* festival mentioned above. It was said, for example, that the deity of the Chinnapura temple had made a presentation to the Bandipur Narasiṃha at this time in 1967.

It should be made clear that in order for any exchange of gifts to take place, there must be at least two distinct parties—the giver and the receiver. Thus it is possible to see this type of ritual exchange, together with inter-village competitive games, as evidence of a social distinction between villages.

The exchange of gifts and friendly competition provide ritual evidence of certain types of social divisions. But violent conflict in ritual contexts seems to be rare in the festivals of South Indian peasants as described in recent ethnographies. The best Hindu example of ritual conflict is the popular Holi festival of North India, during which there is playful teasing and throwing of colored powder or water over others. I have not yet observed this event, but from descriptions of it, it is clearly a time when expressions of strong feelings—especially negative ones—are permitted.²⁸

In his description of the *Divāli* festival of Ramkheri village in the Malwa region of Central India, Mayer includes a brief description of an institutionalized ritual conflict. A group of singers of Rajput, weaver and farmer castes goes together with the Rajput headman to the Tanners' ward, where the tanners prepare the skin of a young calf (*caura*) that is used in a subsequent procession. 'As the Tanners do this work, they joke with the singers and the headman, throwing firecrackers at them and chasing each other with hot coals, which they try to drop down each other's backs.'²⁹ The procession is also a rather violent event, though the provoked party is an animal rather than a human group:

At every open space two or three Weavers hold the *caura*, and a young calf is pinioned behind them. The calf's mother, made very nervous by the deprivation of her calf and the smell of the calf-skin on the *caura*, charges the latter and is only prevented from rushing the Weavers by the pole they hold.³⁰

Like the Holi festival events, these situations contain within them signs of social conflict—in the case of the Tanners manifested in teasing members of the higher castes, perhaps the result of inevitable difficulties associated with the strict isolation or subjugation of the so-called untouchable castes. For this moment each year a reversal of rank order seems to be tolerated. The metaphorical value of the cow-baiting procession is rather less clear than the firecrackers and hot coals; but this does serve as an example of the sort of enjoyable violence that can characterize the festival ritual.

Thirdly, I wish to point out that festival events are sometimes associated with real fights among the participants. Mayer presents a description of such fighting which he observed during the cow-baiting procession described above:

Delay were...caused by disputes which broke out among the Weavers and other people (mostly Bhilalas and Rajputs) who had been drinking since early morning. The climax of the day was about to begin, with cow-baiting in the main square, when a sharper quarrel broke out. Thereupon the headman who had inaugurated the procession stepped in, took the *caura* away at once, and 'cooled' it by sinking it in a nearby pond. So the programme finished abruptly.³¹

Unlike Mayer, however, I feel that such fights may often result from involvement in the rituals themselves, and from feelings about their significance, rather than from drunkenness or simple indisposition.

During my stay in Mysore villages I observed at least two major quarrels during festival ceremonies. (The above-mentioned boycott of the Bandipur temple cart procession may represent another example, but I did not observe that quarrel directly.) One fight occurred at the Māramma *jātra* festival celebrated in the Bandipur Harijan colony. After meals had been offered at the shrine of the goddess and left there by participating families, they were to be redistributed among the worshippers. During the redistribution of the blessed food (*prasāda*) a violent shouting argument began between two groups about the distribution procedure. Apparently, the group that was managing the distribution was giving the majority of the food first to their faction and leaving very little for the members of the other faction. The other quarrel that I observed also had to do with the order of distribution of *prasāda* offerings, this time at a Māramma goddess ceremony in Chinnapura. The complex arrangements during the long Bandipur Narasimha *jātra* festival were associated with a constant quarreling and complaining about festival tasks and remuneration.³²

There is some evidence that participants in festival ceremonies cannot always agree on such controversial details. Such evidence consists of statements about how two groups used to perform a certain ceremony together but now do it separately (it is also possible to merge, as did two subcastes of the Bandipur Śrī-Vaiṣṇava group around 1961 for the ancestral offering following their annual thread-changing *Upākarma* ceremony). I also suspect that discontinuation of a particular festival may represent such difficulties. Such cases are commonly encountered by field researchers. As I have discussed elsewhere, the formation of competing festivals is also a

possibility.³³ Srinivas mentions that an annual dance at a *nād* harvest festival in Coorg has diminished because 'of feuds between the various villages composing this *nād*.'³⁴

An example from North India demonstrates the flexibility possible in the festival life of a village. Marriott, in reporting a situation of major social change, mentions that five new festivals were initiated within a ten-year period.³⁵ As the village became prosperous one of the first things that residents did was to build five new temples where there had previously been none.

The immediate issue behind the two fights which I observed was of the 'respect/honor/prestige' (*maryādi*) of the offended parties. That is, to receive less *prasāda* or to receive a share after another has already received it are both direct signs of low social rank in comparison to others participating in the ceremony. Thus, the question of 'respect' in these crucial situations seems to have broad implications in terms of one's position in the village social order. I assume on the basis of these and similar observations that many festival fights have such significance.

My fourth and concluding point regarding the social role of festival ritual has to do with the manipulation of ritual elements as a type of communication process. I am suggesting that the various elements of which a ritual is composed are more 'negotiable' than an observation of any one ceremony would suggest. That is, it is unlikely that festival ceremonies would be performed in exactly the same manner year after year, if my hypothesis is correct.

The manipulable or negotiable elements to which I refer may include the following: the composition and organization of personnel for the ritual; the spatial aspect of the ritual; perhaps the timing (though I have no examples of this); the equipment used in the ritual (carts, animals, images and their decorations); and the ritual activities themselves. The myths associated with festival rites may also be somewhat flexible, tailored to a certain extent to the situation of the performers, but at this stage I also lack examples of change in this aspect of festival life.

When these elements are united to bring about a particular festival event in any community, their composition represents the outcome of a series of decisions, debates, and perhaps even arguments among the people involved in the festival. Far from being a simple matter, this achievement becomes more and more difficult as the community in question becomes more complex.

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If the village or other unit is divided by factionalism, it can affect the festival ceremony in various ways. If other divisions or difficulties have plagued the community during the period preceding the festival (in modern India, this is a distinct possibility), they are likely to be dealt with either before or during the festival.

It seems that, despite the existence of the caste system of ranked *jāti* relationships, there is considerable flexibility in other ranking relationships in rural South India. The informal prestige rank positions are occupied by important members of each community and are gained, to a certain extent, independently of caste and pollution considerations. There seems to be considerable competition among persons involved in this type of ranking system. And this competition, like other points of tension, can become clearly evident at festival times.

The arguments centering around 'respect' —as reflected in the order of distribution of *prasāda*, proximity of one category to the deity, or other ritual elements—are apparently at the center of this flexible element of the rural ranking system. For example, an agreement that one party shall receive *prasāda* before another represents an agreement about their rank order—at least for a limited period of time. But, as I have pointed out, these agreements are not always easily reached, and they may not be possible at all. This is because of the element of fluctuation and competition in this ranking system. The festivals can be a part of this fluctuating process, as much as they are a part of the stable and continuing aspects of community life.

In conclusion, it is most important to note that ritual events can, according to my view, definitely change social structure. I am not saying that they simply reflect or express a social situation in a passive way. Rather, I am saying that the process of performing these festivals is a communication, negotiation, and decision-making experience for the persons involved in them. But, like other delicate diplomatic encounters, these ceremonial 'discussions' of serious matters are comfortably disguised with a veil of seemingly insignificant ritual details. Nonetheless, social relations within a Hindu community can be changed by ritual decisions that are made during the special times that I call 'festival interludes'.

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TABLE 1: SOME IMPORTANT HINDU FESTIVALS OF TWO MYSORE VILLAGES, 1966-1967

Lunar Month	English Month	Season	Agricultural Activities	Festival Name	Prominent Social Unit, Category, or Group	Selected Ritual Events
<i>Caitra</i>	March-April	Dry	Plowing	<i>Ugādi</i> : Lunar new year	Separate households	a) Eat mixture of sweet and bitter items (<i>bēvubella</i> , neem leaves, and brown sugar); b) Garland bullocks; perform symbolic first plowing.
<i>Vaiśākha</i>	April-May	Dry, hot	Preparation of fields and equipment	(none)		
<i>Jyēṣṭha</i>	May-June	Dry-wet (rains begin)	Planting rice and millet	(none)		
<i>Āṣāḍha</i>	June-July	Wet	Planting; replanting rice seedlings	(none)		
<i>Adhika Śrāvāṇa</i> (extra month, 1966)	July-August	Wet	Replanting; Weeding	<i>Prāti</i> : wife of Viṣṇu	Śrī-Vaiṣṇava brahmin women, Hebbar subcaste only	a) Go in procession to river to retrieve ball of mud as sacred object; b) Serve ritual feasts; c) Honor married daughters.
<i>Śrāvāṇa</i>	August-September	Wet	Weeding	<i>Varamahālakṣmī</i> : for wife of Viṣṇu	Smārta brahmins, separate household	Family worship in house

Upākarma: annual sacred thread changing

1. Śrī-Vaiṣṇava brahmin men, all subcastes (previously separated by subcastes)

1a) Change threads individually in houses, usually with assistance of priest;
1b) Subsequently gather in temple compound for communal offering to ancestors.

2. Men of Weaver (Devāṅgā) caste, in separate houses (previously whole caste together in common village hall)

2. Change threads in houses without aid of priest.

Kṛṣṇajayantī: birth-day of Lord Kṛṣṇa

Śrī-Vaiṣṇava brahmin women, all subcastes

a) Decorate household shrines with flowers and foods;
b) Circulate around to each others' houses, view shrines;
c) Exchange sweets.

Bhādrapada

September-October
Wet-dry (end of rains)

Harvest some millet: *Gaurī*: wife of Śiva weed other crops

1. All worshippers of Śiva, women

1a) Set up household shrines and welcome *Gaurī* to house, as a married daughter returning;
1b) Send gifts to married daughters, or invite them to visit.

2. Smārta brahmin women, all subcastes

2a) Gather together for elaborate worship of *Gaurī* in a house or in a village hall;

<i>Lunar Month</i>	<i>English Month</i>	<i>Season</i>	<i>Agricultural Activities</i>	<i>Festival Name</i>	<i>Prominent Social Unit, Category, or Group</i>	<i>Selected Ritual Events</i>
<i>Bhādrapada</i>						
<i>(Contd.)</i>						
				<i>Gaṇapati</i> : Gaṇeśa, elephant-headed son of Śiva	for 1. Separate households, all worshippers of Śiva 2. All residents of Bandipur village (before 1961 not done together)	2 <i>b</i>) Exchange cosmetic items, placed in winnowing baskets. 1 <i>a</i>) Put image of Gaṇeśa together with Gaurī in household shrines; 1 <i>b</i>) At end of odd number of days, deposit image of Gaṇeśa in a body of water, sending him 'home'. 2 <i>a</i>) Committee collects money to put image of Gaṇeśa in village hall; 2 <i>b</i>) For an odd number of days priest performs daily worship; 2 <i>c</i>) Schedule of daily entertainment; 2 <i>d</i>) On final day, send Gaṇeśa image on long procession through brahman and non-brahman neighborhoods.
				<i>Kaṭrigatta jātra</i>	1. Chinnapura, 1967: twenty-eight	1 <i>a</i>) <i>Harisēvā</i> ceremony: major procession of a

village *nāḍ* unit

consecrated vessel from river to pasture-land shrine; one attendant of the god became possessed, 1967;

1b) Establish sacred object in shrine;

1c) One-day market and fair on pasture site near shrine.

2. Bandipur, 1966 and 1967; separate families from village and region; holy men; priests

2a) Vow-takers make or fulfill vows either to Hanuman or to Śrī Venkaṭeśvara of Tirupati; barbers give ritual haircuts;

2b) Fair and market outside village on pasture site near Hanuman shrine.

Māladahabba: Pitr-pakṣa; Mahālaya amāvāse: new moon propitiation of ancestors

1. Separate household, all castes (often with affines invited)

1a) Make offerings of food, clothing, narcotics to ancestors;

1b) Share offered food in ritual feast;

1c) Non-brahmin houses required by custom to distribute feast food to Harijans on day after ceremony.

<i>Lunar Month</i>	<i>English Month</i>	<i>Season</i>	<i>Agricultural Activities</i>	<i>Festival Name</i>	<i>Prominent Social Unit, Category, or Group</i>	<i>Selected Ritual Events</i>
<i>Bhādrapada</i> (<i>contd.</i>)				<i>Māḷadahabba</i> (<i>contd.</i>)	2. Group of closely related households, especially brothers, gathered in one house 3. Farmer-caste men of different houses and possibly of different sub-castes	2. Same as 1. 3. Individual men move about to one another's houses, rapidly partaking of feast food at each of several houses.
<i>Āśvina</i>	October- November	Cold	Weeding; main-tenance	<i>Daśaharā</i> (<i>dasarā</i>): ten days	1. Households, all castes 2. Śrī-Vaiṣṇava women, all sub-castes	1. Various daily ceremonies, including the ninth-day blessing of all mechanical implements used by the family (<i>āyudhapūjā</i>). 2. Display ornamental items in household shrines, including family pairs of wooden dolls; circulate to other houses to view displays; distribute sweets to guests.

<i>Kārttika</i>	November- December	Cold	Weeding; main- tenance	<i>Dīpāvalī</i> : new moon festival of lights	1. All households separately, especia- lly non-brahmins and Harijans 2. Non-brahmin men, all castes 3. Chinnapura village 4. Śrī-Vaiṣṇava households	1. Bless compost piles; bless thresholds of houses; bathe and decorate larger live- stock. 2a) Gather on night of new moon to build large bonfire; 2b) Next morning, indi- vidually mark fields with ash designs. 3. Decorate and bless stone monument at entrance to village. 4. Send gifts or invite married daughters (espe- cially in the first year of marriage) and their hus- bands.
						Honored persons lights candles in temple nightly for one month.
						Prepare baskets of fresh vegetables and send child- ren to distribute them to village friends.
						1. Individually offer wor- ship to termite hills (as residences of cobras).
<i>Mārgaśīrsa</i>	December- January	Cold	Begin harvest of rice and millet	<i>Śreṣṭhīhabba</i> ; <i>Śubrahmaṇya-ṣaṣṭhī</i> : for Śiva's son	Prominent brah- min families Non-brahmin wo- men, all castes	
<i>Puṣya</i>	January	Dry	Complete harvest	<i>Nāgarahabba</i> ; <i>Nā- garapañcamī</i> : new moon worship of cobra	1. Households that want children or have sick children, all castes	

Lunar Month	English Month	Season	Agricultural Activities	Festival Name	Prominent Social Unit, Category, or Group	Selected Ritual Events
<i>Puṣya</i> (<i>contd.</i>)				<i>Nāgarahabba</i> (<i>contd.</i>)	2. Group of married couples, two sub-castes of Harijan (Ādikarṇā-taka) community, Bandipur	2. Dress in white; prepare food in outdoor stoves built in field near two termite hills (one 'male', one 'female'); couples offer marriage pendants (<i>tali</i>), plantains, and do worship to the two termite hills.
				<i>Narasimha jātra</i> , Bandipur: twelve days (<i>Puṣya</i> and <i>Māgha</i>)	1. Bandipur village (residence of god Narasimha) sponsors festival; Temple Committee 2. Individual temple patrons from Bandipur and elsewhere. 3. Caste and family groups from village and region 4. Representatives of certain castes	1a) Cattle fair; market; 1b) Cinema entertainment; 1c) Temple car procession. 2. Subsidy of temple worship; daily processions; daily meals for brahmins. 3. Worship, cooking, and feasts near temple site. 4. Ceremonial services rendered, some reciprocated with garlanding and others paid in grain and

					feast foods by Temple Committee.
				5. One lineage temple for goddess Lakṣmī, farmer caste	5. No activity in 1967 (previously, procession for Lakṣmī simultaneous with main temple car procession).
<i>Māgha</i>	January-February	Dry	(none)	<i>Śivarātri</i>	Maintain all-night vigil (<i>jāgara</i>).
<i>Phālguna</i>	February-March	Dry	(none)	<i>Māramma jātra</i> : for violent female deity	<p>a) Prepare feast meals at houses;</p> <p>b) Parade to shrine, placing food (rice, beans, and millet—and sorghum-balls) in several piles;</p> <p>c) Ritually dedicate food;</p> <p>d) Play games, build fire, dance;</p> <p>e) Redistribute food to participants (previously, sacrifice of male buffalo).</p>
					Separate households, worshippers of Śiva
					Harijan (Ādikar-ṇāṭaka) colony—all households grouped into two political factions, worshipping at two different shrines

Notes

1. Alfonso Ortiz, 'Challenges in Anthropological Study of Ritual Drama and Festival', paper presented to the New York Academy of Sciences, 26 October 1970.
2. Max Gluckman, 'Les Rites de Passage', in Max Gluckman (ed.), *Essays on the Ritual of Social Relations*, New York: Humanities Press, 1962, pp. 1-52. Cf. also S.F. Nadel, *The Theory of Social Structure*, London: Cohen and West, 1957.
3. E. R. Leach, 'Virgin Birth: The Henry Myers Lecture 1966' *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland for 1966*, London: Royal Anthropological Institute, 1967, p. 41.
4. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915.
5. M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1952.
6. Max Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1965.
7. Cf. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969.
8. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (trans. Ian Cunnison), Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1954.
9. Abraham Rosman and Paula G. Rubel, *Feasting with Mine Enemy: Rank and Exchange among Northwest Coast Societies*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.
10. See also Fredrik Barth, *Models of Social Organization*, London: Royal Anthropological Institute Occasional Paper, No. 23, 1966.
11. Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, *Culture and Community*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc., 1965, pp. 99-103.
12. Suzanne L. Hanchett, 'Changing Economic, Social, and Ritual Relationships in a Modern South Indian Village', Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1970; and Suzanne L. Hanchett, 'Festivals and Social Relations in a Mysore Village', unpublished manuscript, 1971.
13. A. Ortiz, 'Ritual Drama and Festival'.
14. Cf. E.R. Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*, New York: Humanities Press, 1966.
15. Cf. Alan R. Beals, 'Conflict and Interlocal Festivals in a South Indian Region', in Edward B. Harper (ed.), *Religion in South Asia*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964, pp. 99-113.
16. It might be possible to distinguish other types on the basis of other social and territorial units known to exist in South India. For example, we observed a festival in Chinnapura (the *harisēva jātra*) which required the cooperation of representatives of twenty-eight villages. This twenty-eight village unit (the *nāḍ*) also had a judicial council and an official headman. However, since the festival was the only occasion on which I observed this unit to exist, I do not have much information on it.
The Mandaïammaṅ or Māriammaṅ festivals described by Dumont are also *nāḍ* festivals. See Louis Dumont, *Une sous-caste de l'Inde du Sud: Organisation sociale et religion des Pramalai Kallar*, Paris: Mouton, 1957.
17. Cf. *ibid.*, sections on religion.

18. E. g., see Alan R. Beals, 'Conflict and Interlocal Festivals', and M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs*.
19. Hanchett, 'Changing Economic, Social, and Ritual Relationships', and Hanchett, 'Festivals and Social Relations'.
20. Several anthropologists, following Simmel, have demonstrated that the very idea of social 'structure' implies differences, divisions, and perhaps also conflicts among the elements of that structure. See Georg Simmel, *Conflict: The Web of Group Affiliations* (trans. Kurt H. Wolff and Reinhard Bendix), New York: The Free Press, 1955; V. Turner, *Ritual Process*, Max Gluckman, *Politics, Law and Ritual*, p. 139; and Robert F. Murphy, *The Dialectics of Social Life: Alarms and Excursions in Anthropological Theory*, New York: Basic Books Inc., 1971.
21. Andre Beteille, *Caste, Class, and Power*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965, p. 101.
22. Louis Dumont, *Une Sous-caste*, pp. 321, 380, and 396ff.
23. Alan R. Beals, 'Conflict and Interlocal Festivals'.
24. M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs*.
25. See Hanchett, 'Changing Economic, Social, and Ritual Relationships'; and Hanchett, 'Festivals and Social Relations'.
26. When more than one major lineage or subcaste is represented in a village *jāti* population, such privileges and festival duties might be rotated annually among the groups.
27. Alan R. Beals, 'Conflict and Interlocal Festivals'.
28. See McKim Marriott, 'The Feast of Love', in Milton Singer (ed.), *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*, Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966, pp. 200-12; and V. Turner, *Ritual Process*.
29. Adrian C. Mayer, *Caste and Kinship in Central India: A Village and its Region*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960, p. 104.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 105.
32. Epstein mentions the danger of offending others through improper distribution of betel leaves at weddings in Mandya District, Mysore. The giver of a wedding has the option to contribute to a village fund, 'rather than risk offending some important men at the distribution. ...' Scarlett Epstein, 'Economic Development and Peasant Marriage in South India', *Man in India*, Vol. XL (1960), pp. 192-232.
33. Hanchett, 'Festivals and Social Relations'.
34. M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs*, p. 68.
35. McKim Marriott, 'Changes in an Indian Village', unpublished transcript of a talk given on 19 December, 1968.

THE END IS THE BEGINNING: A FESTIVAL CHAIN IN ANDHRA PRADESH

Jane M. Christian

INDIA KNOWS CREATION to be *lilā*, play, dance. Many images, myths and performances exemplify this knowledge: for example, Śiva Naṭarāja in his dance of creation, *ānanda taṇḍava*; Kṛṣṇa sporting with *gopī-s* in *kṛṣṇalīlā*; and the *rāmlīlā*. And throughout India, the understanding of creation as play is present before people participating in festivals of all kinds. Festivals anchor a way of life spontaneously in an aesthetic, creative, and fulfilling experience of world-renewing in a calendrical cycle.

The cycle expresses a general concept of reality, joining visible and invisible aspects. Some layers of the manifest and the unmanifest components of human experience—e.g., cosmological, ecological, familial, social, political—are represented in each festival. No single festival constitutes in itself a total statement of reality; but the sum of festivals nearly does so.

Further, groups of festivals—segments taken from the cycle for heuristic purposes—may reveal an inner structure of sequencing and balancing of significant elements that are recurringly used. The creative use (and re-use) of elements woven into a constant flux of patterns, emphasizes creation's underlying continuity in the midst of its diversity. It emphasizes the ongoing and cyclic nature of reality in which the whole may be seen in the parts and the parts in the whole. Opposites, often overlapping through two or more festivals, are used to highlight diversity. But, what is more important, such opposites point out the breadth of the underlying continuity and unity which ultimately subsume all diversity.

In India's Dravidian and Indo-Aryan languages, repetition serves to emphasize. That also seems to be the function of repetition in the behavioral context of ritual, where the significance of redundancy appears to lie in underscoring the joint and overlapping use of diversely repeated items. It focusses on a changeless center by means of the paradox of diversity in dynamic change.

A sort of 'non-exclusion' policy is at work here also. A festival,

ostensibly held in honor of one deity, may draw in other deities, their shrines and temples. This illustrates the same principle as does the devotion shown to most or all the deities in the festival by individuals and households that are 'sectarian.' The answer of one young Andhra boy to my query about his favorite deity is revealing. He responded with another question: '*epudu*' 'when?' Within the unending cycle, principles, deities, and festivals ascend and descend, interacting in dynamic relationship.

An examination of the festival period spanning the end and the beginning of the year in one town in southwestern Andhra Pradesh will illustrate some of these considerations. Here we shall see ordinary continuities, inversions of expectations, and oppositions of elements recursively and meaningfully juxtaposed in a dramatic depiction of the truth of unending renewal: the serpent coiled as a ring, its tail in its mouth.

We shall also examine the social context in which the festivals take place, noting both the relatively stable and the changing aspects. Festivals easily underwrite both stability and change. And they also articulate the importance to the community of both low and high status groups.

The particular festivals chosen for annual enactment by this community are by no means accidentally selected from the larger range of possibilities.¹ The partial set I shall compare and contrast is composed of basic similarities plus differences, focussing on and highlighting significant social and cultural contrasts. By their very breadth, the contrasts imply the continuity of interaction between opposite forces, the dynamism inherent in the opposites. Wholeness subsumes apparent opposition. And this wholeness is to be emphasized, for the opposites themselves may appear more obvious to casual observers.

Briefly, the chain of four festivals I examine in this paper consists of the following:

Śivarātri: Performed for the deity Śiva (here known as *Īsvaraḍu*), this festival celebration is conducted in much the same way throughout India. It pulls together the entire community and all shrines and temples for the awakening of god(s) in late February (or *māga-māsamu*) after an inauspicious period during which they were asleep. It takes place on the fourteenth day of the dark (second) half of the month and continues through the fifteenth. It is the first step out

of the austerity that marks the period of sleep. The way is prepared for larger festivals which specifically mark the turning of the year. In addition, *Śivarātri* sets the stage for an emphasis on the concept of *karman*.

Kāmaṇa: The two-day *Kāmaṇa* festival follows in a fortnight, in mid-*pālgaṇamasamu*, celebrating the birth and death of *Kāmaṇa*, the god of lust, and his wife, *Kāmamma*. Occurring at the end of the light-half of the month, the festival emphasizes normal societal expectations by inverting them, placing low castes first in the ceremonies. Old belongings are to be destroyed and new ones made or purchased. There is considerable public ceremony with processions. Most important, as one informant put it, *Kāmaṇa* is a sort of mirror in which one looks forward but sees behind. Right and left are reversed, and all expectations are inverted so that one may see and concentrate on the essence of the usual.

Ugādi: After a total respite for the dark-half succeeding *Kāmaṇa*—a period which concludes the month and the year—there is the one-day *Ugādi*. It signals the new year, beginning the light-half of *cētram vaśamu*. In contrast to the two preceding festivals, the *Ugādi* celebrations are more private and familial in nature, as families spend lavishly on feasting and new clothes. A trend towards license is reversed, and worship (*pūjā*) is emphasized. Usual societal expectations are re-created, and there is the reaffirmation of the proper order and association of higher and lower castes. The unity of the dharmic community at each level is stressed rather than the mythology and pageantry that characterize the earlier two festivals. No one deity is singled out for attention during *Ugādi*; rather, all shrines and temples are whitewashed and painted with vertical stripes of red wash. The distinctive role of the lower castes is stressed.

Harmony and the usual social order restored, the three most powerful Hindu groups offer *bhajan*-s and prayers continuously for seven days on behalf of the entire community. At the Vaiṣṇava *Nārāyaṇasvamī* temple (the highest ranking temple in the town), they join efforts in strict two-hour shifts for securing harmony and prosperity. What is done at the beginning of the year influences and conditions the events in the rest of the year. *Ugādi* and these subsequent prayers and *bhajan*-s are relatively new

additions to the festivals celebrated here. They were introduced only in 1943, but they quickly became a vital part of the sequence of celebrations in the calendrical cycle, for reasons that I detail below.

Śrī Rāmanavamī. With the celebration of the birth of Rāmuḍu (Rāma) at the end of the week of *bhajan*-s, there is the full return to the principles of *dharma* in the social and behavioral order. Thoughts turn to the *samsāra* cycle (here *genma*) of rebirth from death and to its associations with *dharma*.

II

It may be fruitful to consider the enactment of these festivals as semantically loaded statements. They are articulated by contrasting social groups, and the 'strings' are woven along several dimensions of meaning. Usually, threads of meaning are extended through groups of festivals, combining them into a single, full statement. Dramatic timing of statements of secular power, of political confrontation, or even of candidacy to public office in these circumstances may well be couched in terms of the patronage of and public participation in certain festivals. In this, the relative importance of the festival and its timing and meanings must be carefully matched to the image that is desired to be projected to the community. In this manner, too, the changing universe that *is* the community displays itself to itself by means of the festival cycle.

Patronizing and publicly participating in calendrical festivals have long been recognized means of stating and affirming social positions and relationships in India. It is well known that this is the prerogative of the priestly brahmin *varṇa*; but it is also important to those with temporal powers based upon commerce, land, or other wealth, or upon political involvement. They have often sought to shore up and even legitimize their claims by such patronage.

The association of patrons with the lavish and propitious execution of any festival or set of festivals apparently leads to the identification of the acts of giving and public participation with community pleasure in the festival itself and also with the prosperity and harmony presumed to arise through well-performed ceremonies. Conversely, by what some psychologists call a 'halo effect' (association

by contiguity), the secular activities of the patrons are validated and honored, because they have contributed to the religious splendor.

To unite the sacred and the mundane is a well-known and powerful device. The establishment, restoration, or bolstering up of unity at the level of universal meanings as well as at the level of community accord and sense of auspiciousness is the goal of such enterprises. These unite the interests—often divisive—of many sorts of leading community groups whose greater strength lies in solidarity. It is a kind of social symbiosis, a giving and participation for mutual advantage. And it can be spelled out in quite exact terms, community factors playing a prominent role. The symbiosis often underwrites community stability and the maintenance of tradition. Conversely, it can bless the processes of change, and announce, or even constitute, a vote of confidence in innovation. This is quite notable in modern times, but it is unlikely that this particular social use of festivals and festival chains is a recent phenomenon in India. Rather, it seems a well-established, even taken-for-granted, use of social and religious rules.

One is reminded of Srinivas' famous concept of 'sanskritization'. Here, as in many situations, however, the criterion for mundane emulation and participation seems rather to be the religious popularity of an item than its sanskritic reference. In practice, it and westernization are sometimes found to be inseparable. This is seen in a traditional festival procession: A garlanded deity, ensconced in the temple car (*ratham*), moves along streets lighted by petromax lanterns with an entourage including priests and political dignitaries, music blaring forth from loudspeakers, and coconuts (*tenkāya*) being dashed over the prow of the car at selected intervals. Or there is the case of the garlanded, victorious politician proceeding slowly through the town and coconuts being smashed against the front of his jeep to mark the auspiciousness of his passing. The same means—rules and the complex strategies for using them—can be generalized within an increasingly wide parameter of contexts, including ceremonial activities supporting the roles of leading figures in the modern political scene.



In order to set the analysis of these particular festivals in a particular

context, the complete set of festivals considered significant by the community should be outlined.² In that connection, it is also advisable to examine briefly some of the main pertinent structural and historical features of the source of this particular set—the community itself.

Beginning with the new year, there is a series of fourteen festivals accepted by almost everybody in the community. It must be remembered that the straight-line model adopted perforce for this enumeration is itself a misleading model for a cyclic set.

In *Cētram vaṣamu* (corresponding to *Caitra*), the first month of the year, occur both *Ugādi Pandugā* and *Śrī Rāmanavami*.³

During the second month, *Vaiśākamu* (*Vaiśākha*), there is a large and old public car festival—*Tērnāla Rathotsavam*.

There are no festivals in the third month, *Jēṣṭhamu* (*Jyēṣṭha*).

Aṣādamu (*Āṣāḍha*) is the fourth month and during it—about the time of the summer solstice—*Ēkādaśi Viṣṇuvu* is celebrated.

There are two major festivals in *Śrāvaṇamu* or *Śrāvaṇamasamu* (*Śrāvaṇa*). One is named for the month and is celebrated almost exclusively by females. The other is *Vāralakṣmiratham*.

In the sixth month, *Bādrapadamu* or *Bādramasamu* (*Bhādrapada*), there occurs a festival for Gaṇeśa called *Viṇāyakotsāvitī*.

The festivals of *Nāgalotsavitri* and *Dasara paṇḍugā* take place in *Āsvijamu* (*Āśvina*), the seventh month.

Dipāvali is the principal festival in the month of *Kārtikamu* or *Kārtikamasamu* (*Kārttika*).

In *Mārgamasamu* (*Mārgaśirṣa*), the ninth month, there is the *Vaikunta Ekādaśi*.

During *Puṣpamasamu* or *Puṣyamu* (*Pauṣa*) occurs *Sankranti*.

Śivarātri is observed on the fourteenth day of the dark-half of *Māgamasamu* or *Māgammu* (*Māgha*), the eleventh month.

And *Kāmaṇa* takes place in the last month of the year, *Pālganasamu* or *Pālganamu* (*Phālguna*).

The setting for these festivals as discussed here is a small village produce market and handloom silkweaving center with a population of about twenty thousand. The town has both rail and paved road connections, and it has grown considerably during this century by virtue of migration inspired by the expanding silk industry. Clearly, the settlement dates back at least to the Vijayanagara empire whose ruined watchtowers and still-used water tank

(*ceruvu*) overlook the town to the south and east. Two temples (*gudḷu*), both still in use but neither of any importance today, also date from that period. Ruins of other temples are to be found here and there in the irrigated rice lands.

Ecologically and culturally, the town is part of the dry, boulder-strewn, southern Deccan. The language spoken in the town is a somewhat archaic form of Telugu. Because of its location, the migrations, and its own history, the town also features considerable bilingualism and multilingualism, mostly with Kannada, Marathi, and Urdu. The silk trade and its merchants connect the town with Bangalore, Madras and Hyderabad as well as with many smaller markets. Thus, directly and indirectly, the town has been exposed to many other South Indian influences, and there is also some influence traceable to western India. Pilgrims and silk merchants sometimes wander as far as Banaras (though the main hub for pilgrims of this area is, of course, Tirupati and the temple of Śrī Veṅkaṭeśvarasvāmī).

In addition to Śrī-Vaiṣṇava-s, Śaiva-s, and other Hindu groupings, there is a relatively smaller population of Muslims and Christians. Neither of these latter groups is strictly segregated by residential areas. Several types of brahmin groups—chief among them being the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava brahmins—have been the traditional powers in the town. They maintain a hold on the *agraharamu* (brahmin district or neighborhood), rice lands, and the municipality through a judicious combination of shifting political alliances and increased participation in such professions as medicine, teaching, government and law. The Reddis of Andhra who are found here have mainly a rural and landholding orientation. Their political power, tied as it was to the older Congress Party, declined locally throughout the 1960's.

The most important man in the town is the RDO (Rural Development Officer) who is a Reddi. Next in importance is the BDO (Block Development Officer) who is a brahmin. The tahsildār and the mayor respectively are next in importance. Both are Christians. All four of these major figures are outsiders posted in the town by the government.

Both the RDO and the BDO publicly participate in all appropriate festivals in the town, each accompanied by his retinue. Neither contributes more than a token amount to the festival expenses. They are invited guests at the proceedings, and the

presence of each contributes auspiciousness to the festival undertaking. Local brahmins contribute substantially to appropriate festivals. The other old landholding groups had been largely squeezed out of this participation by the 1960s, their role pre-empted by vaiśya commercial interests.

In their turn, those vaiśya-s were beginning to give way to the emergent power of the Paṭṭu Sāle and also to the Toguta Virḷu Sāle, the two largest and most powerful of the five avowedly śūdra weaver or Sāle castes. It is the prerogative and duty of the leading families in each to provide, with or without assistance from other caste members, the wherewithal for as elaborate festivals as they can manage. Ritual auspiciousness and temporal power then tend to accrue to them in proportion to their ability and generosity.

The same thing holds for some very low castes, notably the harijan Erukala. Traditionally fortune tellers but now mainly weavers of split bamboo mats and baskets, they live near the large tank and have a fairly close organization. They have joined their numbers and voting power with the rising Paṭṭu Sāle, and they take part in and contribute to some festivals in a very significant way. The commercial and political rivalry between the Paṭṭu and the Toguta Virḷu castes is clearly reflected in their support for and participation in appropriate festivals. And, so far, Paṭṭu superiority in both aspects is clearly maintained. Their leading family has provided the local MLA (Member of the State Legislative Assembly). He divides his time between the duties of office (both locally and in Hyderabad) and the effective management of the family's commercial enterprise (production and sale of silk), an aspect of which is public contribution to and participation in a growing number of festivals.

It is no accident that the Toguta Virḷu Sāle considerably outnumber the Paṭṭu Sāle but do not match them in overall wealth or prestige. The Paṭṭu Sāle-s dominate the merchandizing of local silk production and command a wider outside market. Furthermore, the Paṭṭu Sāle-s have brahmin priests to officiate at their family ceremonies. They eat outside the house only in the homes of brahmins, another indication of their rising aspirations and their ability to implement them. More important for our purposes is the fact that only the Paṭṭu Sāle-s can wear the sacred thread. This is done from the time of marriage. And all this is

managed despite the fact that they still eat meat and participate in goat and chicken sacrifices. Should they give up these latter practices while continuing or increasing the level of contribution and participation in temple and festival activities, one could conjecture that these masterweavers and merchants may eventually come to be considered members of the vaiśya *varṇa*.

IV

Having scanned the festival calendar, the four festivals I have chosen for examination here, and the social background, it should now be possible to understand the range and nature of the significant variables within and among the festivals themselves. This can lead to an understanding of the festival set, the total configuration of each festival, and the way in which the festivals individually and collectively act as semantic representations of local realities—social and symbolic. It is to be hoped that this will be isomorphic with that reality seen by the participants themselves.

The chain of festivals from *Śivarātri* through *Śrī Rāmanavamī* is important because it highlights the continuity from end to beginning and from past into future. But there are additional reasons for selecting these from a larger, continuous set. They show both the public and private nature and functions of such celebrations, their cosmic and their local significances. And the processes of social continuity and change are evident in them.

Other festivals either are not so open to public manifestations or else have long since been pre-empted by older elements of continuing social power—for example, the old and important car festival (*Tērnāla Rathotsavamū*) which is largely controlled by some brahmins and landholders. The only other festival with large group participation and major processions is *Viñāyakotsāviti*. It has apparently been influenced by the larger Gaṇeśa festivals celebrated further to the northwest, possibly through migrants from that area. As a fairly large celebration, this festival evidently is not very old in the community. It has been relatively easy for Paṭṭu Sāle members and modern government officials to patronize this as well as the ceremonies connected with the end and beginning of the year.

Śivarātri Pandugā

The beginning of the end,⁴ Śivarātri takes a day, a night, and another day to mark the end of Śiva's (Īśvarudu) ascetic meditations and the sleep or unconsciousness of the other gods. The night is the most important. All temples and shrines in the community are open all night as people come and go. It is auspicious to remain awake for the full night.

This is most certainly an old festival and an obligatory one in the cycle. It has few if any political connotations. It is universal in the sense that all temples and all groups of people participate in it. There is no procession, no large publicly made contribution, no large expenditure on new clothing, no great feast. Rather, fasting and austerity are the keynotes, activities in which literally everyone can take part. Some families from this community go to attend the very large Śivarātri festival celebrated some twenty miles away in the village of a *svāmin* famous over much of India.⁵

For most participants, observance begins on the morning of the first day when a bath is taken and *muggu* is made.⁶ If the fasting is not complete, some coffee may be taken in the morning and some milk and fruits at night. Worship continues all day, and some may invite friends, near kin and neighbors to their homes.

With the coming of night, worship continues in all temples. Stories from the *Purāṇa*-s and the *Rāmāyaṇa* are recited in several of them. *Haridasu* and *harikātha* are also told, supposedly by any man who knows them well and is regarded as a gifted story-teller. Two-man teams tell *bhāgavata burakātha*. While one relates it dramatically, the other interrupts him with asides, wakes sleepy people in the audience with jokes, and even indulges in horseplay. This is an important factor in the popularity this festival has among children.

Nearly everyone visits several temples during the night. Interestingly, many now also begin the evening by attending the cinema. And some only attend the cinema. On Śivarātri, there are three showings of some religious movie or the other extending through the night. Crowds offer flowers before the screen, and two to three hundred coconuts are offered and broken under the screen in the middle of a showing. This extension of religious tale-telling, meanings, and behavior merits further study.

At dawn on the second day, a full bath is taken and worship is offered. Then the women of the house prepare both *kaccā* and *pakkā* food. At about 1:00 P.M., worship is offered to the gods by the household's eldest male, using the prepared foods, water, fruit, flowers and *pān* (betel). Ghee (clarified, cooked butter) burns in the sacred oil saucers. After this, the blessed food may be eaten by the whole family, and some is taken to kin and friends. This is a very important point of social solidarity and one which clearly marks the lines of friendship and responsibility. With this convivial visiting the festival may be said to end.

Kāmaṇa Pandugā

Mythologically and practically there is considerable continuity between *Śivarātri* and *Kāmaṇa Pandugā*. Śiva was roused from his deep meditations by the well-aimed arrow of Kāmaṇa, the god of lust, in order to bring about the union of Śiva and Pārvatī and to restore the earth to creativity—thus the awakening on *Śivarātri*. But in anger Śiva focussed the power of his third eye on Kāmaṇa and reduced him to ashes. In the version associated with *Śivarātri*, Śiva is made to repent of his hasty action by the sorrowful pleas of Kāmamma, Kāmaṇa's wife, who argues that her husband had merely been following his *dharma* and that he should be restored to life. Śiva agrees to this, allowing Kāmaṇa to live for two days each year. Kāmamma responds by consenting to be burned on her husband's pyre. Each year, then, the couple is reborn on a night in *Pālganamasamu*. The two live in splendor until they die (again by fire) on the morning of the third day. *Kāmaṇa* is a festival of the inversion of normal societal expectations. It celebrates *kāma* and *karma*, the end of the end—the climax that must precede the beginning which returns men to an emphasis on *dharma*.

Plans for the *Kāmaṇa* festivities are made and supplies laid in from the time of *Śivarātri*. This takes place in the well-to-do households of the vaiśya, Paṭṭu Sāle, and Toguta Virilu Sāle and also in (and for) the large and very prestigious temple of Nārāyaṇasvāmī. Though all castes participate in the preparations for *Kāmaṇa*, the *peddamanuṣulu*, literally 'big people', play a prominent part. They are the brahmin priests and any other brahmins interested plus the vaiśya and Sāle. All these are responsible for the collection of

about two thousand rupees for decorating the temple and constructing the paper images of *Kāmaṇa* and *Kāmamma*. Another two thousand rupees is spent for the procession. Twenty to thirty bullock carts are rented to carry the tableaux. Cloth, colored paper, saris, flowers, petromax lights, etc., must be purchased. Fees to bearers, musicians, and men to pull the carts must be paid. All donations are prominently published in detail—and politicians recall them in detail to the public. A few landlords may donate carts, but, as they are generally political rivals of the vaiśya and Sāle, even this is becoming more infrequent. For three generations, the chief responsibility for the festival has lain with the MLA's family. In the previous year, *Kāmaṇa* was poorly observed, with little festivity, because a suicide in his family prevented the members from taking any part in it. In 1968, it was especially splendid because of a desire to make up for this lapse and also because the MLA had just been returned to office after a hotly contested election. It is also interesting and important in the light of political ramifications that the preparations for this festival of Śiva and *Kāmaṇa* should be carried out principally in the major Vaiṣṇava temple by a large number of Vaiṣṇava families, including that of the MLA. Apparently, the union of a suitable festival for patronage with its would-be patrons in a temple of high prestige much frequented by them is more important than the relation of the honored deity with his own temple and with the Śaiva-s.

Young men and teenage boys of leading families in these castes excitedly plan their costly tableaux and costumes for the *Kāmaṇa* procession weeks ahead of time. In silks and gold jewelry they dress as Rāmuḍu, Lakṣmaṇuḍu, Sītā, Hanumānuḍu, Bālakṛṣṇa, Rādhā (or Rukmiṇī), Kṛṣṇa, and several other figures of myth and epic—usually non-Śaiva. Each group decorates its cart according to the scene it wishes to present. Nearly always photographs are taken of the costumed young men in the local studio, and the framed results are hung with the *dēva bommalu* (representations of the deity) within the home. And these are treasured for years after. Some relatively new families in the silk business do not yet participate in this procession of tableaux, saying that in another few years they will do so. Perhaps they feel that their position is not yet secure enough or that it would be ill-timed, ostentatious behavior. Certainly, there is a great deal of public discussion over each

family's costumes and tableaux which are often remembered for years.

The paper icons of Kāmaṇa and Kāmamma are not consecrated. No worship is performed for them nor is any sacrifice made. They are simply dressed in *pattu* (silk), and are decorated with flowers, garlands and jewelry. On Tuesday (when this takes place), the Nārāyaṇasvāmī temple is open all night, and it stays open also the following night. Townspeople and villagers from a ten to fifteen mile radius flock in to see the icons and to take part in the festival. Both men and women are in evidence on the first night ; but on the second and more boisterous night few women are seen. There are no story-tellings or song-singings as there are on *Śivarātri*.

During the day and second night of the festival, men of the lower castes consume large quantities of *sarayi* ('country' liquor) so that 'they will dance well'. And for three days the local police are blind and deaf to the proceedings. On the evening of the procession, men of lower castes (especially Erukala) dress as large, wild animals: lions, elephants, etc. They dance, jump and gesticulate before the houses of the middle and higher castes. Each household must pay each set of these dancers eight *aṇṇa*-s (half a rupee) before the dancers will leave. This is regarded as a traditional right. These dancers are also in evidence on the night of the procession. They take no part in the actual procession because their own ceremonies precede it.

By 2:00 A.M., the cart with the icons of Kāmaṇa and Kāmamma is ready to depart from the temple, followed by all the other carts with their tableaux, lights and musicians. The procession covers exactly the same route as the large, car festival which occurs later in the year. It proceeds from the main temple down the main street of the silk merchants, through the street of the temple car and the bazaar, down another main street of government offices, along the street of the brahmins and so through temple car street again to a point near the temple from which it started. Thus, it covers the main mercantile sections and the brahmin quarter (*agraharamu*), going from the gods and the eternal through the world and time and back to the gods again.

On the following morning, Kāmaṇa and Kāmamma are burned in an *āgamu* (bonfire) with great rejoicing that they are now dead. Throughout the town, other bonfires are fed with old pots, mats,

tools, bamboo and wooden cots, and old furniture—all of which have been broken ceremonially and must be replaced forthwith by new articles. Occasionally, a group of young men will race forward bearing a cot on which an old man or woman is lying. They deposit their discomfited passenger just before hurling the cot into the fire. A red dye (lime mixed with turmeric) is mixed by some and thrown on others, reminding one of the *Hōli* celebrations further north. Here a main object is to violate 'respect relationships' in the kin group. Dye is thrown between *bāva* and *maradalu* (a man and his younger brother's wife or spouse's younger sibling), or between *māmā* and *koḍalu* (mother's brother and sister's son). Many families refuse to join in this, saying that it ruins clothing.

At this point, another version of the *Kāmaṇa* story is more likely to be given than the 'official' one. According to this variant, *Kāmaṇa* is *mānamaḍu* (grandson) of Śiva. As such, he should regard Śiva's wife, *Pārvatī*, as his mother. Instead, he tries to seduce her, and Śiva reduces him to ashes in righteous anger. Similar variants are to be found in association with many other myths.

Ugādi

Within a day or so after the burning of *Kāmaṇa*, the community returns to normal. The festival of inversions—the end of the end—is ended, and there is a break before the beginning of the new year. *Ugādi* restores the idea and practice of *dharma* to their uppermost position. Its outstanding element is ritual. The elaborate processions, the dramatizations, the conspicuous ceremony and the detailed mythology of *Śivarātri* and *Kāmaṇa* are absent. No particular god is honored at *Ugādi*. Respect is given to all *inṭi-dēvudu* (household gods). *Ugādi* is the act of restoration of the normal course of life for the new year. It is the act of providing prosperity, the magical conditioning of the coming year by virtue of what is done on the first day.

All temples are given a coat of whitewash, and many add the auspicious, broad red stripes vertically over this. People talk about new life and the *genma* cycle of birth and death of individuals as analogous to the cycle of the year just beginning. Everyone rises before dawn and, after bathing, eats a quantity of a sort of paste made from tamarind, *nim* flowers, cane sugar and salt. The

concoction mixes 'all the flavors'—sour, bitter, sweet and salty; and eating some of it on *Ugādi* ensures that one will have all types of experience in the new year.

After offering special foods to the household gods for blessing, members of the family eat heartily and offer some food to friends and neighbors to demonstrate continued friendship and solidarity. Among these special foods prepared for *Ugādi* are a sweet wheat cake with pulse and sugar, vegetarian curries, and a sort of milk custard. Only the eldest, active married woman in each household can prepare this food for the god and the family; and only she can set it before the god and place *kumkum*, the auspicious red powder, on the god and fruits. After the eldest male has offered a coconut to the god and has prayed for continued aid to the family, the woman then serves food to all members, thus ensuring family continuity for the year.

Following the meal, most go to the temples. Some of the townspeople will then attend the cinema. Others, who are more traditional, take an evening stroll about town, visiting friends and renewing bonds.

As I mentioned earlier, *Ugādi* is a relatively new festival in this community, especially as it is celebrated in the Nārāyaṇasvāmī temple. *Ugādi* and the ensuing seven days of continuous prayer in the temple were deliberately instituted in 1943 by Śrī-Vaiṣṇava brahmins, vaiśya-s, and the Paṭṭu Sāle. Each year on *Ugādi*, these *peddamanīṣulu* give to the temple some seven hundred rupees plus five hundred measures of rice and hundreds of coconuts. The temple's main priest arranges a schedule for those who will offer *bhajan*-s and prayers from these castes. There will be an alternation of performers in two-hour shifts, day and night, for the seven days. Groups of brahmins, vaiśya-s and Paṭṭu Sāle—the *de facto* leaders of the community—successively offer up prayers of *harirām* for the harmony and prosperity of all. Again, the leadership taken on *Ugādi* should ensure that that leadership will continue throughout the year.

But there is another aspect of *Ugādi* that is carried out entirely separately from the performances at the Nārāyaṇasvāmī temple. This is the ceremony financed and managed by the Erukala. It will be remembered that, by and large, the Erukala support the ascending political group and they also actively take part in the *Kāmaṇa* festival. This sort of Erukala activity seems to be a statement of their intent to remain a significant element in the community

organization. Strictly separate from the *Ugādi* rituals of the three uppermost groups, the Erukala performances during *Ugādi* contrast with their activities during *Kāmaṇa*, when there is a close juxtaposition of high and low and a different sort of sequencing of performances.

The backdrop for the Erukala *Ugādi* celebration is the temple of Durgāmma, a deity much relied upon by them. In the afternoon of *Ugādi*, large crowds of people belonging to middle and lower castes gather near the temple to witness a pole-climbing. A tall pole (*uṭṭamānu*) is firmly set in the ground by the Erukala. It is supported by wires and topped by a platform that is decorated with an umbrella, palm and mango leaves and colorful pennants. An Erukala man sits on this platform during the contest. In the course of the proceedings, he frequently pours muddy water down the pole, rendering it slippery and thoroughly drenching the aspiring climbers. The climbers may be of 'any' caste, but in practice only unmarried males of low and middle castes make the attempt. The successful climber garners a prize of five rupees. And he wins an even higher honor, for he is regarded thereafter as a sort of 'hero of the year.'

The event is festive in every sense. Village and town youths engage in circle dances in the open area surrounding the pole. They weave in and out and clash short sticks or cymbals when meeting a dancer coming from the opposite direction. Musicians beat drums frantically when any climber approaches the top of the pole as onlookers whistle and yell, and a group of unmarried girls—set off in one section of the audience—discreetly clap.

When one climber out of the dozen or so contestants actually reaches the top, there is a deafening climax to the crescendo of crowd noise. The Erukala male atop the platform garlands the champion with flowers. The latter modestly removes the flowers and descends with the assistance of a rope. His joyous friends receive him enthusiastically and carry him off on their shoulders to his father, mother, brothers and sisters. They garland him afresh. Though the ceremony has concluded, the musicians continue to drum vigorously and the dancers continue to dance exuberantly for a considerable time.

One sees a clear polarization during *Ugādi*. There are quite dramatic statements both on the side of the older men of higher caste and on the side of younger men of lower caste. Each grouping operates within its own sphere, but the activities of both relate

to participation in the same community. Participants in one set of activities do not participate in the other set. And the Erukala contingent does not extend its ritual activity to Śrī Rāmanavamī, the *uṭṭamānu* contest being considered the grand climax of the yearly renewal ceremonies. Yet the interaction of the two sets of performances and their common goal is patent.

Śrī Rāmanavamī

On the Śrī Rāmanavamī festival day, one sees temporal and structural interaction. The poorer brahmins come to the houses of the Paṭṭu Sāle-s and others to receive traditional gifts consisting of a single rupee and a hand fan—the latter being an auspicious gift for the coming hot season). These brahmins are said to represent Rāma (Rāmuḍu) when he lived in the wilderness as an exile. Curiously, we have here the several statements of the independence and yet the interdependence of various groups. To be underscored is the implied statement that these differences subsume a working whole, one in which each part has a meaningful relationship in the creative and ongoing cycle. That cycle evokes the universe.

V

Up to this point, we have viewed elements of performances in terms of the festival cycle. It is also possible to see them in terms of their unique, opposing and recurring chains of elements, as will be done below. Here it may be helpful for a basic understanding to review and summarize some of the more important features in what we have observed. Those features we would label *distinctive* with reference to cosmic and social meanings in this community.

One encounters both unchanging elements (or themes which run through all the festivals) and changing themes that mark emphases and special meanings. Other significant features may be unique to a festival, may tie two festivals together as a pair, or may join three festivals in a triad. Any randomly used feature may be unique to any one of the four festivals (and therefore could occupy any one of four positions within the set of festivals). And that feature could be linked with one or two other features—also unique—thus constituting six pairs or four triads.

This can be illustrated as follows:

- 1 unique to *Śivarātri*
- 2 unique to *Kāmaṇa*
- 3 unique to *Ugādi*
- 4 unique to *Śri Rāmanavamī*

The six pairs that are possible are 1 and 2, 1 and 3, 1 and 4, 2 and 3, 2 and 4, and 3 and 4. The four possible triads are 1, 2 and 3; 1, 2, and 4; 1, 3, and 4; and 2, 3, and 4.

What we find is far from random and this is clear even from the foregoing description of the selection and positioning of elements in the four festivals. Therefore we must assume that the apportionment of elements is structurally and semantically significant to the meaning(s) of the entire sequence. Having determined that structure, we can attempt to infer the semantics.

VI

Except for the lengthy and costly home and temple worship offered on all festival days and the holiday from normal business and school activities, there is little 'true' repetition of items in these four festivals. There are several themes that unite all four, themes tending to provide an inner unity for their own grouping. These themes are composed of chains of elements that are modified or contrasted in each festival. There are a few elements specified as being distinctive or definitive by informants which are unique to each festival. Triads—the use of one element in three of the festivals—are virtually non-existent.

Emphasis is clearly on dyads, pairs, and there are at least two types of them. The simpler sort can be called the 'positive-negative'. Two festivals contain an item or element; the other two lack it. The second type may be called 'contrastive'—the 'opposition' being different from that 'plus-minus' contrast in the first type. Here a positive item found in two festivals *contrasts* with a different positive item found in the other two festivals *along some common semantic dimension*. Frequently, these may be polarized along their common continuum. From a slightly different angle, these paired dyads may be seen as a variation of the changing themes which

connect all these festivals on a sort of sliding scale—moving as it were from one end of the continuum to the other.

The relative paucity of unchanging items may indicate that only a small cue is needed in any given situation to show that 'this is a festival'. Similarly, only a few of these items need be noted to point up the unique meanings of any given festival. (Triads—possibly important in groupings of festivals larger than the quartet chosen here—are significant by their absence. Since the form or structure of changing features on a scale and the concatenated use of contrasting dyads are adequate for carrying the semantic content of the festivals, inclusion of triads would be unnecessary. Most certainly it would be confusing.)

In summary: Themes uniting all these festivals include at least the cosmic awakening from sleep in *Śivarātri*, the renewal of auspiciousness and the re-entry into life and creation. At the human level, austerity and fasting give way at the hearing of renewal to worship, the blessed meal, and the bolstering of social ties with gifts of blessed food. Planning for *Kāmaṇa* follows without break at the end of *Śivarātri*. The theme of the latter is reiterated and amplified in *Kāmaṇa*'s birth-marriage-death sequence—death of the old and inauspicious so that the new and auspicious may be born. Death here is a paradox: broken and burned old possessions are merely exchanged for new ones, as an old body is 'exchanged' for a new one in the *genma* cycle. At *Ugādi*, all is ritually renewed within the individual, the family and the community. From a plastic state, everything and everyone are molded for the year by the events of the day. *Ugādi*'s influence on the year permeates the days and nights of *bhajan* that follow, extending into *Śrī Rāmanavami* when the desired social patterns and cosmic influences for the year are fixed.

Thus we see the equation: Cosmic continuity in (*is*) cyclic change; all is an aspect of the same ultimate reality. The removal, passivity, unconsciousness (or death) of the deity is contrasted with divine return, activity, consciousness, and life—noted also in the *genma* spiral of man. Auspiciousness derives from the uniting-reuniting or the celebration of that union-reunion of diverse elements. The solidarity of men—the whole Hindu community with its caste groupings, political and commercial interests, family interests, friendship and neighborhood groupings—must present a harmonious, united aspect if the festivals are to be auspicious and effective. In

the same way, men and gods must be in harmony by virtue of the well-enacted worship and festival performances. And the material and visible plane of reality must unite with the invisible, time with the timeless. Singly and in chains, the festivals effect a closure on a grand scale. The repetitive cycle furthers this.

VII

Let us consider the features that are unique in the four festivals. Distinctive items in *Śivarātri* include the equal opening of all temples, the all-night vigil, the parity of all who worship at that time and the spirited retelling of the tale in all of the temples. Inversions characterize *Kāmaṇa*. There is the spectacle of low castes dressing as wild beasts, of high-powered groups assuming the roles of gods, of the play of the participants in the throwing of red dye. There are the bonfires to destroy lust, willfulness and all that which is old.⁷ *Ugādi* is defined by the way in which it magically conditions the new year. This is exemplified by the four substances that are traditionally eaten on this day, by the honoring of all gods (especially those honored by the family group), and even the *uṭṭamānu* ceremony. In *Śrī Rāmanavamī* there is little that is unique; but it is connected in the cycle and the segment by the seven days of constant praying and by the gifts of fans to brahmins.

VIII

The two dyads 1-2 and 3-4 contrast markedly and repeatedly along several lines, in terms of general ideas and specific traits. Mostly we see the more complex type of dyadic contrast; and in the matter of specific traits there is a tendency towards a scaling along a common continuum as mentioned above.

Dyad 1-2 (*Śivarātri-Kāmaṇa*) exhibits a strong emphasis on *karman*. A shift to an equally pronounced emphasis on *dharma* is seen in dyad 3-4 (*Ugādi-Śrī Rāmanavamī*). Through *Śivarātri* and *Kāmaṇa*, there is a build-up from ascetic fasting to humor, pleasure in tales well told, elaborate processions, great and conspicuous public expense and consumption, and inversion of the caste order. This culminates in the triumph of license over propriety.

Before *Ugādi* and *Śrī Rāmanavamī* there is an abrupt reversal: very strict observance of the usual social order with all its alliances and responsibilities. This regulated behavior epitomizes the modern social realities of the community.

In ideas, deities, patterns of participation and overall behavior, there is a clear continuity between the first two festivals and also between the second two. Only for the festivals in the first dyad do we find myth and its dramatization important, and only here is there a strong element of humor and even horse-play. The festivals of the second dyad do not encourage or even allow that but rather value social restraint. Disinterest in and the destruction of property begin with *Śivarātri* and continue into *Kāmaṇa*. *Kāmaṇa* ends with the ritual purchase of new things, and *Ugādi* continues the theme.

Brahmin priests take an active and leading role only in *Ugādi* and *Śrī Rāmanavamī* (these priests are Śrī-Vaiṣṇava-s). It is interesting that the traditionally important activity of offering and breaking coconuts is participated in by the greatest number of people from all castes and is done most publicly on *Śivarātri*. Fewer people—and they are mostly from the middle and higher castes—offer coconuts during the *Kāmaṇa* procession. Fewer still take part in coconut offerings at the *Śrī Nārāyaṇasvāmī* Temple on *Ugādi*, namely, the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava, vaiśya, and Paṭṭu Sāle participants. Scarcely anyone offers coconuts publicly on *Śrī Rāmanavamī*. This most appropriate offering to the deities—one which nearly all individuals can afford—is thus scaled down through these festivals, as control of worship goes from the hands of all the people to the elite few.

From emphasis on the transcendent deity and the workings of the cosmos in *Śivarātri*, attention is turned through the celebration of lower deities in *Kāmaṇa* to the human and social emphasis in *Ugādi* and *Śrī Rāmanavamī*. Although there is a return to the worship of the high deity in *Śrī Rāmanavamī*, this deity is seen as sustaining the social order and mundane responsibilities. He is a culture hero and follower of *dharma* as well as being god. From cosmic openness, unity and inactivity, there is here a shift to diverse groupings, duties, and activities on the mundane level.

During *Śivarātri*, all temples and shrines are open and all people take part. Although the elite and the powerful collaborate in the use of the most elite temple during *Kāmaṇa* and for all the rituals leading up to *Śrī Rāmanavamī*, a scale is apparent here too. There

is public participation in *Kāmaṇa* by those in low and medium castes, and their activities are close to those of the elites. Such participation is more distinct or fragmented in *Ugādi*, and it is altogether absent in *Śrī Rāmanavamī*. We see again a scaling down from mass public participation to the clear separation of groups.

Śivarātri especially unites townsmen with surrounding villagers who come to attend the festival in great numbers. There is substantial participation by villagers also during *Kāmaṇa*. Only a few villagers attend the *uḷlamānu* at *Ugādi*. Almost no villagers come for *Śrī Rāmanavamī*. (In part this may be explained by sectarian considerations. The villagers are mostly 'Śaiva-s' or 'Śakta-s'. *Śivarātri* is manifestly a Śaiva festival. The Śaiva nature of *Kāmaṇa* is clear. There is some association of Durgāmma with the *uḷlamānu* at *Ugādi*. *Śrī Rāmanavamī*, however, is totally Vaiṣṇava in nature.)

The beginning and ending festivals—the first and the fourth—are both obligatory, ancient, pan-Indian celebrations of high, even transcendent, gods. Neither has any overt political connotations in this community. The two 'middle' festivals, on the other hand, are optional or voluntary in a sense. They are new to the community, and they are regionally confined. In this area, *Kāmaṇa* could be called a middle level deity. The *inṭidēvudulu* honored on *Ugādi* are virtually never high (let alone transcendent) in their aspects as household or family deities.

In the middle festivals there seems to be more latitude for innovation and for the statement of social and divine sanction of both new and established ascendancies in the society. Old forms can judiciously be put to new uses. Conspicuous and lavish festival spending for public benefit is most characteristic of the aspiring political groups on *Kāmaṇa* and *Ugādi*. Characteristic also is their conspicuous public participation by groups.

The first and third festivals and the second and fourth are also paired in significant ways, the pairs contrasting secondarily. *Śivarātri* and *Ugādi* emphasize and sanction the intimate ties of small groups. Each family is a basic worshipping unit. Solidarity of kind and equal status among friends are renewed and emphasized. A feast prepared in each household is offered first to the god, then shared by the family and finally shared with kin and/or close outsiders, neighbors and friends. If possible, new clothes are provided on both days for all members of the family. (On *Śivarātri*, the clothes may merely be very clean and the best available.) On

Ugādi, this emphasis on intimate ties is extended as the three elite groups express solidarity by jointly giving to the elite temple, and the lower castes unite in recognizing Erukala leadership through the celebration of *uṭṭamānu*.

Positive connections between the second and fourth festivals are more tenuous and less important. However, they do serve to maintain the rhythm and to underscore other contrasts with the first and third festivals. Giving money to groups that are ritually and socially distant from one's own is characteristic of the middle castes on *Kāmaṇa* and *Śrī Rāmanavamī*. Half a rupee must be given to dancing, costumed Harijans on the second festival; and a rupee or two plus a straw fan are to be given to poorer brahmins who visit these same homes on *Śrī Rāmanavamī*. But whilst the Harijan dancers are increasing in numbers, fewer and fewer brahmins are participating in the *Śrī Rāmanavamī* exchange.

It is clear that the most significant festival dyads are 1-2 and 3-4, which respectively constitute the full end and the full beginning of the calendrical and cosmic cycle. Most elements correspond in festivals 1 and 2 and contrast with the similarly paired features in festivals 3 and 4. Secondary in terms of importance and also in the total number of features or elements paired is the festival dyad 2-3, which then contrasts with the paired elements of festival dyad 1-4. Here, the linkages in the 2-3 dyad the middle pair, are most important; and they are bolstered and defined more clearly by their explicit contrast with those of the extremes, 1 and 4. Considerably less important but significant in that they complete the rhythm of the semantic sequence are the dyads 1-3—the commencing both of the end and of the beginning of the cycle—and 2-4—the concluding both of the end and of the beginning.

IX

The coalescence of the cosmic and the mundane in festivals sponsored by commercially and politically ascendant groups is characteristic of much Hindu thought. It is not an 'either-or' proposition as in much exclusivist, Western thought. It is rather an acceptance of 'both-and'. The mundane can be subsumed as one plane of the cosmic and has its proper place as such. It is right and proper that the mundane should serve the ends of the cosmic and

thus be served via festival sponsorship and participation. It is, after all, part of the same whole. When an offering has been made, blessed *prasāda* is naturally returned to the worshipper.

Representation of the whole community to the cosmos by its wealthier and more powerful families and castes is auspicious in an important sense. Only in that way can an adequately grand and properly organized festival be arranged. Furthermore, this serves to redistribute the wealth of the community, as the members capable of sponsoring festivals are also obligated to do so by community sentiment.

It would be possible to isolate almost any one of these more important themes or distinctive feature contrasts and to go on to analyze the festivals in terms of that alone. My own thesis, however, is that only by its multiplicity of meanings that are woven together in an intricate tapestry does the deep structure (and inner sense) of the chain of festivals reveal itself. As in the case of a work of art, its essence may be its completeness. Of course, this is a study of just a part of the whole festival cycle in one community—though it is doubtless the most important part cosmically and socially. It would be very instructive to complete this analysis for the whole cycle and over a period of several years. One could then go on to compare methodically, according to this format or a similar one, festival cycles and their elements in different communities and regions of India.

Notes

1. It appears that some are compulsory. I am not suggesting that there is any 'Rousseau-style' contract, of course. But in the historical process there is a selection (at whatever level of consciousness) of rites deemed suitable and satisfactory, rites that will be, as it were, productive of closure.
2. It should be kept in mind that towns and villages in the same district vary in the exact round of festivals celebrated and in those emphasized. Some castes in the same community may have different emphases; and non-Hindus may have a different set of festivals altogether. Even families within the same caste commonly vary in their exact ritual and festival emphases. Some differences are historically based on caste and other demographic considerations; some on proximity to places deemed holy at a particular season. Thus, differences increase roughly in proportion to distance or other physical or social obstacles to communication.
3. The postfix *vaśamu* (power or control) is only added to the name of this month.

For seven other months there is an optional postfix, */-masamu/*. It is not uncommon for the */v/* to be transposed to */m/* in this and other dialects of Telugu, e.g., *dēvuḍu* → *dēmuḍu*. It is also not uncommon for an informant to be inconsistent in his use of sibilants, using the full set of */ś/*, */ṣ/*, and */s/* in words he perceives to be Sanskritic in origin, but coalescing to two or even one sibilant */s/* in ordinary Telugu speech. Aspirated consonants of Sanskrit are normally unaspirated in words adapted by Telugu except in highly Sanskritized formal speech. And there is some shifting of vowel length.

4. This occurred on the 26 and 27 February in 1968. The following year I noted that *Śivarātri* was celebrated in Banaras on the 15 and 16 February, thirteen full days earlier. This is by no means a unique regional difference.
5. There is no restriction on the movement of people either in or out of the community during any festival.
6. An auspicious, usually abstract, rice flour drawing executed on or near the front doorstep by the principal woman in the house.
7. The procession cannot be considered unique, for this feature is found in some ceremonies other than those of this particular set.

KALAM ELUTTU : ART AND RITUAL IN KERALA*

Clifford R. Jones

KALAM ELUTTU¹ IN Kerala is a descriptive term referring to the traditional art of the elaborate 'painting' (actually drawing with colored powders) of specific deities and geometric diagrams as a central motif in particular rituals of worship. As a ritual art connected with temple festival performance and domestic ceremony, it is encountered, with minor variations, throughout the length and breadth of Kerala State. The art form of Kaḷam Eḷuttu and its accompanying ritual tradition form a fairly extensive continuum distinguished by three distinct divisions. It may be more accurate to describe this art form as consisting of three independent traditions which share certain similarities in ritual pattern, in performance, in media and technique of painting, and in the general objectives to be achieved. The main distinctions among these three independent traditions are to be found in the personnel who perform in each ritual tradition and the patrons for whom they perform, their social status and caste. The deities to whom the rituals are dedicated, and the identification of the various forms of the deities represented in the paintings, are further significant factors which distinguish the three Kaḷam Eḷuttu traditions.

The three specific traditions are most commonly known in Kerala as (i) Tiyyāṭiyāṭṭam, (ii) Bhagavati Pāṭṭu, and (iii) Nāgayakṣi Kaḷam. It is the tradition of Bhagavati Pāṭṭu with which this paper is primarily concerned.

The first of these traditions is identified with the Tiyyāṭi Nambiyār community,² who are high ranking, sacred-thread-wearing members of the unique group of sub-ranked temple service castes called Ambalavāsi ('temple dwellers'), traditionally associated with temple ritual activity in Kerala. The ritual powder painting tradition within the Tiyyāṭi Nambiyār specialist community is

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reserved for the worship of the deity Ayyappan. The painting is executed by the Nambyār-s themselves. For special ceremonies, a Nambūtiri priest is required; otherwise the Tiyyāṭi Nambyār-s act as their own priests.

Of all the three traditions, Tiyyāṭiyāṭṭam is the most highly elaborated and articulated. The Nambyār-s not only sing descriptive songs of the deity worshipped, as is done in the other two traditions, but also perform an extensive series of dramatic items which are acted in *abhinaya* and with the use of *mudrā*. The techniques employed in acting these dramatic items closely parallel the classical Sanskrit drama techniques of the Cākyār actors in Kūṭiyāṭṭam as performed in the major temples in Kerala. The Nambyār actor assumes the role of Nandikeśvara, here identified as the legendary devotee and servant of Śiva. The Nambyār then performs an elaborate set of preliminary items: Nandikeśvara *pūjā*, Atma *pūjā*, and *pūjā* to Gaṇapati, Sarasvatī, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Then occur two main items of considerable length and complexity: *Pālālimathanam*, or the legendary 'Churning of the Ocean of Milk', followed by 'The Birth of Ayyappan'. On the basis of the archaic literary language of the text—which employs Sanskrit and Old Tamil as well as Old Malayalam—some Kerala scholars have suggested that the tradition belongs to a period as early as the sixth century; however, other elements indicate more recent transformations, perhaps relative to a period between the tenth and thirteenth centuries.³

In South Kerala, a corresponding variant tradition called Bhadrakāḷi Pāṭṭu is carried on by the Tiyyāṭṭuṇṇi-s who are also a segment of the Ambalavāsi community. They have a corresponding ritual rank to that of the Tiyyāṭi Nambyār-s of central and northern Kerala.⁴

The second distinct tradition is the Bhagavati Pāṭṭu ritual conducted by the Kuṟuppu-s, also members of the Ambalavāsi community. The Kuṟuppu-s, however, occupy a lower ritual rank than the Tiyyāṭi Nambyār-s in the traditional hierarchy of the Ambalavāsi-s. They do not wear the sacred thread as do the Tiyyāṭi Nambyār-s. The Kuṟuppu families, who are the essential custodians of Bhagavati Pāṭṭu are not to be confused with other castes that bear the title Kuṟuppu which indicates that they are by tradition masters of military and physical training.⁵ The Kuṟuppu-s draw the sacred powder painting themselves and sing

the Malayalam text describing the goddess and her myth, accompanying themselves on the one-stringed drone instrument called *nantuni*. They normally require the services of other caste specialists for additional ritual music, tantric *pūjā*, and the office of shaman priest. The Kuṟuppu-s traditionally serve Nambūtiri, Sāmantan, and upper-class Nāyar families.

The Kuṟuppu-s have in their repertoire eighteen *rūpa*-s or forms of deity representing various formalized conceptions of Bhagavati, Ayyappan, Vēṭṭēkkaran, Śiva, and Antimahākāḷan. In addition to these set programs of pictorial representation, there are several varieties of *vaṭṭam* or *patmam* (diagrams in the shape of lotus *maṇḍala*-*yantra*) and varieties of *pāmpu* or serpent deity patterns. These last are drawn by the Kuṟuppu-s only for ritual use in the service of Nambūtiri patrons.⁶ Our specific concern however is the discussion of the Aṣṭeśvarī, or the eight-armed pictorial program of the goddess Bhagavati belonging to the Kuṟuppu tradition, which is discussed in detail later in the paper.

The third distinct segment of the larger tradition of ritual powder painting is the last on the social and ritual scale. This is the tradition of the Puḷḷuvanmār, the practitioners of Nāgayakṣi Kaḷam Eḷuttu. The tradition is also variously referred to as Pāmpin Tuḷḷal and Sarppappāṭṭu.⁷ The term Pāmpin Tuḷḷal refers to the agitated possession of the consecrated female mediums by the spirits of the serpent deities. The last term, Sarppappāṭṭu, refers specifically to the ritual songs sung in accompaniment to serpent worship by the specialist community of Puḷḷuvan-s.⁸ The more precise term to denote this ritual art is Nāgayakṣi Kaḷam Eḷuttu, referring to the pictorial tradition of powder painting which is again the central visual motif of the ritual.

According to local Hindu tradition, the Puḷḷuvan community is ranked socially and ritually below the lowest level of the Ambalavāsi-s and below the Nāyar Śūdra families whom they serve. The Puḷḷuvan-s perform for their own community principally and also for Nāyar-s. At least in one instance they perform for Nambūtiri-s, gathering annually in a group of a hundred or more in the outer precincts of the Mānārśāla Pāmpinkāvu to perform special ritual music for the serpent deities. The resident family at the Mānārśāla serpent shrine in former Travancore State are sub-ranked non-Vedic Nambūtiri-s called Nambiyātiri-s. The annual *utsava* is presided over by an elder *antarjjana* of that family, an unusual

instance of a Nambūtiri female taking a pivotal role in a ritual of serpent worship.

The foregoing brief outline of the three segments of the Kaḷam Eḷuttu tradition is meant simply to indicate what place the Bhagavati Kaḷam Eḷuttu tradition of the Kuṟuppu community occupies within the traditional socio-religious hierarchical scale. Features of the internal structure of the ritual, its practitioners in the middle or second tradition, and the significant relationships of that tradition with Tiyyāṭiyāṭṭam and Nāgayakṣi Kaḷam Eḷuttu will be briefly examined; however, I concern myself with this ritual primarily as an art historian. The art object of the painting is discussed in terms of its technique, medium, form, style, and iconography in relationship to the canonical tradition of temple mural painting in Kerala of the late medieval period. The larger context within which this art object appears as part of ritual observance will be considered in a secondary role, as a vital frame in which we find the central motif of the actual painting of the deity Bhagavati as Aṣṭeśvarī.⁹

The Middle Tradition of Bhagavati Kaḷam Eḷuttu

The ritual drawing of the goddess Bhagavati by the Kuṟuppu community is performed most often as part of yearly temple rituals which occur in a forty-one day *maṇḍala* or cycle preceding the Pūram Vēla festivals in the months of Kumbham and Mīnam. These festivals are celebrated in Bhagavati temples throughout Trichur and Palghat Districts in central Kerala. The ritual drawing is also privately performed throughout this area for Nambūtiri-s and upper-class Nāyar-s, particularly Sthāni Nāyar-s, on auspicious occasions such as birthday ceremonies. Three separate instances of the complete ceremony were observed:

1. As part of a birthday celebration;¹⁰
2. As part of the forty-one day *maṇḍala* or ritual cycle in the temple *maṇḍapa* of Koḷimāmbaṟambu Bhagavati; and
3. At a specially arranged ceremony in the ancestral home of an Āḍhyan Nambūtirippāṭu family.¹¹

The three ceremonies were identical except for minor variations.¹² There is an obvious difference in physical location (2 in the temple

precinct, 1 and 3 in private homes). In rituals 1 and 3 in the households of Nambūtiri-s, a Nambūtiri *tantri* (or *śāntikkāran*) performed *pūjā* appropriate to the rank and caste of the patron. An Embrāntiri Brahman¹³ was substituted in 2. Smaller details, such as the elaboration of the ceremony or the specific form of the deity requested by the patron may vary as well as the size of the drawing and number of supporting personnel, i.e., assisting drummers (traditionally Nāyar-s) and additional Kuruppu artists if the drawing is to be an especially large one. These latter factors of elaboration are largely governed by how much money or equivalent goods of value are to be spent on the ceremony. The sacred drawings are identical in style and technique in all such ceremonies. The description which follows is of the third ceremony indicated as 3, held in an Āḍhyan Nambūtirippāṭu household; incidental references to ceremonies 1 and 2 are made when appropriate to further elucidate minor variations on a comparative basis.¹⁴

The Kaḷam Ritual of Bhagavati Aṣṭēśvarī

The arrangements preceding the initiation of the drawing begin with the purification and preparation of the ground upon which the drawing and attendant rites are to be performed. For the Kaḷam ritual 3, the cement floor of a large roofed utility room (some thirty by fifty feet in area) attached to the main house of the patron family was purified.¹⁵ Above the area designated for the drawing (an area approximately eight by ten feet) a skeletal canopy was constructed of four bamboo pieces forming a rectangle suspended on an horizontal plane from the ceiling by a network of light coir rope. A red cotton cloth emblematic of the goddess was spread upon the rope network within the suspended rectangular perimeter of the canopy frame.¹⁶ With the later completion of the drawing, the perimeter of the canopy is to be decorated with a hanging fringe of *kuruttōla* (strips of young coconut palm leaf), at the lower extremities of which are suspended at regular intervals the common red hibiscus (*cemparatti*) sacred to Bhagavati, alternating with fresh areca nuts and betel leaves.

Five colored powders have been previously prepared by the Kuruppu:¹⁷ (i) white—*arippoti*, white rice flour; (ii) black—powdered burnt paddy husk; (iii) yellow—turmeric powder; (iv) red—

produced by combining dry *cunṇam* (lime) with turmeric powder and a critical amount of water, causing a chemical action which transforms the powder mixture to a rich earth red;¹⁸ and (v) green—dried and powdered leaves of the Siris tree (*nenmēniveka*). These five colors will be combined in the drawing, both in their pure flat state and in shaded overlays to create tonal variations and to indicate three-dimensional form.¹⁹

The process of drawing begins in a subdued atmosphere of quiet concentration. The drawing is formally begun by establishing the *brahmā sūtra*, the center line of the drawing, with white powder on a west to east axis. That is to say, the finished drawing will 'face' the auspicious direction of the east (the head of the image in the east, the feet in the west). All other spatial arrangements are oriented from this axis. The length of the drawing is measured by repetitions of the module of the vertical dimension of the head.²⁰

From the reference of the central axis the subsidiary measurements and extensions are indicated by dots of dry white powder extruded from the hand of the Kuṟuppu artist by the dexterous manipulation of his fingers.²¹ Then the curving lines of the further developed drawing of the parts of the body and major ornaments are laid in, working from the head outward, upward and downward. The large areas of basic undercolor are filled in: red for the lower garments and midriff jacket; green for the face, stomach, arms and feet of the figure; yellow for the *kiriṭam* or crown. Next, the shading of the outer edge of the head, stomach and arms is accomplished—yellow over the base of green, red over yellow, and last the encompassing accent of a sharp line of pure black. This technique is a conscious effort to indicate the three-dimensional low-relief sculptural effect of traditional canonical painting. Shading of the crown is done in white and red over yellow with the black accent line heightened by a sharp pure white line next to it. The two dynamic extremes of black and white, forming the highest contrast, encompass the combinations of subsidiary color, enlivening the two-dimensional patterns with visual intensities and textures, accentuating the growing rhythmic progressions of the totally articulated form of the deity as she emerges from the two-dimensional ground.

Approximately at the half-way point in the development of the technically two-dimensional drawing, the element of a real third dimension is introduced. The breasts of the goddess are formed and raised by the pouring out of two medium measures of *nellu*

(unhusked rice), one measure for each. These are amply overlaid in the later development of the drawing with the red base color and a subsidiary ornamental necklace in white and yellow. A secondary three-dimensional element is introduced at a point approximately three-quarters of the way through the completed drawing. The nose is raised with additional green powder, the eyes with white. As the senior Kuruppu shapes the eyes with a *vāl kaṇṇāṭi* ('tailed mirror', a ritual bronze hand-mirror) and begins to fill in the irises and pupils, at that precise instant the Nāyar drummers and cymbal players begin the first reverberating beats of the long percussion composition which will continue at intervals throughout the remainder of the ceremony until ultimately the drawing is ritually destroyed. From the point of the eye-opening rite, the atmosphere becomes immediately more charged. The drums (two *centā*) and bronze cymbals (*ilattālam*) play their leisurely course of rhythmic progressions from simple to more complex, with a structured increase of tempo from very slow, through six plateaus of increasing speed, to the final destination. Within this humming, vibrating, aural continuum, the Kuruppu artists continue with the remaining methodical elaborations of the drawing.

The form of the goddess can now be more clearly discerned. She is conceived as sitting upon a *pīṭham*, or ritual stool, with thighs and legs turned outward.²² The lower body is shown as draped in a geometrically patterned cloth traditionally called *vīrāḷi paṭṭu*, which in color and design resembles the famous pre-patterned dyed silk *paṭola* of Gujarat, much prized as trade goods in the past as far as Southeast Asia. The eight arms indicate the form of the goddess called Aṣṭeśvarī. She holds in her lower left arm a rectangular shield with a characteristic four-sided concave linear design. The other lower left hand holds the hair of the severed head of the evil demon Dāruka, slain by the goddess in battle. The two upper left hands hold a bell and a skull bowl. On the right side of the figure the two upper hands hold a pestle and a trident. The third hand holds an elliptical *cilambu*, or bronze anklet, filled with sound-producing metal particles.²³ The remaining lower right hand holds the most characteristic weapon of the goddess, the sacred ritual sword called *nāndakam*.²⁴ The form of the crown is characteristic of the Kerala medieval art style: a conically arranged, graduated, triple-spheroid form, backed by a *prabhā* or nimbus, and ornamented in geometric patterns representing jewels. In

addition, there are large round *kuṇḍala*, or ear ornaments.

The treatment of the countenance is most striking. The three eyes are represented with a wide fixed stare, the whites showing above the irises which meet the lower lids. The expression is a recognized form described in canonical literature, traditionally embodying the root *bhāva*-s of *utsāha* (vigor), *krodha* (anger) and *vismaya* (astonishment). The total effect in simpler terms is a combination of qualities to be beheld in the temperament of the goddess, well known in dramatic as well as pictorial art. Her expression is that which evokes the *rasa* of *vīra*, or valour, supported by *raudra*, or fury—the result of the moment of her victory over Dārūka the demon. Her *damṣṭra*, or extended canines, and exultant grimace demonstrate this violence, triumphant in victory. She inexorably conquers and is victorious. She is compellingly attractive, vibrating in rich color and ornamentation which further induce the intended *rasa* of *adbhuta*, or wonder and astonishment. The four *poṭṭu*—the circular designs between her eyes, on each cheek, and in the center of her chin—are seen in Kerala's traditional temple murals and sculpture, ornamenting epic figures of violence.

These are the traditional expressions of the *ugra* (violent or fearsome) forms of the goddess in her several manifestations. In this ritual form, the goddess is worshipped most traditionally as the patroness of fever and disease, particularly smallpox, and as a power which can give protection from diseases. Her fearsome aspects are offset by her other ample attributes as a fertility figure. With her swelling breasts of paddy, she sustains, protects and cleanses with her fearsome countenance of power. These aspects, though not all specifically emphasized in this particular ritual, are implicit in the many songs sung in connection with other festival occasions associated with this goddess. These are the worship and songs offered by traditionally lower-ranked castes (Tīyar, Maṇṇān, Pāṇan, Paṛaya and Pulaya Ceṛuma, etc.) notably at the time of the great *Kodungalur Bharāṇi* festival. The songs on these occasions are most often of a wildly erotic nature addressed to the goddess, explained locally as intended to cool the goddess's burning wrath after the destruction of the demon Dārūka.²⁵

As noted previously, there is in the composite nature of the goddess the sustaining alternate aspect of Bhagavati as a victorious war deity. She is traditionally the patroness of the *kaḷari*, the old traditional military and physical training gymnasium. Ultimately,

she may be identified with Korṟavai, the ancient Tamil goddess of war (Dravidian Durgā), perhaps as likely an ancestress of the present Sanskritized transformation of the great Mother Deity in Kerala as can be encountered. The more obvious relevant corresponding deity is the Tamil disease goddess Māriammaṅ, who would seem to be the root and prototype of the goddess Bhagavati as worshipped in her several manifestations in Kerala.

Historical Background of the Late Medieval Art Style of Kerala

There are as yet so many unknown aspects of this artistic tradition as a part of religious ritual and festival celebration that it is perhaps unwise to insist upon categorically identifying this art either as what is commonly called 'folk art' or as the 'classical' canonical art of the temple and court in India. Such classification is too often made without sufficient extended investigation. We cannot say that there was no early tradition of drawing patterned diagrams or figures of a sacred or magical nature in the early eras of the Tamil period preceding the introduction of Aryan-Sanskritic culture and institutions into South India. What we have before us is undoubtedly the result of a long process of integration and transformation of concepts that drew materials from both sources. The triple tradition of Kaḷam Eluttu is an instance of a ritual art which has combined or integrated canonical and folk traditions to a degree which challenges any simplistic analysis.²⁶

With more assurance we can discuss historical elements of both a theoretical and stylistic nature regarding the Kerala art tradition. The overall stylistic temperament of Kerala's art traditions in temple painting, and sculpture as well, is directly connected with the canonical literature last crystallized in the *Śilparatna*, a text of the sixteenth century. The stylistic evolution preceding this period from at least as early as the thirteenth century is suddenly overwhelmingly influenced by the decorative style and conceptual rendering of the human and divine figure in art as seen in the later Hoysala tradition.²⁷ The correspondence apparently goes further in the literary tradition. In the *Śilparatna*, at the end of the section dealing with the technique and varieties of painting, the last mentioned is *dhūlicitra*, painting with powders or dust. This section

on the varieties of painting appears in almost identical form in the earlier twelfth-century *śilpa* text, the *Mānasollāsa*.²⁸ The *Mānasollāsa*, also known as the *Abhilaṣitārthacintāmaṇi*, is ascribed to the Cālukya king Someśvara. The suggested historical continuity is implicit in the evolution of style and theory demonstrated in the legacy of Cālukya art and architectural forms as employed by their feudatories, the Hoysāḷa-s. The geographical and cultural contiguity of Kerala to the former domain of the Hoysāḷa-s is obvious. Further, Hoysāḷa influences are markedly present in the earlier phase of medieval bronze sculpture of very high quality found in Kerala and on the southwest coast of Karnataka.²⁹

The basic scheme of five colors in Kaḷam Eḷuttu corresponds almost exactly to the Kerala technique of mural painting, both as to the formulae given in *citra śāstra* and in practice. The mural painting style—which we can substantially document from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century by means of surviving examples in Kerala's temples and palaces—reinforces the correspondence between theory and technique in practice. It also governs the essentially iconographic nature of the representation.

Details illustrating the linear rendering of concepts regarding pattern, shape and volume are further to be found in the incised palm-leaf manuscript illustration style of the sixteenth century and later. Two excellent references to the linear style of manuscript illustration are to be found in the chapter on medieval Kerala art in *South Indian Paintings* by Śivaramamurti.³⁰ The wire-like undulating line depicting the Śeṣaśayana Viṣṇu reveals a particular style as well as a distinctive iconographic conception developed in medieval Kerala. A second source for reference is the unusual illustrated palm-leaf *Citra Rāmāyaṇa* in the Kerala University Manuscripts collection. The style of this sixteenth-century work demonstrates even more directly the stocky rounded scale of the human figure as seen in earlier Hoysāḷa sculpture. The preoccupation of Kerala art with related decorative form and rounded volumes, while still maintaining narrative economy, is clearly demonstrated.³¹

A further comparison may be made of details of ornamental beaded border patterns as in the 'encircling' arc behind the Yoga-nārāyaṇa (sixteenth-seventeenth century) from the Rāma temple at Triprayar.³² Here, the outer framing border in pure black and white at the top of the painting is a repeat pattern of radial flower

forms made of manipulated dots and short dashes. The rich range of color from gold and russet to earth red and muted green, accented with pure black and white, and the constant wire-like line encircling all form and detail of the multi-braceleted deity, are further constant elements in pictorial representation. Significantly, the fingernails are indicated in white precisely as in the Kālam Eluttu technique. The scenes of Venugopāla and Rāma³³ from the same temple at Triprayar underscore the comparative range and manipulation of color and form. The enlarged detail of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa from the Śiva temple at Trichur³⁴ demonstrates the continuity of the earlier style into the beginning of the eighteenth century. Here the wide-open energized eyes of the two brothers exemplify the basic conception of the face of Bhagavati in the ritual powder painting.

The most direct formal correspondences that firmly bind the iconographic conception of Bhagavati and Ayyappan of the Kālam Eluttu tradition to the iconographic conceptions as seen in the temple mural tradition, are two renderings to be found in the private royal chapel of the Palace of Padmanabhapuram located in Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu, which was formerly a part of the princely State of Travancore. The formal bisymmetry of the hieratic figure of Bhagavati offers few programmatic distinctions. The Padmanabhapuram figure is seen standing; our figure is seated. While there are minor variations in the arrangement of symbolic objects in the eight hands of the figure and variant details of ornament and adjustments of design, and though the media are different, we still have an equal communication of form, style, color and crucial identifying content. Both fall within the orbit of the iconographic and stylistic 'language' of the art expression of medieval Kerala.³⁵ The 'message' is the same; the figure is unmistakably the form and image of the auspicious goddess Bhagavati as evolved in medieval Kerala.

The program for the figure of Ayyappan is far more eloquent in its detailed identity, both in the powder form and in the wall painting. The Ayyappan image is conceived in profile from the waist downward, turned to its left side. The body from the waist upward is presented in full frontality.³⁶ The right hand grasps a sword pointed downward across the right thigh. The left hand grips a long bow held vertically. The countenance of the figure is green, the eyes wide in an attitude of triumph. The face is

encircled with a fierce short black beard; the head is crowned with a special jewelled *muṭi*, topped with a circlet of peacock feathers. The several ornaments and the familiar geometric pattern of the lower garment correspond equivalently.

This fixed program of Ayyappan may be equated with Vēṭṭēkkaran as well. The figures of this program—to be found in the Padmanabhapuram Palace and in the Mattancheri Palace at Cochin—have both in the past been questionably identified as Kirāta.³⁷ The basic program referred to is interchangeable for the deities Ayyappan, Vēṭṭēkkaran and Kirāta. The identical program of the figure of the bronze *utsava* image in the private temple of Kirāta Sūnu (the son of Kirāta) in the palace grounds at Nilambur in Malabar, further identifies this interchangeable conception common to these forest-hunter deities. Kirāta would seem to be a further applied Sanskritic translation or iconographical transformation of these indigenous, perhaps older, conceptions and is regarded as the least important divine identity represented by this particular program. Kirāta is significantly not represented specifically in the Kaḷam Eḷuttu tradition's repertoire of formal programs.

It is still premature to attempt a definitive explanation of the possible relationship of the two traditions and media of expression. Are the features of canonical structure a later adjustment of a pre-existing ritual art tradition which has in turn ultimately influenced the canonical wall painting style? Or has the canonical tradition re-created a 'primitive' pre-existing ritual art tradition according to its literary and theoretical conceptions? Has it thereby not only Sanskritized the deities, to a degree, but ultimately affected the form of pictorial conception and the structure of the total ritual itself? These are questions we cannot yet answer.

From the preceding examination of form, style, color and relationships—which are but a small sample of the far more varied 'dialects' of sub-typological styles in various media—we can establish the substantial basis of a single overall related stylistic 'language' of aesthetic expression that is characteristic of medieval art in Kerala. This wider homogeneity of color, form, style and image in visual art communication reinforces our view that the Kaḷam Eḷuttu tradition under discussion is to be identified as having reached its present formal stylistic evolution somewhere between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries and that it is essentially this period in its

development that we see reproduced today in a ritual art form. This does not necessarily indicate a simultaneous development for all other aspects of ritual form or of the performance of rites integral to the total Bhagavati Kalam Eluttu ritual.

The detailed examination and analysis of the further extent of the rites and consideration of the functions of caste specialists representing the total complex of ritual performance remain a subject for further ethnographic study.

Aspects of Communication in the Art of Kerala

Apart from the historical and textual considerations that aid an examination of this ritual art form, a further evaluation of the formal compositional and stylistic features of Kalam Eluttu indicates an even wider range of relationships and meaning in such art forms as communication systems. Within the circumscribed geographic-linguistic-cultural context of Kerala, the artistic expressions under discussion understandably have a far greater level of meaning and response. We can safely say that the structure and expression of the drawn images are informed by the stylistic conventions and details of a pictorial vocabulary intimately familiar to the people, operating in a system representing an historically sustained tradition of visual communication in art. Though the specific message programs of the deity, evolved and prescribed by the tradition for iconographic representation, may be alternated as required, the stylizations of form, color manipulation, and details of ornamental embellishment remain for all a constant basic vocabulary of familiar image-idea communication of traditional Hindu art in Kerala.³⁸ It is this very distinct and familiar and well understood vocabulary of visual communication that compels the eye and draws the attention irresistibly into the fabric of the total ritual performance.

One may speculate upon the evaluation of this particular ritual art or other related arts as to what comparative degree they are 'hot' or 'cold', passive or active, inert or dynamic communications media. On examination, the principal feature which distinguishes Kalam Eluttu ritual art from the essentially passive, static art of temple murals and sculpture is that it is ephemeral. Since the art representation of the temple proper is intended ideally to be

permanent and to be contemplated repeatedly at will, it is primarily a visual experience at best.

As contrasted with temple sculpture and murals, the ritual art of the powder-drawn deity involves a much wider range of integrated aesthetic expressions, which are characterized by intense physical and psychological concentration and immediacy realized through the use of multi-media of expression, these being the necessarily ephemeral arts of live ritual performance.³⁹ The drawn image as the centerpiece of the prepared communication experience is created on the spot for the specified occasion as part of a complex of performed rites which have not only fundamental visual and aural factors but also contain a further complex of reinforcing techniques of explicit as well as suggestive aesthetic communication. The range of patterned choreographic movement and varieties of vocal and instrumental performance in the total ritual are extensions of a basic idea of live contact with the senses to achieve greater involvement in and more intense and direct communication with the projected religious concept. The ritual is observed by the patrons and devotees from its beginning, through its development, and to its culmination by their active participation in a concluding sacramental rite of protective purification by means of a portion of the 'corpus of the deity'—i.e., the shower of paddy and colored powders from the ritually destroyed drawing of the deity at the close of the ritual. This sacred mixture is cast upon the assembled devotees by the Nāyar shaman-priest. This act, combined with the acceptance of *prasāda*, brings the experience to the tactile level. Finally, the devotees ask questions of the deity and hear the oracles given by the deity through the mouth of the Nāyar shaman. This act formally concludes the complex ceremony of evocation, propitiation, benediction and protection.

Traditional Patronage

Traditional patronage is vital, in the present as in the past, in sustaining this particular religious art expression. Whereas other forms of traditional art—such as canonical temple and palace architecture, sculpture and painting—are understandably in almost total decline owing to the obvious social and economic developmental changes of the past fifty years or so, the ritual art of Kaḷam

Eḷuttu survives with remarkable vigor. The economic demands necessary to produce a performance of these rituals are still relatively small compared to the enormous expense necessary to produce major works of canonical art. The three related traditions of Tiyyāṭiyāṭṭam, Bhagavati Kaḷam Eḷuttu and Nāgayakṣi Kaḷam Eḷuttu serve far more popular forms of the deities, at a more intimate level, and to more pragmatic ends than the more remote 'classical' deities of the established caste temples. Whereas the Tiyyāṭi Nambyār tradition serves an essentially exclusive patronage group, principally the Nambūtiri-s, the second tradition, Bhagavati Kaḷam Eḷuttu, and the third, Nāgayakṣi Kaḷam Eḷuttu, serve a much wider segment of traditional society. They are all ultimately part of the still larger complex of institutions and independent caste traditions of ritual worship directed, in this context, to the widely popular deity Ayyappan of Sabarimala, the great goddess Bhagavati, and the serpent deities. The last two represent concepts of death-disease and fertility-life, the worship of which is celebrated in innumerable forms by large segments of traditional Hindu society in Kerala (including the Paṛaya and Pulaya Ceṛuma communities, who were from ancient times the indispensable and vital personnel base of agricultural production).

Patronage of the Kaḷam Eḷuttu ritual performance traditionally brings a corresponding increase in status to the patron family. Depending on the number and elaborate extent of the celebrations of the ritual, a degree of increased status is brought to the shrine and the particular hamlet or village in which these rituals are regularly performed. The patron-devotees as well as the villagers of the area receive the spiritual-psychological benefit of the ritual performances. The cycle of forty-one days of Bhagavati Kaḷam Eḷuttu ceremonies in connection with the annual *Pūram Vēla* festival of the temple of the goddess is traditionally considered the most important ritually for the protection of the village area and its inhabitants. This latter is an event that ultimately engages on the average four to five ritually ranked and related hamlet or village shrines belonging to a particular group or *tattakam*. Each *tattakam*, after celebrating separate rituals in its respective local Bhagavati shrines in a prescribed order, sends a deputation to the main shrine or temple on the last day of the cycle of forty-one days. The last two or three days of the cycle are celebrated with many other varied subsidiary rituals and the performance and display of several other

traditional arts connected with temple festivals outside the immediate purview of the present paper. The detailed description of the numerous varieties of events on the festival calendar and the various castes and communities taking part in them will appear in a future extended paper.

Concluding Remarks

Significant aspects of the form and presentation of Bhagavati Kaḷam Eḷuttu are the pattern of the ritual's integral structure and the diversity of its personnel, spanning several caste-ranked segments of traditional society within a single ritual continuity. The distinction between the high art of the 'great tradition'—the art and ritual tradition of Sanskrit canonical literature—and the 'other' elements of an art and ritual of the 'little tradition'—often labelled as 'folk' for want of a more accurate term—is an artificial one here, for the two coexist in a symbiotic form.

The Kerala art tradition under examination further demonstrates a popular function of art and apparently a wide integration of canonical 'inside' usages with concepts 'outside' that 'orthodoxy'. The several participants in the intimate performance structure of the Bhagavati Kaḷam Eḷuttu tradition, representing various castes and status groups, may be evidence of the kind of cooperative social-ritual interaction which encouraged the integration of elements of 'folkways' with elements of the late medieval regional canonical traditions found in the present form of ritual art.

Far too often, such varieties of combined popular ritual art are referred to as merely the products of periods of 'decay' or 'debasement' of the orthodox canonical tradition, or, on the other hand, as intrusions of 'folk' or 'primitive' art and ritual elements into an otherwise ostensibly 'fixed' classical canonical system.⁴⁰ They would rather seem to indicate historical transitions and mutual accommodations within the social and religious complex of a specific cultural region. It has been suggested by Kerala Varma that the Kaḷam Eḷuttu tradition basically represents an archaic religious ritual art predating the mounting influence of the Aryan-Sanskritic period which transformed the content and pattern of ritual into the tradition as we observe it today.⁴¹

However, speculation upon how ancient the tradition is or what

its precise transformations have been through time must be suspended until further more extensive research material has been collected in the field. The visual form is clearly a continuation of a later medieval phase of artistic development in Kerala. Forthcoming information on the textual background specific to the practice of the art by the Kuruppu specialists, will aid in further identifying a clearer relationship with the major canonical *tantra*, *āgama*, and *śilpa śāstra* traditions in South India.⁴² Ample evidence of the relationships of aspects of form, performance and structure among the three traditions already indicates the need for a future comparative study of the three fully researched traditions. From the point of view of the discipline of either the South Asia art historian, anthropologist or religions specialist, the complex of the three traditions of Kaḷam Eḷuttu opens a rewarding door on the extensive but little studied cults of the deities Ayyappan and Bhagavati and of the serpent spirits. All three of these traditions are fundamental to understanding the still wider extensions of the popular systems of worship followed by the broadest segment of Kerala's Hindu community today.

For the art historian, the aspects of the ritual performance which make use of a language or vocabulary of form and color, through which ordered varieties of aesthetic experience can be communicated, hold particular interest. I have discussed in part some of these aspects of the ritual art in the course of the paper. To go beyond this stage and to attempt to suggest relationships of cultural values to facts of style and symbolic form, or vice versa, is at this point premature. In a highly provocative article,⁴³ George Mills discusses such difficult problems and indicates some of the dangers of too premature an analysis of this sort. He has apparently accepted arbitrary value correspondences, admittedly made largely from a Western cultural experience, which cannot necessarily be regarded as methodological universals. Relationships regarding form, style and meaning, through aesthetic communication systems, i.e., Mills's 'form-quality linkages', must be formed as far as possible on the basis of conceptual patterns operating within the culture observed. One must guard against one's own, not only conscious but unconscious, cultural conditioning which may lead one to see patterns which are nonexistent in the culture under study. Particularly within a cultural tradition with an enormous historical literary tradition in aesthetic theory and practice such as India,

the research scholar is continually made aware of the variables and discontinuities between textual theory and living tradition in practice. Gesture, form, design, color, sound pattern, and even time interval and juncture in art and ritual have particular meaning in a particular cultural context. These specific meanings are as variable and complex as the several idioms of a single language within a family of languages, itself within a still larger complex of language families, spoken in a multi-linguistic, multi-cultural society.

The dangers of arriving at 'universals' prematurely are further indicated in the following hypothesis, the third from a set of four hypothetical polar contrasts in art style: 'Symmetrical design (a special case of repetition) should characterize the egalitarian societies; asymmetrical design should characterize the hierarchical societies.'⁴⁴ The author of the above quotation is 'theoretically' far more successful with his other three factors. However, in the Indian context in general, and in Kerala in particular, the quoted item above could not apply or conceivably be a valid 'universal'.

Finding or devising a 'form equals meaning lexicon' can be attempted only with the very greatest care and only in the field for a study of this kind. This in no way should deter scholars from pursuing similar analytical and interpretive studies. The highly complex and integral nature of a culture's living religious art forms is by no means so easily understood or interpreted. These forms do, however, often contain much valuable information about a traditional culture, as a visible and ultimately 'readable' form of that culture's values and varieties of aesthetic experience through time. Any artifact or art object torn from its context, and certainly an art of religious ritual bereft of its fullest contextual meaning, is, after all, merely a lifeless curiosity no longer operating in its own vital continuum. It is like the green patina on an ancient bronze that excites in us today a certain sensual aesthetic enjoyment that is totally irrelevant to the time, period, culture and the utilitarian purpose, or aesthetic experience, for which the bronze was conceived and created.

It is evident that in the examination and analysis of forms of traditional Hindu art that are a part of ritual, the spectrum of possible approaches to the problem must be regarded with caution. The two extreme attitudes might be summarized as: (i) that approach which considers the 'art object as the all-important center of the study', the more usual emphasis of most art historians; and

(ii) moving towards the extreme opposite end of the spectrum, the approach which considers 'the study of the culture which produced the art object' as the real objective. The latter is often the attitude of the anthropologist concerned with material culture and art. Somewhere in between the understandably oscillating spectrum of objectivity is the more constructive method.

In the recent past a concern for new approaches to such problems has been gaining attention. A vigorous reaction by several scholars to Herta Haselberger's 'Method of Studying Ethnological Art' has produced a series of remarkable discussions of the many problems involved.⁴⁵ A desirable new dialogue is at long last at the beginning stages between '... anthropologists and art historians who usually seem to navigate upon parallel and separate courses without communication.'⁴⁶ Avoiding the often crippling extremes in studying ritual art forms, 'art can be studied as the center of a web of functionally related aspects of culture and society'⁴⁷ to far greater advantage to both the discipline of the art historian and that of the ethnologist-anthropologist.

Art and material culture are not only a part of the history of man's transactions with the material world. They are a significant adjunct, a vital part, of his 'several languages of communication', ultimately an expressive aspect of the history of man's transactions with the spiritual world around him as well.

Notes

1. In South India, *Kalam Eluttu* (literally 'threshing floor drawing') has come to refer, in current usage, to ceremonial designs, diagrams and figures drawn upon the earth or floor.
2. The *Tiyyāṭiyāṭtam* tradition (alternate spelling, *Tiyāṭiyāṭtam*) is also referred to by the terms of *Ayyappan Pāṭṭu* and *Vēṭṭēkkaran Pāṭṭu*, which more precisely refer to the particular deity and its descriptive songs sung during the ceremony. Both of these deities, *Ayyappan* and *Vēṭṭēkkaran*, may be ritually celebrated by the *Kuruppu-s* as well in their own tradition of *Kalam Eluttu*. The *Tiyyāṭi Nambyār-s* are concentrated in central and northern Kerala.
3. Kurumappalli Sridharan Nambūtiri, 'Udayāstamanam—Nambyār Kūttu Enna Kṣētrakala', *Māṭṭbhūmi Ālccappatippu*, Vol. XXXV, No. 9, Kozhikode, 26 May 1957, pp. 21-23.
4. L. K. Anantha Krishna Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, 2 Vols., Madras: Higginbothams and Co. for the Government of Cochin, 1909-1912, Vol. II, pp. 134-36.

5. The title Kuṟuppu traditionally refers to a master of arms and physical culture. The Kaḷam Eḷuttu Kuṟuppu-s with whom we are concerned are alleged to be an upper status segment of specialists belonging to the Mārār community, families of which are often musicians and numbered among the Ambalavāsi community. Their title Kuṟuppu may very well be derived from the fact that they teach the newly consecrated Nāyar shaman specialist who performs the long choreographed ritual dance as part of the Bhagavati Pāṭṭu ritual. This 'routine' demands considerable dexterity and technical facility of a physical nature. It requires a knowledge of *tāla*, or rhythm as well. To prepare the Nāyar shaman, a regimen of regular gymnastic exercises and *uliccil* (a complicated oil massage) is followed for a period of six months under the instruction of a Kuṟuppu. In the Kaḷam Eḷuttu ceremonies, in the absence of a *veliccappāṭu* or *Kāmaram*, as the Nāyar shaman is known, the senior Kuṟuppu may serve in the same capacity, performing all the rites ideally performed by his pupil the Nāyar. See Iyer, *The Cochin Tribes and Castes*, Vol. II, pp. 144-45, for details of caste ranking of Mārār-Kuṟuppu in the traditional social hierarchy.
6. Two variant pictorial programs reported as rarely performed are representations of Yakṣī and Āryyanambi. At the Arpukkara temple near Kottayam, a unique program called Brāhmaṇa is drawn.
7. Occasionally the reference Nāgārādhana is used, denoting simply serpent worship.
8. *Nāga* (snake); *yakṣī* (female spirit); *kaḷam* (threshing floor, in this context, a floor painting); *eḷuttu* (writing or drawing); *pāmpu* (snake); *tullal* (jumping, here meaning agitated movement); *sarppam* (snake); *pāṭṭu* (song). H. Gundert, *A Malayalam and English Dictionary* (2nd ed.), Kottayam: Sahitya Pravartaka C.S. Ltd., 1962, pp. 513, 788-89, 233, 177, 603, 459, 936, 598.
9. By no means do I intend to minimize the importance or value of a careful and meticulous description and analysis of the total socio-religious fabric of the ritual painting tradition under examination, nor of what would be a revealing examination when seen in relation to its two contiguous traditions, all operating in one larger cultural context. The potential for study in these three related ritual traditions is enormous and in no way can be encompassed here. My present concern is with an art form in religious ritual indigenous to Kerala and its relationship to the larger historical-cultural, technical and stylistic scheme of Kerala's art tradition.
10. In honor of the Kuttanerci Aṣṭavaidya Mūssad, a Kerala brahman belonging to one of the eight traditional families of Ayurvedic physicians, ranked high as an aristocratic Nambūtiri family.
11. The term Ādhyan is a title indicating the high rank of the family in the Nambūtiri brahmin hierarchy, entitling them to use the honorific suffix '*pāṭu*' as in Nambūtirippāṭu.
12. Relative to the size and elaboration of the ceremonies attending the drawing of deities in this tradition, the following is a rare reference to the 'Vadaku Purathu Pattu' ritual, the most elaborate yet reported:

'Vadaku Purathu Pattu', literally meaning Northern Side Song, is an elaborate and detailed observance of Kalam Ezhuthu but performed only in

Siva temples once in twelve years. This most important and highly sacred Sakthi worship, lasting for twelve days is intended to safeguard the entire 'desam' or town mainly from infectious diseases. Naturally the entire population of the desam joins in the festival.

One such Vadakku Purathu Pattu was recently conducted in the famous Siva temple of Vaikom in central Kerala. Twelve days before the commencement of the festival, a jackfruit tree, earlier selected by the temple Velichapad, was cut and brought without touching the ground and planted in front of the Puja site. A large and profusely decorated pandal was erected in the spacious northern side of the temple compound. Every day the image of Bhadrakali was drawn on the floor by the experts covering over 1,600 sq. ft. The figure during the first 11 days had sixteen hands and the last day's Kali on Vethalam was with 32 hands. One hundred kg. of colored paddy was used to make the bust of the Goddess. Twenty-three skilled Kurups would work for six hours every day to draw this excellent figure which would at the end of the night's puja be erased by the Velichapad and the powder distributed as 'prasadam'.

The Bhagavathi of a nearby temple was taken in procession every night and installed in the pandal before the commencement of the 'Pattu'. Eight to ten persons formed as the singers. The tune would be like Kathakali padam but the words are in pure Malayalam. The slokas describing the Bhagavathi from head to toe and again from toe to head (Kesadi padam and padadi kesam) would last for two hours.

- N. S. Mani, 'Vadakku Purathu Pattu', *The Hindu* (Madras), 27 March 1966, part II. The title of the article evidently refers to the ritual custom of the Kuruppu-s of facing the northern side of the completed drawing while they sing the descriptive-eulogistic songs in celebration of the goddess. Mārān-s, or Mārār, call themselves Vaṭakku Purattu ('belonging to the north side').
13. Sub-ranked brahmans of Tulu speaking immigrants into Kerala. They most often officiate at smaller Bhagavati shrines in Kerala.
 14. From this point on I refer to the total ceremony as the ritual and to its major integral segments as rites.
 15. The most traditional floor surface is of packed earth which is cleaned and prepared with a fresh coat of liquid cow dung, rendering it as a purified sacred space for the purpose of the ceremony.
 16. In Ayyappan Kaḷam Eluttu, in both the Tiyyāṭi Nāmbiyār and the Kuruppu tradition, a black cloth is used. Black, and secondarily a shade of dark blue, are the emblematic colors of the deity Ayyappan or Śāstāvu.
 17. The question of color symbolism would seem to be inherent in the traditional use of particular colors in the drawings. The more obvious significance of red as the color associated with the dynamic aspect of the goddess may be read as blood-energy, hot, representing the dominant aspect of the conception. However, the significance of green, a 'cool' color—which in Kerala art usually signifies beauty, the erotic and the generative mood—poses the question of a ritually symbolic reference in this tradition apart from the canonically based color tradition in painting. The color symbolism of the three *guṇa*-s (white—*sattva*, red—*rajas*, and black—*tamas*) is well known and often discussed.

- However, specific research remains to be done in these three traditions before any significant analysis of their color symbolism component can be made. For a discussion of color in ritual as practiced in the Kongunad area of Tamil Nadu, South India, see Brenda E. F. Beck, 'Colour and Heat in South Indian Ritual', *Man*, n.s. IV, No. 2, December 1969, pp. 553-72.
18. This mixture is the basis of *kuruti*, or the blood surrogate liquid, used in connection with what were formerly animal sacrifices practiced by various communities ranked from Śūdra and below in Kerala. The red powder is prepared on the site of the ritual just before the drawing is begun.
 19. Not a part of the traditional *añcu niyam* (the five colors), a sixth is created from a nearly equal mixture of white, black and red, producing a pale grey-violet called *kapota*, or pigeon color, which is used with telling restraint in ornamental details of the outer *prabhāmaṇḍala*, the crown, necklace and lower garment.
 20. The module of the head (*śiras pada*) may be increased, thereby extending the related dimensions of the total drawing. Although the unusual festival at Vaikom once in twelve years features a drawing reported as covering 1,600 square feet (see note 12 above), the average drawing covers an area of approximately 80 to 150 square feet.
 21. Basically, there are two varieties of the manual technique. A portion of powder is held in the closed hand; the powder is funneled out beneath the thumb and forefinger to produce short dashes or long narrow lines and more broadly cast to fill areas or to overlay colors. The second technique again proceeds by making a funnel of the closed hand and releasing controlled amounts of powder downward through a round aperture created by the little finger and curving subsidiary fingers, a closer approximation of a makeshift funnel, producing dots of various sizes. The Puḷḷuvanmār are reported to use half a coconut shell filled with powder and having a small hole in the bottom. In the drawing technique observed among Puḷḷuvan-s, both the hand and several coconut shells with differing perforated designs were employed. Unlike the other two Kaḷam Eḷuttu traditions, Puḷḷuvan-s involve both men and women in the drawing and the accompanying music. They lay special emphasis upon female participation in their rituals, which are centered on disease prevention and cure as well as fertility.
 22. The *pītham* is of a type well known as standard furniture in Kerala temples. A *pītham* or stool of the same basic design, executed in teak, is placed at the head of the completed drawing. Upon it are placed the starched and pleated symbolic cloth fan, sword, mirror and flowers.
 23. The *cilambu* is associated with Devi or Amman worship in Tamil Nadu as well. They are worn as anklets by the *kōmaram* or *veliccappātu* shaman priests and also held in the left hand for some ceremonies.
 24. The *nāndakam* is identified, as are the three primary ritual sword types, by the shape and design of the blade. The *nāndakam* is traditionally associated with Śrī Bhadrakāḷi. The more common sword type with its blade ending in a sickle shape is called *paḷḷivāl* and is associated with Śrī Durgā. However, the sword type that is always shown in the ritual drawings of Bhagavati is of the *nāndakam* type and never of the *paḷḷivāl* type. This appears to be a constant even in the instances when Bhagavati Kaḷam Eḷuttu ceremonies are

conducted in a *kāvū* or *kṣetra* specifically identified as dedicated to Kālī, Caṇḍī, Vana Durgā, Bhadrakālī, or Bhagavati. The second most important ritual sword type which appears in the Kaḷam Eḷuttu tradition is that used in connection with the deities Ayyappan and Vēṭṭēkkan. The sword type pictured in the ritual drawings is the standard straight, double-edged battle sword called simply *vāl* or *śūla*; however, the officiating *veḷiccappāṭu* always carries a distinctive ritual sword called *kaṭuttīla* (in the Malabar area, *curika*). See P. S. Rawson, *The Indian Sword*, London: Herbert Jenkins, 1968, p. 41.

The Cālukya 'flamboyant' sword types and varieties from Vijayanagara times can be related to the distinctive *curika* sword type employed in rituals of Ayyappan and Vēṭṭēkkan Kaḷam Eḷuttu (illustrated in P. S. Rawson, *Indian Sword*, plates 12 and 13). Examples of *paḷḷivāl* and *nāndakam* sword types are found in Rawson's plates 14 and 15 respectively. The type of sword held by the figures of Ayyappan and Vēṭṭēkkan in Kaḷam Eḷuttu as well as in temple and palace representations—known in Kerala as *śūla*—is the one seen in Rawson's plate 17.

25. This last aspect suggests another avenue of investigation. This rich oral literature, whose imagery is both explicit and symbolic at several levels, has not yet been dealt with in any detail. Approximately one hundred *śuddha* or 'pure' songs have been published in Malayalam, but the erotic literature remains an oral tradition.
26. Sivaramamurti refers to *dhūli citra* and to *bhaumika citra* in the *Nārada Śilpa*. In a reference to another variety of floor painting called *rasa citra*, done with colored liquids, Sivaramamurti mentions Bhagavatī Śaṣṭhī with a garment of 'orange' as a motif. Further, he discusses the domestic female art of traditional ornamental borders and diagrams for decorating floors common in various parts of India. There are at least three varieties of interwoven snake pattern common in Andhra and Tamilnad. The combination of eight snakes, two facing each of the four directions, is very similar to the organizational pattern of design of one of the programs in the Puḷḷuvan tradition of Nāgayakṣi Kaḷam Eḷuttu. C. Sivaramamurti, 'Painting and Allied Arts as Revealed in Bāna's Works', *Journal of Oriental Research*, VI, Part 4 (1932), pp. 408-10.
27. The art style of the later Hoysaḷa, which ultimately influences late medieval art styles in Kerala, is widely considered to demonstrate a minor sub-regional efflorescence and is held by many art historians to represent a decadent or debased phase when compared to earlier post-Gupta styles. Little will be gained by making meaningless comparisons of this period and style with the earlier 'classic' periods. The preconception is heavily loaded with a late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Western classical bias and its theoretical preconceptions of form values and aesthetic meaning. The later Hoysaḷa style (twelfth-thirteenth centuries) and its later derivative styles (fourteenth-seventeenth centuries) are the art forms of a totally different era with different problems, which found different solutions in a distinct social, political, cultural and ecological environment. They should also be viewed for what they came to be on their own terms within their own spatial and temporal contexts. Until we view this period as such, aesthetic abstractions and superficial comparisons will continue to be a game of idle connoisseurship.

What would seem to be important is that the later medieval period is more clearly a fragmented, vernacularizing, essentially sub-regional development in South Indian art and architecture in general. Needless to say, it was a period of intense popular devotional Hinduism and the rise of vernacular literatures.

The conceptual scale of the Hoysāḷa period is essentially horizontal, more humanized in dimension, smaller, and more directly reflective of the earlier wood tradition in temple architecture and sculpture that had largely been replaced by a monumental stone architecture elsewhere in India. An available soft workable stone in Karnataka made possible the production of the highly detailed, essentially ornamental style and technique of the master carpenter who worked in wood and the carver who worked in ivory rather than that of the stone worker. Earlier, between the time period of the later Western Cālukya-s and their feudatories, the Hoysāḷa-s, in the Deccan, new developments, particularly in 'Western Indian' painting, attest to the emergence of a 'new style'. The elements of a reduced scale, abstraction, increased stylization and ornamentation appear to dominate.

There would seem to be many factors at work here. The period from the twelfth to the fourteenth century was a period of great change in the Deccan and South India. Within this time, there occurred the further breakup of the last imperial Hindu hegemonies; the fragmentation and further proliferation of smaller kingdoms increased. The major result of this for South India was the emergence of the Vijayanagara power and a new eclectic, sometimes innovative, sometimes archaistic, art and architectural style. The several later Nāyaka powers which succeeded the Vijayanagara empire continued to develop varieties of regional styles, influences of which reached from Karnataka to the farthest South, from the west coast to the east coast, and which remained potent art styles until the eighteenth century.

It is from the subsequent extended period of these later transformed South Indian art styles that most of the traditional ritual and festival arts which survive have been developed into the visual forms in which they are presented today. It might be further described, on the basis of increasing evidence, as a period of an emergence of more varied popular expressions of art on a more numerous, more locally autonomous, scale, relatively less expensive, perhaps less circumscribed by a single exclusive elite, and evidently more responsive to a more popularized patronage. An example of this tendency in this same medieval transitional period is the rather spectacular surge of the commercial and trading communities in general, and among the Jains in particular, and their significant patronage, influence and stimulus on the west coast and in the Deccan. Such observations, however, need considerably more careful documentation. Study of the influence of political, economic and social development and change on Indian art is a comparatively new area of approach for art historians.

28. Śrīkumāra, *Śilparatna* (ed. T. Ganapati Sastri and K. Sambasiva Sastri), 2 Vols., Trivandrum Sanskrit Series Nos. 75 and 98, Trivandrum: Government Press, 1922 and 1929, Vol. I, XLVI *Citralakṣaṇa*; and *Abhilaṣitārthacintāmaṇi (Mānasollāsa) of Someśvara*, 3 Vols., Gaekwad's Oriental Series Nos. 28, 84 and 138, Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1925, 1939, and 1961.

29. Variations of a sometimes inferior sub-tradition are found as far south and east as the border of the Ramnad and Madurai areas. A sizable collection is to be found in the Madras Museum at Egmore, Madras, Tamil Nadu. In Kerala, the Trichur Museum collection is outstanding. The most extensive and highest quality examples are, however, in private collections.
30. C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Paintings*, New Delhi: National Museum, 1968, pp. 138-55 (with 16 plates).
31. C. R. Jones, 'An Illustrated *Rāmāyaṇa* Manuscript and Kathakaḷi *Āhāryam*', *Journal of the Oriental Manuscripts Library*, XII, Nos. 1 and 2 (1963), pp. 17-26; and C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Paintings*, p. 155.
32. C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Paintings*, Fig. 104.
33. *Ibid.*, Figs. 101 and 102.
34. *Ibid.*, Fig. 96.
35. For further reference, see Stella Kramrisch, J. H. Cousins and R. Vasudeva Poduval, *The Arts and Crafts of Travancore*, Madras: The Royal India Society and the Government of Travancore, 1948, Plates IV, LXIV and LXXII. One of the variant sub-typological styles is the 'Europeanized' eighteenth-century style characterized by the later Mattancheri Palace murals (see C. Sivaramamurti, *South Indian Paintings*, op. cit., Figs. 89, 90, 91). This sub-style and its close variants are the furthest from the characteristic core style as seen at Triprayar and Padmanabhapuram.
36. This characteristic pose is seen earliest in South India in Hoysala hieratic and narrative sculpture. It was carried over into the synthetic art styles of Vijayanagara and the several later Nāyak styles, which parallel the development of art style in late medieval Kerala.
37. Hugo Munsterberg, *Art of India and Southeast Asia*, New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1970, p. 145. Munsterberg further mistakenly identifies the deity as Rāma. However, his color plate is the finest reproduction of the Kerala temple mural style so far published.
38. The concrete visual elements of this characteristic homogeneous style-content vocabulary are to be found and recognized in Kerala's late medieval temple architecture, sculpture (stone, bronze, wood), mural painting, palm-leaf illustration (from the fourteenth century to the eighteenth century), and not least in the make-up and costume of Kūṭiyāṭṭam Sanskrit temple drama (*circa* the tenth century to the present) as well as in its derivative vernacular dance-drama form of Kathakaḷi (seventeenth century to the present). The more generalized levels of the Kerala vocabulary of image-idea communication would be perceived as well in Hindu India at large; that is to say, outside the specific cultural boundaries of Kerala. We shall not concern ourselves here, however, with the more 'universal' aspects of Hindu canonical imagery and its communication.
39. There is so little surviving concrete evidence of the extent of popular art and ritual of the early medieval period that one can only conjecture or at best make a provisional hypothesis. The simple fact is that any ephemeral art form can survive only in a degree relative to the physical permanence of its medium. Performing arts, or art and ritual that must be performed, can leave no real record of their performance if the continuity is broken. Most often, if they do survive, they have undergone drastic transformation and

change, or they are revived or reconstituted in consciously archaistic forms, which is most misleading of all to the scholar. We have but very few descriptions, mostly by Muslims or Europeans, from the period of the Vijayanagara empire to attest to the ephemeral arts.

40. There are partial analogues to this kind of process and the various scholarly attitudes regarding the problems encountered in studies of the canonical-textual tradition and the present living continuities of practice in other realms of Indian art, such as that of the classical or so called *mārga* form of music and the so-called *deśi*, or regional-folk forms of music. See Harold Powers, 'An Historical and Comparative Approach to the Classification of Rāgas (with an Appendix on Ancient Indian Tunings)', *Selected Reports*, Los Angeles: Institute of Ethnomusicology of the University of California, 1970, Vol. I, No. 3, pp. 1-78.
41. H. H. Kerala Varma Thampuran, 'Kāḷi Cult in Kēraḷa', *Bulletin of the Śrī Rāma Varma Research Institute* (ed. T. K. Krishna Menon), Ernakulam: Cochin Government Press, 1936, No. 4, pp. 77-97.
42. Negotiations are presently underway with a Kuṟuppu family of Pattambi to secure a copy of an original palm-leaf manuscript alleged to be a *sūtra* on the technique and iconography of Kaḷam Eḷuttu as practised in the South Malabar and Cochin area by Kuṟuppu ritual artists.
43. George Mills, 'Art: An Introduction to Qualitative Anthropology', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, XVI, No. 1 (1957), pp. 1-17.
44. John L. Fischer, 'Art Styles as Cultural Cognitive Maps,' in Charlotte M. Otten (ed.), *Anthropology and Art: Readings in Cross Cultural Aesthetics*, New York: The Natural History Press, 1971, p. 149. Reprinted from *American Anthropologist*, LXIII, No. 1, pp. 79-93.
45. Herta Haselberger, 'Method of Studying Ethnological Art', *Current Anthropology*, II, No. 4 (October 1961), pp. 341-55.
46. George Kubler, 'Comments' (response to Haselberger's article cited above), *Current Anthropology*, II, No. 4 (October 1961), p. 370.
47. Phillip Lewis, 'Comments' (response to Haselberger's article cited above), *Current Anthropology*, II, No. 4 (October 1961) p. 371.

THE KATARAGAMA AND KANDY ĀSALA PERAHĀRAS: JUXTAPOSING RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS IN SRI LANKA

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THIS PAPER IS, foremost, a description of the two most significant religious festivals on a national level in Sri Lanka. Secondly, it offers a slightly different perspective on a lively issue among anthropologists of religion, namely, the juxtaposition of religious elements. This latter focus of the paper is indebted, in particular, to the work of Gananath Obeyesekere. I strongly agree with his emphasis on the unitary structure of Sinhalese Buddhism. However, perhaps because the context of my study differs from most of his work, I see the fundamental structure of this unity in somewhat different terms. The basic idiom of the two festivals that provide the substance of this study is a celebration of the Sri Lanka nation over opposing forces. On the one hand, these forces are particular historical enemies, i.e., South Indian Tamils, and, on the other, they are mythical, i.e., the Asuras. Whereas for Obeyesekere the unity of the structure of Sinhalese religion is provided by the Buddha, it is my contention—at least in regard to the Kandy and Kataragama festivals—that the fundamental unity is provided by a deification of the nation. Self-conscious designations of ‘Buddhist’ or ‘Hindu’ are, of course, important on a cognitive level; however, the structural unity of these festivals seems to be better described in terms of civil religion (i.e., the deification or sanctification of the nation over against an outside power) rather than in terms of Buddhism or even of Hinduism.

Obeyesekere makes a suggestion in this direction in his paper, ‘Religious Symbolism and Political Change in Ceylon’, first prepared for the 1966 Burg Wartenstein Symposium. And Hans Dieter Evers has demonstrated the importance of the relationship between religious and political structures in his study of the Lankatilaka temple in Kandy (*Monks, Priests, and Peasants*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972). However, this paper goes in a somewhat different direction than the analyses of the anthropologists and sociologists who

have addressed this problem, in its emphasis on a structure underlying the myth and ritual components of the two major festivals.

The Juxtaposition of Religious Elements: Obeyesekere and Ames

Within recent years, several studies on religion in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia have been produced by anthropologists. They include the work of Michael M. Ames, Gananath Obeyesekere, Manning Nash, Nur Yalman, S. J. Tambiah, E. R. Leach, and Melford Spiro.¹ While the problems these scholars tackle cover a wide front ranging from a detailed study of a particular ritual to a comprehensive design of an entire religious system, several consistent themes emerge. One of them is the way religious subsystems within a given geographic or cultural area relate to one another or affect the human components within the geographic or cultural boundaries under consideration. In other words, the problem is defined as the manner in which diverse religious elements are juxtaposed in terms of practice as well as attitude and thought.

On examining a selected number of anthropological studies relating to this issue, we find that the principal religious elements or subsystems are generally defined as Buddhism, Brahmanism, and magical-animism. Furthermore, it is concluded that while these subsystems are functionally distinct they are merged into a mutually interdependent whole. This distinctive unity has led one anthropologist to observe that the proper appellation of Buddhism in Sri Lanka is Sinhalese Buddhism rather than Theravāda Buddhism. The same point could also be made for Burma, Thailand and Cambodia. The thrust of the terminological distinction is self-evident—namely, that the Theravāda Buddhism of Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia has emerged as a unique phenomenon in each country or culture where it has held sway. Part of this uniqueness is the way in which a variety of religious elements have been synthesized or amalgamated into a coherent, although not always harmonious, whole. Since we shall be examining a form of the juxtaposition of religious elements in Sri Lanka, I propose first to examine some of the parameters of this problem as they have been delineated by Obeyesekere and Ames.²

In an article focusing on the nature of the Buddhist pantheon

in differing sociological contexts in Sri Lanka (i.e., village, province, nation) Gananath Obeyesekere argues that Sinhalese Buddhism is basically a unitary rather than a composite structure.³ In the case at issue the pantheon of gods is not to be seen as Theravāda Buddhist, Brahmanical, or animistic but as a Sinhalese Buddhist pantheon held together by the morality of *karma*.⁴ It is important to observe that Obeyesekere asserts the pantheon is Buddhist even though the deities incorporated into it include various evil spirits and demons as well as the Hindu deities Saman, Viṣṇu, Skanda, Pattini and Nātha. These deities, he suggests, have lost their specifically 'Hindu' identification, "...for they have been given statuses and attributes consonant with their roles in a Buddhist pantheon".⁵ The demons and non-Buddhist deities are incorporated into the unitary structure of the pantheon through the mechanism of *varan* or power and authority delegated to them from the Buddha who stands at the head of the hierarchical structure. We should note Obeyesekere's argument that the structure of the pantheon and the distribution of authority within it are derived from Sinhalese feudalism.

In Obeyesekere's opinion, the overarching Buddhistic framework of religious beliefs and practices can be demonstrated, in particular, by the mechanism of obligatory pilgrimage. There are sixteen great Buddhist pilgrimage centers in Sri Lanka whose traditions go back at least to the *Cūlavamsa* (eighteenth century). Today in Sri Lanka the two most venerated centers with which national festivals are associated are Kandy and Kataragama. Given the importance of festival-pilgrimage centers, the character of the major festival celebrations there may be particularly significant in helping us evaluate Obeyesekere's claim that the pilgrimage centers play a critical role in "building up a sense of universal religious brotherhood transcending national barriers...and in fostering a sense of national consciousness...."⁶ In sum, Obeyesekere's study of the Buddhist pantheon in Sri Lanka makes several points to which we shall refer at the conclusion of our study of the Kandy and Kataragama *Āsaḷa Perahāras*: that Sinhalese Buddhism is fundamentally unitary in nature, that the model for the unitary structure derives from a feudalistic-nation structure, that the integrating power is basically the figure of the Buddha, that the sense of belonging to a 'single moral community' transcending local and provincial limits receives concrete expression in the act of pilgrimage.

Michael Ames' study of religious institutions and ritual practices in Sri Lanka leads him also to conclude that Sinhalese religion is basically a unitary structure dominated by Buddhism; however, he is more interested than Obeyesekere in analyzing the differentiation of religious elements or religious subsystems within the structure. Correspondingly, he directs more attention to the way in which seeming oppositions between various religious elements and different religious subsystems are resolved, e.g., Kammic *vs.* Nibbānic ends, spirit cults *vs.* the Buddhist salvation-ideal, reciprocal *vs.* non-reciprocal ritual prestations, etc. While Obeyesekere's study led him to the conclusion that the spheres of Buddhism and magical-animism (a rubric Ames uses to cover Brahmanical deities as well) are not wholly distinct—viz., all deities are viewed as actual or potential Buddhas or Bodhisattvas—Ames comes to a different conclusion. Buddhism and magical-animism occupy totally distinct spheres and where the two are conjoined Buddhism "raises the meaning" of the latter. Thus, when a Buddhist temple has deity temples (*dēvālaya-s*) in the same compound, as is often the case in Sri Lanka, the devotee always venerates the Buddha and his symbols first before going to the deity temple and invoking the gods. In this way, 'part of the merit earned from venerating the Buddha is bestowed upon the gods in return for their blessings.'⁷ Ames counters studies of religious syncretism that have tended to see the high religion as a thin veneer 'covering a rich jungle of pagan cults' by insisting that the juxtaposition of Buddhism and magical-animism does not vulgarize or parochialize the latter but rather works the other way around.

Ames asserts that Buddhism and magical-animism are functionally complementary in practice; however, he concludes that the spheres of each are distinct and that, when necessary, magical-animistic practices are rationalized in terms of Buddhism: "The spirit cults that attempt to handle problems related to magical pollution are consequently facilitating Buddhist pursuits as well. Magic removes psychological and somatic obstacles so that a Buddhist may continue to perform his sacred duties; it controls mental disturbances so that one is emotionally freed to cultivate mental purity. Magic also symbolically reaffirms the sacred by expressing its own subordination to Buddhism."⁸

In their respective studies of Sinhalese Buddhism both Obeyesekere and Ames depict a unitary structure in which a variety of religious elements are amalgamated. Ames puts a stronger emphasis on

the distinctive nature of the separate elements than does Obeyesekere. Both, however, perceive the unitary structure as being dominated by the Buddha or Buddhist goals. Ames presses this point beyond Obeyesekere by suggesting that whenever juxtaposed with Buddhism the meaning of magical-animism is enhanced. These claims are also applied to the nature of religion in Sri Lanka as a whole, not just religion within a more limited sociological context, e.g., a village.

The issue of the juxtaposition of religious subsystems within a given cultural matrix is one deserving study on different levels. I would argue that differing contexts might lead to somewhat differing conclusions and that one of the appropriate contexts in which to explore the issue on a national level is that of national religious festivals. It will be my contention that Sinhalese Buddhism on that level may be described fundamentally as a civil religion underlying the rubrics of Buddhism and Hinduism.

Furthermore, within its structure the distinctions between the spheres of Buddhism, Brahmanism, and magical-animism are often ambiguous, thereby making it difficult to draw clear-cut lines among them. In order to investigate these claims I propose to study the two major national, annual religious festivals in Sri Lanka—the Kandy and Kataragama Āsaḷa Perahāras. I hope to find both diachronic and synchronic support for my claims, i.e., both from the perspective of the histories of the two festivals as well as from the character of the two festivals during their celebration.

Kataragama Āsaḷa Perahāra

Kataragama is a small, undistinguished village near the southeast coast of the island. Yet, it contains the temple or *dēvālē* of the most venerated deity on the island—Kataragama, known also as Subrahmaṇya, Murugaṅ, Kanda Kumāra and Skanda. In the exuberant opinion of one author who (on his own admission) had visited all the important places of sanctity and holiness in India, “Kataragama may be placed on the same footing as Benares of the North, Kanchipuram of the South, Pahdhapur of the West and Puri Jagannath of the East. “Nay”, he continues, “it is the ‘Kailas’ of the Hindus of the Island [of Sri Lanka].”⁹

The history of Kataragama is shrouded in a mythical past

recounted in the Skanda Purāṇa, whose Sanskrit version probably dates from the fifth century A.D. and the Tamil version from the eighth century. Skanda, the god after whom the Purāṇa is named, is the second son of the god Śiva. He has been identified with the great sage Sanatkumāra of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, was apparently worshipped by the Scythians in the second century A.D. in North India, was the subject of a Kālidāsa poem, and has been one of the patron deities of the Tamils.¹⁰

•Differing myths of Skanda's birth are found in the Skanda and Śiva Purāṇas, but in both cases he is a warrior god who conquers the Asura Tāraka (Surapadma in Tamil myths) on behalf of the gods. The type or structure of this battle *qua* creation myth is similar to the earth-diver pattern¹¹ in which the deity descends into the waters of chaos in order to regenerate the creative order of the cosmos. In this case it is Skanda's lance or *vēl* which seeks out and subjugates the foe hiding in the water. The *vēl* embodying Skanda's creative power consequently becomes the most important symbol of the god and frequently the only one by which he is worshipped in the temple.

Skanda's association with Kataragama in Sri Lanka is one of those fascinating episodes in mythology when a beautiful woman attracts the desire of a deity. In this case the girl is Vallī or Vallī Ammā, born in the jungle of southeastern Sri Lanka of a union between a pious hermit and a doe. She was raised by a chief of the Veddas, one of the pre-Buddhist tribes occupying Sri Lanka, and grew into a lovely maiden. Catching the eye of Nārada, the messenger of the gods, he urges Skanda to see her. He does so disguised as a beggar and through a subterfuge plotted with the help of Gaṇeśa manages to win her hand in marriage. Skanda's Indian wife, Devayānī, Indra's daughter, is naturally not happy about this turn of events. Trying unsuccessfully to convince her husband to return to India, Devayānī herself eventually emigrates to Sri Lanka where she, Vallī Ammā, and the warrior god still reside in three temples in the village of Kataragama.

Kataragama is one of the sixteen holiest pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka and is venerated not only by Hindus but also by Buddhists. Indeed, the latter claim it as one of the places visited by the Buddha. (Even the Muslims have adopted it as a holy place.) The Sinhalese Buddhists claim Kataragama as one of their earliest settlements on the island. The *Mahāvamsa* records that King Devānampiyatissa

had one of the shoots of the Anurādhapura Bo tree planted there and Wirz believes that there is fair evidence for the existence of a Kṣatriya clan settling in Kataragama in the third century B.C.¹² According to Sinhalese tradition found in the poem *Kanda Upata*, the shrine to Skanda at Kataragama was built by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi in the first century B.C. in fulfillment of a vow made by him after he had defeated the Tamil usurper Eḷāra who ruled at the Sinhalese capital of Anurādhapura. Mahāgama (present-day Tissamahārāma) located twelve miles from Kataragama had been the Sinhalese capital in exile for nearly seventy-five years until the success of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi.¹³ The Buddhist claim to Kataragama competes with the Hindu Tamil version recounted above, namely, that Kataragama was a sanctuary of the god Skanda prior to the arrival of the Āryan Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. Indeed, if we accept the Tamil tradition the site was originally a Vedda sanctuary and the legend of the marriage of Vallī to Skanda probably represents the conversion of the Veddas from an animistic or totemistic religion to the worship of Skanda alias Kataragama. It should at least be noted that Sinhalese authority over Kataragama is given muscle by the fact that all the temple priests or *kapurāḷa*-s (with the exception of Devayānī's temple where the *kapurāḷa* is from India) are Sinhalese.

At Kataragama Hindu and Buddhist shrines exist side by side. This phenomenon is not unusual since many Buddhist temples throughout the country have Hindu *dēvālē*-s connected with them and, as Obeyesekere and Ames point out, Sinhalese Buddhists venerate Hindu gods. At Kataragama the principal temple is the Mahādēvālē or Mahākōvil dedicated to Skanda-Kataragama where the object of greatest veneration is not an image of the god but a *yantra* symbolizing his power. The fact that Skanda-Kataragama is represented by an abstract symbol hidden from all viewers but the *kapurāḷa*, lends support to Arunachalam's claim that the deity represents the one and only reality; or, as he is known in Tamil, *kantāḷi*—the “reality transcending all categories without attachment, without form, standing alone as the Self.”¹⁴ In the same compound are found temples to Gaṇeśa, Viṣṇu, and three other Hindu deities as well as two Bo trees sacred to the Buddhists. Other holy sites include a shrine to Devayānī, a mosque, a Buddhist cloister, shrines to Hindu and Muslim holy men, and a temple to Vallī Ammā.

The *Āsaḷa* (July-August) *Perahāra* is the most sacred time at Kataragama. In the late nineteenth century it was described by Covington in the following manner: "The veneration... in which this temple dedicated to the great god of war is held by the Hindus; the intense interest manifested by them... in its yearly festival; and their blind confidence in the supposed supernatural and invisible powers associated with this hallowed spot, its holy men, and its sacred hills, are so great and profound, that the pilgrims from all parts of India and Ceylon are still in the habit of resorting to it, year after year, without being deterred by the fear of losing their health, and even their lives from sickness, on their journey to Kataragama..."¹⁵

The festival takes place for a period of ten days and nights prior to the *Āsaḷa* full moon with the final night falling at the time of the full moon. Fundamentally, the *Āsaḷa Perahāra* is a celebration of Skanda's marriage to Vallī Ammā as symbolized by the nightly journey of the god's *yantra* from the Mahādēvālē to the temple of Vallī Ammā at the opposite end of the small square. The symbol is carried on the back of an elephant amidst the blaring of conch shells and the noisy clamor of the thousands of pilgrims gathered there. Processing to the temple of his Vedda consort, Skanda's symbol is taken inside for a period of about forty-five minutes before it is returned to its usual resting place in the Mahādēvālē. The journey obviously symbolizes the union of the god with his consort—*śakti*. In the afternoon of the day before the last procession, the *yantra* is taken in procession to the Buddhist *stūpa* or *dāgaba* (the Kiri Vihāra). The Sinhalese priests claim that this act is a gesture of Skanda-Kataragama's veneration of the Buddha. Monks from the Buddhist cloister take part in this *Perahāra* but not the others.

People from all over the island and also from India attend the *Perahāra*. Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and even some Christians participate in it. Many have come to fulfill a vow made to the deity in return for some boon granted by him. The nights are charged with the frenzy of released emotions and ecstatic dancing (*kāvali*). Some of the pilgrims walk on spiked shoes, others pull carts with lines attached to hooks through their flesh, or roll around the dusty path encircling the temple. Several appear to be in a state of trance. Many social groups are represented ranging from Indian *sannyāsin*-s to staid, middle-class Sinhalese civil servants.¹⁶ My companion during my visit to the *Perahāra* was a middle-class,

Sinhalese, government administrator. He goes to Kataragama annually and while he does not participate in the more ecstatic rituals he pays his respect to the deity by making the usual sorts of offerings and bathing in the Manik Ganga. He stays at the Ramakrishna Mission at Kataragama. Most of the people I met there seemed to come from educated, urban backgrounds, although the hundreds of pilgrims who are fed by the Mission come from a wide variety of socio-economic situations.

The ten days and nights of the Kataragama Āsaḷa Perahāra are concluded with a water-cutting ceremony in the Manik Ganga, traditionally held at the exact hour of the full moon although now held on the morning following the beginning of the full moon. Skanda's *yantra* is carried by the *kapurāḷa* into a palanquin-like conveyance which is taken to the river. The priest and the sacred symbol are lowered into a quadrangular shelter. There, it is believed, the priest draws a *maṇḍala* in the riverbed with a sword and then bathes the god. This act parallels the earth-diver myth from the Purāṇa in which Skanda cowed the Asura with his *vēl*. After this symbolic exercise the river is then crowded with pilgrims who, in Covington's words, "... plunge themselves into the sacred stream with a superstitious belief that this holy ablution will cleanse away all their former sins and secure them all the blessings they can deserve in this or the next life."¹⁷

Despite the Sinhalese Buddhist claims regarding the early settlement of Kataragama or the Sinhalese origin of the temple, the festival clearly evidences little more than a superficial Buddhist character. The central event it celebrates, the expectations of the pilgrims who participate, the ecstatic character of the festivities, the extremes to which the performance of vows are taken, and the finale of the festival all stand at variance with the middle-way philosophy of Buddhism. Other than the Buddhist historical claims (which are dubious at best), the fact that the *kapurāḷa*-s are Sinhalese, and that there is one daytime procession to the Buddhist *dāgaba* and *vihāra*, the festival must be seen as either a Hindu-Tamil celebration or a consecration of the nation. If the latter view is taken, then the Kataragama Āsaḷa Perahāra need not be interpreted primarily in terms of Buddhism or Hinduism but as a unique national celebration symbolizing the amalgamation of the principal religio-ethnic elements of the island—the aboriginal Veddas, the Hindu Tamils, and the Sinhalese Buddhists. Indeed, from this perspective

the Sinhalese claim that the Skanda shrine was originally built by Duṭṭhagāmaṇī need not be seen primarily as representing Sinhalese claims to the spot, but simply as signaling a victory of the nation over the Tamil invaders from India. The same theme of national sovereignty seems to be apparent in the purāṇic myth itself symbolized by Skanda's desire not to return to India but to stay in Sri Lanka. What both Sinhalese and Tamil historical claims for Kataragama may be seen to represent, therefore, is the assertion of the country's uniqueness vis-à-vis its northern neighbor, and what the *Āsaḷa-Perahāra* symbolizes fundamentally is an annual covenant renewal of the major constituencies composing the island's populace. The variety of contemporary participants would also seem to reinforce this diachronic perspective. If this interpretation has merit, then to attempt to analyze the festival within a framework or typology that is primarily Hindu or even Buddhist would be to ignore the basic structural dimension of the festival. I make this claim while at the same time acknowledging that the principal *content* of the festival can be labelled Hindu.

Kandy Āsaḷa Perahāra

We turn now to an examination of the Kandy *Āsaḷa Perahāra*. Our contention will be that while the basic content of the festival may be interpreted in terms of Hindu subordination to Buddhism, the structure or form of the celebration may be best understood in terms of national or civil religion.

Kandy was the last capital of the Sinhalese kings before the British formally took over the governance of the island in 1815. It is still the cultural and, in some sense, the religious center of the island. The headquarters of the principal Buddhist sect (the *sīyama nikāya*) are located there as well as the Daḷadā Māligāva, the temple which contains the sacred tooth relic of the Buddha. The tooth relic was brought to the island in the fourth century by King Kitti Siri Mēghavaṇṇa and came to legitimate the political authority of the king. According to the *Mahāvamsa*, the relic was processed around the capital of Anurādhapura annually in the spring. Such a procession is confirmed by the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hsien who visited the island in the fifth century A.D. The *Daḷadā Sīrita* ('History of the Tooth Relic') also records that a great festival in honor

of the tooth relic was held by Parakramabāhu I (1153-1186 A.D.) when the capital was at Poḷonnaruva.¹⁸

The *Perahāra* as we know it celebrated today in Kandy goes back at least to the seventeenth century, for Robert Knox gives an account of it in his book, *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*, published in 1681. At that time it was a festival composed exclusively of companies from the Hindu *dēvālē*-s. Knox described it as a celebration honoring the gods of the earth.¹⁹ According to an account recorded in the early nineteenth century the festival was "... a very ancient ceremony in commemoration of the birth of the god Viṣṇu, beginning on the day that the god was born, viz., the day of the new moon in the month of July (*āsaḷa*)". "In some sacred books", the account continues, "this ceremony is said to be in remembrance of Viṣṇu's victory over Asuras, or the enemies of the gods."²⁰ Knox had observed over a hundred years earlier that the festival was one in which the deities Viṣṇu, Kataragama (Skanda) and Pattini figured most prominently.²¹

According to a legendary tradition, dating back to at least in the sixteenth century, the goddess Pattini or Kaṇṇaki, as she is known in the Tamil epic poem, *Cilappatikāram*, figures in the origin of the festival. This tradition, found in the Sinhalese chronicles *Rājaratnākaraya* and *Rājāvaliya*, relates the worship of Pattini in Sri Lanka with the reign of Gajabāhu I (174-196 A.D.). These legends have Gajabāhu launching a successful incursion against the Tamil Cōḷas of South India and bringing to Sri Lanka skilled Tamil artisans who worshipped Pattini.²² While Obeyesekere argues convincingly that the association of Gajabāhu with the Pattini cult should be seen as myth rather than as history,²³ the fact remains that the Sinhalese chronicles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries present the picture of a Tamil-Hindu rather than a Buddhist basis of the Kandy *Āsaḷa Perahāra*. Gunasegaram furthers the argument for a Tamil origin of the *Perahāra* by claiming that the word, *perahāra*, is the Sinhalesed form of the Tamil, *piraharam*, the annual sacred procession around a temple precinct honoring the deity with dancing and music.²⁴

Whether the roots of the festival be Buddhist or Hindu, we know that in Knox's time it was exclusively in honor of the guardian deities of Sri Lanka (Viṣṇu, Nātha, Kataragama, and Pattini) and continued so until the eighteenth century. During the reign of King Kīrtiśri Rājasimha (1747-1780 A.D.), however, a change took place.

According to one account he had brought a group of Siamese *bhikkhu*-s to the island to restore the *upasampadā* ordination, because the state of Buddhism had deteriorated so badly. Surprised to find an exclusively Hindu celebration in the capital of a Buddhist country, they urged him to correct the situation. He did so by placing at the head of the procession a company from the Daḷadā Maligāva carrying a symbol of the sacred tooth relic. Consequently, today the procession includes segments from the four major Hindu *dēvālē*-s and the Temple of the Tooth.

The procession itself is a ten-day pageant beginning on the new moon of the month of *Āsaḷa*. The celebration is initiated by installing sections of the trunk of the jak tree in the compounds of the four *dēvālē*-s as a *kaṇṇa* or sacred pillar. Symbolically, the *kaṇṇa* functions as an *axis mundi* allowing the gods to descend into the world of men. For four nights there is a small procession around the *kaṇṇa* in which the *kaṇṇāḷa*-s carry the bows and arrows of the gods to whom the temple is dedicated. On the fifth night they are taken to the street where they are carried on the back of an elephant and processed with elephants from the other *dēvālē*-s and the Maligāva tusker bearing a representation of the tooth relic. This part of the festival, known as *Kumbal Perahāra*, covers a relatively limited section of the city and continues for five nights. It is followed by the *Randōli Perahāra* which is enlarged by the temple palanquins (after which it takes its name) and processes over a larger area of the town. The *Randōli Perahāra* lasts for five days and is concluded on the night of the full moon with a water cutting ceremony held at the Mahāweli Ganga. Only the four Hindu *dēvālē*-s participate in this part of the festival. The *kaṇṇāḷa*-s enter a decorated boat (which has not been available for several years) with the swords of the four deities and water bowls. After striking the water with the swords in a manner similar to the Kataragama festival, the priests fill the water bowls.²⁵ Then the procession goes back to the town with the separate segments returning to their respective *dēvālē*-s. The festival is concluded with a *Walīyak-nāṭum* ceremony which used to be held in each of the Hindu temples but is now confined to the Viṣṇu Dēvālē. The ceremony is performed by Kandyan dancers who act in the role of the *kaṇṇāḷa*-s. Its purpose is to ward off evil spirits and to seek the blessings of the gods on all the people for the rest of the year until the next *Perahāra*.

The Kandy *Āsaḷa Perahāra*, even more so than the Kataragama

Āsaḷa Perahāra, is an example of what we have termed civil religion. The celebration itself is the largest and most important annual festival in Sri Lanka. The major religious elements comprising religion in Sri Lanka (i.e., Buddhist, Hindu, and magical-animistic), participate toward the same end—the protection and glorification of the nation. While it is rationalized as a Buddhist celebration, we have seen that there are both Buddhist and Hindu claims to its beginnings. Also, despite the fact that the procession around the city is led by the Temple of the Tooth, its major components are the Hindu *dēvālē*-s. Furthermore, though the *dēvālē*-s are put in a position subordinate to the Daḷadā Maligāva, the pattern of the participation of the latter is basically that of a Hindu temple—i.e., the procession of the gods through the streets of the capital city to gain the good will of the people and prosperity for all.

Not only are the major religious sub-groups of the island integrated into the *Perahāra*, but diverse elements of the socio-political structure of the wider community are also represented. As Seneviratne observes, traditionally “the presence of the king, the *adigars*, the chiefs of the great departments of the central government.... seemed to sum up in the *Perahāra* the politico-administrative structure of the community. At the social level the *Perahāra* in its provision of room for diverse castes like the cultivator, washermen, potter, and drummer, reflected the society’s caste-based hierarchical system.”²⁶ In sum, from a sociological perspective, the Kandy *Āsaḷa Perahāra* appears as a rite of intensification in which the startification of Kandyan society was relegitimated. Of course, political and social changes complicate a univocal assessment of this structure.

On the level of myth and legend, the *Perahāra* is fundamentally an affirmation of the nation over the demons or powers of darkness, on the one hand, and the Cōḷa enemies on the other. On the mythic level it commemorates the victory of Viṣṇu over the Asuras just as the Kataragama celebration includes a reminder of a similar victory by Skanda. On the legendary level it celebrates Gajabāhu’s victory over the Cōḷa enemies of South India. In fact, the Gajabāhu legend must figure even more prominently in an interpretation of the Kandy *Āsaḷa Perahāra* than the relationship of Duṭṭhagāmaṇi to Kataragama. Gajabāhu personifies the integration of diverse religious elements in that he brings back from South India both Hindu relics (the insignia of the gods of the four *dēvālē*-s and Pattini’s ankle bracelets) and Buddhist relics (the bowl relic). Whereas the

water-cutting ceremony at Kataragama is related to Skanda's victory over the Asura, the Kandy water-cutting event is interpreted in terms of the Gajabāhu legend. When the Sinhalese returned to Sri Lanka with 12,000 captive Cōlas, the water was parted by the Herculean soldier, Nīla, who divided the ocean with a blow of his sword and enabled the entire Sinhalese force to walk back to Sri Lanka. Finally, as Obeyesekere so provocatively argues, Gajabāhu is a culture hero who is utilized as the central figure in a 'colonization myth'.²⁷ The myth justifies the status of immigrant populations which are affirmed in terms of the Sinhalese social structure in the Kandy *Perahāra*. In sum, the Gajabāhu legend, which the Kandy *Perahāra* in part re-enacts, affirms the viability and integrity of the nation in its social and religious diversity. It is only to be lamented if this mythic-legendary vision of the past is abrogated in the chaos of present political vicissitudes.

Conclusion

This study of the two most significant annual religious festivals in Sri Lanka both supports and qualifies the kinds of generalizations anthropologists like Obeyesekere and Ames make about the juxtaposition of religious elements in Sri Lanka. It strongly supports their insistence on the unity of Sinhalese Buddhism; however, perhaps because of the specific context of my study, I am inclined to emphasize the deeper, structural aspects of Sinhalese religion. This structure, as perceived in the context of the festivals I have studied, would be more appropriately labeled civil religion rather than Buddhist, or, for that matter, Hindu. In conclusion I would offer some of the following observations that are based on an examination of the Kandy and Kataragama *Āsaḷa Perahāras* but reflect back to the anthropological studies briefly considered in the first section of the paper.

1. Religion in Sri Lanka is a unitary structure but it need not necessarily be given the label of Sinhalese Buddhism. Both the Kandy and Kataragama festivals are fundamentally a celebration of national identity over demonic forces on the mythic, legendary, and historical levels. That they may

- be rationalized as either Buddhist or Hindu should not obscure this underlying form.
2. In both festivals the king was made to figure prominently in the history of the place and/or the event in texts which originate in a time of political uncertainty in Sri Lanka. The identification of the king as a Buddhist seems incidental to the fundamental meaning of the festival. In Kataragama, Duṭṭhagāmanī fulfills a vow to the warrior god Skānda; and in Kandy, Gajabāhu brings back from South India not only the bowl relic of the Buddha but Pattini's golden ankle bracelets and the insignia of the four guardian deities of the island. In sum, the authority of the ruler need not be identified with the Buddha.
 3. In terms of the structure of the two festivals the relationship with Buddhism seems to be secondary rather than primary. Buddhist elements are clearly incidental to the celebration of the Kataragama *Perahāra*, but even in the Kandy celebration the participation of the Temple of the Tooth follows the pattern of the Hindu *dēvālē-s* rather than vice versa.
 4. The relationship between different religious subsystems in the religion of Sri Lanka cannot always be clearly delineated. Rather than being functionally distinct, Buddhism, Hinduism, and magical-animism may be functionally overlapping. For instance, in the Kandy *Perahāra* all three participate in securing the well-being of the nation within their respective spheres. In this case the primary claim would not be that Buddhism raises the meaning of the other religious elements but that all three are to be seen in terms of the civil or national goals of integration and affirmation. When seen in relation to the structure of civil religion the functional relatedness of the religious elements of Sinhalese religion receives a new kind of clarity.

Notes

1. For example, Michael Ames, 'Ritual Prestations and the Structure of the Sinhalese Pantheon,' in Manning Nash (ed.), *Anthropological Studies in Theravāda Buddhism*, New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1966, pp. 27-50; Gananath Obeyesekere, 'The Great Tradition and the Little in

- the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism,' *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXII (June 1963), pp. 139-53; Manning Nash, 'Ritual and Ceremonial Cycle in Upper Burma, in Manning Nash (ed.), *Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism*, pp. 97-116; Nur Yalman, 'The Structure of Sinhalese Healing Rituals', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXIII (June 1964), pp. 115-50; S. J. Tambiah, *Buddhism and Spirit Cults in Northeast Thailand*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970, and *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976; and Melford E. Spiro, *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and its Burmese Vicissitudes*, New York: Harper & Row, 1970.
2. Especially in Michael Ames, 'Magical-Animism and Buddhism: A Structural Analysis of the Sinhalese Religious System', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXIII (June 1964), pp. 21-52; and Gananath Obeyesekere, 'The Buddhist Pantheon in Ceylon and its Extensions' in Manning Nash (ed.), *Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism*, pp. 1-27.
 3. G. Obeyesekere, 'The Buddhist Pantheon', p. 2.
 4. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
 5. *Ibid.*
 6. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
 7. M. Ames, 'Magical-Animism and Buddhism', p. 36.
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
 9. Swami Asangananda, *Kataragama: The Holy of Holies of Sri Lanka*, Ramakrishna Mission, 1935, p. 3.
 10. Ponnambalam Arunachalam, 'The Worship of Muruka or Skanda (the Kataragam God),' *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch)*, XXIX (1924), p. 237.
 11. See Charles H. Long, *Alpha: The Myths of Creation*, New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1963, chap. 5.
 12. Paul Wirz, *Kataragama: The Holiest Place in Ceylon*, Colombo: Gunasena, 1966, p. 17.
 13. S. Paranavitana, 'Kataragama Inscriptions', *Epigraphia Zelanica*, Vol. III, Colombo, 1933, p. 212.
 14. P. Arunachalam, 'The Worship of Muruka,' p. 241.
 15. M. K. Covington, 'Hindu Kataragama,' *Orientalist*, III (1888-89), p. 152.
 16. Unfortunately, I do not have ethnographic data on specific caste participation in the festival.
 17. M. K. Covington, 'Hindu Kataragama,' p. 153.
 18. H. L. Seneviratne, 'The Āsaḷa Perahāra in Kandy', *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, VI (July-Dec. 1963), p. 170.
 19. Robert Knox, *An Historical Relation of Ceylon* (2nd ed.); Dehiwala, Ceylon: Tisara Prakasakayo, 1966, p. 148.
 20. Ralph Pieris, *Sinhalese Social Organization*, Colombo: Ceylon University Press, 1956, p. 135.
 21. Robert Knox, *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*, p. 150.
 22. H. L. Seneviratne, 'The Āsaḷa Perahāra in Kandy', p. 169.
 23. Gananath Obeyesekere, 'Gajabahu and the Gajabahu Synchronism: An Inquiry into the Relationship Between Myth and History,' *Ceylon Journal of the Humanities*, Vol. I, No. 1 (1970), pp. 25-56.

24. S. J. Gunasegaram, 'Description of the Kandy Perahara', *Tamil Culture*, IX (July-Sept. 1961) p. 308.
25. It was related to me by participants in the festival that the bowls remain full of water the entire year until they are refilled at the next Perahāra.
26. H. L. Seneviratne, 'The Āsaḷa Perahāra in Kandy', p. 177.
27. G. Obeyesekere, 'Gajabahu and the Gajabahu Synchronism,' p. 24.

AN-KELIYA : A LITERARY-HISTORICAL APPROACH

Glenn E. Yocum

ANY SOCIO-CULTURAL interpretation of the Sinhalese *An-keliya* rite should take cognizance of the South Indian traditions regarding the origin of the cult of Pattini, the deity upon whom *An-keliya* is centered. At least this will be my contention in what follows. Furthermore, a consideration of the way in which the goddess Pattini is represented in both Tamil and Sinhalese literature gives cause for questioning the conclusions of a recent intriguing attempt to uncover the structure of the *An-keliya* rite, that of Nur Yalman in his essay 'Dual Organization in Central Ceylon'.¹ My purpose is not to attempt a conclusive interpretation of *An-keliya* but rather to offer a critique of Yalman's approach by bringing to bear upon the problem an examination of the traditions regarding the goddess Pattini. While these historical-textual considerations may not completely invalidate Yalman's conclusions, they do require that we adopt a sceptical stance vis-à-vis his explanation of the rite. Having thus stated my limited intentions, what is *An-keliya*, and how does Yalman interpret it?

An-keliya means 'horn game.'² The central part of the rite consists of two sambhur horns or wooden hooks, belonging to opposing teams, being elaborately bound together and then pulled apart. *An-keliya* is performed in an open area called the *an-pitiya* ('horn place'). The main features of the *an-pitiya* are two shrines, usually temporary structures, in which the horns of the two sides are worshipped; a large tree which serves as the post of the *uda pila* (cf. below) team; and a coconut trunk, root end upwards, placed in a ditch about three feet long by four feet deep. The coconut palm is the post of the *yata pila* (cf. below) team and stands about five yards from the *uda pila* post. The horn of each team is fastened by jungle creepers to that team's post. The two horns are then tied together between the tree and the upended coconut trunk. A rope, about 25 feet in length, is attached to the coconut palm stem, and it is pulled by members of both teams so that the

trunks rocks back and forth in the trench, thus producing tension upon the horns tied between the two posts. Although in terms of technology *An-keliya* is not exactly a tug-of-war, it, nevertheless, has the competitive characteristics of such a contest. The side whose hook breaks first is considered to be the losing team, and its members are subsequently subjected to ridicule and obscene abuse by the victors. The mocking of the losers sometimes goes on for several hours and often takes the form of a chanted dialogue between a leader and the other members of the winning team. Now, apparently, this type of tug-of-war is not simply the Sinhalese counterpart of the games program of the American Sunday school picnic; for *An-keliya* copies the *keliya*, the 'play', of the gods. Yalman relates the mythological paradigm for *An-keliya* as follows:

The goddess Pattini and her consort Pālānga were out in the jungle looking for some *sapu* (temple tree) flowers. They discovered a beautiful one, but it was too high up on the branches of a tree to reach so they found some long poles with hooks at the end and attempted to pick the flower with these. They still could not reach the flower. Climbing the tree, Pattini always on a 'lower' branch (*yata*) than her consort, the two went from branch to branch until suddenly their hooks became entangled. They climbed back down and tried unsuccessfully to pull the hooks apart, finally repairing to the legendary city of Madura in southern India, where all the maidens on the side of Pattini and all the men on the side of Pālānga had a tug of war. When Pālānga's hook broke, Pattini was delighted and in her pleasure demanded that henceforth she be propitiated annually in this fashion. Thus Pattini's side became *yata pila* (below side) and Pālānga's became *uda pila* (top side). Pālānga, however, was not a very good husband, and although Pattini allows him to win now and again she is not pleased when it happens.³

While *An-keliya* is observed in villages that display a type of dual social organization, the ritual also appears where there is no such social bifurcation (specifically for Yalman in the village of Panama on the east coast of Sri Lanka). This lack of a clear social division parallel to the *An-keliya* teams in some communities where *An-keliya* is celebrated helps clear the way for an analysis of *An-keliya* which does not seek to relate ritual phenomena to the morphology of social groups but rather to the 'structural Principles' according to which the social groups are formed.⁴

That is, Yalman interprets *An-keliya* from a structuralist theoretical framework which attempts to discover common 'structural principles' underlying both social and ritual phenomena. In the case of *An-keliya*, Yalman finds confirmation of the 'caste principle', a principle which serves to uphold female purity.⁵ In a society structured according to caste, hypergamy (the union of a woman with a man of higher status) is allowed, but hypogamy (the union of a woman with a man of lower status) is strictly taboo. Thus, according to Yalman, *An-keliya* is a 'rite of separation' which seeks to correct the 'sexual mistake', the 'wrong marriage', involved in the union of Pattini with Pālānga, who Yalman claims is of inferior social status. When *An-keliya* is compared with rituals in which the union of a god and his consort is emphasized, the underlying structural principle is found to be the same. Yalman's primary example here is the festival at Kataragama, which, taking place over a period of two weeks, focuses on Kataragama's (i.e., Skanda, Subrahmaṇya) twice-nightly visit to the temple of Vallī Ammā, who is of low social status. That the ritual in this case concentrates on divine union indicates the legitimacy of hypergamous marriage. Contrariwise, the hypogamous union of Pattini and Pālānga is illegitimate by caste standards and must be corrected, which, in fact, is what Yalman claims happens in the *An-keliya* ritual—the two are pulled apart.⁶

This is the substance of Yalman's thesis. Leaving aside any questions about his theoretical framework, two points can be raised which cast doubt on Yalman's interpretation of *An-keliya*. First, no account at all is taken of the South Indian background of the Pattini cult. In particular, this would include attention to the legend related in the Tamil epic, the *Cilappatikāram*, whose heroine, Kaṇṇaki, is presented as the ideal, chaste and faithful wife, deified at the end of the epic as Pattinikkaṭavuḷ—hardly a likely candidate for a rite which aims to overcome her 'sexual mistake'. Secondly, Yalman never conclusively shows that Pālānga is of inferior social position to Pattini. This assumption gradually gains the status of a verified fact in his essay without, however, finding proof in any of the myths he relates. The difference in status between Pattini and Pālānga is crucial to his argument, and if this point cannot be convincingly substantiated his analysis is considerably weakened. Our procedure will be to examine the first literary evidence of the Pattini myth in the *Cilappatikāram* and

then, in so far as available material allows, to take account of the parochialization of the Pattini myth and cult, constantly attending to the relative social status of Pattini's consort.

II

The *Cilappatikāram*, 'the story about the anklet,' relates events of which many later myths about Pattini are recognizable variants. Whether the *Cilappatikāram* is itself the origin of all the later myths or is merely the literary descendant of a popular Tamil folk tradition is a moot question. In any case, it is the earliest literary evidence we have of the Pattini myth and cult. How early, however, is a matter of debate. Arguments for a date of composition ranging from the end of the second century to the middle of the ninth century have been put forward.⁷ Even if we should accept the later date (and there are reasonable, rather persuasive, arguments for an earlier dating of the *Cilappatikāram*), the literary tradition about Pattini is still seen to be an old one, stretching back over a millenium. With this in mind, we can now proceed to outline the plot of the epic.⁸

The *Cilappatikāram* opens in the coastal city of Puhār, the Cōla capital, where Kōvalaṅ and Kaṇṇaki, each the child of a wealthy merchant family, were married. No difference in social status is indicated. Kaṇṇaki's father is said to have been a maritime trader, whereas Kōvalaṅ's was a merchant prince of the caravan trade. In fact, Kōvalaṅ's father is described as 'in the foremost rank of the aristocracy' and is praised for his benevolence.⁹ A picture of marital bliss is painted such that Kōvalaṅ and Kaṇṇaki are said to resemble Kāma and Rati, the god and goddess of love. But into this scene of harmonious marriage stepped the courtesan Mādavi, to whom Kōvalaṅ was attracted. Kōvalaṅ abandoned Kaṇṇaki to live with Mādavi, and while Kōvalaṅ's infidelity brought much sorrow to Kaṇṇaki, she remained chaste, waiting for him to come back. When Kōvalaṅ suspected that Mādavi harbored thoughts of another lover, he returned to Kaṇṇaki, confessing that he had squandered all his wealth on the courtesan. Kaṇṇaki, however, held no grudge against him and immediately offered him her anklets to sell. Kōvalaṅ accepted this offer, vowing to use them to raise capital in order to recover his lost fortune. And to

accomplish this new start Kōvalaṇ proposed they go to the city of Madurai.

They set out immediately and were accompanied by Kavundi, a famous female Jain ascetic, who served as a guide. When they arrived in Madurai, Kavundi introduced Kōvalaṇ and Kaṇṇaki to Mādari, a cowherdess who agreed to accommodate Kaṇṇaki until Kōvalaṇ had established himself in the city. With Kaṇṇaki safely under Mādari's wing, Kōvalaṇ set out to sell one of her anklets and showed the anklet to the state goldsmith for appraisal. Since the goldsmith had recently stolen an anklet of similar appearance from the queen, he seized the opportunity to accuse Kōvalaṇ of the theft, thereby exonerating himself. Without properly investigating the goldsmith's accusation against Kōvalaṇ, the Pāṇḍyaṇ king sent out his executioners to kill the supposed thief. After some hesitation because of Kōvalaṇ's innocent appearance, one of the men cut Kōvalaṇ down with his sword.

When word of Kōvalaṇ's death reached Kaṇṇaki, she was completely distraught. After grieving over Kōvalaṇ's corpse, Kaṇṇaki went to the palace to demand justice. Since the queen's anklet was filled with pearls while hers was filled with gems, Kaṇṇaki had only to break open her anklet to prove the king's mistake. Thus presented with his failure to carry out justice, i.e., to fulfil the duties of a king, the Pāṇḍyaṇ swooned and died. But this did not assuage Kaṇṇaki's grief and sense of outrage. She cursed the entire city for wronging her husband, then twisted off her left breast and threw it into the street whereupon the city was engulfed in flames. After the guardian goddess of the city appeared to Kaṇṇaki and told her that after fourteen days Kaṇṇaki would be reunited with Kōvalaṇ in heaven, Kaṇṇaki set out in a westerly direction. On the fourteenth day, after she had climbed a hill sacred to Murukaṇ, she was taken up into heaven in a chariot with Kōvalaṇ at her side.

Some hill-maidens witnessed Kaṇṇaki's ascension, and when the Cēra King, Senguṭṭuvaṇ, visited the area, they told him about the incident. The poet Śāṭṭaṇār related the rest of the story of Kōvalaṇ and Kaṇṇaki, and Śenguṭṭuvaṇ and his queen then decided to establish a temple to Kaṇṇaki, who is now called Pattinikkaṭavuḷ (25:113). (The meaning given in the *Tamil Lexicon* for *pattinikkaṭavuḷ* is simply 'Kaṇṇaki deified'. As used in the *Cilappatikāram* *pattini* is said to mean 'chaste wife', deriving

from the Sanskrit *patnī*.¹⁰) Thereafter Śenguṭṭuvan undertook an expedition to the Himalayas in order to procure a stone from which to carve an image of Pattini. During this trip to the North, he successfully defeated several Āryan kings and brought back to his capital at Vañji the stone image of Pattini which he had sought, even having bathed it in the Ganges. Upon his return, an elaborate ceremony was held to consecrate a temple to Pattini. This was attended by several other kings including Gajabāhu of Ceylon.

This concludes the story of the *Cilappatikāram* proper, although an early editor added the following preface, which, owing to its bearing on the spread of the Pattini cult, I shall quote in full:

From that day forth the Pāṇḍyaṅ kingdom was deprived of rains, and famine-stricken. This was followed by fever and plague. Verrivērceliyaṅ reigning at Koṛkai propitiated the Lady of Chastity by sacrificing a thousand goldsmiths, and celebrated a festival when there was a downpour causing fertility to the land. Thereupon the kingdom was rid of disease and distress.

Hearing this, the Iḷam-Kōśar of the Kongunāḍu instituted festivities in honour of the Lady of Chastity in their land, and this resulted in plentiful rains.

On hearing this, Gajabāhu of Ceylon encircled by the sea, built a shrine for the Lady of Chastity where daily sacrifices were performed. Thinking that she would remove the distress (of his land), he also instituted annual festivals commencing with the month of Āḍi; then the rains came to stay, and increased the fertility of the land so as to produce unfailing crops.

At this the Cōḷa king Perumkilli built at Uṛaiyūr a shrine for Pattinikkaḍavuḷ, and instituted daily offerings, thinking that she would shower her blessings at all times.¹¹

The mention of Gajabāhu in connection with the establishment of the Pattini cult, although most likely not recording an historical event in the reign of that king of second-century Sri Lanka,¹² does betoken a South Indian origin of Pattini worship in Sri Lanka and probably a rather early acquaintance of the Sinhalese with the worship of Pattini. While the *Dipavaṃsa* and *Mahāvaṃsa* are both silent about any connection Gajabāhu may have had with the Pattini cult, the *Rājāvaliya*, a late chronicle probably of seventeenth-century origin, and Sinhalese popular literature do credit Gajabāhu with a trip to South India, from where, among other things, he is said to have brought back to Sri Lanka the anklets or bangles of Pattini Devi.¹³ The implication in this account, however, is not

that Gajabāhu introduced the worship of a new goddess, but rather that he brought back paraphernalia to assist the functioning of an already established cult. It must be pointed out, however, that these later versions of the Gajabāhu story reflect the period of intense Sinhalese conflict with the kingdoms of South India during the early centuries of the second millenium and that they consequently cast Gajabāhu in the role of a Sinhalese culture hero who is the defender of his country's interests in the face of antagonism from South India.¹⁴ This later characterization of Gajabāhu is certainly for the most part mythical. In any case, even if the descriptions of Gajabāhu in the *Cilappatikāram* and in the later Sinhalese accounts are discounted as unhistorical, there is still little doubt that Pattini worship originated in South India. While the Sinhalese Pattini myths, which we are about to examine, do vary in some details from the story of the *Cilappatikāram*, the basic myth of the faithful wife and the unjust king remains the same. The core of the Pattini myth of Sri Lanka is definitely derived from the story of Kōvalan and Kaṇṇaki found in the *Cilappatikāram*.

III

Generally speaking, Pattini takes on the characteristics of Kālī and Durgā in South India. At certain points this is explicitly stated and partially indicates why she is perceived as a fearful deity needing propitiation. In parts of Kerala, Pattini is identified with Bhagavatī, an aspect of Kālī peculiar to Kerala. Indeed, Kaṇṇaki's disaster-producing wrath because of the unjust death of her husband provides some precedent for these developments in the Pattini cult. In various of the Sinhalese myths, Pattini also plays the role of the village smallpox goddess so well known throughout South India; and most accounts of *An-keḷiya* state specifically that the rite is held in times of epidemics as a means of propitiating Pattini. Yalman does not mention this in connection with the two *An-keḷiya* rites he observed, except in one case to note that 'if Pālānga won, the village would be ravaged by disease brought on by the angry Pattini, whereas her victory would be auspicious.'¹⁵ It is interesting to note that in South India the smallpox goddess, often called Māriamman, is usually considered to be of relatively low status. Evidently, Pattini's association with smallpox has not cast her in

a similar position. From all indications she is the recipient of only vegetarian offerings and occupies a high place in the Sinhalese pantheon on the same level as Saman, Viṣṇu, Skanda and Nātha.¹⁶ It should also be mentioned that the performance of *An-keḷiya* necessitates especially high standards of purity for the inhabitants of the village in which the rite is to be held. There is nothing in the standards of ritual purity surrounding the worship of Pattini to suggest that she is not of high status.

Whitehead notes a myth in Tamil folklore in which Kōvalaṅ and Kaṅṅaki are considered to be incarnations of Śiva and Mīnākṣi.¹⁷ An account of the 'Ceylon Tamil version' of the *Kōvalaṅ-katai* ('the story of Kōvalaṅ'), a popular Tamil ballad, is given by Hugh Nevill.¹⁸ Kaṅṅaki was an incarnation of Kālī, born to the Pāṇḍyaṅ king and queen. Because of ill omens the king discarded his daughter. She, however, was rescued and adopted by a wealthy vaiśya noble who married the girl to his debauched grandson Kōvalaṅ. Kōvalaṅ, however, would have nothing to do with Kaṅṅaki, as he spent all his time with a prostitute. But when Kōvalaṅ was unjustly suspected of having stolen the queen's anklet and was ordered executed by the Pāṇḍyaṅ king, Kaṅṅaki avenged her husband's death in the burning of Madurai, the king having also died as in the *Cilappatikāram*. While at one level there would appear to be a caste difference here—goddess or kṣatriya marrying a vaiśya—nothing is made of this in the story.¹⁹ Nevill even hypothesizes that because in the Sinhalese version Kōvalaṅ is called Palava Guru (and in the same vein, I suppose, 'Pālanga' or 'Polanga' in other Sinhalese myths) that Kōvalaṅ may have been a Pala or Pallava king.²⁰ In any case, it does not appear that what could be taken to be a caste difference between Pattini and her spouse in the *Kōvalaṅ-katai* is of any significance, and particularly not so in the Sinhalese versions of the story where Pālanga is often called a prince. What is noteworthy here is Kōvalaṅ's unrelieved degradation. This is also true in some of the Sinhalese accounts and contrasts with the repentant and reformed husband portrayed in the *Cilappatikāram*.

Of the 911 poems collected by Nevill in his *Sinhalese Verse*, in no less than forty-six does Pattini play a significant if not central role.²¹ While many of these poems relate events common to those recorded in the *Cilappatikāram*, the Pattini myth is greatly elaborated to include six previous incarnations and to relate her in various ways to other members of the Sinhalese pantheon. Along with

Nātha, Viṣṇu, and Kataragama she becomes one of the four guardian deities of Sri Lanka (No. 448). Her seventh birth from a mango is often recounted (Nos. 22, 241, 806, 868 and 869). Several of the poems used to cure smallpox refer to Pattini's connection with that disease, which is said to have come into being at the burning of Madurai (Nos. 398 and 549). At least two poems claim she will become a future Buddha (Nos. 334 and 549). Her association with agriculture is also indicated in her having turned stone into mud and grown paddy (Nos. 334 and 549). From the variety of themes included in this popular literature we can conclude that in Sri Lanka Pattini is *the* goddess par excellence. She subsumes within herself features of kindness and benevolence juxtaposed with those of wrath and arbitrariness. Nevertheless, the theme of Pattini's faithfulness to her husband is not lost sight of and is central to several of the more extensive poems, particularly the *Vayantimālaya* which deals with Pālānga's affair with Mādavi and Pattini's loyalty.²²

While the narrative of the myths about Pattini does not reveal any status difference between the goddess and her consort, can anything be learned about her spouse's social position from the various names by which he is called in Sinhalese mythology? We have already noted Nevill's speculations about the name 'Palava Guru'. Pertold suggests that 'Pālānga' derives from the Sanskrit *pālaka*, hence , a guardian, ruler, or priest.²³ Yalman remarks in a footnote that *polānga* is the Sinhalese term for the deadly Russell's viper,²⁴ evidently taking this to be possible evidence for Polānga's supposed low status. Yalman ascribes no significance to the names 'Alut Deva' (new deity) or 'Alut Swami' (new holy man) which are used for Pattini's husband at the village of Panama. The one name for Pattini's husband, however, which does seem to be clearly indicative of his position vis-à-vis Pattini is strangely overlooked by Yalman. Quoting Wirz,²⁵ Yalman cites one of the Pattini myths, which is a variant of the Kōvalaṇ and Kaṇṇaki story, as follows: 'Pattini marries Polānga Therunaanse, a man 'with neither profession nor income'.²⁶ 'Therunaanse' is usually applied only to Buddhist monks, although in this case it might be used figuratively to call attention to Polānga's lack of sexual relations with Pattini, since he is sometimes thought of in Sri Lanka as being a kind of neuter.²⁷ If, on the other hand, Polānga is actually to be seen as a Buddhist *bhikkhu*, then two implications follow: (i) he enjoys the highest social status, the Sinhalese equivalent of the Hindu brahmin; but (ii) he must

remain celibate, which obtains especially in Sri Lanka where monastic life is considered to be a life-long rather than a temporary vocation. Thus, from this perspective, *An-keḷiya* could well be a 'rite of separation', not, however, because the union of Pattini and Pālānga violates the caste principle forbidding hypogamy, but because marriage or any suggestion of sexual relations infringes one of the cardinal rules of Theravāda monastic discipline.

IV

In none of the Sinhalese myths I have been able to review is any emphasis put upon a real or apparent difference in social position between Pattini and Pālānga that would be indicative of hypogamy. Granted that Pattini is nearly always the central figure of interest when both are involved in a given story, and granted that Pālānga sometimes, but certainly not always,²⁸ comes off as a bit of a rake, there is nothing to suggest that we are dealing with a hypogamous union, i.e., a union considered solely from the point of view of the respective social positions of the husband and wife where the wife is of higher status than the husband. Yalman's assumption that Pattini's and Pālānga's marriage is hypogamous seems to be based on Pālānga's low moral standing and Yalman's subsequent ingenious, but not always convincing, interpretations of myths, which, even if accepted, do not prove that we are dealing with a 'wrong marriage' or a 'sexual mistake'.²⁹ But moral standing has nothing to do with Yalman's structural principle of caste. Even if Pālānga is fickle and a scoundrel, this does not constitute grounds for a 'sexual mistake'. If that were the case, then Kataragama would have to be separated from his South Indian wife Devayānī on account of his sports with the Ceylonese Vallī Ammā.

What then is *An-keḷiya* all about? As previously stated, I do not intend to present a carefully argued alternative to Yalman's approach, since such an effort would be contingent upon opportunities, which I have not had, to observe the rite first-hand in its ritual and social contexts as well as upon a thorough study of the myths about Pattini. I would be remiss, however, if I did not mention another scholar's interpretation and also present several of my own rather random ideas and questions about *An-keḷiya* which may be of use to anthropologists and historians of religion who are

better acquainted with the broader aspects of Sinhalese religion and culture than I am. From an anthropological point of view, I find Gananath Obeyesekere's analysis of the rite easier to agree with than Yalman's interpretation. Basically, Obeyesekere views *An-keḷiya* as part of a wider ritual context (the annual harvest ceremony of *gam-maḍuva*, 'village hall') which generally enables the worshippers to "recognize on a symbolic level the indispensability of the castes for the perpetuation and maintenance of society".³⁰ While some of the *gam-maḍuva* rituals emphasize caste differences and interdependence, the two opposing teams of *An-keḷiya*—*yata pila* and *uda pila*—are organized irrespective of caste affiliations, and this opposition, while hereditary, exists only for the purpose of the rite and has no wider application.³¹ The two teams seem to enhance inter-caste solidarity by including within themselves a cross-section of the castes. Obeyesekere also suggests that while the division primarily appears to produce a bond of union among the castes, it might also be thought of as an institutionalized way of expressing intra-caste tension; for members of the same caste are members of opposing sides.³² The shouting and ridicule that take place after one hook has broken could be seen as serving this secondary function.

The abuse to which the losers of the 'tug-of-war' are subjected by the winners is commented upon by nearly everyone who has written about *An-keḷiya*. It would be quite helpful if we knew more about the precise nature of this obscene mockery, for it could be important to our understanding of *An-keḷiya*. More thoroughgoing information regarding the everyday social status of the members of the teams would also be desirable. Is it possible that the abuse signifies not simply the release of intra-caste tension but, also, since the *yata pila* team is supposed to win most of the time, an instance of status reversal? It is curious that in the myth of *An-keḷiya's* origin cited by Yalman, all the women pull on Pattini's hook while the men take the side of Pālānga. Here the opposing sides are differentiated solely by sex; and the women win—clearly a reversal of the usual state of affairs. Although the teams competing today are not sexually differentiated, might they have been so divided at one time? Might the *yata pila* team still in some sense be considered inferior?³³ In the Theravāda country of Burma it is interesting to note that there are festivals designed to propitiate local spirits (*nats*) which include a tug-of-war between men and women.³⁴ But there the contest, although it is characterized by

considerable teasing between the two sides, does not involve any reversal of usual roles, since the men's team wins. Sometimes this Burmese rite is said to induce rain, an interesting parallel to the salutary disease-preventing and health-restoring effects of *An-keliya* and also to the efficacy of Pattini worship for ending drought mentioned in the early preface to the *Cilappatikāram*.

Certainly, a complete analysis of *An-keliya* would have to attend to its connection with dispelling epidemics. Indeed, one verse of the myth establishing *An-keliya* reads:

Ah! delightful horn-pulling sport, fraught with blessing,
It is meet to pull horns guilelessly
Goddess Sat-Pattini banished all ill;
Henceforth will no sickness rage in the village.³⁵

As indicated above, Yalman does not emphasize the relation of *An-keliya* to epidemics, particularly outbreaks of smallpox. Might there be some connection between the threat of smallpox and the winners' ridiculing of the losers? Whether we are dealing with a case of status reversal or merely with a deliberate disregard of everyday social distinctions in the formation of the *An-keliya* teams and the post-competition abuse, *An-keliya* could be viewed as an attempt to strike a proper balance in the face of impending danger between what Victor Turner has called structure and *communitas*.³⁶ *Communitas* is lack of social differentiation, emphasis simply on the bond of humanity; it is the sphere of Martin Buber's 'I and Thou'. Turner argues that society reveals a dialectic between these two opposed aspects of human relatedness and that 'no society can function adequately without this dialectic'.³⁷

What I would suggest is that *An-keliya* is an affirmation of *communitas*, either by means of status reversal or through a simple obliteration of structure, and as such represents an attempt of the whole community to restore social structure and *communitas* to a proper mutual relationship in order to ward off a calamity.³⁸ Perhaps epidemics are thought of as being the result of social mistakes that can be corrected by the performance of *An-keliya*. Be that as it may, Yalman's interpretation in sexual terms of the villagers' comments about 'reversing faults' by means of *An-keliya* will not pass muster. After the victors have mocked the losing team, they sing 'certain charmed songs referred significantly to as

“reversing the fault” (*varada horavanava*)’.³⁹ Yalman takes this to mean that the fault of Pattini’s ‘wrong marriage’ with Pālānga has now been reversed by their separation through *An-keliya*. *Varada horavanava*, however, refers not to sexual relations but to the winners’ attempts to forestall any ill feeling which might arise out of the just-ended ridicule.⁴⁰ Coming as it does at the end of the rite, the songs which ‘reverse the fault’ signify a return from the liminal,⁴¹ ritual situation of *An-keliya*, i.e., from the temporary experience of *communitas*, to the ordinary world of social structure. The process of ‘reversing the fault’ represents an implicit admission of the opposition between, but also the complementarity of, *communitas* and structure.

Finally, I offer some rather speculative hypotheses about Pattini’s relationship with her consort. I would suggest that one might account for the absence of ritual divine union in the Pattini cult as contrasted, for example, with Kataragama and Vallī Ammā, by reference to the fact that Kataragama’s and other principal male deities’ wives are their *śakti*-s, their vital, active aspects. But Pattini is, so to speak, her own *śakti*. She certainly is not Pālānga’s *śakti*, nor, of course is Pālānga her active side. Thus, there is no theological reason, as it were, to represent their marriage ritually.

Another avenue of interpretation may lie in the analysis of goddess worship in Chhattisgarh proposed by Lawrence Babb.⁴² Basically, Babb’s thesis is that goddesses when married are protective and benevolent; whereas unmarried goddesses, or goddesses whose husbands appear in a peripheral or subordinate role, tend to be malevolent. “When the feminine dominates the masculine the pair is sinister; when male dominates female the pair is benign.”⁴³ (It would appear that goddesses are better kept in the shackles of male chauvinism!) Although the phenomenon of goddess worship in Sri Lanka is different from that of Central India and although Pattini is a vegetarian deity unlike the malevolent goddesses of India, it is nevertheless noteworthy that in the myths directly underlying *An-keliya* Pattini appears as superior to her husband and is the figure of central concern. In the first *An-keliya* pull she and the maidens of Madurai certainly dominated Pālānga and the men. The association of the rite with epidemics bespeaks an uncanny, if not malevolent, aspect of Pattini’s character. Yet, in the core myth of Kōvalaṅ and Kaṅṅaki, Kaṅṅaki-Pattini’s virtue and power are founded upon her very role of subordination to her husband.

Perhaps the ambiguity of Pattini's relationship to her husband is reflected in her failure to fit neatly into the conceptual schema of married-benevolent/unmarried-malevolent which Babb finds applicable to the Hindu goddesses of Chhattisgarh. In any case, Babb's conclusions must not be pressed wholesale upon a different set of data, although there are ideas worth pursuing here for those with more extensive knowledge of the cult of Pattini.

It may seem I have now come full circle to occupy the same ground as Yalman; for have I not just said that Pattini is superior to her consort? However, whatever superiority which Pattini does manifest in relation to her husband is superiority of morality or of power, not superiority of caste. While I certainly make no claims of finality for the ideas presented in the last several paragraphs (they are suggestions rather than arguments), the moral that I hope is clear from this limited critical review is that observation must be supplemented by attention to traditions, to texts where relevant, i.e., to history, in order to yield convincing analysis.

Notes

1. Nur Yalman, 'Dual Organization in Central Ceylon', in Manning Nash (ed.), *Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism*, New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1966, pp. 197-223. Apart from minor revisions this is the same essay which was previously published as 'Dual Organization in Central Ceylon? or the Goddess in the Tree-top', *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXIV, No. 3 (May 1965), pp. 441-57. My references are to the Nash edition.
2. Descriptions of *An-keliya* are found in Yalman's essay and in Gananath Obeyesekere, 'The Structure of a Sinhalese Ritual', *Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies*, I (July, 1958), pp. 193-94. The most detailed ethnographic account of the rite, however, is that by M. D. Raghavan in 'The Pattini Cult as a Socio-religious Institution', *Spolia Zeylanica*, XXVI (1951), pp. 251-61. The following brief description is derived from the above articles.
3. Nur Yalman, 'Dual Organization', op. cit., p. 203. For slight variants of this myth cf. Hugh Nevill (ed. and trans.), *Sinhalese Verse (Kavi)*, Colombo: Ceylon National Museum, 1954, Part II, p. 307; Paul Wirz, *Exorcism and the Art of Healing in Ceylon*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1954, pp. 177-78; and C. J. R. LeMesurier, 'An-keliya', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Ceylon Branch)*, VIII, No. 29 (1884), pp. 384-92.
4. Nur Yalman, 'Dual Organization,' p. 198.
5. In an earlier article, Yalman uses the same structural principle to interpret

- female puberty rites in Sri Lanka and Malabar (cf. 'On the Purity of Women in the Castes of Ceylon and Malabar', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, XCIII, Part I (1963), pp. 25-58.
6. In *Under the Bo Tree*, Yalman's monograph on caste and kinship in Ceylon, there is a short section on religion in which the following sentences occur: 'An-keliya' was one of the annual rituals of Teruntenne. In Panama the names of the deities were different. The goddess there is called Valli Ammā (she is better known as the mistress of the god Kataragama), and the male deity is simply Alut Deva (New Deity).' In his essay on *An-keliya*, however, Yalman simply refers to the Panama goddess as 'Pattini.' If she was, in fact, called Valli Ammā at Panama and the social implications of this name were also intended, we are presented with a clearly hypergamous ('correct') union; for Valli Ammā, who is taken to be a member of the Rodiya caste, would be at the very bottom of the Sinhalese social hierarchy and would, hence, be incapable of a 'wrong marriage', i.e., a hypogamous union. Cf. Nur Yalman, *Under the Bo Tree: Studies in Caste, Kinship and Marriage in the Interior of Ceylon*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967, p. 317.
 7. In support of an early date for the *Cilappatikāram*, cf. V. R. Ramachandra Dikshitar (trans.), *The Śilappadikāram*, Madras: Humphrey Milford, 1939, pp. 8-10. The ninth century as the date of composition is suggested by S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, *History of Tamil Language and Literature*, Madras: New Century Book House, 1956, pp. 147-53.
 8. The ensuing relation of the story follows Ramachandra Dikshitar's translation. For convenience of reference I have also followed his transliterations.
 9. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *The Śilappadikāram*, pp. 88-89.
 10. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai, ed., *Tamil Lexicon*, Madras: University of Madras, 1931, Vol. IV, p. 2466.
 11. Ramchandra Dikshitar, *The Śilappadikāram*, p. 81.
 12. Cf. Gananath Obeyesekere, 'Gajabahu and the Gajabahu Synchronism: An Inquiry into the Relationship between Myth and History', *Ceylon Journal of the Humanities*, I, No. 1 (1970), pp. 25-56.
 13. B. Guṇasēkara (trans.), *The Rājāvaliya*, Colombo: George J. A. Skeen, Government Printer, 1900, pp. 41-42; and H. Nevill (ed. and trans.), *Sinhalese Verse*, Part II, p. 259, and Part III, pp. 202-3.
 14. G. Obeyesekere, 'Gajabahu and the Gajabahu Synchronism,' pp. 40-41.
 15. Nur Yalman, 'Dual Organization', p. 204. Also cf. p. 218 where it is suggested that *An-keliya* enhances the village's 'luck, fertility, health, wealth, and the general well-being of the inhabitants'.
 16. Cf. Gananath Obeyesekere, 'The Buddhist Pantheon in Ceylon and its Extensions', in Manning Nash (ed.), *Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism*, pp. 9-10; and, in the same volume, Michael M. Ames, 'Ritual Presentations and the Structure of the Sinhalese Pantheon', pp. 33-34 and 43-44.
 17. Henry Whitehead, *The Village Gods of South India* (2nd ed. rev.), Calcutta: Association Press, 1921, pp. 112-13.
 18. Hugh Neville [*sic*] (trans.), 'The Story of Kovalan : Ceylon Tamil Version,' *Tamil Culture*, X, (1963) pp. 72-84.
 19. Branda E. F. Beck relates a similar account of Kaṇṇaki's origins presented in an oral version of the epic she recorded in Coimbatore District. In this

- modern bardic account, it is stated that it was Kōvalan's mother's brother who rescued Kaṇṇaki and raised her. Thus, Kaṇṇaki was the rightful, cross-cousin mate for Kōvalan—anything but a 'wrong marriage'. Cf. 'The Study of a Tamil Epic: Several Versions of Silappadikaram Compared', Unpublished paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Learned Societies of Canada, 7 June 1971, pp. 8-9. This paper is an admirable study of the parochialization of the epic in modern Tamil Nadu.
20. H. Nevill, 'The Story of Kovalan', op. cit., pp. 73-74. This appears rather speculative, and Nevill promises a subsequent article on the subject, which, if ever written, I have not been able to locate.
 21. Specifically poem Nos. 22, 55, 90, 103, 114, 124, 151, 207, 221, 241, 334, 398, 416, 448, 529, 548, 549, 584, 677, 688, 704, 705, 721, 722, 723, 724, 727, 728, 729, 731, 732, 733, 734, 754, 777, 778, 805, 806, 807, 808, 825, 826, 868, 869, 873 and 891.
 22. C. E. Godakumbara, *Sinhalese Literature*, Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries' Co., 1955, pp. 282-83.
 23. Otakar Pertold, 'Die ceylonische Göttin Pattinī', *Archiv Orientalní*, XIII (1942), p. 222. Pertold's etymologies, however, are far from unimpeachable. A particularly egregious error occurs on p. 215, where, failing to note a retroflex consonant, Pertold traces the name 'Ilaṅkovatikaḷ', to whom tradition ascribes authorship of the *Cilappatikāram*, to the Sanskrit compound *laṅkā-adhikārah*; thus, 'the one who rules over Sri Lanka'. The author's name, however, is Iḷaṅkōvaṭikaḷ, which is almost certainly a Tamil construction from *iḷaṅkō* ('a prince', derived from *iḷamai*—'youth', and *kō*—'king') and *aṭikaḷ* (an honorific suffix, which in the *Cilappatikāram* is particularly applied to Jains); hence, 'the venerable young prince'.
 24. Nur Yalman, 'Dual Organization,' p. 221.
 25. Paul Wirz, *Exorcism and the Art of Healing in Ceylon*, p. 175.
 26. Nur Yalman, 'Dual Organization,' p. 214.
 27. I am indebted to Professor Gananath Obeyesekere for this information.
 28. Cf. poem No. 778 in Hugh Nevill, *Sinhalese Verse*, op. cit., Part III, p. 200. Here Pālānga is called *suwaraja*, or prospering king, an apparent indication not only of high social status but also of personal worth.
 29. For instance, need *yata pila* (below side) and *uda pila* (above side) be laden with sexual significance? Customary behavior would have a wife walk behind her husband. One assumes that in tree-climbing situations, she would also decorously allow her husband to precede her up the tree—hence, the possible cultural origin of these terms. Nevertheless, in support of a sexual interpretation of *yata pila* and *uda pila*, see Obeyesekere's mention in a footnote of an informant who explicitly associated the words with sex; 'The Structure of a Sinhalese Ritual,' p. 192.
 30. Ibid., p. 197.
 31. At Panama, Yalman observed a performance of *An-keliya* which, while theoretically requiring participant's hereditary affiliation with one of the two teams, actually had little reference to any discernible hereditary social division. Cf. Nur Yalman, 'Dual Organization,' p. 210. In fairness to Yalman, it must be said that the low-country *An-keliya* rite on which Obeyesekere's analysis is based was still structured on hereditary lines, although Obeyesekere

notes that the division of society into *yata pila* and *uda pila* has in modern times largely been abandoned in low-country Sri Lanka.

32. G. Obeyesekere, 'The Structure of a Sinhalese Ritual,' p. 200.
33. The opposite is indicated in the village displaying a dual social organization which Yalman studied. There the *yata pila* side was considered to be of higher status and also was wealthier than the *uda pila*. Cf. Nur Yalman, 'Dual Organisation,' pp. 204-7. Nevertheless, we know this is not repeated in all other areas where *An-keliya* is performed, e.g., at Panama. Also, one might raise the historical question of whether or not this modern division into *yata pila*—high status and *uda pila*—low status is a relatively recent development obscuring the 'original meaning' of *An-keliya* which is based on status reversal.
34. For a description of one such festival from which my information is derived, See Melford E. Spiro, *Burmese Supernaturalism*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967, pp. 110-12.
35. C. J. R. LeMesurier, '*An-keliya*,' p. 390.
36. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969, pp. 94-203.
37. Ibid., p. 129.
38. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 177-78.
39. Nur Yalman, 'Dual Organization,' p. 209.
40. Again, I am indebted to Professor Obeyesekere for this information. Some of Yalman's other renderings of terms with which I am better acquainted also display a lack of precision which can only lead one to doubt the interpretations which he sometimes reads into his informant's expressions. For example, on p. 211 of 'Dual Organization', the symbol of Kataragama given as an 'arrow' is almost certainly a spear. And on p. 219 his mention of *An-keliya* divisions among Tamils as *sen seri* and *wada seri* (translated there as 'east and west'), must, if in fact it is Tamil, be translated as 'south and north'. I am taking these terms to be variants of the written forms *ten cēri* and *vaṭa cēri*.
41. On this term, cf. Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process*, pp. 94-130.
42. Lawrence A. Babb, 'Marriage and Malevolence: The Uses of Sexual Opposition in a Hindu Pantheon', *Ethnology*, IX, No. 2 (April 1970), pp. 137-48.
43. Ibid., p. 142.

INDEX

For ease of reference, all entries are alphabetized according to English letter values without regard to diacritical marks or other conventions. In general, words from Indian languages are italicized except for names of divinities, persons, castes, schools, and months of the year as well as all words not transliterated strictly.

An asterisk (*) indicates the name of a month, and readers should consult Charts 3 and 4, pp. 9-10, for equivalents in the Gregorian and other calendars.

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