

**THE GROWTH OF VAIS|N|AVISM IN MEDIEVAL KERALA:
A RECONSTRUCTION FROM ARCHAEOLOGICAL
AND LITERARY RECORDS**

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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**THE GROWTH OF VAISNAVISM IN MEDIEVAL KERALA: A RECONSTRUCTION FROM ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND LITERARY RECORDS**”, submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History of the University of Calicut, is a record of bonafide research carried out by **Sri. GOPI KRISHNAN. G** under my supervision and guidance and that no part of it has been submitted for the award of any degree before.

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09.03.2012

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DECLARATION

I, **GOPI KRISHNAN. G**, hereby declare that the thesis entitled **“THE GROWTH OF VAISṆAVISM IN MEDIEVAL KERALA: A RECONSTRUCTION FROM ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND LITERARY RECORDS”** is a bonafide record of research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of **Prof. M.G.S. NARAYANAN** and that I have not submitted the thesis fully or partially to any other University for the award of any degree, diploma or recognition.

Calicut
09.03.2012

GOPI KRISHNAN.G

PREFACE

The object of the present study is to provide for the first time a systematic reconstruction of the history of Vaisṇāvism in Kerala during the medieval period from 800AD to 1700AD. Much has been written on the political and social life in medieval Kerala. But the history of Vaisṇāvism remained by and large unexplored. The present endeavor avoids aspects of beliefs and it does not try to define or discuss the inner meaning of the religion. The study is the result of an exhaustive examination of sources, primary as well as secondary. A glossary is given at the end of the study. Selected photographs of Vaisṇāva sculptures, wood carvings and mural paintings are also given to provide an idea regarding the impact of Vaisṇāvism on Kerala arts. These photographs are representative in nature. Diacritical marks are employed for non-English names and words wherever possible. The well known words and names such as Kerala, Brahmin, Ezhuthachan and Padmanabha and place-names like Kottayam, Eranakulam, Kozhikkode and Kannur are left as they are. Non-English terms, except proper names, are italicized. In the following pages, Tiruvananthapuram temple denotes Śrī Padmanabha Swamy temple. The two maps at the end will provide an idea of the Vaisṇāva centres in medieval Kerala.

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I consulted books and resources available at the libraries of the Department of History, University of Calicut; C.H.M.K., University of Calicut; Department of Sanskrit, University of Calicut; Department of Malayalam, University of Calicut; University of Kerala, Tiruvananthapuram; Department of History, University of Kerala; Department of Archaeology, University of Kerala; Department of Tamil, University of Kerala; M.G. University, Kottayam; Madras University, Chennai; Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati; M.H.Krishna Institute of Indology, Bangalore; the Indian Archaeological Society, New Delhi; the Sukrtindra Oriental Research Institute, Kochi; the Travancore Devaswom Board, Tiruvananthapuram; the Guruvayur Devaswom, Guruvayur; Kerala Sahitya Akademi, Trissur and N.S.S Hindu College, Changanacherry. I am grateful to the librarians and staff of all these institutions. I am also thankful to the librarians and staff of Sri Chithra Grandhasala, Tiruvananthapuram and the State Central Library, Tiruvananthapuram.

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Gopi Krishnan. G

Contents

PREFACE

ABBREVIATIONS

Chapter s	Title	Page No.
I	INTRODUCTION	1-29
II	VAIS̃ÑAVISM IN CĒRA PERIOD	30-78
III	EARLY VAIS̃ÑAVA CENTRES	79-112
IV	VAIS̃ÑAVISM IN THE POST-CĒRA AGE (1125AD-1700AD)	113-150
V	RISE OF TWO ROYAL VIS̃ÑU TEMPLES	151-188
VI	VAIS̃ÑAVA CENTRES: POST-CĒRA PHASE	189-223
VII	VAIS̃ÑAVA FESTIVALS	224-252
VIII	VAIS̃ÑAVISM IN LITERATURE	253-285
IX	VAIS̃ÑAVISM IN ARTS	286-328
X	CONCLUSION	329-347
	APPENDICES	348-376
	GLOSSARY	377-391
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	392-434
	MAP I	
	MAP II	
	PLATES	i – xi

Appendices

Plates

Glossary

Bibliography

ABBREVIATIONS

A.I.	- Ancient India
A.R.A.D.C.	- Annual Reports of Archaeological Department, Cochin.
B.I.T.C.	- Bulletin of the Institute of Traditional Cultures.
B.R.R.I.	- Bulletin of Ramavarma Research Institute.
E.C.	- Epigraphia Carnatica.
E.I.	- Epigraphia Indica.
E.M.	- Epigraphia Malabarica.
I.A.	- Indian Antiquary.
Index.	- An Index to Cera Inscriptions.
J.A.I.R.I.	- Journal of Anantacharya Indological Research Institute.
J.I.H.	- Journal of Indian History.
J.K.S.	- Journal of Kerala Studies.
J.M.S.	- Journal of Manuscripts Studies.
J.S.O.R.I.	- Journal of Sukrtindra Oriental Research Institute.
K.A.S.	- Kerala Archaeological Series.
K.S.P.	- Kerala Society Papers.
M.A.S.I.	- Memoirs of Archaeological Survey of India.
M.R.	- Matilakam Records.
P.I.H.C.	- Proceedings volume of Indian History Congress.
P.S.I.H.C.	- Proceedings volume of South Indian History Congress.
Q.J.M.S.	- Quarterly Journal of Mythic Society.
S.I.I.	- South Indian Inscriptions.
S.I.P.N.	- Studies in Indian Place Names.
T.A.S.	- Travancore Archaeological Series.
T.M.S.	- Tiruvananthapuram Malayalam Series.
T.S.S.	- Tiruvananthapuram Sanskrit Series.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Vaiṣṇavism centres on the worship of Viṣṇu and his numerous manifestations known as *avatāras*. Viṣṇu was a minor deity during *Rigvedic* period and *Rigveda* contains only five hymns addressed to him¹. The synthesis of various non-*Vedic* divinities and Viṣṇu took place in the age of *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* which augmented the growth of Vaiṣṇavism as a major religion in terms of popularity. Several deities such as Nārāyaṇa, Vāsudēva, Sankarṣaṇa and Krīṣṇa got identified with Viṣṇu and this process of amalgamation paved the way for the rise of Viṣṇu as a prominent deity and Vaiṣṇavism as a dominant religion². The assimilation of various deities within the Vaiṣṇava pantheon was made possible by the revision of *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* literature. The incorporation of various deities into the Vaiṣṇava fold was achieved effectively through the doctrine of incarnations and semi-incarnations of Viṣṇu. The Vaiṣṇava religion was able to absorb and embody the multitude of folk-tribal divinities through the concept of *avatāra* and family relatives. Several legendary narratives in *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* literature glorified the doctrine of incarnation. Consequently, the mythological potentiality of Viṣṇu enhanced enormously. The newly amalgamated deities rose to the status of *avatāras* of Viṣṇu. The assimilation of different divinities into Vaiṣṇava fold and the proliferation of *avatāras* enabled Viṣṇu to be bestowed with a multitude of attributes.

The growth of Bhāgavatism was a catalyst that played a key role in the growth and popularization of Vaiṣṇavism³. The Bhāgavata cult became popular after fifth-fourth centuries BC and it rose to prominence in the second–first centuries BC. The Besnagar inscription of the second century BC which

refers to the setting up of a *garudadhwaaja* in honor of Vāsudēva by Heliodorus and the Ghōsunīdī inscription of the first century BC which records the construction of a stone enclosure for a temple in honor of Sankarsānā and Vāsudēva by a Bhāgavata are indicative of the growing popularity of Bhāgavatism in this period⁴. The age of the Gupta rulers saw the further growth of Bhāgavatism. The Guptas were patrons of Bhāgavata cult and many of them assumed the title, *Paramabhāgavata*⁵. Many Viśṇū temples sprang up in the Gupta kingdom and the worship of *avatāras* became more popular. The Viśṇū temples at Deogarh, Bhila, Viśṇūpāda hill, Bhitāri, Bhitārgāon, Dāmōdarpūr, Erān and Udaigiri are some of the notable Vaiśṇava centres of the age.

The germ of *bhakti* is traceable in *Vedic* hymns. The terms *bhakti* and *bhakta* are derived from the root *bhaj*, which means ‘to divide’, ‘to distribute’, ‘to share’ etc.⁶. The term *bhakta* stands for a person who enjoys a portion or share and *bhakti* means sharing of the possessions of the deity. The word *bhakti* denoting fondness does not appear in *Vedic* hymns. It has been argued that both these terms had a passive sense during the early use of the terms as they denote the thing one belongs to or is the portion to the god. In this context, the original conception of *bhakti* appeared as materialistic associated with the sharing of the wealth and possessions of God⁷. Elements of attachment, love and fondness came to be attached to *bhakti* only in a later period. The *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* are replete with many passages containing references to *bhakti* which signifies devotion and loving adoration of a personal god. Similar to this, the concepts of personal God are found in several *Upanisādic* passages⁸.

The idea of *bhakti* with its multifarious characteristics finds clear exposition in *Bhagavadgīta*. The doctrine of *bhakti* with elements of

adoration, experiencing oneness with the supreme, close intimacy between God and *bhakta* and pure affection find expression in the passages of *Bhagavadgīta*⁹. *Bhagavadgīta* considers *bhakti* as an emotional concept devoid of any intellectual conviction. *Bhakti* got a crystallized ideological form during the period when several treatises on *bhakti* such as *Nārada Bhakti Sūtra* were compiled¹⁰. *Nārada Bhakti Sūtra* takes *bhakti* to a higher level of divine attachment and two stages are appended to the doctrine, *aparābhakti* and *parābhakti* or pre-mature and mature stages. It is again significant that the doctrine of complete surrender got advanced in this work. With the development of Bhāgavata cult, the doctrine of *bhakti* grew further and the renderings on *Itihāsic- Purānīc* narratives glorify adoration of a personal god. Meanwhile the doctrine of *bhakti* charged with an emotional feeling of intense love to Viṣṇu finds its first expression in South India in the Tamil songs of *Ālīvārs*¹¹.

Vaiṣṇava religion entered South India as and when the *Vedic-Itihāsic-Purānīc* ideologies were introduced by Brahmin immigrants, traders and the military conquerors from the north¹². The Jain-Buddhist missionaries also had key role in the spread of a more developed Gangetic valley culture into the south. The *Sangam* poetry, produced in the first five centuries of the Christian era, contain several references to various divinities affiliated to Vaiṣṇavism¹³. The stories of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa were familiar to the *Sangam* poets. The deity with emerald blue complexion of the body, the deity with the bird of flight as vehicle, the deity with plough and the boy god are glorified in several verses of *Sangam* works¹⁴. The deity known as Māyōn was one of the most popular gods of the *Sangam* age¹⁵. This god of pastoral land with dark-blue complexion is identified as Kṛṣṇa. From the *Sangam* references, it is obvious that the ideas pertaining to Viṣṇu and Vaiṣṇavism

became deep rooted in South India during the early centuries of the first millennium AD.

The doctrine of Vaisṇavism acquired a definitive shape in Tamilṅakam, the land between Vēṅkatāṅam hills in the north and Kanyakumari in the south, in the second half of the first millennium AD. It was a significant age for Vaisṇavism in South India¹⁶. This was a period which saw the origin and growth of a highly organized and temple-centred Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult spearheaded by twelve Viṣṇū *bhaktas* known as Ālīṅvārs. The term Ālīṅvār is derived from the Tamil root, *ālī* which means immersing and it denotes the one who delved deeply in devotion to Viṣṇū. Similarly this term signifies preservation which is the chief function of Viṣṇū. Ālīṅvārs were Viṣṇū *bhaktas* who plunged in the ocean of emotional *bhakti*. They lived in different parts of South India, either in different times or as near contemporaries. Their *modus operandi* was mass pilgrimage and composition of temple eulogies. Their ideology was wholly centred on emotional *bhakti* towards Viṣṇū in certain sacred spots. A sacred geography consisting of 108 temples came up as the focal points of South Indian Vaisṇavism. The mass pilgrimage with bands of devotees by Ālīṅvārs, in singing and dancing, to these Vaisṇava centres generated a stir in the countryside in favor of emotional Viṣṇū *bhakti*¹⁸. This widened the social base of Vaisṇavism in South India. Pilgrimage expanded the cultural geography of Vaisṇava centres. The *bhakti* hymns of Ālīṅvārs crystallized the cult of emotional temple-centred *bhakti*. *Bhakti* also acquired a new conceptual dimension in the songs of Ālīṅvārs when devotion to *bhaktas* got equated with true devotion to Viṣṇū.

During the four centuries from seventh century to tenth century AD when the Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult of Ālīṅvārs swept Tamilṅakam, the land was broadly compartmentalized into four political segments ruled over by the

Pallavas, the Cōlīas, the Pāñḍīyas and the Cēras¹⁹. These potentates espoused the cause of Viṣṇū *bhakti* and patronized temple building activities. The explicit result was that temples proliferated, temple oriented culture got promoted and Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult prospered. Another sect of *bhaktas* also emerged simultaneously in Tamilñakam. They were the votaries of Śiva *bhakti* and were known as Nāyanārs. Temple eulogy formed central to their literary creations and emotional *bhakti* was their ideology. Like Ālīvārs, pilgrimage was their chief means to diffuse Śiva *bhakti*.

The Viṣṇū *bhakti* poured out by the Ālīvārs permeated into Kerala, which constituted the western sea coast of Tamilñakam, in the ninth-tenth centuries at a time when the Cēra rulers held sway over a vast area of Kerala with Mahōdayapuram as capital. The Cēras of Mahōdayapuram ruled approximately between 800AD and 1124AD as ritual sovereigns²⁰. The Cēra kings were patrons of Brahminic culture and temples. The age of the Cēras was a crucial period in the history of the evolution of Kerala society and culture. Kerala was separated during the Cēra age from the rest of Tamilñakam in terms of society, culture and language and this paved the way for the gradual evolution of a separate regional identity for Kerala²¹.

Three Ālīvārs, namely Tirumankai Ālīvār, Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār and Nammālīvār, sang eulogies on the Viṣṇū temples of Kerala and the songs of these *bhaktas* and their frequent pilgrimage with large contingents of devotees to the Kerala shrines diffused the doctrines of Viṣṇū *bhakti* and placed these temples in the sacred geography of South Indian Vaiṣṇavism. The temple-centred *bhakti* cult which projected temple-cult paved the way for the socialization of Brahminism and the evolution of a Brahminic social order based on Śāstraic-Itihāsic-Purāñic social norms. Moreover it accelerated the evolution of temple-centred society and culture. Sthāñu Ravi Kulaśēkhara, the second ruler of the Cēra dynasty and who is identified as Kulaśēkhara

Ālīvār, was instrumental in the propagation of Viṣṇu *bhakti* in Kerala. The king composed *bhakti* hymns, revived and rejuvenated the temple theatre, produced dramas to serve the theatre as repertoire, founded and patronized temples and promoted temple festivals. A new code of laws was framed at Mūlīkkalāṁ Viṣṇu temple under the auspices of the king. This code had pan-Kerala fame. All these ventures hastened the pace for the growth of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult in the Cēra kingdom.

After the eclipse of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram, in the early decades of twelfth century, their place was taken over by several kings and chieftains who emerged from the ruins of the Cēra kingdom²². The post- Cēra monarchies also patronized Viṣṇu temples and promoted Viṣṇu *bhakti* through literary compositions. Literature was the chief medium of the votaries of devotion in this age and arts and literature got enriched under the impact of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult. However, the sense of a community consciousness or a sectarian outlook did not evolve in Kerala. The absence of such a dogmatic cult does not mean that the ideology of Viṣṇu *bhakti* was absent.

Significance of the Study

The present study deals with a new area of research in the socio-cultural history of Kerala. Vaisṇavism had a key role in the development of Kerala culture. Literature and arts of medieval Kerala owed greatly to Vaisṇavism for their development. The *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* literature played crucial role in the evolution and growth of Malayalam language. All streams of arts- sculptural and pictorial representations, performing and ritual arts and stage arts also were obliged to Vaisṇavism for their evolution and growth. *Ōṇam*, which at present is the most popular regional festival, was initially linked to Viṣṇu temples.

In spite of such profound contributions by Vaiṣṇavism to the development of literature, arts and thought of medieval Kerala, no separate historical probe was initiated by anyone to situate Vaiṣṇavism in the wider context of medieval Kerala history. Again in respect of the role played by Vaiṣṇavism in the development of festivals no proper survey has been made. The present study assumes significance as a pioneer endeavor to unveil the history of Vaiṣṇavism in medieval Kerala. Further, this is a maiden attempt to assess the contributions of Vaiṣṇavism to the development of medieval Kerala literature and arts. This study also examines the role of Vaiṣṇava religion and temples in the growth of festivals on the basis of archaeological and literary data. The present venture is the first comprehensive historical probe into the socio-cultural and political role of the Vaiṣṇava centres in the post- Cēra age too. The spread of *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* culture and its influence on Kerala society and culture are also analyzed. In this backdrop, the present attempt to sketch the history of Vaiṣṇavism and Vaiṣṇava centres in medieval Kerala, during the nine centuries from 800AD to 1700AD, is expected to enrich the understanding of the history of Kerala.

Period of the Study

The present study intends to reconstruct the history of Vaiṣṇavism in medieval Kerala. The period covering thousand years from 800 AD to 1800 AD is roughly taken into consideration as the medieval period in the history of Kerala. Though the present study deals with the history of Vaiṣṇavism in the medieval period, it excludes eighteenth century from the scope of discussion and confines itself only to the nine centuries from 800 AD to 1700 AD. This period has been chosen for a variety of reasons. The reign of the later Cēras of Mahōdayapuram commenced approximately around 800 AD and it was during the age of the Cēras which lasted for about three centuries

that Kerala society and culture underwent rapid transformation which resulted in the development of a unique regional identity for Kerala. The socio-political and cultural conditions in Kerala began to change radically in the eighteenth century with the rise of the British as colonial power and the emergence of two powerful princely states - Travancore and Kochi - respectively under Anilālam Tirunālī Mārtāndīa Varma and Śaktan Tampurān as well as the Mysorian conquest of Kerala. As a sequence to these historical occurrences, the medieval socio-cultural and political apparatus gradually collapsed. It was in the medieval feudal socio-political situation that Brahminic institutions prospered. In this context, it stands reasonable to avoid eighteenth century from the scope of the present study.

Statement of the Problem and Hypotheses

An attempt is made in this work to trace the history of Vaisṇāvism and its impact on Kerala society and culture from 800 AD to 1700 AD. Vaisṇāvism and Śaivism were instrumental in the socialization of Brahminic culture and the feudalization of Kerala society and polity. With the development of Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult in Kerala during and after the period of Sthānū Ravi Kulaśēkhara, Śaiva *bhakti* cult lost popularity and its place was also taken over by Vaisṇāvism. Vaisṇāva religion with its rich repertory of cult themes as enshrined in *Bhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhāgavata* traditions provided thematic substance to arts and letters in medieval Kerala. Vaisṇāvism played a key role in the evolution and growth of Kerala culture in later times also. The doctrine of Viṣṇū *bhakti* continued to enrich Kerala arts and literature through the works of *bhakti* poets. The Rāma- Krīṣṇa cults provided thematic substance to the artists, poets, painters and sculptors. Royal patronage was rewarded by temples and Brahmins by legitimizing the authority of kings/chieftains. There has been no exhaustive research work done so far to unravel the history of Vaisṇāvism in Kerala.

The following hypotheses are tested in this study -

- ▶ Though the temple-centred Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult was imported from the neighbouring Tamil Kingdoms, it was fully Keralized and grew into a prominent religion during the reign of Sthānū Ravi Kulaśēkhara or Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār and his successors. There was a proliferation of Viṣṇū temples in Kerala.
- ▶ Sthānū Ravi's ideology of *bhakti* had political dimensions and *bhakti* appears to have produced a disciplined society.
- ▶ The Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult was the product of a second wave of Brahminic culture.

- ▶ In the Post- Cēra age, when organized *bhakti* cult was absent, an undercurrent of Visṅṅu *bhakti* movement existed and Visṅṅu *bhakti* was propagated through literature and arts. Several free renderings on *Purāṅṅic- Itihāsic* literary works were produced and wood carvings and mural paintings on Vaisṅṅava themes got generated in large numbers.
- ▶ Though Kerala did not experience the advent of a sectarian cult of Visṅṅu *bhaktas* , the tenets of *bhakti* did exist in arts, literature and temples.
- ▶ The *bhakti* poets advanced the ideology of *bhakti* and diffused *Purāṅṅic* culture which enriched every sphere of the cultural life of post-Cēra phase.
- ▶ The Visṅṅu *bhaktas* of medieval Kerala, during post-Cēra age, compromised with Brahminic claims and only a mild voice of protest or dissent was raised against the caste supremacy of Brahmins.
- ▶ Inter-religious rivalries and conflicts between the votaries of Vaisṅṅavism and other religions did not exist in Kerala.
- ▶ Vaisṅṅavism had key role in the growth and development of Kerala arts and in the evolution of Kerala culture.

Objectives

This discussion is attempted not with a view to glorify the spiritual-religious realms of the Vaisṅṅava religion nor to promote any kind of religious or spiritual pursuits. The study again does not seek to unravel the ‘inner meaning’ of the religion. An endeavor is made in this study to undertake a historical probe into the growth of Vaisṅṅavism in a dispassionate and an objective manner. Apart from this, the present study has the following objectives-

- ▶ To make an in-depth study on the history of Vaisṅṅavism in medieval Kerala and to evaluate the impact of Vaisṅṅavism in the development of Kerala culture.

- ▶ To analyze how far did Vaisṇāvism influence the evolution of Malayalam language and medieval Kerala literature.
- ▶ To survey the proliferation of Viṣṇū temples in medieval Kerala and to assess its impact on society and culture.
- ▶ To examine how far did royal patronage advance the fortunes of Vaisṇāvism in the Cēra and post- Cēra ages.
- ▶ To analyze the impact of Vaisṇāvism in the advent of festivals and celebrations like *Ōṇāṁ*, *Alpiśi*, *Māmānkam* etc.

Methodology

This study involves historical analysis using epigraphy, architectural and artistic analysis and the study of literatures- Tamil, Sanskrit and the medieval variants of Malayalam. This work is mainly analytical in nature, based on careful narrative. Prior to the analysis, facts are reconstructed and reorganized from archaeological and literary sources. The chronological sequence and social implications are presented and explained. The study is chiefly based on primary records and it is further supplemented by secondary sources in Malayalam and English.

Historiography

What has been written until recently as the history of early and medieval Kerala was a medley of legendary traditions and non-historical narratives. Tradition was taken as the only reliable source material for producing historical narratives in the nineteenth and in the early decades of the twentieth century. The writings of the early court historians of Travancore, Pachu Muttathu and P.Shangoonny Menon, are replete with historical inaccuracies and anachronisms²³. However, the first dispassionate endeavour to narrate the history of Kerala was undertaken in 1886 by William

Logan whose district manual of Malabar known as *Malabar* reproduces the history of Kerala in an objective and non-traditional manner²⁴. Though Logan's study was path-breaking in terms of several aspects of the early history of Kerala such as social, cultural and political realms of historical thought, he did not incorporate any analysis of the origin and growth of Vaiṣṇavism and related subjects in his narratives.

The State Manuals, produced in the princely states of Travancore and Kochi in the early half of the twentieth century, merely consist of the eulogies of royal dynasties. *The Travancore State Manuals* by V. Nagam Aiya in 1906 and T.K. Velu Pillai in 1940 and *The Cochin State Manual* by C. Achyutya Menon in 1911 rely more on tradition²⁵. A striking feature of the State Manuals of Travancore is that they narrate the history of Tiruvananthapuram Śrī Padmanabha Swāmy Temple, which is referred to hereafter in this study as Tiruvananthapuram Viṣṇū Temple. These descriptions are intertwined with legends and facts. Tiruvananthapuram Viṣṇū Temple was closely associated with the royal dynasty of Vēṅṅāṭṭu/ Trāvancore. The kings of Vēṅṅāṭṭu patronized the temple as a shrine of their tutelary deity. This prompted the authors of the Manuals to describe the glories of the temple. A welcome aspect of the work of T.K. Velu Pillai is that it contains the texts of several documents of Tiruvananthapuram Viṣṇū Temple as appendices.

The compilation of *T.A.S.* between 1908 and 1938 by the Travancore royal government was a welcome step of considerable significance in the field of the publication of epigraphic and archaeological documents in Kerala²⁶. Several archaeological and literary documents with expert commentaries and notes prepared by erudite scholars came out through the volumes of *T.A.S.* A good number of archaeological records pertaining to various Viṣṇū temples also got published. However these commentaries deal only with political

history and the regnal years of monarchs, identity of kings, their dynastic details and their wars. Similar to *T.A.S.*, the multi-volume work, *B.R.R.I.* and *K.S.P.*, the journal of Kerala Society, contain expert discussions on several archaeological and literary data²⁷.

The four volume *History of Kerala* by K.P. Padmanabha Menon, published posthumously in between 1924 and 1937 by T.K. Krishna Menon, is a historical work of inestimable value²⁸. Several non-political aspects pertaining to socio-religious history are elaborately and critically discussed in this work. But he does not endeavor to study the rise and growth of Vaisṇāvism and related topics of cultural history. Meanwhile, K.V.Krishna Ayyar took up the task of compiling a historical narrative on the Zamorins of Calicut²⁹. The work does not contain any discussions regarding the history of Vaisṇāvism in Zamorin's kingdom. A serious attempt to reconstruct the early and medieval history of Kerala was undertaken by Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai. Several essays, articles and books are authored by him on different aspects of the history of ancient and medieval Kerala. He identified the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram as the Cēramān Perumālīs of legendary fame. Valuable contributions were made by him to unravel the history of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram. A new genealogy for the Cēras was also worked out by him for which several inscriptions were taken into critical analysis.

Elamkulam also traced the rise and growth of Brahminic culture, *Cāturvarṇya* system, *Marumakkattāyam* and feudalism in Kerala³⁰. Also he worked on topics like the Āys, *śālais*, Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār, Cēramān Perumālī Nāyanār, *Sangam* age, Tiruvananthapuram city, the rise of Kollam as a trade centre, trade guilds, *Ōṇam* and *Cāvers* or suicide squads. He identified Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār as the founder and the first ruler of the Cēra dynasty of Mahōdayapuram and assigned him to the first two decades of the ninth century³¹. An essay surveying the rise of *bhakti* literature in the fifteenth

century and the historical evolution of Malayalam literature was also written by him³². The advent of the Portuguese missionaries is taken as the chief reason for the emergence of *bhakti* literature. Though a vast corpus of historical literature was produced, no definitive study was undertaken by Elamkulam to pursue the later growth of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult in Kerala.

Following the studies of Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, M.G.S. Narayanan started probing the social and political history of the age of the Cēras of Mahodayapuram. Several views expressed by his predecessors have been modified and further advanced in his studies. The historical puzzles that raged in the sphere of historical research in Kerala have been resolved in an objective manner. The doctoral thesis namely, 'The Political and Social Conditions of Kerala under the Kulaśekhara Empire, c.800-1124AD', submitted by him to the University of Kerala in 1972 and its revised version, *Perumals of Kerala* (1996), are definitive studies of the history of Kerala during the three centuries from 800AD to 1124AD³³. One of the striking contributions of the erudite Professor is that, after rereading the Cēra records and scrutinizing the contemporary literature, he identified Sthānu Ravi Kulaśekhara as Kulaśekhara Ālvār and fixed the life time of this royal saint as between 844 AD and c. 883AD³⁴.

Besides, he wrote several works and articles on different aspects of the history of medieval Kerala³⁵. A detailed and exhaustive analysis of the impact of Brahmin immigration, the spread of *bhakti* cults and the socio-economic history of the Cēra country along with an analysis and survey of the *bhakti* literature constitute important parts of his study on the social and cultural history of the Cēra age. Thanks to the efforts of M.G.S. Narayanan, the unknown areas of early medieval history of Kerala were brought to light and an integrated history of the period of the Cēras of Mahodayapuram got

modified and reconstructed. Later views regarding the causes for the spread of the new *bhakti* movement in the sixteenth century have also been formulated by him³⁶. The *bhakti* cult of the sixteenth century spearheaded by Tunchathu Rāmānujan Ezhuthachan is analysed in its historical background in this study in which the social background and the significance of the movement are also examined.

The studies of M.G.S. Narayanan provided the starting point for further studies on areas coming under the ambit of medieval period in Kerala history by a new generation of scholars who started analyzing historical processes in terms of theoretical knowledge. Kesavan Veluthat, who probed the historical significance of the early Brahmin settlements in Kerala, continued the discussion on the nature of the Cēra monarchy and the Cēra state³⁷. He also wrote on the ideology of *bhakti* of Tamil *bhakti* preachers. K.N.Ganesh, while examining the socio-political and economic processes in medieval Vēṅṅātṅu in the post- Perumāṅṅ era, discussed the role of royal temples in extending ritual legitimacy to the ruling dynasty of Vēṅṅātṅu chieftdom³⁸. P.M. Rajan Gurukkal, in his studies on early medieval Kerala temples, analyzed the role of the temples of the Cēra age in the agrarian economy of the Cēra age³⁹. M.R.Raghava Varrier wrote on the Vaisṅṅava themes in the mural paintings of medieval Kerala⁴⁰. A general analysis of the features of Vaisṅṅava mural paintings is made in this paper.

M.G. Sasibhooshan who worked on the mural paintings and the iconography surveyed the peculiarities of the pictorial and iconographic arts of Kerala⁴¹. These endeavors are only in the form of surveys. In spite of several studies on the literature of medieval Kerala, separate studies in the direction of Vaisṅṅava impact on literature did not come out so far. Several studies have also been conducted on the history of several individual Visṅṅu

temples. K.V.Krishna Ayyar has written on the history and legends of Guruvāyūr temple⁴². This work presents both history and legendary tales. P. Unnikrishan Nair has traced the history of Tiruvalla and Tiruppuliyūr temples⁴³. A striking feature of these works is that numerous cadjan records are made use in a dispassionate manner. Similarly A.G. Menon has written on the history of Tiruvananthapuram temple⁴⁴. All these works do not attempt to analyse the historical evolution of respective temples in the wider social and cultural contexts. Several works were produced as encyclopedia of Kerala temples. Many of these works did not incorporate any serious historical enquiry. Meanwhile the encyclopedia on Kerala temples by P.G.Rajendran deserves special mention as a serious attempt to present the historical antecedents of temples in summation⁴⁵. This work is intended mainly for general public. Yet the author tried to summarise the historical background of temples in a dispassionate manner.

Many scholars have studied the history of Vaisṇāvism in other parts of India. Several studies were conducted on South Indian Vaisṇāvism. S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, T.A. Gopinatha Rao, J.S.M. Hooper, K.C. Varadachari and V.R.R. Dikshitar have written on the Visṇū *bhakti* cult in South India⁴⁶. What has been written in their works on the Ālīvārs' movement concerned chiefly with the lives of individual saints, their chronology, their literary and philosophical contributions and the traditional description of Vaisṇāva centres. K.A.Nilakanta Sastri has traced the development of religions and religious thought in South India⁴⁷. Unlike the early attempts, this work analyzes the songs of various Ālīvārs in an objective manner. F.Hardy wrote elaborately on the history of the Vaisṇāva devotional movement in South India. His magnum opus, *Viraha Bhakti* deals with the features of the Ālīvār movement, especially the Krīṣṇa *bhakti*

movement in the early medieval period in South India⁴⁸. M.G.S.Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat jointly wrote an article entitled, ‘‘Tamil Bhakti Movement’’ analyzing the peculiarities of South Indian *bhakti* movements⁴⁹. In this essay, the learned scholars correlate the religio-literary aspects and the socio-political background of the *bhakti* movement. The *bhakti* movement is analyzed within the larger framework of the development of society and culture in South India and it is characterized as a movement of ‘dissent, protest and reform’.

R.Champakalakshmi analyzed the Vais̃ṇāva iconography of Tamil countries in the early medieval period and examines the role of Vais̃ṇāvism in the development of arts in Tamil kingdoms⁵⁰. Further, several essays have been written by her on numerous aspects of the religious life of South India and Tamil *bhakti* movements. Theoretical analysis of the nature and scope of the Tamil *bhakti* movement and religion and its social base is attempted in these essays. Recently these essays get thematically united as a collection entitled, *Religion, Tradition and Ideology, Pre- Colonial South India*⁵¹. The erudite scholar in her essays analyses the impact of Vais̃ṇāva cult on the society and culture of Tamilnadu. Apart from these studies, several scholars have endeavored to trace the historical growth of Vais̃ṇāvism in a pan-Indian context. R.G. Bhandarkar, H.C. Raychaudhari, J. Gonda, K.G. Goswami, A.P.Karmarkar, R.P.Chanda and D.C. Sircar have written on the rise and growth of Vais̃ṇāvism as a popular theistic cult in India⁵². Suvira Jaiswal’s *The Origin and Development of Vais̃ṇāvism* is an objective and a dispassionate study of the Vais̃ṇāva religion⁵³. The Socio-economic context in which the Vais̃ṇāva religion came into existence gets systematically analyzed in this work. Urmila Bhagowalia has written on the history of

Vaiṣṇāvaism in North India and analyses the rise of the religion as a popular Brahminic cult⁵⁴.

A good number of studies have been made on the history of Vaiṣṇāvaism in regional contexts too. S.K.De and S.C. Mukherjee have studied among several others the history of the Vaiṣṇāva devotional movement in Bengal⁵⁵. Several studies have also been done on the history of Vaiṣṇāvaism in Orissa and on the Jagannatha cult of Puri⁵⁶. Scholarly works have been produced on localized Viṣṇū *bhakti* cults and several Viṣṇū temples of South India such as Tiruvēṅkaṭṭam and Śrīrangam⁵⁷.

In this context, a definitive study on Vaiṣṇāvaism in medieval Kerala remains a desideratum for the further development of historical researches on medieval Kerala history and culture.

Sources

For the study of the medieval Kerala history, archaeology and literature form the most reliable sources of information. Hence, the present study takes into account both archaeological and literary records. The archaeological records for this historical probe consist of inscriptions, archival documents, iconography and mural paintings. The study of inscriptions is indispensable for any attempt to reconstruct the social and cultural history of medieval Kerala. Various inscriptions of different south Indian dynasties such as the Kadambas, the Cōlīas, the Cēras, the Pāṇḍīyas, the Āys, the Ālīupas and the rulers of Vēṅkaṭṭu provide valuable information regarding the spread of Brahminic culture, the growth of temples and the progress of temple centred society and culture. For the texts of these inscriptions, works such as *T.A.S*, *B.R.R.I*, *S.I.I*, *E.I*, and *E.C*. have been extensively referred to in this study. M.G.S. Narayanan reread all the Cēra inscriptions and published his findings

along with the summary notes of the content of records as a companion volume entitled *An Index to Cēra Inscriptions*, to the Ph.D thesis⁵⁸. This work is also extensively used in this study.

Besides, certain published works like *Kerala Bhashayute Vikasa Parinamangal* and *Cila Kerala Carithra Prasangal* by Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, *Pracina Likhithangal* by V.R. Parameswaran Pillai and *Kerala Charithrathinte Atisthana Silakal* and *Foundations of South Indian Society and Culture* by M.G.S. Narayanan contain the texts and summaries of several Cēra and post- Cēra inscriptions. These published texts of epigraphic records are also made use of in this study. Apart from these works, *A Topographical List of Travancore Inscriptions* by R. Vasudeva Poduval, *Epigraphia Malabarica* by K.Maheswaran Nair and *Pracinasanangalum Malayala Paribhashayum* by K. Ratnamma have also helped a lot in the completion of this study. The epigraphic records indicate the observances in temples, endowments to temples and the prosperity of temples, proliferation of rituals, royal patronage to temples and the rise of temple-centred culture, development of temple arts and festivals like *Ōṅam*, *Alpiṣi* etc and the growth of temple-centred socio-cultural institutions like *śālais*, *Māpāratampatṭar* and debates and discussions known as *vyākhyāna*.

This study is largely based on the data collected from the archival repositories of Kerala. The Central Archives and the Oriental Manuscripts library, both at Tiruvananthapuram and the Regional Archives at Ernakulam are rich repositories of archival data regarding the history of various Vaisṅṅava centres in the post- Cēra age. The records pertaining to Tiruvananthapuram Visṅṅu temple are separately catalogued and preserved as *Matilakam Records* in Central Archives. Besides, there are several documents related to various Visṅṅu temples in Central Archives and Regional Archives

at Ernakulam. The *grandhavaris* such as *Trippunīithura Grandhavari*, *Annamanada Grandhavari*, *Records Relating to the Irinjalakkuda Pagoda* and the edited works like *Pradhanappetta Matilakam Rekhakal*, *Chronicles of Tiruvananthapuram Pagoda*, *Vanjeri Grandhavari*, *Tiruppuliyūr Grandhavari*, *Tiruvalla Grandhavari*, *Edamana Grandhavari*, *Māmānkam Rekhakal*, *Kozhikkodan Grandhavari- Sthānārōhanīam Chadangukal* and several such archival materials are used as primary records in this study⁵⁹. Besides, several show case records, cadjan leaf manuscripts, edited collections kept in archives and temple records are also referred to in this study.

Medieval Kerala has produced a considerable amount of both *bhakti* and secular literature. Therefore, literature has been of immeasurable value in the present study. The songs of the *Ālīvārs* on Kerala temples constitute a rich repository of historical information regarding Vaisṇava centres in medieval Kerala⁶⁰. Dramas and poetic compositions such as *Tapatisamvaranīa*, *Subhadradhanajaya*, *Āścaryacūdāmanīi*, free renderings of *Bhārata- Bhāgavata- Rāmāyanīa* and various temple *stutis*, produced both in the Cēra and the post- Cēra ages, form another category of primary records in this study⁶¹. The *Sandēśakāvya*s like *Unīlīsandēśa*, *Śukasandēśa*, *Kōkasandēśa*, *Kōkilasandēśa* and *Kāmasandēśa*, several *Sthalapurānīas* and literary works on *devadasis* contain valuable information regarding the history of Visṇu temples in the post- Cēra age⁶². These works are also widely used in this study. Apart from epigraphic records, archival documents and contemporary literature, various forms of arts are also analyzed in this study to survey the popularity and growth of Vaisṇavism in medieval period and to trace the features of Visṇu *bhakti* cult in Kerala. The Vaisṇava arts of medieval Kerala get analysed in the wider context of the Vaisṇava arts of

medieval South India. Different strands of arts such as iconography, wood carvings, mural paintings and performing and ritual arts are analyzed to survey the impact of Vaishnavism on Kerala culture. In addition to this, field study has also been conducted in several Visṅu temples of Kerala. The field visits helped immensely in obtaining first hand information regarding the pictorial and iconographic representations of Vaishṅava themes.

The secondary sources for this study are varied in nature. Various works on the history, culture, literature and arts of South India and especially of Kerala are extensively referred to in this study. The works of K.P. Padmanabha Menon, P. Sundaram Pillai, William Logan, V. Nagam Aiya, T.K. Velu Pillai, K.V. Krishna Ayyar, Ulloor S Parameswara Aiyer, Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, Sooranadu Kunjan Pillai, M.G.S. Narayanan, K.K.Raja, M.E. Manickavasagam Pillai, K.N. Ganesh, M.R.Raghava Varrier, Kesavan Veluthat, P.M. Rajan Gurukkal, K.M.George, N.P.Unni and M.G.Sasibhooshan are widely used. Several works on South Indian history and culture are also extensively used in this study. The works of S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, T.V. Mahalingam, C.Minakshi, K.V. Raman, K.V. Ramesh, B.A. Saletore, K.K. Pillai, Stella Kramrisch, M. Srinivasa Aiyangar, D.C.Sircar, N. Subrahmanyam, V. Kanakasabhai, T.A. Gopinatha Rao, D. Dayalan, R. Champakalakshmi, F. Hardy, Suvira Jaiswal, R.C.Majumdar, Raju Kalidas, J.N.Farquhar, S.K.De and C.Sivarama Murthi are some of the important works used in this study. Besides, several other works and articles in English and Malayalam are referred in this endeavour.

Thesis Outline

The present study contains ten chapters. The first chapter is introductory in nature which discusses the significance, objectives, methodology, problems and hypotheses and historiography. The chapter also contains a note on sources.

The second chapter entitled, ‘Vaiṣṇāvaism in Cēra Period’ takes up a detailed discussion of the emergence of Vaiṣṇāvaism in Kerala, the nexus between the ideology of Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult and the Cēra state and the growth of Vaiṣṇāvaism under the Cēra rulers of Mahōdayapuram. An attempt to reconstruct the history of the *Ālīvār* movement and its impact on Kerala society and culture is also endeavored in this chapter. Besides, the growth of Vaiṣṇāvaism as a popular cult and the relation between Vaiṣṇāvaism and other religious sects also get narrated in this chapter.

The third chapter entitled, ‘Early Vaiṣṇāva Centres’ reconstructs the history of *divyadēsams* and other early Viṣṇū temples in Kerala in the age of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram. The historical background of the early temples is reproduced solely on the basis of archaeological and literary records. This chapter also critically analyses the peculiarities of the geographical distribution of the Vaiṣṇāva centres and the reasons for the formation of a cluster of Vaiṣṇāva centres in central Kerala.

The fourth chapter under the caption ‘Vaiṣṇāvaism in the post- Cēra Age (1125AD-1700AD)’ discusses the features of the Vaiṣṇāva devotional movement in the post- Cēra age. Also an account of the nature of the *bhakti* cult of the age and the *modus operandi* of *bhaktas* is discussed in an analytical manner in this chapter. The growth of Vaiṣṇāvaism into a popular cult, the

rise of syncretic cults and the interaction between Vaisṅavism and Śaivism in the period under discussion are critically examined.

The fifth chapter, ‘Rise of Two Royal Visṅu Temples’ examines the growth of Tiruvananthapuram and Guruvāyūr temples into prominent royal Vaisṅava shrines in the post-Cēra age. The rise of these temples is analyzed in the context of their political background. This chapter also includes a brief description of the role of certain kings, who patronised Visṅu shrines, in the growth of Vaisṅavism in the post- Cēra age.

The sixth chapter, ‘Vaisṅava Centres: Post-Cēra Phase’, examines the history of the Vaisṅava centres in the post- Cēra age. The history of Vaisṅava centres is reconstructed entirely on the basis of epigraphic and literary documents. The royal association of temples and its impact on the prosperity of temples is also analyzed.

The seventh chapter entitled, ‘Vaisṅava Festivals’ attempts a detailed reconstruction of the history of Vaisṅava festivals such as *Ōṅam*, *Cāturmāsya*, *Māmānkam* and various temple festivals of both Cēra and post-Cēra ages. The socio-economic impact of festivals and their cultural relevance also get analysed.

The eighth chapter entitled, ‘Vaisṅavism in Literature’ narrates the Vaisṅava literature of medieval Kerala. The impact of Vaisṅavism on the language and literature of medieval Kerala and the role of Vaisṅava literature in the growth of Malayalam language are analyzed. Similar instances from other parts of medieval India where regional languages and literature grew under the impact of Vaisṅavism is also briefly examined to assess the significance of Vaisṅava literature in the growth of medieval Indian literature.

The ninth chapter entitled 'Vaiṣṇāvaism in Arts' surveys the impact of Vaiṣṇāvaism on Kerala arts. The peculiarities of Vaiṣṇāva iconography and mural paintings are analysed. The impact of Vaiṣṇāvaism in the growth of stage arts, performing arts and folk arts are also analyzed in this part of the work. Apart from this, the role of Vaiṣṇāvaism in the development of a peculiar Kerala style in arts is analysed.

The last chapter is the concluding part of the work. Though all core chapters contain brief conclusions, the major results and findings of the study are incorporated in the last chapter as a general conclusion.

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Chapter II

VAISŪNAVISM IN CĒRA PERIOD

The VaisŪnāva religion was introduced in Kerala by the Brahmin immigrants. VaisŪnavism percolated into Kerala with the cultural wave heralded by the immigrant Brahmins who settled in thirty two villages with structural temples as the nuclei and many of these settlements centred on VisŪu shrines. The establishment and growth of the CĒra kingdom in the ninth century with Mahōdayapuram as capital further advanced the prospects of VaisŪnāva religion in Kerala. The proliferation of structural temples and the development of temple-centred VaisŪnāva devotional movement spearheaded by the *Ālīvārs* paved the way for the subsequent growth of VisŪu *bhakti* cult in Kerala during the CĒra age. The VaisŪnāva religion surpassed Śaivism in popularity and enriched the art and thought of medieval Kerala. A survey is made in this chapter to unravel the history of VaisŪnavism and its growth under the CĒras of Mahōdayapuram.

Advent of VaisŪnavism in Kerala

The absence of direct inscripational or literary records on the early history of VaisŪnavism in the pre-CĒra period made the attempt of scholars probing the subject a difficult task. A careful analysis of the socio-cultural changes that occurred in Kerala in the first millennium AD would be helpful in throwing light on this subject. It appears that the influx of Brahmins through the western coast to Kerala which took place in different stages in various centuries of the first millennium AD was an important socio-cultural phenomenon¹. VaisŪnavism owed its origin in Kerala to the migration of Nambūdiri Brahmins. It is evident from *Akanānūru* that Talīparamba or Perumcellūr, one of the northern most Brahmin settlements in Kerala, existed

during the *Sangam* age². The *Akam* songs praised Perumcellūr as a haven of *Vedic* Brahmins and as a place marked by the sacrificial pillar and the never extinguished sacrificial fire of Parasurāma. Perumcellūr is again celebrated as a place where gods received sacrifice. The references to Talṭiparamba in *Akanānūru* point to the fact that the Brahmin settlement at Talṭiparamba came into existence as a prominent Brahmin centre when *Akanānūru* was compiled. The prolific references to Kerala in various *Sangam* works like *Patirṭrupattu* do not mention any other Brahmin settlements in Kerala. It signifies that only the northern village came into existence during the *Sangam* age.

It appears from *Kēralōlpatti* that there were two stages in the Brahmin migration to Kerala. According to *Kēralōlpatti*, the first group of Brahmin settlers were known as *Palṭantulṭuvarṭ* and they fled back to their home land following the hostility of serpents³. After the return of *Palṭantulṭuvarṭ*, another batch of Brahmin settlers arrived. This second wave of Brahmin migration occurred under the auspices of the Kadambas and the Cālūkyas who held sway over a larger area of Karnataka⁴. In this context it is significant that the Brahmin migration to Kerala was not an isolated incident and it was part of a larger migration of Brahmins along the western coast. The *Kēralōlpatti* tradition states that Parasurāma established sixty four Brahmin settlements in the territory between Gōkarnṭam and Kumari (Kanyakumari), the first thirty two in the Tulṭunātṭu and the second thirty two in Kerala or Malainātṭu⁵. This tradition reveals that the Brahmin settlements in Kerala form part of a long chain of Brahmin settlements in the west coast.

The Kadambas who ruled in between the fourth and sixth centuries AD were zealous patrons of Brahmins and their culture⁶. Mayūravarma, the founder of the Kadamba dynasty of Banavasi, played a great part in

encouraging the spread of Brahmin culture in coastal Karnataka which formed Tulīunātīu⁷. The Kadamba inscriptions and traditional Canarese accounts testify to the royal patronage of the Kadamba rulers for the promotion and advancement of Brahminic culture⁸. Again, *Grāmapadhāti*, the Brahminic chronicle of Tulīunātīu, also gives credit to Mayūravarma for the establishment of Brahmin settlements in coastal Karnataka⁹. Although the Kadambas wielded political influence widely over Karnataka, there is no credible evidence to prove that they ever exerted direct political influence over Kerala. An inscription of Viśīnīuvārma, the Kadamba king, is discovered from Edakkal in Wayanad district of Kerala¹⁰. The spread of the cultural influence of the Kadambas over Wayanad which lies close to Karnataka is apparent from this inscription.

The Cālūkyas who rose to prominence in the sixth century AD in Karnataka claimed in inscriptions that the Mūsīakas and the Keralas along with the Ālīupas and the Gangas were brought into subservience by the Cālūkyā rulers¹¹. These claims reveal that the Kerala ruler was made a vassal by the Cālūkyas. *Kēralōlpatti* speaks of the arrival of Brahmins in many batches from Ahichatra to Kerala¹². Ahichatra is identified with Aihōlīā or Aihōlīapura, the capital of the Cālūkyas¹³. Similar to *Kēralōlpatti* tradition, *Grāmapadhāti* also held that Brahmins moved in large numbers from Ahichatra to Tulu country¹⁴. The Cālūkyas were patrons of Brahminic culture and the age of the Cālūkyas is noted for the proliferation of many structural temples in Karnataka¹⁵. The Cālūkyas promoted Vaiśīnīava and Śaiva literature too. Hence these Brahminic religions steadily grew in medieval Karnataka and Andhradesa. This is an indication of the role of the Cālūkyas in the promotion of Brahminic culture. The immigration of Brahmins into coastal Karnataka and Kerala was augmented by the Cālūkyā monarchs.

The Brahmin migration was a cultural wave that resulted in the swift diffusion of *Āgamic* culture in Kerala¹⁶. The spread of Sanskrit language, proliferation of structural temples and the popularisation of Brahminic culture resulted in the rise and growth of temples as the foci of the socio-cultural and economic life. Along with this, a new social system based on Brahmanic norms also came into existence in Kerala in which caste norms pervaded the entire social life and Brahmin supremacy firmly got established and an advanced material culture with better agricultural techniques and better organizing ability swept the land under the influence of Brahmin settlers¹⁷. All these social and economic factors placed Brahmins on a predominant position in Kerala. Another result of Brahmin immigration was the introduction of Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religions. Both these religions were prominent Brahminic ideologies. The Brahmin exodus accelerated the pace for the dispersal of the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religions.

The Brahmin immigrants in Kerala settled in thirty two settlements known as *grāmas*. These settlements sprang up with structural temples known as *grāmaksīētras* at the nuclei¹⁸. This kind of *grāma* organisation is a unique system that existed only in Kerala and Tulūnātū. Many Viṣṇū temples came into existence as *grāmaksīētras*. A survey of the original settlements reveals that out of the thirty two original settlements in Kerala, nine had Viṣṇū temples as *grāmaksīētras*. The nine settlements that flourished around Vaiṣṇava centres were Ālathur, Kārantōlīa, Panniyūr, Irinjālakkuṭā, Mūlīkkalām, Āranmulīa, Tiruvalla, Nīrmanīa and Venmanī. It is plausible that the Vaiṣṇavites had majority in these nine centres. Majority of *grāmaksīētras* were dedicated to Śiva which indicates that Śaivism was more popular among the immigrant Brahmin community.

A similar situation existed in Tulūnātū where Śaivism was the dominant religion in the immigrant Brahmin community¹⁹. However no

settlement was exclusively monopolised by any particular sect. The Brahmin settlements were inhabited by different categories of Brahmins irrespective of their sectarian affiliation. Religious conflicts arising out of Śaiva-Vaiṣṇava differences were completely absent among the Brahmin settlers. What was the reason for the absence of religious differences among Nambūdiri Brahmins in *grāmas*? The topography of Kerala was typical as there was dense forest with wild animals and serpents. *Kēralōlpatti* contains several references to such a difficult topography of Kerala. It is stated in *Kēralōlpatti* that the first batch of Brahmin settlers fled back to their homeland as they were afraid of serpents. After that the second batch of Brahmins came down and settled and this makes clear that the difficult topography forced Brahmins to settle together without expressing religious diversities. In this context it is notable that the Brahmins in Kerala worship serpents and all the Brahmin families have *kāvus* in the premises of their houses. Similar to this, the Brahmins of Tūḷu country also worship serpents.

Rise of the Cēras and Growth of Vaiṣṇavism

The Vaiṣṇava saints known as *Ālīvārs* spearheaded an emotional Visṇu *bhakti* cult in South India in the four centuries from the seventh century onwards at a time when the political scene in the south emerged with greater clarity in the wake of the emergence of post- *Sangam* monarchies of the Pallavas, the Cōlīas, the Pāṇḍīyas and the Cēras²⁰. During *Sangam* age these chieftains, except the Pallavas, existed in different parts of Tamilākam and they were disintegrated with the dawn of the fifth century in the havoc produced by the Kalabhra rampage²¹. The Cōlīas, the Cēras and the Pāṇḍīyas were revived from the political turmoil in seventh- eighth centuries. The Pallavas rose to prominence as a political power in Tondai region in Tamilākam. The emergence of these political powers were closely

associated with the Brahmins as the Brahmin leaders in Tamilġakam were instrumental in the revival of these monarchies to terminate the political impasse that existed in south India in the absence of powerful monarchies²². Also Brahmins were eager to install favourable monarchies to ensure protection.

The history of the advent of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram remains obscure due to lack of direct evidence. It is apparent from the Vālġappalġġi inscription and the recently discovered Kurumathūr inscription that Rāma Rājasēkhara, the first known Cēra monarch of Mahōdayapuram, was occupying the Cēra throne in the first half of the ninth century²³. M.G.S Narayanan suggests that in the eighth century Kongunātġu, the original seat of the Cēras of *Sangam* age, was annexed by the Pānġdġyas and the Kongu Cēras were forced to move to the western sea coast in pursuit of carving out an independent kingdom²⁴. Mahōdayapuram, being a port city, was the natural choice and this gave birth to the Cēra kingdom of Mahōdayapuram.

How far was the establishment of the Cēra kingdom of Mahōdayapuram associated with the Brahmin settlements and Brahminic ideologies? Did the political fortunes of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram get influenced by the Brahminic ideology? The Cēra kingdom of Mahōdayapuram was a byproduct of the foundation and growth of Brahmin settlements as what happened in other parts of South India. The Brahmins became the most formidable potentates in Kerala by the time the Cēras moved to Mahōdayapuram²⁵. As in other parts of contemporary South India, the Brahmin settlers of Kerala also felt the necessity of protection. Hence they provided support to the Cēra princes in their bid to establish a new kingdom and this firmly established a strong nexus between the Brahmins and the Cēra

rulers. The Cēra kingdom of Mahōdayapuram was the offshoot of this alliance. The Cēra records reveal that the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram upheld Brahminic culture, pursued Brahminic injunctions and regulations as enshrined in *Śāstraic* scriptures and patronised temples²⁶. The Cēra council of ministry known as *Nālu Talīi* was constituted by Brahmins²⁷. *Nālu Talīi* was represented by four Brahmin settlements - Parīavūr, Mūlīikkalām, Airānīikkulām and Irinjālakkutā. M.G.S.Naryanan's suggestion that the Cēra monarch was only a ritual sovereign and the strong and well organised Brahmin community propped up this ritual sovereign assumes significance in this context as it indicates the camaraderie between the Brahmins and the Cēra monarchs²⁸.

The mutual patronage between the Cēra kings and the Brahmin leaders paved the way for the promotion of *Itihāsic- Purānīic* traditions and religions like Vaisṇāvism and Śaivism. The Vaisṇāva-Śaiva religions were fundamentally Brahminic ideologies and hence royal patronage to these religions were akin to patronage to Brahmins. The Visṇū temples along with Śaiva centres received royal patronage by way of endowments which resulted in the growing popularity of the Brahminic religions. The Cēra rulers found in Śaivism and Vaisṇāvism a favourable and formidable ally. Why were the Vaisṇāva and Śaiva ideologies considered as pro-royal by the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram? It is revealed from the songs of the *Ālīvārs* and the *Nāyanārs* that Visṇū *bhakti* cult and the Śaiva *bhakti* movement emphasised the concept of voluntary submission of one's pride in the self and these Brahminic ideologies accorded special status to those who became 'the servant of the servants of god' or 'the *bhakta* of the *bhaktas*'²⁹. When this perception was applied in the realm of politics, it created obedient subjects and ensured obedience to royalty. The sense of obedience as contained in the Brahminic ideologies of Vaisṇāvism and Śaivism attracted the ruling Cēras

to the ambit of *bhakti* cult. The ideology of Visṅṅu *bhakti* raised the temple as a domain of Visṅṅu where the God presided as a sovereign. It indirectly helped kings in acquiring sovereignty in Tamil kingdoms³⁰.

The *bhakti* hymns enhanced the status of temples as exclusive realms of divinities with the emblem of sovereignty which indirectly provided legitimacy to the kings who promoted them. Rituals and festivals were occasions when the emblems of royalty got expressed in the domain of the deity. The result was that the deity and the king got equated with each other. The king who promoted the temple became the emblem of the deity, Visṅṅu or Śiva. Royal patronage advanced the fortunes of temples while temporal authorities acquired legitimacy and the Kṣātriya lineage. Due to these reasons the Cēra-Cōlīa-Pāṇḍīya monarchs actively partook in Visṅṅu- Śiva *bhakti* cults.

The Cēra rulers, during the reign of Rāma Rājasēkhara in the first half of the ninth century, patronised Śaiva devotional movement³¹. A shift in this stand happened in the middle of the ninth century when Sthāṅṅu Ravi Kulaśēkhara started patronising Vaisṅṅava devotionalism. He was wont to participate in the Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult and was a leading Visṅṅu *bhakta* of the stature of an Ālīvār saint³². The Cēras patronised the Brahminic ideology of Vaisṅṅavism to appease Brahmins and to ensure Brahminic support to the Cēra kingdom. This kind of reciprocal patronage made both the Cēra royalty and the Brahmin leaders interdependent on each other. Just like the Cēras, the Āy rulers who held sway over the southern extremity of Kerala patronised Vaisṅṅavism. The Āys existed in the *Sangam* age as a political force with capital at Potiyil Mala³³. Afterwards they shifted their capital to Vilīiñṅam near Tiruvananthapuram and became one of the feudatories of the Pāṇḍīyas. Later, the Āys accepted the political supremacy of the Cēras of Mahodayapuram³⁴. The distribution of three *divyadēsams* - Tiruvanparisāram,

Tiruvattār and Tiruvananthapuram - in a comparatively small geographical unit like the Āy kingdom indicates substantial royal patronage to Vaisṇavism in that kingdom. It has been widely held that the Āys were Yādavas who came to the south as part of a certain folk movement of people after the decline of Dwāraka³⁵. R.Champakalakshmi suggests that the Āys had Yādava origin and they are described as the descendants of the Yādavas who migrated from Dwāraka³⁶. It is significant that many Āy kings are described in inscriptions as descendants of Yādavas³⁷. Even today a community in South Kerala known as Kr̥ṣṇānvaḥakkār cherishes a tradition that sustains the belief of their migration from Dwāraka and their affiliation to the Yādavas³⁸. The caste name Kr̥ṣṇānvaḥakkār literally means belonging to Kr̥ṣṇā. In fact, it denotes the pastoral rudiments of the community.

Some of the Vēlīr chieftains of the *Sangam* age claimed descent from Kr̥ṣṇā. The Vēlīrs were in power in Vēṇṭāṭṭu from whom the name of the region originated³⁹. The Vēlīrs and the Āys were closely allied to each other and both Vēṇṭāṭṭu and the territory of the Āys were in the neighbourhood of each other. It is quite significant that the Tamil term *Āyar* stands for pastoral people and they were the inhabitants of *Marutam* region which consisted mainly of pastoral lands⁴⁰. Were the Āys the true descendants of migrant Yādavas? Was there any authenticity in their claim as members of Vr̥ṣṇīkula? The diffusion of *Śāstraic - Purāṇīc-Itihāsic* culture influenced South Indian culture and society in a considerable way and various *Sangam* works point to this⁴¹. It is plausible that many communities and chieftains in South India got identified with various groups of *Purāṇīc-Itihāsic* communities and dynasties. This happened under the impact of the dissemination of *Śāstraic-Purāṇīc-Itihāsic* culture. The South Indian kings and chieftains took pride in their new identity as it elevated them to the status of Kṣātriyas. They were given a legitimate descent from the solar or lunar

dynasties. Consequently, the *Āyars* were identified with *Yādavas* and the *Āy* rulers described themselves as descendants of *Yādavas* which inked them with *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥ā*⁴².

Royal patronage to temples was a stimulant in the popularisation of *Vaiṣṇ̥avism*. How did royal patronage contribute to the advancement of *Vaiṣṇ̥avism*? The *Cēra* and *Āy* royal patronage to *Vaiṣṇ̥avism* was mainly in the form of royal benefaction to *Viṣṇ̥u* temples. Many *Cēra-Āy* inscriptions demonstrate how liberal grants were made to *Viṣṇ̥u* temples by the *Cēra-Āy* rulers, the provincial governors and *bhaktas* for instituting rituals and ceremonies, for conducting routine services, for the celebration of festivals and to arrange ritual feeding in temples. Gifts of land were made for performing rituals, burning perpetual lamps, feeding Brahmins and performing various arts in temples. An inscription of c.861AD speaks about the celebration of *Ōṇ̥am* in the month of *Śr̥āvan̥ā* in *Tiruvār̥r̥uvāi* temple when *Sthān̥u Ravi* was the *Cēra* ruler⁴³. A *Cokkūr* inscription of king *Kōta Ravi* is about the institution of ritualistic ceremonies such as *nivēdyā*, *vil̥akku*, *śānti*, *ākkiram*, *at̥ai* and *bali* in the temple by *Kadampan Kumāran* of *Kārkottupurattu*⁴⁴. Similar to this a *Trikkākkara* inscription of king *Kerala Kesari* speaks about setting apart of landed properties for meeting the expenses of *tiruamr̥utu*, *pūtapali*, *ol̥ikkavi*, *śānti*, *tiruākkriam* etc in the temple⁴⁵.

A *Tiruvanvand̥ūr* inscription registers the gift of a plot to the temple by *Etiran Kaviyan* of *Kur̥attikkāt̥u* for instituting a perpetual lamp in the temple⁴⁶. A *Tirumūl̥ikkal̥am* inscription of king *Indu Kōta* of 948 AD reveals that provisions were strictly instituted for the conduct of rituals and services such as *tiruamr̥utu*, *nivēdyam*, *uttamākkiram* and *tiruvil̥akku* in the *Viṣṇ̥u* temple⁴⁷. A *Trikkākkara* inscription of 953 AD of *Indu Kōta* records a gift of land for *nandavil̥akku* and *tiruākkiram* and another record of 959 AD

speaks about the institution of *tiruākkiram* and *nandāvilākku* in the temple⁴⁸. A Trikkotiṭṭānam inscription of king Bhāskara Ravi records that *tiruamr̥utu* for 12 Brahmins on every *Amāvāsi* day and *nandāvilākku* on *Cithra Viṣṭu* day were instituted in Trikkotiṭṭānam temple⁴⁹. Similar to this, a Tirunelli record of 1021AD of king Bhāskara Ravi speaks about the institution of *tiruamr̥utu* and *nandāvilākku* in Tirunelli temple⁵⁰. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates speak about various offerings like *tiruamr̥utu* and *tiruvilākku* on special occasions like *Dwādaśi*, *Āvan̥i Ōn̥am* and *Vriscika* and *Kārttika* months, *tiruākkiram*, *nadāvilākku*, *nirāṭṭiṭṭupal̥li*, *pancasambadam* etc⁵¹.

Did the institution of rituals and offerings have any role in popularising Vaiṣṇavism? The royal initiative was tremendous in introducing and maintaining rituals and offerings in the Viṣṇu temples. Royal benefaction enriched and popularised Viṣṇu temples and inspired common *bhaktas* in giving endowments to temples. With the growth of temple-centred *bhakti*, offerings and rituals proliferated in Viṣṇu temples in Kerala as in other parts of South India⁵². Temples received royal patronage extensively. Kings, queens, ministers, officers and others vied with each other in making grants to temples for various purposes. The most common and the most popular offerings were offerings of lamp, flowers, gold endowments, expenses for bathing and ritual feeding of the deity, Brahmin feeding, institution of various services such as morning service, midday service, evening service and rituals on *dwādaśi* and *amāvāsi* days. These were the most popular temple offerings in the contemporary South Indian kingdoms⁵³.

The enchanted nature of temples caused large scale flow of endowments for rituals and offerings and the flow of wealth resulted in the stockpiling of wealth in temples. As a result, the wealth of temples grew substantially and the temple became the custodian of substantial resources of land. Hence

temples grew into prosperous institutions. A striking aspect of royal patronage is that the scope of the functions of Visṅṅu temples widened and enlarged. Visṅṅu temples were in the forefront of academic activities as temple-centred academic institutions known as *śālais* sprang up in their precincts. The *śālais* came into existence and prospered under royal patronage. The Huzur plates of Āy king Ko Karunandadīakkan is about the establishment of a new *salai* in the precincts of the newly built Visṅṅu temple at Pārthivapuram⁵⁴. Various inscriptions make clear that the Visṅṅu temples at Mūlīkkalām and Tiruvalla had *śālais*⁵⁵. The temple academies played a vital role in the dissemination of *Śāstraic-Purāṅic-Itihāsic* culture in Kerala and it strengthened Brahminic ideology. The propagation and popularisation of *Śāstraic - Purāṅic-Itihāsic* tradition contributed to the growth of Vaisṅṅavism which was a *Purāṅic-Itihāsic* ideology.

Royal patronage to Vaisṅṅavism is again evident from the active participation of Sthāṅu Ravi Kulaśēkhara in the *bhakti* movement⁵⁶. The Brahminic ideology of temple centred Vaisṅṅavism reciprocated the Cēra royal patronage by legitimising the authority of the king. The Cēras were identified as descendants of *Sūryavamśa* (solar dynasty) and became Kṣātriyas. Before espousing the cause of Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult, Śaivism was patronised with an intention to befriend Brahmins to derive political and social mileage. Rāma Rājaśēkhara, the founder of the Cēra dynasty, was a Nāyanār saint⁵⁷. The reign of the successor of this king, Sthāṅu Ravi Kulaśēkhara, marked an alteration in the religious policy and the king started promoting Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult. Apart from religious pursuits, political pragmatism and the quest for legitimacy were equally responsible for the active royal patronage to Visṅṅu *bhakti* movement. Hence Vaisṅṅavism registered considerable progress in its growth as a Brahminic religion.

Spread of the Vaisṇava Devotional Movement in Kerala

The Vaisṇava devotional movement spearheaded by Ālīvār saints swept Kerala in ninth century AD. The spread of the devotional movement was a catalyst in the development of Vaisṇavism in Kerala. The South Indian Visṇu *bhakti* cult appeared first in the Pallava kingdom in the seventh century AD in Tondaimandalam which lay in the north-eastern extremity of Tamilṅakam⁵⁸. From the Pallava kingdom which was exposed to North Indian influences, the *bhakti* cult spread to the Cōlīa and the Pāṇḍīya kingdoms. It was from the Pāṇḍīya kingdom that the wave of Visṇu *bhakti* poured into the Cēra kingdom. How is it possible to say that the Visṇu *bhakti* cult spread to Kerala only in ninth century? Is there any evidence to prove that the Visṇu *bhakti* cult spread to Kerala in ninth century? The early Ālīvārs -Pey Ālīvār, Bhutattalīvār, Poigai Ālīvār and Tirumalisai Ālīvār – who lived in the seventh century were silent on Kerala shrines while only those Ālīvārs who lived in the ninth century composed songs on the Kerala *divyadēsams*⁵⁹. This indicates that the Vaisṇava devotional movement spread to Kerala only in the ninth century.

The Ālīvārs were ardent votaries of Visṇu *bhakti* who preached Vaisṇavism with emotional frenzy and went on pilgrimage to Vaisṇava centres, singing and dancing with bands of devotees⁶⁰. The Ālīvārs visited the sacred spots known as *divyadēsams* or *tirupatis* scattered in various kingdoms of Tamilṅakam and eulogised the shrines as abodes of Visṇu on earth. The Ālīvār movement was fundamentally a temple oriented movement and the pilgrimage tradition was an important trait of their *bhakti* cult. As a result of this, *divyadēsams* became the nuclei of Vaisṇava devotional cult which resulted in the promotion of emotional temple cult and wide spread temple worship. Apart from this, the Vaisṇava religion underwent rapid

transformation as and when emotional devotion centred on the sacred geography of selected Visṅṅu temples replaced the earlier form of Vaisṅṅavism which was confined to a localised and personal worship of Visṅṅu. Now an emotionally surcharged Vaisṅṅavism which originated from and centred on temples came into existence. The Ālṅṅvārs celebrated a total number of 108 shrines as *divyadēsams* out of which 22 belonged to Tonḍḍaimanḍḍalam, 2 to Natṅṅnātṅṅu, 40 to the Cōlḷa country, 18 to the Pānḍḍyan Kingdom and 13 to Malainātṅṅu or the Cēra kingdom. Two shrines were considered as celestial abodes. The remaining shrines were in Vatḷanātṅṅu or the northern country⁶¹.

There were twelve Ālṅṅvārs and they were - Poigai Ālṅṅvār, Bhutattālṅṅvār, Pey Ālṅṅvār, Tirumalisai Ālṅṅvār, Tiruppanālṅṅvār, Tondaradippodi Ālṅṅvār, Tirumankai Ālṅṅvār, Kulaśēkhara Ālṅṅvār, Periyālṅṅvār, Āntḷāl, Nammālṅṅvār and Madhura Kavi Ālṅṅvār⁶². The first three Ālṅṅvārs in this list are regarded as the pioneer votaries of Visṅṅu *bhakti* (*Mutal Ālṅṅvārs*) in South India who lived in the Pallava kingdom in the seventh century⁶³. Tirumalisai Ālṅṅvār, a contemporary of the Pallava king Mahendra Varma, also lived in the seventh century⁶⁴. All other Ālṅṅvār saints followed these predecessor *bhaktas* and they lived in subsequent centuries as contemporaries or near contemporaries. Among them, Tirumankai, Kulaśēkhara and Nammālṅṅvār sang on Kerala temples⁶⁵. They celebrated thirteen temples in Kerala as *divyadēsams*. The temples glorified were Tiruvanparisāram, Tiruvatḷḷār, Tiruvananthapuram, Tiruvalla, Tiruppuliyūr, Tirucirḷḷār, Tiruārḷanmulḷa, Tiruvanvanḍḍūr, Trikkotiḷḷānam, Trikkākkara, Tirumūḷḷikkalḷam, Tirumirḷḷakkotḷḷu and Tirunāva⁶⁶.

Although the three Ālṅṅvārs associated with Kerala temples were near contemporaries, Tirumankai Ālṅṅvār lived in an earlier period. The traditional hagiology attributes an impossible date for him⁶⁷. The traditional hagiology

again describes him as a petty Kalīṅgar chief of the Cōḷa country. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri places him in the middle of the eighth century⁶⁸. Tirumankai sang on four *divyadēśams* in Kerala ie, Tiruppuliyūr, Tiruvalla, Tirumūḷḷikkalāṁ and Tirunāva in *Periya Tirumolīṅi*, *Ciriyatirumatāḷal* and *Periyatirumatāḷal*⁶⁹.

Kulaśēkhara Āḷḷvār was closely associated with the history of Vaisṇāvism in Kerala. Until recently, no unanimity among scholars existed regarding the period and identity of Kulaśēkhara Āḷḷvār. T.A. Gopinatha Rao, K.G. Sesa Iyyer and A.S. Ramanatha Aiyar assign him to the early ninth century and R.G. Bhandarakar places him in the first half of the twelfth century⁷⁰. L.D. Swamikannu Pillai argues on the basis of astronomical details that Kulaśēkhara lived between AD 767 and AD 834 and Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai holds that Kulaśēkhara ruled in between 800AD and 820AD⁷¹. More importantly Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai argues that Kulaśēkhara was the first ruler of the Cēra dynasty of Mahōdayapuram. M.G.S. Narayanan fixes the period of Kulaśēkhara in between 844AD and c.883AD and he identifies this royal saint with Sthāṅṅu Ravi Kulaśēkhara, the second known monarch of the Cēra dynasty of Mahōdayapuram⁷². He fixes the identity and age of Kulaśēkhara Āḷḷvār on the basis of the references to the king in various Cēra inscriptions and literary data such as *bhakti* songs, *Yamaka* poems and secular works like *Śankaranārāyanīyam*.

Not much is known from either epigraphic or literary works with certainty about Kulaśēkhara's personal life or his religious activities. What is given in *Perumālī Tirumolīṅi* and in the traditional hagiology is of little historical value. The traditional account holds that Kulaśēkhara Āḷḷvār was a monarch of the Cēra dynasty and was the lord of Kūtāḷ, Kūḷḷi, Kongu and Kollī⁷³. The royal saint is also described as born at Tiruvancikkulāṁ, another name for Mahōdayapuram. What is displayed from these accounts is that

Kulaśēkhara had unquestionable sway over entire Tamilñakam. It is inappropriate to take this account in its literal sense as it was a tendency of the Tamil kings – the Cōlñas, the Pāñdñyas and the Cēras- to claim supremacy over the other two whenever the chance occurred⁷⁴. Therefore the claims about Kulaśēkhara were also part of the customary practice that was prevalent in South Indian kingdoms to assert authority over their counterparts in Tamilñakam. Moreover, the titles and claims of self-glorification as appeared in the last portion of *Perumālñ Tirumolññi* is an added section which was appended in a later period by *bhaktas* to glorify the royal saint⁷⁵. It is highly fanciful to think that the Cēra king Sthāññu Ravi Kulaśēkhara alias Kulaśēkhara Ālññvār ever extended the frontiers of the Cēra kingdom permanently to the hinterlands of the Cōlñā and the Pāñdñya kingdoms. Never in the history of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram, had a single monarch established his sway in the Cōlñā - Pāñdñya territories⁷⁶.

Kulaśēkhara Ālññvār composed two Visñññu *bhakti* works- *Perumālñ Tirumolññi* in Tamil and *Mukundamāla* in Sanskrit⁷⁷. *Perumālñ Tirumolññi* is included in *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*. Two Sanskrit dramas– *Tapatisamvaranñā* and *Subhadradhananjaya*- and a *Campūkāvya* called *Āścaryamanjari* are the other literary compositions of the royal saint. These non- *bhakti* secular works intermittently glorify Visñññu *bhakti*. Though Kulaśēkhara was a Cēra monarch who fairly ruled for a long span of about forty years, the royal saint sang only on the *divyadēsam* shrine at Tirumirññakkotññu in the Cēra kingdom⁷⁸. Why did the royal saint avoid twelve *divyadēsams* in the Cēra-Āy countries from the subject of eulogy? What might be the reason for the king to remain silent on majority of the *divyadēsams* and even on those shrines at Tirumūlññikkalññam and Trikkākkara which located in proximity to the Cēra capital? It may be argued that these shrines developed only in a later period after Kulaśēkhara’s reign. However as

stated earlier, Tirumankai Ālīvār had glorified Tirumūlīkkalām temple in his *pāsurams* along with Tiruvalla and Tirunāva. Tirumankai was a predecessor or a near contemporary of Kulaśekhara. It is probable in this context that Kulaśekhara spared twelve *divyadēsams* of Kerala from being celebrated for unknown reasons and selected only one temple from among Kerala temples. The king, on the other hand, went on eulogising Tiruvēkatām (Tirupati Tirumala) and Tiruarangam (Śrīrangam) which were the two most renowned centres of South Indian Vaisṇavism. In this context a reference in the traditional hagiology that linked the royal saint with Śrīrangam temple appears to be relevant as it indicates the special concern of the saint king for Śrīrangam temple. It is stated in the hagiology that the king sent his daughter to Śrīrangam as a *devadasi*⁷⁹.

It is not apt to say that the king was unconcerned about Kerala temples and was only interested in eulogising and promoting temples in other parts of South India. The royal saint was not indifferent to the Visṇū temples in Kerala. The king had a special liking for Vāmana and the king introduced *Ōṇam*, the birthday festival of Vāmana, in Kerala temples⁸⁰. The Trikkakara Visṇū temple was the main centre of *Ōṇam* celebration in Kerala where Visṇū is conceived as Vāmana. The saint king creates an occasion in *Tapatisamvaranā* to praise Vāmana and a shrine of Vāmana⁸¹. It is plausible that Trikkākkara temple is the subject matter of the praise of the royal playwright. This indicates the consideration of the king for Vāmana and Trikkākkara temple. He is also associated with the foundation of Tirukkulaśekharpuram Visṇū temple which is situated in the vicinity of Mahodayapuram⁸². The name of the temple signifies that it derived its name from the king. An inscription which could be assigned on the palaeographic basis to the second half of the eleventh century was discovered from the temple which speaks of the 195th year of its foundation⁸³. Often the temple

year denotes the foundation of temples and in this context when 195 years get deducted from the second half of the eleventh century, the period of the foundation of Tirukkulaśēkharapuram temple can easily be fixed in ninth century in Sthān̄u Ravi's reign.

Kulaśēkhara Āl̄vār's *bhakti* compositions got wider popularity through out South India. An epigraph of 1188AD in Śrīrangam temple speaks about the ritual singing of *ter̄r̄arumtiral* portion in *Perumāl̄i Tirumol̄i* in the temple⁸⁴. What is revealed from this record is that the composition of the royal saint was assigned a special ritual status in Śrīrangam temple. Śrīrangam was the focal point of the *bhakti* cult of Vais̄navism in South India during hey days of the *bhakti* cult. Similar to this, the preface of an inscription in Pagan in Burma contains quotations from *Mukundamāla*⁸⁵. This is a Tamil inscription about the construction of Nānādēsi Vin̄agar Āl̄vār temple with a *man̄d̄apa*. An endowment for a permanent lamp in the newly built *man̄d̄apa* in this temple was instituted by Riyiran Cirian alias Kulaśēkhara Nambi of Mākōtaiyarpatt̄in̄am in Malaiman̄d̄alam. These two inscriptions point out that the literary compositions of the royal saint were popular among the Vais̄navas of South India. Further, the royal saint was apotheosized and worshipped. A temple was built for Kulaśēkhara Āl̄vār by Vais̄navaites at Mannārkōyil near Tirunelveli and they composed a *vandanaślōka* in praise of him which became widely popular in South India⁸⁶

The period of Sthān̄u Ravi Kulaśēkhara was notable for Vais̄navism in the Cēra country. Vis̄n̄u temples prospered during this period as the focal points of Vais̄n̄ava *bhakti* cult. With these developments, Vais̄navism registered steady growth in Kerala and superceded Śaivism in popularity. Rāma Rājasēkhara, the first Cēra ruler, was a Śaiva luminary who was known as Cēramān Perumāl̄i Nāyanār. During the early decades of ninth century

when this royal saint ruled the Cēra kingdom, several Śaiva centres such as Kollam, Kanṭṭiyūr, Tiruvancikkulāṃ and Vālṭṭappalṭṭi had sprung up⁸⁷. It is again significant that two more Śaiva saints, Vēṭṭāṭṭṭadikal and Virṭṭalminṭṭā Nāyanār lived in Kerala in this age and they composed songs on Śiva *bhakti*⁸⁸. All these reveal that the age that preceded Sthāṅṅu Ravi was a period when Śaiva religion was dominantly prevalent. Sthāṅṅu Ravi's reign marks a shift in this condition and Vaisṅṅavism began to grow as a prominent religion in his time. No more Śaiva centres emerged afresh and Śaiva themes did not receive wide popularity as thematic substance in arts and literature.

What was the nature of the ideology of Kulaśēkhara Āṭṭvār's *bhakti*? The *bhakti* works of the king give an account of his ideology of *bhakti*. The king like other Āṭṭvārs emphasised the concept of surrender of the self before the deity, the *bhaktas* of Viṣṅṅu or true devotees⁸⁹. The tenets of surrender appeared to have political and economic implications as surrender to god created a sense of discipline and obedience among the subjects towards the royalty. In this context it is significant that Sthāṅṅu Ravi Kulaśēkhara was a political aspirant who along with ĀdityaCōṭṭā, the Cōṭṭā king, conferred military honours to Vikki Anṅṅan⁹⁰. The dramas of the royal saint make clear that the king assumed various titles such as 'Keralakulacūdamanṅṅi', 'Keralādhinātha' and 'Mahōdayapuraparamēswara'⁹¹. These claims express the political ambitions of the king. The Tarisappalli Copper Plates reveal that the king was a donor of privileges to the traders of Kollam⁹². This makes clear that the king was instrumental in the economic growth of the kingdom. This royal endeavour was significant as with this venture that Kollam was made a major trade centre with a new settlement of the Syrian Christian merchants. The doctrine of emotional *bhakti* finds greater place in the works of Kulaśēkhara Āṭṭvār as he glorifies emotional *bhakti* to the deities of

Tiruvēkatāṁ, Śrīrangam and Tirumirīrakkotū as well as to various incarnations of Viṣṇū like Rāma and Kṛṣṇa⁹³. The king's espousal of the ideology of emotional *bhakti* broadened the popular base of Vaiṣṇavism in the Cēra country and this must have created an image of a royal saint for the king. This advanced further his political stature.

Nammālīvār or Śathakōpa sings on the large number of Viṣṇū temples of Kerala. He is a later Ālīvār saint who hailed from Ālīvārtirunagari in the Pāṇḍīyan kingdom and the *Guruparampara* tradition points to the 43rd day of *Kali* as the date of birth of Nammālīvār⁹⁴. T.A.Gopinatha Rao places him in the first half of the ninth century and K.A.Nilakanta Sastri holds that Nammālīvār and Mathurakavi were the last Ālīvār saints⁹⁵. F.Hardy assigns him to an early age⁹⁶. Since Nammālīvār hailed from the Southern portion of the Pāṇḍīyan kingdom and as the *bhakti* cult of Ālīvārs is viewed as spread to the Pāṇḍīyan kingdom in a later age, it is possible to place Nammālīvār in the ninth century. Nammālīvār glorified twelve shrines in Kerala in *Tiruvāimolī* other than Tirumirīrakkotū⁹⁷.

Apart from *Tiruvāimolī*, Nammālīvār wrote *Tiruviruttam*, *Tiruvācīriyam* and *Periyatiruvantadi*. The Ālīvār also sang about the popularity of sacrificial culture in Cēra temples and about the recital of *Vedic* hymns by Brahmins in temple precincts⁹⁸. These references of the Ālīvār reveal that the Vaiṣṇava centres in Kerala prospered as the citadels of *Vedic/Purāṇic* culture. From the songs of the Ālīvārs, it is certain that the Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult swept Kerala in the ninth century and a large number of temples were identified by the Viṣṇū *bhaktas* as the nerve centres of *bhakti* cult. Pilgrimage of the Ālīvārs to these sacred centres diffused emotional *bhakti* in the countryside and it resulted in the promotion of temple worship.

Impact of the Vaiṣṇava Devotional Movement

Did the temple centred *bhakti* movement produce any sweeping results in Kerala? Was Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult instrumental in affecting the social and cultural life of Kerala or was it comparatively a weak movement? A striking feature of the Viṣṇu *bhakti* movement was that it was a temple cult and the spread of the temple-centred *bhakti* movement was responsible for the proliferation of new Viṣṇu temples⁹⁹. Being the abodes of Viṣṇu, temples became unavoidable institutions to preach and practise *bhakti*. The *divyadēśams* and temples like Pārthivapuram, Nārāyaṇapuram, Tirunelli, and Tirukkulaśēkharapuram were some of those temples which emerged under the impact of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult. Again the spread of *bhakti* paved the way for the growth and prosperity of the already existing temples in the Cēra country. Many of the Vaiṣṇava centres that originated with the immigration of Brahmins developed into the focal points of Vaiṣṇava devotional cult. With the growth of temple centred *bhakti*, the ideology of *bhakti* was transformed from simple devotion to a temple-centred emotional cult. This was not an isolated phenomenon and this happened in other parts of South India too where the ideology of *bhakti* picked up popularity.

In South India, the doctrine of *bhakti* provided an enamoured world to temples when the temple cult was projected and Viṣṇu temples became veritably the abodes of Viṣṇu in the emotional aura cast around them¹⁰⁰. This, in turn, popularised Viṣṇu *bhakti*. More over Viṣṇu temples, as *bhūloka Vaikunṭā* (Viṣṇu's holy abodes on earth), prompted a new genre of sacred literature promoting the cause of the deity as well as temples in South India. This kind of sacred literature was also produced in Kerala during the heydays of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult¹⁰¹. No wonder temples accrued further glory and charm by the new literature. This kind of literature aimed mainly to

bring more devotees to the temples.

The *bhakti* of Ālīvārs was not an isolated phenomenon as it connected one temple with another through the institution of pilgrimage¹⁰². Pilgrimage to temples originated from the doctrines of personal god and temple worship. Pilgrimage functioned as a powerful instrument in facilitating the spread of *bhakti* cult. The pilgrimage tradition resulted in the advent of a network of pilgrim circuits connecting different pilgrim spots in Kerala. The ideology of *bhakti* and the institution of mass pilgrimage enabled *divyadēśams* to prosper as focal points of Viṣṇu *bhakti* and the institution of mass pilgrimage of Ālīvārs with the bands of devotees to the celebrated Viṣṇu shrines, dancing and singing, led to the generation of an enthusiasm in favour of Vaiṣṇavism in the countryside in the Cēra kingdom. Pilgrimage added to the expansion and extension of the cultural geography of Vaiṣṇavism.

The projection of temples and temple cult was accompanied by the proliferation of different and variegated rituals in Viṣṇu temples in South India¹⁰³. The temple inscriptions testify to the commencement and institutionalization of various rituals and services in Viṣṇu temples. The usual services such as *nivēdyam*, *vilākku*, *sānti*, *ākkiram*, *atīai* and *bali* are commonly found in Cēra inscriptions. Royal dignitaries and *bhaktas* instituted rituals in temples and endowments were made in relation to the institution of rituals and offerings. It is evident from the Tiruvalla Copper Plates that endowments were made by various royal luminaries in different periods for *tiruākkiram*, *tiruamrītu*, *tiruvilākku* and *nandāvilākku* in the temple¹⁰⁴. The proliferation and expansion of rituals and offerings resulted in the further enhancement of the attraction of temples and this paved the way for the promotion of temple cult too.

Another notable impact of the growth of temple-centred *bhakti* was the origin of temple festivals. How did the rise of temple cult relate to the development of temple festivals? Was the emotional *bhakti* of Ālīvārs a catalyst in the rise of temple festivals? It appears that festivals were promoted by the emotional stir created by the Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult in South India¹⁰⁵. The ideology of *bhakti* which extolled the glories of temple cult created and projected an exalted image around the deity in sanctum sanctorum. Festivals place the temple as the focal point of activity and have key role in linking the temple with the society. Public feast was held in temples on festive occasions and temple records make clear that large scale endowments were given towards the expenses of festivals¹⁰⁶. Festivals provided an opportunity to the devotees to assemble in the temple and to take part in the public feast. This had economic impact also. A portion of the wealth which flowed to the temple by way of endowments to meet the expenses of festivals had to be redistributed to temple servants and dependants. This strengthened the mutual link between the temple and the society¹⁰⁷. Apart from this, festivals played a vital role in popularising Brahminism and Vaiṣṇava themes in the society. Ōṅam in Śrāvanā month was a festival celebrated in temples as the birth asterism of Vāmana and *Uttamākkiram* and *Cāturmāsyā* were celebrated as sacred temple festivals¹⁰⁸.

The Tiruvārīuvāi inscription of Sthānu Ravi Kulaśēkhara reveals that Ōṅam was introduced in Kerala during the period of this royal saint¹⁰⁹. This inscription contains several stipulations regarding the celebration of Ōṅam which suggests that the festival was newly introduced somewhere in that age. It is evident from the references to Ōṅam in *Madurai Kānci* that the festival was widely celebrated in South Indian temples even in the *Sangam* age. The songs of Perīālīvār also refer to the celebration of Ōṅam festival in

the Visṅṅu temples of South India and Tiruvēnkatāṁ was a prominent centre of Ōṅṅam celebration¹¹⁰. Apart from Tiruvārṅṅuvāi inscription, the Tiruvalla Copper Plates and a Trikkākkarai inscription also speak about the celebration of Ōṅṅam festival in the Visṅṅu temples at Tiruvalla and Trikkākkara¹¹¹.

The temple-centred *bhakti* cult gave rise to the emergence of dancers, singers and instrumental musicians in temples of Kerala during the Cēra age¹¹². Apart from promoting Visṅṅu *bhakti*, the expansion of the functions of temples and the proliferation of rituals gave rise to the emergence of *devadasis* or temple handmaids, vocalists and instrumental musicians in temples. As in other parts of South India, emotional Visṅṅu *bhakti* got diffused through dance, songs, beauty and multifarious rituals. The *devadasis* occupied an important place as divine handmaids of the deity and they were treated with honour and respect. The importance attached to *devadasis* is evident from the tradition that Kulaśēkhara Āṅṅvār dedicated his daughter to Śrīrangam temple as a *devadasi*¹¹³. She was known as *Cērakula Nācciyār*. The *devadasis* through the medium of dance enhanced the appeal of temples. The Cēra inscriptions refer to *devadasis* as *tēvatṅṅicci* and *nangicci*. The earliest known reference to temple dancers in Kerala is found in the Cokkūr inscription of the fifteenth regnal year of Kōta Ravi¹¹⁴. It is apparent from the inscriptions of Tiruvalla temple that *devadasis* were employed in this Visṅṅu temple in the Cēra age and they received rice during Ōṅṅam celebration¹¹⁵.

The proliferation of rituals, the projection of temple-cult and the flow of emotional *bhakti* necessitated the service of drummers and musicians in temples during rituals and festivals. The terms *kotṅṅi* and *uvaccan* were used to denote them in the Cēra inscriptions and they had specific duties during ritual services¹¹⁶. They sounded drum and conch during daily rituals. Five

categories of instrumental musicians known as *pancasabadam* were appointed in the Viṣṇu temples in the Cēra age¹¹⁷. Five categories of instrumental music are still sounded in temples during festivals and rituals. This is known as *pancavādyam* which means ‘five categories of instrumental music’. What is apparent from these references is that different kinds of instrumental musicians were employed in temples as their services were needed during rituals. The emergence of drummers, singers and musicians induced the emergence of a separate section of temple-centred communities known as *Ambalavāsis*. The term, *Ambalavāsi* denotes ‘the one who resides in temples’ which points to the temple centred nature of these communities. The *Ambalavāsis* have been engaged in various hereditary jobs in temples such as garland making, flower plucking, cleaning and sweeping¹¹⁸.

The development of temple theatre in medieval Kerala was another consequence of the propagation of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult. The male actors known as *Cākkai* or *Cākyār*, who performed *Kūttu* and *Kūṭṭiyāṭṭam*, were employed in the temples of the Cēra country. A Trikkotiṭṭānam record of Śrī Vallabhan Kōta refers to the institution of *Kūttu* every day for ten days in the temple during *Uttiravilā* festival¹¹⁹. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates refer to the payment to actors who performed *Kālṭiyankamkūttu* on Rōhinī day in the temple¹²⁰. The *Cākyārs* performed monoacting, story-telling and play-acting and these artistic endeavours led to the development of temple theatre in the Cēra temples¹²¹. Temple arts developed in Tamil kingdoms at a time when Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult grew into a popular movement. Role of temples in the performance of arts and theatre originated and developed under the monarchies of the Pallvas, the Cōḷās and the Pāṇḍiyas¹²². It happened during the heydays of *bhakti* cult. An underlying objective of temple arts was to diffuse *bhakti* through the stories in *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇās*. Temple arts acted

as a means to propagate *bhakti* as arts provided color and glamour to temples and raised the status of the social acceptance of *bhakti*. The plays of Kulaśekhara Ālīvār - *Tapatisamvaranā* and *Subhadradhananjaya*- and *Āścaryacūdāmanī*, the drama on *Rāmāyanā* by Śaktibhadra, formed the chief repertory for the performance of Cākyārs¹²³. With the development of temple theatre, temples prospered as prominent centres of the diffusion of *bhakti*. Temple arts attracted devotees in large numbers to temple precincts and *Purānīc*-*Āgamic* lore was imparted to them which resulted in the further popularization of Vaiṣṇāvism.

A popular tradition which is prevalent among the Cākyārs of Kerala reveals that Sthānū Ravi Kulaśekhara revived the temple theatre¹²⁴. This tradition points to the revival of temple theatre in Kerala in the regnal years of Sthānū Ravi. This legendary tale appeared to have historical connotation as temple artists mainly took up stories from the dramas of the royal playwright which points to the role of the king in reviving temple theatre in Kerala. It is plausible that temple theatre was developed to popularise the Vaiṣṇāva religion in the Cēra country by the royal saint. The wave of emotional Visṇū *bhakti* with the accompaniment of a fervent and soul stirring fascination for the deities in temples produced a situation which was favourable for the origin and development of temple arts in South India. The art of sculpture was another medium for the expression of emotional *bhakti* as Vaiṣṇāva cult themes got reproduced in sculptures in large numbers in medieval South Indian temples¹²⁵. The Cēra temples were no exception and sculptures in Cēra temples were produced to disseminate *bhakti*. Temple arts also diffused *Purānīc* knowledge in the society. Besides, sculptural panels added to the charm of the temple. This resulted in the further socialisation of Brahminic ideology in the society.

Another impact of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult was the rise of temple-centred academies. Mainly the Viṣṇu temples of Kerala took up the responsibility to promote and to patronize learning. The temple-centred academies known as *śālais* came into existence in the precincts of the temples of the Cēra age¹²⁶. It is apparent from various temple inscriptions that the *śālais* of Pārthivapuram, Tiruvalla and Mūlīkkalām were some of the prominent temple-centred academies that sprang up around the Viṣṇu temples in Kerala¹²⁷. The *śālais* at Kantālūr and Nedumpuram Talī were other prominent temple academies that came into existence in the early medieval Kerala temples¹²⁸. These two academies were associated with Śiva temples. The *śālais* had a key role in the socialisation of Brahminic culture and *Purāṇic* values in the society. The society was more familiarised with Brahminic knowledge through the academic ventures of temples. Such temple academies proliferated in other parts of South India too. Many temple academies known as *Ghatikas* sprang up in Pallava, Cōlīa and Pāṇḍīya kingdoms¹²⁹.

The popularisation of *Āgamic* culture and *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* knowledge was another result of the spread of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult in Kerala. Specially trained men known as *Māpāratampatīars* (*Mahābhārata Bhatīas*) who expounded on the *Purāṇas* and *Itihāsas* were employed in temples. A Trikkotiṭṭānam inscription mentions the name *Māpāratampatīar*¹³⁰. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates referred to *Patīarkalī* (*Bhatīas*) who conducted discourses in the temple¹³¹. *Patīarkalī* were learned men who conducted *vākkāṇikka* or *vyākhyāna* (Discourses) in temples. How did these institutions of erudition facilitate the growth of Vaisṇavism? The Vaisṇava stories in epics and *Purāṇas* got popularised through story-telling which resulted in the popularisation of Viṣṇu *bhakti* in the countryside. The society was

familiarised with the stories of *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata* through the discourses and lectures in temple compounds.

The institution of mass pilgrimage, the ideology of *bhakti* and the institution of temple together functioned as a cementing force in the society that brought together different sections in the society. It achieved harmony between kings, Brahmins, the temple servants and laymen. The doctrine of egalitarianism as envisaged in the ideology of *bhakti* made this unity possible. The songs of *Ālīvārs* reveal that the *bhaktas* never discriminated devotees on the basis of birth, sex and occupation. It preached the right of every devotee to become either a *bhakta* or the *bhakta* of the *bhaktas*. This is a unique feature of the *bhakti* cult of the *Ālīvārs* which had an intrinsic element of dissent, reform and protest¹³². The ideology of *bhakti* undermined caste ego and made the so called upper strata in the society forget their pride and enabled the lower strata to disremember their misery¹³³. The element of dissent, protest and reform gave way to orthodoxy in due course when the cult of *bhakti* was firmly introduced. This finally led to the evolution of a Brahmin dominated and temple-centred Hindu society in Kerala.

The ideology of *bhakti* and the Vaiṣṇava doctrine of incarnation enabled the Brahminical ideology of Vaiṣṇavism to assimilate and to take in many non-Brahmin cult deities into the fold of Brahmanism. The Vaiṣṇava concept of incarnation or sub-incarnation accelerated the process of acculturation. Did this trend exist only in medieval Kerala? Was it prevalent in other parts of India? The doctrine of *avatāra* played a significant role in dispelling differences in Vaiṣṇavism and it had a key role in syncretism in medieval India¹³⁴. Many non-Brahminic gods were identified as the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu all through the medieval age. Many deities of non-Brahminic

creeds were accommodated in the Vaisṅṅava pantheon. In medieval Kerala temples, non-Brahminic deities were accommodated as subsidiary deities and they were treated as different sub-incarnatory forms of Visṅṅu. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates indicate the existence of Māyayakṣi, Kurayappa Swāmy and Amaidāyar in the precincts of the Visṅṅu temple¹³⁵. The spirit of syncretism prevailed in this endeavour and it pervaded the entire society unifying the Brahmin and non-Brahmin beliefs through the tenets of *avatāra*.

The emergence of a new genre of literature centred on the doctrine of emotional *bhakti* was another product of the prevalence of Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult in the Cēra kingdom. Such a kind of literature was produced in South India when the Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult reached its climax in Pallava, Cōlīa and Pāṅḍīya kingdoms¹³⁶. This kind of literature eulogized the temple cult surcharging it with fervent emotion of *bhakti*, drama and mysticism. The Vaisṅṅava themes as glorified in *Itihāsas* and *Purāṅṅas* also got reproduced in the religious and secular literature of the age¹³⁷. As a result of this, the non-Brahminic sections were endeared to the ideology of *bhakti* and this finally endeared the non-Brahmin sections to the Brahminic culture. Slowly, literary works celebrating and eulogising sacred centres accrued to become *Kṣṅṅṅṅamāhātmyas* and *Sthalamāhātmyas* in the subsequent period¹³⁸.

Another result of the spread of Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult in Kerala was the advent of local celebrities¹³⁹. The local celebrities were associated with *divyadēśams* and they played a key role as chief votaries of Vaisṅṅavism in the countryside. The legendary tales eulogising their pious lives provide impetus to the Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult. More devotees were attracted to temples as stories of local celebrities projected a sacred halo around the temple. The stories of Śankaramangalattamma of Tiruvalla temple and Divākaramuni of

Tiruvananthapuram temple are examples of such local luminaries in the Cēra age¹⁴⁰.

Did Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult cause feudalisation of polity and society in medieval Kerala? Was Visṅṅu *bhakti* instrumental in the strengthening of feudalism in Kerala? The deities in temples were treated as feudal entities with feudal and royal appellations and feudal-royal terminologies were widely used to denote the deity during the heydays of Visṅṅu *bhakti*¹⁴¹. The terms with feudal leanings such as *tambirān*, *utṅaiyar*, *kō*, *kōyil* and *Perumāḷi* were commonly used to denote the deity. Again the concept of considering oneself as a servant of the deity was predominantly influenced by feudal concepts. The royal-feudal influence permeated into temple service. The daily rituals in temples were framed to look upon the deity as a king or a noble. The deity was awakened, bathed, dressed, taken in procession, worshipped, eulogised, served and fed like a king or like a noble¹⁴². Royal /feudal appellations were employed to denote the ritual feeding (*nivēdyam*), bathing (*nīrātṅṅupalṅṅi*) and sleeping of the deity (*palṅṅiikkurṅṅuppu*). All these appellations point to the legitimisation of feudal tendencies in the temple apparatus.

The Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult emphasised on the doctrine of *śaranṅṅāgati* or complete surrender of individual initiative before the deity and Brahmins who were considered as the dearest and the nearest agents of the deity¹⁴³. The doctrine of complete surrender echoed feudal obligations of the non-Brahmin sections and tenants in temple properties. Along with this, the flow of landed properties into the ownership of temples transformed temples into feudal institutions with immense landed properties in possession and tenants in service. The temple developed into the largest among the landed ‘magnates’ and became a pivotal institution in the sphere of agriculture¹⁴⁴. The fertile

agricultural tracts in medieval Kerala were all the properties of temples and the supervision of agriculture by temples paved the way for the growth of an agrarian order. Besides, the stockpiling of landed properties in the ownership of temples led to the advent of *Ūrālīar* or proprietors and *Kārālīar* or tenants¹⁴⁵. The lands were given to *Kārālīar* or tenants who cultivated lands. The *Kārānmai* rights were hereditary. As a result of the development of such a system of resource control led to the gradual development of a feudal society in Kerala. The contribution of the ideology of *bhakti* in the realm of feudalism was that it strengthened feudal obligations and popularised the doctrine of surrendering before the temple and the temple authorities. As the Cēra temple was the biggest employer in early medieval Kerala, the temple had a decisive influence on society.

A striking feature of the Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult in South India was that it was the second wave of Brahminic culture after the first wave of Brahminic culture in the form of the immigration of Brahmins¹⁴⁶. If the first wave was from the north through Karnataka, the second wave originated from within South India. The driving force of the cult of *bhakti* was the Brahminic ideology. If the first wave brought in Vaiṣṇavism into Kerala, the second wave resulted in the consolidation of the Brahminic culture centred on temple-cult. Though the Viṣṇū *bhakti* movement was a movement of dissent and protest against caste claims, it was not against the basic ideology of Brahminic culture. It was only an attempt to acculturation and to diffuse the tenets of *bhakti*. Like what happened in other parts of Tamil South, the *bhakti* cult was instrumental in taking Viṣṇū and his incarnations into the minds of Keralites and in socialising Vaiṣṇavism. It is again significant that the *bhakti* cult strengthened the caste claims of Brahmins as it justified Brahminic claims as priests and as temple proprietors.

It has been argued by M.G.S Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat that exactly the same thing happened in other parts of South India as the openness and flexibility of the movement disappeared and the notes of dissent and protest which marked it earlier gave way to a kind of orthodox rigidity by about tenth century¹⁴⁷. In Kerala the disappearance of the *Ālīvār* movement was followed by a Brahmin dominated Hindu society. The Nambūdiri Brahmins of Kerala became the feudal lords as they became the largest custodians of the landed properties. The tenets of caste got legitimised and a highly organised temple-centred society was created. The *Viṣṇu bhakti* of *Ālīvārs*, finally, paved the way for the rise of a temple-centred and Brahmin dominated Hindu society in Kerala. There were no orthodox sects of *Vaiṣṇavites* with a separate monastic order. Majority among Nambūdiri Brahmins were landed magnets and feudal lords. There was Brahmin domination, but ritualism and sectarianism were lacking. This was in contrast to the situation that followed with rise of *Ācāryas* and *Matihoms* in other parts of South India¹⁴⁸. The *Matihoms* preserved ritualism and conservative ritualistic principles. A sectarian outlook was also maintained in such institutions. Absence of a highly organised *Vaiṣṇava* sect with separate line of Brahmin preceptors and *Matihoms* at the nuclei was a factor which kept sectarianism away from the interreligious relations.

Vaiṣṇavism and Other Religions

The inter-religious conflicts between Śaiva and *Vaiṣṇava* devotees raged in certain areas in the Tamil kingdoms during later period in twelfth century¹⁴⁹. However absence of Śaiva - *Vaiṣṇava* conflicts was an important feature of the religious life of the Cēra country. The Śaiva *bhakti* cult swept Kerala before the *Vaiṣṇava* devotional movement spread to Kerala¹⁵⁰. The ascendancy and popularity of Śaivism in Kerala is obvious from the existence

of the celebrated Tiruvancikkulġam Śiva temple in the vicinity of Mahōdayapuram, the Cēra capital. This Śiva temple was situated in the heart of the Cēra capital near the palace of the Cēra king. The presence of this Śiva temple provided the name to the city. The name Mahōdayapuram derived from Mahēswara's 'puram' or city. Mahēswara is a name of Śiva. Tiruvancikkulġam temple was glorified by Sundara Mūrti Nāyanār as a sacred abode of Śiva and he composed songs on the temple¹⁵¹. The period of Rāma Rājasēkhara or Cēramān Perumālġ Nāyanār, the Śaiva royal saint, witnessed the growth of Śiva temples at Kanġtġiyūr Kaviyūr, Tirunandikkara, Triśśūr, Cengannūr, Airānġikkulġam, Avitġattūr Kollam-Rāmēswaram, Perumcellūr, Nedumpuram Talġi, Cōkiram and Triprangōtġu. The cave temples of Kerala which can be datable to the 7th-8th centuries also contain a large number of Śaiva images¹⁵². This further demonstrates the one time popularity of Śaivism in Kerala.

However the Vaisġava themes started dominating the arts and thought of medieval Kerala with the reign of Sthānġu Ravi. Royal patronage, the devotional frenzy and the tempo generated by the intense and emotional Visġu *bhakti* made Vaisġavism a dominant religion and enabled the Vaisġava religion to surpass Śaivism in popularity. But the shift in favour of Vaisġavism did not lead to conflict or animosity between the Śaiva and the Vaisġava religions. Equally noticeable fact is the lack of any kind of persecution or neglect of Śaiva centres. The process of rapprochement was considerably strong in Kerala and it gave rise to the popularisation of various syncretic cults such as those of Śankara Nārāyanġa and *Eratġayappan*. The introduction of syncretic elements minimised the spirit of conflict and paved the way for the popularisation of Vaisġava and Śaiva religions in Kerala.

If there was no conflict between Vaisṇāvism and Śaivism in Kerala, how was the Vaisṇāva religion able to exceed Śaivism in popularity? It was not through acrimonious struggles, but through the medium of the stories of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma and temple cult that Vaisṇāvism won over popular support in Kerala. The Cēra age saw the production of different *bhakti* works including the summaries of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhāgavata*¹⁵³. Apart from singing on the temples at Vēnkatāṁ, Tirumirīrakkotū and Śrīrangam, Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār sang on *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhāgavata* in *Perumāli Tirumolī*. The presentation of the stories, *Itihāsic-Purāṇic*, in an emotional style in the songs by Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār suggests that the Visṇū *bhakti* in Kerala gave importance on the diffusion of *bhakti* through literature.

However there were certain sporadic incidents of religious rivalries in certain pockets in Kerala. One such incident of rivalry is seen at Tirumirīrakkotū where the sanctum sanctorum of Śiva is superimposed in front of the sanctum sanctorum of Visṇū. There was no reference to a Śiva shrine in the songs of Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār on Tirumirīrakkotū¹⁵⁴. A Tirumirīrakkotū inscription of Ravi Kōta Raja Simha, the Cēra king, reveals that Cōlīa political influence was established in Tirumirīrakkotū in eleventh century AD¹⁵⁵. The Cōlīas were known patrons of Śaivism and they built Śiva temples in their kingdom and in the conquered territories¹⁵⁶. Tirumirīrakkotū was located on the trade route from the Cōlīa country to west coast through Palakkad pass and the presence of the trade route made the Cōlīa penetration into Tirumirīrakkotū a reality. In this context it is certain that the elements of Śaiva - Vaisṇāva rivalry at Tirumirīrakkotū was produced by Cōlīa influence.

Cordial relationship existed between Vaisṇāvism and heterodox sects

like Buddhism and Jainism in the Cēra kingdom. On the contrary, inter-religious conflicts prevailed between Vaiṣṇavism and heterodox sects in the Cōlīa and the Pāṇḍīya kingdoms which ultimately resulted in the extinction of Buddhism and Jainism¹⁵⁷. The rancour between these sects broke out mainly with an intention to win over popular support. Jainism never attained the status of a dominant religion with pan-Kerala popularity in early and medieval Kerala¹⁵⁸. On the contrary, the religion grew and prospered in certain pockets adjacent to the inter-regional trade routes. A great Jain centre existed at Matilakam near Mahōdayapurapam and the rules of this Jain centre provided the model for other Jain centres in the Cēra country¹⁵⁹. Similar to this, Buddhism became a popular religion in the eighth and ninth centuries AD only in certain localities¹⁶⁰. Śrīmūlavāsam near Purīakkātīu, the port town, was a prominent Buddhist centre in Kerala and the religion flourished mainly in and around Śrīmūlavāsam. The Pāliam Copper Plates of Vikramāditya Varagunīa, the Āy king, and *Mūsīakavamśakāvya* reveal that Śrīmūlavāsam was noted for its Buddhist temple¹⁶¹. The Cēra king Vijayarāga took keen interest in the protection of the temple as the king nominated protectors to this Buddhist shrine¹⁶². All these make clear that the Buddhist centre at Śrīmūlavāsam flourished in the ninth century and the appearance of the Āy, the Mūsīaka and the Cēra kings as patrons of the temple discloses the prominence of this shrine at a time when the Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* cult swept Kerala. This is a pointer to the absence of religious rivalry between Vaiṣṇavism and heterodox sects in Kerala.

What was the reason for the absence of severe rivalry between Vaiṣṇavism and heterodox sects in Kerala? Vaiṣṇavism never found any competent adversary in the heterodox sects in the Cēra country. It was due to

the fact that the heterodox sects were confined mainly to certain pockets. Buddhism began to register progress in its growth in Kerala only by the period when Vaisṇavism had taken strong roots in the ninth century. The Perunna record of 1102AD of king Rāma Kulaśēkhara unveils that along with *Nālu Talīi*, a representative of Trikkunnapulīa was also present in the Perumāl's council¹⁶³. This reveals that the Brahmin domination over the ideology and institutions of the Cēra kingdom was not an obstacle in having a Buddhist nominee in the Cēra council of ministry and this also makes clear that animosity was absent between the Brahminic religions and heterodox sects in the Cēra kingdom. Vikramāditya Varagunā, who was a patron of Buddhism, claims in the Pāliam Copper Plates which registers an endowment to the Buddhist temple at Śrīmūlavāsam that he is a descendant of the Yadu dynasty to which Krīśṇa belonged¹⁶⁴.

With the spread of *bhakti* cults, the heterodox sects lost the popular base and they disappeared from the Tamil kingdoms¹⁶⁵. Did Buddhism and Jainism decline in Kerala due to the popularisation of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult? How far was Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult responsible for the disintegration of heterodox sects in Kerala? The Buddha and the Jaina religions centred mainly on trade centres and trade routes in Kerala. The popularity of these religions owed to trade prosperity and they declined in Kerala as a result of the shift in the course of trade and not due to the rise of Vaisṇavism¹⁶⁶. The decline of trade primarily paved the way for the disappearance of the patrons of heterodox sects. Vaisṇavism with its ideology of *bhakti* and temple-cult only functioned as a catalyst in the later period for the final disappearance of Buddhism and Jainism the decline of which had already commenced. Hence it is important to note that the rise of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult

did not detrimentally affect the prospects of Buddhism and Jainism in Kerala.

Popularity of Vaisṇavism

Vaisṇava religion became popular in Kerala soon after the spread of the emotional Visṇu *bhakti* movement. Vaisṇava themes and names were familiarised in the Cēra kingdom through mass pilgrimage, temple cult and literary creations based on *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*. The personal names in Cēra inscriptions point to the popularity of Vaisṇavism. Various names of Visṇu and his incarnatory forms were widely used as personal names. The names such as Rāman, Vāsudēvan, Dāmōdaran, Trivikraman, Vikraman, Kēśavan, Krīṣṇa, Rīṣikeśa, Śāṅgapāni, Achyutan, Nārāyaṇan, Kanṇan, Cakrapāṇi and Govindan are commonly found in the Cēra inscriptions. A notable aspect of the Vaisṇava personal names of the age is that the original Sanskrit names got changed into regional variants. For instance the name Krīṣṇa was used as ‘Kirutīṭan’, ‘Kittīṭinṇan’ etc. The two prominent poets, Atula, the court poet of the Mūsaka king Śrīkanṭha, and Vāsu Bhatṭha, the *Yamaka* poet, had Vaisṇava names. Several place-names also exhibit the Vaisṇava influence. Talṅiparṅamba was also known as Perumcellūr even during the *Sangam* age and this name originated from the name of Vaisṇava goddess Lakṣmi who is known as Śelvi in Tamil¹⁶⁷. The name Perumcellūr denotes ‘the place of Śelvi’.

The popularity of Vaisṇavism is apparent from the fact that Vaisṇava doctrines and *Purāṇic* stories were well spread in the society. The Cēras claimed their ancestry to Sūryavamaśa to which Śrī Rāma belonged. The Kurumattūr inscription and *Śankaranārāyaṇīyam* by Śankara Nārāyaṇa connect the ancestry of the Cēra rulers to Sūryavamaśa¹⁶⁸. The Āy rulers

claimed that they were Yādavas and the members of *Vr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥īkula*¹⁶⁹. This kind of claims originated from the belief that Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥ā belonged to *Vr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥īkula* and was a Yādava. Making ancestral link with the family and dyansty of Rāma or Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥ā attributed an exalted political status to respective dynasties. The poets of the age were well conversant with the sagas of Rāma and Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥ā. It is well established by the large number of literary works produced in the Cēra kingdom with Vais̥ṇ̥āva themes¹⁷⁰. Many incarnations were hinted at and Vais̥ṇ̥āva episodes from *Harivamśa*, *Rāmāyanā* and *Mahābhārata* got narrated in such works. The stories in the epics were reproduced in various forms such as plays or poetic works. All these point to the fact that the Vis̥ṇ̥ū *bhakti* cult got much attention and reputation in Kerala in the Cēra period. The popularity of the Vis̥ṇ̥ū *bhakti* cult is further attested by the sculptural representation of Vis̥ṇ̥ū in the structural temples of the age¹⁷¹.

To recapitulate, Vais̥ṇ̥āvism was prevalent in Kerala in the pre- Cēra age as the immigrant Brahmins introduced the religion in Kerala and the Cēra kingdom which came into existence as a by-product of the establishment of Brahmin settlements contributed to the advancement of Vais̥ṇ̥āvism. In the Cēra age, the popularity of Vais̥ṇ̥āvism was phenomenal when temples proliferated and temple cult prospered. The elements of syncretism were popularised. Vais̥ṇ̥āvism fostered the evolution of a Brahminical social structure. Due to the prevalence of syncretism and because of geographical factors inter-religious or intra-religious conflicts were absent in Kerala.

Notes and References:

1. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.39, 143; M.G.S.Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, "A History of the Nambudiri Community in Kerala" in Fritz Stall (ed.), *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar*, Berkeley, 1983, pp.256-259.
2. *Akanānūru*, 220, 90.
3. H.Gundert (ed.), *Keralolpatti*, Mangalore, 1874, pp.2-8.
4. There is no direct evidence to prove that the Kadambas and the Cālūkyas were responsible for the migration of Brahmins to Kerala. But it is argued by M.G.S.Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat that the Karnataka dynasties had key role in the process of the immigration of Brahmins to Kerala. They formulate their arguments on the basis of the references in *Kēralōlpatti* and *Grāmapadhathi*. The claims of Kadambas and Cālūkyas enshrined in various inscriptions are also taken into analysis for arriving at this conclusion. See M.G.S.Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 1983, pp.257-259.
5. H. Gundert, *op.cit.*, pp. 4-5.
6. B.A. Saletore, *Ancient Karnataka*, Poona, 1936, pp.296-335; K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1995, pp.110-111; H.V.Sreenivasa Murthy and R. Ramakrishnan, *A History of Karnataka*, New Delhi, 1977, pp.62-63..
7. The Talagunda Record of Kakustavarma, a later Kadamba king, describes King Mayūravarma as a *Vedic* scholar who carved out the kingdom of the Kadambas. Also it is stated that he was by birth a Brahmin who later took up the job of the Kṣātriyas. B.A. Saletore, *op.cit.*, pp. 296-298. Also see P.Gururaja Bhatt, *Studies in Tuluva History and Culture*, 1975, pp.237-239.
8. D.D.Kosambi, *An Introduction to the study of Indian History*, Mumbai, 1956, rpt.2008, pp.325-329.
9. See for discussion on *Grāmapadhathi* B.A. Saletore, *op.cit.*, pp.296-347.
10. *I.A.*, Vol.XXX, rpt.1985, pp.409-421;K.A.S., No.1, Tiruvananthapuram, 2010, pp.13-14.
11. *E.C.*,Vol.XI.,pp.62-63,144.The records of Cālūkyas from the time of Kīrtivarma I onwards contain such claims. Also see for more details R.C.Majumdar, *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. III, Bombay, 1951, pp.232-245; B.A. Saletore, *op.cit.*, p.71.
12. H.Gundert, *op.cit.*, p.4.
13. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.39.
14. B.A. Saletore, *op.cit.*, pp.298-300.
15. R.C.Majumdar, H.C.Ray Chaudhari and Kali Kinkar Datta, *An Advanced History of India*, New Delhi, 1946, rpt.2008, pp.243-244;R.N.Nandi, *Religious Institutions and Cults in the Deccan(c.AD600-AD1000)*, New Delhi, 1973, pp.2-3; G.Yazdani(ed.), *The Early History of the Deccan*, pts.VII-XI, New Delhi, 1976, p.500;M.N.Venkata Ramanappa, *Outlines of South Indian History*, New Delhi, 1975, rpt.1976, pp.64-65.
16. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op. cit.*, 1996, pp.188-196.
17. *Ibid.*, pp.147-152; Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 1978, pp.10-11.
18. Kesavan Veluthat, *op. cit.*, 1978, pp. 6-7, 22-31.
19. B.A.Saletore, *op.cit.*, pp.385-404; K.V.Ramesh, *A History of South Kanara*, Dharwar,

- 1970, pp. 292- 296.
20. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1995, pp.423-429; M.G.S.Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.394-396.
 21. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1995, pp.115-128.
 22. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1994, pp.200-202.
 23. Rāma Rājaśēkhara is the earliest known Cēra ruler to epigraphy. This king is also referred to in many literary works. The Tiruvārīrīuvāi record (also known as Vālīappalīli) of the king of c.830AD is regarded as the earliest Cēra inscription. See for more details of Tiruvārīrīuvāi record, *Index. No.A.4*. Recently a record of Rāma Rājaśēkhara is discovered from Kurumattūr near Areekkode. This inscription is deciphered by M.R.Raghava Varrier. Though the period of this inscription is not conclusively fixed, it may be accepted as one of the earliest inscriptions of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram. See for details of Kurumattūr inscription *The Hindu*, February, 11, 2011.
 24. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.38-39.
 25. *Ibid.*, pp.38-41; Rajan Gurukkal, *op.cit.*, pp.28-29.
 26. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.80-89.
 27. *Ibid.*, pp.85-87; Kesavan Veluthat, *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India*, London, 1993, p.208.
 28. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.111-119.
 29. M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.395-396.
 30. R. Champakalakshmi *op.cit.*, 2011, pp.600-603.
 31. This is discussed in section 'Vaiśiṣṭvism and Other Religions in this chapter
 32. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.212-214.
 33. K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1995, pp.120-121; Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, 1970, pp.165 – 170.
 34. The Pāliam Plates of Vikramāditya Varagunā indicates that the country of the Āys refers to the territory around Vilīiññam. Significantly the eighth century Madras Museum Plates of the Pānīdīyan King Neduncadayan speaks about his conquest of Vilīiññam. This again points out the prominence of Vilīiññam in the history of southern Kerala in eight and ninth centuries. In the aftermath of the Pānīdīyan invasion of Āy kingdom, the Āys came under the political influence of the Pānīdīyas. This happened in the eighth century. Later the Āys came under the influence of the Vēnīātīu governors when the Cōlīas occupied the Pānīdīyan kingdom. See for details of Pāliam Plates *T.A.S. Vol. I*, pp. 189-192; See for more details about the Madras Museum Plates *I.A, Vol., XXIII*, pp. 57-75; See for more details on the political fortunes of the Āys, M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1994, pp.221-231. Vilīiññam was a prominent trading mart and a seaport city with fortification. See K.Sadasivan, "Vizhinjam in the Political, Military and Commercial History of Ancient Kerala", *J.K.S.*, Vol.XXX., 2003, pp.1-11.
 35. R.Champakalakshmi, *op.cit.*, 1981, p.34.
 36. *Ibid.* R. Champakalakshmi considered the Āys as the descendants of the Yādavas who migrated from the north. This is on the basis of the claims of the Āy rulers in the inscriptions that they belonged to the *Vrīśiṅṅikula*.
 37. *T.A.S. Vol. I*, pp. 15-37; 275-283.

38. *Keralathil Krishnan Vamsajarute Udbhavam*, Kanyakumari, 1969, pp.1-4; Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol.IV., New Delhi, 1975, pp.74-75.
39. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, *Chila Kerala Charithra Prasnangal*, Kottayam, 1955-56, II.edtn.1963, p.83; M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.102-103.
40. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1977, pp.8-10.
41. See chapter.I, Note no.13.
42. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, 1963, pp.83, 110-112.
43. *Index. No. A.4; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp. 85-86. Also see chapter VII.
44. *Index.No. A. 8; S.I.I. Vol.VII.*, p.72.
45. *Index. No. A.19; T.A.S.*, Vol. III., pp.186-188.
46. *T.A.S.*, Vol. V., pp.31-33.
47. *Index. No. A. 23 ; T.A.S.*, Vol. III., pp.189-191.
48. *Index. No. A. 24 ; T.A.S.*, Vol.III., pp.169-171.
49. *Index. No. A.25; T.A.S. Vol. III.*, pp.161-169.
50. *Index. No. A. 36; E.I.*, Vol. XVI., pp.339-345.
51. *Index. No. A.80; T.A.S Vol.II.*, 131-207.
52. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1994, p.226; H.Sircar, “Gleanings from Kerala’s Temple Inscriptions”, *Itihas*, Vol.III, No.I, 1976, pp.43-49; Alex Mathew, “Making Sense of Sacred Geography: The Case of Tiruvallaval”, *Rational Discourse*, Vol. XI, Nos.I -II, 2007, pp.22-26.
53. Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2009, pp. 61-78, *passim* ;Kumudranjan Chatterjee, “Temple Offerings and Temple Grants in South India”, in K.M.Shrimali, *op.cit.*, pp.1-17.
54. *T.A.S.*, Vol. I, pp. 17-34.
55. There are references to *cāttirar* or the students of *śālais* in inscriptions associated with the temples of Mūlīkkalāṃ and Tiruvalla. A record of Tirumūlīkkalāṃ speaks about separate provisions for feeding *cāttirar*. In Tiruvalla temple, 350 *nālī* rice was distributed every day for feeding the *cattirar*. See for details of *cāttirar* in Mūlīkkalāṃ temple *T.A.S. Vol. III.*, pp.189-191; See for details of *cāttirar* in Tiruvalla temple *T.A.S.*, Vol. II, pp.131-207.
56. This is discussed in section ‘Spread of the Vaisṇava Devotional Movement in Kerala’ in this chapter.
57. Śēkkilīār, *Periyapurāṇam*, *Kalīarirīarīvārīpurāṇam*, verses, 10-20; See for a detailed discussion on the identity of this royal saint, M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.40-42, 212-213.
58. K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1963, p. 34.
59. Only three *Ālīvār* saints –Tirumankai, Kulaśēkhara and Nammālīvār - composed songs on the Vaisṇava centres of Kerala. It is held that Tirumankai lived in the last half of the eighth and in the first half of the ninth centuries and others in the ninth century.
60. J.S.M. Hooper, *op.cit.*, pp.9-24; M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1994, pp.193-194.
61. F.Hardy, *op.cit.*, pp. 256-260.

62. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, pp.2-7; K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1963, pp.45-48; S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *op.cit.*, 1920, pp.38-39.
63. S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *Some Contributions of South India to Indian Culture*, New Delhi, 1923, rpt.1995, pp.264-266; M.Sreenivasa Aiyangar, *Tamil Studies*, New Delhi, 1986, pp.291-299.
64. *Ibid.*, pp45-47; See for the period of Mahendra Varma (590AD-629AD) C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life Under the Pallavas*, Madras, 1938, rpt.1977, pp.17-19.
65. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.188-189.
66. See songs by various Ālīvārs on Kerala shrines in *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*, *op.cit.* See Note nos.68, 77 and 96 below.
67. The traditional account or hagiology of the Ālīvār saints is narrated in the *Guruparambara*. It placed him in an earlier period and held that he was born in the *Kali* year 397. See for more details T.A.Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, pp.6-7.
68. K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1963, p.46.
69. *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham- op.cit.*, *Peria Tirumolī*, songs on Tirunāva, 6-8-3 *pāsuram*-1520 and 10-1-9 *pāsuram*-1856; Songs on Tiruvalla, 9-7-(full), *pāsurams*-1808-1817; Song on Tirumūlīkkalām, 7-1-6, *pāsuram*- 1553; *Siriya Tirumatal*, song on Tiruppuliyūr, *pāsuram*- 39; *Peria Tirumatal*, song on Tirumūlīkkalām *pāsuram*-65; Song on Tiruvalla *pāsuram*- 58; *Tirunedunthadakam*, song on Tirumūlīkkalām, *pāsuram*-10.
70. T.A.Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, pp.22-23; A.S.Ramanatha Aiyar, “Kulasekhara Perumal”, *T.A.S.*, Vol.V., pp.104-114 ; K.G. Sesa Iyyer, “Kulasekhara Ālīvār”, *K.S.P.*, Vol.I., pp.30-39; R.G. Bhandarkar, *op.cit.*, pp.68-71.
71. See for L.D.Swamikkannupillai’s opinion K.G.Sesha Iyyer, *op.cit.*, p.32; Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, 1961, pp.9-21.
72. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.25-26, 189, 213-214.
73. *Ibid.*, pp.213-214; T.A.Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, pp.4-5; S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *op.cit.*, 1920, p.23.
74. M.G.S.Narayanan, “The Impact of the Vaishnava Bhakti Movement in Kerala-An Evolution of Ōṅam Festival in Kerala”, A Paper presented at the 40th International Conference of Eastern Studies, Tokyo on 26th May, 1995.
75. *Ibid.*
76. See for more details M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.42-49.
77. K.G. Sesa Iyyer, *op.cit.*, pp.31-36; S. Desivinaiyagam Pillai, “Kulasekhara Ālīvār and His Devotional hymns”, *K.S.P.*, Vol.II., pp.133-135; Ulloor S Parameswara Aiyer, *Kerala Sahithya Charithram*, Vol.I, Tiruvananthapuram, 1953, rpt.1990, pp.104-106; Also see Chapter VIII.
78. *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*, *op.cit.*, *Perumālī Tirumolī*, *pāsurams*- 688-697.
79. *Ibid*, songs on Tiruarangam, *pāsurams*- 647-676 and songs on Tiruvēkatām, *pāsurams*- 677-687; See for the details of the story regarding the daughter of the king,

- A. Govindacharya, *The Holy Lives of the Ālīṅvārs*, Madras, 1902, pp.116-133. Also see the summary of the *Guruparampara* tradition on Kulaśekhara in Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *Vinjanadipika*, Vol.I, , Trivandrum, 1968, pp.23-28.
80. See Chapter VII.
81. *Tapatisamvaranā*, Anka-II.
82. See Chapter III.
83. *Index. No. B.22; T.A.S. Vol. VI, Part-II.*, pp.193-194.
84. *S.I.I.*, Vol. III, pp.148-152.
85. *E.I.*, Vol. III., p.197.
86. K.G.Sesha Iyyer, *op.cit.*, pp.31- 34.
87. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.189.
88. *Ibid.*, pp.212-213.
89. The trend of thought is same in both these works of the royal saint and both the works emphasised on complete surrender before Viṣṇu. See for the expression of the concept in *Perumāli Tirumolīi, Nālāyira Divya Prabandham, op.cit., Perumāli Tirumolīi, pāsurams-* 647-751; See for the expression of the trend in *Mukundamāla, slokas-* 6, 44 and 46.
90. *Index No.A.5; S.I.I.*, Vol. III, p.89.
91. *Tapatisamvaranā*, prologue; *Subhadradhanajaya*, prologue. This subject has been studied by M.G.S.Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat separately in their studies on the Cēra royal authority. See M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.74-80; Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2009, pp.183-228.
92. *Index. No.A.2; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp.62-70.
93. See Note no 89 above.
94. T.A.Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, p.4 ; S.Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *op.cit.*, 1920, pp.42-46.
95. T.A.Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, p.21 ; K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1963, p.47.
96. F.Hardy, *op.cit.*, pp.308.
97. *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham, op.cit., Tiruvāimolīi*, - Songs on Tiruvanparisāram *pāsurams*, 3469-3479; Songs on Tiruvatīṭṭār *pāsurams*, 3722-3732; Songs on Tiruvananthapuram *pāsurams*, 3678-3688; Songs on Tiruppuliyūr *pāsurams*, 3535-3545; Songs on Tiruvalla *pāsurams*, 3205-3215; Songs on Tiruāranmulā *pāsurams*, 3436-3446; Songs on Tiruvanvandūr *pāsurams*, 3227-3237; Songs on Trikkotiṭṭānam *pāsurams*, 3502-3512; Songs on Tiruchirīrāru *pāsurams*, 3480-3490; Songs on Trikkākkara *pāsurams*, 3612-3622; Songs on Tirumūlīikkalāam *pāsurams*, 3623-3633; Songs on Tirunāva *pāsurams*, 3634-3644.
98. *Ibid.* The songs of Nammālīvār contain a number of references on the prevalence of sacrificial culture in temples. This Ālīṅvār refers to the sacrificial pits in temples and the recital of *Vedas* in temples.
99. M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.396-398.

100. *Ibid.*
101. *Ibid.*, p. 394; Such a genre of panegyrics were produced all through out medieval period in different parts of India. See E.Alan Morinis, *Pilgrimage in the Hindu Tradition*, Oxford, 1984, p.44.
102. A.Pandurangan, 'Divyadēsayathra as per ŚrīVaiṣṇava Traditions', *J.A.I.R.I.*, Vol. IV, Mumbai, 2001-2002, pp.43-56.
103. M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.401-402.
104. *Index.No.* A.80; *T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp.131-207.
105. M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.397-398.
106. See ChapterVII.
107. P.M. Rajan Gurrukkal, *op.cit.*, pp.32-35.
108. See ChapterVII.
109. *Index No.A.4; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp. 85-86. See for a detailed discussion of the role of king Sthānū Ravi in the popularisation of Ōṇam festival in Kerala, M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1995; Also see chapter VII.
110. See chapterVII, Note nos.5 and 6.
111. See for Trikkākkara inscription *Index. No.A.35; T.A.S.*, Vol.II, pp.46-48; See for Tiruvalla Copper Plates *Index No.A 80; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp.131-207.
112. See for a discussion on the rise of temple culture in the age of the Cēras of Mahōdayapurapam M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.188-196.
113. M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, p.398. Also see Note no.79 above.
114. See Note no.44 above.
115. *Index. No.* A.80 ; *T.A.S.*, Vol., II, pp. 131-207.
116. *Ibid; Index. No.* A. 47; *T.A.S.*, Vol. II, p.47.
117. *Index. No.* A.80; *T.A.S.*, Vol., II, pp. 131-207; *Index No.A.* 46; *E.I.*, Vol.XVI., pp. 339-345; *Index. No.* A. 64 ; *T.A.S.*, Vol.V, pp.172-176.
118. Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol.1, New Delhi, 1975, pp.220-222.
119. *Index No.* A.32; *T. A.S.*, Vol., II, pp. 187-189.
120. *Index No.* A.80; *T.A.S.*, Vol., II, pp. 131-207.
121. See for a detailed discussion on the rise of Cākyārs M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.194.
122. K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cōlīas*, Madras, 1935 and 1937, rpt.1975, pp.635-647; *Idem*, *The Pānḍīyan Kingdom*, Madras, 1929, rpt.1972, pp.203-210; C. Minakshi, *op.cit.*, pp.261-332; T.V.Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*, Madras, 1967, pp.382-391.
123. See Chapter IX.
124. *Ibid.*
125. K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1995, pp. 457-473; *Idem*, *op.cit.*, 1975, pp.693-709.

126. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1973, pp. 21-42; Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 1978, pp.102-115.
127. *Index. No.A.80; Index No.A.23 ; T.A.S., Vol.I, pp.15-34; T.A.S., Vol.II, pp.131-207.*
128. See for references on Kantalūr *śālai* T.A.S., Vol.I, pp.17-34; See for references on Nedumpuram Talī *śālai* *Index. No.A.27; T.A.S., Vol.VIII, pp.41-43.*
129. K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1975, pp.628-634; C.Minakshi, *op.cit.*, pp. 222- 243; Elamkulam P.N.Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, 1970a, pp.268-269.
130. *Index No.A.42; T.A.S., Vol.II, pp.34-37.*
131. *Index No.A.80; T.A.S., Vol.II, pp. 131-207.*
132. See for a detailed discussion of this trait of *bhakti* movement M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp. 404-407.
133. *Ibid.*, pp.403-404.
134. Suvira Jaiswal, *op.cit.*, pp.132, 213-216; Shanti Lal Nagar, *Composite Deities in Indian Art and Literature*, New Delhi, 1989, pp.15-30.
135. *Index. No.A.80; T.A.S., Vol.II, pp. 131-207.*
136. M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.394-398.
137. See Chapter VIII.
138. See Chapter III.
139. Local *bhaktas* emerged in several areas when *bhakti* spread throughout the south. See M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1994, p.212.
140. V.Raghavan Nambyar, “Annals and Antiquities of Tiruvalla”, *K.S.P.*, Vol.II, pp.74-75; Aswathi Tirunal Gauri Lakshmi Bayi, *Sree Padmanabha Swami Ksetram*, (trans.) K.Sankaran Nambudiri and K.Jayakumar, Tiruvananthapuram, 1998, pp.25-28.
141. This was found widely in South India. See M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.401-404.
142. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates give an account of the proliferation of multifarious rituals in the temple. See for more details *Index.No. A.80; T.A.S., Vol.II, pp.131-207.*
143. M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.402-404; Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2009, p.67.
144. P.M. Rajan Gurukkal, *op.cit.*, pp.32-34.
145. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.174-175.
146. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1994, p.221.
147. M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, p.407.
148. *Ibid.*
149. By twelfth century, Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava conflicts raged in the Tamil kingdoms. See for more on this R.Champakalakshmi, “From Devotion and Dissent to Dominance” in David N. Lorenzon (ed.), *Religious Movements in South Asia, 600-1800*, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 72-74.

150. M.Raghava Aiyangar, *Cēravēndar Ceyyutkovai*, II., pp.278-282.
151. *Ibid.*
152. See Chapter IX.
153. See Chapter VIII.
154. *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*, *op.cit.*, *Perumālī Tirumolīi, pāsūrams* - 688-697.
155. *Index. No.A. 52*; See for the text of the record M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1994, p.251.
156. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1975, pp.642-645.
157. *Ibid.*, pp.423-425; M.G.S.Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.399-401. It is also apparent from various stories on Tirumankai Ālīvār. See for details T.A.Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, p.6; K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1963, pp.45-47.
158. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.183-186; B.Padmakumari Amma, *Jain and Buddhist Centres in Kerala*, Kuppam, 2008, pp.60-62.
159. The Tirumanṅṅūr and the Ālathūr inscriptions speak about the code of Tirukkunṅavāy or Trikkunṅāmatilakam or Matilakam. See *S.I.I.*, Vol. V, p.338. See for a detailed discussion on Mathilakam and for the texts of Tirumanṅṅūr and Ālathūr inscriptions M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1972, pp.17-22, 70-74.
160. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.180-183; B.Padmakumari Amma, *op.cit.*, pp.62-64.
161. See for Pāliam copper plates *Index.No.B.2.;T.A.S.*, Vol.I., pp.187-193. The *Mūsāakavamśakāvya* says that the Mūsāaka king Vikrama Rāma saved this temple from the virulence of the sea. See *Mūsāakavamśakāvya*, chapter-12, *ślōkas* -96-98.
162. It is stated in the tenth ślōka of the Pāliam Copper Plates that Vīra Kōta was appointed by the king as the protector of the property donated to Śrīmūlavāsa Vihāram. It is suggested by M.G.S.Narayanan that Vīra Kōta was the nominee of the Cēra king in whose kingdom Śrīmūlavasam situated and Vijayarāga was the Cēra counterpart of Vikramāditya Varagunṅa. *Index. No. B. 2; T.A.S. Vol. I.*, pp. 187-193.
163. *Index. No. A. 68; T.A.S. Vol.V.* pp. 37-40.
164. *T.A.S.*, Vol. I, pp. 275-283. Also see the text of the inscription in M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1972, Appendix-I, pp. 65-68.
165. M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.399-401.
166. K.N. Ganesh, *Keralathinte Innalekal*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1997, pp.255-256; B. Padmakumari Amma, *op.cit.*, 120-122.
167. See Note no.2 above.
168. P.K.Narayana Pillai (ed.), *Laghu Bhaskariya Vyakhya*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1949, p.49; *The Hindu*, *op.cit.*
169. *T.A.S.*, Vol. I., pp.17-34, 277-283.
170. See Chapter VIII.
171. See Chapter XI.

Chapter III

EARLY VAISŪNĀVA CENTRES

The temple-centred VisŪnŪ *bhakti* cult led to the origin and prosperity of many VaisŪnĀva centres in Kerala in the Cēra age. The pilgrimage tradition of the ĀlŪvārs and royal patronage had a key role in the proliferation of temples. Various aspects of the origin and proliferation of VisŪnŪ temples in Kerala have been discussed in the previous chapter. It remains now to narrate the early VaisŪnĀva centres of Kerala about which epigraphic or literary data is available. The early VaisŪnĀva centres of Kerala were of two broad categories – *divyadēśams* and non- *divyadēśam* shrines. The early VisŪnŪ shrines which sprouted up in the aftermath of the Brahmin exodus - *grāmaksŪētras* - got distributed in both these groups. A striking aspect of *grāmaksŪētras* is that during the pre-Cēra period these temples remained only as the seat of the Brahmin trustees of the respective settlements and they never attained the status of VaisŪnĀva pilgrim centres. A survey of the early VaisŪnĀva centres of Kerala is made in this chapter.

Divyadēśams in Kerala

The VaisŪnĀva saints identified thirteen VisŪnŪ shrines as *divyadēśams* in Kerala and during the heydays of VisŪnŪ *bhakti* cult these shrines functioned as the focal points of VisŪnŪ *bhakti* movement in Kerala¹. The *divyadēśam* shrines got distributed in the southern and central parts of Kerala. The Āy kings were in power in southern parts of Kerala and the three southern most *divyadēśams* namely Tiruvanparisāram, TiruvatŪtŪār and Tiruvananthapuram were clearly within the Āy kingdom and the rest belonged to the Cēra kingdom². The early VaisŪnĀva centres were situated on inter-

regional or intra-regional trade routes. The southern most centres - Tiruvanparisāram and Tiruvatīṭṭār – were on the trade route that came from Kadukkarai- Aramboli pass³. This trade route linked Pānīdīyan, Āy and Cēra kingdoms politically, economically and culturally. The Aramboli pass was a major trade route which functioned as an inter-regional trade link between Kerala and Tamil kingdoms.

The six *divyadēśams* - Tiruppuliyūr, Tiruccirīrār, Tiruārīanmulā, Tiruvanvandīūr, Tiruvalla and Trikkotiṭṭānam – in the erstwhile Nanrīṭṭulīainātīu and Vempolinātīu were accessible by Achankōvil or Mēkkarai pass and Trikkākkara and Tirumūṭṭikkalāam by the trade route that stretched through Bodināykkannūr pass⁴. Tirumirīrākkotīu and Tirunāva, the northern shrines, were accessible for the Tamil *bhaktas* through the Palakkad pass⁵. The location of *divyadēśams* on trade routes made them accessible to Ālīvārs and their followers. As a result, a pilgrim network emerged in early medieval Kerala. Trade routes connecting Pānīdīya and Cēra kingdoms through passes in the Western Ghats made the flow of devotees possible. Thus trade routes functioned as pilgrim routes too. Thirteen Visīnīu shrines in Kerala got included in the pilgrim circuit of the Vaisīnīavas. The pilgrim routes thus connected Kerala temples with sacred spots in other parts of Tamilīakam. The unifying link was Vaisīnīavism and the carriers of this cultural unity were Visīnīu *bhaktas*. It is evident from *sandēśakāvyas* of the post- Cēra age that the south-north route passed through Tiruvananthapuram, Tiruvalla, Trikkotiṭṭānam and Tirunāva and it passed by the neighbourhood of other Vaisīnīava centres⁶.

The six shrines - Tiruvanvandīūr, Tiruvalla, Trikkotiṭṭānam, Trikkākkara, Tirumūṭṭikkalāam and Tirumirīrākkotīu- yield Cēra inscriptions⁷. A cluster of six *divyadēśams* is found in the former Nanrīṭṭulīainātīu. Nanrīṭṭulīainātīu was a province in the Cēra kingdom

which included places like Trikkotiṭṭānam, Perunna, Tiruvalla, Tiruvanvandīūr and Cengannūr⁸. The *divyadēsams* that constituted the cluster are Tiruppuliyūr, Tiruccirīrār, Tiruārānmulā, Tiruvanvandīūr, Tiruvalla and Trikkotiṭṭānam. Why did this cluster of shrines come into existence? Cengannūr, a prominent place in the region where the cluster is found, was a meeting place of two trade routes⁹. Cengannūr was on one of the major routes that commenced from the Pāṇḍīyan kingdom to the Cēra capital. The trade route from the Pāṇḍīyan kingdom through Achankōvil or Mēkkarai pass and the south-north route met at Cengannūr. The memory of Achankōvil route is still cherished in by the people of central Travancore who accorded sanctity to the trade route as ‘a sacred way’ associated with Achankōvil Śāsta temple¹⁰. Later, fugitives from the Pāṇḍīyan kingdom who founded the Pandalam chieftdom came to Kerala through this route¹¹.

It is significant that *Kēralōlpatti* speaks about massive arrival of Tamil people at Cengannūr which resulted in conflicts involving questions on certain customs¹². This is a pointer to the frequent movement of people to Cengannūr from the Tamil country. Further, many Brahmin families of Cengannūr *grāmam* appear to have Tamil origin and they still claim family properties in the erstwhile Pāṇḍīyan kingdom. Five original Brahmin settlements are located in and around Cengannūr – Tiruvalla region in Nanrūlāinātū and Vempolinātū. They are Tiruārānmulā, Tiruvalla, Kaviyūr, Cengannūr and Venmanī¹³. Among them, Tiruārānmulā and Tiruvalla settlements were Vaisṇāva *grāmas* with Visṇū temples at the nuclei. These Visṇū temples got elevated to the position of *divyadēsams* in the heydays of Ālīvār movement. It is now obvious that a demographically dominant Brahmin community was present in Cengannūr-Tiruvalla area in Nanrūlāinātū and Vempolinātū. The presence of a strong community of Brahmins was a stimulating factor for the rise and growth of *Āgamic* religions

and structural temples in this region. A local tradition of later origin celebrates these temples, except Tiruvalla, as *Pancapānīdīava* shrines¹⁴. This tradition was concocted in a later period when *Purānīc* culture penetrated deep into the society and *sthalamāhātmyas* came into existence.

Besides *divyadēsams*, several Visṅṅu temples existed in the Cēra age. It is corroborated by Cēra inscriptions and literature. These temples also functioned as catalytic agents in the growth of Vaisṅṅavism. Tirukkulaśēkharapuram, Tirunnelli, Cokkur, Pullūr, Triccambaram, Nārāyankanṅūr, Triprīayār, Tiruvangūr, Kūtīal Mānīkyam, Mānipuram and Panniyūr are examples of such temples. These temples came into existence when Visṅṅu temples proliferated in Kerala with the growth of Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult spearheaded by the *Ālīvār* saints. Royal patronage was a formidable factor for the rise and prosperity of temples. Among these temples Tirukkulaśēkharapuram temple was a prominent Vaisṅṅava shrine situated in the neighbourhood of Mahodayapuram.

There are references to *Śrī Vaisṅṅavas* in the records of the temples of Trikkākkara, Tirunelli and Tiruvalla¹⁵. The *Śrī Vaisṅṅavas* were identified as Brahmin trustees and their number in these temples was fixed at twenty five by M.G.S.Narayanan¹⁶. This identification and calculation was made on the basis of the calculation of the quantity of rice set apart to be given to *Śrī Vaisṅṅavas*. The name *Śrī Vaisṅṅavas* denotes the devotees of Visṅṅu or those who were Vaisṅṅavites. The reference to Brahmin trustees as *Śrī Vaisṅṅavas* is a clear indication of the fact that the Visṅṅu temples of the Cēra kingdom were administered by Vaisṅṅava Brahmins.

Tiruvanparisāram

This is the southern most *divyadēsam* in the corpus of the thirteen *divyadēsam* temples. It was situated in Āy kingdom and this temple was

celebrated in *Tiruvāimolī* by Nammālīvār¹⁷. He refers to the deity as *Tiruvālīmarban*. *Tiruvāimolī* provides the earliest hitherto available reference to this place and it is obvious on the basis of these references that Tiruvanparisāram temple existed in ninth century. A tradition holds that Tiruvanparisāram was the native place of Nammālīvār's mother¹⁸. As stated earlier, the temple was situated on the highway that stretched out from Pāndīyan Kingdom to Āy -Cēra kingdoms through the Aramboli pass. An incomplete Tamil inscription of 1129AD is found in the temple¹⁹. The record speaks about a donation of some gift to the deity of the temple by Natān Cetī of Vilīññam. Vilīññam is referred to in this record as Rājendra Cōlāpatānam. It is significant that the Cōlās overran the region and several place names in Āy kingdom got changed²⁰. The place-names Vilīññam and Kottār were renamed into Rājendra Cōlāpatānam or Cōlākeralapuram as well as Mummudiśōlānallūr respectively. The record cited above demonstrates that wealthy merchants patronised the temple.

Tiruvatīār

This *divyadēśam* also was situated in Āy kingdom. The *Sangam* work, *Purānānūr* hails Tiruvatīār as the capital of Elīlini Ātan²¹. Nammālīvār celebrates the temple in *Tiruvāimolī* as the most sacred abode of Viṣṇu²². The references to Tiruvatīār make clear that the temple was in existence in ninth century. An incomplete Tamil inscription of Rājendra Cōlā Dēva of the eleventh century mentions the deity as one who resides at Tiruvatīār²³. This is the earliest epigraphic account found from the temple. In this backdrop it is certain that Rājendra Cōlā Dēva patronised temples in the Āy kingdom after the region was subjugated through a series of military conquests. As a *divyadēśam* shrine, this temple functioned as one of the centres of Vaisṇavism in the Āy kingdom. However no Āy inscription has been

discovered about the shrine. Like Tiruvanparisāram temple, Tiruvatīṭṭār was on the trade route from the Pāṇḍīya kingdom to the Cēra-Āy kingdoms through Aramboli Pass²⁴.

Tiruvananthapuram

Nammālīṭṭvār celebrates the *divyadēśam* shrine at Tiruvananthapuram which was also located in the Āy kingdom²⁵. This temple came into existence before the spread of *bhakti* cult into Kerala. This is evident from a reference to the temple in *Cilappatikāram*²⁶. The temple is referred to in this work as ‘Āṭṭagamātṭattarīṭṭuyilamarntōn’. It is evident from the songs of Nammālīṭṭvār that the place was known in those days as Ananthapuram. Nammālīṭṭvār refers to the idol of Viṣṇu in this temple as in Ananthaśayanam pose. The present idol is still in the same pose. The songs of Nammālīṭṭvār refer to the place as a marvellous and a beautiful town that sprang up around the temple. The references to big buildings around the temple make clear that it was a temple city in early medieval period. A Kanyakumari inscription of the Pāṇḍīyan king, Jātavarman Pārantaka Pāṇḍīya who ruled in the early decades of twelfth century, recounts the acts of munificence shown by the king to Tiruvananthapuram temple²⁷. The king donated ten golden lamps and a village known as Tāyanallūr to the temple. The land grant was made to meet the expenses of burning the lamp. Tiruvananthapuram was located on the route from Pāṇḍīyan kingdom to the Cēra capital though Aramboli pass. This route became the main high way which functioned as the south- north high way in the Cēra kingdom.

Tiruppuliyūr

This shrine is one among the six temples of the cluster in the Cēra kingdom. Both Tirumankai Āṭṭvār and Nammālīṭṭvār eulogise this temple in

Siriya Tirumatāḷal of *Peria Tirumolīḷi* and *Tiruvāimolīḷi* respectively²⁸. Nammālīḷvār calls the deity as *Māyappirān* and the place is celebrated as a centre of *Āgamic /Purānīc* culture. However no epigraphic record is discovered so far from this temple. It is significant that Tiruppuliyūr was accessible to *bhaktas* as it situated in proximity to the south-north route in the Cēra kingdom.

Tiruccirīrīār

This *divyadēśam* is also known as Tirucengannūr and it was situated in the neighbourhood of Cengannūr which was a prominent Brahmin settlement and a Śaiva pilgrim centre. This temple is also included in the cluster of temples in the Cēra kingdom. Earlier this Viṣṇu shrine occupied an important place as that of a *grāmaksīētra* in Cengannūr settlement²⁹. Nammālīḷvār sings about this temple³⁰. The deity is referred to as Imaiavarappan and the place is hailed as a centre of sacrificial culture and *Vedic* Brahmins. The Ālīḷvār saint sings that the temple is in the midst of agrarian fields. Tiruccirīrīār was on the south-north highway in the Cēra country.

Tiruārīanmulīa

Tiruārīanmulīa *divyadēśam* was the *grāmaksīētra* of Ārīanmulīa Brahmin settlement and it is also included in the cluster of temples in the Cēra kingdom. Nammālīḷvār celebrates this temple in *Tiruvāimolīḷi*³¹. He refers to the place as Tiruvārīanvilīai and calls the deity as Tirukkurīulīappan. The Ālīḷvār saint mentioned about the thriving agriculture in the place and the prevalence of *Vedic* culture. Tiruārīanmulīa, which was located on the inter-regional trade route that came from the Pānīdīyan kingdom through the Achankōvil pass, was easily accessible to the *bhaktas* from the Tamil country.

Tiruvanvandīūr

The *divyadēśam* temple at Tiruvanvandīūr is praised by Nammālīvār in *Tiruvāimolīi*³². This temple which was situated in the vicinity of Cengannūr is also included in the cluster. The place is mentioned as Tiruvanvandīūr in the songs of the Ālīvār saint. Many Cēra inscriptions are found in this temple. The Cēra inscriptions testify to the prosperity of the temple. A damaged and incomplete inscription of 948 AD of the reign of Indu Kōta mentions about the offering of a perpetual ghee lamp to the temple by Etiran Kaviran³³. Another record which is datable to c.973AD states that Śrīvallabhan Kōta, the governor of Vēnātīu made a land grant to Tiruvanvandīūr temple for meeting the expenses of offerings instituted in the temple by him³⁴.

Another record datable to the same year states about a land donation by Śrīvallabhan Kōta to Tiruvayampātī shrine with in the temple complex of Tiruvanvandīūr³⁵. It is obvious from the epigraph that there existed two shrines in the temple- one of Viśnīu and the other of Krīśnīa. The name Tiruvayampātī appears to be the corrupt form of Tiruvambātī which denotes the shrine of Krīśnīa. An oral tradition of later origin states that the soldiers of Cempakśēri Rāja of Ambalapulīa caused certain destructions in the sanctum of Krīśnīa in Tiruvanvandīūr temple during a royal hunt for an auspicious idol of Krīśnīa to be installed at Ambalapulīa³⁶. The legend enshrines that in order to save the idol from the soldiers of Cempakśēri Rāja, it was thrown in the temple well and the sanctum was closed by the Brahmin trustees. However, at present there is a separate sanctum sanctorum each for Viśnīu and Krīśnīa in the temple. The Krīśnīa shrine was rebuilt recently. Tiruvanvandīūr was situated adjacent to the south- north highway in the Cēra kingdom.

Tiruvalla

Tiruvalla temple was the *grāmaksīētra* of the Brahmin settlement of the same name and this temple is also included in the cluster of Vaisṇava centres in the Cēra kingdom. This temple is celebrated by Tirumankai Ālīvār and Nammālīvār in *Peria Tirumolī* and *Tiruvāimolī* respectively³⁷. They refer to the place as Tiruvallavālī and the deity is called as Tiruvallavālīappan (father of Tiruvallavālī). It is apparent from the account of the Ālīvārs that Tiruvalla was a prominent centre of Brahmins and Brahminic culture.

The Tiruvalla Copper Plates provide more information about the temple and its multifaceted functions in the socio-economic life in the Cēra age³⁸. The temple was patronized by kings, governors and bureaucrats in the Cēra kingdom. Royal patronage resulted in the flow and stockpiling of wealth in the temple. Many Cēra monarchs and governors of provinces, besides wealthy traders and Brahmin aristocrats are found in Tiruvalla Copper Plates as donors. Vīra Cōlīa, the Cōlīa ruler from 907 to 955AD, his queen Kilīān Atikal and the Cēra King Bhāskara Ravi Manukulāditya (962-1021AD) donated extensively to the temple. Donations were also made in different periods by various persons for offerings like *tiruvilīakku*, *tiruamrīutu*, *tiruākkiram*, *nīrātīupalīli*, *snāpanam*, *pancasabadam* and for *Ōṇam* and *Dwādaśi* day celebrations. Many Vaisṇava sectarian festivals such as *Ōṇam*, *Dwādaśi* and *Cāturmāsya* were celebrated in the temple³⁹.

Various Cēra governors and merchants like Iravi Śrīkanṭṭān, Kumāran Iyakkan, Eran Cankaran, Rāman Kōta Varma, Rāman Mātēvi, Munnimarāyōr and an unnamed merchant from Śrī Lanka made donations to the temple. Lands were donated to the temple for meeting the expenses of various rituals like *pantiratīpūja*, *namaskāram*, Brahmin feeding, ritual feeding of the deity and for meeting the expenses of *Kūttu* performance. The

temple owned about 12634 *Kalam* seed capacity paddy fields and garden lands in various parts of Vempolināṭṭu⁴⁰. A temple centred academy (*śālai*) and a hospital (*āturaśāla*) also functioned in the temple. Significantly the temple is associated with a local celebrity known as Śankaramangalathamma who is associated with the origin of the temple⁴¹. The south- north high way passed through Tiruvalla.

Trikkotiṭṭānam

Nammālṭṭvār sings on this shrine which is included in the cluster of shrines. He gives an account of the *Vedic* Brahmins in the place⁴². This *divyadēśam* shrine bears Cēra inscriptions and the inscriptions prove that the temple was a prosperous institution. The Cēra records give an account of rituals and offerings made in the temple. The records also tell about the royal initiative in patronising the temple. A record of 976 AD of king Bhāskara Ravi Varma speaks about the fixation of annual dues from the temple and the institution of *ākkiram* or Brahmin feeding⁴³. It is stated in another inscription of the period of Bhāskara Ravi that the *Uttiraviṭṭā* festival instituted by Śrīvallabhan Kōta, the governor of Vēnṭṭāṭṭu, is to be celebrated⁴⁴. It is apparent from the inscription that Śrīvallabhan Kōta instituted *Uttiraviṭṭā* festival and a council known as *Uttirakanṭṭattār* was set up to look after that festival. It is recorded that flag should be hoisted on the day of *Kārṭṭika* asterism in *Kumbham* month and the festival should be held for ten days from *Kārṭṭika* to *Utrṭam* in *Kumbham*. The Brahmin feeding and *Kūttu* were also instituted on festival days.

A record of the 48th regnal year of king Bhāskara Ravi states that Iyakkan Kovinnan made provisions for *nandāvilṭṭakku* on *Viṣṭu* day and *tiruamrṭutu* for twelve Brahmins on every *amāvāsi* day in the temple⁴⁵. To meet the expenses, the donor made a donation of a plot of 400 *kalam* with an yield of 4800 *parṭas* paddy to the temple. An inscription of 991 AD of king

Bhāskara Ravi records a temple committee resolution regarding the proper management and cultivation of landed properties of the temple⁴⁶. The temple committee resolutions also aimed at making temple administration effective and efficient. Similarly another unique record in the form of a protective order of the twenty sixth regnal year of king Bhāskara Ravi states about the royal initiative to protect the property of temple servants⁴⁷. A record which is datable to the age of Bhāskara Ravi tells about a land donation for food offerings in the temple at twelve feet time before mid-day by a devotee⁴⁸. Kanṭṭian Kumāran, the governor of Kilimaināt made a gift of a *cērikkal* for instituting *nandāvilakku* in the temple⁴⁹. This is registered in a record which is datable to 1064AD. A record datable to c.1050AD of king Ravi Rāma makes provisions for punishing thieves who committed theft in the temple⁵⁰. It is evident from these records that Trikkotiṭtānam temple received wealth enormously from donations. This temple was also situated on the highway that ran from south to north.

Trikkākkara

Nammālṭvār celebrates Trikkākkara shrine in *Tiruvāimolī*⁵¹. The temple was founded by Sthānṭu Ravi Kulaśēkhara alias Kulaśēkhara Ālṭvār⁵². It is significant that Visṭnṭu is conceived in this temple as Vāmana. Trikkākkara temple has an important place in the history of Vaisṭnavism in the Cēra kingdom as it was selected as the main venue of *Ōṇam* celebrations. In the post- Cēra age also this temple played an important role in the cultural history of Kerala as the focal point of *Ōṇam* festival⁵³. Significantly, the shrine yields many Cēra inscriptions. An inscription of king Kerala Kesari of c.913 AD records an endowment of landed properties for meeting the expenses of *tiruamrṭutu*, *tiruākkiram*, *sānti*, *pūtapali*, *olṭikkavi* and *palṭittāmam*⁵⁴. Along with these offerings, provision was also made for garlands and payments to various temple servants. As the inscription is about

the routine expenses of the temple, it is doubted by M.G.S. Narayanan that the endowment was made by the royal patron after the renovation of the temple⁵⁵.

A record of c.950AD speaks about the setting up of a *vilāṅku* in the month of *Vriśchikam* in the temple by Venpuyum Nārāyaṅan⁵⁶. In 953AD Cāttiraśikhāmanīi alias Kilīān Atikal, probably a Cēra princess, donated a lamp and land for *nandavilāṅku* and *tiruākkiram* in the temple⁵⁷. An inscription of the 16th regnal year of king Indu Kōta states that land was surrendered partly as a gift and partly in return by Kanīṅan Purāyan, the Governor of Kāṅkaraināṅu for gold from two temple officers⁵⁸. An inscription of the 17th regnal year of Indu Kōta (c. 960AD) states that land was surrendered to the temple by Kanīṅan Purayan, governor of Kāṅkaraināṅu. This land transaction was made in return to the payment of gold by Netīyatalīi Cōlīāśikhāmanīi⁵⁹. A record of 968 AD of king Bhāskara Ravi speaks about a transaction by the temple committee for instituting feeding in the temple⁶⁰. It is stated in the record that the temple authorities handed over the gold donated by Cirumatteppulai Kōta Keralan for food to four brothers and accepted their joint family property as security. They were given the right to cultivate the property as tenants of the temple. A record of 975AD of king Bhāskara Ravi states about the institution of ritual feeding of the deity and the Śrī Vaisīṅavas or the Brahmin trustees⁶¹. There were twenty five Brahmin trustees in this temple.

In 999AD a perpetual lamp was instituted in the temple by Cirumatteppulai Kōta Nārāyaṅan⁶². Similarly a record of 1004 AD of king Bhāskara Ravi refers to a gift of gold by Kovinnan Kunrīappōlan to the temple⁶³. The gold was invested in land by Netīyatalīi Purāiyan to meet the expenses of a three day feast for Brahmins and Śrī Vaisīṅavas in the temple. The feast was held for three days from the day of *Pūrātīam* asterism to

Tiruōṅṅam asterism. Ritual feeding was instituted in the temple in 1009AD⁶⁴. The temple committee decided in 1020AD to entrust Keralan Pōḷḷan with landed properties for *nandāvilḷakku* and Iravi Konnan with landed properties for providing materials for routine rituals in the temple⁶⁵. The prosperity of the temple is apparent from these records which give an account of the flow of wealth to the temple. The management of wealth was strictly done by the *Ūrālḷars*. This is evident in two cases as suggested in the inscriptions of c. 950 AD and c.958 AD⁶⁶. The *Ūrālḷars* were particularly careful about the management of the wealth of the temple. Wealth was stockpiled in the form of landed properties, gold, dress and ornaments.

Was there any other political reason for the prosperity of Trikkākkara temple apart from Cēra patronage? It is significant that Trikkākkara was the headquarters of Kālkarainātḷu province in the Cēra kingdom⁶⁷. The name Kālkarainātḷu points to its association with Trikkākkara and the story of Vāmana and Mahābali. The term ‘kāl’ originated from the story of Vāmana who measured the earth with his foot. The temple records refer to the governors of Kālkarainātḷu. The governors of Kālkarainātḷu were Brahmins and they were associated with Trikkākkara temple⁶⁸. Later the governors of Kālkarainātḷu became independent local chieftains of Etḷappalḷi. They had no standing army of their own, but were wholeheartedly patronised by several kings. Trikkākkara was located near to the south-north main trade route which passed through Etḷappalḷi. Again the trade route that stretched through Bōdināykkannūr pass from Pāṅḍḷyan kingdom to Mahōdayapuram passed through Trikkākkara which made the temple accessible to the *bhaktas* from the Pāṅḍḷyan kingdom too.

Tirumūḷḷikkalḷam

Tirumūḷḷikkalḷam *divyadēsam* was the *grāmaksḷētra* of Mūḷḷikkalḷam

Brahmin settlement. This temple was eulogised by both Tirumankai Ālīṅvār and Nammālīṅvār. Tirumankai Ālīṅvār praises the temple in *Tirunedunthantakam* and *Peria Tirumatāḷal* and Nammālīṅvār celebrates it in *Tiruvāimolī*⁶⁹. This *divyadēśam* was located nearer to Mahōdayapuram. Mūlīṅkalāṃ was a prominent Brahmin settlement in Kerala. This settlement enjoyed the right to become the trustees of *Mēltalī* which was located at Tirukkulaśēkharapuram temple⁷⁰. Further the eminence of Tirumūlīṅkalāṃ is obvious from *Mūlīṅkalāṃ kaccam*, a pan-Kerala code of temple regulation⁷¹. *Mūlīṅkalāṃ kaccam* was a set of laws intended for the effective management of temple properties. *Mūlīṅkalāṃkaccam* was ratified at Tirumūlīṅkalāṃ temple during the reign of Sthānīṅṅu Ravi.

What was the reason for the drafting of this set of temple laws at Tirumūlīṅkalāṃ? Tirumūlīṅkalāṃ was a Brahmin settlement which located in close proximity to Mahōdayapuram. There were several temples in and around the Cēra capital like Tiruvancikkulāṃ, Tirukkulaśēkharapuram etc. A striking aspect of these temples is that they were not *grāmaksētras*. Tirumūlīṅkalāṃ temple combined the virtues of a *grāmaksētra* and a *divyadēśam* shrine and Mūlīṅkalāṃ grāmam enjoyed the status of a *Talī*. This kind of politico-social prominence of Mūlīṅkalāṃ and its temple were the reasons for selecting Tirumūlīṅkalāṃ temple as the venue for drafting the code of regulations for Cēra temples. Tirumūlīṅkalāṃ shrine yields two Cēra inscriptions. A record of 948 AD of the reign of Indu Kōta states that *Śrīkāriyam* is regulated and provisions were made for *tiruamrītu*, *nivēdyam* and *tiruvilāṅku* in the temple⁷². *Uttamākkiram* was instituted for the students or *cāttirar*. The reference to *cāttirar* in the temple record is a pointer to the existence of a temple academy or *sālai* there. Another record of the 48th regnal year of king Bhāskara Ravi speaks about a temple committee resolution regarding the leasing out of landed properties⁷³. The land was a royal gift by

Manukulāditya. Manukulāditya was the title of Bhāskara Ravi.

Tirumir̥r̥akkot̥u

This *divyadēśam* was celebrated by Kulaśēkhara Āl̥vār in *Perumāl̥ Tirumol̥i*⁷⁴. The deity is referred to in the songs of Kulaśēkhara as *Vattavakt̥t̥uammān*. This is the only Kerala temple about which Kulaśēkhara Āl̥vār, the Cēra king, composed songs. An inscription of the eighth regnal year of king Ravi Kōta of 1028 AD records a gift of gold equivalent to 40 *pal̥ankāsu* to the temple by Cekkilan Śaktinjayan alias Cōl̥ā Muttarāyan of Kāvannūr⁷⁵. The record mentions the name of the temple as Tiruvittavakkot̥u. The donor hailed from the Cōl̥ā kingdom and the reference to him as a person who carried out the orders of Parakēsari Varma, the Cōl̥ā king, indicates that the donor was a Cōl̥ā commander. Parakēsari Varma is another name of Rajēndra Cōl̥ā.

The Cōl̥ā presence at Tirumir̥r̥akkot̥u is indicative of the Cōl̥ā occupation of the place and it is stated in the record that the Cōl̥ā commander arrived at Tirumir̥r̥akkot̥u on the orders of the Cōl̥ā king. The record again mentions that the endowment was made in the shrine of Mātēvar. Mātēvar is a corrupt form of Mahēśwara, another name for Śiva. It is significant that there is a Śiva temple presently in this temple complex. The Cōl̥ās were hardcore votaries of Śaivism and the Śiva temple in the temple complex originated under Cōl̥ā influence⁷⁶. This is the only known case of inter-religious rivalry between Śaiva and Vais̥n̥ava cults in Kerala. Tirumir̥r̥akkot̥u was located on the trade route that connected the Cōl̥ā and the Cēra kingdoms. This trade route stretched through Palakkad pass. The geographical location of the shrine on the trade route appeared to be the reason for the inclusion of Tirumir̥r̥akkot̥u in the sacred geography of Āl̥vārs. An undated and fragmentary record datable to c.10th century is also discovered from the

temple⁷⁷. This record registers a land donation to the temple for making arrangements for food offering in the temple.

Tirunāva

Tirunāva is the northern most *divyadēśam* in the corpus of the thirteen Vaisṇava centres in the Cēra kingdom. Tirumankai Ālīvār celebrates the shrine in *Peria Tirumolī* and Nammālīvār praises the temple in *Tiruvāimolī*⁷⁸. In *Tiruvāimolī*, the temple is referred to as situated in the midst of paddy fields and gardens. Legends hail the place as a seat of Brahmins who selected the legendary rulers known as Cēramān Perumāḷs⁷⁹. Tirunāva was located on the same route on which Tirumirīrakkotū shrine also situated. The location of the temple on this busy interregional route facilitated the devotees from distant areas to come to the temple frequently.

Other Early Vaisṇava Centres:

Tirukkulaśēkharapuram

This temple which was situated in the vicinity of the Cēra capital is regarded as a prominent Visṇu shrine in the Cēra country. The name of the temple indicates that the shrine originated in the reign of Sthānū Ravi Kulaśēkhara or Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār. An inscription of Tirukkulaśēkharapuram temple, which is datable on palaeographical basis to the second half of the eleventh century, suggests the 195th year of the foundation of the temple⁸⁰. Sthānū Ravi Kulaśēkhara ruled between 844AD and c. 883AD and the temple year in the above mentioned record suggests the second half of the eleventh century as the foundation period of the temple which goes hand in hand with the period of Sthānū Ravi Kulaśēkhara. The temple was founded in the Cēra capital by Sthānū Ravi to provide a place for Vaisṇavism in the Cēra capital and to overshadow the

prominence of Tiruvancikkulāṃ Śiva temple in Mahōdayapuram. The temple was eulogised by Sundara Mūrti Nāyanār and it was the only temple in Kerala about which the Śaiva *bhakta* composed songs. The conspicuous absence of Tirukkulaśēkharapuram temple in the sacred geography of *Ālīvārs* including its own founder might be due to the fact that the temple came into existence only in the closing years of Sthānū Ravi's reign. Tirukkulaśēkharapuram temple had a major political role in the Cēra age as it was the seat of *Mēltalī* which was represented by Mūlīkkalāṃ settlement in the Cēra council known as *Nālu Talī*⁸¹. Also the ministers in Cēra kingdom were known as *Talī Adhikārikal* or *Talīiatiris*.

The above mentioned inscription speaks about a temple committee resolution which stated that *Talī* and *Talī Adhikārikal* met with certain other higher officials and accepted gold from Nākkanāliyakattu Kovinna Tāmōtiran for instituting *Kūttu*. This was done in conformity with the rules of the temple. This record reveals that a devotee instituted dance drama in the temple. Another record which is assignable to the eleventh century states about a temple committee resolution⁸². As per the temple committee resolution, the four *Talīs* unanimously agreed to divide among themselves the revenue from a land called Neytattala Mēkkātū.

Irinjālakkutā Kūtāl Mānīkyam

This temple was the *grāmaksētra* of Irinjālakkutā Brahmin settlement and it yields two Cēra inscriptions. An Irinjālakkutā inscription of 855AD of Sthānū Ravi records a temple committee resolution regarding a land transaction⁸³. Another record of Bhāskara Ravi speaks about the management of the landed properties of the temple⁸⁴. A plot called Patinnāyirū Porūai which was donated by Cōkirattu Potuvāl was renamed as Bhāskarapuram and

‘the Six Hundred’ (the provincial militia) of Valīlvanātīu was entrusted the right to protect the land. Irinjālakkuṭīa was one among the thirty two original Brahmin settlements and the settlement had a prominent role in the Cēra age. This Brahmin settlement was allotted a position in the Cēra council of ministry⁸⁵. Irinjālakkuṭīa had the right to send representatives to *Cingapurattalīi*. It is significant that Irinjālakkuṭīa was located on the trade route which proceeded to Mahōdayapuram from the northern division of the kingdom⁸⁶.

Kurumattūr

Recently, an inscription was discovered from Kurumattūr temple near Areekkode⁸⁷. Though the date of the record is not fixed convincingly, it belonged to the period of Rāma Rājasēkhara, the first ruler of the Cēra dynasty of Mahōdayapuram. Though the record is about the digging of a temple well, it contains eulogy of the Cēra king. The presence of the inscription reveals that the temple existed in ninth century and received royal patronage.

Tirunelli

Tirunelli temple was in the Purīaikilīānātīu province in the Cēra kingdom⁸⁸. Two Copper Plate inscriptions bear information regarding this temple during the Cēra age. The Copper Plate inscription of 1008 AD of the age of king Bhāskara Ravi records a temple committee resolution. Certain Śankaran Kōta Varma alias *Atīkaīl Purīaikilīāl, Nilīal* and *Panīi* made a land donation to the temple for conducting ritual feast⁸⁹. The governor donated certain ornaments too. The land was made a *kilīitu* of ‘the Five Hundred’ (the provincial militia) of Purīaikilīānātīu.

Another record of 1021 AD of King Bhāskara Ravi states that Kuncikkutṭā Varma *alias* Vīra Kurūmpurāiyūr, Mūttakūrṭil Elṭunnūrṭuvar, Panṭiyutāya Nāyan, Ūr and Ūritavakai Velṭṭalṭar met and decided in unanimity to set aside a plot of land for conducting rituals like *tiruamrṭutu* and *nandāvilṭakku* in the temple⁹⁰. This land was placed in the hands of *Sanyāsikal*, *Yōgikal* and *Śrī Vaisṭnṭavar*. *Śrī Vaisṭnṭavar* were the Brahmin trustees of the temple. It is evident from *Kōkilasandēsa* of the post-Cēra age that Tirunelli, located in the mountainous ranges of Western Ghats in Wayanad, was on a trade route that proceeded from the Cōṭṭa country to Kerala through Udagamanṭdṭalam – Nilgiri pass⁹¹. It is also significant that Wayanad was increasingly under the cultural influence of the Kadambas of Karnataka in the fifth- sixth centuries AD⁹². The cultural influence of Kadambas was the reason for the spread of Brahminic culture in Wayanad and for the emergence of Tirunelli as a prominent Vaisṭnṭava centre. Several Jain centres are found in Wayanad and this is also due to the Karnataka influence.

Cokkūr Temple

An inscription of the 15th regnal year of Kōta Ravi of 898AD refers to a gift of land by Kārṭkōtṭupurattu Kadamban Kumāran to the temple for the routine expenses such as *nivēdya*, *vilṭakku*, *śānti*, *ākkiram*, *atṭai* and *bali*⁹³. The shrine is referred to in this record as Kumāra Nārāyanṭapuram temple and the name is derived from a combination of the names of the donor and Nārāyanṭa, a name of Visṭnṭu. The record also speaks about the presence of *devadasis* in the temple and it is the earliest record which mentions about *Mūṭṭikkalṭattuvyavastai* or *Mūṭṭikkalṭamkaccam*.

Trippūnṭithurṭa Temple

An inscription of 913AD of king Kōta Ravi is found in Trippūnṭithurṭa

temple which speaks about a temple committee resolution which unanimously regulated the affairs of the temple in the presence of Iravi Āticcan, the *amaicci* (minister) and other officials. This inscription was written by Ā Cāttan Kumāran of Pūnīthurāi⁹⁴. The prefix ‘Tiru’ which denotes sacred is a later addition to the place-name Pūnīthurai and hence the present place-name Trippūnīthurā. It is obvious from *Śukasandēśa* that Trippūnīthurā was included in the Vandanāṭṭu Brahmin *grāma*⁹⁵. The origins of Trippūnīthurā temple and the Brahmin settlement are interlinked. Trippūnīthurā was accessible to *bhaktas* as the place was on the south-north highway.

Triccambaram

Triccambaram temple was within the Mūsāka kingdom and *Mūsākavamśakāvya* refers to the worship of Bālakrīśṇā in this temple by Valabha II, the Mūsāka king⁹⁶. *Mūsākavamśakāvya* refers to the place as Śambara. Various names such as Hari, Madhumathana, Murabhit and Śauri are used in this work to denote the deity of the temple. These synonyms of the deity reveal that the deity was Krīśṇā. The proprietorship of Triccambaram shrine belonged to the Brahmin settlement at Talīparāmba. The *Sthalamāhātmyas* speak about the association of Śambara, a sage, with this place and the place-name is also linked to the name of the sage⁹⁷. It is probable that Śambara was a local celebrity associated with Triccambaram. The Sanskrit place-name, Śambara, corresponds with the name of the sage. The *Sthalamāhātmya* was fabricated later to corroborate the new place-name.

The Kerala place-names were Sanskritised in a loose manner in medieval period⁹⁸. Often the Sanskritised place-name was fabricated on the basis of the meaning of the original place-name and sometimes the Sanskrit place-name was concocted after making necessary changes in the original name of the place. In this case both the names resemble each other in terms of pronunciation. Usually the latter method was resorted to when it was found

difficult to find out the meaning of the original name. In this manner, the place-name Kollam was Sanskritised into Kolāmbam, Kodungallūr as Kōdilingapura and Vembalanāt̃u into Bimbalidēśa. The *Sthalamāhātmyas* were produced in large numbers to substantiate the concoction of the new names.

The origin of the temple was associated with Talīparīāmba Brahmin settlement. Triccambaram Viṣṇū temple was promoted to a dominant position by certain Brahmin settlers who were the devotees of Viṣṇū in Talīparīāmba *grāmam* which was centred on Śiva temple. Gradually the Viṣṇū temple also attained a status equivalent to that of a *grāmaksīētra*⁹⁹. It is significant in this respect that *Mūsāakavamśakāvya* prominently mentions both Talīparīāmba Śiva temple and Triccambaram in association with Talīparīāmba settlement. This must be the reason for the consideration of Triccambaram temple as a *grāmaksīētra* in a later period.

A record of 1040 AD of king Rāja Rāja appears to refer to a renovation of the temple¹⁰⁰. This was a reconstruction of the temple. Another Cēra record, possibly of the eleventh century, is found on the base of the central shrine and this record states that Manvēpala Mānaviyatan, the governor of Erānāt̃u under the Cēra kings, makes an endowment for *tiruvilākku* in the temple¹⁰¹. An arrangement was also made for the weekly supply of oil to the temple. From these records, it is evident that Triccambaram temple received Cēra royal patronage when the Mūsāaka kings accepted the Cēra suzerainty in the ninth century.

Nārāyanī Kanīnūr Temple (Rāmantalī)

The location of this temple at the foot of Ēlīmalai and the discovery of an inscription, which refers to Validhara Vikrāma Rāma, the Mūsāaka king, in

the temple suggest that Nārāyaṅ Kanṅnūr temple was associated with the Mūsāka rulers. This record is datable to c.929AD and is an endowment of a land donation by Validhara Vikrāma Rāma for instituting *nandāvilāṅku* and *nivēdya* to the deity in the temple¹⁰². The deity mentioned in this record is Narasinga Vinnākar Tēvar. This clearly points to the fact that it was a Vaisṅava shrine dedicated to Lord Narasimha. However the present concept of the deity is that of Śankara Nārāyaṅa¹⁰³. When did this change come into effect? Did it originate in a later age? This change was effected in the eleventh century AD. This is evident from a record of 1075 AD which is found on the base of the central shrine¹⁰⁴.

The record points to the renovation of the temple under the Ālūpa king Kunda Varma Ālūpēndra. This king, like the other medieval Ālūpa kings, was a devotee of Śiva. For instance, an inscription from the Manjunātha temple at Kadri of the king states in one line that the king was a bee at the lotus feet of Śiva¹⁰⁵. In the Rāmantalī inscription of Kundavarman, it is stated that Hiraṅyagarbhan constructed of the image and the sanctum was built in granite with the help of Kunda Ālūparāiyar. It is also mentioned that Chandrasēkharan built the shrine. Thus it is clear that the temple was renovated and the image was newly made or being installed in the temple. The shift from Narasimha to Śankara Nārāyaṅa occurred in the aftermath of this renovation.

Nārāyaṅapuram

This temple was also within the Mūsāka kingdom. The *Mūsākavamsākāvya* mentions about the construction of the temple. It is stated in *Mūsākavamsākāvya* that Kundavarman of the Mūsāka dynasty who was the nephew of Jaymanī and the younger brother of Valabha I, built

the Viṣṇu shrine at Nārāyaṅapuram¹⁰⁶. Nārāyaṅapuram is presently known as Nārāttu. The place-name Nārāttu is the contraction of Nārāyaṅapuram.

Pullūr

Pullūr Viṣṇu shrine was the *grāmaksṛētra* of Pullūr settlement in Tulūnātū. Presently this temple is located in the Kasargod district of Kerala. This temple as a *grāmaksṛētra* came into existence in the northern extremity of Kerala. An inscription of eleventh century of the 58th regnal year of king Bhāskara Ravi is found engraved on a single slab in the courtyard of the temple¹⁰⁷. This record which is assignable to 1020AD stipulates the tax to be paid to the sovereign. The inscription suggests that Pullūr temple was under the Cēra patronage during the period of Bhāskara Ravi. The Brahmins of Pullūr performed the duties of priests in several temples of Kerala¹⁰⁸.

Panniyūr

The Viṣṇu temple at Panniyūr was the *grāmaksṛētra* of Panniyūr Brahmin settlement. Hence this shrine is one of the early Vaisṇava centres in Kerala. An undated and fragmentary inscription, which is found engraved in the temple, speaks about a temple committee resolution regarding agreements on the temple property¹⁰⁹. The record is datable to the eleventh century. It also registers a gift of *Ūrāṅmaittanam* and *paratīai* of another temple to the *Ūrālīars* of Panniyūr.

Triprayār

Triprayār is a shrine which bears a Cēra record of tenth century¹¹⁰. The record refers to a temple committee resolution for an agreement for making provisions for *nandāvilākku*, *nivēdya*, *kilīitu* and *ākkiram* in the temple.

Pārthivaśēkharapuram (Pārthivapuram)

This Visṅṅu shrine was constructed by Ko Karunandadṅakkan, the Āy king. The Huzur office plates of 864AD of the king records that the king constructed the Visṅṅu temple and the village round the place known as Ulṅṅakkuṅṅivilṅṅai was renamed as Pārthivaśēkharapuram¹¹¹. Significantly, a temple academy (*śālai*) was also established in the precincts of the temple and arrangements were made for its maintenance. Many landed properties were also donated to the temple by the king for performing rituals. Another inscription is also found in this temple which registers a gift of land for instituting *Vrischikavilṅṅakku*. The donation was made by Kāman Tatṅakkan of Kunrṅattūr¹¹². An inscription of the eleventh century is also found in the temple¹¹³. The record registers a gift of land to the local chieftain of Valṅṅlṅuvanātṅu and it also contains certain conditions in favour of the Pārthivapuram temple.

Alṅṅagiyapānṅṅṅyapuram

The Alṅṅagiyapānṅṅṅyapuram Visṅṅu temple is presently in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu. It was in the Āy kingdom during the early medieval period. A record of 1077AD registers a gift of land to the temple by Kanṅṅan Dēvan¹¹⁴. A record of 1124AD is found on the west base of the central shrine in the temple¹¹⁵. The record is about a land transaction in which the temple was to receive certain taxes on land. The temple is presently known as Vēnkatṅṅāchalapati temple and this name is of later origin.

Mānipuram

An inscription in the courtyard of the private temple in the compound of Mākkāttu Mana makes clear that the Visṅṅu shrine at Mānipuram existed in the tenth century AD¹¹⁶. The inscription is of the 3rd regnal year of king Indu Kōta, ie, 946 AD and it records a temple committee resolution for

making certain arrangements with a plot of land which was set apart for *akanālīkai* expenses in the temple and lamps. Nothing more is known about the temple.

Tiruvangūr

Tiruvangūr Visṅṅu temple bears a Cēra inscription of the 35th regnal year of king Bhāskara Ravi¹¹⁷. It is a short two sentence inscription which says that Makalūr Nārāyanān Kēsavan built *balikkal* in the temple and instituted regular expenses of *nālīi* rice. Another inscription, which is found on the rock surface near the temple, records the institution of *tiruākkiram*¹¹⁸. It is stated that a fine is prescribed for every violation of rules. This record is datable either to the latter half of tenth century or to the first half of eleventh century.

Cēnamangalam

Cēnamangalam Visṅṅu temple bears a Cēra record of the early half of the tenth century¹¹⁹. The record states that *Parāiyūr*, *Ūrarī*, *Paratāiyarī* and *Potuvālī* met and unanimously fixed the amount of ghee payable as rent by a person for plots of land which were leased out to him. This record is a temple committee resolution for ensuring effective administration of the temple properties.

Mitrānandapuram

Mitrānandapuram temple is a unique temple complex where three separate shrines of Brahma, Visṅṅu and Śiva are found. This temple complex located closely to the west of the main temple of Tiruvananthapuram. The Visṅṅu temple in this temple complex existed in the Cēra period as it is evidenced by the Mitrānandapuram inscription found in it¹²⁰. The record

speaks about the donation of a land by Pugali Śelvan or Tiruvālyil Danma Cetṭi, a merchant from Tirukkōlūr near Tirunelveli. It is held that the shrines of the Trinity in Mitrānandapuram temple complex were established for the Tuḷu priests of Tiruvananthapuram temple¹²¹.

Nāvāikkulāam

An inscription of 1124AD speaks about a donation by Ēranātṭu Kumāran Kānṭān for *tiruvilāaku* in Nāvāikkulāam temple¹²². Presently the deity is Śankara Nārāyaṅa. However the above mentioned record refers to the deity only as *Tēvar*. From this reference the identity of the deity is not certain. It is suspected by M.G.S. Narayanan that the appearance of a person from Ēranātṭu in northern parts of the Cēra kingdom in a record of a temple in the southern division in Vēnātṭu as a donor is suggestive of the military credentials of the person as it was the period of Cēra-Cōḷā wars¹²³. The donor came down to the south to assist the Cēra forces in their battles against the Cōḷās.

Ananthapuram

Ananthapuram temple at Kumbalā was the *grāmaksētra* of Ananthapuram settlement. The *Kēralōlpatti* and *Grāmapadhathi* traditions glorify this temple as a Vaisṅava *grāmaksētra*¹²⁴.

Trivikramamangalam

The Viṅu shrine at Trivikramamangalam near Tiruvananthapuram was a prominent Vaisṅava centre in southern Kerala. An inscription, which is found on the south base of the temple *manḍāpa*, states that the *manḍāpa* was erected by two traders called as Puttan Trivikraman and Vikramamangalattiran¹²⁵. A temple inscription, which is datable to

eleventh-twelfth centuries, records the conduct of ritual feeding in the temple¹²⁶. The inscription also makes clear that certain landed properties were donated to the temple for the conduct of morning rituals by certain *bhaktas*. A land donation was made in the temple by a *bhakta* called as Sāttan Kunrīan for burning lamps in *Vrischika* month¹²⁷. Another undated record states that ritual feeding, Brahmin feeding and special food offering of the deity were made in the temple by certain *bhaktas* for the rituals on Puratīam days of every month¹²⁸.

It is apparent in the light of various Cēra inscriptions from various Visṅṅu shrines that many Visṅṅu temples prospered in the Cēra kingdom. The Visṅṅu temples of Indiānūr, Alanallūr and Kāmapuram bear Cēra inscriptions¹²⁹. Similarly, certain Śiva temples of the age had the sub-shrines of Visṅṅu. For instance, it is evident from a Cēra inscription that a sub-shrine of Visṅṅu existed in the temple complex of Triprangōde temple¹³⁰. The lack of epigraphic or literary evidence should not lead us to think that the Vaisṅṅavite *grāmaksīētras* of Kārantōlīa, Ālathiyūr, Nīrmanṅṅa and Venmanīi did not exist in the Cēra age as prosperous Vaisṅṅava centres. The tradition of the original settlements and the remnants of the ruined temples from these places prove otherwise¹³¹. A tenth century damaged inscription from Nelveli Visṅṅu temple contains only certain names¹³². Probably these names were those of the *Ūrālīars* of the temple.

Temple inscriptions bring to light that temples were prosperous institutions and their prosperity was due to the royal patronage. Large scale endowments to temples in the form of land, money and gold transformed temples into wealthy institutions. The functions of temples got widened and

this paved the way to the development of a temple-centred society and culture in Kerala. Just like Viṣṇu temples, Śiva temples received royal patronage and donations and were at the nuclei of society and culture. Similarly, temples in other parts of contemporary South India emerged as multipurpose institutions with multifarious socio-cultural roles¹³³. Temples, in these regions too, ran academies and hospitals, promoted arts, literature and theatre. Liberal endowments to temples enriched the temple treasury and expanded the material base of temples.

To conclude, there were several Vaiṣṇava centres in the Cēra kingdom. We do not have precise data regarding the construction of many of these temples. It is certain that the Vaiṣṇava centres emerged in Kerala in the aftermath of Brahmin immigration and the spread of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult was a catalyst in the proliferation of the Viṣṇu temples. Temples were renovated as structural temples during the Cēra age which furthered the scope of the functions of temples. The proximity of trade routes was an accelerating factor for the emergence of temples as notable pilgrim spots. Royal patronage advanced the material base of temples and played the role of a catalyst in the rise and prosperity of Vaiṣṇava centres in the Cēra age.

Notes and References:

1. See chapter II.
2. According to Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, the Āy kingdom extended up to Tiruvalla in the north. The studies of M.G.S. Narayanan makes clear that the Āy kingdom consisted of the present Tiruvananthapuram district of Kerala and Kanyakumari district of Tamilnadu. In this context, it is certain that the southern most *divyadēśams* were within the Āy kingdom. See Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*,1970a, p.165; M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*,1996, pp.102-103; *Idem*, *op.cit.*,1994, pp.227-234.
3. The Aramboli pass linked southern Kerala and the Pānḍīyan kingdom.V. Nagam Aiya, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, p.16; T.A.Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, p.20; V.K.R. Menon, “The Natural Routes in Malabar”, in Rathi Ramachandran, Girija Narayanan and Ammini Ramachandran (eds.), *History of Medieval Kerala*, New Delhi,2005,pp.1-4.
4. T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*; William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.30.
5. *Māmānkam Rekhakal*, pp.21-23; M.G.S. Narayanan, *Calicut: The City of Truth Revisited*, Tenhipalam, 2006b, pp.153-154.
6. The post Cēra literary works such as *Śukasandēśa* and *Unṅīnīunīlisandēśa* refer to the south-north main route.
7. See for Trikkākkara inscriptions *Index No.*A.19, A.24, A.25, A.26, A.28, A.30, A.35, A.41, A.44, A.45, B.7, B.8, B.9, B.10, B.18 and B.20; See for Trikkotiṭṭānam inscriptions *Index No.*A.31, A.32, A.38, A.42, A.47, A.48, A.64 and B.20; See for Tiruvalla Copper Plates *Index No.* A.80; See for Tiruvanvandīūr inscriptions *Index No.*A.22, B.13, B.14 and C.40; See for Tirumūlīkkalāam inscriptions *Index No.*A.23 and A.37; See for Tirumirīrīakkotīu inscription *Index No.*C.15.
8. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*,1996, p.102.
9. The south-north trade route passed in the vicinity of Cengannūr. As a prominent Brahmin settlement, Cengannūr was one of the notable places in medieval Kerala. See for the reference to the Achankōvil pass and the trade route to Cengannūr T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*; Robert Caldwell, *A History of Tinnevely*, New Delhi, 1881, rpt.1982, p.25.
10. The people of many places in central Travancore like Konni still consider the route that passed through Achankōvil as sacred and call it as ‘Achankōvil pāta’ or the pass of Achankōvil.
11. Adoor K.K. Ramachandran Nair, *Kerala Charithrathile Chila Vismrithadhyangal*, Kottayam, 1973, pp.90-91.
12. H. Gundert, *op.cit.*, pp.15-16.
13. Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 1978, p.30.
14. P.Unnikrishnan Nair, *Tiruppuliyur*, Tiruvalla, 1993, pp.11-12; M.G.Sasibhooshan, “Pandavakshetrangal”, *Sannidhanam*, Vol.28, No.4, December, 2008,pp.25-31.
15. See for Trikkākkara inscription *Index.No.*A.30; *T.A.S.*,Vol.II.,pp.38 -40; See for Tirunelli record *Index. No.*A.46; V.R. Parameswaran Pillai, *op.cit.*, pp.170-175; See for Tiruvalla Copper Plates *Index No.*A.80; *T.A.S.*,Vol.II.,pp.131-207.

16. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*,1996, p.110.
17. *Nālayira Divya Prabandham,op.cit.*, – *Tiruvāimolīi, pāsurams* -3469 -3479.
18. S. Padmanabhan, *Temples in Kanya Kumari District*, Nagarkovil, 1970,p.54.
19. *T.A.S.* Vol. IV., p.198.
20. *Ibid.*, Vol.VI, Part-I, pp.1- 4.
21. S. Padmanabhan, *op.cit.*, p.105.
22. *Nālayira Divya Prabandham, op.cit.*, – *Tiruvāimolīi, pāsurams*- 3722 -3732
23. *T.A.S.* Vol.VI., p.146.
24. See Note no 3 above.
25. *Nālayira Divya Prabandham, op.cit.*, –*Tiruvāimolīi, pāsurams*- 3678 -3688.
26. *Cilappatikaram*, XXVI,1.62.
27. *T.A.S.*, Vol. I, pp. 56-57.
28. *Nālayira Divya Prabandham, op.cit.*,- *Siriya Tirumatīal, pāsuram*-39; *Tiruvāimolīi, pāsurams*-3535-3545.
29. Kallur Narayana Pillai, *Tirucengannur Ksetra Mahatmyam*, Tiruvanathapuram, 1936,pp.32-33.
30. *Nālayira Divya Prabandham, op.cit.*, –*Tiruvāimolīi, pāsurams*- 3480 -3490.
31. *Ibid.*, *pāsurams* - 3480- 3490.
32. *Ibid.*, *pāsurams* – 3227- 3239.
33. *Index. No.A.22; T.A.S.*, Vol.V., p.34.
34. *Index. No. B.13; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp.22-24.
35. *Index. No. B.14; T.A.S.*, Vol.II.,pp.24-25.
36. P.G. Rajendran, *op.cit.*, pp.572-573.
37. *Nālayira Divya Prabandham, op.cit.*, – *Peria Tirumolīi, pāsuram*-9-7-(full)- 1808-1817, *Tiruvāimolīi, pāsurams*- 3205- 3215.
38. *Index. No. A.80; T.A.S.*, Vol.II., pp.131-207.
39. See chapter VII.
40. *T.A.S.*, Vol.II, pp.131-207.
41. V.Raghavan Nambyar, *op.cit.*,p.75.
42. *Nālayira Divya Prabandham,op.cit.*, –*Tiruvāimolīi, pāsurams*-3502-3512.
43. *Index. No.A.31; T.A.S.*, Vol. II.,p.33; *T.A.S.*, Vol. V., pp.176-178.
44. *Index. No.A.32; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., p.33.
45. *Index. No.A.38; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., p.45.
46. *Index. No.A.42; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp.34-37.
47. *Index. No.A.47; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., p.40.
48. *T.A.S.*, Vol. V., p.180.
49. *Index No. B. 20; T.A.S.*, Vol. V., pp.181-183.
50. *T.A.S.*, Vol. V., pp.172 -176.
51. *Nālayira Divya Prabandham,op.cit.*, –*Tiruvāimolīi, pāsurams*-3612-3622.

52. See chapters II and VII.
53. See chapter VII.
54. *T.A.S.*, Vol. III., pp.186-188.
55. *Index. No.A.19.*
56. *Index. No. B.8 ; T.A.S.*, Vol. III., pp.173-174.
57. *Index. No. A.24 ; T.A.S.*, Vol. III., pp.81-82.
58. *Index. No. A.25; T.A.S.*, Vol. III., pp.161-169.
59. *Index. No. A.26; T.A.S.*, Vol. III., pp.171 -173.
60. *Index. No. A.28; T.A.S.*, Vol. III., pp. 179 -182.
61. *Index. No. A.30; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp. 38 -40.
62. *Index. No. A.44; T.A.S.*, Vol. III., pp.182 -184.
63. *Index. No. A.35; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp.46 -48.
64. *Index. No. A.45; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp. 42 -44.
65. *Index. No. A.41; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp.48 -49.
66. See for the record of c.950AD *Index No.B.7; T.A.S.*,Vol.III.,pp.174 -175; See for the record of c.958AD *Index No.B.9; T.A.S.*,Vol.III.,pp.177 -179.
67. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p. 99.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Nālayira Divya Prabandham, op.cit.,– PeriaTirumolīi, 7-1-6, pāsuram-1553; PeriaTirumatīal- pāsuram-65; Tirunedunthandakam, pāsuram-10; Tiruvāimolīi, pāsurams-3625-3633.*
70. H. Gundert, *op.cit.*, p.25; M.G.S. Narayanan,*op.cit.*,1996,p.77; Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2009, p.236.
71. Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*,1970a,pp.336-338; M.G.S. Narayanan, *op. cit.*, 1996, pp.114-115.
72. *Index No.A.23; T.A.S.*, Vol. III., pp.189 -191.
73. *Index No.A.37; T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp.45 -46.
74. *Nālayira Divya Prabandham, op.cit., Perumālī Tirumolīi,- pāsurams-688-698.*
75. *Index No. A. 52.*
76. See for a discussion on the religious policy of the Cōlīas and religious life in the Cōlīa country. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1975, pp.635-657.
77. *Index No. C. 15.*
78. *Nālayira Divya Prabandham, op.cit.,–PeriaTirumolīi-pāsuram-6-8-3, pāsuram-1520; Tiruvāimolīi, pāsurams-3634-3644.*
79. H. Gundert, *op.cit.*, p.17.
80. *Index. No.B.22; T.A.S.*, Vol. V., pp. 193-194.
81. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.77; Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*,2009, p.236.
82. *Index. No. B.32; T.A.S.*, Vol. VI., pp. 192-193.
83. *Index. No. A. 3 ; B.R.R.I.*, Vol. IX, Part.I. pp. 47-48.

84. *Index. No. A. 74 ; B.R.R.I., Vol. IX, Part.I. pp. 48-50.*
85. *M.G.S. Narayanan, op.cit., 1996, p.84.*
86. *The route of the messenger in Kōkilasandēśa travels from north to south via Triśśūr, Perumanam, Irinjālakkutīa and Mahōdayapuram to Cēnnamangalam. It seems that this route got divided at Triśśūr and one route proceeded to the north and another branch proceeded to the Cōlīa kingdom.*
87. *This is a three stanza inscription of Rāma Rājaśēkhara, the first known ruler of the Cēra dynasty. See chapter II, Note no.23.*
88. *M.G.S. Narayanan, op.cit., 1996, pp.94-95.*
89. *Index No.A.36; I.A., Vol. XX., pp.285-290.*
90. *Index No.A.46; E.I. Vol. XVI, pp. 339-345.*
91. *The messenger in Kōkilasandēśa travels from Kancipuram to Kerala through Udaghamandalam and Wayanad route.*
92. *I.A., Vol.XXX., pp.409-421; See chapter II, Note no.10.*
93. *Index No.A.8; S.I.I., Vol. VII, p.72.*
94. *Index No.A.16; T.A.S., Vol. VI, p.64.*
95. *Śukasandēśa, ślōkas-62-63.*
96. *Mūsāakavamśakāvya, chapter-13, ślōkas - 62-67.*
97. *P.G.Rajendran, op.cit., p.667.*
98. *Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma, op.cit., p.49; Also see for the discussion of the Sanskritisation of Place-Names in Medieval Kerala, Gopi Krishnan.G, "Sanskritisation of Place-Names in Medieval Kerala Literature", S.I.P.N., Vol. XXVII, 2007, pp.16-28.*
99. *Kesavan Veluthat, op.cit., 1978, p.23.*
100. *Index. No. A.61.*
101. *Index. No. C.1.*
102. *Index No.B.3; See for the text of the inscription in M.G.S.Narayanan, op.cit.,2000, pp.87-90.*
103. *P.G. Rajendran, op.cit., pp.1029-1030.*
104. *Index No.B.21; M.G.S.Narayanan, op.cit., 2000, pp.106-109.*
105. *B.A. Saletore, op.cit.,pp.94,98,293-295, 385 – 402; K.V. Ramesh, op.cit., pp.97-98.*
106. *Mūsāakavamśakāvya, chapter-13, ślōkas -13:14-16.*
107. *Index No.A.39; See the text of the inscription in M.G.S.Narayanan, op.cit., 2000, pp.70-71.*
108. *P.G. Rajendran, op.cit.,pp.854-855.*
109. *Index. No.C.16; S.I.I., Vol. V., p.336.*
110. *Index No.C.31; B.R.R.I., Vol. IX., Pt.-II., p.137.*
111. *T.A.S., Vol. I., pp.17-34.*
112. *Ibid., Vol. III., pp.52 -56.*
113. *Ibid., Vol. V., pp.170-171.*

114. *Ibid.*, Vol. III., pp. 56-57.
115. *Ibid.*, pp.57-58.
116. *Index. No.*A.20; *S.I.I.*, Vol. VII., pp.71-72.
117. *Index. No.* A. 50; *S.I.I.*, Vol. VII., p.75.
118. *Index. No.* A. 77; *S.I.I.*, Vol. VII., p.74.
119. *Index. No.* C.34; *T.A.S.*, Vol. VI., pp. 189-190.
120. *T.A.S.*, Vol. III., p.30.
121. P.G. Rajendran, *op.cit.*, p.980.
122. *T.A.S.*, Vol.VI., p.83.
123. *Index. No.* C.44.
124. H. Gundert, *op.cit.*, p.4.; B.A. Saletore, *op.cit.*, pp.293-295,385– 402.
125. *T.A.S.*, Vol.VI., p.62.
126. *Ibid.*,p.60.
127. *Ibid.*,p.61.
128. *Ibid.*,pp.61-62.
129. *Index.Nos.*A.63, C. 24, C.25, C.40.
130. *Index.No.* A.13; V.R. Parameswaran Pillai, *Prachina Likhithangal*, Kottayam, 1963, pp.162-168.
131. Ruins of old temples could be seen at Kārantōla, Ālathūr, Venñmanññi and Nīrmanññā and the *Kēralōlpatti* tradition enlists these settlements as original settlements. H. Gundert, *op.cit.*, p.26; Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 1978, pp.96- 97, 101.
132. *T.A.S.*, Vol. VII, p.96.
133. T.V.Mahalingam, *op.cit.*,pp.382-391; A.Suryakumari, *The Temples in Andhra*, New Delhi, 1988,pp.64-110; R.N.Nandi, *op.cit.*,pp.23-25; A.Nagabhushanan, “Temple in Medieval Deccan”, *Itihas*, Vol. XI.,No.1-2,1983,pp.153-164.

Chapter IV

VAISŪNAVISM IN THE POST-CĒRA AGE (1125AD-1700AD)

The dismemberment of the Cēra Kingdom of Mahōdayapuram by 1124 AD culminated in the advent of fissiparous tendencies in the form of the unleashing of a large number of minor chiefdoms. However this political fragmentation did not hamper the further consolidation of the Brahminical culture through the medium of the temple and the ideology of *bhakti*. Vaisŷnavism with its heavy Brahminic ideological substance continued to grow and get further solidified. The early Vaisŷava centres continued to function as prosperous Brahminic institutions. However, these shrines, except that of Tiruvananthapuram and, to certain extent, Tirunāva lost the place of pre-eminence that they had during the Cēra period as the most notable sacred spots in the sacred geography of Vaisŷavism. The post-Cēra age also witnessed the emergence of new *bhaktas* who wrote vast corpus of *bhakti* literature. The popularity of Vaisŷavism got enhanced and the Visŷu *bhakti* cult dominated the arts and thought of the day. The age also witnessed the rise and development of syncretic cults which contributed further to the growth of the Visŷu *bhakti* cult.

Divyadēsams in post-Cēra Age

Though the emotional Visŷu *bhakti* cult of Ālīvārs ceased to be in existence, *divyadēsams* continued to operate as centres of Visŷu worship and as pilgrim spots in the post-Cēra age. They remained as the main arenas of *Itihāsic- Purānīc* culture. However, the religious and cultural predominance of these temples underwent radical transformation in the post-

Cēra period. New Vaisṅṅava centres emerged with more religious excellence and with an exalted political clout in this period. The *divyadēśams*, except the shrines of Tiruvananthapuram and Tirunāva, got superseded in fame by other Vaisṅṅava centres. The advent of new royal temples did not hamper the prospects of royal patronage to *divyadēśams*. Along with the chieftains who held political sway, the wealthy merchants and the landed magnets put their weight well behind *divyadēśams*. Different post-Cēra inscriptions and temple records along with contemporary literature point to the prosperity of *divyadēśams*. Such records shed light on the flow of wealth to *divyadēśams*. Several such inscriptions are of the immediate post-Cēra age.

An inscription of 1614 AD of Tiruvanparisāram temple speaks about a donation of 150 *panṅams* for conducting *Tiruōṅṅam* festival in the month of *Āvanṅi* by Śambhu Nārāyanṅan Nambi¹. The details of expenditure are also specified. The donation was made for *cirṅappu* expenditure to the deity at the time of the rituals at *manṅdṅapa*. He instituted one *padṅakku* and six *nālṅṅi* of rice for the *cirṅappu* expenses and the donation was made to meet the expenditure for *pāyasam* with milk, *pāyasam* of jaggery, cakes, torch and light in front of the deity in procession and for the Brahmin bearer of the image of the deity in ritual procession. Also money was invested for the expenses of the rituals and processions of the deity and the sub-deities in the *curṅṅumanṅdṅapa*. Rituals in the sub-shrines of Sadaiyapuramudaiya Nāyanār, Śāsta and the goddess are specifically mentioned in this record. The amount was received to the temple treasury. Rituals and offerings were instituted to be conducted every year. Brahmin feeding was also instituted in the temple on every *Dwādaśi* days.

The temple was renovated in 1786AD. An inscription of 1786 AD makes clear that the pavings of the floor in front of the *orṅṅakkalmanṅdṅapam*

were the service done by one Kuppam Cetṭi of Pilṭaiyār Kōyilgrāmam². The two aforesaid inscriptions reveal that Tiruvanparisāram temple was patronised by devotees and various rituals and festivals were instituted in the temple. Along with sacred ritual feeding, Brahmin feeding was also instituted. The post- Cēra inscriptions of Tiruvatṭār temple from twelfth to sixteenth century also speak invariably of the reconstruction of the temple and the liberal munificence to the temple by royal patrons and *bhaktas*. An immediate post-Cēra inscription of the twelfth century of Vīra Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma Tiruvatṭi mentions a gift of land for ritual services in the temple³. An undated and fragmentary Tamil inscription of the twelfth century contains names of certain plots of lands⁴. It is plausible that these were the names of plots donated to the temple or the landed properties already in its ownership. However the names or other details of donors are not given. It may be due to the mutilation befalling the inscription. The Vēṅṭu rulers who became independent in the wake of the political mishap that happened to the Cēra kingdom of Mahodayapuram contributed immensely for the renovation of Tiruvatṭār temple.

An inscription of Vīra Ravi Ravi Varma which is datable to 1603 AD records that the king renovated the temple and built the front *manḍapa*⁵. The king took steps to fix a single slab of stone as its floor. Another record of 1605AD makes clear that the king and his relatives made certain additions and repairs to the temple⁶. It was a major renovation of the temple. It is recorded that the four *tirumālṅaippattis*, the temple kitchen, the water room, the flooring of the inner portion, the single stone *manḍapa*, the *dvārapālas*, the structure for lights (*vilakkumāṭam*) and *balikkalpura* were all built. The king, his younger brother Āditya Varma, the queens and royal relatives were associated with these renovations. An inscription of Vīra Kōta Mārtāṇḍa Varma of Vēṅṭu speaks about the renovations by the king⁷. It is apparent

that Vīra Kōta Mārtānīdīa Varma repaired the temple, re-engraved the old inscriptions on the walls and revised the existing establishments in the temple to make it more efficient. All these renovation works were executed by the officers of Vīra Kōta Mārtānīdīa Varma when he was the heir apparent to the throne. Significantly another fragmentary record of Vīra Kōta Mārtānīdīa Varma associates the name of the king with certain plots of lands⁸. These plots of lands might be donated to the temple by the King.

In addition to royal patronage, ordinary *bhaktas* also donated extensively to Tiruvatīār temple. This is also evident from various inscriptions. A record of 1582AD states that the metal casing of the stone *balikkal* in the temple was put up by one Kutīātti Iccāmakutīi⁹. An undated record of Tiruvatīār states that a pillar of the *curīrīumanīdīapa* was built by an accountant in the royal service of Ravi Varma Kulaśēkhara and another undated record tells us that the row of pillars was set up by one Deyvaputran Iravi¹⁰. It is apparent from a temple record of 1267AD that Araśu Kēśavan of Dēvancēri at Iranīsinganallūr made gifts of lands to the temple for meeting the expenses of temple rituals¹¹. The *manīdīapa* in the temple was built by an individual of Tēkkinātīu Illam who was a *bhakta* of the deity. An inscription makes clear that Kitīānīan Kitīānīan (Krīśnīan Krīśnīan) contributed a *patti* to the temple for renovation works and Dattan Kandan of Māmpalīi family made a donation of a plot known as Tāmaraituruttipurayitāam for lighting perpetual lamp in the temple¹².

Many post- Cēra literary works also contain stray references to *divyadēśams*. The literary works provide adequate information to bring out the contemporary status of *divyadēśams*. The thirteenth century work, *Tirunilīalmāla* gives an account of the prosperity of Tiruārānmulīa *divyadēśam*¹³. The temple is eulogised as a prominent and a prosperous

Vaiṣṇava shrine. The temple is referred to as a pilgrim centre in *Bhāratadēśa*. Various *sandēśakāvya*s refer to different Vaiṣṇava centres that appeared on the route. *Unṅunīlisandēśa* speaks about Tiruvalla and Trikkotiṭṭānam temples in its description of the route from Tiruvananthapuram to Katṭutturuthi. Two *ślōkas* are exclusively dedicated to describe Tiruvalla temple¹⁴. The royal messenger is asked to pray before Śrī Kṛṣṇa who is enshrined in this temple. It refers to the prosperity of the shrine. *Unṅunīlisandēśam* also refers to Trikkotiṭṭānam temple as a notable Vaiṣṇava centre of the age¹⁵.

Śukasandēśa, a Sanskrit *sandēśakāvya*, refers to Tiruvalla temple¹⁶. The place is referred to as ‘Vallabhagrāma’ which was the Sanskritized form of the place-name. The temple is described as a wealthy and a prosperous Vaiṣṇava centre. *Kōkilasandēśa* refers to the *divyadēśam* shrine at Tirunāva¹⁷. The place is eulogised as Nāvaksṛētra. This *divyadēśam* shrine is also described in *Kōkasandēśa*¹⁸. The place is described in this work as a *Muktiksṛētra* (a place for salvation) and a crown on Kerala. In this context it is significant that Tirunāva is a site for performing last rites. This continues even to this day and from the reference in *Kōkasandēśa* it is certain that Tirunāva was known as a place suitable to perform last rites during fifteenth century too. *Cakōrasandēśa* refers to Tirunāva and Tiruvalla *divyadēśams*¹⁹. *Bhringasandēśa* also speaks about Tiruvalla and Tirunāva Visṅu temples²⁰. Tiruvalla is referred to as ‘Vallabhagrāma’ and Tirunāva as ‘Nāvaksṛētra’ in this literary work. *Kāmasandēśa* speaks about Isṭākṛōtā or Tirumirṅakkotṭu and Tirunāva²¹. The *divyadēśams* continued to be the popular Vaiṣṇava centres in the post- Cēra age. The messengers in the *sandēśakāvya*s were asked by the authors to visit *divyadēśam* shrines which appear on the way and it is significant that no indication to collective pilgrimage is mentioned in these descriptions.

Tiruppuliyūr shrine, another *divyadēśam*, was in a prosperous condition in the post- Cēra period. The *grandhavaris* in a private house of Puliyūr give an account of the economic status of the temple in the post-Cēra age²². Tiruppuliyūr temple had extensive landed properties in various parts of Puliyūr and in the near by areas. A record of 1640 AD gives a long list of the paddy fields of the temple²³. Properties with different seed capacity ranging from 1 *parā* to 120 *parās* were owned by the temple. A record of 1673 AD enlists the properties of the temple²⁴. The temple owned paddy fields in different parts of Puliyūr and nearby areas. The temple was under the patronage of both the Rāja of Ōṭānātū and the chieftains of Etāppalīlī²⁵. The royal association provided security and prosperity to the temple. It is evident from temple records that there were extensive rituals and rites in the temple. The multitude of rituals is a clear pointer to the prosperity of the temple. From a record of 1674AD, it is apparent that there were four daily ritual services in the temple and it is apparent that ritual feeding was conducted in the temple on important occasions along with various rituals²⁶. Many individuals donated extensive plots of lands to the temple both as atonement and as gift. As in other parts of South India, Kerala temples maintained scholars and expounders of *Itihāsas* and *Purānās*. The literary works and temple records of post-Cera age refer to *Māpāratampatīṭṭar* and *Bhatīṭṭas* and a temple record of Puliyūr makes clear that *Bhatīṭṭa* was employed in the temple²⁷. This indicates the continuation of the academic role of the temple in the diffusion of *Purānīc* knowledge.

Tirunāva temple which was the northern most *divyadēśam* in the corpus of *divyadēśams* in Kerala developed into political prominence in the post-Cēra age. It was due to the strategic location of the temple on the banks of river Nilā. The temple was located on the busy trade route that runs from Tamil kingdoms to the port towns in Kerala²⁸. Tirunāva temple became the

epicentre of *Māmānkam* festival in the post-Cēra age²⁹. Tirunāva, a fertile land and a place with trade prospects, turned out to be a bone of contention between Valīlīuvanātīu and the Zamorins of Calicut. The Rāja of Valīlīuvanātīu who became independent after the disintegration of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram was the protector of *Māmānkam* and the overlord of Tirunāva³⁰. The Zamorin annexed Tirunāva to his domain in his southern campaign to extend his boundaries.

Later, the Zamorins as the overlord of the fertile area of Tirunāva and as the patron of *Māmānkam* patronised Tirunāva temple³¹. The Zamorins made Tirunāva temple a royal shrine and this resulted in the development of Tirunāva as a politically important shrine. The royal association made Tirunāva temple a prominent shrine in the kingdom of the Zamorins. But in the aftermath of these developments, *Māmānkam* became a venue for vengeance and it soon became a horrible and awful event of self sacrifice of *cāvers* from Valīlīuvanātīu³². This was detrimental to the prospects of Tirunāva shrine as a pilgrim centre and it affected the flow of pilgrims to the temple. This was the reason for Mēlppattūr Nārāyanā Bhatītatiri and Mānavēda in the sixteenth- seventeenth centuries to choose Guruvāyūr as the institutional base of their *bhakti* movement. The *divyadēśam* shrines were patronised by kings, chieftains, landed aristocrats and common men in the post-Cēra age. The *divyadēśam* temples were patronised as they were Brahminic institutions. The absence of a particular sectarian Vaisīṇāva sect in Kerala in the post- Cēra age resulted in the obliteration of *divyadēśams* as cult centres of emotional Vaisīṇāvism. But they, like any other Brahminic institutions of the age, functioned as prosperous Vaisīṇāva centres.

New Visīṇāu Bhaktas

The absence of an organised Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult did not hamper the emergence of a host of Viṣṇū *bhaktas* in the post-Cēra age. These *bhaktas* were mainly poets. Instead of organised pilgrimage, literature was the main medium for them to propagate Viṣṇū *bhakti*. Tunchathu Rāmānujan Ezhuthachan was the most important *bhakti* poet of the post-Cēra age. Different scholars express divergent views on the period and identity of Ezhuthachan. P.Govinda Pillai argues that Ezhuthachan lived somewhere between 1525AD and 1625AD³³. R.Narayana Panikkar and Chelanattu Achyutha Menon hold that Ezhuthachan lived in the sixteenth century³⁴. K.N. Ezhuthachan put him to the first half of the sixteenth century³⁵. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer opines that Ezhuthachan lived between 1495 AD and 1575 AD³⁶. He also argues that the early name of Ezhuthachan was Rāman and Rāmānandan was his ascetic name which in due course got changed into Rāmānujan. The opinion of Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer appears to be the most acceptable view regarding the period and identity of Ezhuthachan.

Ezhuthachan's two epic works, *Adhyātma Rāmāyanam Kilippātittu* and *Mahābhāratam Kilippātittu* and his shorter works *Irupattināluvrittam* and *Harināmakīrtanam* represent a landmark in the history of *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* literature and in the development and progress of Malayalam language and literature³⁷. Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult finds its supreme literary expression in Malayalam in the works of Ezhuthachan. He stresses *bhakti* towards Viṣṇū - either Rāma or Krīṣṇa. These two incarnations of Viṣṇū are mainly glorified in his works. *Bhakti* was a means for him to overcome the problems in social and individual lives. This idea is conveyed on various occasions in his works. The importance of Ezhuthachan lies in the fact that he lived and wrote *bhakti* works at a time when a large number of poets concentrated on producing erotic works with *Unṅiacci*, *Unṅiunīli*,

Unññiātī, Māralēkha and other *devadasis* as the heroines³⁸. Such literary works are known as *accicaritams* and they focussed on lust, immorality, loose moral standards and the eulogies of *devadasis*.

The *Itihāsic- Purāñic* knowledge and the right to write in a language with heavy Sanskritic influence were monopolised, in fifteenth-sixteenth centuries, by Nambūdiri Brahmins and Kṣātriyas. The result was that until the period of Ezhuthachan no prominent poet came from among the Nāyars who could write in a language with abundant use of Sanskrit words. There were only Brahmin or Kṣātriya poets. Certain Nāyar poets such as the Kanññāśśas and Kōvalāam poets contributed to literary creations in the earlier age. Their literary endeavours remained as localised and in the *pātīu* style. Also the Kanññāśśas and Ayyippilāi wrote in a language in which less Sanskrit words are used. Their literary works did not set a new trend in the evolution of Malayalam language and medieval Kerala literature. On the contrary, Ezhuthachan started writing in a language in which Sanskrit words make appearance profusely. The modern Malayalam owes to Ezhuthachan as it got evolved in a systematic method in his works.

What was the political and social background of the *bhakti* cult of Ezhuthachan? Was it a suddenly emerged phenomenon? Was it a *bhakti* cult at all? The factional-feud between Śukapuram and Panniyūr weakened the Brahmin authority in fifteenth-sixteenth centuries and the political condition of the period was also marked by conflicts between various chieftains³⁹. The advent of the Portuguese in the political realm vitiated further the political situation. Along with this, the religious policy of the Portuguese Christian missionaries and the loose morals of the Portuguese contributed further to the escalation of the moral degeneration of the age⁴⁰. The presence of the European colonial traders with an aggressive and greedy commercial policy

added to the existing flutter in the society and polity. The wars and the advent of the early colonisers with gun powder reduced the authority of chieftains and the collective power of Brahmins. This peculiar political and social condition created a favourable situation for initiating the *bhakti* cult by a person of Nāyar birth. As the authority of Brahmins weakened, Ezhuthachan was able to write on *Itihāsic-Purānīc* literature in a language with profound Sanskrit influence. Diffusion of *bhakti* and dissemination of morality were the objectives of the *bhakti* poet. Like Śankaradēva, Ānanda Kandali and other *bhaktas* in Assam, Chandidās, Krittivāsa and Murāri Misra in Bengal and *Pancasakhas* in Orissa, Ezhuthachan resorted to literature for diffusing *bhakti*.

What was the prime motive of Ezhuthachan's compositions? Was he a *bhakti* poet or a poet with greater inclination towards *advaita* philosophy? Ezhuthachan speaks about *advaita* philosophy intermittently in his works⁴¹. His proclivity towards the glorification of Vaisṇāva icons and the eulogy of devotion to Rāma and Kṛṣṇa clearly place him among the *sagunā* Visṇu *bhaktas*. Ezhuthachan is vociferous when he sings the glories of Rāma or Kṛṣṇa. It is significant that his Rāma is an *avatāra* with divine qualities as in the Sanskrit *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā*. No instance is missed in *Adhyātma Rāmāyanām* to narrate the divine qualities in Rāma. The work is loaded with many *stutis* on Rāma and Visṇu. The intention was to diffuse *bhakti* to teach morality and to spread *Purānīc* culture to counterbalance the prevailing conditions. This is in contrast to Vālmiki's concept of Rāma⁴². Ezhuthachan intended to popularize the divine qualities in Rāma and for that purpose he wrote *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā Kilippātītu* in Malayalam on the model of the *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* in Sanskrit in which the divine attributes in Rāma got glorified. The Sanskrit *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* was written in Andhra and the

oral traditions on Ezhuthachan speak about his wanderings in different parts of South India. It is plausible that he learnt Sanskrit and *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* during his stay in Andhra.

Similar to this, *Kṛṣṇā* has an important role in his *Mahābhāratam Kilippātītu*. *Bhakti* towards *Kṛṣṇā* is projected intermittently in this work. The work aims at telling the story of *Nārāyanā* to eliminate the sins of the readers and listeners and to make them the real *bhaktas*⁴³. Unlike Vyasa's *Mahābhārata*, Ezhuthachan's work stresses *bhakti*, while original *Mahābhārata* stresses *dharma*. Ezhuthachan, as an ardent *bhakta* of *Kṛṣṇā* incorporates many *stutis* in *Bhārata* frequently⁴⁴. Ezhuthachan clearly deviated from *advaita* philosophy while projecting *sagunā* system through the glorification of the divine qualities in Rāma and *Kṛṣṇā*. Doctrine of emotional *bhakti* is obvious in each story of his *Rāmāyanā* and *Bhārata* and it is an effective instrument for Ezhuthachan to spread the message of the *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* morality. Along with the dissemination of morality, the doctrine of devotion to *Viṣṇu* also got diffused. However it appears that he tries to bring in an integrated approach combining various strands of *bhakti* in his works.

Did Ezhuthachan glorify temple cult? The literary compositions of Ezhuthachan did not celebrate any temple cult. As a *Viṣṇu bhakta*, Ezhuthachan who lived in the sixteenth century was a forerunner of Mēlpattūr *Nārāyanā Bhatīyatiri*, Pūntānam Nambūdiri and Mānavēda who sang on the glories of Guruvāyūr *Viṣṇu* temple. By the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries the Guruvāyūr temple became a royal temple under the Zamorins. In spite of all these facts, Ezhuthachan is silent on Guruvāyūr temple. It is again significant that he did not project Tirunāva temple which was situated in the neighbourhood of *Trikkanīyūr* where Ezhuthachan was born. It was a period when prevalence of caste rules and associated norms prevented a large

section of the society from entering temples. He preferred epic literature as it contain moral values heavily. These factors must have prevented him from compiling temple eulogies. Though he did not compose temple *stutis*, many *stutis* on Rāma and Krīṣṇa were incorporated in his *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhārata*. It is again significant that the contemporary *bhaktas* in other parts of India were *bhakti* poets who focussed on composing free renderings on *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*⁴⁵. Ezhuthachan also endeavoured to popularize Vaisṇavism through *Krīṣṇa* and *Rāmabhakti* literature.

What was the social philosophy of Ezhuthachan? Did he accept the rights of non- Brahmins to worship Viṣṇu or was he an orthodox votary of Brahminic claims? Ezhuthachan holds that anybody could attain *mokṣa* or salvation by remembering or chanting the names of Viṣṇu⁴⁶. This is a striking aspect of Ezhuthachan's philosophy. Hence the names of Rāma and Krīṣṇa in the form of *stutis* appear frequently in his works⁴⁷. The focus on *japa* is a clear deviation from the temple centred *bhakti*. *Japa* is simple and not expensive and anybody could afford it. All the more, the exhortation of Ezhuthachan to chant Viṣṇu's names ratified that anybody irrespective of caste or gender could chant the names of Viṣṇu and become *bhakta*. Ezhuthachan makes clear in the beginning of *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam Kilippātī* that chanting Viṣṇu's names is significant and that it could even transform the uncultured Ratnākara into a great sage, Vālmiki⁴⁸. This conveys the message that anybody can become a sage or a cultured person by way of chanting the names of Viṣṇu or his incarnations. As temples remained closed before a vast section in the society, this doctrine of *bhakti* which did not involve any kind of rituals picked up popularity.

A group of five Viṣṇu *bhaktas* who glorified Guruvāyūr temple cult lived as near contemporaries in the sixteenth - seventeenth centuries and fostered a new *bhakti* cult⁴⁹. Pūntānam Nambūdiri was one among the five

bhaktas of Guruvāyūr. Pūntānam is a family name. So far no evidence could be traced to identify his personal name. Many legends are prevalent which associate this poet with Guruvāyūr temple. All these legendary tales only refer to the poet merely as Pūntānam Nambūdiri⁵⁰. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer considers Pūntānam Nambūdiri as a contemporary of Mēlppattūr Nārāyanā Bhatītīatiri. According to him, Mēlppattūr lived between 1560AD and 1648AD⁵¹. Hence this period is fixed as the period of Pūntānam Nambūdiri too. K.V.Krishna Ayyar opines that Pūntānam Nambūdiri lived from 1547AD to 1640AD. He also holds that Pūntānam was a contemporary of Mēlppattūr⁵². M. Leelavathy fully agrees with the opinion of K.V. Krishna Aiyar⁵³. It is also significant that the legendary tales on Pūntānam Nambūdiri also make clear that Pūntānam, Mēlppattūr, Mānavēda, Vilvamangalam Swāmiyar and Kurūramma were contemporaries.

Pūntānam Nambūdiri emphasizes simple *bhakti*, especially simple *bhakti* towards the deity of Guruvāyūr temple. His style and language are those of a common man and his appeal is to the heart of the reader and the listener. It is different from the language of Mēlppattūr Nārāyanā Bhatītīatiri. Though Pūntānam was a Nambūdiri Brahmin, all kinds of caste related discrimination and Brahminic claims are denounced in his compositions. He even doubts the validity of caste claims on several occasions⁵⁴. Pūntānam sarcastically ridicules caste pride and the associated claims of the fellow Brahmins. A distinctive aspect of the ideology of *bhakti* of Pūntānam Nambūdiri is that he eulogized and glorified Guruvāyūr temple, but stressed *japa* and *bhajanam*. He also expressed reservations on the degeneration of temple service into a merely remunerative job to amass wealth⁵⁵. He did not attach importance on rituals. No literary compositions of Pūntānam Nambūdiri uphold the validity of rituals. This is a unique feature of Pūntānam's *bhakti*.

Why does Pūntānam reject rituals? As a vehement critic of casteism and caste claims, Pūntānam Nambūdiri does not give importance to ritualism which involves the intervention of intermediary priests. Instead, chanting the names of Viṣṇu does not require the help of priests. It is not expensive also. This may be the reason for Pūntānam's rejection of rituals. The legends associated with Pūntānam say that he was declared as the dearest *bhakta* by the deity of Guruvāyūr. One such legend states that the deity declared from the sanctum that he likes Pūntānam's *bhakti* than the *jnāna* (knowledge) of Mēlpattūr Bhatṭāṭiri⁵⁶. The historicity of such legends is doubtful. However it is certain that such stories were the creation of ordinary *bhaktas* who approved simple *bhakti*. This again makes clear that the medieval society accepted Pūntānam as a true Viṣṇu *bhakta* and accorded him a high status due to his simplicity and the use of common man's language.

Pūntānam's simple language, his *bhakti* to the deity of Guruvāyūr temple, his emphasis upon *japa* and *stutis* and his liberal social outlook make him a popular Viṣṇu *bhakta* in the post-Cēra age. Even to this day, his *stutis* and *kīrtanams* have great popularity as these compositions diffuse emotional *bhakti*. The works of Pūntānam had key role in endearing Viṣṇu *bhakti* in the society. Partly because of this, the status of Guruvāyūr temple got enhanced. It is enshrined in various legends that Pūntānam continuously read and expounded on *Bhāgavata*⁵⁷. This oral tradition make clear that Pūntānam was fond of reading *Bhāgavata* which is known for emotional *bhakti*. The compositions of the poet also reveal that an element of emotional *bhakti* dominates his works. The child pranks of Krīṣṇa inspired *bhaktas* of all periods and Pūntānam was also a *bhakta* of Unṅikrīṣṇa or Krīṣṇa in child form.

Vilvamangalam Swāmiyar, Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṅa Bhatīṭāṭiri, Kurīṅamma and Mānavēda were the other votaries of the Guruvāyūr temple cult. They were contemporaries of Pūntānam Nambūdiri. Vilvamangalam was an ascetic of Tekke Matīhom at Trissur⁵⁸. It is argued by K.V.Krishna Ayyar that there were two Vilvamangalams who lived at different times and Vilvamangalam SwāmiyarII was the *bhakta* associated with Guruvāyūr⁵⁹. K.V. Krishna Ayyar also holds that Vilvamangalam Swāmiyar was born in 1575AD and lived up to 1660AD. There is no reliable data regarding his life and period. Only certain legends are in circulation on his life and activities. Though these legends are far away from historical facts, it is evident from the oral traditions that he was a true Vaiṅṅava who was associated with a large number of temples in Kerala. Images in many temples of Viṅṅu in Kerala are described as consecrated by Vilvamangalam Swāmiyar⁶⁰. The oral traditions on Vilvamangalam make clear that he was an advocate of ritualism and temple cult which goes in harmony with his role as a Brahmin ascetic.

Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṅa Bhatīṭāṭiri was another ardent votary of Viṅṅu *bhakti* cult. He was a Sanskrit poet and an erudite scholar. According to Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, Mēlppattūr was born in 1560AD and he died in 1648AD⁶¹. Many *Kṣētramāhātmyas* of Guruvāyūr make a comparison between Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṅa Bhatīṭāṭiri and Pūntānam Nambūdiri. It is stated in the *Kṣētramāhātmyas* that the deity preferred the simple devotion of Pūntānam than the *jnana* (knowledge) of Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṅa Bhatīṭāṭiri. Again it is enshrined in these legends that Mēlppattūr was a scholar *bhakta*. Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṅa Bhatīṭāṭiri was a Sanskrit scholar who wrote only in Sanskrit. Though these legends have little direct historical value, they reveal the general perception regarding *bhakti*. An important *Kṣētramāhātmya* speaks out that Mēlppattūr underwent *bhajanam* or penance at Guruvāyūr

temple for getting remedy for his rheumatism and he got relief⁶². The old name of the place where the temple is situated was Kuravayūr and it was Mēlppattūr Nārāyanā Bhatītatiri who Sanskritised it into Gurupavanapuram in his work, *Nārāyanīyam*⁶³. This name got transformed subsequently into Guruvāyūr.

No authentic record is available on Kurūramma. Kurūramma was a Brahmin widow and an ordinary devotee of Viṣṇu. She was a contemporary of Pūntānam, Mēlppattūr, Mānavēda and Vivamangalam Swāmiyar. She is enshrined in many legends as a *bhakta* of Guruvāyūr. K.V. Krishna Ayyar holds that she was born in 1570AD and lived up to 1640AD⁶⁴. The authorship of many *kīrtanas* is attributed to Kurūramma. Though Kurūramma was an ordinary widow, she is accorded a place of honour as a devotee of Viṣṇu-Krīṣṇā. Mānavēda was a royal saint and a royal artist. He was a prince of the Calicut kingdom. He was another prominent Viṣṇu *bhakta* of post- Cēra age and was the author of *Krīṣṇāgīti*, the dance drama on the story of Krīṣṇā⁶⁵. Jayadēva's *Gītagovinda* which is noted for its exquisite devotional content and fervour of emotional *bhakti* influenced the royal saint in the composition of this work. His association with Guruvāyūr temple contributed to the growth of the temple and Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult⁶⁶.

Many other Viṣṇu *bhaktas* also enriched Vaisṇava religion by way of their literary compositions and temple eulogies. Govindan, the author of *Tirunilālmāla*, a work is on the glories of Tiruārānmulā temple, was such a *bhakta*. This work makes clear that the author was a devotee of the deity of Tiruārānmulā temple. The anonymous author of *Anantapuravarnānam* was a *bhakta* of Viṣṇu. He was a devotee of the deity of Tiruvananthapuram temple⁶⁷. The *bhaktas* like Kanṇāśśa poets, Ayyipilīlai Āśan, Ayyinipilīlai Āśan, Cerūśśēri Nambūdiri and Punam Nambūdiri also contributed to Vaisṇavism through literary creations⁶⁸.

Features of Viṣṇū Bhakti Movement

A striking feature of Vaiṣṇavism in the post-Cēra period was the absence of organized *bhakti* movement and massive pilgrimage to Vaiṣṇava centres. This was in contrast to what happened in the heydays of the Ālīvār movement. However this does not imply that the pilgrimage tradition was totally absent in this period. What is observable in the post-Cēra age is the replacement of collective pilgrimage by individual pilgrimage. Stories on the association of Pūntānam Nambūdiri, Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇa Bhatītīatiri, Kurūramma, Mānavēda and Vilvamangalam Swāmiyar with Guruvāyūr temple point to the existence of a pilgrimage tradition centred on Guruvāyūr temple. A Vatāśēri inscription of 1464AD refers to a money offering to the temple by Dīrgha Bhatīta from north India⁶⁹. A record of Kochaipidāram temple of 1494 AD also registers a gift to the temple collectively by Gangādhara Brahmācāri from Āryadēśa, Śankara Perumāli from Tondaimanīdīalam and Sokkiyār from Cōlīamanīdīalam⁷⁰. These inscriptions point to the continuation of pilgrimage to Kerala temples by *bhaktas* from distant areas in India.

Unlike the Ālīvār movement, the Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult of the post- Cēra age was not entirely a temple cult. Both temple cult and *bhakti* centred on the philosophical tenets in *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* were prevalent in the age. Temple cult had only a secondary position and *bhakti* was diffused mainly through literature. The philosophical doctrines in the Vaiṣṇava literature were disseminated through the literary creations on *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*. However temple cult was propagated through *Kṣētramāhātmyas* and temple *stutis*. A temple-centred *bhakti* cult existed with Guruvāyūr temple as the nucleus. This temple cult was spearheaded by five *bhaktas*- Pūntānam Nambūdiri, Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇa Bhatītīatiri, Kurūramma, Mānavēda and

Vilvamangalam Swāmiyar⁷¹. Another temple cult was prevalent with Tiruvananthapuram temple as the focal point and this cult developed under the royal patronage of Vēñātīu rulers⁷². Though many other temples of the age attracted devotees and inspired poets to compose literary creations, such temple cults never attained pan-Kerala publicity.

Another striking feature of Visñīu *bhakti* cult in the post-Cēra age is that it was mainly dominated by *bhakti* poets. Many literary works on Vaisñāva themes got produced⁷³. Visñīu *bhaktas* considered literature as an effective instrument to disseminate Visñīu *bhakti* in the society and this paved the way for the production of free renderings on *Itihāsas* and *Purāñās*. With supreme mastery over the genius of the then language, the votaries of *bhakti* like Tunchathu Ezhuthachan produced literature of the first order and popularised Vaisñāva stories. Different schools of thought such as *advaita*, *dvaita*, *sagunā*, *nirgunā*, eulogy of temples and emotional *bhakti* found lucid expression in the works of the age. Some literary creations harmoniously integrated these divergent views. The literature of Tunchathu Ezhuthachan is an example of the kind of literature that portrayed the whole things of philosophy in this manner⁷⁴. The language and style of the works of Pūntānam Nambūdiri reveal that the ideology of *bhakti* provided consolation to *bhaktas*. The concept of ‘complete surrender’ was highlighted in the compositions of Pūntānam too.

Literature was the main instrument in the popularisation of *bhakti* in the other parts of contemporary India too. The most vital urge that had conditioned the character of medieval Indian literature was *Itihāsic-Purāñic* tradition and *bhakti*. *Bhakti* literature conveyed the religious impulse in a passionate manner and in this sense *bhakti* was captivating and popular. Visñīu *bhaktas* in Karnataka, Andhra, Orissa, Assam, Gujarat, Maharashtra and in the Vrij region resorted to literary creations as a means to propagate

*bhakti*⁷⁵. They composed literary creations on *Itihāsas* and *Purānās*. Free renderings on *Rāmāyanā*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavatapurānā* were produced in regional dialects which immensely contributed to the development of regional languages.

What was the social outlook of the Visṅṅu *bhaktas* of post- Cēra age? Were they liberal *bhaktas* or protagonists of conservatism? The social outlook of Visṅṅu *bhaktas* is envisaged in their works which disclose reformist zeal. It challenges the Brahmin monopoly over classical knowledge. In this respect the emergence of Kanṅṅāśśa poets and Tunchathu Ezhuthachan acquire importance as a movement of social protest⁷⁶. These non- Brahmin *bhaktas* and scholars became the masters of Brahminic knowledge. But they never challenged the authority of Brahmins as unquestionable masters nor did question the claims of Brahmins as the sole masters of *Itihāsic-Purānīc* lore. The position of Brahmins as the unquestioned leaders in the society was recognized by the Kanṅṅāśśa poets and Tunchathu Ezhuthachan alike. Ezhuthachan who was foremost among Visṅṅu *bhaktas* was apologetic to the Brahmins for expounding on *Itihāsas* and *Purānās*. Visṅṅu *bhaktas* of the post-Cēra age never dared to reject Brahminic claims totally. For instance Tunchathu Ezhuthachan, the leading advocate of reformism and liberalism among *bhakti* poets, was a *bhakta* of Brahmins too.

The Brahmins were regarded as elites and ‘holy beings to be adored’. This is clearly stated in both *Adhyātma Rāmāyanām Kilippātītū* and *Mahābhāratam Kilippātītū*⁷⁸. Adoration of Brahmins is described as a means to cleanse evil doings. He describes himself as a *dāsa* in *Rāmāyanām Kilippātītū* who wrote *Rāmāyanā* for the benefit of the ignorant. From this statement, it is certain that Ezhuthachan intended to popularise the *Rāmāyanā* story in the society, with the permission of Brahmins, for those

who were ignorant of Rāma lore. Again he admits that he did not enjoy the right to study or to lecture on the *Vedas* as he took birth in a Nāyar family⁷⁸. His prayer to Brahmins for exceeding his limits by indulging in writing on and teaching *Purāṇas* and other scriptures of Brahminic knowledge proves that he was not against the caste claims of the Brahmins. Though repentant for making compositions on *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* literature, Ezhuthachan did not discard the right of non- Brahmins and women in worshipping Viṣṇu⁷⁹. A different line of thought is apparent in the works of Pūntānam Nambūdiri. A clear stand against caste related claims of fellow Brahmins could be seen in his *Jnānappāna*. Though born in a Brahmin family, Pūntānam lamented on the deplorable Brahminic customs⁸⁰. He made a scathing attack on the ego and pedantic self boasting life style of Nambūdiri Brahmins.

Ezhuthachan popularised the classical Sanskrit culture which was the monopoly of Brahmins without denouncing the status of Brahmins and without questioning the Brahminic claims. The sense of repentance expressed by Ezhuthachan in this regard was a means to appease Brahmins before taking up his literary adventure on *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* narratives. As a result, large segments of population were initiated into the mysteries of *Purāṇic* lore. In spite of the prevalence of all the reformist ideologies of Vaisṇava *bhaktas*, the exhortation to adore Brahmins and the acceptance of Brahminic social claims strengthened Brahminic caste norms and social hierarchy. The strengthening of conservative elements led to the further development of feudalism and landlordism in medieval Kerala. The attempt of Ezhuthachan, like that of the Kanṅāśās, was only to raise a mild protest against Brahmins. This protest was to initiate the non-Brahmin sections in devotion and in *Itihāsic* and *Purāṇic* lore.

Despite all these, Ezhuthachan was successful in popularising *Itihāsic-Purānīc* literature among the ordinary sections in Kerala society. His works attained wider popularity. Even now Ezhuthachan's works are popular among all sections of the Hindu population in Kerala. What was achieved by Ezhuthachan is that he effectively squashed the Brahmin monopoly over *Itihāsic-Purānīc* literature. Ezhuthachan's literary endeavour was again significant as it started to enlighten Nāyars who chiefly associated with martial activities⁸¹. Until that time Nāyars, like other non-Brahmin and non-Kṣātriya castes, were debarred from studying *Itihāsic-Purānīc* knowledge and learning. It remained the monopoly of Nambūdiri Brahmins. Learning was popularised among Nāyars in the aftermath of the *bhakti* movement of Tunchathu Ezhuthachan.

As discussed in another context, rejection of ritualism is a striking feature of the Vaiṣṇava devotional movement of the post-Cēra age. No *bhakta* of this age except Vilvamangalam Swāmiyar ever advocated for ritual performances for worshipping Viṣṇu. Ezhuthachan and Pūntānam did not stress ritualism. Chanting the names of Viṣṇu continuously was proposed by the *bhaktas* and importance was given to *japa* and *kirtana*⁸². Ironically, the Guruvāyūr temple cult received stimulus in the works of Pūntānam Nambūdiri who clearly emphasised upon the chanting of the names of Viṣṇu as a worthy service of a *bhakta*. Like Punthanam Nambūdiri, Mēlpattūr Nārāyaṇa Bhatīṭatiri also gave importance to *japa* and argued that singing of his *Nārāyanīyam* would propitiate the lord. Mēlpattūr Nārāyaṇa Bhatīṭatiri states in *Nārāyanīyam* that the urge for evil doing could only be overcome by frequently remembering God⁸³.

The Viṣṇu *bhakti* movement influenced the arts and thought of post-Cēra age. The wood carvings and mural paintings of the post-Cēra age exhibit

Vaiṣṇava influence. A large number of mural paintings on *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata* themes were produced during this period⁸⁴. Diffusion of *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* lore and Vaiṣṇava stories through the literary works of *bhakti* poets resulted in the popularisation of Vaiṣṇava cult themes and in the production of Vaiṣṇava wood carvings and mural paintings. A dance-drama known as *Asīttāpadiātīam* was developed in this period. The name of this dance-drama demonstrates its connection with *Gītagovinda* of Jayadēva. Manavēda who wrote *Kṛṣṇāgīti* took up *Gītagovinda* as the model. *Gītagovinda* is a lyric drama with songs in eulogy of Kṛṣṇa and Rādha cult⁸⁵. It contains twelve cantos and twenty four *Asīttāpadis* and with the popularisation of this work, the *padāvali* literature began in Bengal. In medieval Bengal, *Gītagovinda* was sung in the accompaniment of musical instruments and dance⁸⁶. *Gītagovinda* is known as *Asīttāpadi* in Kerala. The musical singing that developed in the post-Cēra age in temples is also known as *Asīttāpadi*⁸⁷. All these make clear that Jayadēva and his work influenced *bhaktas* of Kerala. Jayadēva's work inspired the *Viṣṇu bhaktas*, poets and dancers in different parts of medieval India. *Gītagovinda* was sung during festivals and rituals in Puri temple⁸⁸.

Was there any link between Kerala and Bengal in terms of *bhakti* cult? How did *Gītagovinda* become popular in Kerala? Though organised *bhakti* halted, individual pilgrimage tradition continued unabatedly. There are certain temple inscriptions which speak well of the visit of the *bhaktas* from North India and *Ananthapuravarnānam* refers to the presence of traders from several regions of India such as Orissa, Andhra, Karnataka and Bengal at Tiruvananthapuram market⁸⁹. All these point to the existence of cultural and economic exchange between different parts of India. The pilgrims and traders transmitted the cultural trends and brought about cultural unity.

Growth of Syncretic Cults

The syncretic cults combining Viṣṇu and other deities became widely popular in the post-Cēra age. The Śankara Nārāyaṅa temple at Nāvāikkulāṃ in South Kerala developed into a significant centre of Śankara Nārāyaṅa worship in this period. An inscription of 1439AD of king Vīra Rāma Mārtāṅḍa Varma of Kilīpērūr refers to the deity as Śankara Nārāyaṅa Mūrti⁹⁰. The reference to the deity as Śankara Nārāyaṅa reveals that the deity was Śankara Nārāyaṅa in the fifteenth century. The Śankara Nārāyaṅa temples of Trikkangōtū, Panamanā and Nāyathōtū also came into existence in the post-Cēra age. Was Śankara Nārāyaṅa cult prevalent in Kerala only? Was Śankara Nārāyaṅa cult popular in the other parts of India? The Śankara Nārāyaṅa cult is analogous to the Hari Hara cult which developed in North India during the early period itself and the deity was widely worshipped in the medieval period in North India. This composite cult was referred to as Hari Śankara, Śiva Kēśava, Ardhaśaurīśvara, Murārīśvara and Sulabhriccharṅgapāṅi⁹¹. These names seldom were popular in Kerala.

The popularity of the syncretic cult of Śankara Nārāyaṅa in medieval Kerala is suggested by mural paintings also. The temples of Trikkangōtū, Peruvanam, Palīlīmanā, Elīankunnapulā, Nāyathōtū, Rāmamangalam, Punḍārikapuram, Pāṅḍāvam, Tukalaśseri, Munnūtti Mangalam, Katāttanāt, Kārāt, Lokanārkāv, Cēnamangalam, Kōttakkal and Tirurvēgappurā contain mural paintings of Śankara Nārāyaṅa⁹². The right half of the body of the iconographic or pictorial representations of Śankara Nārāyaṅa contains third eye on the forehead, blue neck and a garland of skull which represent Śiva and the left half of the body has Vaiṣṇava symbols like crown, flower garland, gold ornaments etc. The right side represents Hara or Śiva and the left half represents Hari or Nārāyaṅa or

Viṣṇu⁹³. This representation goes hand in hand with the directions in the treatises on iconography such as *Matsyapurāṇa* and *Mānasōllāsa*⁹⁴. The description of the iconographic details of Śankara Nārāyaṇa in *Matsyapurāṇa* and *Mānasōllāsa* is as follows - the right half shows white body complexion, matted hair with crescent moon on the head, elephant skin garment, snake ornament for the ear and the two hands holding a spear and showing the *varada* pose. The left half has the colour of the *atasi* flower, yellow garment, *kirīṭāmakutīa*, *makara* earring and the conch and discus as the two attributes in hands.

Similarly, treatises such as *Kaśyapaśilpa* and *Īśānaśivagurudevapadhati* give accounts of the iconography of the deity. *Kaśyapaśilpa* describes the image of Haryardha with the right half representing Śiva and the left showing the features of Viṣṇu⁹⁵. It states that the left half must have all kinds of garments and ornaments with serene expression and the other half to be without any such features, but with a fearful look. The left hands hold conch and *Katākamudra*. *Īśānaśivagurudevapadhati* characterises *abhaya* and *ṭāṅka* as the right-hand attributes representing Śiva and the lotus and the conch as the left hand attributes indicating Viṣṇu⁹⁶. Śankara Nārāyaṇa is represented in the Kerala murals as per the directions in these treatises of iconography.

Tantrasamuccaya of Cēnnās Nambūdiri describes the ritual worship of the seven divinities in Kerala. *Tantrasamuccaya* codifies the entire ritual practices of Kerala in an effort to make them systematic. Along with Mahāviṣṇu, Mahādēva, Durga Dēvi, Skanda, Ganēśa and Śāsta, Śankara Nārāyaṇa is also accepted as a chief deity⁹⁷. This reveals that Śankara Nārāyaṇa was a prominent deity like Śiva and Viṣṇu in the fifteenth century and the deity was given an enhanced place to ensure unity among the

followers of both cults. It is notable that in North India, the *Pancayatana Pūja* system developed in medieval period which marked a new attempt to bring unity among the devotees of five cults- Viṣṇu, Śiva, Gaṇapati, Śakti and Sūrya⁹⁸. Just like in the Cēra age, the name Śankara Nārāyaṇa was used as personal name in the post- Cēra age too. Apart from Śankara Nārāyaṇa, the composite personal names such as Kanṇan Tēvan, Puruṣōttaman Śivan, Kanṇan Kumāran, Kāman Cuvaran, Nārāyaṇan Śankaran etc were widely found in the *grandhavaris* of the post-Cēra age⁹⁹. Though these personal names originated from the father/son or uncle/nephew relationship, the growing tendency of syncretism which got shaped in the period is revealed by such combined names. It is a pointer to the fact that no restriction was imposed on using combined names of Śiva and Viṣṇu in medieval Kerala. It is again a pointer to the prevalence of syncretic personal names. Similarly, the combined names of Vaiṣṇava and local deities also appeared as personal names in this age. Personal names such as Nārāyaṇan Cāttan, Vikraman Ayyappan, Nārāyaṇan Ayyappan and Ayyappan Vikraman appear frequently as personal names in the temple records of post-Cēra age¹⁰⁰.

Another conspicuous development of this age was the evolution of Śāsta cult or Ayyappa cult. Ayyapa was considered as a deity with Buddhist affiliation¹⁰¹. This contention is based partly on the premise that Buddhism was widely prevalent in medieval Kerala and partly because, the name Śāsta, is regarded as a synonym for Buddha¹⁰². However the iconographic peculiarities of Śāsta or Ayyappa do not go hand in hand with this argument. It appears that Ayyapa cult originated and developed from the worship of Ayyanār who was a village deity in South India¹⁰³. It is apparent from certain inscriptions that Ayyappa was worshipped in the Cēra period itself. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates speak about the existence of the sub-shrine of Ayyapa in the Viṣṇu temple at Tiruvalla¹⁰⁴. From the records of Tiruvananthapuram

temple and *Anantapuravarnānam*, it is certain that the sub-shrine of Śāsta existed in the premises of the temple in the fourteenth century and temple records of Tiruppuliyūr temple also refer to the sub shrine of Śāsta in the temple¹⁰⁵. However, this deity obtained new identity through a newly fabricated story involving Śiva and Viṣṇu. Śāsta or Ayyappa came to be known as Hari Harasuta or ‘the son of Hari and Hara’. The story of Śāsta’s origin as the son of Hari and Hara developed only in a later period, probably after the compilation of *Tantrasamuccaya*. Not a single reference to Śāsta as the son of *Hari* and *Hara* is there in the medieval literature or in *Tantrasamuccaya*. The story of the origin of the son of Hari and Hara was concocted to integrate Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism and to justify the inclusion of Ayyappa into the Brahminic fold of divinities.

A deity known as Kurayappa is mentioned in the Tiruvalla Copper Plates as a subsidiary deity in that temple¹⁰⁶. Another deity known as Kūvalāttappan is also mentioned in Tiruppuliyūr records as the subsidiary deity in the temple¹⁰⁷. The names of these deities make clear that these divinities were non-Brahminic cult deities. The presence of these local deities in temples is indicative of the development of a trend of amalgamation and assimilation of the local deities with Viṣṇu. Such a trend is obvious in other parts of contemporary India too. The assimilation of non- Brahminic deities into Brahminic fold was a popular religious trend in medieval India¹⁰⁸. The doctrine of incarnation was a catalyst in the assimilation of different cults and in the development of syncretism.

Popularity of Vaiṣṇavism

The members of the dynasty of Vēṅkāṭṭu were devotees and patrons of Ananthaśāyi Viṣṇu of Tiruvananthapuram temple and they claimed that they were the descendants of Yādavas¹⁰⁹. The Vaiṣṇava cult themes have

dominance in the post-Cēra literature as thematic substance. The Vaisṅṅava themes, especially the legends of Krīṣṅṅa and Rāma, were the popular themes in a large number of works¹¹⁰. Vaisṅṅava literature was a stimulus to the popularisation of Vaisṅṅavism in medieval Kerala. Various incarnatory forms of Visṅṅu also became popular. Krīṣṅṅa was the most popular form of Visṅṅu and Krīṣṅṅa *bhakti* cult became more popular in the post-Cēra period. The fourteenth century inscriptions of Āditya Varma Sarvāṅṅaṅa of Vēṅṅātṅu - two from Padmanabha Swāmy temple and one from Vatṅāśṅeri temple - narrate the glories of Krīṣṅṅa¹¹¹. The Krīṣṅṅa cult centred on Guruvāyūr temple was responsible for the popularity of Krīṣṅṅa in the post-Cēra age. *Krīṣṅṅanāṅtam* or the dance drama of Krīṣṅṅa was created to be enacted in the precincts of Guruvāyūr temple in this age which paved the way for the further growth of Krīṣṅṅa cult. Consequently *Bhāṅṅavatapurāṅa* attained wide popularity and acceptability in Kerala. The story of Krīṣṅṅa as envisaged in *Bhāṅṅavatapurāṅa* was a fascination for the poets. This also had a role in popularising Krīṣṅṅa cult. Varāha incarnation was also popular. It is evident from the praises of Varāha form of Visṅṅu in *Syāṅṅandūrapurāṅasamuccaya*¹¹². Later, Varāha ceased to be a popular cult. This might be due to the reversal suffering by the Panniyūr faction in the factional feud that occurred during the post-Cēra age¹¹³. Panniyūr was a prominent centre of Varāha cult as Panniyūr Brahmin settlement was centred on the Varāha temple. The place-name Panniyūr, which means ‘the place of swine’, denotes its association with Varāha.

Rāma was another popular incarnation of Visṅṅu as it is evident from various *Rāmāyanāṅas* which got produced in the post-Cēra period¹¹⁴. The earliest known work in the *Pātṅtṅu* style of the post-Cēra age was *Ramacaritam-pātṅtṅu*. Afterwards many works were produced on the Rāma story. The story of Rāma was one of the popular themes for the artists. The production of *Rāmāyanāṅa*

panels in wood carvings and mural paintings in large numbers in the post-Cēra age is a pointer to the popularity of the Rāma cult. The wood carvings in Cāttankulīangara, Kaviyūr and Cunakkara have *Rāmāyanīa* panels which elaborate the story of Rāma in details¹¹⁵. However no prominent Rāma temple emerged in Kerala as the nucleus of a separate Rāma *bhakti* cult like Guruvāyūr temple. It is evident from *Kōkasandēśa* that Triprayār temple which at present is a Rāma shrine was a Viṣṇū temple at the time of the composition of this work¹¹⁶. It is stated in a stanza on Triprayār temple that the temple is dedicated to the destroyer of Kamsa. Like *Kṛīśṇīanātīam*, a new dance drama on Rāma's story was produced in Kerala and it was known as *Rāmanātīam*. This is another indicator to the popularity of Rāma cult.

The incarnation of Narasimha was worshipped in the temples of Kerala in the post-Cēra age. A sub-shrine of Narasimha existed in the temple complex of Tiruvananthapuram in the immediate post-Cēra age. This is evident from the references to the sub-shrine of Narasimha in *Matilakam Grandhavari* and *Unīṅūnīlisandēśa* and Cāttankulīangara temple was another centre of Narasimha worship¹¹⁷. Paraśurāma was also worshipped as a deity in Kerala. It is significant that the concept of *Bhārgavaksīētra* or the land created by Bhārgava Rāma or Paraśurāma received much attention in the literary works of the age¹¹⁸. It is evident from *Ananthapuravarnīanam* that the *daśāvatāras* or the ten main incarnatory forms of Viṣṇū were popular and worshipped in Kerala in the fourteenth century¹¹⁹. All the ten *avatāras* are praised in this work with extreme devotion. *Unīṅūnīlisandēśa* also enlists the ten incarnations of Viṣṇū while speaking about Tiruvananthapuram temple¹²⁰. The pictorial and iconic arts reveal that the concept of *daśāvatāra* became widely popular. The free renderings of *Bhāgavatapurānīa* which came out in the post-Cēra age popularised *daśāvatāra* concept.

Again the names of Viṣṇū and his various incarnatory forms were widely used as personal names in the post-Cēra age. This is apparent from the inscriptions and *grandhavaris*. For instance the documents of Tiruvananthapuram temple contain personal names such as Dāmōdaran, Nārāyaṇan, Anirudhan, Nārāyaṇan Kēśavan, Mādhava Nārāyaṇan, Vāsudēvan, Vikraman, Ananthan, Padmanabhan, Dhananjayan, Kēśavan, Cakrapāṇi and Gōvindan.¹²¹ Similar to this *Calicut Grandhavari* also contains a long list of Vaisṇava personal names. Names like Dāmōdaran, Karunākaran, Rāman, Kanṇan, Nārāyaṇan and Unṇi Rāman are seen as popular personal names in this set of documents¹²².

Similarly Vaisṇava names such as Ravi Krīṣṇan, Rāman, Dāmōdaran, Mādhavan, Karunākaran, Krīṣṇan, Rāman Krīṣṇan, Kanṇan, Kēśavan, Trivikraman, Nārāyaṇan, Dēvan Viṣṇū, Padmanabhan, Puruṣōttaman and Gopalan are found as popular personal names in *Vanjeri Grandhavari*¹²³. Further, Mādhavan Viṣṇū, Vāsudēvan, Puruṣōttaman, Kēśavan, Nārāyaṇan, Padmanabhan, Dēvan, Śrīdharan, Kanṇan, Govindan, Rāman, etc. are the popular names of individuals found in *Tiruppuliyūr Grandhavari*¹²⁴. Various names of Viṣṇū such as Nārāyaṇan, Krīṣṇan, Achyutan, Viṣṇū, etc are found as personal names in the records of certain Brahmin families in Tiruvalla¹²⁵. It is evident from the names of poets of the age that the names of Viṣṇū were popularly and widely used as personal names. The author of *Ramacaritampat̃tu* was Cīrāma and *Tirunilālmāla* was Govindan. The name Cīrāma derived from either Śrī Rāma or Śiva Rāma. Two Kanṇāśśa poets had Vaisṇava names – Rāma and Mādhava.

The epigraphic records of the age also exhibit the growing influence of Vaisṇavism in choosing personal names. The Puruvacheri inscriptions of Vīra Ravi Varma contain the names Cingan Rangan, Nārāyaṇan Śankaran,

Kēśavan Araiyan, Vikraman Arangan, Ananthan Cakrapān̄i and Govindan Vikraman¹²⁶. The Cōlīapuram record of the same king contains the names Śrī Cakrāyudhan, Kan̄n̄an, Govindan and Vikraman Kunr̄an and a person bearing the name Kan̄t̄an Trivikraman appears in the Man̄alikkara inscription of Ravi Kerala Varma¹²⁷. Two persons with names, Vikraman Parannavan and Govindan Kumāran were the signatories in the Vel̄l̄āyan̄i inscription of Vīra RāmaVarma of 1196AD¹²⁸. Similarly it is evident from various other inscriptions that the names of Vis̄n̄u were popular as personal names in the post-Cēra age¹²⁹. However, it is improbable to think that the persons with the names of Vis̄n̄u were all ardent devotees of Vis̄n̄u. It only shows that the Vais̄n̄ava religion and Vais̄n̄ava literature had obtained wide popularity by this time.

The men who got mentioned in the records belonged to the upper strata of the society which consisted of Brahmins and the associated castes. Only Brahmins and persons belonging to the other so called upper castes happened to get mentioned in temple records. However, certain *grandhavaris* contain the names of men belonging to the Ezhava caste and those of Carpenters, Goldsmiths, Blacksmith etc. A record of 1546AD in *Vanjeri Grandhavari* refers to Cēnnan Kumāran, (Jayanthan Kumāran) who is an Ezhava and a record of 1605AD refers to Rāman Kēl̄an who is a Van̄n̄ān¹³⁰. Similarly *Tiruppuliyūr Grandhavari* provides the names of certain men of Ezhava community. It is apparent that Vais̄n̄ava names were popular among the Ezhavas. The names such as Nārān̄an (Nārāyan̄an), Rāman Kāl̄i and Rāman Ayyappan are there in this document and another record provides the name of a person of Man̄n̄ān community¹³¹. The name is Kochu Rāman which is a Vais̄n̄ava name. Thus it is apparent that Vais̄n̄ava names were used as

personal names by men of different sections in the society including men of the downtrodden sections in the society in the post-Cēra age.

It is also notable that several coins of medieval Kerala depict the images of Viṣṇu and Vaiṣṇava symbols. The *Kaliyugarāyanpanam* which became one of the popular coins in Vēṅṅātṅṅu from the end of the thirteenth century contain the symbol of Viṣṇu¹³². *Kāśu* which is most common copper coin in Vēṅṅātṅṅu have the images of a man with axe and pellets. The letter ‘Ra’ is also found in these coins¹³³. The word ‘Ra’ stands for Paraśu Rāma. Certain variants of the coin contain the Tamil word ‘Ca’ and the image of a standing figure flanked by lamp and cakra. The symbol *cakra* is an attribute of Viṣṇu. The attributes of Viṣṇu, club and conch, are also found in certain coins. Later in sixteenth century, when Vēṅṅātṅṅu came under Vijayanagara influence, coins with standing figures flanked by conch, club and Viṣṇu’s mark on forehead were introduced. The coins with Sri Rāma and Hanumān were issued in large numbers by the Nāyaka rulers of Madurai who got political authority over Vēṅṅātṅṅu. A large number of coins with the depiction of Ananthaśayanam were circulated during the eighteenth – nineteenth centuries when Vēṅṅātṅṅu was transformed into Travancore by Mārtāṅṅṅa Varma¹³⁴.

To conclude, the post-Cēra age saw the further development of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult in Kerala. Though no organised *bhakti* cult emerged, elements of *bhakti* dominated the art and literature of the age. Divergent elements like *advaita*, *dvaita*, emotional *bhakti* and temple eulogy got integrated in the works of *bhaktas*, especially in the works of Ezhuthachan. The Brahminic knowledge got popularised in the society. The *bhakti* poets took up the study of *Purāṅṅas*. The story of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa found speedy

dissemination in society through the literary creations of *bhaktas*. The Rāma and Krīṣṇa themes became the thematic substance of various forms of artistic expressions of the age. Though the early temple centred *bhakti* got subsided, a new temple cult developed during this period with Guruvayūr temple as the nucleus. Though *bhakti* played the role of a reformer, it strengthened the feudal tendencies of the age and justified the Brahminic claims. The propagation of Vaiṣṇava lore and the dissemination of Brahminic knowledge among a vast section of non-Brahmin and downtrodden sections in the society were the results of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult in the post-Cēra age. This led to the further consolidation of Brahminic social system in Kerala.

Notes and References:

1. T.A.S., Vol. V., pp.157-159.
2. *Ibid.*, pp.159-160.
3. T.A.S., Vol. I., p.418.
4. *Ibid.*, p.258 ; T.A.S., Vol.VII., p.119.
5. T.A.S., Vol. I, p.260.
6. *Ibid.*, pp.258-260.
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p.118.
8. *Ibid.* The name of the king mentioned in this record is Vīra Udaya Mārtāṇḍīya Varma. It is probable that the name of the Prince was changed as Vīra Udaya Mārtāṇḍīya Varma after his coronation.
9. *Ibid.*, p.120.
10. *Ibid.*, p.122.
11. *Ibid.*, pp.120-122.
12. *Ibid.*, p.123 ; R. Vasudeva Poduval, *op.cit.*, p.259.
13. See *Tirunilīalmāla*, 1.4, 1.9.
14. *Unṅunīlisandēśam*, ślōkas -121-122.
15. *Ibid.*, ślōka -127.
16. *Śukasandēśa*, Pūrva Bhāga, ślōka - 58.
17. *Kōkilasandēśa*, Pūrva Bhāga, ślōka - 72.
18. *Kōkasandēśam*, ślōka – 24.
19. See 'Introduction' to *Śukasandēśa* in N.P.Unni (ed.), *op.cit.*,1985,p.12.

20. *Bhringasandēśa*, ślōkas – 29, 86.
21. *Kāmasandēśa*, *Pūrva Bhāga*, ślōka – 60, 66: *Uttara Bhāga*, ślōkas - 1-61.
22. See for more details *Tiruppuliyur Grandhavari*.
23. *Ibid.*, pp.54-55, Record No- 22.
24. *Ibid.*, pp.55- 60, Record No- 23.
25. See for information on Etṭappalṭṭi's association with Tirupuliyūr temple *Ibid.*, Record No-9, pp.46-47. The Ōṭṭanātṭu Rāja's association with this temple is apparent from Cengannūr Grandhavari. See excerpts from *Cengannūr Grandhavari* in Kallur Narayana Pillai, *op.cit.*, pp.15, 40.
26. *Tiruppuliyūr Grandhavari*, pp.60-67, Record Nos-21, 24.
27. *Kiltrikkovil Grandhavari*, Record of 810 ME, Quoted in P.Unnikrishnan Nair, *op.cit.*,1993,pp.71-72; *Anantapuravarnṭanam* refers to *bhatṭṭas* of Tiruvananthapuram temple, *Anantapuravarnṭanam*, ślōkas-139 ;*Unṭnṭunṭilīsandēśam* refers to *bhatṭṭas* at Adityapuram temple at Kollam. See *Unṭnṭunṭilīsandēśam*, ślōka - 75. .
28. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 2006b, p.154; Also see chapter III.
29. *Māmānkam Rekhakal – Kozhikkodan Grandhavari-2*, pp.11-42.
30. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1999, pp.91-93; M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 2006b, p.155.
31. V.V. Haridas, *Kshetram, Uthsavam, Rashtriyam*, Calicut,2008, p.38.
32. William Logan, *op.cit.*, pp.167 –169 ; K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1999, pp.106-107; M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 2006b, pp.158-178 ; N.M. Nambudiri, *Samootheri Carithrathile Kanappurangal*, Sukapuram, 1998, pp.96-108.
33. P.Govinda Pillai, *Malayala Bhasha Charithram*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1889, pp.174-175.
34. R. Narayana Panikkar, *Kerala Bhasha Sahitya Carithram*, Vol. II., Tiruvananthapuram, pp.378-435; Chelanattu Achyutha Menon, *Ezhuthachanum Kalavum*, (trans.) M. Leelavathy, Tiruvananthapuram, 2000, pp.54-62.
35. K.N.Ezhuthachan, “Kilṭippātṭṭu” in K.M.George (ed.), *Sahitya Charithram Prastanangalilote*, Kottayam, 1958, rpt.2008, pp.382-383.
36. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*,1990,Vol.II., pp. 534-545.
37. See chapter VIII.
38. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*,1970b, pp.48-57; M. Leelavathy, *Malayala Kavitha Sahitya Caritram*, Thrissur, 1980,rpt.2002, pp.81-83; K.Ramachandran Nair, *Early Manipravalam, A Study*, Tiruvananthapuram,1971, pp.87-155; P. Raman, “Prachina Manipravalam Champukkal”, in Panmana Ramachandran Nair, *op.cit.*,pp.84-110,*passim*.
39. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 2006a, pp.22-23.
40. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, 1970b, pp.77-82.
41. *Adhyātma Rāmāyanṭam Kilṭippātṭṭu*, *Bālakānṭdam*, lines -199-220.
42. P. Usha, *Ezhuthacchante Bhaktiyum Darsanavum*, Sukapuram, 2003, pp.53-142, *passim*.
43. *Mahābhāratam Kilṭippātṭṭu*, *Pauloma parvam*, lines-1-10,19-20; *Sabha parvam* lines-1-20; *Strṭi parvam*, lines-131-140; *Aswamedhika parvam*, lines-1 -10.

44. *Ibid.*, ;*Sabha parvam*,lines- 1201-1210; *Bhīṣma parvam*,lines-517-530, 567-580; *Śalya parvam*,lines-11-40;*Souptika parvam*,lines-1-10; *Sānti parvam* -lines, 161-280; *Aswamedhika parvam*,lines-311-350;*Mousala parvam*, lines-681-720; *Swargārohanā parvam*, lines-35-70,151-158.
45. J.N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of Malayalam*, New Delhi, 1920, rpt.1984, pp. 228-251.
46. *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇam Kilippātītu*, *Balakāṇḍam*, lines- 87-94, 320-340.
47. *Ibid.*, lines- 123-130
48. *Ibid.*, lines- 77-80.
49. See chapter V.
50. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*,1986, pp. 88 -90.
51. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990,Vol.II,pp.385-393,506-509.
52. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1986, p.88.
53. M. Leelavathy, *op.cit.*, p.95.
54. *Jnānappāna*, Lines – 221-222.
55. *Ibid.*, Lines- 209-210, 283-284, 333- 358,
56. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1986, pp 40-41.
57. *Ibid.*, pp.40-41.
58. M.G.S. Narayanan, “Guruvayur Oru Charithravalokanam”, *Bhaktapriya*, Vol.21, No-12, December 2006c, p.32.
59. *Ibid.*; K.V.Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*,1986, p.92.
60. Many temple legends of different localities in Kerala celebrate Vilvamangalam Swāmiyar’s association with respective temples. See Kurumathur Narayanan Nambudiripad, “Ananthapuram Kshethravum Tiruvananthapuram Sri Padmanabha Swamy Kshethravum”, *Samskara Keralam*, Vol.VIII, January-March,1994,pp.53-57; Radhakrishnan Pottaykkal, *Sri Vilvamangalam Swamiyar*, Trissur, 2001, 5th edtn.2006, pp.57-97.
61. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990,Vol.II,pp.385-393.
62. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*,1986, pp.67-70.
63. See chapter V.
64. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*,1986, pp.90-92.
65. See chapters V, VIII and IX.
66. See chapter V.
67. The author’s *bhakti* to Sri Padmanabha is evident from intermittent *stutis* in the work. The work also begins with a prayer to Padmanabha. See *Anantapuravarnānam*, *ślōka*-1.
68. See chapter VIII.
69. *T.A.S.*, Vol. V, pp. 124-127; Also see chapter VI.
70. *T.A.S.*, Vol. VI, pp. 135- 137; Also see chapter VI.
71. See chapter V.
72. *Ibid.*

73. See chapter VIII.
74. *Ibid.*
75. J.N.Farquhar, *op.cit.*, pp.296-346; J.T.F.Jordens, “Medieval Hindu Devotionalism” in A.L. Basham (ed.), *A Cultural History of India*, New Delhi, 1975, rpt.2010, pp.266-280; K.M.George, *Facets of Indian Literature*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1994,pp.59-78; Also see chapter VIII.
76. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 2006b, pp.182-186.
77. *Adhyathma Rāmāyanam Kilippāt̃t̃u*, *Balakāñdam*, lines- 45-58.
78. *Ibid*; *Mahābhāratm Kilippāt̃t̃u*, *Astikam*, lines-311-317,
79. *Ibid.*, lines-85-90.
80. See Note no. 54 above.
81. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*,2006a, pp.20-23.
82. See discussion on the social ideology of Pūntānam’s *bhakti* in previous section in this chapter.
83. *Nārāyanīyam*, *dasakam* -22, *Ślōkas* – 7- 8,
84. See chapter IX; Also see Appendix-VII.
85. S.K.De, *op.cit.*,pp.9-10; S.C.Mukherji, *op.cit.*,pp.91-95.
86. S.C.Mukherji, *op.cit.*,pp.99-100; Swamy Prajnananda, *A Historical Study of Indian Music*, New Delhi,1981, pp.13-14.
87. K.Omanakutty, “Sangeethavum, Nrittavum”, in P.K.Velayudhan Pillai, *Navodhana Samskaram Keralathil*, Tiruvananthapuram,1998,p125.
88. Gopinath Mohapatra, *op.cit.*,p.36.
89. *Anantapuravarnanam*, *sloka*-101; Also see Note nos 69 and 70 above.
90. *T.A.S.*, Vol. I., pp. 419-423.
91. Dipak Chandra Bhattacharya, *Iconology of Composite Images*, New Delhi, 1980, pp.10-11.
92. M.G. Sasibhooshan, *op.cit.*, 2006, pp.147-150; Also see Appendix-VII.
93. See chapter IX.
94. *Mānasollasa*, *ślōkas*-746-753.
95. *Kaśyapaśilpa*, *ślōkas* -1-9.
96. *Íśanaśiva Gurudeva Padhathi*, *Patala*-43, *ślōkas* - 65-67.
97. See for details of rituals services of these gods in *Tantrasamuccaya*, K.P.C.Anujan Bhattathirippad (ed.), *Tantrasamuccaya*, Vol.I, Kunnamkulam, 2006.
98. Shanti Lal Nagar, *op.cit.*,p.16.
99. See for instance records of Tiruvananthapuram temple in *Pradhanappetta Matilakam Rekhakal*, *op.cit.*; *Trippunithura Grandhavari*, *op.cit.*; *Tiruppuliyūr Grandhavari*, Record-16.
100. *Ibid.*
101. Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, 1961,pp.120-121; Adoor Ramachandran Nair, *op.cit.*, pp.174-175.

102. *Amarakōśam* gives the name of Śāsta as a synonym for Buddha. See *Amarakōśam*, p.59.
103. B.Padmakumari Amma, *op.cit.*, pp.141-142.
104. *Index* No.A. 80; *T.A.S.* Vol. II., pp.131-207.
105. M.R., *Curunñā*1720, *Ōla* 146 ; *Anantapuravarnñanam*, *sloka*-123-125; *Tiruppuliyūr Grandhavari*, Record No-24.
106. *Index* No.A. 80; *T.A.S.* Vol. II., pp.131-207.
107. *Tiruppuliyūr Grandhavari*, Record No-24.
108. Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India*, New Delhi, 2003, pp.482-486; Shanti Lal Nagar, *op.cit.*, pp.16-30.
109. See chapter V.
110. See chapter VIII; Also see Appendix-VI.
111. *T.A.S.* Vol. I., pp.251-256; Also see chapter V.
112. *Syānandūrapurāññasamuccaya*, chapter- I, *ślōka* -34.
113. Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 1978, pp.74-75.
114. See chapter VIII; Also see Appendix-VI.
115. See chapter IX; Also see Appendix- VII.
116. *Kōkasandēśam*, *ślōkas* - 41-42. Still the image of the deity is that of Viṣṇu with four hands. The belief, however, is that of Rāma.
117. *Unññunīlisandēśam*, *ślōkas*-29,42; See for references on Cāttankulñangara temple, *T.A.S.*, Vol.IV, pp.161-166; Also see chapter VI.
118. Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2009, pp.295-306.
119. *Anantapuravarnñanam*, *ślōkas* – 164 – 172,183.
120. *Unññunīlisandēśam*, *ślōka* – 40.
121. See various *Matilakam* records in Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 2004 and various *curunñā* records in Central Archives, Tiruvananthapuram.
122. See Calicut Grandhavari in N.M.Nambudiri, *op.cit.*, 1987, Appendices, pp.213-277.
123. See various documents in *Vanjeri Grandhavari*, *op.cit.*
124. See records in *Tirupuliyur Grandhavari*, *op.cit.*
125. See various documents in *Tiruvalla Grandhavari*, *op.cit.*
126. *T.A.S.*, Vol. VII, Pt. I, pp.1-15.
127. *Ibid.*, Vol. VI, Pt. I, pp. 1-27.
128. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp.33-37.
129. See for the list of post-Cēra inscriptions, Appendix-V.
130. *Vanjeri Grandhavari*, Document No- 8 A, 44 A.
131. *Tiruppuliyūr Grandhavari*, Record- 23.
132. Beena Sarasan, *Traversing Travancore Through the Ages on Coins*, Calicut, 2008, Coin No. 21 and 22.1, p.24.
133. *Ibid.*, pp. 29-34.

134. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-40.

Chapter V

RISE OF TWO ROYAL VISṬṆĪU TEMPLES

A striking feature of the VaisṆāva centres in the post – Cēra age was the development of Tiruvanthapuram and Guruvāyūr VisṆĪu temples as two prominent royal shrines. The political condition in medieval Kerala was altered with the disappearance of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram in the early decades of the twelfth century¹. Several kingdoms emerged from the ruins of the Cēra state. A peculiar feature of the political life of the age is that political authority was controlled by matrilineal joint families known as swarūpams². The royal patronage gave rise to royal temples. Among the royal temples, the VisṆĪu shrines of Tiruvanthapuram and Guruvāyūr had prominent place.

The political charisma of the royal patrons of Vēṅṭāṭṭu and Netṭiyiruppu swarūpam contributed respectively to the growth of Tiruvanthapuram and Guruvāyūr temples. Royal patronage advanced the prospects and prosperity of these VisṆĪu temples. This resulted in the emergence of Tiruvanthapuram and Guruvāyūr temples as prominent VaisṆāva centres in the post-Cēra age. They emerged as new focal points of VisṆĪu *bhakti*. A host of royal patrons also came to the forefront as votaries of the VisṆĪu *bhakti* cult. The royal *bhaktas* of Vēṅṭāṭṭu were the devotees of Śrī Padmanabha, the deity of Tiruvanthapuram temple and the Zamorins were the patrons and devotees of the Guruvāyūr temple.

Rise of Tiruvanthapuram Divyadēśam as a Royal Shrine

Different literary works of the post–Cēra age contain references to the Tiruvanthapuram temple. The earliest available description of this

temple in the post-Cēra age is given in *Syānandūrapurān*āsamuccaya of the immediate post-Cēra period³. Like a typical *Ks*ētramāhātmya, *Syānandūrapurān*āsamuccaya contains only legendary tales⁴. The glorification of the sacred geography of Tiruvananthapuram appears to be the intention of the author of this panegyric work. *Syānandūrapurān*āsamuccaya narrates various *tīrthas* in and around Tiruvananthapuram. Twelve *tīrthas* are described. They are – *Anantatīrtha*, *Agastyatīrtha*, *Varāhatīrtha*, *Cakratīrtha*, *Śurpakāratīrtha*, *Pitatīrtha*, *Rāmasaras*, *Kan*vatīrtha, *Saptars*itīrtha, *Brahmakun*dā, *Angavatatīrtha* and *Jat*ākundā⁵. The identification of such a large number of *tīrthas* in a small temple town like Tiruvananthapuram was part of a deliberate effort to enhance and glorify the sacredness and prominence of Tiruvananthapuram temple as a *tīrtha* or a pilgrim centre.

It is a notable feature of medieval period that many *tīrthas* emerged all over Indian sub-continent⁶. These pilgrim centres were known for their role as centres of ritual purification. Often *bhaktas* considered holy tanks and temples as determining factors of the sacredness of a pilgrim centre⁷. Along with the description of the sacredness of Tiruvananthapuram, *Syānandūrapurān*āsamuccaya speaks of the observation of various *Vais*nāva penances like *Dwādaśi* and *Ēkādaśi*. The objective of this was to endear *bhaktas* to *Vais*nāva penances and to proclaim the effectiveness of performing them at Tiruvananthapuram. The intention of the author was to enhance the status of Tiruvananthapuram as the foremost *tīrtha* in the sacred geography of *Vais*nāvites. The work as a distinctive *Sthalamāhātmya* speaks in the language and style of a typical panegyric with least concern for historical or logical causality. The intention of the author was only to make a sacred account for Tiruvananthapuram. The compilation of this panegyric is a pointer to the fact that various legends and *Sthalamāhātmya* on Tiruvananthapuram got fabricated in the twelfth century when *Vēn*ātū became

an independent chiefdom following the disintegration of the Cēra kingdom of Mahōdayapuram. It seems that there is an interconnection between the attempt of *Samuccaya* to glorify Tiruvananthapuram and the emergence of the independent kingdom of Vēṅṅātṅu. The underlying factor for the compilation of this panegyric was to accord a place of prominence to a flourishing town in Vēṅṅātṅu and the ruling dynasty there.

During the age of the Cēras, Vēṅṅātṅu was the southern province in the Cēra kingdom⁸. The incessant Cōlṅa-Pāṅṅdṅya incursions in Nāṅchinātṅu in the southern part of Kerala which constituted the erstwhile Āy kingdom forced the Vēṅṅātṅu rulers in the twelfth century to maintain vigilance in their southern border with Nāṅchinātṅu⁹. The Pāṅṅdṅyas, who became feudatories of the Cōlṅas in the twelfth century, were able to establish authority in Nāṅchinātṅu and Kōṅṅtṅār was their chief military and administrative station¹⁰. The Cōlṅas after their successful military campaigns in Nāṅchinātṅu in the tenth and eleventh centuries occupied the region and Kōṅṅtṅār was their chief military station. Kōṅṅtṅār was renamed as Mummudicōlṅanallūr by Rāja Rāja to proclaim his hold over the region. The constant Cōlṅa-Pāṅṅdṅya invasions in Nāṅchinātṅu were impeded with the rise of Vēṅṅātṅu and the concentration of Vēṅṅātṅu forces in the south resulted in the gradual emergence of Tiruvananthapuram as a prominent political centre in Vēṅṅātṅu. This was a catalyst in the transformation of the *divyadēśam* shrine at Tiruvananthapuram into a royal shrine under the increased political influence of the Vēṅṅātṅu rulers. It is apparent from various inscriptions of Kerala Varma of Vēṅṅātṅu in different parts of Nāṅchinātṅu that Kōṅṅtṅār came under Vēṅṅātṅu in the beginning of the twelfth century. The Cōlṅapuram inscription of Kerala Varma of 1127AD is the earliest record of a Vēṅṅātṅu ruler found in Nāṅchinātṅu¹¹. It is significant that this inscription makes clear that the king

made an endowment to the Rājēndracōlīēswaremudaiya Mahādēva temple at Mummudicōlīanallūr or Kōtītār.

Two Śúcīndram inscriptions of Kōta Kerala Varma of 1145AD and an inscription of 1150AD disclose that Vēnātīu rulers continued to control Nānchinātīu in the middle of the twelfth century¹². References found in Cōlīapuram and Śúcīndram inscriptions to Kerala Varma relate to one and the same monarch who ruled Vēnātīu in the early decades of the twelfth century. The importance of the compilation of *Syānandūrapurānāsamuccaya* is that the work was compiled in a period when Vēnātīu emerged as an independent kingdom¹³. This reveals that the compilation of *Syānandūrapurānāsamuccaya* took place soon after Vēnātīu became an independent political entity and a notable political power by vanquishing the Pāndīya depredators. It is also significant that Kōta Kerala Varma renovated the Viśnīu temple at Tiruvananthapuram¹⁴. This proves that as Vēnātīu rulers focused on Tiruvananthapuram, the place was glorified and the temple therein received patronage.

The growth of independent Vēnātīu was followed by the emergence of several royal temples¹⁵. Similar to this, emergence of post-Cēra kingdoms and chiefdoms was accompanied by the growth of royal temples which thrived under royal patronage. It is significant that various chieftains who asserted independence in the aftermath of the dismemberment of the Cēra kingdom of Mahōdayapuram patronised temples in their kingdoms to obtain Brahminic support and to legitimise their authority. With ritual legitimacy the chieftains were enhanced to the position of Kṣātrīyas¹⁶. The royal patronage of Vēnātīu swarūpam was a stimulant in the production of the genre of panegyric works in the immediate post-Cēra period. The compilation of *Samuccaya* is to be

perceived as a step to attain political eminence by the Vēṅṅātṅṅu chieftains in the newly evolved political condition in Vēṅṅātṅṅu. The Vēṅṅātṅṅu kingdom and the monarchy put their weight well behind the production of *sthalamāhātmyas* to extol a temple in their kingdom to garner religious and political recognition. The courtiers and *bhaktas* in Vēṅṅātṅṅu ventured fabricating *māhātmyas* on Tiruvananthapuram temple to provide glories both to the deity and Vēṅṅātṅṅu chiefdom.

Many *sthalamāhātmyas* on Tiruvananthapuram came out in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. *Anantapuravarṅṅanam* is one such panegyric work on Tiruvananthapuram temple which was written in *Manṅṅipravālṅṅam* in the fourteenth century¹⁷. This work offers a detailed description of the temple and its structural plan. The metallic *dhvajastambha*, the *gōpuram* in the east, the *agnimanṅṅdṅṅapa*, the *curṅṅrṅṅumanṅṅdṅṅapa*, the subshrines of Śāsta, Śrī Krṅṅśṅṅṅa of Tiruvambātṅṅi, *agraśāla*, *vātilmātṅṅam*, *balikkal*, *vyāsakōṅṅa*, *mukhamanṅṅdṅṅapa*, the sanctum sanctorum, the granary, *gōśāla* and *ūtṅṅtṅṅupura* are all mentioned in this *sthalamāhātmya*¹⁸. It is apparent from *Anantapuravarṅṅanam* that Tiruvananthapuram temple was a magnificent temple complex consisting of various buildings. The sacred geography of the city as enshrined in *Anantapuravarṅṅanam* is a pointer to the further growth of Tiruvananthapuram as a notable Vaisṅṅṅava centre in Kerala. The picture of a temple with multifarious activities is given in this panegyric. The temple was also the nucleus of a highly organised temple culture with a temple academy. The presence of *bhatṅṅtṅṅas* or scholars, *cāttirars* or students and *Bhāratam* singers in the temple point to the multifaceted activities of the temple¹⁹. *Ananthasayanaksṅṅētramāhātmyam* is another *sthalamāhātmya* on Tiruvananthapuram²⁰. This work does not contain any

historical information regarding the temple and it is only a eulogy of the place and the temple.

Different *sandēśakāvya*s contain references to the affluence of Tiruvananthapuram Viṣṇu temple. *Unṅunīlisandēśa* of the fourteenth century speaks about the prosperity of the temple. It mentions about the sanctum sanctorum, the sub-shrines of Narasimha and Śrī Krīṣṇa and the colossal *gōpurams* in the east and the west²¹. It is evident that the temple continued to be in prosperity and magnificence during the period of *Unṅunīlisandēśa*. *Śukasandēśa* of Lakshmidasa is another fourteenth century *sandēśakāvya* which describes Tiruvananthapuram temple²². A general description of the temple town is given and Syānandūra or Tiruvananthapuram is hailed as a prosperous abode of Murāri or Viṣṇu. It is described that the devotees thronged in large number in the temple at the time of the evening prayer. In a similar manner, *Bhringasandēśa* of the sixteenth century contains references to the prosperity of the temple²³. These literary references are testimonies of the prosperity of the temple.

The temple was renovated by Vēṅṅātṅu rulers and royal relatives. The earliest known renovation was undertaken by Kerala Varma. It is stated in *Syānandūrapurāṅṅasamuccaya* that Kerala Varma, the elder brother of Udaya Mārtāṅṅṅa Varma, renovated the temple sometime in the immediately preceding period of the composition of the work²⁴. Udaya Mārtāṅṅṅa Varma was the patron of the author of *Syānandūrapurāṅṅasamuccaya*. No further information regarding this renovation is given in *Syānandūrapurāṅṅasamuccaya*. Kōta Kerala Varma, who was the first independent monarch of Vēṅṅātṅu, ruled over Vēṅṅātṅu in the first half of the twelfth century²⁵. The first known renovation of the temple took place in the immediate post-Cēra age under the first independent ruler of Vēṅṅātṅu.

Meanwhile P. Shangooni Menon contends that the earliest renovation of the temple was in the year 1050 AD by an unknown ruler of Vēnīātīu²⁶. However no further details about this renovation are furnished.

A major renovation of the temple was undertaken by Āditya Varma Sarvānganātha in the fourteenth century. An inscription of Āditya Varma Sarvānganātha of 1375AD records that the king undertook the renovation of the *gōśāla*, the *dīpikagriha*, the *Krīśnīālaya* and *manīdīapa*²⁷. *Krīśnīālaya*, which means ‘the house of Krīśnīa’, is Tiruvambātīi sub-shrine. An undated and fragmentary record on the base of the *balikkal* of the Krīśnīa temple mentions the name of one Vīra Iravi Mārtāndīa Varma who was Trippāppūr Mūtta Tiruvatīi²⁸. It is probable that Vīra Iravi Mārtāndīa Varma put up the *balikkal*. The temple was elaborately renovated during the period of king Rāma Mārtāndīa Varma in the fifteenth century²⁹. The renovation includes the reconstruction of the sanctum sanctorum too. Before the commencement of the renovation, the image was shifted to *bālālaya*. The *vimāna* was reconstructed and *matīappalīi*, *tiruvarāakam*, *curīrīumanīdīapam*, *cerīucurīrīumanīdīapam* and *vilīakkumātīam* were reconstructed. The *orīrīakkalmanīdīapam* was erected anew. After the completion of the works, a detailed purification ceremony known as *kalaśam* was held in 1461AD (20th *Makaram* 636 ME). In 1469AD, the temple well was constructed in stone on the orders of Rāma Mārtāndīa Varma and the king made a new *matīhom* known as Śankara Nārāyanīa Mārtāndīamatīhom for the devotees who came in pilgrimage to the temple³⁰.

The next extensive renovation of the temple took place in the beginning of the reign of Vīra Iravi Iravi Varma in the fag-end of the sixteenth century³¹. The plan for the reconstruction of the *gōpuram* and the

central shrine was formulated in 1606AD. A striking feature of this plan is that the temple officers and royal servants had to contribute in this renovation work by way of constructing the flights of *gōpuram*. No information is furnished in the temple records regarding the execution of the construction work by the royal officers. The renovation scheme also envisaged to rebuild the entire *gōpuram*, the *balikkalpura*, the *curṛumanḍāpa*, the *mēlmurṛi* and *nīrarṛa* in granite. An upper storey was constructed for the sanctum sanctorum. The *vātilmāṭam*, the *curṛumanḍāpa*, the *matṛappalṛi* and *mētṛamurṛi* were also reconstructed in 1608AD. The floor of *mētṛamurṛi* was paved with stone and the surroundings of the temple well were renovated with stone. The reconstruction work was carried out by the successors of Vīra Iravi Iravi Varma - Rāma Varma, Āditya Varma and Rāma Varma. The copper plating of *nālabalam* was finished and its reconstruction was completed in 1620AD. After the completion of the work, *kalaśam* was performed for purifying the temple.

The kings of Vēnṛātṛu and the royal relatives made endowments to Tiruvananthapuram temple frequently as an attempt to promote the temple. Often the kings and feudal nobles made money offerings and submitted presents to the deity. They also used to offer many precious things before the deity whenever they visited the temple. Gold ornaments, lamps, umbrellas, musical instruments, vessels, and silk clothes were some among the offerings to the deity. Land was also donated to the temple for meeting the expenses of various rituals and ceremonies. Offerings were also made for arranging special feeding in the temple. The Pānḍṛya kings who conquered southern regions of Kerala patronised the temple. Royal endowments were made to the temple by Jatāvarman Parāntaka Pānḍṛya. The king, who ruled in the early decades of twelfth century, conquered Nānchinātṛu and Tiruvananthapuram and

donated ten golden lamps to the temple along with the grant of a village known as Tāyanallūr for meeting the expenses of burning lamps³².

An inscription of Tiruvambātī temple of 1196AD speaks about a donation by certain courtiers in the service of Vēñātī King Kōta Mārtāndīa Varma or Udaya Mārtāndīa Varma in this sub-shrine of Krīśṇa³³. Āditya Rāma, the bearer of the umbrella of the king, donated a massive silver drum which looked like Manthara mountain to the deity of Tiruvambātī. Further the donor made provisions for the preparation of daily offering of two *nālī* rice to the deity. In order to meet the expenses of the offering, he invested three *sāligai* and thirty *alīagachu* with the priests of the temple. The interest of these donations was to be utilized for the purpose. It is evident from *Syānandūrapurāṇasamuccaya* that Udaya Mārtāndīa Varma, the master of Āditya Rāma, was a benefactor of the temple.

An inscription of 1209 AD registers a gift of land to the temple by a person called Pallavarāiyan³⁴. The name of the donor denotes that he was a trader or an aristocrat from the Pallava kingdom. This endowment was made during the reign of king Rāma Kerala Varma. Many plots were donated to the temple for meeting the expenses of rituals and festivals like *Painguniuttram*. Provisions were made for feeding one Brahmin every day and for feeding a group of Brahmins on special occasions with gruel in the morning and a sumptuous meal at noon after *pantīratīpūja*. Provisions were made for making a flower garden or *nantāvanam* to ensure the supply of flowers to the temple for the exclusive use of the temple. Provisions were also framed for the maintenance of the flower garden and for the regular supply of flowers to the temple during ritual services.

A tenth century inscription which is engraved on the south wall of Tiruvambāṭṭi shrine in *vatṭelṭuttu* registers a gift of land in Peruvēṅṭāṭṭu by Kāman Kunrṭappōlan of Peruntōṭṭam in Kutṭamangalam³⁵. This endowment consisted of one lamp and certain fields of lands, a coconut garden and the plot attached to it. Another inscription, which is datable to twelfth century and which is engraved on the south wall of Tiruvambāṭṭi temple, registers a gift by Śankaran Dēvan of Pūkkōṭṭe for maintaining two *Vriscika* lamps in the temple³⁶.

Various inscriptions and literary works of Ravi Varma Kulaśēkhara *alias* Sangrāmādhīra reveal that the king was a devotee and a patron of Tiruvanathapuram temple. A Cālaigrāmam inscription of this monarch which enumerates his *birudas*, proclaims that the king is a devout worshipper of the lotus feet of Padmanabha³⁷. It is stated in the prelude to the drama *Pradymnābhyudayam* that it is written to enact during festivals in the temple of Padmanabha who is the patron god of *Yādavakula*³⁸. *Yādavakula* in this record stands for the Vēṅṭāṭṭu dynasty. This statement is a pointer to the enhanced position of the temple as an abode of the family deity of Vēṅṭāṭṭu dynasty (*Kuladaivam*). Such a reference to Tiruvanathapuram temple as a shrine of the patron god of Vēṅṭāṭṭu swarūpam is not found in earlier records or literary works. It is certain that it was Ravi Varma Kulaśēkhara who accorded such a status to the temple. The king presented a large gold vessel to the temple and constructed Kāncipuramkontānmatṭhom to commemorate his victory at Kāncipuram³⁹.

Like Jatāvarman Parāntaka Pāṅṭṭya, several Pāṅṭṭya rulers patronised Tiruvanathapuram shrine and they instituted certain rituals in the temple. It is apparent from the temple chronicles that a Pāṅṭṭya ruler instituted a commemorative ritual service known as *Vīrapāṅṭṭyancilavu* in

the temple⁴⁰. Many villages in various parts of the Pān̄ḍīyan kingdom were donated to the temple to meet the expenses of the ritual. The name of the ritual reveals that the Pān̄ḍīya ruler who instituted the ritual was Vīra Pān̄ḍīya. A temple record of 1568AD, which enumerates various rituals in the temple, refers to *Vīrapān̄ḍīyancilavu*⁴¹. Although this document is silent on the date of the institution of this ritual, it is obvious that the ritual came into existence sometime back. The Kāncipuram inscription of Ravi Varma Sangrāmadhīra claimed that Vīra Pān̄ḍīya, the Pān̄ḍīya king, was defeated by the Vēn̄ḍātīu ruler⁴². In all probability, Vīra Pān̄ḍīya who was defeated by the Vēn̄ḍātīu ruler instituted *Vīrapān̄ḍīyancilavu* in Tiruvananthapuram Viṣṇū temple. The donation was made as it was the temple of the patron god of Vēn̄ḍātīu. More than an act of piety, it had political overtones as the objective behind this act was to acknowledge the victory of his vanquisher.

A temple record of 1375AD says that Āditya Varma Sārvanganātha made donations for meeting the expenses of *Alpiśi* festival⁴³. These donations included twelve *kalams* of paddy land at Kuśaverkalkarunagannūr, 12000 *pan̄ams* and elephants. The donation was made before the beginning of the festival and it was an act of expiation. An endowment of twenty gold coins was made for burning a lamp in the sanctum sanctorum in 1386AD⁴⁴. The offering was made by Trippāppūr Mūtta Tiruvatīi. The senior king of Vēn̄ḍātīu donated one silver lamp, one hanging lamp and two umbrella lamps as an offering in the temple in the same year⁴⁵. The senior member of Kunnummal made a donation of five gold coins for maintaining one lamp in the sanctum sanctorum⁴⁶. This endowment was made in 1386AD. A temple record of 1470AD discloses that *Uttamāgrapūja* was instituted in the temple by Rāma Mārtān̄ḍīyaVarma⁴⁷. Vīra Kōta Āditya Varma who succeeded Vīra Rāma Mārtān̄ḍīyaVarma issued strict orders in 1472AD for burning

permanent lamps in the *madāhoms* attached to the temple⁴⁸. There were four *matāhoms* at that time in the temple and they were *Pancāndanmatāhom*, *Kāncipurattumatāhom*, *Rāmavarmamatāhom* and *Mārtānādamatāhom*.

Vīra Iravi Udaya MārtānādaVarma, the junior prince of Trippāppūr, reinstated two rituals - *Kurumattūr Cilavu* and *Devadasi* feast- in the temple in 1483AD⁴⁹. During the reign of King Iravi Iravi Varma, the temple was granted certain important rights of taxation⁵⁰. The temple was granted the right to collect taxes from the travellers and traders of Tiruvananthapuram. These taxes were known as *kataiyam* and *vazhiyam* and they were collected for lighting lamps around the temple. King Iravi Iravi Varma also made strict arrangements for the performance of various rituals like *śrībali* in time without any break⁵¹. Permanent arrangements were made on behalf of the king for musical service in the temple and introduced several musical instruments like *ūttūkku*, *cillithālām*, *idakka* and *maddalām* in the temple⁵².

A donation of one gold bugle was also made by the king and orders were given for its regular use in the temple. Persons with weapons were prohibited from entry into temple and the premises. Also persons with cap or upper garments were not allowed to enter into the temple. This was in the year 1501AD. Arrangements were made for the strict performance of burning lamps in the sanctum sanctorum⁵³. The lamp in the sanctum sanctorum was known as *Tiruvarāvilakku*. Vīra Kōtadēva MārtānādaVarma instituted a new ritual known as *Vīra Mārtānādanpūja* in the temple in 1537AD⁵⁴. Landed properties which included both paddy fields and gardens were donated to the temple for meeting the expenses of the ritual. A gold flower was donated to the temple by the king in 1539AD. A gold ring studded with three gems was presented to the deity in 1542AD by Bhūṭala Vīra Āditya Varma, the King of Vēnāṭu⁵⁵.

Iravi Varma of Dēśinganāṭū branch of the royal house presented 101 *paṇams* for the central shrine, 11 *paṇams* for the temple of Narasimha and 4 *paṇams* for Tiruvambāṭi in 1543AD and Mārtāṇḍa Varma of Attingal branch of the royal house made money offering of 15 *paṇams* before main deity in 1544AD⁵⁶. Rāma Varma of Dēśinganāṭū made money offering of 101 *paṇams* in the central shrine and 12 *paṇams* in Narasimha shrine and Ciravāy Mūtta Tiruvaṭi and his consort made a donation of 101 *paṇams* for the central shrine and 12 *paṇams* for Narasimha shrine in 1548AD⁵⁷. Iravi Varma made certain arrangements for the prompt performance of rituals in the temple in 1552AD⁵⁸. The temple was closed for two months prior to this royal initiative. The record does not mention the reason for the closure of the temple. What was the reason for the closure of the temple? The tussle between the Brahmin trustees and the king was the chief reason for the closure of the temple. It was a method of protest by Brahmins against the political authorities in medieval period. K.N.Ganesh argues that the temple was closed due to the strains in agrarian relations as the interests of the trustees of the temple and the tenants clashed with each other⁵⁹. Iravi Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma donated a gold flower to the temple as an offering in 1579AD and Iravi Rāma Varma made an offering of gold ornaments in the temple in 1580AD⁶⁰.

Udaya Mārtāṇḍa Varma of Trippāppūr Kiḷp̣ērūr conducted a feast in the temple on *Pūruruṭṭāti* asterism in *Mithunam* month in 1581AD and made money donations to Brahmins and temple dependants⁶¹. The birthdays of kings were festive occasions in medieval Kerala temples when feast was conducted in temples by royal patrons. The king conducted *Paṭiyēṛram*, feast, money donations and special *pūjas* in the temple on the occasion of his birthday celebrations in 1587AD⁶². A gold flower was donated to the temple

on the birth day of King Iravi Varma in 1583AD and a money offering was made by Vīra Iravi Iravi Varma in 1588AD⁶³. King Iravi Iravi Varma conducted *Patīyērīram*, *curīrīuvilīakku* and money offerings in the temple and presented an elephant on the occasion of his birthday in 1594AD⁶⁴. The king also made money offering of 51 *panīams* in the central shrine and 7 *panīams* in the sub-shrine of Narasimha as offerings when he visited the temple. The king instituted various rituals in the temple. Offerings and rituals like *tiruarīavilīakku*, *Karuvēlamkulīampūja*, *atīacānipūja*, *uttamākkiram*, *pūjas* in *matīhoms*, *Kurumattūrcilavu* and *śrībali* were conducted on the orders of the king and money offering of 204 *panīams* was made in the temple in 1602AD⁶⁵.

The king ordered for the regular performance of rituals and the fair management of temple affairs in 1623AD⁶⁶. The temple was in an economic crisis in those days and temple servants and tenants misappropriated the temple properties. The king ordered the retrieval of temple possessions from their hands. He made an offering of *pantrandutulāpāyasam* in the temple along with an offering of a lamp in the sanctum sanctorum. Rituals were performed in Tiruvambātī and in main shrines. A *kalaśam* and *peruntamrīutupūja* were performed in the temple for fifteen days on royal orders by two members of the royal family, Unīnī kerala Varma and Iravi Varma⁶⁷. Various offerings such as *kalaśam*, silk clothes, *kalaśam* in Tiruvambātī, usual rituals and money offerings were also made in the temple by the royal family in 1632AD and Iravi Varma made money offering, feast, *kalaśam* and *patīyērīram* in the temple in 1635AD⁶⁸.

A temple record of 1638AD enlists the offerings in the temple made by various royal members and *bhaktas*⁶⁹. Iravi Varma of Trippāppūr Kilīpērūr donated a silk cloth, a chieftain of Attingal made an offering of a blue silk

cloth, Āditya Varma presented a gold flower, Ayyappan Īśwaran made a donation of a gold garland, Ayyappan Anantan presented a gold finger ring, Kālġiamma made a donation of a gold ornament, an unknown Brahmin from the north donated a gold bangle. Donations of gold ornaments were made by the junior prince of Trippāppūr Kilġġpērūr and Perumākutġġi of Kārappalġġi too. In 1685AD, Umayamma Rānġġi and Iravi Varma made offerings of ornaments and clothes to the temple⁷⁰. What is apparent from temple records is that the Vēnġġātġġu rulers and members of various branches in Trippāppūr swarūpam wholeheartedly patronised the temple as a royal shrine. The unifying link in Trippāppūr swarūpam was the temple. The flow of wealth to the temple raised the financial position of the temple and as a result the temple became a prosperous institution of the age.

The kings and chieftains in medieval Kerala were forced to pay fines to temple for the loss that they or their servants inflicted on the temple properties⁷¹. Often the cases of destruction of temple properties were not the outcome of designed or deliberate endeavours. Some times searches conducted for social miscreants or thieves hiding in temples also caused havoc. *Sankētam*, to an extent, was the geographical area in which the temple, to an extent, was the de facto authority in terms of juridical rights⁷². The temple *sankētam* depended upon the local chieftains for the maintenance of law and order and it had no armed force of its own. In this sense the autonomy of *sankētam* was limited. In fact *sankētam* comprised of the temple properties and the neighbouring regions of the temple. The incursions and interferences within the *sankētam* limits led to the imposition of fines on kings and chieftains. If the ruler refused to comply with the decision of the temple, the temple trustees resorted to the closure of temples (*sankētam azhikkuka*). This was done in protest to royal misdemeanours. Often the temple trustees held back the flag hoisting ceremony prior to the beginning of

the annual festival. Again, the temple declined the ritual duties of swarūpam such as the legitimisation of the political authority if swarūpam turned down the commands of the temple in making the local chieftains disciplined.

Similar to this, the temple trustees on several occasions underwent *paṭṭiṇṭi* (protest fast) against the king⁷³. The Brahmin trustees of Eḷṅgunnapuḷṭa performed *paṭṭiṇṭi* in protest against Paṛṭavūr Rāja who carried out severe actions of injustice in temple *sankētam*⁷⁴. The frequent internecine clashes between swarūpams had a higher degree of potentiality in bringing in disturbances in *sankētams*. Occasionally temple possessions were destroyed by royal officers and servants too. The temples of medieval Kerala looked upon such ‘acts of violation of the norms of discipline’ as the *raison d’être* for amassing wealth and to control the political authorities. Before the commencement of the festival, the king and royal members had to pay fines to the temple treasury as atonement if they committed atrocities against temple servants, dependants and temple properties.

Often kings and relatives had to present gold and silver vessels, money and elephants or mahouts’ tools as acts of atonement⁷⁵. Only after making such payments and presents that the festival flag was hoisted by temple trustees. Many instances of the payments of retributions to temples by swarūpams for the acts of indiscipline are noticed in the medieval temple records⁷⁶. The Rājas of Perumpaṭṭappu had to pay fines in Eḷṅgunnapuḷṭa temple for the faults of Tekkumkūr chieftains. The Paṛṭavūr Rāja made payments in Eḷṅgunnapuḷṭa temple for disturbing *sankētam* and for misbehaving in the temple premises. The fines on swarūpams unveil that *sankētam* and temples were two powerful institutions of separate juridical power. This immunity is an attempt to safeguard the temple wealth in an age when battles were fought frequently.

The records of Tiruvananthapuram temple refer to several cases of payments of retributions to temples by Vēṅṅātṅu kings and royal relatives. The earliest reference to the payment of fines by a Vēṅṅātṅu king comes from a record of 1325AD⁷⁷. Kerala Varma of Kunnummal branch of Vēṅṅātṅu royal family made a grant of 167 *parṅas* of paddy land and a payment of 30,000 *panṅams* as atonement for causing the death of certain Brahmins in the *sankētam*. The king also paid 30000 *panṅams* as *karuvaketṅṅu*. The fines paid to the temple were known as *karuvaketṅṅu*. The term, *karuva* is derived from the *Garva*, the Sanskrit term for arrogance and *ketṅṅu* stands for the payment⁷⁸. Vīra Mārtānṅṅa Varma who was Trippāppūr Mūṅṅa Tiruvatṅi presented four silver vessels and paid 5000 *panṅams* as fine to the temple in 1382AD and Ravi Varma, the Trippāppūr Mūṅṅa Tiruvatṅi dedicated an elephant and six silver pots in the temple in 1417AD for harassing men⁷⁹. The fine which was paid by Ravi Varma as fine was 5000 *panṅams* for the harassment that he committed against the populace in temple *sankētam*.

Kōṅṅa Āditya Varma presented an elephant and four silver pots in expiation to the temple and reconstructed the north *gōpuram* of the temple as an act of atonement in 1482AD and Vīra Rāma Mārtānṅṅa Varma of Dēṅṅinganātṅu presented an elephant, four silver vessels and 360 *panṅams* for meals and an additional fine of 10000 *panṅams* in atonement in 1469AD⁸⁰. Perumālṅṅ Parākrama Pānṅṅṅya Dēva, the Pānṅṅṅyan king made a donation of a paddy field at Tāmaraiṅṅṅam at Kalṅṅakkātṅu to the temple as a fine to the temple and Parākrama Pānṅṅṅya Dēva is identified as Jatāvarman Parākrama Pānṅṅṅya who renovated the Cōṅṅṅapuram temple in 1372AD⁸¹.

Vīra Iravi Varma presented two elephants and fifteen silver vessels to the temple in 1491AD as acts of atonement for the highhanded actions

committed by royal soldiers against Vīranārāyanāśśerimatīhom of the temple and Ravi Ravi Varma returned paddy fields with yield of 5 *kalam* at Kōlīarakkōnam to the temple in 1498AD for manhandling the cultivators in temple properties by royal servants⁸². Iravi Iravi Varma who was the Trippāppūr Mūtta Tiruvatīi made an atonement of twelve silver pots and presented an elephant and silver pots in 1507AD⁸³. Vīra Iravi Varma performed one day penance on a Monday in the temple and donated 53 *panāms* in a golden plate before the deity⁸⁴. In 1613AD, the Pilīlīaimār of Ceruvalīlīi presented silver pots and an elephant in the temple in reparation for killing and wounding certain temple servants⁸⁵.

A striking aspect of the medieval Kerala polity and religion is that the kings and royal members had specific ritual status in temples during rituals and festivals⁸⁶. The kings had to take part in the processions during festivals. The Vēnīātīu kings, royal representatives and various members of the royal house participated in the festivals of Tiruvananthapuram temple. The king's participation in *ārīātīu* procession and other ritual pageant ensured royal patronage and protection. More over the royal participation confirmed the conferment of legitimacy to the kings. Apart from this, the exhibition of royal authority in the public during festivals projected the political claims of kings⁸⁷.

The earliest temple record that speaks about *Alpiśi* is of 1375 AD of the period of Iravi Āditya Varma and Kerala Varma⁸⁸. It states that Iravi Āditya Varma and Kerala Varma made land donations to the temple for the celebration of *Alpiśi*. The *Matilakam Grandhavari* gives a detailed account of the *Alpiśi* festival of 1588 AD and this description makes clear that Vēnīātīu kings and the royal relatives were present in the temple on the occasions of festival⁸⁹. The temple and its premises were cleaned and decorated for the

festival. Renovations were undertaken and roads were built around the temple. The royal forces were employed to guard the temple.

Trippāppūr Mūtta Tiruvatī with the sword and shield of the deity took part in the hunting procession of the deity. Trippāppūr Mūtta Tiruvatī had to escort with the sword and shield of the deity in the *ārātī* procession. Before the commencement of the procession, Trippāppūr Mūtta Tiruvatī had to grant the dues to the temple functionaries. It is significant that in both these cases, Trippāppūr Mūtta Tiruvatī was asked by the king to escort the processions. Also it was the king who handed over the sword and shield of the deity to Trippāppūr Mūtta Tiruvatī. The *ārātī* procession was accompanied by all the members of the royal house, the feudal nobles, chief functionaries in the service of the king and king's soldiers.

The Vēnātī kings performed *patīyērām* on different occasions in the temple⁹⁰. *Patīyērām* was an important function which was aimed at obtaining legitimacy. In this respect, it was a ritual for legitimising the royal authority of Vēnātī kings. The term, *patīyērām* literally means ascending the steps of the *mandāpa* of the temple. Often kings performed *patīyērām* at the time of the accession to the throne. The king, before assuming office, had to go to the temple and had to present an elephant as a gift to the deity. Then the king had to advance to *Abhisravanamanḍāpa* where the *Etṭarayōgam* members were present. Then the king had to go to the *mukhamanḍāpa* for performing *namaskāram* ceremony. He had to make gifts of ornaments, precious metals and silk clothes before the deity. After the performance of these ceremonies, the king had to receive the state sword from the chief priest. The priest also invested the king with the title *Cirāvā Mūppu*. Then the king donated money offerings at various shrines in the temple. With this the king got elevated to the status of the king of Vēnātī.

On several other occasions, royal members had to perform *paṭiyēṛṛam*. The younger brothers of the kings performed this ceremony when the prince is made as a heir apparent to the throne. The Rāṇis of Attingal (the Mother Queens) also had to do *paṭiyēṛṛam* at the time of the succession to the throne. The adoptees to the Vēṇāṭū royal family also had to do *paṭiyēṛṛam*. What was the significance of *paṭiyēṛṛam* ceremony? Was it a mere ritual ceremony? *Paṭiyēṛṛam* confirmed the royal status of a member of the Vēṇāṭū royal house. It was a ritual anointment ceremony by which the kings obtained ritual legitimacy from the Brahmins. Ritual legitimacy accorded Kṣatriya status to the kings and it strengthened the nexus between kings and Brahmins. Similar ceremonies were performed by the post-Cēra swarūpams to legitimise their authority⁹¹. The members of the royal family also underwent *tirumaṭambu* or ‘initiation into formal ritualistic studies’ in the temple. It was the *upanayana* ceremony. The swarūpams like Neṭiyiruppu and Perumpaṭappu performed similar ceremonies during festivals and rituals in their royal temples⁹². All these efforts had the objective to obtain legitimacy from the temple.

A separate royal officer known as Trippāppūr Mūtta Tiruvaṭi looked after the affairs of Tiruvananthapuram temple in medieval period⁹³. A senior member of the royal family functioned as Trippāppūr Mūtta Tiruvaṭi. Although Tiruvananthapuram temple was a royal shrine, the temple authorities went in collision course with royal patrons intermittently. The temple remained closed for many years without having daily rituals and festivals. The temple was under Brahmin trustees and a council known as *Eṭṭarayōgam*, which like other temple councils of the age, functioned as an independent body⁹⁴. The Vēṇāṭū king had the rights of *mēlkōima* which signifies that he was the chief patron or the chief protector of the temple. The term literally implied that the king or the chieftain was the overlord of the

temple. The kings in medieval Kerala considered the post of *mēlkōima* in temples as symbols of prestige.

Did this temple produce a temple cult? Did it produce a *bhakti* movement? No separate *bhakti* cult of an organised nature came into existence with Tiruvananthapuram temple at the nucleus. No *bhaktas*, like the five *bhaktas* of Guruvayūr, spearheaded *bhakti* movement. But a temple cult originated as it is evidenced by the production of several panegyrics and sculptural and mural arts in which the representations of Ananthaśāyi got produced on the model of the sculptural peculiarities of the idol of the temple⁹⁵.

Growth of Guruvāyūr Temple

The growth and prosperity of the Viṣṇū temple at Guruvāyūr was a significant cultural phenomenon in the post-Cēra age. The dearth of any inscriptional or literary evidences makes the early history of the temple untraceable. The *Ālīvārs* who extolled the nearby Viṣṇū temples at Tirunāva and Tirumirīrakkotū did not glorify Guruvāyūr temple. The exclusion of Guruvāyūr temple from the sacred geography of *Ālīvārs* reveals that the temple was not a celebrated Vaisṇava centre in the Cēra age.

The earliest account of Guruvāyūr temple is found in *Kōkasandēśa* of the fifteenth century. *Kōkasandēśa* gives an account of the temple and its environs. Four *ślōkas* in this work are dedicated to eulogize the glories of the temple⁹⁶. The 34th *ślōka* indicates that the temple had a vast tank with lotus flowers. The next *ślōka* is about the temple wall and the *gōpuram*. The wall is mentioned as a huge one and the *gōpuram* as an exquisite structure full of beautiful engravings. Again this *ślōka* indicates that many elephants were present in the temple premises. The 36th *ślōka* elaborates the flagstaff and mentions about the aroma of incenses and camphor in the temple precincts. It

is stated that the temple and its surroundings reverberated with the sound of instrumental music which indicate the rituals of the temple. Many ladies were seen in front of the sanctum sanctorum during rituals. It is evident from these references that Guruvāyūr temple was a prosperous shrine by the fifteenth century when *Kōkasandēśa* was compiled. The references to the big temple tank, the flagstaff, the huge outer wall, the beautiful *gōpuram*, the reverberating sound of instrumental music, the presence of elephants and the presence of a large number of devotees in the temple are pointers to the prosperity of the temple.

The Punnathūr Rājas, a branch of the royal house of Talappalīlī Nambitīis, ruled over Guruvāyūr and the nearby territories in the immediate post-Cēra age⁹⁷. The chieftains of Punnathūr became the closest ally and the right hand men of the Zamorins when the political power of the Zamorins expanded to the regions where the Punnathūr Rājas held political sway. The Zamorin became a party in the internal feud that erupted in the royal house of the Nambitīi between the matrilineal branches which culminated in their subduing. Punnathūr soon became a vassal of the Zamorins and his territories got merged with that of the Zamorins⁹⁸.

Guruvāyūr temple came under the Zamorins before the compilation of *Kōkasandēśa*. *Kōkasandēśa* refers to the presence of *Elīamkūr* of Netīyiruppu swarūpam (Zamorins' royal family) at Matilakam near Kotīṅgallūr⁹⁹. Matilakam was located in the south of Guruvāyūr. This indicates that the Zamorins overran up to Matilakam by the period when *Kōkasandēśa* was compiled. It is apparent from the description on Guruvāyūr in *Kōkasandēśa* that the place was on the north-south highway that passed through the western sea coast. *Kōkasandēśa* describes the route from Velīlōtītīukara to Etīappalīlī. The military movements of the Zamorins to

Kotṭungallūr in the south took place through this route. The location of Guruvāyūr on this route in Punnathūr region benefitted the temple in acquiring royal attention as the Zamorins frequently moved through Guruvayur to the south to wage battles with the Perumpatṭappu Rājas¹⁰⁰.

The Zamorins made Guruvāyūr as one of the political and military outposts in the southern division of their kingdom. This facilitated their military campaigns in the south. Added to it, there was a palace of the Zamorins at Guruvāyūr and they stayed often at Guruvāyūr¹⁰¹. The Zamorins patronized Guruvāyūr temple as a royal shrine. The close association of the Zamorins with this temple is evidenced from the frequent presence of various Zamorins or his right hand men in Guruvāyūr temple. The Zamorins or his ministers appeared in certain legends as *bhaktas* or as protectors of the *bhaktas*¹⁰². Mangṭātṭāchan, the Chief Minister of the Zamorin appears in a story as a rescuer of Pūntānam Nambūdiri, the renowned devotee of Guruvāyūr temple, from a mishap¹⁰³.

The Zamorins filled the ritual services of the temple by his men like Cēnnās Bhatṭṭatiri. The Cēnnās Brahmin family was entrusted with the hereditary duty of the chief officiating priest in the temple. The Cēnnās Brahmin family had the hereditary right of the chief officiating priest of the royal house of the Zamorins and Cēnnās Bhatṭṭatiri wrote *Tantrasamuccaya* on the orders of the Zamorins. The pace of the growth of Guruvāyūr temple was accelerated by five *bhaktas* who lived in the second half of the fifteenth century and in the first half of the sixteenth century¹⁰⁴. Pūntānam Nambūdiri, Mēlpattūr Nārāyanṭa Bhatṭṭatiri, Kurṭūamma, Vilwamangalam Swāmiyar and Mānavēda were the chief votaries of Guruvāyūr temple cult. Among these *bhaktas*, Pūntānam Nambūdiri wrote in praise of Guruvāyūr temple and *Kṛṣṇṇa* in Malayalam. Mēlpattūr Nārāyanṭa Bhatṭṭatiri was an erudite

Sanskrit scholar who glorified the temple in his Sanskrit works. Vilvamangalam Swāmiyar and Kurūramma were the celebrated *bhaktas* of Guruvāyūr temple. Mānavēda, the Zamorin, was another renowned *bhakta* and a patron of Guruvāyūr temple.

Mānavēda's role as an ardent *bhakta* elevated the eminence of the Guruvāyūr temple and the temple was transformed into a royal shrine. His dance drama, *Kṛṣṇānāṭīam*, accelerated the growth of both the cults of Kṛṣṇā *bhakti* and the Guruvāyūr temple¹⁰⁵. Many stories are prevalent on the Guruvāyūr temple and the five *bhaktas*. These oral narratives glorify the *bhaktas* as the dearest and nearest devotees of the deity. The oral traditions also were aimed at glorifying the temple and the deity. The story of Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇa Bhatīatiri's penance at Guruvāyūr temple and the relief that he got from acute arthritis became widely popular and this story spread the fame of the deity as a curer of arthritis. The place-name 'Vāyupuri', 'Samīrālayam', 'Vāthālayam', 'Gurupavanapuri' and 'Guruvāyūr' became popular which signify both the story of the curing of arthritis and the installation of the idol by Guru (jupiter) and Vāyu (god of wind). *Bhramarasandēśa* refers to this story in its description of Guruvāyūr¹⁰⁶. It is stated in this *sandēśakāvya* that the performance of penance at Guruvāyūr temple cure arthritis. The temple is mentioned as Samīrālayam in this work. The Sanskrit term *samīram* means wind/ air etc and the latter part of the word signifies temple.

The deity of Guruvāyūr temple is hailed by *bhaktas* as Kṛṣṇā in child form¹⁰⁷. This is clearly a deviation from the early conception of the deity. *Kōkasandēśa* refers to the deity as Viṣṇu, while Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇa Bhatīatiri identified the deity as Kṛṣṇā of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*¹⁰⁸. Mānavēda

wrote *Kṛṣṇāgīti* to eulogise Kṛṣṇā of the temple. *Kṛṣṇāgīti* is written on the basis of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. Pūntānam Nambūdiri was a devotee of Kṛṣṇā and a votary of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. The identification of the deity of Guruvāyūr with Kṛṣṇā by the *bhaktas* contributed to the further growth of the temple and its popularity. Kṛṣṇā incarnation is the most popular form of Viṣṇu and this incarnatory form has great popular appeal.

The earlier place-name of Guruvāyūr was Kuruvayūr. *Kōkasandēśa* mentions the place as Kuruvayūr and the *Calicut Grandhavari* also refers to the place as Kuruvayūr¹⁰⁹. It appears that the name ‘Gurupavanapuram’ was concocted by Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇā Bhatīṭṭatiri in the Sanskrit work, *Nārāyanīyam* and the present name Guruvāyūr got derived from Gurupavanapuram. The original place-name was Sanskritized to enhance the religious prominence and the antiquity of the temple¹¹⁰. The Sanskritization of the place-name was accompanied by the fabrication of a new *Sthalamāhātmya*. The new *Sthalamāhātmya* speaks about the involvement of both ‘Guru’ and ‘Vāyu’ in the consecration of the idol¹¹¹. The divine role in the installation of the idol increased the prestige of the temple and boosted its cultural eminence. The Sanskritised place name and the new *Sthalamāhātmya* were instrumental in the growth of Guruvāyūr temple as a notable Vaisṇava centre.

No record is available on the structural details of Guruvāyūr temple in the period prior to *Kōkasandēśa*. It is certain in the light of the reference to the temple in the *Kōkasandēśa* that Guruvāyūr temple had big outer wall, *gōpuram* and a flag staff in the fifteenth century¹¹². However certain records from seventeenth century onwards speak about the renovation of the temple. An inscription in the temple reveals that the sanctum was reconstructed in

1638AD by the Zamorins¹¹³. An elaborate ceremony known as *Visṅṅubali* was held after this renovation. No other records are available about the renovation in our period of study. Though Guruvāyūr was a royal shrine, no temple record states that the Zamorins' presence was inevitable in the ritual processions in the temple. The Zamorins did not perform any particular rituals like *patṅiyērṅam* or *tirumatṅampu* in this temple.

Royal Patrons

Many kings and chieftains patronized and enriched Visṅṅu temples. They renovated and endowed temples with donations. Certain kings proclaimed themselves in inscriptions and in literary works as ardent *bhaktas* of Visṅṅu. However they were not fanatics who tried to belittle Śaiva centres. Among the royal patrons, three kings were Vēṅātṅu rulers and one among them was a Zamorin. A king of Ambalapulṅga was also a known votary of the Vaisṅṅava religion.

Ravi Varma Sangrāmadhira

Ravi Varma Kulaśēkhara alias Ravi Varma Sangrāmadhira was the Vēṅātṅu ruler who reigned from 1299 to 1314¹¹⁴. The king marched up to Kāncipuram soon after the return of Malik Kafur and proclaimed that he was the supreme master of the south¹¹⁵. The inscriptions of the king reveal that he was an ardent devotee of Visṅṅu who contributed to the enrichment of Vaisṅṅavism in the south and especially in Vēṅātṅu. The Śrīrangam inscription reveals that he renovated Śrīrangam temple, performed certain purificatory ceremonies, reconsecrated the idol and reinstated *Bhadradīpam* in the temple¹¹⁶. Ravi Varma Kulaśēkhara also performed certain costly

ceremonies in Tiruvatīi temple after its renovation¹¹⁷. Tiruvananthapuram temple was patronised by this monarch.

The inscriptions of the King convey the idea that he was proud to be called as a *bhakta* of Padmanabha of Tiruvananthapuram temple and he called himself as *Yādava Nārāyanīa* and *Garudadhwaja* or the king with Garuda as the emblem on the flag¹¹⁸. All these indicate that the monarch had particular leanings towards Vaisṇāvism. In order to make necessary arrangements for the Vaisṇāva pilgrims from Kānci, the king built the *Kānickondānmatīhom* at Tiruvananthapuram¹¹⁹. It also indicates that there was flow of *bhaktas* from Kāncipuram to Tiruvananthapuram. The king states in the prelude to *Pradyumnābhyudayam* that he is a firm devotee of Padmanabha¹²⁰. The work with the theme taken from *Harivamśa* was dedicated to Padmanabha and the work was intended to enact in Tiruvananthapuram temple¹²¹. Ravi Varma Kulaśēkhara's Visṇū *bhakti* is traceable from Śrīrangam inscription in which Visṇū of Śrīrangam temple is declared as his tutelary God. His Vaisṇāva inclination culminated in the solidification of Visṇū *bhakti* cult in Vēṇātīu with Tiruvananthapuram temple as the nucleus. A court poet of Ravi Varma Kulaśēkhara, Samudrabandha eulogized his patron as *Yadupati* and *Yaduvamśavibhusānam*¹²². Both these names have Vaisṇāva association and these names associated with the claim of Vēṇātīu dynasty as descendants of Yādavas.

Āditya Varma Sarvānganātha

Āditya Varma Sarvānganātha was another royal *bhakta* of Vēṇātīu who was a patron of Vaisnavism. It is assumed on the basis of temple records that he lived in the second half of the fourteenth century¹²³. 'Sarvānganātha'

was a *biruda* or a title of the king and inscriptions hail this prince as a versatile genius who excelled in various branches of arts and knowledge¹²⁴. Further the name, Sarvānganātha, denotes wide scholarship and knowledge. The Tiruvambātīi inscription of Sarvānganātha glorifies Kṛṣṇā and Tiruvambātīi shrine¹²⁵. The prince's devotion to Kṛṣṇā is well depicted in this inscription which is engraved on the south base of Tiruvambātīi temple. The prince built a new *gōśala* in the temple. This was done out of his ardent adoration to the God. The king says in the last part of the inscription which is engraved on the northern and eastern bases of the *manḍapa* in front of the Kṛṣṇāswāmi temple at Vatāśēri that:

“Let the thought of Bālakṛṣṇā , whose splendour is like that of the fresh cloud, whose lotus eye is marked and who removing his flowing locks by his fingers, smilingly gazes on the group of young shepherdesses, ever dwell within my heart”¹²⁶.

The prince wrote a poem know as *Avatāradaśakam* in praise of the deities of Tiruvatīār and Tiruvananthapuram temples¹²⁷.

Vīra Iravi Iravi Varma

Vīra Iravi Iravi Varma of Vēṅātū was another royal patron of Vaiṣṇavism. This monarch was the king of Vēṅātū from 1595 to 1609 AD¹²⁸.The inscriptions of Vīra Iravi Iravi Varma at Tiruvatīār and Keralapuram near Padmanabhapuram are indicative of his ardent devotion to Viṣṇu. It is significant that these inscriptions begin with the term, *Hari*¹²⁹. This invocation appears before the usual invocation, *Swasti Śrī*. An inscription of the king of 1601AD of Tiruvananthapuram temple speaks about a *tulābhāra* performed by the king in the temple¹³⁰. It is stated that the *tulābhāra* was conducted in gold in which the monarch was weighed against

gold and the queens constructed a *manḍāpa* in commemoration of this *Tulāpurusa* ceremony.

An inscription of 1603AD of the king proclaims that the king was a devotee of Padmanabha¹³¹. However, Vīra Iravi Iravi Varma was not averse to patronising Śaivism. This is evident from the Keralapuram inscription of the king which states that the king reconstructed the Śiva temple at Keralapuram¹³². This record is significant as it begins with the invocation, *Hari*, eventhough the subject of the record is about the reconstruction of a Śiva temple. The king proclaimed in the inscription that he was an incessant worshipper of the feet of God Padmanabha and a donor of sixteen great gifts to the God.

It is apparent from an inscription of 1604 AD of Tiruvatīār that the king was a patron of the Viṣṇu temple¹³³. He along with his close relatives reconstructed the temple. It was an extensive renovation of the temple with several buildings got constructed newly. The king's patronage to Tiruvananthapuram temple is obvious from *Matilakam* records¹³⁴. The temple records speak about the offerings by the monarch in Tiruvananthapuram temple. The king reinstated old rituals like, *Karuvelamkulāmpūja* in the temple and prepared an extensive plan for the reconstruction of the temple. The renovation proposed to rebuild *vilākkumātam*, *curṛumanḍāpa* and *vātilmātam*. The king was a promoter of Brahminic culture.

Mānavēda

Mānavēda was a Zamorin of Calicut who ruled from 1655 to 1658 AD and he was known for the contributions to the development of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult centred on Guruvāyūr temple¹³⁵. Mānavēda composed two *Vaiṣṇava*

works and was a votary of the deity of Guruvāyūr temple. He wrote *Pūrvabhāratamcampu* in 1643AD and *Krīṣṇāgīti* in 1652 AD¹³⁶. The year of the compilation of *Krīṣṇāgīti* is traceable from the chronogram, *Gra-hya-stu-tir-ga-tha-kaih* which is given in the work. This chronogram denotes 17, 36, 612th day of *Kaliyuga*. This day corresponds to 1652 AD. *Krīṣṇāgīti* forms the repertory of *Krīṣṇānātītām*, the dance drama. *Krīṣṇāgīti* and the dance drama had a prominent place in the popularisation of *Krīṣṇā bhakti* cult in Kerala as *Krīṣṇāgīti* narrates the story of *Krīṣṇā* in eight cantos on the model of Jayadēva's *Gītagovinda* and this dance-drama enacted the story of *Krīṣṇā*¹³⁷. *Krīṣṇā bhakti* got diffused through them and Guruvāyūr temple cult was also got popularised.

The royal saint is the central figure in many legends on Guruvāyūr temple and it is said that he spent a large part of his life at Guruvāyūr temple even after becoming the Zamorin¹³⁸. *Mānavēda* died at Triśśūr and a popular tradition states that the body of the royal saint was cremated at Guruvāyūr near the erstwhile palace of the Zamorins which was located in the southern direction of the temple. The actors face southern direction in *Krīṣṇānātītām* when it is enacted at Guruvāyūr temple. The common belief is that the actors are paying respects to the royal saint by facing the direction where the king was cremated.

Pūrātīam Tirunālī Cempakaśśēri Rāja:

The Brahmin kings of Ambalapulīā who were popularly known as Cempakaśśēri Rājas were patrons of *Viṣṇū bhakti* cult. The *Krīṣṇā* temple at Ambalapulīā was associated with the family of Cempakaśśēri Rājas¹³⁹. The Rājas of Ambalapulīā were the devotees of the deity of the temple and they

adopted the title, Dēva Nārāyanā as their hereditary name. This name has Vaisṇāva affiliation which is a clear indicator of the Viṣṇu *bhakti* credentials of Ambalapulā Rājas. It is apparent from the works of Mēlpattūr Nārāyanā Bhatṭatiri that a Rāja of Cempakaśēri who was a contemporary of the scholar poet patronized him¹⁴⁰. The royal patron is termed in the works of Bhatṭatiri as a *Parama Vaisṇava* and a scholar of *Bhāgavata* and *Bhārata*. In *Prakriyasarvaswam*, Mēlpattūr Nārāyanā Bhatṭatiri states that he went to Ambalapulā due to the fame of the Rāja and his compassion¹⁴¹. Notably Mēlpattūr calls the Rāja of Cempakaśēri by his hereditary name, Dēva Nārāyanā. The royal saint is identified as Pūrāṭam Tirunāl and Ulloor S. Paramesvara Aiyer fixes his period between 1566AD and 1623AD¹⁴². This Rāja is credited with the composition of *Dēva Nārāyanā*¹⁴³.

To recapitulate, the emergence of royal temples was accelerated by both religious and political factors. The royal patronage to temples and Brahmins was an act of religious merit. It had political dimensions too. The kings and chieftains promoted royal temples for legitimizing their claims¹⁴⁴. Tiruvananthapuram temple prospered under the patronage and protection of Vēṅāṭṭu rulers. The temple was a royal shrine in the sense that Vēṅāṭṭu kings looked after the temple as the most sacred shrine ie., the temple of the patron deity. The royal patronage was also related to befriend Brahmins and Brahminic institutions for legitimising their authority. Tiruvananthapuram temple received patronage and protection from Vēṅāṭṭu kings and the temple, in return, legitimised the authority of the kings. The ritual anointment ceremonies of Vēṅāṭṭu kings were all performed in the temple and it ensured royal patronage. The royal association of the temple enhanced the status of

the temple. The kings and chieftains were in pursuit of ritual sovereignty. The temples and Brahmins wanted protection and patronage. Extensive donations to temples and royal patronage to temple festivities and rituals created a situation in which many Visṅṅu temples prospered as royal shrines. Guruvāyūr temple was a Visṅṅu shrine which shot up to fame as a royal temple under the Zamorins of Calicut. The geographical location of the temple was also a factor in ensuring royal patronage to the temple.

Notes and References:

1. Kesavan Veluthat, "Further Expansion of Agrarian Society – The Political Forms" in P.J. Cherian, *op.cit.*, 1999, pp.62-73.
2. K.N. Ganesh, *op.cit.*, 1999, pp.222-223.
3. See chapter.1., Note no. 62.
4. The panegyric works are full of legendary tales and are written in legendary style. See for a discussion on the nature of panegyric works Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma Raja, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, pp.355-362; K.K. Raja, *op.cit.*, pp.242-243; N.M. Nambudiri, "Cultural Traditions in Medieval Kerala", in P.J. Cherian, *op.cit.*, 1999, pp. 276-279.
5. See chapters 4 to 11 in *Syānandūrapurānāsamuccaya*. See for the text R. Girija, *op.cit.*, Vol. 28, No.1-2 (chapter IV), pp.150-155; Vol.19, No.1-2 (chapter V- XI), pp.119-147.
6. S.R. Goyal, *A Religious History of Ancient India*, Jodhpur, 1986, p. 154.
7. *Ibid* ; R.S. Sharma, *Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India*, New Delhi, 1983, p. 236.
8. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp. 102-104.
9. A.P. Ibrahimkunju, *Medieval Kerala*, Tiruvananthapuram, 2007, pp. 3-5.
10. See note on Cōlāpuram inscription in *T.A.S.*, Vol. VI, pt. I, pp. 1-4; Also see T.K.Velupillai, *op.cit.*, Vol.II., pp. 58-61.
11. *T.A.S.*, Vol. IV., pp. 17-18.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 18-21.
13. *Syānandūrapurānāsamuccaya* refers to the prowess of Kerala Varma and Udaya MārtāndīaVarma. From these references it is certain that the author of the work was a courtier of the king of Vēnāṭu or he was associated with the royal court. See *Syānandūrapurānāsamuccaya*, Chapter, 15, *ślōkas*-29-31.
14. *Ibid.*, *ślōka*-31.
15. K.N. Ganesh, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp. 103-105.
16. *Ibid.*
17. See introduction to *Anantapuravarnānam* in Sooranad Kunjan Pillai, *op.cit.*, 1971, pp.13-15; Elamkulam P.N. Kunjan Pillai, "Sanskrita Misrasakha", in K.M. George, *op.cit.*, 2008, pp.242-243; Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol. I, pp.436-438.
18. *Anantapuravarnānam*, *ślōkas*– 110-147.
19. *Ibid*, *ślōkas*-139; See for references on *Bhāratam* singing *ślōkas*-144-145.
20. See chapter.I, Note no.62.
21. *Unānilisandēśam*, *ślōkas*-42-49.
22. *Śukasandēśam*, *ślōkas*, 40-42.
23. *Bhringasandēśam*, *ślōka*- 2.
24. *Syānandūrapurānāsamuccaya*, chapter-15, *ślōkas*- 30-31.
25. T.K. Velupillai, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77; A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *op.cit.*; K.Sivasankaran Nair, *Venatinte Parinamam*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1994, pp. 46-52.

26. P. Shangoonny Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 68.
27. *T.A.S.*, Vol. I., pp. 251-253.
28. R. Vasudeva Poduval, *op.cit.*, p. 276.
29. *M.R. -Curunġa* 1722, *Ōla* 18; *Curunġa* 1719, *Ōla* 39.
30. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1720, *Ōlas* 160-161.
31. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1719, *Ōla* 34; *Curunġa* 94, *Ōla* 131.
32. *T.A.S.*, Vol. I, pp.49-57.
33. *T.A.S.*, Vol. III, pp.46-52.
34. *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, pp.66-68.
35. *Ibid.*, Vol. III., pp. 45-46.
36. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.
37. *Ibid.*, Vol. II., pp. 58-59.
38. *Pradyumanābhyudayam*, Prelude.
39. T.K. Velupillai, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-117.
40. K. Maheswaran Nair, *op.cit.*, Record No. 37; *M.R.-Curunġa* 1727, *Ōla* 155.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *E.I.*, Vol. IV, pp. 145-146.
43. *M.R. – Curunġa* 1720, *Ōla* 113; Also see chapter VII.
44. T.K. Velupillai, *op. cit.*, Appendix- Doc. CXXIX, p. 108.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*, Appendix. II, p.2.
47. *M.R.- Curunġa* 1720, *Ōla* 14.
48. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1719, *Ōla* 47.
49. T.K. Velupillai, *op. cit.*, Appendix-Doc. XIV, p. 11.
50. *M.R. – Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 14.
51. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1720, *Ōla* 128.
52. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1720, *Ōla* 127.
53. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa*. 1686, *Ōla*. 70; *Curunġa* 1720, *Ōla*. 154.
54. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1686, *Ōla* 65.
55. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1656, *Ōla* 226.
56. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1656, *Ōla* 426; *Curunġa* 68, *Ōla* 2.
57. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa*. 1656, *Ōla*. 440; *Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 42.
58. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa*. 1727, *Ōla*. 157.
59. K.N. Ganesh, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.162-163.
60. *M.R. - Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 66; *Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 98.
61. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 88.
62. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 2601, *Ōla*193.
63. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 16, *Ōla* 4.
64. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 16, *Ōla* 2; *Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 52; *Curunġa* 2601, *Ōla* 171.

65. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 56.
66. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 2303, *Ōlas* 241, 248, 259 and 293; *Curunġa* 1727, *Ōla* 186.
67. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 2191, *Ōla* 3.
68. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 2303, *Ōlas* 121, 123; *Curunġa* 16, *Ōla* 3.
69. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 15.
70. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 2303, *Ōlas* 154, 156.
71. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op. cit.*, 1996, pp.105-107; K.N. Ganesh, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.106-107.
72. Show Case Record, No. 203, Central Archives, Tiruvananthapuram; See 'Introduction' to *Vanjeri Grandhavari*, pp.XVII-XX.
73. See for reference to the performance of *Paṭṭiṅi* in Tiruvatur temple in *B.R.R.I.*, Vol. X, Part I, pp.12-13; *Vanjeri Grandhavari*, Document No.43 A. Earlier scholars defined *Sankētam* as independent republics. See K.P. Padmanabha Meon, *op.cit.*, Vol.IV, pp.87-103; P.K.S. Raja, *Medieval Kerala*, Annamalai, 1953, p.241.
74. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.106.
75. P. Bhaskaranunni, *Pathonpatham Noottandile Keralam*, Trissur, 1988, rpt. 2000, pp.813-814, 817-818.
76. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp. 105-106.
77. T.K. Velu Pillai, *op. cit.*, Appendix- M.CXXIX, p.108.
78. Aswati Tirunālġ Gauri Lakshmi Bayi, *op.cit.*, pp.101-102.
79. T.K. Velupillai, *op. cit.*, p.108.
80. *M.R.* - *Curunġa* 1722, *Ōla* 18.
81. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1686, *Ōla* 39; See for the discussion on the identity of the king Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyar, *op.cit.*, 2004, p.39.
82. *M.R.* - *Curunġa* 96/9, *Ōla* 2.
83. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1722, *Ōla* 5; *Curunġa* 2601, *Ōla* 188.
84. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 71.
85. *Ibid.*, *Curunġa* 2601, *Ōla* 191.
86. K.N. Ganesh, *op. cit.*, 1997, p.132.
87. See chapter VII.
88. See Note no.43 above.
89. See chapter VII.
90. M.Raja Raja Varma Raja, "Some Travancore Dynastic Records", *K.S.P.*, Vol.I., pp. 3-5, 15-26, 113-118, 333-352; Aswati Tirunal Gauri Lakshmi Bai, *op.cit.*, pp. 586-587.
91. See Note no.15 above.
92. K.P.Padmanabha Menon, *op. cit.*, 1996, pp.99-103; V.V. Haridas, *op. cit.*, pp.48-70.
93. K. Sivasankaran Nair, *op.cit.*, pp.102-103.

94. *Ibid.*, pp.175-187; P. Shangoonny Menon, *op.cit.*, pp.71-72.
95. See chapters VIII and IX.
96. *Kōkasandēśa, ślōkas-34-37.*
97. K.P.Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, 1983, Vol.II, pp.127-128.
98. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1999, p.114.
99. *Kōkasandēśa, ślōka-49.*
100. See for more on Zamorins' wars with Kochi Rajas, K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.140-143; K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1999, pp.114-118.
101. N.M.Nambūdiri, *op.cit.*, 1987, Appendix-3.1, p.244; M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 2006c, p.31.
102. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1986, pp. 54-56.
103. *Ibid.*, pp.95-98, 122, 292; M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 2006b, pp.181-182.
104. See chapter IV.
105. See chapter IX.
106. *Bhringasandēśa, ślōka- 76.*
107. The oral traditions and legends on Guruvāyūr temple eventually glorify the deity. All these legendary narratives identify the deity as Krīśṇā in child form. See for more details K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1986, pp.24-16, 67-79.
108. Mēlppattūr Nārāyanā Bhatītīathiri's *Nārāyanīyam* attempts to equate the deity of Guruvāyūr with Krīśṇā of *Bhāgavatapurānā*. All the major themes in *Bhāgavata* is incorporated in this work.
109. See Note nos. 96 and 101 above.
110. See *Nārāyanīyam, Daśakam -I, ślōkas-1-2.* This was a general practice in medieval period. Also see chapter III., Note no.98.
111. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1986, pp.18-20.
112. See Note no.96 above.
113. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1986, p.108.
114. T.K. Velu Pillai, *op. cit.*, pp.95-117.
115. *E.I.*, Vol. IV., pp. 145-148.
116. *Ibid.* , pp. 148-152.
117. *Ibid.* , Vol. VIII, pp. 8-9.
118. *T.A.S.*, Vol. II, pp. 58-59.
119. T.K. Velu Pillai, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-117.
120. *Pradyumnābhyudayam*, Prelude.
121. See chapter IX.
122. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyar, *op. cit.*, 1990, Vol.3, pp. 347-349.
123. V. Nagam Aiya, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, pp.265-266; Elamkulam P. N. Kunjan Pillai, *Unṅṅunīlisandesam Carithra Drishtiyilkuti*, n. p., 1953, pp. 29-39.

124. T.A.S., Vol. I, pp. 251-253.
125. *Ibid.*
126. *Ibid.*
127. T.A.S., Vol. VII., pp. 123-125.
128. V. Nagam Aiya holds that the king ruled from 1595 to 1607 AD. However T. K. Velu Pillai argues that the king was on the throne in between 1595 and 1609 AD. V. Nagam Aiya, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, p.301; T.K.Velu Pillai, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, pp. 184-185.
129. T.A.S., Vol. I., pp. 258-262; Also see chapter IV.
130. *Ibid.*, Vol. II., pp. 28-30.
131. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 260.
132. *Ibid.*, pp. 261-266.
133. *Ibid.*, pp. 258-260; Also see chapter IV.
134. M.R.- *Curunġa* 2601, *Ōla* 171; *Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 95; *Curunġa* 2304, *Ōla* 224; *Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 40; *Curunġa* 2601, *Ōla* 118; *Curunġa* 1727, *Ōla* 247; *Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 56; *Curunġa* 1691, *Ōla* 38; *Curunġa* 1727, *Ōla* 242; *Curunġa* 1673, *Ōla* 87.
135. See chapter VIII.
136. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1999, p.297-298; Also see chapter VIII.
137. See chapters VIII and IX.
138. See chapter IV.
139. V.Nagam Aiya, *op.cit.*, pp.345-346; K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, 1983, pp.110-113; A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-60.
140. Ulloor S. Parameswara Ayyar, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, pp.389-390.
141. *Ibid.*, pp. 389-392
142. *Ibid.*, pp. 389, 435.
143. *Ibid.*, p. 435.
144. K.N.Ganesh, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.104.

Chapter VI

VAISŪNĀVA CENTRES: POST-CĒRA PHASE

The political picture in Kerala was completely changed in the third decade of the twelfth century. A fragmented political structure emerged as the Cēra state faded away and the erstwhile provinces of the Cēra kingdom became independent political powers¹. The early Vaisŷava centres continued to function as centres of Visŷu worship in this period and certain new temples also emerged. New *sthalamāhātmyas* were produced. Temple inscriptions, temple records and literature including non-*bhakti* works in *Manŷipravālīam* contain abundant information regarding the Visŷu temples of the post-Cēra age. An attempt is made in this chapter to reconstruct the history of the Vaisŷava centres of the post- Cēra period from epigraphic and literary data.

Trippūnŷithura

The Visŷu temple at Trippūnŷithura continued to be an important shrine in the post-Cēra age. It is obvious from the temple records that the temple was associated with Kurūr swarūpam, a local chiefdom lying in and around Trippūnŷithura in the immediate post- Cēra period². Kurīkkātŷu, not far away from Trippūnŷithura, was the headquarters of this chiefdom and the place-name Kurīkkātŷu and the name of the chiefdom are related to each other³. Karūr in Kongunātŷu was the capital of the *Sangam* Cēras and it is not known whether both these place-names, Karūr and Kurūr, had any connection. Van Rheed, the Dutch commander, states in his accounts that the Rāja of Kurūr commanded 15, 000 armed men⁴. The number of armed men at

the command of a chieftain was a criterion to assess ones' political power in medieval Kerala. The number of soldiers under the command of Kurūr Rājas reveals that it was a notable local chiefdom that held sway over the neighbouring areas of Trippūñīthura in the post-Cēra age.

The temple records of Trippūñīthura till the seventeenth century reveal that Kurūr swarūpam was associated with the affairs of the temple. It is obvious from these records that Kurūr swarūpam enjoyed the *mēlkōima* rights over the temple. The chieftains of Kurūr swarūpam performed coronation ceremony in Trippūñīthura temple⁵. Various rituals were performed in association with the coronation of Kurūr Rājas. The incumbent to the throne had to visit the temple with Palīlīpurattu Pazhiyūr Nambūdiri. The Rāja was to make preparations for the performance of *Kūttu* in the temple. After it the Rāja had to proceed to Cōttānikkara temple where Pazhiyūr Nambūdiri performed certain ritual ceremonies. As atonement for the violation of *sankētamaryāda* (the rules of *sankētam*), the king had to pay compensations to the Brahmin trustees of Cōttānikkara temple. It is significant that Cōttānikkara temple was a prominent shrine of the Brahmins of Vendanātīu settlement⁶. Pazhiyūr Nambūdiri performed the coronation ceremony by placing the crown on the head of the Rāja. The Rāja with the band of his courtiers proceeded in a palanquin to Trippūñīthura temple to make ritual worship of the deity from the steps of sanctum sanctorum by presenting a silk cloth and money. After worshipping, the Rāja had to pay *daksīñīa* to the priests and Cākyārs. The rituals reveal that both Cōttānikkara and Trippūñīthura temples were royal temples associated with Kurūr swarūpam as coronation ceremony and legitimising rituals of the Rājas of Kurūr were held in these two temples.

From the temple records it is obvious that the temple was renovated

and subsequently the idol was reinstalled in the last decades of the thirteenth century following a mishap which occurred sometime in the immediately preceding years⁷. The mishap was in the form of an attack by a group of marauders known as *vatīukar*. The identity and other details of *vatīukar* are not known. The name *vatīukar* got derived from *vatīakkar* which means 'people of the north' and in this context it is certain that they were looters from somewhere in the northern direction. The temple records make clear that the temple was totally destroyed in this attack. The renovation and reinstallation were held under the auspices of Kurūr Rājas. It is likely that the Kurūr Rājas obtained *mēlkōima* rights in the temple in the aftermath of the renovation. The Brahmin chieftains of Parāvūr enjoyed the customary rights of *akakōima* in the temple and *purīakōima* right was vested with Trippūnīthura Mūttatu⁸.

Śukasandēśa describes Trippūnīthura as a prosperous village where the emerald like temple of Mukunda is situated⁹. The deity is described as having seated up on serpent Anantha. It is significant that the idol is that of the Vaikunṭīanatha form of Viṣṇū in which Viṣṇū is sculptured as sitting upon serpent Anantha. However no reference is made in this work about Kurūr swarūpam and its association with the temple. *Bhringasandēśa* also describes the Viṣṇū temple while passing through Trippūnīthura. The temple is mentioned as a notable shrine of Viṣṇū¹⁰.

Frequent donations were made by various chieftains and landed magnets to make the temple prosperous. The temple *grandhavari* gives a detailed account of such donations to the temple¹¹. Pūnīthura was donated to the temple by Kolatīatīkalī or a Kōlattiri Rāja. The plot was purchased by the Rāja from Cempakaśśēri Rāja for donating it to the temple. The details regarding the identity of Kolatīatīkalī are not known as such details are not furnished in temple records. This donation implies significance as the donor

was a king of Kolattunāṭṭu in north Kerala. The king had to purchase the land from the Rāja of Cempakaśśēri as a king of north Kerala could not have properties in Trippūnṭhura which is located far away from Kolathunāṭṭu. Mēlethu Nāyar, a landed aristocrat, donated Karumakkāṭṭu village to the temple in 1356AD and Kelṭappangāṭṭu Nambūdiri donated three villages - Velūr, Vatṭayambāṭṭi and Peringōlu - to the temple in 1530AD. The Rājas of Paravūr and Cempakaśśēri made land donations to the temple in 1652AD and the king of Vēnṭāṭṭu instituted a lamp in the temple and donated oil and money for burning the lamp in 1686AD. Many paddy fields at Valantakkāṭṭu were donated to the temple by Lakṣmi Ambika Amka Kōviladhikārikal of Perumpatṭappu royal house (Kochi royal house).

The temple records speak about the renovations of the temple in medieval period¹². The flagstaff was installed under the auspices of Kurūr Rājas in 1533AD. Only the temple records till 1665AD speak about the association of Kurūr Rājas in the temple affairs and the kings of Kochi appeared as patrons of the temple in the records of the subsequent period. By the middle of seventeenth century, Kurūr royal family merged with the royal house of Kochi and this paved the way for the extinction of Kurūr swarūpam as a separate political entity¹³. This was the reason for the disappearance of Kurūr Rājas in the affairs of Trippūnṭhura temple. The merger of Kurūr swarūpam with the royal house of Kochi also resulted in the transformation of Trippūnṭhura temple into a royal temple associated with Kochi.

Following the general trend of the age, the post- Cēra period saw the fabrication of many panegyrics in eulogy of Trippūnṭhura temple. One such *ksṭētramāhātmya* drags the antiquity of the temple to the – *Itihāsic -Purānṭic* age by associating it with Arjuna¹⁴. The temple panegyric glorifies the idol in Trippūnṭhura temple as an image of Viṣṇu which was originally worshipped by Arjuna. This story was concocted in a later age to glorify the

temple. Many local celebrities are associated with the temple in the post- Cēra age¹⁵. A *mūsari* (brazier) of Panḍārappalḷi is one such *bhakta* whose memory is still cherished in this temple through a festival. The temple *grandhavarī* records that he was associated with the renovation of the temple and it is stated that he made the main idol for reinstallation. Similar to this, Nangapilḷai, a Brahmin lady, is also celebrated as a votary of the deity of the temple. She is described as an ordinary lady who died in her ardent devotion to the deity. A festival was instituted in the temple to commemorate her name and it is known as Nangapilḷai festival.

Trippūṇiṭhura temple was a catalyst in the production of *bhakti* literature. *Nārāyanīyam campu* is a literary work on the deity of Trippūṇiṭhura temple¹⁶. Nīlakanṭṭā, a courtier of Vīra Kerala Varma of Kochi(1601AD-1615AD), was the author of *Nārāyanīyam campu*¹⁷. This work narrates the glories of the temple and its deity. The story of the installation of the idol by Arjuna is narrated in this work. The first part of the work is about the *santānagōpāla* story in *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.

Irinjālakkutā Kūtāl Māṇīkyam

The Viṣṇu temple at Irinjālakkutā, which was the *grāmaksētra* of Irinjālakkutā settlement, emerged as a prosperous Vaisṇava centre in the post- Cēra age. This temple was under the protection of the Rājas of Ayroor immediately after the decline of the Cēras of Mahodayapuram and the Rāja of Vēṇātṭu got *mēlkōima* rights over the temple in the fourteenth century¹⁸. A version of temple *grandhavarīs* suggests that the ruler of Ōṭānātṭu received *mēlkōima*, while another version of temple records assert that the Rāja of Vēṇātṭu was conferred upon with *mēlkōima* rights in the temple by the Brahmin trustees.

The temple records enshrine a legend for extenuating the grant of *mēlkōima* to the Vēñātīu rulers¹⁹. According to this story, red effulgence appeared on the person of the deity in 1342 AD and the priests and the trustees, who suspected it as a ruby, brought a precious ruby from the possession of the Rāja of Vēñātīu in lease for forty one days to compare it with the effulgence. It is held that the ruby was absorbed by the idol when it was brought nearer to it which resulted in providing the deity with the name ‘Kūtīal Māñīkyam’ or ‘the merged ruby’. This legendary account could be classified in the genre of temple panegyric of the post-Cēra age. The Cēra inscriptions make clear that the place-name in the ninth-tenth centuries was Irunkātīkūtīal²⁰. This reveals that the name of the place and the temple did not originate in the fourteenth century. In this context, the legend of merged ruby stands as a later concoction to validate the transfer of *mēlkōima* to Vēñātīu rulers.

The temple records speak about the involvement of various chieftains and kings of post-Cēra age in the affairs of Irinjālakkutīa temple²¹. The Perumpatīappu Rājas were closely associated with the temple. The temple documents narrate that Perumpatīappu Rāja was granted the *mēlkōima* right temporarily in 1337 AD. This temporary arrangement was changed in 1342AD. The Perumpatīappu Rāja remained as the president of the temple *yōgam* and *purīakōima* in the temple. The Rāja was entitled to protect processions and temple festivals. Whenever the deity was carried out of the four walls of the temple, *purīakōima* was to be present in royal attire. The Rāja or his nominee had to make a pledge at the flag hoisting ceremony in the temple. The king had to pledge before the deity and the Brahmin trustees that he would protect festivals and processions till the conclusion of the festival known as *ārīātīu* ceremony.

The Rāja of Kochi also enjoyed certain other privileges like *arasthānam*, *ambalapatīsthānam*, *vēdapālanam*, *parodhānisthānam* and *brahmaswomsthānam* in the temple and the king was granted all these rights on his plea in 1337 AD²². The Rāja of Valīlīuvanātīu was the *akakōima* in the temple and the Rāja had to ensure that the rites and rituals in the temple were performed as per schedule and customs. Also he had to make sure that the materials for rituals and ceremonies were adequately at the reach of the temple priests. It is significant that the Valīlīuvanātīu governors were associated with Irinjālakkuṭṭā temple in the Cēra period itself. This is evident from the Cēra inscription of Bhāskara Ravi²³.

Many local chieftains, who functioned as patrons and protectors of the temple and the temple properties, had various duties in the temple²⁴. Earlier Vākkayil Kaimalī was the *purīapoduvālī* in the temple who looked after the temple kitchen, the surroundings of sanctum sanctorum and *nālambalam*. These areas were to be cleaned after various rituals. Later Ollūr Potuvālī or Ollūr Nāyar became the *purīapoduvālī*. The *ārīunātīṭīlprabhukkanmar* or the six local chieftains- Kōtaśēri Kaimalīī, Śankarankōta Kaimalīī, Śankarankanṭṭā Kaimalīī, Kunnattēri Kaimalīī, Vēlōss Nambyār and Muriyatāssu Nambyār - were closely associated with the temple and they were to be present in the temple meetings and in festivals. The presence of these local chieftains in the temple indicates royal patronage to the temple. The temple records reveal that the temple had extensive landed properties, elephants, precious and semi-precious objects and various kinds of ornaments in gold and silver²⁵. The temple received wealth from royal patronage and land donations from devotees.

A major renovation of the temple was carried out by King Iravi Varma of Vēnīātīu who ruled from 1650AD to 1685AD²⁶. The king constructed

vilākkumātāṁ and renovated *nālabalam* and the outer sanctum in the temple. The temple tank was also renovated. The temple festival was conducted under royal patronage²⁷. The king of Kochi met the expenses for the public feast on the final day of the festival. One hundred and twenty *paras* of rice was earmarked for the feast. The *ārūnātilprabhukkanmār* (six chieftains) had to donate one *ahass* and the temple trustees had to donate thirty six *parāṣ* on each day of the festival for meeting the expenses. A record of 1342AD suggests that a unique institution of temple administration known as Tachutāya Kaimalī existed in the temple and the right to appoint Tachutāya Kaimalī was given along with *mēlkōima* to the rulers of Vēnātū by the temple *yōgam*²⁸.

Tachutāya Kaimalī was selected from among certain Nāyar families in Vēnātū and the person who became Tachutāya Kaimalī enjoyed many unique socio- religious privileges in Kūtāl Māṅikyam temple²⁹. Tachutāya Kaimalī dressed like Brahmin priests while performing temple worship and he bathed in the temple tank where priests alone were allowed to take bath. He worshipped the deity from the steps of sanctum sanctorum and received sandal paste and *tīrtham* in hands directly from the chief priest. A person with non-Brahmin and non- Kṣātriya social background was not entitled to enjoy these privileges in temples in medieval Kerala when feudal and caste norms dominated.

Tachutāya Kaimalī inter-dined with Brahmins in his palace near the temple and in the temple *ūtīṭupura*. He was allowed to sit on *āvanīppalaka* (a wooden plank made of jack tree which is used exclusively by Brahmins during rituals). The Brahmin cooks were appointed for making food in the palace of Tachutāya Kaimalī which was a unique custom as it was not

allowed under the caste rules of medieval age. Like kings and chieftains, the approach of Tachutāya Kaimalī was declared by sounding conch and he was escorted before and after by Nambūdiri Brahmins with traditional lamps (*kuttuvilāakku*). He was escorted by Nāyar soldiers with sword and shield and could use palanquin. Tachutāya Kaimalī was installed after a series of ritual ceremonies conducted by Ālīvānchēry Tambrākkalī who was considered as the supreme religious head of Nambūdiri Brahmins. The installation of Tachutāya Kaimalī was a unique ceremony as it was the only non- Brahmin installation ceremony held in medieval Kerala. Tachutāya Kaimalī was permitted to use all these aristocratic symbols in medieval period.

The institution of Tachutāya Kaimalī had great political significance. He obtained political privileges in his capacity as the royal representative of the kings of Vēnāṭṭu. Like the kings of Vēnāṭṭu, he issued orders known as *nītṭu* and his official designation was, ‘Mānikkan Keralan’. Tachutāya Kaimalī was not a mere temple functionary or a temple manager, he represented Vēnāṭṭu kings and he acted as a royal officer in charge of Irinjālakkuṭṭa temple. The person who became Tachutāya Kaimalī functioned on behalf of the king of Vēnāṭṭu. It is evident from the following custom. At the time of the appointment of Tachutāya Kaimalī, the Vēnāṭṭu king made the declaration: “You have been appointed as Tachutāyan of Irinjālakkuṭṭa. Go with the *yōgakkār* and carry on the duties of the pagoda as we have been doing”³⁰. Here *yōgakkār* stands for the temple council and this royal order reveals that the appointment of Tachutāya Kaimalī was aimed at managing the temple on behalf of the king.

What was reason for the rise of this unique institution of temple administration? Was it only a religious/spiritual institution? Why aristocratic

privileges were given to this institution by Brahmins? The Brahmins of Irinjālakkuṭṭā settlement were closely associated with Tiruvananthapuram Viṣṇu temple and they conducted many of the rituals such as *Hiraṇyagarbham* for conferring legitimacy on Vēṅṅāṭṭu Rājas. In return, the *grāmaksētra* of Irinjālakkuṭṭā was protected by the Rājas of Vēṅṅāṭṭu as *mēlkōima*. Tachutāya Kaimalī who represented the kings of Vēṅṅāṭṭu was elevated to the status of a unique religious institution by the Brahmin trustees to ensure greater protection. Vēṅṅāṭṭu was given *mēlkōima* rights in the temple in the fourteenth century when factional feud ruined the Brahmin settlements. Two other prominent kingdoms - Kochi and Kozhikkode – participated in this feud and Vēṅṅāṭṭu did not participate in it. Hence Vēṅṅāṭṭu Rājas got an opportunity to associate with the affairs of Irinjālakkuṭṭā temple and they appointed Tachutāya Kaimalī to protect the temple which was situated far away in the kingdom of Kochi³¹. In this context, Tachutāya Kaimalī became a unique institution.

The institution of Tachutāya Kaimalī had chequered history and there were six Tachutāya Kaimalīs altogether³². The first Tachutāya Kaimalī was installed in 1342 AD and he died in 1394 AD. The second Kaimalī was appointed in 1489AD and he passed away in 1514 AD. The third Kaimalī was installed in 1728 AD and passed away in 1779 AD. Later two more Kaimalīs were installed in 1808AD and in 1917 AD respectively. It is significant that the Irinjālakkuṭṭā temple was situated well within the boundaries of Kochi and the Rāja of Vēṅṅāṭṭu had *mēlkōima* in the temple. Tachutāya Kaimalī as the representative of Vēṅṅāṭṭu king functioned in the kingdom of Kochi which was perceived as an insult to the royal power of the Kochi king by the kings and courtiers of Kochi. With the power and support of the Brahmin trustees of Irinjālakkuṭṭā, Tachutāya Kaimalī functioned as an independent religious authority. The political dimensions of the institution produced a series of

interstate problems in the eighteenth century onwards between Travancore and Kochi after the rise of modern Travancore and Kochi under Anilīam Tirunāl Mārtānīdīa Varma and Śaktan Tampurān respectively³³. Various *sandēśakāvya*s of the post-Cēra age speak about the prosperity of Irinjālakkutīa temple. *Kōkilasandēśa* mentions about *Sangamagrāmam*. This is the Sanskritised form of the place-name Irinjālakkutīa³⁴. The deity is described in this work as Śauri or Krīśnīa. *Bhringasandēśa* mentions the Viśnū temple and its prosperity while describing the itinerant route of the messenger³⁵.

Varkala

Syānandūrapurānīasamuccaya celebrates Brahmakunīdīa as a sacred spot in the sacred geography of Tiruvananthapuram which is identified as Varkala³⁶. Even at present Varkala is regarded as a sacred spot for the last rites. An inscription of 1252 AD of Vēnīātīu king Padmanabha Mārtānīdīa Varma Tiruvatīi states that the king constructed the shrine from the foundation to the wall and plated it with granite stones³⁷. Also the courtyard was paved with stones by the king. The *śrīmukhamanīdīapa* or the front hall was completely repaired. After the completion of repair works, the king reconsecrated the temple. It is certain that earlier only a small shrine existed and the early shrine was reconstructed into a large temple complex by King Padmanabha Mārtānīdīa Varma in the immediate post-Cēra age.

Varkala is also referred to in the above referred inscription as Udaya Mārtānīdīapuram³⁸. This place-name must have originated from the name of the Vēnīātīu king, Udaya Mārtānīdīa Varma who ruled in the twelfth century³⁹. It is probable that King Udaya Mārtānīdīa Varma established the Varkala temple. This indicates the rise of Varkala temple in the wake of the rise of Vēnīātīu as an independent kingdom in twelfth century under royal

patronage. Varkal temple, as a typical Viṣṇu temple of the post-Cēra age, was the central theme of temple panegyrics. A *ks̥ētramāhātmya* attributes the foundation of the temple to a Pāṇḍya king. According to the *ks̥ētramāhātmya*, the king founded the temple to overcome the sin of *Brahmahatya*⁴⁰. This legend has no historical value, but to eulogise the temple. *Un̥n̥un̥lisandēśa* refers to the temple as a prominent Vaisṇava centre and the deity is referred to as Kr̥ṣṇa who killed Naraka, the demon⁴¹. Also the deity is referred to by various names of Kr̥ṣṇa such as the son of Nandagopa, the husband of Rugminī and one who reads flutes etc. Similarly *Mayūrasandēśa* also refers to Varkala temple as a celebrated shrine of Kr̥ṣṇa⁴².

Ambalapulīa

The Kr̥ṣṇa temple at Ambalapulīa originated and developed as a royal temple under Cempakaśēri Rājas who were the Brahmin chieftains of Ambalapulīa. Pūrāṭam Tirunāl Devanārāyanā who ruled in the sixteenth century is credited with the foundation of the temple⁴³. The idol which was stolen from Kuricci in Tekkumkūr was consecrated in Ambalapulīa temple and the ‘Mūlam Regatta’ of Ambalapulīa is held in commemoration of the secret procession of the idol from Kuricci to Ambalapulīa⁴⁴. Many Viṣṇu *bhaktas* like Vilavamangalam Swāmiyār, Mēlppattūr Nārāyanā Bhatītatiri and Tunchathu Ezhuthachan received royal patronage under Cempakaśēri Rājas and they celebrated Ambalapulīa temple in their works.

Trippālkkatāl

The name Trippālkkatāl is originated from the combination of ‘Tiru’ and ‘Pālkkatāl’. ‘Tiru’ denotes sacredness and the latter word signifies the Vaisṇava concept of the ocean milk. The Kilīmānūr record of 1168AD of

crown prince Vīra Udaya Mārtānīdīa Varma Tiruvatīi of Vēnīātīu speaks about the administration of a newly consecrated Visīnīu temple at Trippākkatīal in Vēnīātīu⁴⁵. The Visīnīu temple at Trippākkatīal came into existence in the immediate post-Cēra period and the temple was the nucleus of a newly formed Brahmin settlement⁴⁶. Vast landed properties were donated to the temple by Vīra Āditya Varma Tiruvatīi, the Vēnīātīu ruler. New trustees and managers were appointed with a new framework of rules for the administration of the temple⁴⁷. Also many officers under Vīra Udaya Mārtānīdīa Varma donated lands to the temple. Royal patronage and the donation of vast properties to the temple increased the prosperity of Trippākkatīal Visīnīu temple. It is again significant that rise of Trippākkatīal temple was closely associated with the advent of several royal temples at a time when Vēnīātīu emerged as an independent kingdom⁴⁸.

Vatīāśseri

A record of Āditya Varma Sarvānganātha, which is found engraved on the north and east bases of the *manīdīapa* of Vatīāśseri temple, enumerates the *birudas* and achievements of the king and the glories of Krīśīnīa⁴⁹. The king's concern for the temple is obvious from the presence of an inscription in the temple which lists the achievements of the king and the glories of Krīśīnīa. An inscription of 1464 AD registers a gift of 450 *panīam* for the mid- day offering to the deity and for Brahmin feeding in the temple⁵⁰. This endowment was made by Dīrgha Bhatītīa who was an Ārya Brahmin from Antarvēdirājya. Dīrgha Bhatītīa was a North Indian Brahmin who came to Vatīāśseri temple on pilgrimage. The deity is described in this record as Rūpa Nārāyanīa Vinnāgar Emperumān. A donation of an amount of 450 *panīam* for instituting rituals in Vatīāśseri temple by a North Indian pilgrim indicates the continuation of the pilgrimage tradition at a time when organised mass

pilgrimage ceased to be in prevalence⁵¹.

An incomplete and damaged record of 1697AD by Mangammālī is found in the temple⁵². The Travancore government epigraphist thought that it was engraved by an illiterate stone mason or an indifferent calligraphist whose inability made the inscription hopelessly misspelt⁵³. Though the content was not known, it is certain that this was an endowment by Mangammālī who is identified as a regent queen of the Nāyaka kingdom of Madurai⁵⁴. It is also identified that Mangammālī reigned from 1689AD to 1706AD on behalf of her minor grandson, Vijayaranga Cokkanātha and the queen set out an expedition in 1697AD to Nānchinātī⁵⁵. The queen, after conquering the region, made the endowment to Vatīāśseri temple. It is significant that the well in the temple near the slab that contains the inscription is still known as *Mangammālīdharmakkinīar* (well of Mangammālī). In this context, it is plausible that the temple well was dug on the orders of Mangammālī and this must have been the subject of the aforesaid inscription.

Cāttankulīangara Temple

The Visīnīu temple at Cāttankulīangara at Cengannūr is another temple which emerged in the post-Cēra period. An inscription which is datable to the fourteenth century states that Dēvan Śankaran of Mēlkkātīu repaired the temple and the idol was reconsecrated⁵⁶. Land donations and endowments of monetary munificence were made to the temple by various aristocrats and nobles⁵⁷. These donations were made after the renovation of the temple. An oral tradition associated with this temple attributes the origin of the temple to a Swāmiyar of Muncira Matīhom⁵⁸. It is significant that until recently Muncira Matīhom had administrative control over the temple. The temple records of Cengannūr Śiva temple, while describing the *grāmam* and

its boundaries, speak about thirty nine temples of Cengannūr⁵⁹. Cāttankulīṅgara temple is described as one among the four prominent temples among them which reveals that the temple was a notable Vaiṣṇava centre in Cengannūr settlement.

Krīṣṇān Kōvil Temple

The Viṣṇū shrine at Krīṣṇān Kōvil bears two fragmentary records. These records are of 1373AD and 1533AD and they speak about provisions for the institution of Brahmin feeding on *Dwādaśī* days in the temple⁶⁰. The record of 1373AD is of the period of Āditya Varma Sarvāṅganātha and the record is about the institution of Brahmin feeding to twelve Brahmins in the temple. The endowment for feeding twelve Brahmins on *Dwādaśī* days reveals the prosperity of the temple. Āditya Varma Sarvāṅganātha was a known patron of Vaiṣṇavism and the association of the king with the temple makes clear that the temple as a Vaiṣṇava centre received wholehearted patronage from the monarch⁶¹.

Mitrānandapuram Temple

The Mitrānandapuram temple, which is situated to the west of the Tiruvananthapuram temple, was a private shrine of the Brahmin priests of Tiruvananthapuram temple. It is a unique shrine which is dedicated to the trio of Hindu pantheon – Brahma, Viṣṇū and Śiva. As a temple of the Brahmin priests of Tiruvananthapuram, the Mitrānandapuram temple received royal patronage and the temple prospered under Vēṅṭāṭṭu rulers. The records of the post-Cēra period speak well of the patronage of Vēṅṭāṭṭu rulers towards the prosperity of this temple complex⁶². Separate shrines within the temple complex received endowments separately from various monarchs. A twelfth century record, datable to 1196AD, speaks about donations to the Viṣṇū shrine in the Mitrānandapuram temple⁶³. The endowment was made by Vīra

Manñikantñā Rāma Varma.

A set of copper plates known as Mitrānandapuram Copper Plates reveals that a large number of donations were made to institute various rituals and offerings in the temple⁶⁴. King Ravi Mārtānñdñā Varma set apart *Rājabhōga* from Tiruvananthapuram for the expenses of rice offerings in the temple. These copper plates make clear that the temple owned extensive landed properties in various parts of southern Kerala. Another copper plate inscription states that one Suvākaran Manñiyān of Malaimanñam set up an image of Śrī Krīśññā in the *Manñdñāpa* of the temple and dedicated *sālagrāmas*, the sacred Vaisññava stones, with a gift of 600 *parñas* paddy and 30 elephant marked coins to the temple⁶⁵. He also made a gift of three coins for feeding a Brahmin and for making offerings to the god on *Dwādaśi* days. Along with these donations, a vessel for cooking (*urulñi*), a bell and a lamp stand were also given to the temple.

An inscription of 1485AD refers to the repair works executed in the temple by Yādavēndrānubhūti Bhatñtñārar Tiruvatñi, Nāga Swāmydēva, Pavitrakalñi Piladñsvaran and Nārāyanñan Rāghavan⁶⁶. The consecration of the image was also undertaken and the pinnacle was covered with copper along with the renovation work. The Mitrānandapuram temple was associated with the Swāmiyār of Muncira Matñhom. It is again significant that the *yōgam* of Tiruvananthapuram temple met at Mitrānandapuram temple⁶⁷.

Malayankñlñ Temple

The Visññu temple at Malayankñlñ near Tiruvananthapuram had links with Tiruvalla temple and Tiruvalla Brahmin settlement. The connection between Malayankñlñ and Tiruvalla temples are highlighted in certain oral traditions⁶⁸. According to Tiruvalla Copper Plates, Tiruvalla temple owned properties at Malayankñlñ⁶⁹. It is quiet certain that Malayankñlñ was a temple

estate of Tiruvalla temple which developed into a sub-settlement of Tiruvalla. The Visṅṅu temple at Malayankīlī must have emerged as the nucleus of the newly formed sub-settlement. Mādhava Panīkkar, the Kanīṅāśśa poet, makes a prayer to the deity of Malayankīlī temple in *Bhāsīa Bhagavad Gītā*⁷⁰. The reference to the deity of Malayankīlī temple as a beloved God by Mādhava Panīkkar, who hailed from Nirāṅam in the vicinity of Tiruvalla, suggests that he stayed at Malayankīlī. This goes in harmony with the contention that Malayankīl and Tiruvalla temples were linked each other.

Tiruvallam

A Tiruvallam inscription of 1224AD of Vīra Kerala Varma of Vēṅātīu registers a gift of *jīvita* rights on Nigamam in Tenganātīu for making arrangements for offerings to the gods- Mahādēva, Tirukkanīṅappan and Ganāpati⁷¹. Nigamam is identified as Nēmam near Tiruvananthapuram. Arrangements for the supply of flowers to the temple are also made by the royal patron. This is the earliest epigraphic record on Tiruvallam temple. It is evident from the record that the Krīśṅā shrine was in existence at Tiruvallam in the third decade of the thirteenth century. Tiruvallam which is situated in the vicinity of Tiruvananthapuram was included in the sacred geography of Tiruvananthapuram. An inscription of the year 1236AD registers a gift by Vijayan Iravi of Tēkkinkāvu to the temple⁷².

An inscription of 1237AD records the provisions for sacred offerings, Brahmin feeding and ritual worship in the shrines of Mahādēvan Tiruvatīi and Tirukkanīṅappan⁷³. Krīśṅā is referred to as Tirukkanīṅappan. Tiruvallam temple is presently known as a shrine of Paraśūrāma. However, the aforesaid records do not convey any idea regarding the Paraśūrāma identity of the deity. The Vaisṅṅava deity in the temple is referred to as Tirukkanīṅappan or Krīśṅā. In this context, it is plausible that Paraśūrāma identity of the deity is

a later invention and the deity was conceived as Kṛṣṇā in thirteenth century. Tiruvallam temple is a temple complex dedicated to the holy trinity of Hindu pantheon-Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva. But the aforesaid records of Tiruvallam only refer to Śiva, Kṛṣṇā and Gaṇapati. Brahma is conspicuously absent in this list of gods. Brahma is also a later entry into the cluster of divinities in the temple.

Vel̥lāyan̥i

An inscription of 1196AD reveals that the Viṣṇu temple at Vel̥lāyan̥i received royal patronage under the ruling dynasty of Vēṅāt̥u⁷⁴. This inscription registers a gift by the officers of king Vīra Rāma Varma Tiruvat̥i of Vēṅāt̥u to the temple. The temple is called in the record as Tirukkunakarai Yādava Nārāyan̥a Vinnāgar Āl̥vār Kōvil. The gift was made for meeting the expenses of daily offerings in the temple. The gift instituted food offerings of four *nāl̥i* of rice and for burning a lamp daily in the temple. The provincial militia of Vēṅāt̥u (the Six Hundred) was entrusted with the duty of repairing and managing the temple and its affairs. This is significant that even after the fall of the Cēra kingdom of Mahodayapuram the local militia known as *Nūr̥ruvar* (the Hundreds) continued to exist and as in the Cēra age they continued to have duties to repair and maintain temples.

Parakkai Temple

The Viṣṇu temple at Parakkai in the vicinity of Tiruvanparis̥āram was a prosperous temple in Vēṅāt̥u. The Parakkai temple which is known as Madhusūdana Vinnāgar Emperumān Kōvil contains an inscription of Vīra Ravi Ravi Varma of 1465AD⁷⁵. This inscription speaks about a royal gift of landed properties to the temple by Vīra Ravi Ravi Varma who was Trippāpūr Mūtta Tiruvat̥i for conducting *pantirat̥ipūja*. The income from a

number of light cesses such as fishing lease, tax on left hand castes (*itāmkai*), trade taxes on Cetṭī merchants, exchange fee, tax on oil mills, tax on looms, tolls in markets, tax on washer men's stones etc. has been transferred to the temple's revenue. Significantly the record was issued on *Ēkādaśi* which is an important day for the Vaiṣṇavas.

A record of 1452AD states that Periya Naināṛ Mayilemperumāṅ of Kānai gave landed properties to Sankattāḷagar with the provision that the daily offerings at the rate of four *nālī* rice, one *ulākkū* ghee, one *palam* sugar, four plantains and one perpetual lamp were to be provided to the temple⁷⁶. Four garlands were also to be given to the temple from the product of the land. An inscription of 1560AD records a gift of a lamp stand weighing 84 *palam* and an amount of 400 *Nenmēnikaliyugarāyanpanāṅ* by Ceruppālī Hariswāmi Bhatṭā⁷⁷. This gift was made for maintaining a perpetual lamp in the temple. It is also stated that the interests of 4 *panāṅ* per month which would accrue on 400 *panāṅ* at the rate of one per cent per month was to be obtained from the *ayappanāṅ* from the lands of Palīam, Manākkutṭi and Orapoki. It is also stipulated that Seliyakkōn, the oil monger of the temple, had to ensure the supply of the required quantity of oil for ritual purposes in the temple.

An inscription of 1515AD states that Śankaran Paramēswaran of Mangalacēri in Kilīarmangalam donated 400 *panāṅ* for maintaining a perpetual lamp in the temple and provisions were made for burning it daily⁷⁸. A record of 1545AD states that the details of lands which were given as *śilpavritti kārāṅmai* tenure to Nayinam Mudali, an architect⁷⁹. The architect was in the service of the temple and he received the donation as remuneration for his service as temple architect. Often the architects were given landed properties for their service in the temple. An inscription of 1558AD records

that Perumāl Ponnarā, a temple official, made an endowment of plots of lands for the construction of water shed for the benefit of the pilgrims⁸⁰.

A record of Bhūtala Vīra Rāma Varma of 1587AD registers a gift of land with the sowing capacity of 35 *koṭṭāi* to the temple⁸¹. The donation was made for the performance of *usāpūja* or morning service in the temple. In 1611AD, Sāvītri Amma donated 40 *panāam* for conducting the *Citravasantam* festival in the temple for three days from the day of *Makha* asterism in the month of *Cittirai*⁸². In the same year, a Brahmin trustee of Śucīndram temple donated 50 *panāam* to garland makers for supplying garlands daily to Parakkai temple⁸³. It is obvious from the inscriptions that Parakkai Viśṇū temple developed into a prosperous Vaiśṇava centre and the temple received royal patronage from the Vēṅṭāṭṭu rulers.

Kochaipidāram

A record of 1494AD reveals that an endowment for Brahmin feeding was instituted by Gangadhara Brahmācāri of Āryadēśa, Śankara Perumālī from Tonḍāimanḍālam, Cokkiyār from Cōḷāmandalam and Krīśṇā Bhatṭā in Kochoipidāram temple⁸⁴. The presence of a person from Āryadēśa or North India, one individual each from Tonḍāimanḍālam and Cōḷāmanḍālam as donors signifies that Kochoipidāram temple was a pilgrim spot. The inscription mentions the diety as ‘Polinḍū Ninnarulīya Pirān’ and the place is referred to as Kulāśēkhara Caturvēdimangalam. This place-name indicates the existence of a Brahmin settlement in the place. From the record, it is certain that the star of nativity of the diety is *Rōhinī*. This enables us to identify the diety as Krīśṇā.

A copper plate grant of 1603AD states that Śankaran Kōta of Panayarāi in Malai manḍalam made a land donation to the temple and money was also donated for the conduct of worship in the temple⁸⁵. Śankaran Kōta was an officer in the royal service of Ravi Varma. The record cited above also states that the temple was renovated by Śankaran Kōta and the idol was reconsecrated after the completion of the renovation. The land grant was made in the aftermath of the renovation. The royal officer was a promoter of Brahmins and a new Brahmin settlement known as ‘Udaya Mārtānḍā Caturvēdimangalam’ or ‘Kōtachanagaram’ was instituted in the place. It seems that the present place-name Koचाipidāram is the corrupt form of Kōtaichanagaram.

Provisions for special ritual offerings in every month on *Tiruōṇam* asterism was also made by Śankaran Kōta⁸⁶. *Tiruōṇam* is the birth asterism of the deity. *Tiruōṇam* was celebrated as the birth asterism of Viṣṇu which later developed into *Ōṇam* festival. Ritual worship was also instituted on *Trikkētā* asterism on which Ravi Varma Kulaśēkharapperumalī was born, on *Tiruvātira* asterism on which the donor was born and on the day of full moon (*pourṇami*). Śankaran Kōta also made a donation of paddy fields which yields 120 *kotā* rice at Kōtāār and 268 *panams* from the *pātākkāṇam* from certain lands to the temple.

Aruvikkarai Temple

Aruvikkarai Krīṣṇa temple in southern Vēṇātū near Kalkulam possesses four inscriptions of post-Cēra age which throw light on the prosperity of the temple under Vēṇātū monarchs. A record of 1236AD speaks about a gift of land to the temple by Nārāyanā Kumāraswāmi and Rāman Manī of Pālakkōtū for food offering to the deity⁸⁷. A record of 1238AD registers a gift of land by a Brahmin namely Cerikanāṅṅān Jātavēda

Bhat̥t̥iā for offerings and garlands in the temple⁸⁸. The deity is mentioned in this record as Puruṣ̥ōttamattudēva. Puruṣ̥ōttama is another name of Viṣ̥ṇ̥u. An inscription of 1241AD records a gift of land by Tuppan Nārāyan̥an , Tuppan Cēnnaṅ and Kan̥t̥iān Tuppan, the residents of Kar̥pakamangalam, and a record of 1655AD states that Jātavēdan Sāvitrī built one of the rows of the ceilings in the temple⁸⁹. These lithic records make clear that Aruvikkarai temple prospered under the Vēn̥āt̥iū rulers who became independent in the twelfth century.

Gōvindapuram

The Viṣ̥ṇ̥u temple at Gōvindapuram is referred to in *Kōkasandēśa* as a notable Viṣ̥ṇ̥u shrine in the route from Tirunāva to Et̥appal̥l̥i⁹⁰. Gōvindapuram is mentioned in this *Sandēśakāvya* as a prominent centre of Brahmins who engaged in eulogising the glories of Viṣ̥ṇ̥u. It is also stated that Talappal̥l̥i chieftains were the devotees of the deity of the temple. A prince of Talappal̥l̥i is mentioned in *Kōkasandēśa* as a *bhakta* and a patron of Gōvindapuram temple. He is mentioned as a royal composer of devotional hymns in praise of Viṣ̥ṇ̥u of Gōvindapuram. It is significant that the Talappal̥l̥i chieftains rose to political prominence in the aftermath of the decline of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram⁹¹. The references in *Kōkasandēśa* reveal that Gōvindapuram temple was a royal temple under Talappal̥l̥i Rājas. A festival known as *pālku̥tam* was celebrated in Gōvindapuram temple. It is mentioned in *Kōkasandēśa*⁹². This festival appears to be an earlier form of the festival known as *ur̥iyat̥i* which is even at present celebrated in Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥a temples.

Triprayār

The Viṣṇū temple at Triprayār is another Vaiṣṇava shrine mentioned in *Kōkasandēśa*⁹³. Triprayār is referred to as Purīayār. *Kōkam*, the messenger in *Kōkasandēśa*, had to pray before the deity of Purīayār. The work mentions the dance performance of *devadasis* in the temple. It is significant that the deity is referred to as Krīṣṇā. At present the deity is conceived as Rāma. From *Kōkasandēśa*, it is certain that the Rāma identity of the deity is a later addition.

Tirunelli

Unīiaccicaritam and *Kōkilasandēśa* refer to Tirunelli temple and these references reveal that Tirunelli continued to be an important Vaiṣṇava centre in the post-Cēra age. The place is described in *Unīiaccicaritam* as a beautiful land of Viṣṇū⁹⁴. Different names of Viṣṇū are given while the deity of the temple is mentioned. The names include the one who killed Kamsa, the one who annihilated Murāsura and the one who is the consort of Lakṣmi. Tirunelli is also referred to as a *tīrtha*. It is significant that still the place is a *tīrtha* where the last rites of the dead are performed. *Kōkilasandēśa* of Uddanīdī also refers to Tirunelli and the Viṣṇū temple⁹⁵. The place-name is Sanskritized in the work as Amalakadharanī.

Triccambaram

Triccambaram temple is described as a renowned shrine of Murāri in *Kōkilasandēśa*⁹⁶. The place name is Sanskritized as Śambara in this *sandēśakāvya* and the deity is referred to as Bālakrīṣṇā. Eulogy of the temple is also found in *Candrōlsavam*⁹⁷. The author of *Candrōlsavam* refers to the shrine Hari which reverberates with the sound of Hai's flute. The temple is equated to Golōka. The place is mentioned as Cemmaram. A *sthalamāhātmya* glorifies the place as the site of the penance of sage Śambara

and the tradition bestows the responsibility for the origin of the place-name on Śambara. The fabrication of the story intended to justify the Sanskritised place-name. The Sanskritisation of place-names was a general trend that developed in the post-Cēra age and in several cases stories were concocted to validate the Sanskritisation of place-names⁹⁸.

Kariyamānīkkapuram

This is another notable Vaiṣṇava centre in southern Vēṅṅāṭṭu which prospered under Vēṅṅāṭṭu rulers. A record of 1468AD states that Kulaśēkhara Nambirātṭīyār repaired the temple and built the *mahāmanīdāpa* and the steps of sanctum sanctorum⁹⁹. The idol was consecrated after the repair works. In 1510AD, Arangan Perumān of Tattaipattāṅṅam made a land donation for daily offerings and for the supply of garlands to the temple¹⁰⁰. The place was renamed as ‘Rāja Nārāyaṅṅa Caturvēdimangalam’. Madhusūdan of Mangalaccēri made a land donation for the renovation of the temple in 1559AD¹⁰¹. The donation was intended for instituting Brahmin feeding in the temple during full moon days. Another inscription of 1559AD records that king Āditya Varma exempted the land from various taxes for the benefit the temple¹⁰².

Vennimala

The Viṣṇu temple at Vennimala was associated with Tekkumkūr Rājas and the temple prospered as a royal temple. Vennimala was the capital of Tekkumkūr Rājas whose royal family came into existence from a split that took place in the erstwhile royal house of Vempolināṭṭu in the twelfth century¹⁰³. A *ksētramāhātmya* attribute the credit for the establishment of Vennimala temple to the legendary Cēramān Perumāṅṅi. This tradition originated in a later period under Tekkumkūr Rājas to attribute greater antiquity to Vennimala temple. The Tekkumkūr chieftains were patrons of

Viṣṇū temples. It is apparent from the Tiruvalla Copper Plates which mentioned the Tekkumkūr branch of Vempolinātū as one of the donors in Tiruvalla temple¹⁰⁴. However, there are no inscriptions found in this temple.

Other Vaisṇava Centres

Unṅunīlisandēśa mentions the Viṣṇū temple at Manṅikanṅtāpuram near Vennimala¹⁰⁵. Manṅikanṅtāpuram is referred to as a Brahminical centre. Like Vennimala temple, Manṅikanṅtāpuram temple was also associated with Tekkumkūr Rājas. The Viṣṇū temple at Katāvallūr is another Vaisṇava centre that became prominent in the post-Cēra age. Significantly this temple was the venue of Vedic competition known as, *anyōnyam* and the competition was held between the *sabhāyōgams* of Tirunāva and Triśśūr¹⁰⁶. *Anyōnyam* still continues at Katāvallūr temple. Earlier the temple was a private shrine of a Nambūdiri family of Panniyūr faction and later came under Perumpatāppu Rājas. Many local chieftains in medieval Kerala such as those of Kochi, Calicut, Tarūr and Āṅgōtṅtū enjoyed various customary rights and privileges in the Viṣṇū temple at Tiruvilvāmala near Triśśūr¹⁰⁷. The Rāja of Kochi had *mēlkōima* rights, the Rājas of Calicut and Palakkad enjoyed *purākōima* rights and the Rāja of Kakkātū had *akakōima* rights in the temple. Notably Tiruvilvāmala was on one of the main trade routes that came from Tamil kingdoms to Ponnāni through Triśśūr. The Kāchamkuriśī and Ayirūr Viṣṇū temples were associated with Vēnganātṅtū and Ayirūr swarūpams respectively¹⁰⁸.

Various inscriptions and literary works of post-Cēra age mention several other Vaisṇava centres. Tāyan Kēsavan of Manṅil made provisions for feeding 15 Brahmins at Kōtṅtāttala Viṣṇū temple near Kotṅtārakkara in 1235AD¹⁰⁹. The Brahmin feeding was instituted for the merit of the ancestors

of the donor. A twelfth century inscription which is found engraved on the margin of the parapet round the well in the Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥āswāmi temple at Nelvēli records that certain landed properties were mortgaged to the temple¹¹⁰. An undated record in *Vat̥t̥el̥l̥uttu* on the *yāli* screen at the entrance in the Viṣ̥ṇ̥u temple Karakul̥am speaks about the construction of the temple by Kāman Kunr̥ān of Mayilam and a record of 1712AD of Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥ānkōvil temple near Keralapuram refers to an early gift to the temple by Silaya Pil̥l̥ai Ariyakut̥t̥i¹¹¹. The donor made the land donation to the temple in 1663AD during the reign of Ravi Ravi Varma.

A record of 1649AD in the Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥ā temple at Vet̥t̥ikkavala near Kot̥t̥ārakkara states that the *balikkal* was constructed by Kan̥t̥ān of Āvan̥appar̥ambil and a fully damaged record datable to the post-Cēra age in the Viṣ̥ṇ̥u temple at Mut̥t̥āmbalam makes clear that the temple existed in that age¹¹². Dāmōdaran Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥ān and Nārāyan̥ān sponsored the flooring of the temple. Similar to this, a fragmentary and a damaged inscription on the eastern side of the north *pr̥ākāra* of the Viṣ̥ṇ̥u temple at Okkal near Kālat̥i throws light on the existence of that Vais̥ṇ̥ava centre in the post-Cēra period¹¹³. The Viṣ̥ṇ̥u temple at Pirappankōt̥u near Tiruvananthapuram bears three inscriptions of the post-Cēra period¹¹⁴. An undated and damaged inscription registers a gift of land for offerings to the temple. Another inscription on the pillars of the *man̥d̥āpa* in the *cur̥r̥uman̥d̥āpa* mentions three names -Karikkāt̥t̥u Narasimhan Govindan, Kaikarai Ayyappan Kāl̥iayampi and Alakan Karun̥ākaran. It is plausible that these persons reconstructed the *man̥d̥āpa* or its portions. A record of 1625AD which is found engraved on the left of the western entrance into the *pr̥ākāra* of the temple records that Īśvara Nārāyan̥ān of Karikkāt̥u executed repair works in

the temple. A record of 1460AD which is found engraved on the northern base of the central shrine in the Kr̥ṣ̥ṇā shrine at Podiyal records that the shrine was reconstructed with stone¹¹⁵.

An inscription of 1496AD which is found engraved on the west base of the Gaṇāpati temple in the bazaar street at Kollam records that Govinda or Viṣṇu was consecrated at Nētrapura during the period of Jayasimha or Keralavarma¹¹⁶. It is significant that Nētrapura was the Sanskritized form of Kan̥ṇāpuram. The place-name Kan̥ṇāpuram denotes ‘the town of Kan̥ṇān’ or Kr̥ṣ̥ṇān. This word again connotes ‘Netr̥ā’ or ‘eye’ and this meaning is taken for sanskritising the name. The Viṣṇu temple at Talakkulāam was repaired in 1485AD and an inscription which is found engraved on the base of the *balikkal* in the Viṣṇu temple at Tiruman̥i Vēṅkatāpuram registers a temple committee resolution about the proper maintenance of the temple. It is stated that the granary shall not be kept in the temple without the consent of the temple authorities¹¹⁷. These records make clear that the Viṣṇu temples of Talakkulāam and Tiruman̥i Vēṅkatāpuram existed in the post- Cēra period. The Talakkulāam record makes clear that the temple was renovated by Vīra Kerala Pallvarāyar of Iranisingappat̥ivīd̥ū. A purification ceremony was also held in the temple after the completion of the renovation. It is apparent from a damaged or a partially damaged inscription that the Viṣṇu temple at Tiruppārāmalā in southern Vēṅāt̥ū existed in the post-Cēra period and the temple received donations for Brahmin feeding and perpetual lamps¹¹⁸.

A damaged inscription which refers to a gift of land by Rāma Pat̥t̥ār for conducting rituals in the Kr̥ṣ̥ṇā temple at Kāvumbhāgom make clear that the temple was a Vais̥ṇāva centre that existed in the vicinity of the

Viṣṇu temple at Tiruvalla¹¹⁹. The temple was a centre of Tamil Brahmins. This is evident from the surname Patṭīar in the name of the donor which denotes that the donor was a Tamil Brahmin. It is significant that still there is a minor settlement of Tamil Brahmins near this temple. A record datable to the post-Cēra age is found engraved on the eastern base of the central shrine of the Viṣṇu temple at Peringara near Tiruvalla Viṣṇu temple¹²⁰. This record points to the existence of the temple in the post-Cēra period. A record of 1525AD which is found engraved in the Kṛṣṇa temple at Tōvālīa records a grant to the temple and an incomplete record of 1651AD which is found engraved on the base of the *manḍāpa* in the Narasimha temple at Peringōtṭu speaks about the institution of certain offerings in the temple¹²¹. The temple bears two more inscriptions¹²². An inscription of 1659AD records that the pillar was the gift of Kokkan Kanṇattiyār. A record of 1665AD speaks about the paving of the courtyard in the temple with stone by Nārāyaṇan. Similarly certain literary works of the age contain references to various Viṣṇu temples. *Bhringasandēśa* refers to Tiruvārpu Kṛṣṇa temple and *Unṇicirutevicaritam* refers to prosperity of the Kṛṣṇa temple at Poyilam¹²³.

The kings and chieftains of the post-Cēra age had diverse functions in temples of all sorts¹²⁴. The royal officers in temples were known as *kōima* and the term signifies overlord, prominence etc. Three kinds of *kōimas* existed in temples- *mēlkōima*, *purḥakōima* and *akakōima*. *Mēlkōima* was the chief protector of temples, *purḥakōima* was in charge of protecting temple estates and processions and *akakōima* looked after ritual services¹²⁵. These royal officers supervised the management of the temple as patrons and protectors. The Brahmin trustees of temples enjoyed extensive powers in the selection of

royal functionaries and they could alter the *kōima*. It was not mandatory for the trustees to accord *kōima* position to the king in whose kingdom the temple was situated. *Kōima* had to make atonements in the temple if the trustees decided and their role in the decision making process in the administration of the temple was limited¹²⁶. The kings and chieftains wholeheartedly promoted temples. The royal functionaries in temples ensured royal patronage to temples. In return, legitimacy was provided to chieftains by temples.

To recapitulate, the Visṅṅu temples of the Cēra age continued to prosper in the post-Cēra age. The rise of independent kingdoms and chiefdoms in this period was a catalyst in the growth of temples as prosperous Brahminic institutions. Several Visṅṅu temples rose to prominence as royal temples. Temples had politically significant role as Brahminic institutions which conferred ritual legitimacy on kings and chieftains. The Visṅṅu temples prospered as royal patronage promoted their interests. Though vehement temple centred *bhakti* movement of an organised character did not persist, Visṅṅu temples of the post-Cēra age prospered as royal temples under royal patronage.

Notes and References:

1. This is discussed in chapter V above in the context of the rise of Vēnṅātṅu and Netṅiyirippu swarūpams . Also see chapter V, Note no.1.
2. *Trippūnṅithura Granthavari, op.cit.*
3. K.T. Ravi Varma, “Kochiyile Swarupangal’, *Vinjana Kairali*, 15.4, 1984, p. 270.
4. Quoted in V.K. Raman Menon, “The Old Chiefs of Malabar, “*B.R.R.I.*, Vol.4, Ernakulam, 1936, p.13.
5. *Trippūnṅithura Grandhavari , op.cit.*
6. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp. 295-296.
7. *Trippūnṅithura Grandhavari, op.cit.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Śukasandēśa, ślōka-62.*
10. *Bhringasandēśa, ślōka- 60.*

11. *Trippūnīithura Grandhavari, op.cit.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. K.T. Ravi Varma, *op.cit.*, p.270.
14. *Trippūnīithura Grandhavari, op. cit.*, ; see chapter II.
15. *Trippūnīithura Ksīētram* (Gosri Grandhamala-2), Ernakulam, 1943, pp. 188-192.
16. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.II, pp. 476-480.
17. *Tenkailanāthodayamcampu, ślōkas-12-19.* See the text of *Tenkailanāthodayamcampu*, Śrī RamaVarma Granthavali, Trichur, 1968.
18. *Grantham No. 625, op.cit.; A.43, op.cit.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *B.R.R.I.*, Vol. IX, Part I, pp. 47-50; Also see chapter III.
21. *A. 43, op.cit. ; Grantham No. 625, op.cit.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *B.R.R.I.*, Vol. IX, Part I., pp. 48-50.
24. *A. 43, op.cit.*
25. *A. 49- Accounts Relating to Irinjalakuda temple, Regional Archives, Ernakulam; Grantham No. 625, op.cit. .*
26. *Grantham No.625, op.cit.*
27. *A. 43, op.cit.*
28. *Ibid; Grantham No. 625, op.cit.*
29. *Papers Relating to Tachudaya Kaimalī Sthanom in the Kudal Manikam Devaswom, Irinjalakuda and Scheme of Management*, Vol. IV, Central Archives, Tiruvananthapuram, p. 115.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-128; See Records on *Avarodham* in *Grantham No.625, op.cit.*. Also see *A. 43, op.cit.*
31. Gopi Krishnan.G, “Tachudaya Kaimal – A Unique Institution of Temple Administration in Kerala”, *PSIHC.*, 2003, pp.30-33.
32. *Grantham No. 625, op.cit ; P. Bhaskaranunni, op.cit.*, p.838.
33. In 1762 AD and 1766 AD, the Travancore Kings signed treaties with Kochi which included provisions for the continuation of the past usages including the installation of Tachutīaya Kaimalī. See *Papers Relating to the Tachudaya Kaimalī Sthanom in the Kudal Manickom Devaswom, Irinjalakkuda*, Central Archives, Tiruvananthapuram, pp. 19-20. During the reign of Śaktan Tampurān, problems reemerged on the question of the appointment of Tachutīaya Kaimalī as Kochi king viewed this institution as a tool to intervene in the affairs of Kochi. See Puthezhathu Rama Menon, *Sree Saktan Tampuran*, Ernakulam, 1941, pp. 489-490.
34. *Kōkilasandēśa, ślōka-86.*
35. *Bhringasandēśa, ślōka- 70.*

36. *Syānandūrapurānīa samuccaya* describes Brahmakunda as the northern boundary and Brahmakunḍīa is identified with Varkala. The fourth chapter of the work narrates Brahmakunḍīa. See *Syānandūrapurānīa samuccaya, Caturdhōdyāya, ślōkas 1-48*.
37. *T.A.S.*, Vol. IV, pp. 151-152.
38. The place is mentioned in this inscription as Varkalai Udaiya Mārtanḍīapuram, *T.A.S.*, Vol.IV, p.151.
39. Udaya Mārtanḍīa Varma reigned between 1173AD-1189AD. See T.K. Velu Pillai, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, pp.80-81
40. P.G. Rajendran, *op.cit.*, p.1058.
41. *Unḥīunīlisandēśa, ślōkas-66-67*.
42. *Mayūrasandēśa, ślōka-67*.
43. P.G. Rajendran, *op.cit.*, pp. 54-55.
44. *Ibid*; Nellikkal Muraleedharan, *Aramula Vallamkali*, Chengannur, 2007, pp.18-19; Ambalapuzha Gopakumar, *Ambalapuzha SreeKrishna Swamy Temple*, Ambalapuzha, 2000, pp.54-57.
45. *T.A.S.*, Vol. V, pp. 63-85.
46. Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 1978, p.78; M.R. Raghava Varier and P.M. Rajan Gurukkal, *Kerala Carithram*, Sukapuram, 1991, rpt.2007, p. 112.
47. See Note no.45 above.
48. See chapter V, Note no.15.
49. The king describes himself thus; “I am well versed in grammar; I am master of the science and art of composition and music. I know the smritis, economics, the science of self, the *purānīas*, the *śāstrās* and the *Vedas* as also the dialectics. I shine by the various kinds of exercises in respect of 36 weapons. I practise the groups of the arts. I also conquer kings in war”. See *T.A.S.*, Vol. I, pp.252-253; Also see chapter V.
50. *T.A.S.*, Vol. V., pp. 124-127.
51. See chapter IV.
52. *T.A.S.*, Vol. V., pp. 209-210.
53. *Ibid*. See note prepared by A.S. Ramanatha Ayyar.
54. *Ibid*; V.Nagam Aiya, *op.cit.*, Vol.I, pp.318-319.
55. M. Gopalakrishnan (ed.), *Gazatteer of India-Kanyakumari District*, Chennai, 1995, p.82;W. Anlet Sobitha Bai, “Rani Mangammal and Her Regency in Madurai”, *J.I.H.*, Vol. LXXXIII., Parts-1 to 3, 2004, pp.21-22; A. Perumal, “Contributions of Vijayanagara and Nayaka Rulers in Kanyakumari Region : From 16th to 17th Century AD”, *J.S.O.R.I.*, Vol.12, No.1, 2010, p.147.
56. *T.A.S.*, Vol. IV, pp. 161-166.
57. *Ibid*.

58. P.G. Rajendran, *op.cit.*, p.430; *Navami Kshetra Vinjanakosam*, Vol. I, Mannar, 1999, pp. 170-171.
59. According to *Cengannūr Grandhavari* there were 19 *ceris* and 39 temples within the area occupied by the Nambūdiri Brahmins of Cengannūr. Among 39 temples, Trikkannāpuram, Cāttankulāngara, Tiruccirāṅār and Mutalanikkāṭu were important centres of worship. Quoted from *Cengannūr Grandhavari* in Kallur Narayana Pillai, *op.cit.*, p.32.
60. *T.A.S.*, Vol. V, pp. 127-128.
61. See chapter IV.
62. *T.A.S.*, Vol. III, pp. 1-29.
63. *Ibid*, pp. 28-29.
64. *Ibid*, pp. 1-21.
65. *Ibid*, pp. 21-25.
66. *Ibid*, p. 27.
67. *Chronicles of Trivandrum Pagoda*, Record No. 2.
68. P.G.Rajendran, *op.cit.*, p.953; P.UnnikrishnanNair, *op.cit.*, 1987, pp.395-398.
69. *Index.No.* A.80; *T.A.S.*, Vol. II, pp. 131-207.
70. *Bhāṣā Bhagavad Gītā*, chapter 18, pātīṭu. 42.
71. *T.A.S.*, Vol. III, pp. 40-43.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.
73. *Ibid.*, pp. 37-40.
74. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-37.
75. *T.A.S.*, Vol. VI., Part II, pp. 110-111.
76. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.
77. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-113.
78. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.
79. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-117.
81. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.
82. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.
83. *Ibid.*, pp. 121.
84. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-137.
85. *Ibid.*, pp. 138-140.
86. *Ibid.* Also see chapter VII.
87. *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 113.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
89. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.
90. *Kōkasandēśam ; ślōkas*, 30-32.
91. *B.R.R.I.*, Vol.4, p.18 ; A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *op.cit.*, pp.62-63; K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, 1983, Vol.II, p.127-128.

92. *Kōkasandēśam* , ślōka-32.
93. *Ibid.*, ślōkas-41-43.
94. *Unñiaccicaritam*, prose-3.
95. *Kōkilasandēśam*, ślōka-41.
96. *Ibid*, ślōka-61.
97. *Candrōlsavam*, ślōka- 49.
98. This is discussed in several contexts in various chapters on this work. See chapters IV, V and VIII.
99. *T.A.S.*, Vol. VI, Part-1, pp. 43-44.
100. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-46.
101. *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.
102. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-50.
103. See for more details on Vempolināṭu K. P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, 1983, vol II, p.85; M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.100. See for a discussion on Tekkumkur A.P. Ibrahim Kunju, *op.cit.*, pp.56-58: P.A. Ramachandran Nair, “Vennimalayute Caritram” *Vinjana Kairali*, 16.12, 1985, pp. 1027-1031.
104. *Index No. A. 80.*; *T.A.S.*, Vol. II, pp. 131-207.
105. *Unñiunīlisandēśam*, ślōka-127.
106. C. Achyuta Menon, *op.cit.*, pp. 501-502; P. Bhaskaranunni, *op.cit.*, pp. 1094-1098; Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma Raja, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 362-365.
107. C. Achyuta Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 504; P.G. Rajendran, *op.cit.*, pp. 229-230.
108. See for references on Kāchāmkuruśī temple *B.R.R.I.*, Vol.X, Part-1, pp.44-43; See for references on Ayirur temple P.G. Rajendran, *op.cit.*, pp.62-63.
109. *T.A.S.*, Vol. VII, p. 66.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
111. *Ibid.*, p.97; Vol.V, p.116.
112. *Ibid.*, Vol. VI., Pt.II p. 141.
113. R. Vasudeva Poduval, *op.cit.*, p. 148.
114. *T.A.S.*, Vol. VII., pp. 99-100.
115. R. Vasudeva Poduval, *op.cit.*, p. 173.
116. *T.A.S.*, Vol. II., p. 26.
117. *Ibid.*, Vol.VII., p.35; Vol.VII;Pt.II, p.139.
118. R. Vasudeva Poduval, *op.cit.*, p. 242.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 251.
120. *Ibid.*, p. 249.
121. See for Tovālīa inscriptions *T.A.S.*, Vol. IV., p. 101; *E. M.*, No.31, 33, pp.93-94.
122. *E. M.*, No.33, p.94.
123. *Bhringasandēśa*, ślōka-46; *Unñicirutēvicaritam*, prose-7. pp.23-24.

124. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, 1986, Vol.IV, pp. 88-89; P. Bhaskaranunni, *op. cit.*, pp.810-812; Gopi Krishnan.G, “Kings and Chieftains as Temple Administrators in Medieval Kerala”, *P.S.I.H.C.*, 2011, pp. 70-75.
125. *Grantham-625, The Records Relating to the Irinjalakkuta Pagoda*, Central Archives, Tiruvananthapuram; *A.43, The Agreement of 517 ME*, Regional Archives, Ernakulam.
126. See Note no.124 above; Also see chapter V.

Chapter VII

VAISŪNĀVA FESTIVALS

The spread of the ideology of Visŷnu *bhakti* and temple-centred devotion acted as catalysts in the development of temple festivals. Many festivals originated as Vaisŷnava celebrations in the temple precincts of medieval Kerala. With the growth of temple as the nerve centre of society, many auspicious days such as consecration days, birth asterisms of gods and transitional days in the lunar calendar became events of religious celebration. Gradually such days developed into festive occasions. Several festivals were instituted by royal patrons and important *tithis* in Hindu calendar such as *Ēkādaśi* and *Dwādaśi* were also observed as sacred days. Temple festivals of medieval Kerala can be classified into three categories – *nityōtsava* or daily or monthly celebrations, *naimittikōtsava* or annual celebrations on special occasions like marriage days and birthdays of deities and *kāmyōtsava* or festivals instituted for special purposes¹. Festivals to mark seasons and harvest festivals are also included in second category. A host of daily and monthly ritual celebrations, annual and seasonal celebrations and special festivals instituted by kings were also celebrated in the Visŷnu temples of medieval Kerala.

Ōṅam - A Vaisŷnava Festival

The origin and development of *Ōṅam* as a temple festival is a striking cultural phenomenon which accompanied the rise of emotional Visŷnu *bhakti* movement in Kerala. *Ōṅam* in the month of *Śrāvanā* was celebrated as the birth asterism of Vāmana, the fifth incarnation of Visŷnu. While eulogising *divyadēśams*, *Ālīvārs* referred to the sacred occasion of *Ōṅam* as the natal star of Visŷnu and his various incarnations². The delicious feast prepared on

Ōṅam day for propitiating Viṣṅṅu got narrated in the songs of *Ālṅvārs*. Mānkuntṅi Marutanār, the *Sangam* poet, sang about *Ōṅam* celebrations at Madurai in *Madurai Kānci*³. It is obvious from the description in *Madurai Kānci* that *Ōṅam* was celebrated at Madurai and grand public feast, mock fighting and dancing were held on the days on which *Ōṅam* celebrations were organised. A significant aspect of *Ōṅam* celebration in Madurai was that the celebrations were aimed at propitiating Māyōn or Krṅsṅṅa. It is obvious from the description of *Ōṅam* celebration in *Madurai Kānci* that *Ōṅam* celebration was started in south India even before the advent of the devotional movement of *Ālṅvārs*. The *Itihāsic- Purāṅic* culture permeated in Tamilṅakam in the *Sangam* age⁴. The influence of *Itihāsic- Purāṅic* culture was instrumental in transforming an early festival celebrated in the harvest season into a temple festival and birthday celebration of Māyōn.

Ōṅam was celebrated at Tiruvēṅkatṅam temple as the birth asterism of Vāmana⁵. It is significant that the deity of Vēṅkatṅam was identified as Bālāji or ‘boy-god’ or Vāmana. Tiruvēṅkatṅam was a *divyadēśam* and *Ōṅam* became a popular celebration at Tiruvēṅkatṅam during the heydays of Viṣṅṅu *bhakti* cult⁶. Identification of *divyadēśams* as sacred spots of Viṣṅṅu worship resulted in the emergence of temple-centred *bhakti* which gave rise to temple festivals. Certain secular celebrations associated with harvest were appropriated as Vaisṅṅava celebrations. *Ōṅam*, a popular celebration in the harvest season, underwent radical transformation in the process of its conversion into a Vaisṅṅava celebration. Sacredness was attributed to *Ōṅam* celebration by identifying it as the birth asterism of Vāmana in the ‘abodes of Viṣṅṅu on earth’. Institution of temple festivals enhanced the popular base of the temple as festivals forged an intimate link between society and Viṣṅṅu temples. The celebration of the birth asterism of the deity on the occasion of *Ōṅam* ensured the popularisation of the Vaisṅṅava cult stories and linked

bhakti with the masses.

Various temple inscriptions of the Cēra age reveal that *Ōnāṁ* was celebrated as a sacred ritual in Kerala temples. A Tiruvārīrīuvāi inscription of 861 AD of king Sthānīu Ravi records the celebration of *Ōnāṁ* or *Tiruōnāṁ* asterism in *Cingam* (August-September) month in Tiruvārīrīuvāi temple⁷. This is the earliest known reference to *Ōnāṁ* celebration in Kerala. It is evident from Tiruvārīrīuvāi inscription that food offering to the deity and Brahmin feeding were arranged on *Ōnāṁ* day in the temple. Sendan Śankaran (Jayantan Śankaran) of Puncaipātīākarattu donated landed properties for the celebration of *Tiruōnāṁ*. A plot known as *Sendansendanārkari* with a yield of ten *kalams* paddy and another plot with yield of five hundred *nālīi* paddy were donated to the temple. Arrangements were made for ritual feeding of the deity. Public feast was also conducted in the temple. Provisions for the supply of ghee, oil, green gram, sugar and plantain fruits were made for the feast. Specific rules were framed for the conduct of the festival. Cooking began at the time of *Pantīraīti* (twelve feet time of the day) and it continued till the evening⁸. This reveals that the feast continued for the whole day and a large contingent of devotees participated in it. The temple servants and dependants received emoluments for services rendered in the temple. The temple employees who were engaged in the supervision of festivals received five *nālīi* rice as remuneration. Specific quantity of rice was given as salary and apart from routine salary, temple servants received rice on special occasions as special remuneration⁹. Payments were also made in the form of *virutti* or service tenure in the age of the Cēras¹⁰. Service tenure was prevalent in contemporary South India¹¹. Land was also given as remuneration when temple service became hereditary.

Elaboration of rules for feast and fixation of the payments to various

temple servants indicate that *Ōnāṃ* was introduced in Kerala in the middle of ninth century. This may go hand in hand with the postulation that Sthānū Ravi introduced *Ōnāṃ* festival in Kerala as an attempt to popularise Vaisṇāva religion. *Ōnāṃ* was celebrated in Tiruvalla Viṣṇū temple in the Cēra age. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates contain a detailed account of *Ōnāṃ* celebration in the temple¹². Public feast was arranged in the temple on *Tiruōnāṃ* day with special ritual feeding in the sanctum sanctorum. Brahmin feeding was also arranged on the festive days during *Ōnāṃ* celebration¹³. *Nivēdya* or the food offered to the deity was distributed among devotees and temple servants. Rice amounting to seven hundred *nālī* was earmarked for ritual feeding of *Tiruvallavālīappan* (chief deity) and Sudarśana Mūrti. Half quantity of the offered rice was given to the *cāttirar* or the students in the temple academy. Apart from food offering in the noon time, food offering with 200 *nālī* rice was also made in the sanctum sanctorum of the chief deity in the morning. Provision was also made for the ritual feeding of all the subsidiary deities in the temple. Food offering of four *nālī* rice each was prepared for Varāhappan or Varāha Mūrti, Krīṣṇā of Tiruvambātī and Ayyappa. Ritual feeding was also instituted in the sub-shrines of *Kuravan* or *Kurayappaswāmy*, *Amandaiyar* and *Māyayakki* or *Māyayakṣī*. Rice amounting to sixteen *nālī* was allocated for the offering of these deities.

Temple functionaries and dependants were also given specified quantity of rice¹⁴. The two chief priests were given fifty *nālī* rice and the priest in the sub-shrine of Ayyappa was given four *nālī* rice. Similar quantity rice was given to the *bhatīṭas* or the *Vedic* scholars in the temple. The subordinate accountant, suppliers of plantain leaves, the watchmen and the sweepers outside the outer *prākāra* received four *nālī* rice and the suppliers of firewood received twenty *nālī* rice. The four garland makers in

the temple received eight *nālī* rice and the outside sweepers were also given eight *nālī* rice. The *Vedic* scholars who engaged in discourses in the temple received fifteen *nālī* rice. There were four inside sweepers and they received eight *nālī* rice. The lamp attenders and suppliers of areca nuts were given three *nālī* rice. Ninety nine *nālī* rice was given to thirty three drummers and blowers of pipes. The drummers who beat drums during *śrībali* offering were given three *nālī* rice. There was another set of drummers in the temple service and they were given thirty six *nālī* paddy. The temple dancers or the *devadasis* received twelve *nālī* rice and the temple oracle (*Velīchapātī*) got three *nālī* rice. Feast was also held in the temple hospital. Rice amounting to four *nālī* was earmarked for the feast in the hospital.

Large quantity of rice, ghee, oil, green gram, cumin, coconuts, pepper and fruits were required for the feast. Sixty coconuts, six bunches of ripe plantain, seven bunches of unripe plantain, ten *nālī* green gram, ten thousand betel leaves with proportionate quantity of areca nuts and one *nālī* cumin were earmarked for the *Ōnām* feast. The huge quantity of rice and other materials indicate that a grand feast was organised and a large number of devotees thronged into the temple to participate in the feast. Public feast was a catalyst in attracting large crowds to temples. Land donations were made frequently to Tiruvalla temple to meet the expenses of *Ōnām*. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates give details regarding several land donations to the temple for *Ōnām* celebrations¹⁵. Sendan Kēsavan donated landed properties at Idaccēri with a yield of 80 *parā*s of paddy for *Ōnām* expenses. A paddy field called *Tiruōnākkari* with yield of 125 *parā*s of paddy was also given in gift to the temple to meet *Ōnām* expenses. The name of the plot meant that the yield from it was to be used for *Tiruōnām* expenses. Similar to this *Krīśṇān Dēvan* of Vilakkilimangalam donated 50 *nālī* rice towards the expenses of *Ōnām* feast in the temple.

Trikkākkara temple where Viṣṇu is worshipped as Vāmana was the main centre of *Ōṇam* celebration in the Cēra kingdom. Sthāṇu Ravi, who exhibited particular consideration towards Vāmana in *Tapatisamvaranā*, was associated with the foundation of Trikkākkara temple¹⁶. A record of the 42nd year of Bhaskara Ravi refers to a grant by Puraiyan Kālkkarai for instituting feast for Brahmins and Śrī Vaisṇavas for three days from *Pūrātīam* asterism to *Tiruōṇam* asterism in Trikkākkara temple¹⁷. Special ritual feeding was instituted in the temple. Rice offered to the god as *nivēdya* was equally divided into halves, of which one part was given to Brahmins and Śrī Vaisṇavas and the other half to the priests and other temple functionaries. The temple functionaries received rice and ghee on the occasion of *Ōṇam*. The priests received twenty four *nālī* rice each and garland makers who supplied flower garlands got 6 *nālī* rice each. Sweepers also received 6 *nālī* rice each. According to tradition, *Ōṇam* festival originated in the precincts of Trikkākkara temple in an early age and all the kings and the chieftains assembled at Trikkākkara to participate in the festival¹⁸. Although there is no historical data to substantiate the authenticity of the legend, this tradition points to the origin of *Ōṇam* in the precincts of Trikkākkara temple. This tradition links *Ōṇam* with Trikkākkara temple. Indirectly it associates the festival with the Cēra rulers too. It appears that the place-name Trikkākkara derived from Trikkālkkarai which means ‘the holy feet’¹⁹. This place-name resounds the story of Vāmana who with his feet measured the worlds to subdue Mahābali. It is significant that several Cēra inscriptions also refer to the place as Tirukkālkkarai²⁰.

Tālīakkātīu inscription of Rājasimha Perumānāṭīkal of the early decades of twelfth century refers to *Ōṇanel* as a payment to be made to the kingdom²¹. The *Manīgrāmam* traders who settled down at a new township at Tālīakkātīu were to pay *ūlīukku Ōṇanel* along with *Pataiyanīmel*. It was

customary for all including traders to make payments in the form of paddy for *Ōnāṁ* celebrations. Such payments were made as gifts. It is significant that traders were exempted from the payment of *Pantalkkānāṁ* and *Tattarakkūli*. *Ōnānel* refers to the system of making payments by tenants to the kings and land lords on the occasion of *Ōnāṁ*. *Tālīlakkātīu* record reveals that gifts were given to the lords by traders on *Ōnāṁ* days in the early decades of twelfth century.

Ōnāṁ festival grew into a grand regional festival in the post-Cēra period. It is apparent from several stray references to *Ōnāṁ* in the temple records and literary works of post-Cēra age that the festival was a popular celebration. A Manalikkara temple inscription of 1236AD refers to the celebration of *Ōnāṁ* in the temple²². Paddy was allotted to meet the expenses of *Ōnāṁ* celebration. The *Matilakam* records of Tiruvananthapuram temple refer to *ōnāṁavillu* (bow of *Ōnāṁ*). It is stated in a record dated 1502AD that the *palīlīvillu* or the holy bow was placed in front of the deity on *Tiruōnāṁ*²³. It is significant that even at present *ōnāṁavillu* is presented to the deity of Tiruvananthapuram temple on the day of *Tiruōnāṁ*. *Ananthapuravarnānam* refers to *Ōnāṁ* gifts and *ōnāṁavillu*²⁴. The anonymous poet of *Ananthapuravarnānam* found *ōnāṁavillu* in Tiruvananthapuram market.

A record of Tiruppuliyūr temple of 1640AD refers to a plot known as *Tiruōnāṁ* paddy field²⁵. It is estimated that the yield from this paddy field is 120 *parāṁas*. From the name of the paddy field, it is obvious that the yield from this plot was intended for meeting the expenses of *Tiruōnāṁ* celebrations in the temple. Tiruppuliyūr temple received *Tiruōnāṁ* paddy field as an endowment by certain unknown *bhaktas* towards *Ōnāṁ* expenses and the

quantity of the yield from the paddy field suggests that public feast was held on *Tiruōṅṅam* asterism in the temple. *Tiruniṅṅalmāla* refers to *Tiruōṅṅacilavu* or ‘the expenses for *Ōṅṅam*’ in *Tiruārṅṅanmulṅṅa Visṅṅu* temple²⁶. The reference to *Tiruōṅṅacilavu* indicates that *Ōṅṅam* feast was held in the temple. *Tiruōṅṅam* is alluded to as a special asterism to be remembered in the medieval literary works. *Ōṅṅam* is referred to as an occasion of joy in *Unṅṅunṅṅilisandēśa*²⁷. The society is described as cheerful in welcoming *Ōṅṅam*. Another medieval work, *Candrōṅṅsavam*, refers to the feast on *Ōṅṅam* days. It is stated in this work that the heroine conducted sumptuous feasts on *Ōṅṅam* days for the Brahmin chieftains²⁸. Uddanṅṅdṅṅa Śāstri also wrote a *ślōka* to glorify *Ōṅṅam*²⁹. The custom of presenting *Ōṅṅam* clothes (*Ōṅṅaputṅṅava*) and the bow of *Ōṅṅam* are referred to in this *ślōka*. Pūntānam Nambūdiri mentions *Ōṅṅam* while referring to the festivals of Kerala in *Jnānappāna*³⁰.

Ōṅṅam became a public festival in the post-Cēra age and different communities celebrated the festival as an auspicious occasion. The *Tālṅṅakkātṅṅu* inscription cited above is significant in this context as the record reveals that the Syrian Christian traders of *Manṅṅigrāmam* trade guild made presents in the form of paddy to meet the expenses of *Ōṅṅam*³¹. A decree of the synod of Diamper exhorts the Christians of Kerala to keep away from the customary practices of *Ōṅṅam* like *Ōṅṅathallu* or mock fighting³². It is significant that the synod of Diamper was convened under the auspices of the Portuguese and the Catholic Church to impose Latin rites on the Christian community in Kerala to make it a church on European standard³³. The prohibition imposed on Christians in participating in mock fighting associated with *Ōṅṅam* in sixteenth century suggests that Christians participated in *Ōṅṅam* celebration before the synod of Diamper. It denotes that *Ōṅṅam* was an occasion of social revelry in sixteenth century in which various sections in the

society including non-temple centred sects like Christians also participated.

With the disappearance of *Ālīvār* movement, *Ōṅam* celebration ceased to be a popular ritual celebration outside Kerala. Kerala, on the contrary, saw the development of *Ōṅam* as a prominent regional festival. What was the reason for the continuation and the further development of *Ōṅam* in Kerala in the post-Cēra age? Many folk elements got incorporated into *Ōṅam* festival in the post-Cēra age. A popular custom developed in this period is *Ōṅappukkalīam* (flower carpets)³⁴. The clay idols of the deity of Trikkākkara temple are made and worshipped as *Ōṅattappan* in the middle of flower carpets in every house in Kerala. These practices incorporated folk elements and brought *Ōṅam* out of the four walls of temples. Many folk songs on *Ōṅam* also got popularised which again had key role in sustaining *Ōṅam*³⁵. The folk songs and the fabrication of a new genre of legends linking *Ōṅam* with the story of Vāmana and Mahābali got wide popularity in medieval Kerala society which ultimately transformed *Ōṅam* into a social festival.

The current popular conjecture that *Ōṅam* festival originated in commemoration of Vāmana – Mahābali episode is not found in medieval records and literature³⁶. The only affiliation *Ōṅam* festival had with Vāmana is that *Tiruṅam* was celebrated as the birth asterism of Vāmana. It appears that the association of *Tiruṅam* with Vāmana got transformed in certain folk songs into Vāmana - Mahābali episode. Interestingly, the sculptural and pictorial representation of the story of Vāmana - Mahābali was not a widely popular theme among the artists of medieval Kerala³⁷.

Did *Ōṅam* originate as a harvest festival? Was it only a ritual celebration? It is significant that *Ōṅam* comes in the harvest season of *Cingam* month. Paddy was stored during this period in abundance in granaries

and it was a period of prosperity. There is a possibility for the prevalence of certain harvest festival in the pre-Cēra period in the harvest season. Often many festivals originated in harvest season as people were free from the demands of cultivation and they were in economic prosperity³⁸. *Ōnāṃ* also originated initially as a harvest festival and it grew into a ritual celebration under the impact of *bhakti* cult. It is significant that the custom of presenting agricultural products as *Ōnāṃakkālīca* (gift of *Ōnāṃ*) by tenants on *Ōnāṃ* day is the continuation of an early agrarian practice in connection with the festival.

The two festivals, *Illamnirā* (filling of the granary) and *Puttari* (feeding on newly harvested rice), which preceded *Ōnāṃ* again reinforces the agricultural foundations of the festival³⁹. These festivals were performed on auspicious days as per the traditional calendar. The occurrence of *Ōnāṃ* festival in the harvest season brought extravaganza in the celebrations. The commencement of the practice of donating lands to temples for meeting the expenses of *Ōnāṃ* feast in the Cēra age under the stamp of Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult and the timing of the festival in the harvest season gradually paved the way for the merger of the harvest festival and the religious festival. The month of *Cingam* in which *Ōnāṃ* is celebrated is known for bright weather and clear sky adding brightness to the festival. Thus *Ōnāṃ* combines the elements of a harvest festival, a religious festival and a folk festival. This aspect of *Ōnāṃ* makes it a popular event of celebration in Kerala even now. In spite of the rise of *Ōnāṃ* as a grand pan-Kerala public festival in recent times, the traces of its medieval Vaisṅṅava connection remains even today. *Tiruōnāṃ* in *Cingam* month is a sacred day in temples, especially in Visṅṅu temples, when special rituals are performed even to this day.

Cāturmāsya

There is a reference in the Tiruvalla Copper Plates about Visṅṅu's slumber⁴⁰. Many plots were given to the temple as gifts, the income from which had to be spent for rituals and other expenses on the day on which Visṅṅu goes to sleep. Twenty four *nālī* rice and one *nālī* ghee had to be collected from Mānāmangalam, fifty *nālī* rice from Mulerppatṭuvattu Varangadarpurayidam, one *nālī* ghee from a plot at Sālappulṭai, one *nālī* ghee from Kuntakkātṭu Puraiyitṭam and one hundred *nālī* rice had to be accrued from the properties of Ayakan⁴¹. The income collected from these plots was used for food offerings in the temple. Apart from this, gifts had to be made on the occasion of the commencement of the slumber of Visṅṅu⁴². For making gifts, many land donations and gold donations were separately made and gifts were to be made from ten *kāṅam* gold given each by Kuntan Iravi of Palṭṭam, Yākkiammai, Kundan Govindan, two and a half *kāṅam* gold given by Kanṭṭan of Marudancheri, five *kāṅam* gold from the income from a plot known as Chembakancheri Purayidam and ten *kāṅam* gold from a plot at Tarānparṭāl. Besides, two *kalṭṭanju* gold donated by the farmers of Cennankari, two *kalṭṭanju* gold collected from the income from a plot at Citukatṭaturutti, one *kāṅam* gold from the income from Anukkanvalkkai and ten *kāṅam* gold from two plots at Kutṭummal and Tattamparavakai had to be donated as gifts on the occasion of the beginning of Visṅṅu's slumber. Seven days festival was celebrated in the temple in the wake of the awakening of the god. However the plate that describes the particulars of the festival on that occasion is missing.

The reference to Visṅṅu's slumber in Tiruvalla Copper Plates stands for the observance of *Cāturmasya*. *Cāturmasya* begins on the eleventh of the bright fortnight of *Āsāṭṭa* month (mid July) as Visṅṅu goes to sleep on this day and he remains in sleep for the next four months⁴³. The deity awakens

on the eleventh of the bright fortnight of *Kārttika* (mid November) and with the awakening of Visṇū, the *Cāturmāsya* comes to an end. During the period of *Cāturmāsya*, the Vaisṇāvites practise austerities⁴⁴. Often no festival is celebrated during the period of *Cāturmāsya*. The festival of rousing the Lord from his sleep, *Utthapānōtsava*, was a grand celebration for the Vaisṇāvites⁴⁵. The reference to the celebration of the festival on the occasion of god's wake up in Tiruvalla temple indicates *Utthapānōtsava*. The *Cāturmāsya* festival had its origin in certain fertility cults and later the festival got Vaisṇāvised during the Gupta period when many Gupta rulers made endowments to Visṇū temples both in the beginning and at the end of the slumber of Visṇū⁴⁶. Often rulers made endowments on both the beginning and the end of *Cāturmāsya*.

Other Auspicious Days and Vows

Auspicious days in lunar calendar such as transitional days were celebrated in medieval Visṅṅu temples. The transitional days are known as *sankrānti* or *sankrāmanā* and among *sankrānti* days, *Mēsāsankrānti* or *Visṅṅu* was the most auspicious occasion of religious merit⁴⁷. It is on *Mēsāsankrānti* that the sun enters *Mēsā* sign (*Mētā* in Malayalam) in the zodiac. According to Hindu astronomy, *Mēsā* is the first sign (*rāsī*) in the zodiac and the sun reaches *Mēsā* after completing its traverse through all the signs⁴⁸. Since the sun takes a period of one month to pass through a sign, it takes twelve months to complete one cycle of its journey. As the first sign in the zodiac, *Mēsā* acquired special religious merit and it is sacred as it is the day with equal day and night (equinox)⁴⁹. *Visṅṅu* or *Mēsāsankrānti* is regarded as equivalent to the beginning of the year. Pūntānam Nambūdiri mentions *Visṅṅu* along with *Ōṅam* and *Tiruātira* as a prominent festival in *Jnānappāna*⁵⁰. The ceremony known as *kanṅi* or ‘seeing good omen’ in the morning of *Visṅṅu* came into existence in post-Cēra age. It is evident from the records of Kūṅṅal Māṅṅikyam temple that *Visṅṅukkanṅi* was arranged as part of the *Visṅṅu* day celebrations in the temple⁵¹. Later in the aftermath of the development of Guruvāyūr temple as a prominent Vaisṅṅava centre in Kerala, *Visṅṅukaniṅ* also got identified with seeing the deity of Guruvāyūr. Now a day the idol or picture of Krīśṅṅā, especially of the deity of Guruvāyūr, is placed as an essential item in *Visṅṅukkanṅi*. This is a clear indication of the influence of Guruvāyūr temple cult on the festival.

There is a reference to *Vrischikavilākku* (lamp in *Vrischika*) in Tiruvalla Copper Plates⁵². The Malayalam month of *Vrischika* is equivalent to *Kārttikai* month in the Tamil calendar and *Kārttikai* month is considered as an apt time for burning lamps (*dīpōtsava*) to propitiate Visṅṅu⁵³. The *Vrischikavilākku* is identical to *dīpōtsava*. There were certain festivals

instituted by devotees in temples. One such festival was celebrated on *Rōhinī* star in the month of *Vrischika* in Tiruvalla temple⁵⁴. The festival was instituted by Ponniyakka Nāyan and *Rōhinī* was the natal star of the donor. A land donation was also made to the temple by Ponniyakka Nāyan for meeting the expenses of ritual feeding to the deity and for instituting *Kūttu* in the temple.

Dwādaśi which comes every twelfth day after full moon and new moon was regarded as an auspicious day for worshipping *Viṣṇu* in the medieval period⁵⁵. The subcommittees known as *Dwādaśiganattār* were formed in *Viṣṇu* temples to look after *Dwādaśi* day festival. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates refer to the meeting of *Dwādaśiganattār* to supervise the arrangements for the supply of oil to the temple⁵⁶. The Tiruvalla Copper Plates refer to a land grant by Rāman Kōtavarman of Munninātu for the requirement of oil in Tiruvalla temple⁵⁷. This donation was made in the presence of *Dwādaśiganattār*. The presence of *Dwādaśiganattār* makes clear that the land grant was intended towards the expenses of *Dwādaśi* day ceremonies in the temple. *Syānandūrapurāṇasamuccaya* narrates the sacredness of the observation of *Dwādaśi* and the narration is aimed at popularising the celebration⁵⁸. However Tiruvalla Copper Plates and other inscriptions of the Cēra age do not contain any information regarding the celebration of *Ēkādaśi*. *Syānandūrapurāṇasamuccaya* describes the significance of observing *Ēkādaśi* vow⁵⁹. The *Ēkādaśi* celebration in the month of *Vrischika* (November-December) was developed into a major festival in Guruvāyūr temple.

Temple Festivals

Uttiravilā

A Trikkotiṭṭānam inscription refers to the institution of a festival known as *Uttiravilā* in Trikkotiṭṭānam temple⁶⁰. This was a temple festival

in the genre of *Kāmyōtsava* and it was instituted by Śrīvallabhan Kōta, the governor of Vēnāṭṭu. It was a ten day festival which commenced every year on the *Kārttika* day in *Kumbham* (February-March). The festival was started with the flag hoisting at an auspicious time on the day. The Brahmins were fed on all the ten days with food cooked of 100 *nālī* rice. Apart from Brahmin feeding, temple functionaries and temple dependants were given feast. Public feast was also held on the festival days in which food was cooked with 4000 *nālī* rice. It is obvious from such a large quantity of rice for cooking that the feast was attended by a large section in the society.

For providing entertainment to the public, *Kūttu* was performed on the festive days. *Bali* or *bhūtabali* ceremony was also conducted on the festive days. A committee known as *Uttirakkāṇam* or *Uttiraganattār* was constituted for the conduct of the festival⁶¹. It consisted of *nilāl* and *panī*. *Nilāl* were the body guards of Cēra rulers who were associated with the administration of various temples in the Cēra kingdom such as Kodungallūr Bhagavati temple and Tirunelli temple⁶². The festival continued in the subsequent years after the demise of Śrīvallabhan Kōta. It is obvious from the inscription cited above that *Uttirakkāṇam* held a meeting after the death of the governor in which *nilāl* and *panī* participated and the meeting decided to continue the festival as instituted by Śrīvallabhan Kōta.

Māmānkam

Māmānkam was an assembly that met on *Māgha* asterism in the lunar month of *Māgha* once in twelve years at Tirunāva river bed of Nilā near Tirunāva Viṣṇu temple. Earlier this festival was also known as *Māmākam*⁶³. *Kēralōlpatti* presents the traditional view regarding the origin of *Māmānkam* festival. This account puts the credit on Paraśurāma for the origin of

*Māmānkam*⁶⁴. *Kēralōlpatti* tradition celebrated Tirunāva as the venue of the august assembly of Brahmins of Kerala. They assembled there to take decisions regarding the selection of Perumāḷī rulers. Tirunāva is considered as a sacred spot even to this day and even now Tirunāva river bed is one of the main centres for the last rites for ancestors. *Māmānkam* was one of the river festivals like the river festivals at Kumbhakōṇāṁ, Nāsik, Ujjain, Prayāg and Haridwār⁶⁵. *Māmānkam* festival must have come into existence as a festival to celebrate the glories of Mahāvisṅṅu of the temple at Tirunāva. It is stated in *Kēralōlpatti* that *Māmānkam* was a sacred celebration to worship both Visṅṅu and Nilā river⁶⁶. The Visṅṅu shrine at Tirunāva was a *divyadēśam* and the sacredness of the place as a *tīrtha* originated with the association of the place with the Visṅṅu *bhaktas* in early medieval period itself.

Earlier the Rāja of Valīḷivanātīu got the coveted positions of the president and the patron of *Māmānkam* festival⁶⁷. Tirunāva was included in the kingdom of Valīḷivanātīu Rāja. Later in thirteenth-fourteenth centuries, when the Zamorin pursued a policy of southward expansion, he subdued Valīḷivanātīu⁶⁸. The right to preside over *Māmānkam* festival was also grabbed by the Zamorin. This has resulted in transforming the festival into a bloody affair of vengeance. The economic importance of Tirunāva was one of the major reasons for the capture of the place by the Zamorin. The suicide squads known as *cāvers* were sent by Valīḷivanātīu Rājas to the venue of *Māmānkam* to kill the Zamorin and to uphold the dignity of the Rāja of Valīḷivanātīu⁶⁹. The Zamorin exploited the occasion of *Māmānkam* as an opportune time to reinforce his authority over local chieftains and feudal lords⁷⁰. *Māmānkam* became a political feat to settle political dispute between the Rājas of Calicut and Valīḷivanātīu. As a result, the festival lost its

religious nature and it got transformed into a politico-military affair with insignificant religious merit.

How far did the transformation of the nature of *Māmānkam* influence the religious scope of Tirunāva shrine? Did it detrimentally affect the fortunes of Tirunāva temple? The militarization of *Māmānkam* had a detrimental impact on the religious fortunes of Tirunāva. Mēlpattūr Nārāyanā Bhaṭṭatiri and Pūntānam Nambūdiri, who hailed from the nearby areas of Tirunāva, did not turn to Tirunāva temple. Instead these *bhaktas* opted for the distant Guruvāyūr temple. From the records of *Māmānkam*, it is certain that even after the transformation of the festival into a political / military feat Tirunāva Viṣṅṅu shrine continued to have a key role in the festival⁷¹. Before the commencement of *Māmānkam*, the Zamorin paid a visit to the temple. Also the Zamorin continued to patronise Tirunāva temple as a royal temple as it was the main venue of *Māmānkam*⁷².

Alpiśi

Alpiśi festival was celebrated as the annual festival in Tiruvananthapuram Viṣṅṅu temple. Even now this annual festival is celebrated in the temple with much pomp and joy. A temple record of 1375 AD is the earliest existing document on *Alpiśi* festival⁷³. This record deals with an endowment of a plot to the temple by Iravi Āditya Varma and Kerala Varma to meet the expenses of *Alpiśi*. This document reveals that *Alpiśi* was celebrated in the fourteenth century. The royal endowment to meet the expenses of the festival makes clear that the temple festival was patronised by the royal family of Vēṇāṭu.

A lengthy narration of the festival celebrated in 1588AD is given in the *Matilakam Grandhavari*⁷⁴. Prior to the commencement of the festival, the

entire temple complex including temple premises was cleaned. The temple buildings were renovated and cleaned. In order to make easy movement of devotees, new roads were built outside the outer walls. A contingent of armed men was deployed in the premises of the temple. The intention is clear. The temple must be guarded during festive days when there were ritual processions in which costly ornaments of the deity would be placed on the idol. Along with this the king and royal members were also present in the temple on the occasion of *Alpiśi*. It is again significant that such festive occasions were treated as opportune period by the royal powers of medieval period to exhibit their authority to muster ritual legitimacy⁷⁵. It is significant that before the commencement of the festival the *Vēñāṭṭu* kings and various chieftains of *Vēñāṭṭu* *swarūpam* made atonements to the temple for highhandedness and violations against the rules of the temple and temple *sankētam*⁷⁶. Such practises were common in the medieval Kerala temples and the practice makes clear that the temple grew into an institution which could demand atonements from the rulers. Such payments of retribution were made at the time of flag hoisting. This points to the firm establishment of the ritual authority of Brahmins over the polity and society of Kerala.

The flag hoisting was held on *Attam* asterism. The record cited above mainly speaks about the functions of the last two days of the festival. The ritual hunting was held on *Trikkētṭā* asterism which was the ninth day of the festival. The deity was taken out in procession for hunting and was attended by thirty two female servants with traditional lamps. Twenty nine among them carried *kaivilṭakku*, one had *pancamukhaviṭṭakku* and two carried *nāgaviṭṭakku* in the procession. The temple guards moved in front of the procession with the accompaniment of different kinds of instrumental music.

When the procession reached the western *gōpuram*, the ruling prince of Vēṅṅātṅu who waited there came forward and handed over the sword and shield of the deity to Trippappūr Mūṅṅa Tiruvatṅi with the instruction to lead the procession. It is significant that Trippappūr Mūṅṅa Tiruvatṅi was one of the senior members of the royal family of Vēṅṅātṅu and he looked after the affairs of temples in Vēṅṅātṅu⁷⁷.

Then the procession came out of the temple through western *gōpuram* and proceeded along *peruvalṅṅi* or main road with the accompaniment of instrumental music by the devotees. The deity was received with traditional welcome at a place called Karippūkkalṅi with *nilavilṅṅakku*, *asṅṅtṅamangalyavilṅṅakku*, *nirṅṅanālṅṅi* and *nirṅṅaparṅṅa*. The deity was decked with *naksṅṅatrṅṅamāla* at Karippūkkalṅi. This garland was presented by the Rāṅṅi of Attingal. Then the procession moved to Kaitamukku. It was the final destination of the procession as hunting had to be performed here in a traditionally decorated place. After hunting, the procession returned to the temple and entered through the eastern main entrance. Trippappūr Mūṅṅa Tiruvatṅi, after reaching the temple, handed over the sword and shield to the *Ālwan*, a temple officer. Then the deity was taken in circumambulation of the central shrine before finally taken back to the sanctum sanctorum.

Ārṅṅātṅṅu (ritual bath) was held on the tenth day on *Mūlam* asterism⁷⁸. The *ārṅṅātṅṅu* procession was held from the temple to Śankumukham beach where *ārṅṅātṅṅu* was held. Before the commencement of the procession, Trippappūr Mūṅṅa Tiruvatṅi granted the temple functionaries their dues. Lord Padmanabha and Lord Narasimha were seated in decorated golden palanquins. As on the occasion of the commencement of *palṅṅlṅivētṅṅa*, the Vēṅṅātṅu king handed over the sword and shield of the deity to Trippappūr

Mūtta Tiruvatīi. The royal ascent to escort the *ārātītīu* procession was also granted by the king to Trippappūr Mūtta Tiruvatīi. The deities were accompanied by royal relatives, feudal nobles and chief functionaries in the king's service. The female temple functionaries carried various kinds of lamps such as *kaivilīakku*, *pancamukhaviḷīakku*, *nāgaviḷīakku* etc. Other temple functionaries carried different kinds of traditional decorated umbrellas.

Many caparisoned elephants and horses also accompanied the procession. The procession advanced through the road known as *Tiruārīātītīu peruvalīi* (main road for *ārīātītīu* procession) to Śankumukham. After performing various rituals, the deities were taken to the sea coast where the ritual bath of the deity was performed by dipping in the sea water. After this, the procession went back to the temple. Then deities were taken back to the sanctum and the flag was hoisted down by the chief priest. With this, the festival was concluded. From this account it is certain that *Alpiśi* festival was celebrated under royal patronage in Tiruvananthapuram temple in the post-Cēra age.

Festivals in Kūṭīal Mānīkiyam Temple

The temple records of Irinjālakkuṭīa Kūṭīal Mānīkiyam temple narrate the celebration of various festivals in the temple. Ten days annual festival was celebrated in the temple from *Utrīam* asterism to *Tiruōnīam* asterism in *Mētam*⁷⁹. The flag was hoisted on *Utrīam* asterism and the presence of the Rāja of Kochi, the *purīakōima*, was indispensable at the time of flag hoisting. The Rāja had to take a pledge before flag hoisting that he would protect the temple and the festival till the last ceremony after *ārīātītīu*⁸⁰. Various local chieftains and kings escorted the festival processions⁸¹. The local chieftains of nearby six *dēśams* (Ārīunattilprabukkanmar), Nandikkara Panīkkar,

Totīṭṭunkal Achan and the eighteen *Sanghas* had to accompany the processions with sword and shield. The political prestige of the temple was projected through the presence of a large contingent of chieftains in the temple on various rituals associated with festival. During the ritual ceremony of *bhūtabali*, the local chieftains of six *dēśams*, Nandikkara Panīkkar and Totīṭṭunkal Achan escorted the deity with all customary paraphernalia. Special rituals such as *kalaśam* were performed in the temple on all ten days. The ritual hunt was held on *Utīṙāṭīam* asterism and the king of Kochi was to be present at the venue of ritual hunting. The *ārīāṭīṭīu* was held on *Tiruōṇāam* and the Rāja of Kochi was to accompany the *ārīāṭīṭīu* procession. The king of Kochi as the *purīakōima* had to escort the deity and to protect the temple and its wealth.

Public feast was held on all the festive days. The temple council met the expenses of the feast on *Attam* asterism⁸². The expenses for the feast on the days from *Trikkētīṭīa* to *Tiruōṇāam* were spent by the king of Kochi. Both *Cākyār Kūttu* and *Nangyār Kūttu* were held in the temple on the days of festival. *Tripputtari* and *Mukkuṭīi* were the two other prominent festivals in the temple⁸³. *Tripputtari* was celebrated on *Tiruōṇāam* asterism in *Tulām* month of Malayalam Calendar and it was a harvest festival⁸⁴. *Tripputtari* was the ritual feeding of the deity on newly harvested rice. Different offerings were sent by the estate managers of the *dēvaswom* properties at Pōṭṭīā, Patīiyūr, Elanātīu and Alūr for *Tripputtari*. Articles such as oil, sandal paste, silk clothes, *kadali* fruits, bananas, coconuts, ghee and rice were sent from the temple estates and the *puttaripūja* was the main ceremony in which the cooked rice and *pāyasam* were offered to the deity. The offered food was distributed to the public in the public feast. Public feast attracted the people to

the temple. *Tripputtari* festival reinforced the relations between the agrarian society and the temple.

It is again significant that *Tripputtari* was celebrated in medieval temples as the agrarian society of the age gave due importance to such festivals which had agrarian foundations and the festival continues even to this day in temples. *Mukkuṭṭi* was celebrated on the next day of *Tripputtari* and it was the offering of a specially prepared medicinal composition to the deity. This medicinal composition was prepared secretly by Kutṭṭāncēry Mūssatu and offered to the deity at an auspicious time⁸⁵. On the day of *Mukkuṭṭi*, special provisions were made for rice offering and other rituals in the temple. Special feast was held for Brahmins and temple dependants on the day of *Mukkuṭṭi*.

Festivals in Trippūṇṭhura Temple

A festival known as *Cingam* festival (the festival in the month of *Cingam*) was celebrated in Trippūṇṭhura temple. This festival came to be known as *Cingam* festival as it was celebrated in *Cingam*⁸⁶. Another festival was celebrated in *Vriscikam* month which was the most prominent temple festival⁸⁷. The flag hoisting was held on *Cōti* asterism and *ārṭṭi* was performed on *Tiruōṇṭam* asterism. Public feast was conducted on the days of the festival and the expenses for each day of the festival were met by various temple trustees and officers⁸⁸. The expenses of *Cōti* asterism was met by the Nambūdiri family of Netṭuvaippalṭṭi, the expenses for the second day were met from an endowment by Mōrakkālu family and Māniampilṭṭi met the expenses for the third day. Earlier the feast and rituals of the first two days of the festival were met by the residents of Udayamperūr. The Valanturutti

Brahmin family made an endowment for the expenses of the fourth day of the festival. For the expenses of the fifth day donation was made by Elūr family and the sixth day celebrations and feast were met by Perayin Manñakkal family. The expenses for *Utñrātñam* asterism were met by the temple officer in charge of Velūr and Vatñayampātñi. The expenses for the celebrations of the last day were met by the temple officer in charge of *pantiratñipūja*.

Ritual feeding was held on the festive days and the expenses for Brahmin feeding were met from the endowments made by different royal members of Kochi and officers in the service of the kings of Kochi⁸⁹. The *Kumbham* festival was celebrated in the *Kumbham* month and the festival was also known as ‘Nangapilññai Festival’ since a tradition associated the origin of this festival to a local celebrity, Nangapilññai⁹⁰. *Kumbham* comes in the harvest season (February- March) and during this festival the deity was taken out to collect paddy through the ritual procession known as *parñaetñuppu*. This term denotes ‘collecting paddy from agriculturists’. Often, after the harvest season in February-March, the deities in village temples are taken out to the houses in the countryside to receive the deity’s share of paddy. This is a means to strengthen the liaison between the deity and society.

Boat Festivals

Boat festivals developed in association with certain ritual processions in Āranmulñña and Ambalapulñña Visññu temples. The boat festivals originated in seventeenth- eighteenth centuries. The Ambalapulñña boat festival was started to commemorate an incident in which the idol of the deity was taken to Ambalapulñña from Kurñichi⁹¹. *Ārñanmulññavilāsam Hamsapātññu* of Nedumpayil Kochu Krishnan Asan of seventeenth century does not contain

any reference to Ārīanmulīa boat festival⁹². An oral tradition holds that the devotees of the forty two divisions in Ārīanmulīa organised together to protect the ritual boat of the temple when certain social miscreants in Ayrūr tried to obstruct its smooth voyage⁹³. The devotees organised themselves into forty two groups and each division built snake boats known as *palīlīiōtīams* and accompanied the ritual boat. According to the tradition this incident marked the beginning of Ārīanmulīa boat festival. Festivals had key role in the economic life of medieval age. Festivals created the venue for markets and temple festivals such as *Māmānkam* and *Alpiśi* provided opportunity to open new markets where people thronged in large numbers⁹⁴. The temple festivals in medieval period were occasions when local chieftains and kings received ritual legitimacy⁹⁵. The kings and chieftains had ritual roles during festivals and had to undertake processions with all paraphernalia of royalty. In the same way, the deities were also taken out in procession like kings. The royal men, feudal lords, courtiers and local chieftains had specific role in these processions. This kind of royal-ritual processions project the authority of the king which also confirmed the political claims of kings. Royal presence and royal participation in temple festivals served as effective means to provide legitimacy to kings. The urge for legitimacy was a catalyst for the increased royal involvement in temple festivals. The royal patronage and participation in festivals and processions ensured security to temples and festivals. Moreover, the royal participation made festivals popular.

To conclude, many festivals got developed under the influence of Vaisṇāvism in medieval Kerala. Festivals had a role in the popularisation of temple cult and in the spread of Āgamic religions. Festivals like *Ōnām* helped the Vaisṇāva religion to grow into a popular religion. *Ōnām* developed

from a harvest festival. It was transformed from the harvest festival to a sacred celebration from which it emerged into the status of a regional festival. During medieval age, temple festivals also developed. Temple festivals cemented the nexus between Visṅṅu temples and society. Temple festivals had political significance too. The kings had ritual roles in festival processions and it was rewarded by legitimising the royal claims.

Notes and References:

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3. *Madurai Kānci- 590-599.*
4. See chapter I, Note no.13.
5. S.Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, *op.cit.*,1940,pp.114-115; T.K.T.Vijaya Raghavacharya, *History of Tirupati*, Vol.I, Madras, 1997,pp.168-169.
6. M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 2002, pp.397-398.
7. *T.A.S.*, Vol. II, pp. 85-86; *Index No. A.4.*
8. The term *pant̥irat̥i* denotes twelve feet time in the morning and it is a significant time for rituals in the morning. It is the time when one's shadow becomes twelve feet. See P. Unnikrishnan Nair, *op.cit.*, 1987, pp. 267-268.
9. Kesavan Veluthat, *op.cit.*, 1978, pp.59-60; P.M. Rājan Gurukkal, *op.cit.*,1992, pp.39-40.
10. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*,1996, pp.168-171
11. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1975, pp. 574-576.
12. *T.A.S.*, Vol. II, pp. 131-207; *Index No. A. 80.*
13. Brahmin feeding was a ritual practice existed in medieval Kerala temples. See K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*,1986, pp.106-107; Also see chapter II.
14. See Note no. 9 above.
15. Apart from rice, different kinds of vegetables were also collected in temples to ensure that varieties of curries must be prepared for *Ōṇam* feast. This reveals that a grand festival was held on *Ōṇam* days. See for details *T.A.S.*,Vol.II., pp. 131-207.
16. It is stated in *Tapatisamvaran̥a* that in the course of his wandering in the forest, the hero finds a temple of Vāmana. *Tapatisamvaran̥a, Anka-II.*
17. *T.A.S.* Vol. II, pp. 46-48; *Index No. A. 35.*
18. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*,1986, Vol. IV, pp. 293-294.
19. K.T. Ravi Varma, *Rigvedam Mutal Onapattukal Vare*, Kottayam, 2001,p.160.
20. *Index. Nos. A.19; A.24;A.25; A.26; A.28; A.30; A.35; A.41; A.44; A.45; B.7; B.8; B.9; B.10; B.18; B.20; C.39.*
21. *T.A.S.*, Vol. VIII, pp. 39-40; *Index No. A. 54.*
22. *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 59-64.
23. *M.R. – Curun̥a. 1722, Ola.10.*
24. *Anantapuravarn̥anam, ślōka-68.*

25. *Trippuliyūr Grandhavari*, Record No. 22.
26. *Tirunilīñalmāla*, 1.16.
27. *Unñunīlisandēsam, ślōka-* 57.
28. *Candrōlsavam, ślōkas-*70.
29. K. Rama Pisharoti, “Uddanda Sastri”, *B.R.R.I.*, Vol. IX, Pt. II, p.120.
30. *Jnānappāna*, Lines- 62-63.
31. See Note no.21 above. See for a discussion on the nature of *manñigrāmam* M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*,1996, pp.155-161.
32. Scaria Zacharia (ed.), *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Diamper*, 1599, Edammattam, 1994, Session- IX; Decree- IV.
33. *Ibid.*,pp.7-8.
34. K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op. cit.*, 1986, pp.290-291; T.K. Gopala Panikkar, *Malabar and Its Folk*, New Delhi, 1900, rpt.1983, pp. 92-93.
35. See for different *Ōñam* songs V. Anandakuttan Nair (ed.), *Kerala Bhasha Ganangal*, Vol. II, Trissur, 1980, rpt.2005, pp.165-176; K.T. Ravi Varma, *op.cit.*, pp.189-198.
36. See for a discussion on Vāmana-Mahābali story K.P. Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, 1986, Vol.IV., pp.288-289; William Logan, *op.cit.*, p.193.
37. See chapter IX.
38. A number of festivals originated as harvest festivals. The Pongal in Tamil Nadu, Baiśākhi in Punjab, Bihu in Assam are some of the examples of such festivals.
39. K.P.Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*,1986, pp. 287-288;Rajan Gurukkal, *op.cit.*, pp.64-65.
40. *T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp. 131-207.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*
43. H. Daniel Smith, *op.cit.*, pp. 32-38.
44. Suvira Jaiswal, *op.cit.*, pp.146-148.
45. H. Daniel Smith, *op.cit.*,p.32.
46. Suvira Jaiswal, *op.cit.*, pp.146-149.
47. T.K.Gopala Panikkar, *op.cit.*, pp.98-100; T.P.Balakrishnan Nair, “Vishu”, *Samskara Keralam*, Vol.VI, No.1-2, January-June, 1992,p.51.
48. C.P.S. Menon, “The Vishu or the Spring Festival”, *B.R.R.I.*, Vol. No.III., pp.78-79.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 80-82.
50. *Jnānappāna*, Lines- 62-63.
51. A. 43- *op.cit.*
52. *T.A.S.*, Vol. II, pp. 131-207.
53. Karen L Merrey, “The Hindu Festival Calendar” in Guy R Melbon and Glenn E Yocum, *op.cit.*, p.11.

54. T.A.S., Vol. II, pp. 131-207.
55. Suvira Jaiswal, *op.cit.*, p.142.
56. T.A.S., Vol. II, pp. 131-207.
57. *Ibid.*
58. *Syānandūrapurān*āsamuccaya, chapter III, ślōkas- 14-22.
59. *Ibid.*
60. Index No. A.32; T.A.S., Vol. V, pp.187-189.
61. See for a discussion on temple committees for the management of festivals M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.195-196.
62. *Ibid.*, pp.123-124.
63. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, “The Kerala Mamankam”, K.S.P., Vol.I., Tiruvananthapuram, 1997, pp.324-327.
64. H. Gundert, *op.cit.*, pp.11-12.
65. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1999, p. 90.
66. H. Gundert, *op.cit.*, p.23; See K.V. Krishna Ayyar *op.cit.*, 1997, p.327.
67. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 2006b, pp.153-154.
68. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1999, pp.109-122.
69. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 2006, pp.158-177; V.V. Haridas, *op.cit.*, pp.114-123.
70. K.N. Ganesh, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp.332-333.
71. See notes on *Māmānkam* by N.M. Nambudiri in *Mamankam Rekhakal*, pp.14-56.
72. *Ibid*; Also see chapter V.
73. *M.R.- Curun*ā. 1720, *Ōla*.113.
74. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyar, *op.cit.*, 2004, Document No.174, *Grandhavari – Vol. I.*
75. K.N.Ganesh, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.103-104; *Idem*, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp.330-333; Also see Chapter V.
76. *M.R., Curun*ā-1683, *Ōla*. 47; Also see chapter V.
77. See chapter V, Note no.93.
78. See Note no.74 above.
79. *Grandham* No. 625, *op.cit.*
80. See chapter VI.
81. *A. 43- op. cit.*
82. *Ibid.*
83. *Ibid.*
84. K.P.Padmanabha Menon, *op.cit.*, 1986, pp.286-288.
85. *A. 43- op.cit.*
86. *Trippunithura Grandhavari, op.cit.*
87. *Ibid.*; *Trippunithura Kshetram, op.cit.*, pp. 145-146.
88. *Trippunithura Grandhavari, op.cit.*
89. *Ibid.*

90. *Ibid* ; *Trippunithura Kshetram*, *op.cit.*, pp. 147-157.
91. Nellikkal Muraleedharan, *op.cit.*, pp. 18-19; P.G.Rajendran, *op.cit.*, pp.54-55; Also see chapter VI.
92. *Arānmuḷā Vilāsam Hamsapātīu* narrates the history, glories and traditions of Āranmulā temple. It is written in the form of a panegyric work and in the form of a devotional poem by Nedumpayil Kochu Krishnan Asan. The author was a local celebrity and a scholar who belonged to the line of disciples of Mēlpattūr Nārāyanā Bhatīatiri.
93. R. Bhaskara Marar, *Tiruaranmula Ksetra Mahatmyam*, Konni, 1966, pp.56-57; Natuvattam Gopalakrishnan, *Samskaramudrakal*, Tiruvananthapuram, 2009, pp. 142-143; Nellikkal Muraleedharan, *Aranmulayute Samskarika Paithrukam*, Chengannur, 2009, pp.144-146; P.Unnikrishnan Nair, “Aranmule Desatheyum Kshetratheyum Sambandhicha Aitihyavum Charithravum”, *Service*, August 15, 2003, pp.10-11.
94. See Note no 71 above. Also see K.N.Ganesh, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp.330-332.
95. *Ibid.*

Chapter VIII

VAISŪNAVISM IN LITERATURE

For VaisŪnavism, literature was an instrument for wider propagation. VisŪnu *bhakti* was carried systematically to different segments in the society through literary compositions on *Itihāsic- Purānīc* themes. *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyanā* and *Bhāgavatapurānā* had a key role as chief sources of inspiration for poets of medieval Kerala. Different stories in *Itihāsic - Purānīc* traditions got popularised and the value system as projected in such works was also diffused by way of literary productions on VaisŪnāva themes. Several *Rāmakatha* and *Krīśnākatha* works were produced and dramas, *bhakti* songs on VaisŪnāva themes and temple eulogies got composed. The secular literature of medieval Kerala also exhibits the domination of VaisŪnāva themes in *Itihāsic- Purānīc* literature. The VaisŪnāva literature of medieval Kerala can be divided into two heads - (a) literature of the Cēra age (b) literature of the post-Cēra age. A survey is made in this chapter on the impact of VaisŪnavism on medieval Kerala literature.

VaisŪnāva Literature in the Cēra Age

The age of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram saw the production of various devotional works such as *stutis*, *bhakti* songs, temple eulogies and a host of secular works with VaisŪnāva themes. The Tamil hymns of Sthānu Ravi Kulaśēkhara or Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār came to be collectively known as *Perumāli Tirumolī* and this is a notable literary contribution of Kerala to VaisŪnavism in the Cēra period¹. The songs of Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār got included in the corpus of the sacred songs of the Ālīvārs, namely *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*. *Perumāli Tirumolī* consists of 105 songs of which the first three decades are on Śrīrangam temple, the fourth decade is on

Tiruvēkatāṁ and the fifth decade is on Tirumirīrākkōtū temple. Kulaśēkhara celebrated these three *divyadēśams* in his songs.

The sixth and the seventh decades are based on *Bhāgavata* story². While the sixth decade speaks about *Gopika*'s complaints on Krīśṇā's mischievous behaviour, the seventh one deals with Dēvaki's motherly care and affection towards Krīśṇā. An underlying intention to arouse emotional *bhakti* is traceable in the description of Krīśṇā's childhood pranks. These songs on *Bhāgavata* form the earliest Krīśṇā *bhakti* literature produced in Kerala. The decades from eight to ten are on the story of *Rāmāyanā*. The eighth decade is a beautiful lullaby to put Rāma to sleep and the ninth decade is about Daśaratha's lament and agony over Rāma. The tenth decade is a brief summary of the entire story of *Rāmāyanā* in which the important events in *Rāmāyanā* are incorporated in an orderly manner. It begins with the birth of Rāma and subsequent episodes in the life of the epic hero are narrated in the remaining *pāsurams*³. The summary of *Rāmāyanā* ends with the celebration of Rāma as the incarnation of Viṣṇu.

Like the songs on *Bhāgavata* story, the *Rāmāyanā* songs of Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār occupy a unique place in the literary history of Kerala as these songs form the earliest literary creation on the *Rāmāyanā* story. It appears that certain portions in *Perumāli Tirumolī* attained wider popularity throughout early medieval south India. From a Śrīrangam inscription of 1188AD, it is obvious that the second decade in *Perumāli Tirumolī*, namely *Terīrārum Tiral* was sung in Śrīrangam temple at the time of ritual worship⁴. What does it indicate? The ritual singing of the songs of Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār clearly indicates the popularity of *Perumāli Tirumolī* among Viṣṇu *bhaktas*. It again indicates that the hymns of the royal saint were accorded

ritual status in Śrīrangam temple. Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār was a votary of emotional *bhakti*. The songs in *Perumāli Tirumolī* reveal the spirit of religious intoxication and the ideology of complete surrender before Viṣṇu⁵.

The Sanskrit lyrical poem, *Mukundamāla* is another *bhakti* work of the Cēra age. It was also written by Sthānu Ravi Kulaśēkhara⁶. Tradition suggests that it was written by the royal saint with an intention for regular singing in Tirukkulaśēkharapuram temple⁷. It seems that the trends of thought in both *Perumāli Tirumolī* and *Mukundamāla* are similar. An ardent fervour towards Viṣṇu *bhakti* is projected in these works. Both the works highlighted the urge for complete surrender before Viṣṇu. It is significant that the concept of total surrender got projected in the songs of the royal saint who was a reigning monarch. Why did the royal saint stress on ‘total surrender’? Did it have any political implications? Though the concept of total surrender (*śaranāgati*) was a religious notion, the ideology appears to have political implication as it reinforced the spirit of discipline among subjects towards Cēra royalty which contributed to the consolidation of Cēra royal authority. In this context, it appears that the ideology of *bhakti* as enunciated by the royal saint had political dimensions. A Tamil inscription at Pagan in Burma quotes a *ślōkas* from *Mukundāmāla* while speaking about the construction of a *manḍapa* in a Viṣṇu temple by Rāyiran Ciriyan or Kulaśēkhara Nambi who was a trader from Mahodayapuram⁸. It is a pointer towards the popularity of *Mukundamāla* among Viṣṇu *bhaktas* of medieval South India.

Secular Literature

The origin and development of *yamaka* or alliterative poetry is a notable cultural trend of the Cēra age⁹. Different themes from *Rāmāyaṇa* and

Mahābhārata were borrowed by *yamaka* poets who initiated a new variety of narrative poetry known as *yamakakāvya*. Vāsubhatīa or Vāsudēva was a *yamaka* poet and was a courtier of both Rāma Rājasēkhara and his successor Sthānu Ravi Kulaśēkhara. Vāsudēva took up Vaiṣṇava themes for literary creations and he authored three works in *yamaka* style – *Śaurikatha*, *Tripuradahana* and *Yudhisṭhīravijaya*¹⁰. *Tripuradahana* is centred on a Śaiva theme while the other two works deal with Vaiṣṇava themes from *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and *Mahābhārata*. *Śaurikatha* is about the story of Kṛṣṇa. This work contains six cantos. This is fully based on the tenth chapter of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. *Yudhisṭhīravijaya* is the greatest masterpiece of Vāsudēva. This work summarises *Mahābhārata* in eight cantos. The story in *Yudhisṭhīravijaya* starts with Draupadi's marriage and ends with the glorious reign of Yudhisṭhira.

Nārāyaṇa was another *yamaka* poet who took up Vaiṣṇava themes for literary compositions. He was a contemporary of Bhāskara Ravi Manukulāditya and author of *Sītaharanā* which deals with *Rāmāyaṇa* story¹¹. This work summarises the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* in fifteen cantos. Ravidēva was a *yamaka* poet who wrote *Nalīōdaya* in *yamaka* style. This work centres on the story of the romance between Nalīa and Damayanti in four cantos¹². Ravidēva's source of inspiration was *Mahābhārata* as he took up the epic story of Nalīa and Damayanti. It is apparent from the preamble of the work that the poet was patronised by king Rāma or Rājāditya¹³. Apart from *yamaka* works, several stage plays were written on *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* themes. Śaktibhadra, the playwright, wrote *Āścaryacūḍāmanī* which recreates the story of *Rāmāyaṇa* in seven acts¹⁴. Kulaśēkhara Ālīvār wrote two stage plays- *Tapatisamvaranā* and *Subhadradhananjaya*¹⁵. *Tapatisamvaranā* narrates in six acts the romance between Tapati, the daughter of the sun god and Samvaranā, the king of Hastinapura. This plot is

taken from *ādīparva* of *Mahābhārata*. *Subhadradhananjaya* is the drama on the story of the abduction of Subhadra by Arjuna from Dwāraka. This plot is also taken from *Mahābhārata*. It appears from the preamble of *Subhadradhananjaya* that the author had a particular fascination towards *Mahābhārata*¹⁶. In the preamble of *Subhadradhananjaya* the dramatist invokes the blessings of Viṣṇu which indicates the Vaiṣṇava leanings of the playwright and his intention to project Viṣṇu *bhakti*. The devotion of the playwright to Viṣṇu is also apparent from the preamble and *Bharatavākya* in *Tapatisamvaranā*¹⁷. The dramatist invokes the blessings of Cakrapāṇi or Viṣṇu. This is an indication to the Vaiṣṇava leanings of the author.

The description of Vaiṣṇava literature in the Cēra age may raise certain questions regarding the nature of Vaiṣṇava literature. What was the catalyst for the sudden upsurge in the production of a large number of literary works with Vaiṣṇava themes in the age of Cēras? What was the social background of the Vaiṣṇava poets of the age? Was there any reflection of conflicts between the votaries of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism in the literature? As in other parts of early medieval south India, the Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult was a catalyst in the production of a vast body of literature with Vaiṣṇava themes in the Cēra country. The *Itihāsic -Purāṇic* stories and Rāma and Krīṣṇa lore got popularised in the society in the aftermath of the spread of the *bhakti* movement. The spread of devotion provided themes with the potential to generate emotional *bhakti*. Along with this, the rise and growth of the Cēra kingdom of Mahodayapuram was another reason for the production of many works on Vaiṣṇava themes. The poets and dramatists were courtiers who were all patronised by the Cēra rulers.

An important feature of the Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* works produced in the Cēra age is that several Sanskrit works were produced. This happened at a

time when Tamil *bhakti* movement of Ālīvārs swept Kerala. *Perumāli Tirumolī* was the only Viṣṇū *bhakti* literature produced in Tamil in the heydays of Ālīvār movement in Kerala. Does it point to the meagre impact of Tamil *bhakti* cult on Kerala? Why did the Tamil *bhakti* movement fail in producing Tamil works in Kerala? Kerala had a rich Sanskrit intellectual tradition. There is a reference to the high intellectual standard and scholarship of Kerala Brahmins in *Avantisundarikatha* of Daṇḍin¹⁸. The work refers to the Brahmin scholars of Kerala. There were Brahmins in Kerala with proficiency in Sanskrit and deep understanding in different branches of *Vedic* knowledge. Śankarāchārya, the renowned scholar of *Vedic*-Sanskritic knowledge, also hailed from Kerala. All these speak well of the strong Sanskrit tradition of Kerala in the 7th-9th centuries. Therefore it is not surprising that less Tamil works got produced even during the heydays of *bhakti* cult. The Tamil *bhakti* movement was not a linguistic movement, but it was a religious phenomenon. Its objective was to spread *bhakti* and temple cult. Though less Tamil works were produced, temple cult was popularised, temple-centred culture got strengthened and Vaiṣṇava tenets got diffused. In this respect, the Tamil *bhakti* movement was a source of inspiration for poets and bhaktas of the Cēra kingdom to produce *bhakti* works and to espouse the concept of Viṣṇū *bhakti*. The chief medium of poets was Sanskrit. It denotes that the early Sanskrit tradition of Kerala was strengthened by the *bhakti* cult. The number of literary works produced in Sanskrit did not get subsided. It may be argued in this respect that the Tamil *bhakti* movement was Keralised in the Cēra country. The poets of Kerala were either Brahmins or Kṣātriyas. Sthānu Ravi Kulaśekhara was a royal poet. Śaktibhadra is also identified, though inconclusively, as a royal dramatist who ruled over a minor principality in Southern Kerala¹⁹. Śankarāchārya, Vāsubhatīa, Ravidēva and Nārāyaṇa were all Brahmins. No men of lower caste found place among the

poets of Kerala during Cēra age.

Vaiṣṇava Literature in the Post-Cēra Period

The exit of the Cēra rulers of Mahodayapuram from the political scenario in twelfth century did not impede the continuation of Vaiṣṇavism as a source of inspiration for literary creations. A large number of free renderings on *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bhāgavata* and *Bhārata* were produced. The Visṇū *bhakti* literature in the post-Cēra age mainly revolves round Rāma and Krīṣṇa traditions. Besides, independent compositions in the form of *stutis* and *Kṣētramāhātmyas* on Visṇū and Vaiṣṇava centres came out in large numbers. The post- Cēra age was a period when Malayalam language got evolved into what is seen today after passing through various stages such as *Pātīṭṭu*, *Manīpravāṇam*, *Campū* etc.

Rāmakatha works

The story of Rāma was a striking theme for literary creations in the post-Cēra age. A notable trait of the Rāma literature of the post-Cēra age is that various free renderings on *Rāmāyaṇa* got produced. *Rāmacaritam* of Cīrāma is the earliest *Rāmāyaṇa* produced in Kerala. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer opines that Cīrāma was a royal poet who held sway over Vēṇāṭṭu from 1195 AD to 1208 AD²⁰. *Rāmacaritam* is in *pātīṭṭu* style and as the name of the work indicates, it deals with the story of Rāma or *Rāmāyaṇa*. Though the work is entitled as the story of Rāma, the work mainly focuses on the *yudhakāṇḍā* section in *Rāmāyaṇa* which narrates the battle between Rāma and Rāvaṇa. A total number of 136 *patīṭṭas* of 164 *patīṭṭas* or sections and among 1814 *pātīṭṭus* or quatrains, 1506 *pātīṭṭus* in *Rāmacaritam* narrate the story of *Yudhakāṇḍā*²¹. Only the remaining portion deals with the stories in other chapters of the epic.

What was the priority of Cīrāma in the compilation of *Rāmacaritam*? Did the poet intend to narrate the story of Rāma to arouse the militia in Vēnāṭṭu? Was Rāma an incarnation for Cīrāma or a human hero? Is it a didactic work or a *bhakti* work? Popularising *Rāmakatha* among the masses appears to be the intention of the poet in narrating the story of Rāma. It is stated in the beginning of the work that the poet intended to narrate only certain portions in *Rāmāyanā* to make the ignorant aware of the story of Rāma²². The poet was particular in describing the *yudhakāṇḍā* in *Rāmāyanā* which highlights the prowess and divinity in Rāma in his fight against Rāvanā. This indicates the didactic motives of Cīrāma which go against the contention of Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer that Cīrāma wrote *yudhakāṇḍā* with the avowed motive to rouse martial spirit among the soldiers of Vēnāṭṭu²³.

Unlike Vālmīki, Cīrāma presented Rāma as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. *Rāmacaritam* is suffused with the spirit of devotion to Rāma. The pronounced deification of Rāma in this work is an indication of the *bhakti* nature of *Rāmacaritam*. To make the work more devotional, many *stutis* were also incorporated. Cīrāma's attempt to idolize Rāma as an incarnation was the result of the extension and continuation of the influence of the devotional movement of Āḷṅvār saints. From literary point of view, *Rāmacaritam* shows considerable amount of poetic skill and absolute command of the poet over language²⁴. From the similarity of *stutis* in *Rāmacaritam* and *Kamba Rāmāyanā*, it is possible to trace Kamba's influence on Cīrāma. Influence of Kamba's *Rāmāyanā* on Cīrāma reveals that through cultural exchange, ideas continued to diffuse in Kerala from the eastern coast of South India.

Nambyār Tamil or *Rāmāyanā Tamil* is another literary work on *Rāmāyanā* and this anonymous prose work is datable to fourteenth century²⁵.

Tamil in the name of the work does not denote the language in which the work is written, it indicates only the non-Sanskritic language. *Nambyār Tamil* deals with *Rāmāyanā* story from the birth of Rāvanā to the coronation of Rāma²⁶. *Nambyār Tamil* was used for telling the Rāma story in the countryside by the non-Brahmin communities²⁷. The simple and clear language of the work made it a popular repertory for telling stories in the countryside where the public preferred non-pedantic language and style.

Kanñāśśa Rāmāyanā is a notable *Rāmakatha* work produced in the fifteenth century. Rāma Panñikkar, one among the *Kanñāśśa* poets, was the author of *Kanñāśśa Rāmāyanā*²⁸. Like Cirāma, Rāma Panñikkar also states in his work that he intends to make the ignorant aware of the story of Rāma²⁹. This is a pointer to the didactic nature of the work. *Kanñāśśa Rāmāyanā* contains 3059 verses or quatrains and it is a free rendering of the entire story of *Vālmīki Rāmāyanā*. Though the work is in *Pātītī* style, the metre used in this work is indigenous and an early stage of the development of *Manñipravāli* is traceable in the style employed in this work in which Sanskrit words are freely used. The poet does not follow *Vālmīki* while depicting the character of Rāma. Both divine and human qualities in Rāma are projected in the work. The projection of divinity in the character of Rāma reveals that the objective of the poet was to diffuse *bhakti* towards Rāma.

Rāmakathappātītī of Ayyipilñlai Āśan of Avvātūturai near Kōvalñam is another literary composition on *Rāmāyana*. This contains 3163 verses in 279 sections³⁰. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer considers *Rāmakathappātītī* as a work of seventh century ME, ie., in between 1425 AD and 1525 AD³¹. It is certain that *Rāmakathappātītī* was produced after *Kanñāśśa Rāmāyanā* as the *Kanñāśśa* poet is hailed as a predecessor in *Rāmakathappātītī*³². It is significant that the style and language used in

Rāmakathappāt̃t̃u are suited for orchestral singing. A particular drum like instrument known as *candraval̃ayam* or *ambil̃ival̃ayam* was used to the accompaniment of the ritual singing of *Rāmakathappāt̃t̃u*³³. Invention and use of *ambil̃ival̃ayam* for the ritual singing of *Rāmakathappāt̃t̃u* reveal the wider use of *Rāmakathappāt̃t̃u* in ritual singing in temples. Similar to *Mahābhāratabhat̃t̃as* who lectured on the *Purāñas*, singers of *Rāmakathappāt̃t̃u* diffused *Purāñic-Itihāsic* values in the society through ritual singing of the work. The language of *Rāmakathappāt̃t̃u* shows an overwhelming influence of the colloquial Tamil which was spoken in the bilingual areas of southern Travancore³⁴. The simple language used in the work is a catalyst for the popularity of *Rāmakathappāt̃t̃u* as a repertory for ritual singing in the countryside. Since manuscripts of *Rāmakathappāt̃t̃u* are collected only from southern Travancore, it is certain that the work was popular only in southern Travancore. An important trait of *Rāmakathappāt̃t̃u* is that it does not project emotional *bhakti* and does not attempt to deify Rāma. Dissemination of morals was the chief intention of the compilation of *Rāmakathappāt̃t̃u*. Following the trend in *Rāmacaritam* of Cīrāma, Ayyipil̃l̃ai Āśan dedicated about half of his work to narrate the story in *Yudhakāñd̃ā*.

Rāmāyañā was written in *Campū* style known as *Bhās̃ā Rāmāyañā Campū* in the second half of the fifteenth century³⁵. This work is assigned to Punam Nambūdiri who was a poet in the court of Mānavikrāma, the Zamorin of Calicut. *Bhās̃ā Rāmāyañā Campū* is divided into twenty independent books with each division dealing with separate story of *Rāmāyañā*³⁶. It begins with *Rāvañōdbhava* or the birth of Rāvañā and ends with *Swargārōhañā* of Rāma or the ascension of Rāma to heaven. The remaining stories are *Rāmavatāram*, *Tāt̃akavadham*, *Ahalyamōks̃āam*, *Sītaswayamvaram*, *Paraśurāma vijayam*, *Viscinnābhis̃ēkam*,

Kharavadham, Sugrivasakhyam, Bālivadham, Udyānapravēsam, Anguliyānkam, Lankāpravēsam, Rāvanāvadham, Agnipravēsam, Ayōdhyāpravēsam, Patītibhisīkam, Sītaparityāgam and Aswamēdham.

The objective of the poet is discernable from the style and the language of the work. Literary appreciation and aesthetic enjoyment appear to be the objective of the poet than evoking religious fervour. *Bhāsīa Rāmāyanām Campū* is a bigger work and it is even bigger than Bhōja's *Campū Rāmāyanā*³⁷. Bhōja's work ends with *Sundarakāndīa* and no story from *yudhakāndīa* is incorporated. Later Laksmanākavi supplemented *yudhakāndīa* to the work to make it a complete work on *Rāmāyanā*. *Bhāsīa Rāmāyanām Campū* was used extensively for *Pātīakam* performance as it includes a large number of Sanskrit verses from the entire range of Sanskrit Literature³⁸. *Rāvanāvijayam Campū* is a short *Campū* work on *Rāmāyanā* which retells the story of Rāvanā's highhandedness against Vēdavati and his battles with Yama³⁹.

Adhyātma Rāmāyanām Kilīppātītu of Tunchathu Rāmaujan Ezhuthachan has a central place in the Rāma literature in medieval Kerala. Instead of *Vālmīki Rāmāyanā* and *Kamba Rāmāyanā*, Ezhuthachan chose *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* as the model in the compilation of his work⁴⁰. The Sanskrit *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* was written in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries and emotional *bhakti* towards Rāma is a hallmark of the work. The growth of Rāma *bhakti* movement in Deccan was instrumental for the composition of a highly devotional work like *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā*⁴¹. The concept of Rāma *bhakti* finds full expression in this work. Being a product of *bhakti* movement, *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* provided inspiration to the development of Rāma *bhakti* literature in various languages. *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* was a source of inspiration to several *bhaktas*. There are two more

works on Rāma bhakti- *Adbhuta Rāmāyanā* and *Ananda Rāmāyanā* which got produced in the age in which *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* was produced⁴². These two versions do not project Rāma bhakti in an emotional manner. Therefore they did not influence many. In South India, *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* was translated into Telugu in the medieval period⁴³. In this context it is certain that the selection of *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* by Ezhuthachan was in tune with the contemporary literary trend. Its adoption as a model may be taken as a token of his predilection towards bhakti⁴⁴.

Ezhuthachan wrote in non-pedantic language in a racy style and adopted the bird song metre to make *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* *Kilippātī* more attractive and popular⁴⁵. The portrayal of characters is bold and to the point. The aim of Ezhuthachan was to popularise the story of Rāma and to spread Visṇu bhakti. This is clear from the incorporation of many long and beautiful stutis on Rāma and Visṇu. *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* *Kilippātī* begins with a beautiful Rāma stuti and continues with frequent stutis on Rāma⁴⁶. Ezhuthachan was more a propagator of bhakti than a mere poet who wrote on Rāma tradition. As a typical bhakta, he expressed humility and emotional attachment towards Visṇu. The entire story of Rāmāyanā as narrated in *Bāla*, *Ayōdhya*, *Araṇya*, *Kisṅkinda*, *Sundara* and *Yudha kāṇḍās* are included in his work on *Rāmāyana*. Besides, *Uttara Rāmāyanā* is not excluded. Sanskrit words are used abundantly within the grammatical frame of Malayalam in *Adhyātma Rāmāyanā* *Kilippātī*. The process of the fertilisation of Malayalam language by Sanskrit words was speeded up by Ezhuthachan which raised Malayalam to a dignified status. As a result he is credited with the title of ‘the father of modern Malayalam language’⁴⁷.

With the invention of various performing arts, a new genre of literature came into existence. In stead of the dramas of Sthānu Ravi Kulaśekhara and

Śaktibhadra, *Prabandhas* were written in the sixteenth century for the performance of *Kūttu* and *Pātīakam*. Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṅa Bhatītatiri wrote a compendium of Sanskrit verses on *Rāmāyaṅa* which came to be known as *Rāmāyaṅam Prabandham*⁴⁸. This work was written with the sole intention of serving as a repertory for stage arts. The origin and development of Rāma theatre known as *Rāmanātīam* required repertory known as *ātīakkathas*⁴⁹. For the performance of *Rāmanātīam*, the story of *Rāmāyaṅa* was reproduced as *Rāmāyaṅam Ātīakkatha* in the seventeenth century by Kotīārakkara Tampurān who invented *Rāmanātīam*⁵⁰. The eight stories from *Rāmāyaṅa*- *Putrakāmēṣīti*, *Sīta Svayamvaram*, *Viscinnābhisīkam*, *Kharavadham*, *Bālivadham*, *Tōraṅayudham*, *Sētubandhanam* and *Yudham*- are incorporated in *Rāmāyaṅam Ātīakkatha*.

Apart from works in various literary styles of medieval Malayalam such as *Pātīu*, *Manīpravālīam*, *Campū* and Malayalam, several Sanskrit works also were produced on Rāma theme in medieval Kerala. *Amōgha Rāghaviya* is in the form of *Prabandha* on the *Bālakāṅdīa* section of *Rāmāyaṅa*⁵¹. It was written by Divākara. This work was written in the Śaka year 1221 which is equivalent to 1299 AD. Another Sanskrit *Rāmakatha* work was produced under the patronage of Pūrātīam Tirunālī Rāja, the king of Ambalapulīa. This work, known as *Uttara Campū Rāmāyaṅa*, was written by an unknown Nambūdiri Brahmin of Kumāranellūr. The story in *Uttarakāṅdīa* in *Rāmāyaṅa* is the central theme of this work⁵².

Uttara Rāma Carita or *Uttara Rāghaviya* deals with the story of Rāma and Sīta after their return from Lanka. This work has five cantos and K.K.Raja argues that it was composed by Mahisīamangalam (Malīamangalam in Malayalam) poet⁵³. Śrīkanīdīa wrote a poem in eight cantos on Rāma story known as *Raghūdaya*⁵⁴. This work is composed on the

model of *Yudhisṭīḥiravijaya* of Vāsudēva. *Rāmāyanāsamgraha* is a work which summarises the story of *Rāmāyanā* in fifty one cantos⁵⁵. This was written by Ravivarma of Vēnāṭṭu in the fag end of seventeenth century. *Kuśābhyudaya* is a Sanskrit work in simple and lucid style on the story of Kuśa, the son of Rāma, written by an anonymous poet who was a courtier of Rāmavarma of Dēśinganāṭṭu and *Rāmakatha* is a prose work on *Rāmāyanā* by Vāsudēva who adorned the court of Ravivarma of Vetṭṭattunāṭṭu⁵⁶. The story of *Rāmāyanā* up to the coronation of Rāma is described in this work in simple Sanskrit.

Several Sanskrit *stutis* were composed on Rāma. *Rāmakarnāmrītam* is a *stuti* on Rāma which is datable to the sixteenth century⁵⁷. The influence of *Rāmāyanā* on medieval Kerala poets was considerable as Rāma lore provided thematic material to many literary works of various streams of literature like *Pāṭṭu*, *Manṭipravālīam* and *Campū* in Malayalam and Sanskrit. The Rāma literature popularised *Rāmāyanā* tradition in the society. Hence *Rāmāyanā* provided themes for mural paintings, sculptural art, wood carvings and Rāma plays⁵⁸.

Krīśṇāakatha Works

Bhāgavatapurānā and various Krīśṇā stories in *Mahābhārata* also provided thematic substance to literary creations in the post- Cēra age. Free renderings on *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata* were produced. The emotional Krīśṇā *bhakti* in *Bhāgavatapurānā* provided motivation for the poets. A large number of poems, *Campūs* and *Prabandhas* were also written on Krīśṇā lore. *Bhāratamāla* of Śankara Panīkkar is the earliest *Mahābhārata* produced in Kerala⁵⁹. Śankara Panīkkar, one among the *Kanṇāśśa* poets, lived between 1350 AD and 1450 AD⁶⁰. *Bhāratamāla* is not a mere translation

of *Mahābhārata*, it is a free rendering of the epic. The author carefully avoids various sub-plots for a smooth condensation. A striking aspect of *Bhāratamāla* is that *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* is summarised in the beginning of *Bhāratamāla* with many *Kṛṣṇa stutis* which reveal that the poet was a devotee of *Kṛṣṇa*⁶¹. Many *Kṛṣṇa stutis* frequently appear in various chapters in this work. These *stutis* glorify the divine attributes of *Kṛṣṇa* and the poet praises *Kṛṣṇa* as a destroyer of demons. The entire stories of *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* are condensed in 1363 stanzas. The poet makes clear in the beginning of the work that he intends to present the story of *Nārāyaṇa* to attain salvation and religious merit⁶². For the poet, telling the story of *Viṣṇu* was an act to redeem sins and to gain merit.

Kaṇṇāśśa Bhāgavata is the earliest free rendering on *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* produced in Kerala. This work was written by *Rāma Panīkkaṛ* who is one among the *Kaṇṇāśśa* poets and a contemporary of *Śankara Panīkkaṛ*⁶³. *Kaṇṇāśśa Bhāgavata* consists of 91 chapters. The primary objective of the poet was to tell the story of *Kṛṣṇa* to the public⁶⁴. *Mādhava Panīkkaṛ*, another *Kaṇṇāśśa* poet, wrote a free rendering on *Bhagavad Gītā* called as *Bhāśa Bhagavad Gītā*⁶⁵. This is the first Malayalam translation of *Bhagavad Gītā*. Unlike the original *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Mādhava Panīkkaṛ's Gītā* is centred on *bhakti* and *bhakti* towards *Kṛṣṇa* is glorified in the work. The poet states in the beginning of the work that the intention of the work is to retell *Kṛṣṇa's* advice to *Arjuna*⁶⁶. His devotion to *Kṛṣṇa* is obvious from the incorporation of many *stutis* in the beginning of the work and the poet stressed on *bhakti* as a means to salvation. *Bhāśa Bhagavad Gītā* is an excellent work of condensation. The seven hundred stanzas of the original text are condensed in just half that number of quatrains in this work.

All the literary compositions of the *Kanñāśśa* poets make clear that the *Kanñāśśas* were votaries of Viññu *bhakti*. The *Kanñāśśas* have a unique place in the history of the evolution of Malayalam language as they produced the earliest *Bhārata*, *Bhāgavata* and *Gītā* along with the earliest work on the entire story of *Rāmāyaṇa*. The literary ventures of *Kanñāśśa* poets, who were non- Brahmins, reveal that non-Brahmin poets started writing on the cult themes of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa in the post-Cēra age. Though the *Kanñāśśa* poets wrote on Vaisṇava themes, they were not votaries of any sectarian form of Vaisṇavism. Nor are these poets reticent on the description of the glories of Śiva in their works⁶⁷. The aim of the *Kanñāśśas* was to popularise Viññu *bhakti* and to make the ignorant aware of *Itihāsic - Purāṇic* stories and values.

Kṛṣṇagātha of Ceruśśēri Nambūdiri is another *Bhāgavata* based literary work of the post-Cēra age. Ulloor S Parameswara Aiyer assigns the work to the fifteenth century and M.G.S. Narayanan holds that *Kṛṣṇagātha* belongs either to the second half of the sixteenth century or the first half of the nineteenth century⁶⁸. Ceruśśēri Nambūdiri was a courtier of Udayavarman Kōlathiri and it is stated in the end of *Kṛṣṇagātha* that the work was composed as per the directive of Udayavarman Kōlathiri⁶⁹. *Kṛṣṇagātha* deals with the story of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* from the incarnation of Kṛṣṇa to Kṛṣṇa's ascension to heaven in 47 cantos in simple Malayalam language. Dissemination of Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* was the objective of Ceruśśēri Nambūdiri as emotional *bhakti* is glorified in the work. *Śrī Kṛṣṇavijaya* of Śankarakavi is another notable *Kṛṣṇakatha* work produced in the period when *Kṛṣṇagātha* was written⁷⁰.

Like *Kṛṣṇagātha*, *Śrī Kṛṣṇavijaya* was produced in Kōlathunātu

under the patronage of Kōlathiri rulers. Kerala Varma of Kōlathunāt̃u ordered Śankarakavi to compose the work⁷¹. This work deals with the Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥ā lore in 12 cantos and in 1155 verses. As in the case of *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥āgātha*, the main focus is given in *Śrī Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥āvijaya* on the story of *Bhāgavatapurān̥ā*. In contrast to Ceruśśēri Nambūdiri's work, *Śrī Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥āvijaya* is presented in a narrative manner without glorifying the emotional traits of *bhakti*. It is significant, in this context, that the poet was a *bhakta* of the goddess of Pal̥l̥ikkunnu and the composition of *Śrī Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥āvijaya* was only to accomplish the task imposed up on the poet by his patron king⁷². This may be the reason for the absence of emotional *bhakti* in *Śrī Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥āvijaya*. *Bhāratagātha* is an anonymous work composed on the orders of a Kōlathiri ruler⁷³. The style and the language in the work reveal that it was produced in the age when *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥āgātha* was written. The fixation of the period of the compilation of the work enables us to fix Udayavarman Kōlathiri as the probable patron of the work.

Pūntānam Nambūdiri wrote many Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥ā *stutis* such as *kīrtanas*, *stutis* and poems. His *Nūr̥r̥et̥t̥u Hari* or *Haristōtram* is a *stōtra* work in simple Malayalam on Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥ā's story as narrated in *Bhāgavatapurān̥ā*⁷⁴. *Śrī Kr̥ṣ̥ṇ̥ākarn̥āmritam* with 169 quatrains is a beautiful narrative poem on the tenth chapter of *Bhāgavatapurān̥ā* by Pūntānam Nambūdiri⁷⁵. Pūntānam's *Jnānappāna* is not a mere devotional work, it summarises the gist of the moral and philosophical teachings of *Upaniṣ̥ads* and *Bhāgavatapurān̥ā* where as *Santānagopālampāna* is a Malayalam work on *Santānagopālam* story as outlined in *Bhāgavatapurān̥ā*⁷⁶. The central themes of *Kucēlavrittampana* and *Kucēlavrittamgātha* are also taken from *Bhāgavatapurān̥ā*⁷⁷. These works deal with the story of Kucēla's friendship

with Śrī Krīṣṇā.

Apart from these works, Pūntānam Nambūdiri wrote *Śauristuti*, *Murāristuti*, *Ānandanrittam*, *Krīṣṇāstōtram*, *Mukundastōtram*, *Nārāyanāstōtram*, *Govindastōtram*, *Vāmapurādhīśastuti*, *Dwādaśanāmakīrtanam*, *Mūlatatvam*, *Vāsudēvastuti* and many *Daśāvatārastōtrams*⁷⁸. About fifty one collections of hymns were composed by Pūntānam Nambūdiri. Except *Ghanasangham*, all other compositions of Pūntānam are on Krīṣṇā. He wrote in simple Malayalam with direct style in which only simple and common phrases, words and similes were used. He was never a prey to highly ritualistic and pedantic style of writing. The *pāna* style in which Pūntānam wrote was a reason for the popularity of his works⁷⁹. Many of his works contain social criticism which reveals that he was not indifferent to the contemporary social problems of casteism and moral degeneration. Pūntānam gave importance on chanting the names of Hari⁸⁰. The *bhakti* works of this *bhakti* poet became so popular that even today his devotional works are popular among Malayalis as evening prayers.

Mānavēda's *Pūrva Bhāratam Campū* and *Krīṣṇāgīti* are two Krīṣṇā *bhakti* works in Sanskrit⁸¹. *Pūrva Bhāratam Campū* deals with the early history of *Candravamśa* in eight *stabakas* and *Krīṣṇāgīti* describes the story of Krīṣṇā as outlined in *Bhāgavata*. *Krīṣṇāgīti* consists of eight cantos and it was composed on the model of Jayadēva's *Gītagovindam*. *Krīṣṇāgīti* was written as a repertory of *Krīṣṇānātītām*⁸². *Krīṣṇāgīti* had a key role in the popularisation of Krīṣṇā *bhakti* and Guruvāyūr temple cult in Kerala⁸³. Mēlppattūr Nārāyanā Bhatītātiri wrote *Nārāyanīyam* as a condensation of *Bhāgavata* in 1036 verses⁸⁴. It focussed on intense form of Krīṣṇā *bhakti*. This work is a commendation on Guruvāyūr temple and its deity. He also

wrote *Campū* works on *Bhāgavata* and *Mahābhārata*⁸⁵. He composed *Matsyavatāram Campū* which narrates the story of the fish incarnation of Viṣṇu and *Rājasuyam Campū* on the story of Dharmaputra's *Rājasūyam* sacrifice as narrated in *Mahābhārata*. *Dūtavākya* or *Kṛṣṇādūta* is about Kṛṣṇa's conciliatory attempts to bring Pandavas and Kauravas together for avoiding the battle and *Subhadraharanā* is about Subhadra's elopement with Arjuna. Though *Dhātuvākya* is basically a work on grammar, it narrates the story of Kṛṣṇa too.

Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇa Bhatṭatiri also wrote many *Prabandhas* on stories associated with Kṛṣṇa⁸⁶. These *Prabandhas* include *Vāmanavatāra*, *Ajamilāmokṣā*, *Kucēlavrittam* and *Santānagopālam*. All these stories are taken from *Bhāgavata* and they are intended for the performance of *Kūttu* and *Pātākam*. *Śrī Kṛṣṇakṛnāmritam* of Vilvamangalathu Swāmiyar is a notable *bhakti* work on *Bhāgavata* story⁸⁷. Tunchathu Rāmanujan Ezhuthachan's *Mahābhāratam Kilippāttū* is a free rendering on *Mahābhārata*⁸⁸. This is known more as a Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* work and Ezhuthachan deliberately incorporated many beautiful hymns on Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa in this work to project Viṣṇu *bhakti*. Ezhuthachan incorporated *stutis* whenever the name of Kṛṣṇa is mentioned.

Many *Prabandhas* and *Campūs* were produced on different stories of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and *Bhārata* by a host of poets. Such works include *Vrukasuravadham*, *Nāradamōhana*, *Sudarśanamōkṣam*, *Ambarikṣācaritam*, *Trināvartavadham*, *Kūrmavatāra*, *Syamantaka*, *Kalyāṇasaugandhika*, *Nayanīdarśanam* and *Bhāratam*⁸⁹. *Śrīsvayamvaram* is a *yamaka* poem on *Pālālīmadhanam* episode and the focus is given in this work on the origin of Lakṣmi and her marriage with Mahāviṣṇu⁹⁰. A *Campū* work was written on

Mahābhārata with fourteen stories - *Bakavadham*, *Draupadisvayamvaram*, *Kirātam*, *Subhadraharanāam*, *Khāndavadahanam*, *Rājasūyam*, *Vanavāsam*, *Kīcakavadham*, *Udyōgam*, *Dūtavākyam*, *Jayadrathavadham*, *Suyōdhanavadham*, *Aswamēdham* and *Swargārōhanāam*⁹¹. This collection is known as *Bhāratam Campū*. Though the identity of the author is not convincingly known, it is certain that an ardent *bhakta* of Viṣṇu wrote the work as Kṛṣṇā stutis are intermittently incorporated. The anonymous work *Rukminīsvayamvaram Campū* is on Kṛṣṇa's marriage with Rukminī and *Pārijātaharanāam Campū* by a member of Tarakkal family deals with the story of *Pārijātaharanāam*⁹². Both these works belonged to the fifteenth century.

Kṛṣṇācarita is a literary work on the story of *Kṛṣṇā* with twelve cantos and three sections by Chandrasēkhara, a disciple of Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇa Bhatṭatiri and *Bhāgavatatīkasamuccaya* of Ravivarma of Vetṭattunātu is a commentary on *Bhāgavatapurāṇā*⁹³. Vāsudēva, a poet in the court of Ravivarma, wrote the summaries of *Rāmāyaṇā* and *Mahābhārata* as *Samkēśapa Rāmāyaṇā* and *Samkēśapa Bhārata* and Ravivarma wrote *Govindacarita* which narrates the *daśamaskanda* of *Bhāgavata*⁹⁴. *Rāsakrīḍāakāvya* is a sixteenth century Sanskrit work by Malāmangalam Nārāyaṇan Nambūdiri on *Rāsakrīḍā* episode in *Bhāgavata*⁹⁵. *Dēvanārāyaṇāam* or *Vēdanta Ratnamāla* is a commentary on *Bhāgavatapurāṇā* by Pūrātam Tirunālī Rāja of Ambalapulā. Similar to this, Rāmavarma of Kōlathiri royal family wrote *Bhāratasangraham*⁹⁶. As the name indicates, the *Bhāratasangraham* is a summary of the story of *Mahābhārata*. Āditya Varma of Dēśinganātu wrote *Yadunāthacaritam* on *Bhāgavatapurāṇā* with ten *sargas* in which the story of *Kṛṣṇā* is narrated⁹⁷.

Viṣṇūsamhita is a popular Vaiṣṇava scripture on *tantric* rituals and the work is widely used in Kerala temples. According to Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, this work was written by an anonymous Keralite Viṣṇu *bhakta*⁹⁸. Many commentaries were also written on *Viṣṇu samhita* in medieval Kerala. A commentary called *Hārinī* was written by a Nambūdiri of Puliyannūr and another commentary known as *Tattvaparakāśika* was written by Nāgaswāmi Nambūdiri⁹⁹. *Pāṇḍāvacaritamkāvyā* is the summary of *Mahābhārata* in sixteen cantos produced in seventeenth century¹⁰⁰. Many commentaries were written on various Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* works and *stōstras* in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Many commentaries were also written on *Mukundamāla*, *Yudhisṭhīravijaya*, *Viṣṇukēśādīpādistōtra*, *Viṣṇusahasranāma*, *Bhāgavata* and various subsections in *Mahābhārata*.

Bhāgavatapurāṇa is written in *Pātīṭī* and prose styles in Malayalam in medieval period. This cultural trend became popular since sixteenth century¹⁰¹. *Bhāgavatampātīṭī* is an anonymous work in *Pātīṭī* style on *Bhāgavata*. *Gurudakṣīnapātīṭī* deals with Kṛṣṇa's stay at the hermitage of sage Sāndīpini and *Bhāgavatamgadyam* or *Bhāgavatasangraham Bhāṣā* is a prose work on *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. The tenth and eleventh *skandas* are translated in a comprehensive manner in this work. It is significant that *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* was a source for a large number of literary productions in medieval Kerala. The popularity of *Bhāgavata* tradition paved the way for the advent of many Kṛṣṇa based mural paintings, sculptures and wood carvings¹⁰².

Dramas

Only a few dramas were produced in the post- Cēra age and two dramas among them had Vaiṣṇava themes. *Pradyumnābhyudayam* is a drama written by Ravivarma Kulaśēkhara of Vēṅṅāṭī¹⁰³. This stage play deals

with the story of Vajranābha as narrated in the seven chapters from chapter ninety one onwards in the *Viṣṇūparva* of *Harivamśa*. This drama consists of five acts. Nīlakanṭha wrote one act play called *Kalyāṇāsaugandhika* on Bhima's fetching for Saugandhika flowers for Draupadi¹⁰⁴.

Stray References to Vaiṣṇava themes

Apart from the above mentioned Rāma and Kṛṣṇa works, various medieval literary works of Kerala contain stray references to Vaiṣṇava themes. The *Sandēśakāvya*s and *Sthalamāhātmya*s refer to Viṣṇu temples and Vaiṣṇava divinities and it is significant that a new genre of literature known as *Sthalamāhātmya*s on Vaiṣṇava centres were produced in large numbers in the post-Cēra age¹⁰⁵. *Unṅunīlisandēśa* contains several references to Viṣṇu and his incarnatory forms. The anonymous author of *Unṅunīlisandēśa* made a beautiful description of Viṣṇu while mentioning about the Tiruvananthapuram temple¹⁰⁶. Padmanabha, the deity, is celebrated in this *Sandēśakāvya*. The poet prostrates before Padmanabha and the god is described as the one who took the ten forms to preserve the world. *Ananthaśayana* form of the deity of Tiruvananthapuram temple is beautifully described and there are references to the elimination of Hiraṇyakaśipu by Narasimha, *Gōvardhanōdharanā* episode, the Gopala story and the childhood plays of Kṛṣṇa. The *daśāvatāra* forms are also narrated in a beautiful style¹⁰⁷. Similar to this, references are made about Kṛṣṇa while referring to the deity of Varkala temple¹⁰⁸. It is mentioned that the deity is the one who killed Narakasura. Also the deity is referred to as the son of Nandagopa and as Vēnugopala. These references show the influence of *Bhāgavata* which contain all these stories.

It is mentioned in *Ananthapuravarnānam* that the *Manīpravālī*am poets did the job of writing in *Manīpravālī*am by combining both Tamil and

Sanskrit just like the devotees of Viṣṇu making garlands of different flowers for Viṣṇu¹⁰⁹. The *daśāvatāra* forms of Viṣṇu are described in details in this work when the glories of the deity of Tiruvananthapuram are narrated¹¹⁰. While referring to various *avatāras*, the poet summarises the main stories associated with these incarnations. It is significant that various stories of *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* are described in the last part of the work¹¹¹. *Śilparatna* of Śrīkumāra contains a beautiful narration of Viṣṇu in the beginning of the work¹¹². Similarly Viṣṇu is praised in *Kōkasandēśa* while referring to Govindapuram, Guruvāyūr and Triprāyar temples¹¹³. There are references to Viṣṇu and Lakṣmi in various works. For instance Unnikutīthi's marriage with a price of Ōṭānātī is referred to as equivalent to Lakṣmi's wedding with Viṣṇu in *Unniātīcaritam*¹¹⁴. All these stray references reveal the influence of Vaiṣṇavism on the poets of medieval Kerala.

Was Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult instrumental in the evolution of Malayalam language and literature? How far Viṣṇu *bhakti* was a catalyst in the literary creations of medieval Kerala? Viṣṇu *bhakti* provided a multitude of themes for literary productions and paved the way for the evolution of Malayalam literature and language. Free renderings on *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata* were produced and various sub-plots in *Itihāsic -Purāṇic* works were compiled in large numbers in various stages of the development of Malayalam. The major literary creations of different stages in the evolution of Malayalam literature were of Rāma or Kṛṣṇa works. This discussion may give rise to certain problems regarding the social background of the poets of medieval Kerala. What was the social background of the poets of medieval Kerala? Were they Brahmins? It is significant that many of the poets were Brahmins. However there were also non-Brahmin poets who made notable

contributions in the field of *bhakti* literature. The non-Brahmin poets of the age belonged to Nāyar community. The advent of Nāyar poets and their literary endeavours contributed to the spread of Viśṅṅu *bhakti* among non-Brahmin segments¹¹⁵. An important aspect is that no literary figure emerged in the medieval period from among the downtrodden sections in the society. The domination of caste rules pervaded the entire societal structure in that age which debarred the downtrodden sections from the benefits of knowledge. However *Itihāsic-Purānīc* values spread among non-Brahmins in the form of folk arts and folk literature¹¹⁶

Was royal patronage a catalyst in the emergence of Vaisṅṅava literature in the post-Cēra age? Royal patronage was instrumental in the production of various literary works in the post-Cēra age as in the previous period. Various kings and chieftains of the post-Cēra age were patrons of poets. A significant aspect is that many of the kings were literary figures. The royal poets like Ravi Varma Kulaśēkhara and Āditya Varma Sarvānganātha of Vēnīātīu, Mānavēda of Calicut, Pūrātīam Tirunālī of Ambalapulīa and Ravi Varma of Vetīttattunātīu contributed to the development of Kerala literature. Many of the poets and scholars such as Punam Nambūdiri, Cerīuśśēri Nambūdiri, Śankara Kavi, Mēlppattūr Nārāyanīa Bhatītatiri and Vāsudēva received patronage from various kings and chieftains. A number of *Itihāsic - Purānīc* works were produced in medieval Kerala which point to the growing popularity of *Itihāsic - Purānīc* tradition and this resulted in the growth of Vaisṅṅavism too. The *Ksīētramāhātmyas* were influenced by the *Purānīc* tradition as these works were produced in the form of *Purānīas*.

Was Vaisṅṅavism instrumental in the growth of medieval Indian literature? Did *Itihāsic - Purānīc* tradition and Vaisṅṅavism influence

literature in other regional languages or was it a unique feature of medieval Kerala literature only? A survey of the literary productions in medieval Indian literature makes clear that the Vaiṣṇava religion played a key role in enriching regional languages and literatures. A striking aspect of the medieval Indian literature is that a large number of free renderings of epics and *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* were produced in different languages. The development of various languages and literatures was closely linked with the Vaiṣṇava literature¹¹⁷. The Assamese literature was developed under the influence of Śankara Dēva and his disciples who lived in the fifteenth century. Many *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhāgavata* works were produced by these Vaiṣṇava poets¹¹⁸. The influence of *Bhāgavata* on fifteenth century Assamese was so immense that the Assamese literature of the period is known as ‘the age of one scripture- *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*’¹¹⁹. Many Assamese poets such as Ānanda Kandali, Rāma Saraswati, Gopinatha Pathaka, Dāmōdara Dāsa, Lakṣminatha Dvija, Prthurāma Dvija, Bhagavat Misra and Bhatīta Dēva wrote many works on *Rāmāyaṇa* and other Vaiṣṇava themes¹²⁰.

The Bengali literature in medieval period was also enriched by the Vaiṣṇava tradition¹²¹. Vidyapati, Candidās, Krittivāsa, Ratnapāṇi, Murāri Misra, Mālādhara Vāsu and Kāsirāma Dāsa were some of the prominent medieval Bengali *bhakti* poets who contributed to the enrichment of Bengali literature. Viṣṇu *bhakti* was a dominating note of the middle Gujarati literature too. Gujarati poets such as Narsimha Mehta, Bhalana, Premananda and Dayārām had to their credit many Vaiṣṇava works which point to the evolution of Gujarati literature¹²². Similarly the medieval Kannada literature saw a proliferation of free renderings on *Mahābhārata*, *Bhāgavata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*¹²³. Pampa wrote a Kannada version of *Mahābhārata* known as

Pampa Bhārata in the tenth-eleventh centuries and Nāgachandra wrote *Rāmacandracaritapurāṇa*, a work on *Rāmāyaṇa*, in the twelfth century.

The *bhakti* poets such as Jnānadēva, Ekanatha, Tukarām, Rāmadās, Muktesvara, Vāmana Pandita, Raghunātha Pandita and Śrīdhara retold the stories of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* in Marathi which resulted in the development of Marathi¹²⁴. In medieval Orissa, Mārkaṇḍa Dāsa, Sārāla Dāsa, the *Pancasakhas*- Balarāma Dāsa, Yasovanta Dāsa, Achyutānanda Dāsa, Jagannātha Dāsa and Anantha Dāsa– and several other *bhakti* poets advocated Vaisṇavism and their literature deals with various stories on Rāma and Kṛṣṇa¹²⁵. The development of Telugu literature and language also owes a great deal to Vaisṇava works – *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas*. The *Kavitraya* (the trio among poets) - Nannayya, Tikkanṇa and Eranṇa- of Telugu heralded a new era in Telugu literature by compiling *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* works¹²⁶. Nannayya's *Mahābhārataṃ* of eleventh century marks an epoch in the history of Telugu literature. Tikkanṇa wrote *Nirvacanōttara Rāmāyaṇa* in the thirteenth century. He also contributed to the completion of the *Mahābhārataṃ* of Nannayya. After Tikkanṇa, Eranṇa completed the composition of *Mahābhārataṃ*. Besides, poets like Śrīnātha, Pōtana, Rāmabhadra Kavi, Pingali Sūranṇa and a host of others wrote on different themes in *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata*¹²⁷.

The *Itihāsic -Purāṇic* literature was retold by medieval Indian poets in regional languages. Free renderings on *Itihāsas* and *Purāṇas* promoted and developed regional languages and literature. The repertory for literary creations was provided chiefly by the Vaisṇava cult stories in *Itihāsic -Purāṇic* literature. Why did Vaisṇava themes enjoy wider popularity among poets of India? Vaisṇava themes on Rāma and Kṛṣṇa traditions provided

thematic substance to poets and the concept of *avatāra* had popular appeal among the masses. The child pranks of Kṛṣṇā and the wars of Rāma also had appeal to the poets and *bhaktas*. Śaivism with less number of cult stories and with the least number of popular themes such as the childhood plays of Kṛṣṇā was not so attractive to the creative minds. The medieval regional literatures of India developed mainly under Vaiṣṇava influence and medieval Kerala literature was not an exception to this. Mysticism and the elements of Viṣṇu *bhakti* poured out from the literary works of the period. This resulted in the popularisation of Vaiṣṇava cult themes and Brahminic ideology. Hence it acquired the qualities of a *bhakti* movement too.

Notes and References:

1. *Nālāyira Divya Prabadam, Perumālī Tirumolīi- pāsūrams*- 647-752.
2. *Ibid.*, *pāsūrams* - 719-741.
3. *Ibid.*, *pāsūrams* - 741-752.
4. See chapter II, Note no. 84.
5. See chapter II.
6. There is no reference to the authorship in the work. See *Mukundamāla*, *op.cit.* ; Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.I, pp.104-105; K.K. Raja, *op.cit.*, pp. 4-6.
7. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.214.
8. *E.I.*, Vol. VII., p. 197.
9. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p. 215.
10. See chapter I, Note no.61.
11. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.216; K.K. Raja, *op.cit.*, p. 205.
12. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer argues that the name Ravidēva denotes Ravi's son i.e., Vāsudēva. Hence, he identified Ravidēva and Vāsudēva as identical persons. However M.G.S. Narayanan identified Ravidēva as a *Yamaka* poet who lived as a contemporary of Cēra king Rājaditya. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.I, pp.139-141; M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996.
13. As quoted in Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.I, p.140.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-133.
15. K.K. Raja, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-19; Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma Raja, *op.cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 123-132; Also see chapter I, Note no.61.
16. *Subhadradhananjaya*, Preamble.
17. *Tapatisamvaranā, Anka-II*.
18. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.I, pp.103-104. Also see M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.149.
19. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.I, p.131; Adoor K.K. Ramachandran Nair, *op.cit.*, pp.18-24.
20. K.M. George, "Tamil Misra Sahithyam" in K.M. George, *op.cit.*, 2008, pp.156-157
21. See for the text of *Rāmacaritam*, P.V. Krishnan Nair (ed.), *Rāmacaritam pattu*, Kottayam, 1956, rpt.1963. See chapter I, Note no.61.
22. *Rāmacaritam pātītu, pātīala -1, pātītu-2 and 3*.
23. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.I, p.302.
24. K.M. George, *Ramacaritam and the study of Early Malayalam*, Kottayam, 1956, pp.28-32.
25. See introduction to *Nambyār Tamil* in P.K. Sumathikutty (ed.), *Nambyār Tamil*, T.M.S. No.171, Tiruvananthapuram, 1990, p.xi.

26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, pp.x-xi.
28. K.M. George, *op.cit.*, 2008, pp. 174-177.
29. *Kaṅṅāśśā Rāmāyanāam, Bālakāṅṅāam, pātītīu-2.*
30. See chapter I, Note no.61.
31. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.I, pp.293-294.
32. This is included in the beginning verses of *Rāmakathappātītīu* which used to be sung by the singers in certain areas of Southern Travancore. See introduction to *Ramakathappātītīu* in P.K. Narayana Pillai, *op.cit.*, pp.54-56.
33. *Ibid.*, pp.60-63.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-80; M. Lilavathi, *op.cit.*, p.70.
35. See chapter I, Note no.61.
36. *Bhāśā Rāmāyanāam Campu, op.cit.*
37. V. Raghavan, “The Ramayana in Sanskrit Literature” in V. Raghavan (ed.), *The Ramayana Tradition in Asia*, New Delhi, 1980, rpt.1998, p.10; Rama Ranjan Mukherji, “Sanskrit and Sanskritic fables” in Suniti Kumar Chatterji (ed.), *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. V, Calcutta, 1978, rpt.2001, pp.224-225.
38. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.II, pp. 200-201.
39. *Ibid.*, p.216.
40. *Ibid.*, pp.554-557.
41. V. Raghavan, *op.cit.*, pp. 17-18; Fr. Kamil Bulcke, *Ramakatha*, (trans.) Abhaya dev, Trissur, 1978, rpt.1999, pp.177-178.
42. *Ibid.*
43. C.R. Sarma, “Ramayana in Telugu Literature and Folklore” in V. Raghavan, *op.cit.*, 1998, p.232.
44. See chapter IV.
45. See *Adhyātma Rāmāyanāam Kilīppātītīu.*
46. *Adhyātma Rāmāyanāam Kilīppātītīu, Bālakāṅṅāam*, Lines – 1-10, 57-58.
47. Ulloor S.Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.II, pp.611-613; Krishna Chaithanya, *A History of Malayalam Literature*, Bombay, 1971, rpt.1995, pp.82-88.
48. Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma Raja, *op.cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 47-58; Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, pp.408-418.
49. See chapter IX.
50. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol. III., pp.105-108; Krishna Chaithanya, *op. cit.*, pp.96-97; Aimanam Krishna Kaimal, *Keralathile Drisyakalasaahithyam*, Tiruvananthapuram, 2006, pp. 73-75.
51. K.K. Raja, *op.cit.*, pp. 238-239.
52. *Ibid.*, p.239.

53. *Ibid.*, p.161.
54. *Ibid.*, pp.110-111.
55. *Ibid.*, p.242.
56. Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma Raja, *op.cit.*, Vol. I., pp. 492-497.
57. *Ibid.*, pp.284-285.
58. See chapter. IX.
59. *Bhāratamāla, op.cit.*
60. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.I., pp.379-381; M. Lilavathy, *op.cit.*, p.59.
61. *Bhāratamāla, Ādiparvam, slokas-23-68, Sabhāparvam, slokas-33-34, Śāntiparvam, slokas-17-20, Musalaparvam slokas – 14-16.*
62. *Ibid.*, Ādiparvam, ślōka-5.
63. *KaṅṅāśśaBhagavata, op.cit.*
64. *Ibid*, chpater I, ślōkas - 1 and 4.
65. *BhāṣṅāBhagavad Gītā, op.cit.*
66. *Ibid.*, chapter I, ślōkas, 3-6.
67. See the text *Śivarātrimāhātmyam* (Kerala Sahithya Akademi Edition), Thrissur, 1968, rpt.1997.
68. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol. II, pp. 142-143; M.G.S. Narayanan, “Kṛishnagathayile Kalasuchanakal”, *Vinjana Kairali*, 6.7, December, 1974, p.592; V.R. Probohdhachandran Nair, *Cerusseri*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1999, pp. 26-49.
69. For the reference to Udayavarman Kolathiri’s role in the composition of *Kṛiṣṅṅāgātha* see the last portion of the work.
70. *Śṛiṣṅṅāvijaya, op.cit.*; See for the discussion regarding the fixation of the period of the work, Reeja B. Kavanal, *Srikrishnavijaya of Sankarakavi: A Critical Study*, Tehnhipalam, 2003, p.8.
71. *Srikrishnavijaya*, 1.16.
72. Reeja, B. Kavanal, *op.cit.*, pp. 8-15.
73. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol. II, pp. 166-178.
74. See various works of Pūntānam Nambūdiri in A.P.P. Namboodiri, *op.cit.*, pp. 117-126.
75. See *Srikrishnakarnāmrītam* in the collection of the works of Pūntānam Nambūdiri in V.A. Sharma *op.cit.*, pp. 33-78.
76. *Ibid.*, pp.1-19, 79-125.
77. *Ibid.*, pp.129-156.
78. *Ibid.*, pp.157-274.
79. Cerukunnam Purushothaman, *Poonthnavum Bhakti Prasthanavum*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1992, rpt.2000, pp.60-62.

80. Pūntānam Nambūdiri severely criticized the fellow Brahmins in *Jnānappāna* for egoistic world view and for leading degenerated life. Instead of performing expensive rituals, Pūntānam exhorted to chant the names of Hari. See *Jnānappāna*, lines-177-248.
81. K.V. Krishna Ayyar, *op.cit.*, 1999, pp.297-298; Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma Raja, *op.cit.*, Vol.III, pp.214-237; Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.III, pp.1-15; K.K.Raja, *op.cit.*, pp.101-102; Also see chapter IV.
82. See chapter IX.
83. See chapters IV and IX.
84. *Nārāyaṅīyam, Śrī Mannārāyaṅīyam, op.cit.*
85. Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma Raja, *op.cit.*, Vol.III, pp.58-128; K.K. Raja, *op.cit.*, p. 146.
86. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.II, pp.393-395, 408-418; K.K. Raja, *op.cit.*, pp. 143-146.
87. *Śrī Krīśṅakarnāmrīta, op.cit.*
88. See chapter I, Note no. 61.
89. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.III, pp.7-8, 53-77 .
90. K.K. Raja, *op. cit.*, p.243.
91. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op. cit.*, 1990, Vol. II, pp. 210-211.
92. *Ibid.*, pp. 216-224, *passim*.
93. *Ibid.*, pp.313-314; K.K. Raja, *op. cit.*, p.150.
94. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op. cit.*, 1990, Vol. II, pp.314-316.
95. *Ibid.*, pp.324-326.
96. K.K. Raja, *op.cit.*, p.58.
97. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, pp. 97-98.
98. *Ibid.*, pp.348-349.
99. *Ibid.*
100. *Ibid.*, pp. 379-380.
101. *Ibid.*, pp. 178-183, 281-282.
102. See chapter IX. Also see Appendix-VII.
103. See Chapter I, Note no. 61.
104. K.K.Rja, *op.cit.*, pp.216-217.
105. N.M. Nambudiri, "Cultural Traditions in Medieval Kerala" in P.J. Cherian, *op.cit.*, pp. 276-277; Also see chapter IV.
106. *Unīlisandēśam, ślōkas-* 37-42, 47.
107. *Ibid.*, ślōka-40.
108. *Ibid.*, ślōka-67.
109. *Anantapuravarnānam, ślōka-8.*
110. *Ibid.*, ślōkas-164-172, 183.

111. *Ibid.*, ślōkas-164-184.
112. K.Sambasiva Sastri (ed.), *Śilparatna, Uttarahāga*, Pt.II, Tiruvanathapuram, 1929, ślōka-1.
113. *Kōkasandēśa*, ślōkas -32, 36, 41, 42.
114. *Unñiñātīcaritam*, ślōkas - 131, 137.
115. See chapter IV.
116. See chapter IX.
117. J.N. Farquhar, *op.cit.*, pp. 296-330.
118. Maheswar Neog, “Assamese” in Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *op.cit.*, pp. 421-423.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 421.
120. *Ibid.*, pp. 422-427; N.C. Sarma, *The Vaisnavite Poets of North Eastern India*, Calcutta, 1991, pp.2-103, *passim*.
121. S.C.Mukherji, *op.cit.*, pp.80-84, 108-161, *passim*.
122. K.M. Jhaweri, “Gujarati” in Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *op.cit.*, pp. 477-482.
123. K.M.George, *op.cit.*, 1994, pp.59-62.
124. J.N. Farquhar, *op.cit.*, pp. 296-330.
125. K.C. Mishra, “Oriya” in Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *op.cit.*, pp.563-567.
126. M. Kulasekhara Rao, *A History of Telugu Literature*, Hyderabad, 1988, pp. 25-53, 63-71.
127. G.N. Reddy, “Telugu” in Suniti Kumar Chatterji, *op.cit.*, pp. 625-630.

Chapter IX

VAISŪNAVISM IN ARTS

The Rāma and Krīśṇa cults had a key role in the development of medieval Kerala arts. *Rāmāyanā* and *Bhāgavatapurānā* with a multitude of Vaisṇava cult stories provided thematic substance to artistic expressions. The proliferation of structural temples gave a fresh impetus to medieval Kerala artists. The iconic representations of Viṣṇu and Vaisṇava themes came out in large numbers in the aftermath of the spread of the Viṣṇu *bhakti* movement. Various Vaisṇava cult legends on Krīśṇa and Rāma in *Bhāgavata- Bhārata- Rāmāyanā* traditions provided thematic substance to the sculptural artists and the mural painters. The ideology of Viṣṇu *bhakti* also instilled the growth of temple theatre and dance-dramas. This paved the way for the development of *Kūttu*, *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *Pāṭṭakam* in the Cēra age and various dance-dramas in the post-Cēra age.

Vaisṇavism in Sculptural Art

The earliest iconic representation of Viṣṇu is found in the Irunilakkōṭṭu rock-cut temple near Triśūr¹. This is the only Vaisṇava representation found in the rock-cut temples of Kerala. The rock-cut temples of Kallil, Trikkūr, Kaviyūr, Tirunadikkara, Tirucāṇāthu, Bhrāntanpāra and Kotṭṭukkal bear no images of Viṣṇu. The rock temples of Kaviyūr, Kotṭṭukkal, Bhrāntanpāra and Trikkūr contain only Śaiva iconic representations and those of Kallil and Tirucāṇāthu were Jain centres of worship². What does it stand for? Does this point to the scanty popularity of Vaisṇavism in the pre-Cēra age? The prevalence of Śaiva iconic representation in the rock architecture of Kerala is a pointer to the profuse popularity of Śaivism and rarity of Vaisṇava iconic representations in the

rock-cut temples is a pointer to the meager popularity of the Vaisṇava religion in the pre-Cēra and early Cēra ages. It is significant in this context that the Śaiva devotional movement spread in Kerala prior to the growth of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult and Śaivism was more popular among Brahmin settlers³. A vague sculptural representation of Viṣṇu is found engraved on the left wall of the cave at Irunnilakkōṭṭu⁴. Viṣṇu is a standing figure in *tribhanga* pose with *karaṇḍāmakutā*, *cakra* and *śanka*. The two back hands are in uplifted position and the two front hands are in lowered pose. This image displays the influence of the Pallava style⁵. The cave temple at Irunnilakkōṭṭu is dedicated to Śiva in Dakṣiṇāmūrti form. P. Anujan Achan of the Archaeology department of Cochin government recognized the Śaiva sculptural representation at Irunnilakkōṭṭu as Śankara Nārāyaṇa and later M.G.S. Narayanan identified it as Dakṣiṇāmūrti⁶.

The proliferation of structural temples and the propagation of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult in the Cēra period had a key role in the development of Vaisṇava iconic art. How far was the ideology of *bhakti* instrumental in the progress of Vaisṇava iconic art in Kerala? Did the growth of *bhakti* cult pave the way for the development of iconic art in other areas of south India? Viṣṇu *bhakti* was a source of inspiration for the sculptors. Sculptural art developed under the stamp of Vaisṇavism as decorative art and as a means to impart *Āgamic*-Brahminic values. *Bhakti* cult was a catalyst for the development of temple arts in early medieval south India⁷. Temple centred *bhakti* resulted in the growth of temple as the nucleus of the society. Slowly temples also afforded patronage to arts. Iconic arts in temples had an educative value too. Art was intended for diffusing *Āgamic* and *Purāṇic* cult themes in the society. The Vaisṇava devotional movement with the socio-cultural objective of the transmission of Brahminic ideology played the role of a catalyst in the sculptural activities in medieval India. Vaisṇavism with the rich repertory of

themes and cult figures provided immense scope for artistic endeavors. The Gupta and the Cālūkyā periods witnessed a spur in the image building endeavors⁸. The age of the Pallavas, the Cōlīas and the Pānḍīyas in south India which witnessed the growth of Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult also saw the development of Vaisṅṅava iconography⁹. In nutshell, Vaisṅṅavism and the Vaisṅṅava devotional movement were catalysts in the development of the iconography related to them in different parts of medieval India.

Unlike in the Pallava, Cōlīa and Pānḍīya kingdoms, sculptural panels representing Vaisṅṅava stories are rarely found in the Cēra temples. The only expression of a Vaisṅṅava theme in stone panels in the Cēra age is found in Cōkiram Śiva temple¹⁰. The stone panels on the Vaisṅṅava stories from *Bhāgavatapurāṅa* are carved in this temple. These panels include *Kālīyamardana*, the marriage procession of Dēvaki and Vasudēva and *Gōvardhanōdharanā* episodes. The Cēra sculptural panels representing *Rāmāyanā* episodes are found conspicuously lacking. The Cēra temples of Tiruvancikkulāṅam, Talakkātṅu, Triccambaram, Porngātṅiri, Mānipuram, Cokkūr, Thalakkulāṅattūr, Tirukkulaśēkharapuram and Triprangōtṅu bear broken images of Visṅṅu¹¹.

Images of Visṅṅu which can be assignable to the ninth–tenth centuries are discovered from Kalīṅakkūtṅam and Eramam¹². The two bell metal images of Tiruvananthapuram museum, one in copper and the other in bronze, are also datable to the age of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram¹³. Many Visṅṅu temples of the Cēra age still contain the original images of Visṅṅu in the sanctum sanctorum. These images were intended for worship as main idols. Original idols were reinstalled in several cases as and when reconstruction of temples was held in the subsequent centuries. The chief idols were removed only if the images are seriously damaged. The sanctum sanctorums of the Cēra

temples of Triccambaram, Tiruppuliyūr, Tiruvalla, Tirunāva, Tiruārāṅmulā, Tirukkulaśēkharapuram and Tirunelli contain images datable to the age of the Cēras¹⁴. It is apparent from a survey of the Viṣṇū idols of the Cēra age that the images of Viṣṇū have certain common features. Often the images of Viṣṇū are in standing pose with four hands. The front left hand is in *katīyavilāmbita* style while the front right hand is either in *abhaya* or in *varada* postures. The back hands usually hold *śanka* and *cakra* and the thick *yajnopavita* in the idol appears to have fallen over the right arm. The crown of the idol is commonly in cylindrical shape. Nīramanīkara in the vicinity of Tiruvananthapuram bears an image of Viṣṇū. Stella Kramrisch who noticed this image assigned it to the fourteenth century¹⁵. Apparently this image has all the chief attributes of the Cēra sculptures. It is a standing image with four hands. The back hands hold *śanka* and *cakra* while the bottom left hand is in *katīyavilāmbita* style. The front right hand is in *abhaya* pose with the *yajnopavita* falling over the right hand. It is certain from the peculiarities of Nīramanīkara image that the immediate post-Cēra images also have the attributes of the Cēra images.

According to *Vaikhānasāgama*, the four armed standing image of Viṣṇū with *śanka* and *cakra* respectively in upper left and right hands and lower left arm in *katīyavilāmbita* style with lower right arm either in *abhaya* or in *varada* postures is that of the *Yōgasthānakamūrti* variety of the Vaisṇāva iconic classification¹⁶. Only the images of *Yōgasthānakamūrti* were mainly sculptured extensively in the Cēra age. A survey of the Vaisṇāva iconography of the contemporary Cōlā and Pāṇḍīya kingdoms also reveals that *Yōgasthānakamūrti* form of Viṣṇū was a popular theme¹⁷. In this context, the prevalence of *Yōgasthānakamūrti* images in the Cēra kingdom indicates the penetration of the artistic tradition that was prevalent in the Cōlā-Pāṇḍīya kingdoms into the Cēra kingdom.

There are certain other varieties of Viṣṇū images which can be datable to the Cēra period. One such image is found in the sanctum sanctorum of Tiruvalla temple. It is a standing image of Viṣṇū with four arms. The upper hands hold *śanka* and *cakra* while the lower right hand holds *padma* and the lower left hand is in *kat'yavil'ambitahasta* style. The *yajnopavita* falls over the right arm, the ears are conspicuously big which touch even the shoulders and the crown of the idol is in *karan'dāmakut'a* style. The chief images in the central shrines of Tirunāva, Tirunelli, Tiruppuliyūr, Tirukkulaśēkharapuram and Triprayār temples have four arms with the typical attributes ie., *śanka*, *cakra*, *gada* and *padma*. It seems that along with a large number of *Yōgasthānakamūrti* images, images of Viṣṇū with *śanka*, *cakra*, *gada* and *padma* were also produced in the Cēra age. Another unique image of Viṣṇū is found in the sanctum sanctorum of Kūt'al Mān'ikyam temple at Irinjālakkuṭ'a. This is also a standing image with four arms. The distribution of the attributes in the four hands is unique in style. The back hands hold *gada* and *cakra* while the front right hand is in *varada* pose with *akṣ'amāla* and the front left hand holds *śanka*. The idol has *karan'dāmakut'a* crown.

The Tiruvat'tār and Tiruvananthapuram temples have *śayanamūrti* images of Viṣṇū as chief idols in the *garbhagriha*. The *pāsurams* of Nammāl'vār refer to the deity of Tiruvananthapuram as the one reclining on serpent Anantha¹⁸. It seems that the place-name Tiruvananthapuram or Ananthapuram is derived from the name of the serpent bed of Viṣṇū, 'Anantha'. Various medieval literary works refer to the reclining posture of the deity of Tiruvananthapuram temple. *Syānandūrapurān'asamuccya* mentions the deity as 'Ananthaśāyi Viṣṇū'¹⁹. *Un'ūnilisandēśa* refers to the deity as 'Bhujagaśāyi' or 'Ananthaśāyi' and as Padmanabha²⁰. *Ananthapuravarn'anam* also contains references to the *śayana* image of Viṣṇū²¹. The present image, which contains twelve thousand *sāl'agrāmas* has

two arms with the right arm stretching towards a small Śivalinga and the left arm holding a *padma*, was installed in 1739 AD during the reign of Anizham Tirunālī Mārtānīdīa Varma²². It is held that the right arm is performing the ritual worship of Siva. However, the *śayana* images in other parts of India do not contain Śivalinga. The previous idol which was replaced in 1739AD was a wooden idol and the temple records reveal that no alteration in the style and particulars was made when the previous idol was substituted with a new idol²³. This indicates that the current idol is the replica of the one that existed in the medieval age.

The *śayana* images of Viṣṇū are found in Mahiśāmarḍini cave at Māmallapuram, Singavaram cave temple, Śrīrangam, Yathokātakarai, Nāmakkal, Tirueyyam, Tiruttangal, and Vinnamparai in South India²⁴. The *śayanamūrti* images are also found in Deogarh, Mathura, Udaigiri and Rajim in north and central India²⁵. Another notable idol of *śayanamūrti* is found at Aihole²⁶. A notable feature of the geographical distribution of *Ananthaśayanam* images in Kerala is that they are mainly found in southern Kerala which constituted the erstwhile Vēṅṅātīu chieftdom. Why *śayanamūrti* images were mainly popular in South Kerala? It appears that the Vēṅṅātīu chieftains who held sway over South Kerala were the devotees of Ananthaśāyi Viṣṇū of Tiruvananthapuram temple. As discussed earlier the Viṣṇū temple at Tiruvananthapuram was a royal temple which prospered under the patronage of Vēṅṅātīu rulers²⁷. The political influence of Vēṅṅātīu rulers and the cultural sway of Tiruvananthapuram temple were well established in south Kerala and this accounts for the popularity of *Ananthaśayanam* images in southern Kerala.

Images of Vaikunṭīānātha form or *āsanamūrti* variety of Viṣṇū are also found in Kerala which can be datable to the Cēra age. One such idol is

found at Ananthapuram temple at Kumbalā in north Kerala. This image has four arms with the back hands holding *śanka* and *cakra* and the front arms in *abhaya* and *varada* postures. Two consorts of Viṣṇu— Lakṣmidēvi and Bhūmidēvi- are also present on either side of the deity. Another *āsanamūrti* image of Viṣṇu is found in the sanctum sanctorum of Trippūnīthura temple. This idol can be assigned to the thirteenth century as it is stated in a temple record that the main image of the temple was recast in the fag end of the thirteenth century following a mishap occurred in the temple²⁸. The new idol, the present one, was recast in the same style in which the previous idol was made. *Śukasandēśa* refers to this image while speaking about Trippūnīthura temple and the idol is referred to as in sitting posture on Anantha²⁹. The present idol is in sitting posture on Anantha with *śanka* and *cakra* in the upper hands. The bottom right hand holds a *padma* in the open palm while the bottom left hand rests upon a *pīṭha*. This image is similar to that of the *Bhōgāsanamūrti* image of Viṣṇu at Badami³⁰.

An important feature of the Vaisṇava iconography of the Cēra age is that the images of Viṣṇu with four arms were commonly produced, while the images of various incarnatory forms of Viṣṇu were rarely produced. The image of Krīṣṇā in the sanctum sanctorum of Triccambaram temple is an important iconic representation of Viṣṇu in Krīṣṇā form which is datable to the Cēra age. *Mūsāakavamśakāvya* refers to the temple and the deity³¹. The image of Krīṣṇā is in standing pose with two arms. The right hand holds a *lagutam* and the left hand which touches the waist carries a conch. Another idol of an *avatāra* form of Viṣṇu comes from Kōtālil temple at Perumbalam near Patītāmbi. This image is that of Vāmana which is consecrated as the chief deity in the sanctum sanctorum. The idol is about 135 cm height and has four arms with *śanka*, *cakra*, *kamanīdālu* and *danīdū*³².

An image of Narasimha in a sub-shrine in the vicinity of Palīkkuruppu Viṣṇu temple at Kārakuriśsi has *śanka*, *cakra*, sword and a bowl in the four hands and this image can also be datable to the Cēra age³³. The Panniyūr temple has the image of Varāhamūrti in semi-animal form. The image has the face of Varāha and human body. The sitting image holds *śanka* and *cakra* in the back hands and *padma* in the bottom left hand. The bottom right hand is in *abhaya* pose. This temple is one among the thirty two original Brahmin settlements and the place-name which means ‘the village of swine’ (place of swine) originated from the Varāha identity of the deity³⁴. An undated Cēra record of eleventh century reveals that the place was known in the Cēra age as ‘Panriyūr’ from which the present name is derived³⁵. Another prominent temple of Varāha was Śrī Varāham temple at Tiruvananthapuram. The post-Cēra panegyric works such as *Syānandūrapurāṇāsamuccaya* and *Ananthapuravarnānam* refer to Varāha *tīrtha* as a holy spot in the sacred geography of Tiruvanathapuram temple³⁶. The Varāha *tīrtha* is identified as the present Śrī Varāham temple.

A unique aspect of Viṣṇu worship in the Cēra age was that the images of four armed Viṣṇu were often identified with different incarnatory forms. The Ālīvār saints who traversed the length and breadth of Kerala glorify various images of Viṣṇu in incarnatory forms such as Krīṣṇā, Rāma, Vāmana and Narasimha³⁷. Similar to this, the Ālīvārs had glorified the Viṣṇu images in the temples of the Cōlā, the Pāṇḍya and the Pallava kingdoms as *avatāras*³⁸. The glorification of the idols of Viṣṇu as various *avatāras* influenced the development of the practice of worshipping *avatāras* in the images of four armed Viṣṇu. This did not necessitate the production of the images of separate *avatāras*. This practice continued in the post-Cēra age even at a time when the popularity of Krīṣṇā and Rāma stories under the impact of *Bhāgavata* and *Rāmāyaṇā* traditions reached a high point of

fame³⁹. Visṅṅu *bhaktas* identified various Vaisṅṅava images with *avatāra* forms of their interest. For instance the four armed image of Visṅṅu with *śanka*, *cakra*, *padma* and *gada* in Guruvāyūr temple was identified and glorified as Krīśṅṅa by *bhaktas* who lived in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries⁴⁰. Similar to this, *bhaktas* began to worship the Visṅṅu image of Tiruārṅmulṅa temple as Pārthasārathi and the four armed image of Visṅṅu at Cāttankulṅangara temple as Narasimha⁴¹. The four armed image of Visṅṅu in Triprayār temple is celebrated as Rāma and the idol of the Visṅṅu in Tirumūṅṅikkalṅam temple is glorified as Laksṅṅmanṅa⁴².

Along with this, the practice of making individual images of various forms of Visṅṅu also attained popularity in the post-Cēra age. This trend was expressed more in wood carvings. What was the catalyst for an upsurge in the proliferation of the images of incarnatory forms? The post-Cēra age saw the production of *Itihāsas* and *Purānṅas* in large number which resulted in the increased popularity of *Rāmāyanṅa* and *Bhāgavata*⁴³. The wider popularity of *avatāra* stories in *Bhāgavatapurānṅa* was a stimulant for the advent of the sculptural representation of the incarnatory forms of Visṅṅu in an extensive manner. One such image of Krīśṅṅa comes from Nārāyankanṅṅūr near Kanṅṅūr in north Kerala⁴⁴. This is a standing image of Krīśṅṅa in Bālakrīśṅṅa form. This image has only two arms. The left hand holds a butter ball while the right hand which is in broken condition also appears to hold a butter ball. The *kēyūra* and *katṅakavalṅayas* are simple and the image has no *vastra*. A girdle of tinkling bells is conspicuously present while the hair style is unique as it is knotted behind the *makutṅa*. This image is identified as a variety of Navanīta Krīśṅṅa as it holds butter balls. Navanīta Krīśṅṅa, known as Venṅṅaikkutṅṅan in Tamil country, is sculptured in different ways in medieval Tamil kingdoms⁴⁵. Navanīta Nrittamūrti or dancing Krīśṅṅa with butter balls is found in large number in medieval temples of Tamil country.

The child Kṛṣṇa with butter balls appears as a popular theme in *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. It is again significant that the image of Kṛṣṇa cited above is a notable piece of sculptural art as it points to the evolution of an indigenous sculptural style in the post-Cēra period with round face, round eyes, broad lips, fatty thighs, short legs and big belly.

The post-Cēra age was a significant period for the Vaiṣṇava sculptural art as it was a period when sculptural art in wood developed and prospered. The iconic representation of Vaiṣṇava themes in wood developed in Kerala in the thirteenth century⁴⁶. The wood carvings are mainly found as decorative art and as relief works on the ceilings of *mandapa*, *balikkalpura* and on the outer walls of *garbhagriha*. There are interesting and spirited wood carvings of many incidents from Rāma and Kṛṣṇa traditions. The wood panels representing *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhāgavata* episodes narrating Rāma and Kṛṣṇa stories in full or in partial length were produced in wooden panels. There are individual carvings on certain notable themes associated with Rāma and Kṛṣṇa stories too. The story of *Rāmāyaṇa* is carved in 56 panels in the *namaskāramandapa* and 22 panels on the wooden beam in the *mandapa* in Kaviyūr temple in southern Kerala⁴⁷. These panels depict various *Rāmāyaṇa* themes such as Daśaratha with wives, *Putrakāṁśāyāga*, *Tātākavadham*, *Ahalyāmōksam*, *Sītaswayavaram*, *Virādhavadham*, *Pancavatīpravēśa*, *Māricavadham*, killing of Khara, Dūśāṇa and Triśśirass, *Sētubandhanam*, Rāma's battle with Rāvaṇa, *Rāvaṇavadham*, *Śrī Rāmapatītābhisēkam*, Hanuman's journey to Lanka, *Lankadahanam* etc. There are also wood carvings on various *Rāmāyaṇa* themes on the ceilings of *balikkalpura* and on the outer wall of the sanctum sanctorum.

Tiruvangāṭṭu temple in north Kerala contains *Rāmāyanā* panels on the ceilings in *manḍāpa*⁴⁸. The entire story of *Rāmāyanā* is carved on the ceilings in the *namaskāramanḍāpa* in this temple. *Rāmāyanā* scenes include panels on the childhood days of Śrī Rāma, *Sītaswayamvaram*, *Ahalyāmōksā*, Rāvanā's encounter with *Jatāyū*, *Kabandhagati*, *Bālivadham*, *Kharavadham*, Hanuman crossing the ocean, *Sētubandhanam*, *Rāvanāvadham*, Vibhisāna's coronation etc. The *Rāmāyanā* panels are also found in Cāttankulāngara temple⁴⁹. These *Rāmāyanā* carvings include Hanuman's *Lankayātra*, *Anguliyapradānam* by Hanuman, Sīta sitting under Aśoka tree, *Tātākavadham* and *Sētubandhanam*. The story of *Rāmāyanā* is summarized in the wooden panels in the *valiabalikkalpara* of Vetṭīkulāngara temple too⁵⁰. Vālīappalīi Śiva temple has several *Rāmāyanā* carvings which include *Śrī Rāmāvatāra* and *Yāgaraksā*⁵¹. Apart from these, individual wooden sculptures of Rāma, Hanuman and Sīta are also found in this temple.

The Krīṣṇā story as enshrined in *Bhāgavatapurānā* was another source of inspiration for the wood sculptors. The *Bhāgavata* panels are mainly found in Vālīappalīi, Vetṭīkulāngara, Cunakkara, Kaviyūr, Cāttankulāngara and Triccambaram temples⁵². The popular Krīṣṇā themes are Krīṣṇā's child days, *Pūtanāmōksā*, *Vastrāpaharanā*, *Govarḍhanadhāranā*, *Pālālīmadhanam*, *Kālīamardana* and *Rāsalīla*. Vetṭīkulāngara temple contains several wood carvings on the entire story of Krīṣṇā from *avatāra* to *Kamsavadha*. The *Bhāgavata* panels in Triccambaram temple are found in the *garbhagriha*, *mukhamanḍāpa* and *namaskāramanḍāpa*. The *Bhāgavata* themes such as *Kālīamardanam*, *Bakāsūravadhā*, *Pūtanāmōksā*, Nandagopa and Yaśoda with Krīṣṇā, Krīṣṇā with Rukminī and Satyabhāma, *Vastrāpaharanā* and Krīṣṇā's childhood plays are sculptured in Vetṭīkulāngara temple. Kaviyūr temple

also contains various Kṛṣṇa panels which include Kṛṣṇa's childhood plays, *Pūtanamōksā*, *Rukminīparināyam*, *Bakavadham* and *Kṛṣṇalīla*. Vālīappalīi Śiva temple contains various *Bhāgavata* panels around *garbhagriha*. Themes such as *Vastrāpaharanā*, *Pūtanāmōksā* and *Kālīamardanam* got carved here and different *Bhāgavata* themes are carved in wood in Cunakkara, Cāttankulāngara, Triprayār, Turavūr, Kūtāl Māṅikyam and Ciravamutītam temples.

Two commonly found themes in the wooden iconic representations in Kerala are *Daśavatāra* and *Ananthaśayanam*. Often different *avatāra* forms got sculptured either as independent relief sculptures or as wooden sculptures in *Ananthaśayanam* carvings. *Ananthaśayanam* panels are found in Cāttankulāngara, Vetīikulāngara, Kalīakkūtītam, Otīūr, Vālīappalīi and Kaviyūr temples⁵³. All these temples belong to South Kerala where erstwhile Vēṅāṭu chieftains had political power. Similar to the popularity of *Ananthaśayanam* sculptures in south Kerala, *Ananthaśayanam* wood carvings are also mainly found in south Kerala. This is due to the political influence of Vēṅāṭu rulers who patronized Tiruvananthapuram temple as a royal shrine⁵⁴.

Apart from *Daśavatāra* carvings, separate carvings of various *avatāra* forms are also found in large numbers in the wooden panels of medieval Kerala. Matsya and Kūrma images are rarely found in the wood carvings. This reveals that Matsya and Kūrma were the least popular *avatāra* forms among the incarnatory forms of Viṣṇu in Kerala. Similar to this, Matsya and Kūrma were the two least popular *avatāras* in medieval Tamil country too⁵⁵. Varāha form of Viṣṇu attained more popularity among the wood sculptures as compared to Matsya and Kūrma incarnations. Wood sculptures of Varāha are found both in animal and semi-anthropomorphical forms and Varāha

images in animal forms are found in the wood carvings of Kaviyūr, Trikkotṭittānam and Cāttankulṅangara temples⁵⁶.

It is evident from a large number of wood carvings that Narasimha was a popular *avatāra* among the sculptors. Narasimha images are found in two forms- Yoga Narasimha and Ugra Narasimha and both the forms are carved at Cunakkara, Vetṭṭikulṅangara, Kuratṭṭi, Cāttankulṅangara and Kaviyūr⁵⁷. Often Yoga Narasimha has a tranquil attitude and is in *Yogāsana* pose. But Ugra Narasimha is carved as killing Hiraṅyakaśipu and the deity has a ferocious look. The Vāmana - Mahābali story which attained much popularity in Kerala in association with *Ōṇam* festival is rarely found in sculptural form. The iconic representations of this story in wood come from Kaviyūr and Vālṅappalṅi temples and an iconic representation in stone of this theme comes from Śucīndram temple in south Kerala⁵⁸. Though Paraśurāma legend, which speaks about the creation of Kerala by Paraśurāma was known to the poets of medieval Kerala, it was never sculptured in the wood work⁵⁹. It is also significant that the sculptural art in stone does not present the Paraśurāma legend. However individual sculptures of Vāmana and Paraśurāma are found throughout in the wooden panels as individual relief sculptures. Balarāma as the elder brother of Kṛṣṇa has a notable place in the wood carvings on *Bhāgavata* panels. Individual relief sculptures of Balarāma are found in Ciravammuttṭam, Cāttankulṅangara, Vetṭṭikulṅangara, Kaviyūr and Triccambaram temples⁶⁰.

Buddha was not considered as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu in Kerala. Hence Buddha does not find place in the Vaiṣṇava sculptural art of Kerala. However Buddha was accorded the status of Viṣṇu's *avatāra* in certain areas in north India⁶¹. The absence of Buddha in the list of incarnations is due to the meager presence of Buddhism in Kerala in the early medieval period and its complete absence in the period when such iconic representations got

produced. Kalki images are sculptured in wood in many temples. Prominent Kalki sculptures are found in Cāttankulāngara, Trikkotiṭtānam, Kaviyūr and Vetṭīkulāngara temples⁶². Often Kalki is sculptured as a human figure on the horse back or as sitting inside a termitarium. This is the tenth incarnation and the forthcoming form of Viṣṇu. Therefore, the artists sculptured the deity as sitting inside a termitarium. Kalki images have two arms with sword in one of the hands. The other hand carries a *khēṭṭāka*. The Kalki image of Kaviyūr is in sitting posture inside a termitarium, while the Kalki image in Kanṭṭiyūr temple is in standing pose with a *khadga* in the right arm. The left hand holds together the ends of the garment with which the body is covered.

Often the images of Viṣṇu or Narasimha are made in stucco as *koṣṭadēvatas* in the *grīvakosṭas* of temples⁶³. It is significant that the presence of Viṣṇu and Narasimha in the *grīvakosṭas* in Śiva temples and Śiva in Viṣṇu temples as *koṣṭadēvatas* is an indicator to the cordial relationship that existed between Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism in Kerala. It is a unique architectural peculiarity that developed in medieval period in the Kerala temple architecture.

Vaiṣṇavism in Mural Paintings

Vaiṣṇava themes provided inspiration and thematic substance to the mural paintings in Kerala. The Rāma tradition in *Rāmāyanā* and Krīṣṇa tradition in *Bhāgavatapurānā* formed the chief repertory for the painters. Often the *Rāmāyanā* themes from *Putrakāmēṣṭīyāga* in *Bālakanḍā* to *Śrī Rāmapatṭīabhisṭēkam* in *Yudhakanḍā* find a place extensively in the mural panels⁶⁴. The *Uttara Rāmāyanā* section does not find a popular place in the thematic consideration of the medieval painters. However certain mural panels in north Kerala depict *Uttara Rāmāyanā* themes. The Matṭāncherry palace of the Kochi Rājas contains several *Rāmāyanā* panels that can probably

be assigned to the seventeenth century⁶⁵. The story of *Rāmāyanā* is drawn in sixty panels in this palace. It starts with a painting on *Putrākamēśītyāga* and ends with the victorious return journey of Śrī Rāma, Sīta and Lakṣmanā to Ayodhya. Strikingly coronation panel is conspicuous by its absence in these pictorial representations of *Rāmāyanā*. It is attributed to the fragile political condition prevalent in Kochi in medieval period⁶⁶. The Kochi Rājas faced stiff military threats from the Zamorins who frequently conquered the territories of Kochi.

Totīkkalām temple in the erstwhile Kottayam kingdom in north Kerala has several *Rāmāyanā* panels⁶⁷. They include Rāma's battle with Rāvanā, *Rāvanāvadham*, Rāma on Hanuman's shoulders, *Agni-parīksā* and *Śrī Rāmapatīābhīśēkam*. All these themes are taken from the *Yudhakanīdī* section in *Rāmāyanā*. An interesting feature of Totīkkalām paintings is that there are certain *Uttara Rāmāyanā* panels. The Makrēri temple contains *Rāmāyanā* panels depicting multi-faced and multi-armed Rāvanā and Śrī Rāma with Sīta and Morazha temple contains paintings on Rāma and his monkey army, Rāma's warriors in Lanka and Sīta⁶⁸. Similar to this, Lokanārkāvu, Tirualathūr, Vāsudēvapuram, Pānīdāvam, Kānjiramkotū, Vaikkom, Arppūkkara, Atīakkaputhūr, Māngānam and Trikkotiāttānam temples have individual panels on various *Rāmāyanā* themes⁶⁹. Among *Rāmāyanā* themes, Rāma's battle with Rāvanā and *Śrī Rāmapatīābhīśēkam* are two popular themes for medieval painters.

Among *Bhāgavata* panels, Krīśṇā's birth and childhood plays, *Pūtanamōksā*, *Arisīāvadham*, *Kēśivadham*, *Kamsavadham*, *Kālīamardanam*, *Vastrīāpaharanā*, *Rāsalīla* and *Govardhanadhāranā* are found in a large number of panels as thematic substances⁷⁰. There are single paintings on various forms of Krīśṇā such as *Unīkrīśṇā*,

Bālagopāla, Navanīta Kṛṣṇā, Vrindavana Kṛṣṇā and Kṛṣṇā with Gopikas. The *Bhāgavata* panels are found in Totīkkalām, Tricakrapuram, Trikkatīri Mūnnumūrti, Triprayār, Tiruārānmulā, Katirūr, Kilīkuriśśmangalam, Pānīdāvam, Mitrānandapuram, Trikkotiṭtānam, Pundarikapuram and Ettumanur temples and Matītānchēry palace⁷¹. There are also Kṛṣṇā themes in the paintings of Matītānchēry palace. The Pundarikapuram panels depict various *Kṛṣṇāalīla* themes such as childhood plays, *Vastrāpaharanām*, *Pūtanamōksām*, *Paksivadhā*, Kṛṣṇā as Vēnugopāla, Kṛṣṇā in Gokulam and Kṛṣṇā with Gopikas. There are single paintings on *Kālīamardanam*, *Govardhanadhāranām*, Navanīta Kṛṣṇā and Balagopala. The Matītānchēry palace contains mural paintings on *Govardhanadhāranām* story, Kṛṣṇā with Gopikas and Madanagopālakṛṣṇā and Totīkkalām temple has a panel on *Rukminīswayamvaram*. Tricakrapuram temple contains several Kṛṣṇā paintings which include Dēvaki-Vasudēva in Dwāraka and Kṛṣṇā and Balarāma in child forms. Similarly Trikkatīri Mūnnumūrti temple contains a painting on *Kṛṣṇāalīla* and Triprayār temple has paintings on Vēnugopāla Kṛṣṇā and *Gajēndramōksā* story.

Among various forms of Viṣṇu, Ananthaśayanam finds a place in the paintings in several temples. Ettumānūr temple has a notable painting on Ananthaśayanam which can be datable to the second half of the seventeenth century⁷². The *Ananthaśayanam* paintings are also found in Trikkotiṭtānam and Tiruvēgappura temples⁷³. Vaikunṭhānātha form of Viṣṇu is found in the mural paintings in Trikkotiṭtānam, Udayanapuram, Triprayār, Kanṭīyūr and Pundarikapuram temples and Matītānchēry palace⁷⁴. A painting of Kalki is found in Mitrānandapuram temple. It is significant that Kalki is drawn as having horse face⁷⁵. The *Bhāgavata* themes such as Viṣṇu on Garuda,

Varāhamūrti, Narasimha, *Gajēndravārada* Viṣṇū and Vāmana are also found in large numbers in various temples.

The *Gajēndramokṣa* story in *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* has a special appeal to *bhaktas* and artists. What could be the reason for the large number of *Gajēndramokṣa* paintings? The story of *Gajēndramokṣa* glorifies Viṣṇū's descent to the earth for rescuing his devotee from a disastrous fate⁷⁶. This has a message about Viṣṇū's concern for *bhaktas* and therefore it has relevance to *bhaktas*. *Bhakti* towards Viṣṇū could be easily popularized. This appears to be the reason for the popularity of *Gajēndramokṣa* story among the sculptors. Like *Gajēndramokṣa* story, themes such as *Rāvanāvadha*, *Kamsavadha*, *Kālīamardanam*, *Govardhanadhāraṇam* and *Hiraṇyakaśipuvadha* glorify the prowess of Viṣṇū in the elimination of the evil forces. These stories expose god's concern for protecting *bhaktas*. Themes like *Krīṣṇāṭīlā*, *Vaṣṭrāpaharaṇam*, *Krīṣṇa's* childhood plays, *Sītaswayamvaram*, *Rukminīswayamvaram* and Hanuman in front of Rāvanā in Lanka have entertainment value⁷⁷. More over the objective behind the mural paintings was to endear the ordinary people with *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* stories. The literary creations on *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* literature formed the repertory for paintings. An important pictorial representation of *Rāmāyaṇa* story is found in *Citra Rāmāyaṇa* which portrays the entire story of *Rāmāyaṇa* story in 98 palm leaves⁷⁸. This is preserved in the Oriental Research Institute and Manuscripts Library at Tiruvananthapuram. This work consists of 34 cm long and 5cm wide folios. The *Rāmāyaṇa* story is represented in these palm leaves. However certain themes such as *Pādukapatītibhisēkam*, *Śabaridarśanam* and *Ādityahridayōpadēśam* are avoided. The contemporary arts and culture had its influence on these pictorial representations⁷⁹. Influence of *Kūttu*, *Kūṭiyātīṭam*, *Krīṣṇānātīṭam*,

Rāmanāṭī and *Kathakalī* is traceable in *Citra Rāmāyana*. The production of the illustrated manuscripts is a new cultural trend which attained wider popularity in India in the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries. Illustrated manuscripts on Rāmāyana were produced in different parts of later medieval India⁸⁰.

Had Vaiṣṇava sculptural arts and paintings any didactic value? Did the Vaiṣṇava iconic and pictorial arts function as artistic endeavors only? Diffusion of knowledge was an underlying objective of sculptural and pictorial arts. The educative value of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa sculptures and paintings is that they conveyed *dhārmic* values and imparted *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* world view to the society. The iconic representations and paintings were part of the educative mission of temples. The medieval Kerala temple reminded one of an art gallery where various arts portray *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* themes which popularized *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* stories and culture. The temple academies along with discussions and debates diffused knowledge through academic activities. Equally important role was played by arts as they disseminated *dhārmic* values through the stories. Thus temple arts fulfilled the objective of educating laymen who did not get the privilege to associate themselves with the temple academies⁸¹. Similar to this, iconic and pictorial arts developed at a time when temple centred *bhakti* movement swept South India. The *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* subjects provided thematic substance to the iconic and pictorial representations in the Pallava, the Cōlā and the Pāṇḍya kingdoms and Viṣṇu *bhakti* was popularized in the countryside through arts⁸². The arts popularized *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* culture which was the basis of the ideology of *bhakti* in South India at a time when *bhakti* cult got momentum.

Vaiṣṇava Syncretic Deities in Iconic and Pictorial Representations

Śankara Nārāyaṇa was a syncretic deity sculptured and represented largely in the pictorial arts of medieval Kerala. Hari Hara cult which is also known as Hari Śankara, Śiva Kēśava, Haryardha, Murārīśara and Ardhaśaurīśvara was popular in north India as a syncretic deity⁸³. Śankara Nārāyaṇa and Hari Hara are identical with each other. Both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava symbols are combined in the iconographic representation of the deity. The iconographic peculiarities of Hari Hara are given in *Mānasōllasa*⁸⁴. *Mānasōllasa* describes the right half of the deity as Śiva and the left half as Viṣṇu. The right portion is in white and the other side is in the color of *atasi* flower. The right portion has matted hair with crescent on head and animal skin garment. There are also trident, snake ornaments and half third eye in the right half which all signify the Śaiva elements. While the left half exhibits the Vaiṣṇava rudiments such as silk clothes, flower, conch, discus and crown. Many other treatises on iconography such as *Kaśyapaśilpa* and *Īśānaśivagurudēvapadhathi* narrate the descriptions of the iconographic features of Hari Hara or Śankara Nārāyaṇa⁸⁵.

Mural paintings on Śankara Nārāyaṇa are found in Triprangōtī, Pāṇḍāvam, Tiruvēgappurā, Pundarikapuram, Palḷiṁmanā and Nāyathōtī temples⁸⁶. Following the rules of the iconographic representation of Hari Hara, Śankara Nārāyaṇa paintings project Vaiṣṇava symbols in the left half and Śaiva signs in the right half of the body. The deity has only a partial third eye on the face and has half blue neck, matted hair or *jatāmakutā*, the snake ornament and skull ornamentations. Only the right half which represents Śiva wears the animal skin garment. The right back hand holds trident and the right bottom hand is in *varada* posture. Similarly the left side which represents

Viṣṇū has half *vanamāla*, *kiritāmakutā*, gold ornaments, yellow silk garments and the left hands hold conch and discus.

When did Śankara Nārāyaṇa cult become popular in Kerala? Did it develop in the post- Cēra age? It is significant that the idea and concept of Śaiva - Vaiṣṇava syncretism in the form of Śankara Nārāyaṇa traversed all the way from North India to Kerala with Brahmin settlers who were the harbingers of *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* culture into Kerala. It is apparent from the name of Śankara Nārāyaṇa, the renowned astronomer in early medieval Kerala, that the name Śankara Nārāyaṇa was used as a personal name in Kerala in the Cēra period⁸⁷. It is also significant that *Ālīvārs* and *Nāyanārs* made frequent references to Hari Hara in their *pāsurams*. The *Ālīvār* saints made conceptual imagery of the combined cult of Hari and Hara in their *pāsurams* on various temples⁸⁸. This reveals that the concept and the idea of the cult of Hari Hara got further propagated in Kerala during the heydays of *bhakti* movement.

Several images of Śankara Nārāyaṇa or Hari Hara are found from different parts of North India in which the earliest may be dated to the Kusāna age⁸⁹. These images of the deity reveal that Hari Hara cult was popular in North India from the period of Kusānas onwards. An image of Hari Hara is found at Badami⁹⁰. This standing sculptural representation of Hari Hara has four arms with the back hands hold an axe and a conch. The bottom right arm is broken and the bottom left hand is in *katīyavilāmbita* style. A snake entwined the axe in the right hand. The right part shows *jatāmakutā* and the left part shows *kiritāmakutā*. The right ear has *sarpakunīdāla* and the left ear has *makarakunīdāla*. Nandi and Pārvati are present in the right portion. The presence of Garuda and Lakṣmi make the

left side a Vaisṇava zone. Many Hari Hara sculptures were found in the Pallava, the Cōlīa and the Pāṇḍīya kingdoms too⁹¹. The Ādivarāha cave temple at Mahābalipuram contains an early Hari Hara sculpture of the Pallava country. The standing image of the four handed deity has an axe in the upper right hand, a discus in the upper left arm and the lower right arm is in *abhaya* pose. The lower left hand of the deity is in *katīyavilāmbita* style. The right portion wears the tiger skin garment down to the thigh and a silk cloth like garment down to the ankle in the left side. The Hari Hara sculptures are found in places like Nāmakkal, Ārīcotīṭī, Ukkal, Tanjāvūr, Gangaikondacōlīapuram etc. in the Pallava, the Cōlīa and the Pāṇḍīya kingdoms⁹².

Śāsta is another popular syncretic deity widely represented in the sculptural and pictorial arts of medieval Kerala. The paintings of the deity are found in Pundarikapuram, Triprayār, Ettumānūr, Pāṇḍīavam, Trikkotiṭtānam, Nāyathōṭū and Arppūkkara temples⁹³. Similarly the wooden sculptures of Śāsta are found in Vālīappalīi, Cunakkara, Trikkuratīṭī and Cetīṭīkulāngara temples⁹⁴. Unlike Śankara Nārāyaṇa images and paintings, the iconic and pictorial representations of Śāsta do not display any elements of syncretism. Often the deity is sculptured and painted as a Hunter god⁹⁵. However the conceptual basis of Śāsta incorporates elements of syncretism. Śāsta is hailed in tradition as the son of Hari and Hara. It is significant that no early literary documents mention about the syncretic origin of Śāsta from Śaiva and Vaisṇava union. This kind of story is celebrated only in the oral traditions and ritual songs of later period to incorporate the deity with a place in the pantheon of prominent deities⁹⁶.

The syncretism and the images of syncretic cult deities reveal the attempt of rapprochement and reconciliation between Śaiva and Vaisṇava cults. Popularity of Śankara Nārāyaṇa and Śāsta discloses that the ideas of

compromise and coexistence were strong in medieval Kerala and it again makes clear that the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religions had popular base. Therefore efforts to project syncretism involving both the deities become prevalent. The images of a composite deity known as Yōgi Nārāyaṇa in eastern India and Viṣṇu Lōkēswara in North India which coalesce both Vaiṣṇava and Buddhist divinities were produced⁹⁷. No such composite sculptural representations of Vaiṣṇava-Buddhist syncretism got produced in Kerala. What was the reason for the absence of such composite images? R.Champakalakshmi argues that such images are absent in Tamil country and it indicates Buddhist and Jain sects did not pose any serious threats to Vaiṣṇavism in terms of popularity there at a time when sculptures were produced⁹⁸. The emotional Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult led by Ālīvārs paved the way for the decline of heterodox sects which had earlier popular support base in several parts of Tamilākam. The ideology of *bhakti* led to the eclipse of the popularity of Buddhism and Jainism and as a result they were nowhere in the social picture to oppose the growth of Vaiṣṇavism. It was not necessary to reconcile between Vaiṣṇavism and heterodox sects in Kerala where Buddhism and Jainism had only a meager presence in the early medieval period. Later these religions lost popularity and Buddhism got disappeared⁹⁹. Therefore Vaiṣṇava- Buddhist/Jain syncretism did not take place in Kerala arts.

Vaiṣṇavism in Performing Arts

The Rāma and Krīṣṇa stories in *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Bhāgavata* traditions provided the artists with the rich collection of thematic substance for the creation of dance-dramas. The result was that various arts, both performing and ritual arts, developed in medieval Kerala. The origin of *Kūṭiyāṭṭam*, the temple theatre, was associated with the spread of Viṣṇu *bhakti* movement¹⁰⁰. The repertory for *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* is mainly taken from the two stage plays

written by Sthānũ Ravi Kulaśēkhara- *Tapatisamvaranĩa* and *Subhadradhananjaya*¹⁰¹. The Cākyārs also depended upon certain acts in Śaktibhadra's *Āscaryacūdĩamanĩi* for enacting on the stage. Sthānũ Ravi Kulaśēkhara is credited with the revival of *Kūtĩiyātĩtĩam* and the king is identified in a popular tradition which is prevalent even in present days among Cākyārs as a master of histrionics and *Kūtĩiyātĩtĩam*¹⁰². This tradition attributed the king and Tōlan, the minister, with the onus for the introduction of many innovations in the stage practice to transform *Kūtĩiyātĩtĩam* into a more realistic expression on the stage. This tradition is reinforced by the fact that Sthānũ Ravi's plays formed the repertory for *Kūtĩiyātĩtĩam*.

The first acts of both *Tapatisamvaranĩa* and *Subhadradhananjaya* are mainly enacted on the stage. The acts in *Āscaryacūdĩamanĩi* such as *Anguliyānkam*, *Udyānapraēśaka* and the last act provide themes for *Kūtĩiyātĩtĩam*. *Kūttu* or a mono acting also developed in the Cēra age along with *Kūtĩiyātĩtĩam* and it was also performed by Cākyārs¹⁰³. The plays of Bhāsa and Śaktibhadra are heavily depended upon by the Cākyārs for the performance of *Kūttu*. Often *Mantrānkam* in *Pratinjayaugandharāyanĩa* of Bhāsa and *Anguliyānkam* and *Aśōkavanikānkam* in *Āscaryacūdĩamanĩi* of Śaktibhadra provide the thematic substance for *Kūttu*¹⁰⁴. Separate temple theatres known as *Kūttambalams* were built in temple premises for the performance of *Kūttu* and *Kūtĩiyātĩtĩam*.

New genre of literature known as *Prabandhas* was produced in the post-Cēra age for the purpose of providing themes for performing *Kūttu*. Mēlppattūr Nārāyanĩa Bhattatiri wrote many *Prabandhas* on *Rāmayana-Mahābhārata-Bhāgavata* themes¹⁰⁵. With the composition of *Prabandhas*, *Kūttu* received a new fillip. *NangyārKūttu* which was vogue in the early medieval period was performed by *Nangyārs*, the women folk in the Cākyār community, was another variety of *Kūttu* in which the second act of

Subhadradhananjaya was enacted¹⁰⁶. *Pātīhakam* also developed in temples as a variety of story telling¹⁰⁷. This also relied mainly upon on Vaisṇava cult stories for thematic substance. *Pātīhakam* is a bi-lingual art in which the dramatic exposition of *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* episodes are made in Malayalam. Besides, Sanskrit verses from the scriptures are recited intermittently. Earlier *Rāmāyaṇa* story got produced as *Nambyār Tamil* for *Pātīhakam* deliberations¹⁰⁸. However with the production of *Prabandhas*, a new genre of repertory for *Pātīhakam* also came into existence.

How far were *Kūtīyātītam*, *Kūttu* and *Pātīhakam* Vaisṇava stage arts? What was the role of these arts in the popularization of Visṇu *bhakti* in Kerala? It is significant that *Kūtīyātītam* was developed and popularized by Sthānu Ravi Kulaśekhara. The role of this royal saint in the growth of temple-centred culture in Kerala reinforces the contention that *Kūtīyātītam* was revived to propagate Visṇu *bhakti*. The cult stories associated with Vaisṇavism in the plays written by the royal saint and playwrights provided the repertory for the stage art. The heavy presence of Vaisṇava elements as thematic substance in *Kūttu*, *Kūtīyātītam* and *Pātīhakam* is indicative of the association of these stage arts with Vaisṇavism. It also served as a key factor in the popularization of Vaisṇava ethos and Brahminic socio-cultural ideology in the society.

The Kṛṣṇa and Rāma traditions inspired and enriched various performing arts of Kerala in the post-Cēra age. Jayadēva's *Gītagovinda* had a direct impact on the artistic minds of medieval Kerala¹⁰⁹. A separate dance-drama known as *Asītāpadiātītam* (dance of *Asītāpadi*) developed with the thematic content of Kṛṣṇa's love lore with Radha and his romantic attachment with the *Gopikas*¹¹⁰. The central theme in this dance-drama is taken from *Gītagovinda*. *Gītagovinda* which came to be known popularly as

As̥t̥apadi in Kerala was used to be sung in temples during rituals¹¹¹. This is significant as the songs of a Vis̥ṇu *bhakta* from Bengal attained ritual status in Kerala temples. *Gītagovinda* which provided thematic substance to the dance-drama conferred the name *As̥t̥apadiāt̥t̥am* to the stage art. *As̥t̥apadiāt̥t̥am* did not enjoy wide popularity and it is now extinct.

Kr̥ṣ̥ṇānāt̥t̥am or *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇānāt̥t̥am* is another dance-drama which emerged in medieval Kerala¹¹². As the name indicates, this dance-drama enacts the story of Kr̥ṣ̥ṇa. It was invented by Mānavēda, the Zamorin of Calicut who was a known *bhakta* of Guruvāyūr temple and a votary of Kr̥ṣ̥ṇa *bhakti*. *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇānāt̥t̥am* was invented to popularize Kr̥ṣ̥ṇa *bhakti*. There was a strong supposition that *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇānāt̥t̥am* originated from the development of *As̥t̥apadiāt̥t̥am*, but this argument received severe criticism from several quarters¹¹³. *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇāgīti* was written by Mānavēda in 1652 AD and it formed the repertory for *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇānāt̥t̥am*¹¹⁴. *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇāgīti* narrates the story of Kr̥ṣ̥ṇa in eight cantos. Influenced by the emotional Kr̥ṣ̥ṇa *bhakti* in *Gītagovinda*, Mānavēda wrote *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇāgīti*. This again points to the impact of *Gītagovinda* on Mānavēda and his literary compositions. The Zamorins undertook administrative measures for the promotion of *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇānāt̥t̥am* and the performance of the dance-drama was made compulsory at least once every year in all the temples in Zamorin's kingdom¹¹⁵. The royal initiative was a catalyst in the growth of *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇānāt̥t̥am* as a popular dance-drama in Kerala.

Following the advent of *Kr̥ṣ̥ṇānāt̥t̥am*, a separate Rāma theatre developed in the seventeenth century. A chieftain of El̥āyadattu swarūpam of Kot̥t̥ārakkara (*Kot̥t̥ārakkara Tampurān*) is credited with the invention of the Rāma theatre known as *Rāmanāt̥t̥am*¹¹⁶. Vīra Kerala Varma wrote *Rāmayan̥am āt̥t̥akkatha* narrating the story of Rāma in eight divisions for

the performance of *Rāmanātītīam* and this formed the repertory of *Rāmanātītīam*¹¹⁷. The stories are *Putrakāmēśīti*, *Sītaswayamvaram*, *Viśchinnābhisīkām*, *Kharavadham*, *Bālivadham*, *Toranīayudham*, *Sētubandhanam* and *Yudham*. The eight stories are written to be enacted on eight days. According to a popular and an interesting tradition, Vīra Kerala Varma of Kotītīārakkara sent certain artists to Calicut to learn *Krīśnīanātītīam*¹¹⁸. However the Zamorin declined the request of the artists from Kotītīārakkara and humiliated them by saying that the southerners had no sense to know the histrionics. The tradition continues that the Rāja wrote a new dance-drama on *Rāmāyanīa* to avenge the disgrace that he felt from the Zamorin and to make the latter know that the southerners understood the art of dramatics. According to the tradition, the new dance-drama was produced in revenge. However this is only a tradition with no historicity. This was invented by certain fanciful minds to provide the origin of *Rāmanātītīam* with a dramatic flavor.

The invention of the Rāma theatre was a stimulant in the development of *Kathakalīi*. A Rāja of Kottayam (*Kottayattu Tampurān*) who wrote four major plays on *Mahābhārata* as *ātītīakkathas* contributed to the further development of the dance-drama tradition of Kerala which finally paved the way for the development of *Kathakalīi*¹¹⁹. All these four plays narrate the elimination of various demons by the Pāndīavas. The stories written by Kottayam Tampurān are *Bakavadham*, *Kirmīravadham*, *Kalyānīasaoughandhikam* and *Nivātakavacakālakēyavadham*¹²⁰. These stage arts helped Vaiśṇavism to reach to different segments in Kerala society. Unlike *Krīśnīanātītīam* and *Rāmanātītīam*, *Kathakalīi* has a wide range of thematic substance of various *Itihāsic-Purānīic* traditions. *Krīśnīanātītīam* and *Rāmanātītīam* are restricted only to the plays on *Krīśṇīa* and *Rāma*. Unlike *Kūtīyātītīam* and *Kūttu* which were performed solely by Cākyārs,

Kṛṣṇānāṭīam and *Rāmanāṭīam* were performed by men of Nāyaka community who were principally warriors and who were experts in the martial arts. Hence these arts were performed mainly in palaces which indirectly made them less temple-oriented.

Yaksṛagāna is a popular theatre in the Kannada speaking northern extremity in Kerala which was once included in the Kannada kingdoms of the Ālīyupas and the Nāyaks of Ikkēri¹²¹. In fact this is a Kannada theatre which developed in Karnataka under the influence of Mādhvacarya's Viṣṇū *bhakti* movement. M.M. Bhatt argues that the *Yaksṛagāna* developed from *Daśavatārātīa*, a dance-drama that existed in Kannada kingdoms in medieval period and that certain dance-recitation known as *Cāttana* of the Rashtrakuta age was the earliest form of *Yaksṛagāna*¹²². As the name denotes, *Daśavatārātīa* was a stage play on the story of the ten incarnations of Viṣṇū. The plots for *Yaksṛagāna* are taken from *Itihāsic-Purānīc* traditions. Prominent stories used in the performance of *Yaksṛagāna* include *Abhimanyukalīaga*, *Karnārjunakalīaga*, *Draupadipratāpa*, *Subhadrakalyānīa*, *Draupadiswayamvaram* and *Dēvayānikalyānīa*¹²³. Often *Yaksṛagāna* ends with a *Vaiṣṇava maṅgalīaślōka* in which the artist invokes Viṣṇū to bless mankind with all kinds of prosperity.

Several Rāma and Kṛṣṇā theatres developed and prospered in various parts of India in medieval period. The Rāma and Kṛṣṇā devotional theatre genres developed as a product of Vaiṣṇava devotional movement. The tide of Viṣṇū *bhakti* paved the way for the rise of various theatres. The *Kathak* was developed as a prominent dance-drama in North India in which Kṛṣṇā themes are mainly used as the repertory¹²⁴. The rise of Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult in medieval age had considerable bearing on the development of *Kathak*. *Bhāgavatamēlīanātīaka* was developed in medieval period in

Tamilnadu to popularize the story of Kṛṣṇa¹²⁵. A dance-drama on Kṛṣṇa story known as *Ras* was introduced in Manipur in a later period when Kṛṣṇa *bhakti* movement prospered under Mahārāja Bhāgya Chandra Dēva¹²⁶. *Kuchipudī* in Andhra developed on the story of Kṛṣṇa. Sidhendra Yogi, an ardent devotee of Kṛṣṇa, popularized *Kuchipudī* dance–drama in the seventeenth century to spread Kṛṣṇa *bhakti*¹²⁷. Similarly *Ankīya Nāṭī* of Assam and *Daśavatār* in Maharashtra developed as Vaiṣṇava theatres¹²⁸. *Ankīya Nāṭī* had its origin in the emotional Viṣṇu *bhakti* movement of Śankara Dēva and it was started as one act play to advance Viṣṇu *bhakti* in the society. *Mahānāṭīka* or *Hanummanāṭīka* was a *Rāmāyanīa* theatre that came into existence in North India on Rāma tradition¹²⁹.

The discussion on the Vaiṣṇava performing arts may raise certain problems such as what was the basic feature of the dance-dramas which originated in medieval age? Were these dance-dramas the products of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult? Who were the performers and how far performing arts played the role of catalysts in the popularization of Viṣṇu *bhakti*? Devotion was the essence of all the dance-dramas that got produced in medieval Kerala. It is significant that the dance-dramas in medieval Kerala, like in other parts of contemporary India, developed as Rāma theatre or Kṛṣṇa theatre under the influence of Viṣṇu *bhakti*. As cited above similar dance-dramas which emerged in medieval period in other parts of India were all influenced by Viṣṇu *bhakti*. As theatre was an effective tool for the dissemination of *bhakti*, dance-dramas were developed on various Vaiṣṇava themes. It transmitted epic stories in the society and society was endeared more to the *Itihāsic-Purāṇīc* culture.

Moreover the rich cult themes of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa stories made a variety of themes available to the artists. The early art forms - *Kūṭīyātīṭam*

and *Kūttu* – were exclusively performed by Cākyārs as temple arts. The performance of these arts confined wholly to the temple premises. But the emergence of *Krīṣṇānāṭīam*, *Rāmanāṭīam* and *Kathakalī* marked a shift in the social background of the performers of theatrical arts in Kerala. There were no castes with the exclusive right to perform these arts. These stage arts which came into existence under royal patronage were performed by Nāyars who were chiefly warriors. This contributed to the popularization of the Rāma and Krīṣṇā stories through stage arts as a large section in the non-Brahminic and non- *Ambalavāsi* communities in Kerala now came in direct touch with Rāma and Krīṣṇā cult themes. This shift expanded the size of the spectators of performing arts too. Earlier the Brahmins and kings formed the only spectators and performers of temple arts.

Vaiṣṇavism in Folk Arts

The folk culture of Kerala is also influenced and enriched by Rāma and Krīṣṇā stories. The story of Rāma had key role in the puppet or shadow theatre in Kerala which came to be known as *Tōlppāvakūttu*. This was performed in the village temples of Palakkad region¹³⁰. *Rāmāyanā* form the repertory of this puppet theatre. The Tamil *Rāmāyanā* of Kamba is taken up as the chief source of thematic substance of *Tōlppāvakūttu*. Instead of various *Ramayanās* by Kerala *bhaktas* such as the Kanṇāśśas, the Kōvalāam poets, Punam Nambūdiri and Tunchathu Ezhuthachan, *Kamba Rāmāyanā* in Tamil was taken up for the spoken word material by the performers of *Tōlppāvakūttu*. *Kamba Ramayanā* was introduced in this art form by Chinna Tampi Vadhyar who modified certain early puppet theatre into *Tōlppāvakūttu* in seventeenth century. *Tōlppāvakūttu* is performed during annual festivals in village temples. This art was an effective tool in diffusing the story of *Rāmāyanā* in the countryside of Palakkad.

The *Rāmāyaṅa* story constituted the repertory of the puppet theatres in different regions in India¹³¹. The rod-puppets of West Bengal, Orissa, Karnataka, Bihar and Jharkhand, the shadow puppets of Bihar and Maharashtra, the string puppets of Assam, Tripura, Orissa, Bengal and Karnataka, the marionettes in Tamilnad and Karnataka and the puppet-theatre of Andhra are associated primarily with the epic tradition. Similar to this, the puppet theatres of various countries in South Asia are also associated with *Rāmāyaṅa* story¹³².

The *Rāmāyaṅa* and *Mahābhārata* themes have central position in many of the folk songs of Kerala. For instance the songs for *Bālittōrīrām* narrate various *Rāmāyaṅa* themes associated with the story of Bāli¹³³. These songs contain the narration of the origin of and killing of Bāli, sorrow of Tāra, *Sītāpaharaṅam*, *Sītadukham*, *Vibhīsīanōpadēśam* and *Sītāvrittāntakadhanam*. The songs of *Viśṅumūtittōrīrām* are also based on Vaisṅava themes¹³⁴. The songs for *Viśṅumūtittōrīrām* centre on the story of the incarnation of Narasimha and the elimination of the evil forces by this ferocious form of Viśṅu. There are several other songs on Rāma and Krīśṅa stories. For instance, *Bhāratappōru* and *Māvāratampātītu* are the summarized narrations of *Mahābhārata* and the songs for *Nilīalkuttu* deal with the *Mahābhārata* story¹³⁵.

The Pāṅar community in Kerala performed a ritual signing in the month of *Karkkidāgam* (July-August) and *Cingam* in the village houses. This practice is known as *Unārttupātītu* or *Tuyilunārttupātītu*. Stories such as *Krīśṅalīla* and *Hariscandracaritam*, *Pūtanamōksām*, *Sītavivaham*, *Rāsalīla*, *Govardhanadhāraṅam*, *Pālālīmadhanam* and *Ahalyāmōksām* are mainly sung by Pāṅas during this ritual singing¹³⁶. Apart from these songs, they also sing *Rāmāyaṅa* story. The entire story of *Rāmāyaṅa* is

summarized for the ritual singing in the houses. The Vēlan community also performed a ritual singing in houses in the *Karkkidāgam* and *Cingam* months and they sing on Rāma and Krīśṇā. They sing about the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu and this song is known as *Daśāvatāramkathappātītu*¹³⁷. They sing about the stories of Narasimha and Prahlāda, Krīśṇā and Kucēla etc. The Teyyampātī community sings on Krīśṇā and Vāmana when they perform *Mābalippātītu* in houses¹³⁸. *Mābalippātītu* is found prevalent only in North Kerala. The Malayar community in North Kerala sings on the heroic deeds of Krīśṇā of Katālayi temple¹³⁹. The song is in the form of a praise of Krīśṇā and it narrates the story of the establishment of Katālayi temple by the Kōlathiri Rājas.

The story of *Rāmāyanā* acquired wide popularity in Wayanad where the tribal populace took up the story of *Rāmāyanā* as the central theme of various oral versions of the epic¹⁴⁰. Localization is a feature of such oral narratives. These epic versions do not conform to the original version of the epics and many places in Wayanad got identified by them as associated with the lives of Rāma and Sīta. There is a unique localized version of *Rāmāyanā* which is popular in North Kerala. This is known as *Māppilāi Rāmāyanā* and it contains 148 lines and it is in the form of *Māppilāipātītu*¹⁴¹. The term *Māppilāi* denotes Muslims in North Kerala and *Māppilāipātītu* is a folk song which is prevalent among the Muslims of North Kerala. *Māppilāi Rāmāyanā* represents an effort to assert religious harmony between Hindus and Muslims.

The *Bhāgavata*, *Rāmāyanā* and *Bhārata* themes were widely taken up for agricultural songs. The original plots are changed in these songs with Pāndavas, Krīśṇā and *Rāmāyanā* figures having their own roles as villagers and common men. The folk authors derived pleasure from inventing

new stories or situations around *Rāmāyanā*–*Bhārata*- *Bhāgavata* stories. It was a general trend that existed in other parts of Indian sub-continent also. Such fabricated stories can be seen in the folk literature of Andhra, Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Bengal. Fabrication of a new theme in tandem with the changes in the original theme was attempted to suit the story in the local situation. This resulted in the domination of folk elements. The agricultural songs like *Tekkuppāt* and *Cakrappāt* are such concoctions in which *Bhārata* and *Rāmāyanā* figures appeared as main characters¹⁴².

The folk theatre had more popularity in which ordinary people in the countryside could take part or take pleasure in its performance. The *Ivar* is a folk drama which deals with the story of the Pāṇḍavas¹⁴³. *Ivar* in Malayalam means ‘the five’ which connotes the five Pāṇḍava brothers. This folk art is still prevalent in the rural areas of Kerala. It is performed mainly by the male members of the five artisan castes of Kerala- *Aśāri*, *Mūsari*, *Kollan*, *Tat*, and *Tachan*. In certain areas of Kerala, *Ezhava* and *Paraya* communities also perform this folk art. The Rāma story constitutes the central theme in *Kuravarkal*¹⁴⁴. It is mainly performed by the *Kuravars*. Vaisṇava themes are largely taken for the performance of *Kaikotikkal* (dance play with hand clapping). *Krīśṇastutināt* is a folk drama which is prevalent in certain rural areas in Kerala¹⁴⁵. It is mainly performed in association with *Pūrakal*. The story of Krīśṇa is the central theme of this folk drama. *Kamsanāt* is another folk drama on *Bhāgavata* story from the birth of Krīśṇa to the killing of Kamsa. There is a folk play known as *Kambatikkal* or *Kambukal*. It is also known as *Kōlkkal*. The folk belief holds that the folk play was developed by the Pāṇḍava brothers and Śrīkrīśṇa during the forest stay of the former. Many *Bhāgavata*, *Bhārata* and *Rāmāyanā* themes in which Krīśṇa along with Pāṇḍavas and Rāma are heroes are used as thematic substance for *Kolkkal*¹⁴⁶. The *Mahābhārata*

story is the theme of *Kurṅattippāṅtṅu*. It is a folk song used for the performance of *Kurṅattiāṅtṅam* (dance of the women of Kurṅava caste)¹⁴⁷. The wider use of Rāma and Krṅṅṅa stories as repertory for folk arts in medieval Kerala is a pointer to the massive popularity of *Itihāsic-Purāṅic* tradition in society. This was made possible by the spread of *Itihāsic-Purāṅic* values by the *bhakti* poets.

Various folk theatres and folk arts developed in many parts of India under the stamp of Visṅṅu *bhakti* movement¹⁴⁸. The *Jatra* developed as a popular folk theatre in medieval Bengal and Orissa in the aftermath of the growth of Krṅṅṅa *bhakti* movement under Caitanya in the sixteenth century¹⁴⁹. The *Bhāgavata* themes on Krṅṅṅa's life got enacted in this theatre. Krṅṅṅa's march to Mathura to kill his uncle Kamsa is a popular theme of *Jatra*. It seems that collective singing and dancing which formed an important trait of the *bhakti* movement was instrumental in the development of various folk theatres. The *Ras* of Gujarat and *Rāslīla* are prominent folk theatres on the story of Krṅṅṅa¹⁵⁰. The *Krṅṅṅalīla* and the *Rāslīla* are like operatic plays on Krṅṅṅa and they are fundamentally folk theatres. These plays developed in Brajbhumi region in North India which was the focal point of Krṅṅṅa *bhakti* cult. Almost every incident in Krṅṅṅa's life is taken up for the performance of these dance-dramas. The *Braj* was another highly developed dance-drama on Krṅṅṅa.

During *Dassara*, the Rāma theatre known as *Rāmlīla* is enacted in North India. Many *Rāmāyanṅa* based themes on Rāma are enacted in this folk drama¹⁵¹. Besides, there were several regional folk theatres on Rāma and Krṅṅṅa themes which developed in different regions of India¹⁵². They include Nauntaki, Tamasa, Bhavai etc. It is obvious that the performing arts and folk theatres in entire medieval India were energized by Rāma and Krṅṅṅa *bhakti*

cults. The diffusion of the ideology of Viṣṇu *bhakti* and Vaiṣṇava tenets through the media of literature and temple arts had a bearing on the wider popularisation of Vaiṣṇava themes among folk artists. Among various stories of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, the child pranks and romantic plays of Kṛṣṇa and the elimination of demons by Kṛṣṇa and Rāma are chiefly performed on the folk stage. The folk arts also played the role of a catalyst for the growth of Vaiṣṇavism as a popular religion in the rural areas and it had a vital role in the swift dissemination of *Purāṇic* tradition.

Many local deities were identified as incarnations or semi-incarnations of Vaiṣṇava divinities. The concept of *avatāra* was instrumental in bringing in folk deities to the Vaiṣṇava pantheon. This practice became prevalent in the post-Cēra age in Kerala when *Bhāgavata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* traditions got imparted in the society. Many village gods and goddesses got recognized as incarnations of Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, the Vaiṣṇava female divinity. Names of these village gods and goddesses clearly reveal the pre-Brahminic origin of such gods. A striking aspect of these deities is that they have non-Brahmin priests and non-Brahminic form of worship. Majority of such deities in Kannūr are having *Teyyams*. All these indicate the non-Brahminic background of the deities. The acculturation process transformed the identity of these divinities and endowed them with place in the Vaiṣṇava pantheon.

In north Kerala, Kanṅangattī Bhagavati has many *kāvus*. This is a local deity and a mother goddess. It is held that this deity is associated with Kṛṣṇa¹⁵³. It is significant that a community of cowherds known as Manṅiyāṅis in north Kerala is the chief group of devotees of Kanṅangattī Bhagavati. There are two Teyyams known as Kanṅangattī Bhagavati Teyyam and Palṅachīl Bhagavati Teyyam to propitiate this Goddess. Another local deity which is identified with the Vaiṣṇava cult is Koyārāndaivam.

Local deities such as Kārandaivam, Kavumbāyi Bhagavati, Andalūr Daivam, Athiyatam Daivam, Malliyōtīu Daivam, Azhikkōtīu Daivam, Pālōtītīu Daivam, Kīchēri Daivam and Cīvōti are linked to various Vaisṅṅava divinities¹⁵⁴. The Vaisṅṅava identity provided these deities with an elevated position in the hierarchy of gods as incarnations of either Viṣṅṅu or of his main incarnations. This practice incorporated elements of syncretism and it resulted in the popularization of the Vaisṅṅava religion in the society, socialization of Brahminism and diffusion of *Purāṅṅic* culture.

To recapitulate, the Vaisṅṅava religion with a rich repertory of themes on Rāma and Krīṣṅṅa acted as a catalyst in the rise and development of different arts in medieval Kerala. Elements of co-existence and syncretism dominated and no element of religious conflict and sectarian rivalry is seen in the iconic and pictorial arts of Kerala. Different strands of performing arts also were created and developed on Vaisṅṅava cult themes. Folk arts including folk songs and folk beliefs, which originated and developed during the late medieval period, also were enriched by Vaisṅṅavism. All these point to the popularity and further popularization of the Vaisṅṅava religion and permeation of *Purāṅṅic* culture in medieval Kerala.

Notes and References:

1. A.R.A.D.C., 1935-36, p.29.
2. See for more details on Kaviyūr rock-cut temple *T.A.S.*, Vol.V., pp. 1-6; See for Kallil and Tirucāṅṅathu rock-cut temples *T.A.S.*, Vol. II., pp.125-127, 130 and see for Tirucāṅṅathu rock-cut temple *T.A.S.*, Vol. IV, pp.146-147; See for Trikkūr temple M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.200; See for Kotītīukkal and Bhrāntanpāra rock-cut temples H. Sarkar, *An Architectural Survey of Temples of Kerala*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1978, pp.47-48.
3. See chapter II.
4. *A.R.A.D.C.*, *op.cit.*
5. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 2000, pp. 22-24.
6. *Ibid.*, p.23 ; *A.R.A.D.C.*, *op.cit.*

7. The concept of temple cult gave fillip to image worship and therefore image making. See Raju Kalidas, *Encyclopaedia of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I., New Delhi, 2006, pp.86-87, 129-130.
8. *Ibid.*, pp.93-107; S.P. Gupta and S.P. Asthana, *Elements of Indian Art*, New Delhi, 2002, rpt.2007, pp.103-108.
9. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1975, pp.693-743; C.Minakshi, *op.cit.*, pp. 349-360.
10. M.G.S.Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.207-208; S.Jayashanker, *Temples of Malappuram District*, Tiruvananthapuram, 2003, p.384.
11. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, pp.205-207.
12. H. Sarkar, *op.cit.*, pp.107-108.
13. R.Vasudeva Poduval, "The Metal Images of Travancore" in Stella Kramrisch, J.H. Cousins and R. Vasudeva Poduval (eds.), *The Arts and Crafts of Travancore*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1948, rpt.1999, pp.87-88.
14. All these images have similar features which may enable us to classify them as Cēra idols.
15. Stella Kramrisch, "The form of the sculptures", in Stella Kramrisch, J.H. Cousins and R. Vasudeva Poduval, *op.cit.*, p. 63.
16. Quoted in R. Champakalakshmi, *op.cit.*, 1981, p. 67.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-76.
18. *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham, Tiruvāimolī-pāsurams*- 3678-3688.
19. *Syānandūrapurānāsamuccaya*, Chapter.II.
20. *Unīnīlīsandēśam, ślōkas*- 3, 31.
21. *Anantapuravarnānam, ślōkas*- 151-159.
22. T.K. Velupillai, *op.cit.*, Vol.II, Appendix- M.Doc-CXXX, pp.114-133.
23. *Ibid.*
24. R. Champakakshmi, *op.cit.*, 1981, pp. 69-75.
25. See for a general survey of āsanamūrti images, J.N. Banerjea, *The Development of Hindu Iconography*, New Delhi, 1956, rpt.1974, pp.274-277; .
26. T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *Elements of Hindu Iconography*, Vol. I, Part-I, New Delhi, 1914, rpt.1997, pp.112-113; R. Chapakalakshmi, *op.cit.*, 1981, pp.73-74..
27. See chapter V.
28. *Trippūnīthura Granthavari, op.cit.*; Also see chapter VI.
29. *Śukasandēśa, ślōka*- 62.
30. T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp.87-89.
31. *Mūsākavamśakāvya*, chapter-13, *ślōkas*- 62-67.
32. Field study by the present scholar. Also see S. Jayashanker, *Temples of Palakkad District*, Tiruvananthapuram, 2004, p.70.
33. Field study by the present scholar.

34. See for the reference to Panniyūr as an original Brahmin settlement H. Gundert, *op.cit.*, p.5.
35. *Index No.* C.16.
36. See for the reference to Śrī Varāham temple *Syānandūrapurānīsamuccaya*, chapter-7, *ślōkas*-1-52; *Anantapuravarnānam*, *ślōkas*- 17- 18.
37. *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham- Tiruvāimolīi*, *pāsurams*- 3205-3215; 3227-3237; 3436-3446; 3469-3479; 3612-3622.
38. This was a popular way of making eulogies on individual temples and deities by *Ālīvārs*. These *Viśṅṅu bhaktas* attributed the qualities of various *avatāras* to respective idols in *divyadēśam* shrines so that the deities in temples got celebrated as having multifaceted traits.
39. See chapter VIII.
40. See chapters IV and V.
41. *Viśṅṅu* in *Tirūārānmulā* temple was glorified as *Pārthasārathi* in the eighteenth century by Nedumpayil Kochu Krishnan Asan. See *Ārānmulā Vilāsam Hamsapātītu* lines- 199-268; See for details regarding the identification of the image of four armed *Viśṅṅu* of *Cāttankulāngara* with *Narasimha*, *Navami Ksetra Vinjana Kosam*, *op.cit.*, p.170.
42. P.G. Rajendran, *op.cit.*, pp. 689-690, 1008-1010.
43. See chapter VII.
44. H. Sarkar, *op.cit.*, p.110.
45. *Navanīta Krīśṅṅa* is often sculptured as holding butter ball in hands and there are different forms of *Navanīta Krīśṅṅa*. See T.A.Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp.206-207; R. Champakalakshmi, *op.cit.*, 1981, pp.138-139.
46. Stella Kramrisch, *op.cit.*, 1999, p.70.
47. Field study by the present scholar. Also see for the references to the wood carvings H. Sarkar, *op.cit.*, pp. 117-120; M.G. Sasibhooshan, “Kaviyur Silpangalute Samskarika Mulyam”, *Samskara Keralam*, Vol. 17, No. 4, October-December, 2003, pp.7-14.
48. Field study by the present scholar. Also see for the references on these wood carvings K.V.Soundara Rajan, *Temple Architecture in Kerala*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1974, pp.116-117.
49. Field study by the present scholar. See for references to the wood carvings Stella Kramrisch, *op.cit.*, 1999, p.3; M.G. Sasibhooshan, *op.cit.*, 2006, pp.256-258.
50. Field study by the present scholar.
51. Field study by the present scholar.
52. Field study by the present scholar in these temples. Also see for *Vazhappalli Wood Carvings* *Ibid*; See for *Vetītikulāngara* wood carvings Note no. 50 above; See for *Cunakkara* wood works H. Sarkar, *op.cit.*, pp.120; M.G. Sasibhooshan, “Chunnakkarayile Darusilapangal”, *Vinjana Kairali*, Vol.26, No.3, March-1995, pp.189-191; See for *Kaviyūr Wood Carvings* Note no. 47 above; See for *Cāttankulāngara* wood works Note no.49 above; See for *Triccambaram* wood carvings H. Sarkar, *op.cit.*, pp. 119-120;

- K.V. Soundara Rajan, *op.cit.*, pp.114-115 and S. Jayashanker, *Temples of Kannoor District*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1999, pp.355-356.
53. Field study by the present scholar. Also see K.V. Soundara Rajan, *op.cit.*, pp. 57, 69.
54. See chapter V.
55. R. Champakalakshmi, *op.cit.*, 1981, pp. 80-81.
56. Field study by the present scholar. See for a description of Varāha's iconography T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp.132-145.
57. Field study by the present scholar. See for a description of the iconography of Narasimha T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp. 149-161; See for a description of the wood carvings of Narasimha in Kerala temples M.G. Sasibhooshan, *op.cit.*, 2006, pp.203-207.
58. Field study by the present scholar. Also see Stella Kramrisch, *op.cit.*, 1999, p.64.
59. *Śukasandēśa* refers to Kerala as the land of *Brahmaksātras* and Paraśurāma. See *Śukasandēśa*, *ślōka*-34.
60. Field study by the present scholar. Also see M.G. Sasibhooshan, *op.cit.*, 2006, pp. 210-211.
61. J.N. Banerjea, *op.cit.*, pp. 424-425; T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp. 216-221.
62. See for the description of the iconography of Kalki T.A. Gopinatha Rao, *op.cit.*, 1997, pp. 221-223.
63. *Grīvakōśīta* is niche on the *grīva* or the clerestory raising the *śikhara*. Various deities are enshrined in *grīvakōśītas*. Often images of Brahma, Indra or Viṣṇu, Dakṣiṇāmūrti and Narasimha are placed respectively on the north, east, south and west on the *grīvakōśītas*. See for details H. Sarkar, *op.cit.*, p. 118.
64. Field study by the present scholar. Also see M.R. Raghava Varier, *op.cit.*, 2000, pp.76-82.
65. Field study by the present scholar. Also see references to Mattancherry murals, V.R. Chithra and T.N. Srinivasan, *Cochin Murals*, Cochin, 1940; C. Sivarama Murthi, *South Indian Paintings*, New Delhi, 1968, pp.138-140; M.G. Sasibhooshan, *op.cit.*, 1994, pp.68-82.
66. M.G. Sasibhooshan, *op.cit.*, 2006, p.276.
67. Field study by the present scholar. Also see Albrecht Frenz and K.K. Marar, *Wall Paintings in Northern Kerala*, Stuttgart, 2004, pp.10-51; M.G. Sasibhooshan, *op.cit.*, 1994, pp.98-100; S. Jayashanker, *op.cit.*, 1999, pp.332-333.
68. Albrecht Frenz and K.K. Marar, *op.cit.*, pp.52-53, 100-109.
69. Field study by the present scholar. Also see M.G. Sasibhooshan, *op.cit.*, 1994, pp.52-100, *passim*.
70. *Ibid*; M.R. Raghava Varier, *op.cit.*, 2000, pp.79-82.
71. Field study by the present scholar. Also see Stella Kramrisch, "The form of the paintings", in Stella Kramrisch, J.H. Cousins and R. Vasudevan Poduval, *op.cit.*, pp. 143-160.

72. Field study by the present scholar. Also see M.G.Sasibhooshan, *op.cit.*, 1994, pp.45-46.
73. Field study by the scholar. Also see K.V. Soundara Rajan, *op.cit.*, pp. 67, 94.
74. *Ibid.*, pp.60-77, *passim*;M.G.Sasibhooshan, *op.cit.*, 2006, pp.192-193.
75. K.V. Soundara Rajan, *op.cit.*, pp.34-35.
76. M.R. Raghava Varier, *op.cit.*, 2000, pp.83-84.
77. *Ibid.*
78. *Citra Rāmāyanā*- Index No.12308, Oriental Manuscripts Library, Tiruvananthapuram, 1997.
79. The pictorial and iconic arts always exhibit the influence of the contemporary age.
80. Sita Sharma, *Krishna Leela Theme in Rajasthani Miniatures*, Meerut, 1998, pp. 36-100.
81. Gopi Krishnan.G, “Discourses, Debates and Arts – Early Medieval Kerala Temples and Dissemination of Knowledge”, *History Today*, Vol. No.11, New Delhi, 2010, pp. 56-57.
82. C.Sivarama Mūrti, *op.cit.*, pp.61-89; C.Minakshi, *op.cit.*, pp. 349-356; K.A.Nilakanta Sastri, *op.cit.*, 1975, pp.722-743.
83. J.N. Banerjea, *op.cit.*, pp. 546-548; Dipak Chandra Bhattacharya, *op.cit.*, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 10-13.
84. See chapter IV, Note no.94.
85. See chapter IV, Note no. 96.
86. Field study by the present scholar. Also see M.G.Sasibhooshan, *op.cit.*, 2006, pp.146-150.
87. Śankara Nārāyaṇa was a renowned astronomer who lived in the ninth century. He wrote *Laghu Bhaskariya Vyakhya*. See chapter II, Note no.165.
88. R. Champakalakshmi, *op.cit.*, 1981, pp. 259-260.
89. J.N. Banerjea, *op.cit.*, pp.123-124, 546-547; Dilip Chandra Bhattacharya, *op.cit.*, pp. 12-13; Suvira Jaiswal, *op.cit.*, pp. 154-155.
90. J.N. Banerjea, *op.cit.*, p.546.
91. R. Champakalakshmi, *op.cit.*, 1981, pp. 258-266.
92. *Ibid.*, pp.261-264.
93. Field study by the present scholar. M.G.Sasibhooshan, *op.cit.*, 1994, pp.49-50, 62-63, 99-100, *passim*; See Appendix VII.
94. Field study by the present scholar. See Appendix VII.
95. Often Śāsta representation is drawn as that of a hunter deity with weapons. The ritual songs of Ayyappan Tiyāṭṭu, a variant of Ayyappan Kalāṃ, end with the saying, “Ayyappan Vetṭakontāṭṭakiya Daivamē”(Ayyappa, the lord of hunting). See M.V.Vishnu Nambudiri, *Thiyattum Ayyappan Kuthum*, n.p., 2000, pp.43-44.
96. The story of the origin of Śāsta or Ayyappa from the union of Śiva and Viṣṇu is described in traditional songs known as Śāstampāṭṭukal which were used to

- propitiate Śāsta during rituals. There are minor regional variations in the narration of the story in these songs while the content remains the same. See *Sastampattukal*, (comp.), Raman Pillai Asan, Maradu, Kodungallūr, 2002. Also see chapter IV.
97. See for *Yoginārāyanā* C.Sivarama Murthi, “Geographical and Chronological Factors in Indian Iconography”, *A.I.*, No.6, 1950, p.41; See for *Viṣṇū Lōkēsvara*, Dipak Chandra Bhattacharya, *op. cit.*, pp.24-26.
 98. R. Champakalakshmi, *op.cit.*, 1981, pp.258-259.
 99. B. Padmakumari Amma, *op.cit.*, pp.161-168. Also see chapter II.
 100. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 1996, p.194; Aimanam Krishna Kaimal, “Traditional Performing Art Forms” in P.J. Cherian (ed.), *Essays on the Cultural Formation of Kerala*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1999b, pp.99-101; K.R. Pisharoti, “South Indian Theatre” in H.H. Wilson (ed.), *The Theatre of the Hindus*, New Delhi, 1972, pp. 201-202. Also see chapter II.
 101. Farelly P.Richmond, “Kutiyattam” in Farelly P.Richmond, Darius L. Swann and Phillop B. Zarrilli (eds.), *Indian Theatre*, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 93-94; Also see chapter II.
 102. See chapter II.
 103. *Ibid.*
 104. *Ibid*; Aimanam Krishna Kaimal, *op.cit.*, 1999b, pp.100-101.
 105. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyar, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.II, pp.393-397; Vadakkumkur Raja Raja Varma Raja, *op.cit.*, Vol.III, pp.48-130; Also see chapter VIII.
 106. Aimanam Krishna Kaimal, *Keralathile Drisya Kala Sahithyam*, Tiruvananthapuram, 2006, pp.16-17; K.R. Pisharoti, *op.cit.*, p.196.
 107. K.R. Pisharoti, *op.cit.*, pp.177-178.
 108. See chapter VIII.
 109. This is discussed in another context in chapter IV.
 110. S.K.Nayar, “Attakkatha”, in K.M.George, *op.cit.*, 2008, pp.486-487; Aimanam Krishna Kaimal, *op.cit.*, 2006, pp. 21-25. Also see chapter IV.
 111. See chapter IV.Note nos. 87 and 88.
 112. K.V. Krishna Iyer, *op.cit.*, 1999, pp.297-298.
 113. The criticism is mainly focused on the argument that *Asṭapadiātītam* is of later origin and not anterior to *Krīṣṇānāntītam*. See Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op. cit.*, 1990, Vol. III, pp.112-113.
 114. See chapter VIII.
 115. M.G.S. Narayanan, *op.cit.*, 2006, p.187. Also see chapter IV.
 116. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol. III, pp. 105-106.
 117. Aimanam Krishna Kaimal, *Attakkatha Sahithyam*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1982, rev.3rdedtn. 1998, pp.48-68; Killimangalam Vasudevan Nambudiripad and M.P.S. Nambudiri, *Kathakalīyute Ranga Pada Caritram*, Calicut, 2007, pp. 154-162. Also see chapter IV.

118. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol. III, p.107; Aimanam Krishna Kaimal, *op. cit.*, 1998, pp. 41-44.
119. Ulloor S. Parameswara Aiyer, *op.cit.*, 1990, Vol.III, pp.133-137; S.K. Nayar, *Kathakali Manjari*, Madras, 1956, pp.154-162; K.R. Pisharoti, *op.cit.*, 1972, pp.179-186.
120. See chapter VIII.
121. *Yaksāgāna* is the most popular dance-drama in Karnataka. It is also prevalent in Kasargode district in Kerala which has close political and cultural links with Karnataka.
122. M.M. Bhatt, "Yaksagana-Stage in Karnataka", *B.I.T.C.*, Pt.-2, 1963, p.235.
123. K. Sivarama Karanth, "Dance Rituals of South Canara", *QJMS*, Vol. XLVIII, Bangalore, 1957-58, pp.88-89; Martha Bush Ashton, *Yaksagana: A Dance-Drama of India*, New Delhi, 1977, pp.27-28.
124. Reginald Massey, *India's Kathak Dance, Past, Present, Future*, New Delhi, 1999, pp.18-21.
125. *Idem*, *India's Dances: Their History, Techniques and Repertoire*, New Delhi, 2004, pp.87-90.
126. *Ibid.*, pp.181-183.
127. *Ibid.*, pp.79-86.
128. S.Gaj Rani, *History, Religion and Culture of India*, Vol.VI., New Delhi, 2004, p.113; Manohar Laxman Varapande, *Krishna Theatre in India*, New Delhi, 1982, pp.103-104.
129. Induja Awasthi, "Ramacharitmanas and the Performing Tradition of Ramayana" in V. Raghavan, *op.cit.*, pp.506-507.
130. M.D.Raghavan, *Folk Plays and Dances of Kerala*, Thrissur, 1947, pp.38-40; G. Venu, *Puppetry and Lesser Known Dance Traditions of Kerala*, Irinjalakkuta, 1998, 2ndedtn.2004, p.24; V. Ajith Kumar, *Pavanatakam*, Tiruvananthapuram, 2006, pp.22-23.
131. Stuart Blackburn, *Inside the Drama House- Rāma Stories and Shadow Puppets*, New Delhi, 1997, pp.23-38, *passim*; Sampa Ghosh and Utpal K Banerjee, *Indian Puppets*, New Delhi, 2006, pp.39-98, *passim*.
132. M.D. Raghavan, *op.cit.*, pp.37-38.
133. G.Venu, *op.cit.*, pp.37-38.
134. M.V. Vishnu Nambudiri, *Uttarakeralathile Thottampattukal*, Thrissur, 1981, rpt.2005, pp.25-92.
135. *Ibid.*, pp. 281-344; Cirakkal T. Balakrishnan Nair (ed.), *Kerala Bhasha Ganangal*, Vol. I., Thrissur, 1979, rpt.2005, pp. 124-128.
136. C.P. Govinda Pillai (ed.), *Malayalathile Pazhaya Paattukal*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1918, rpt.2004, pp.29-67, 144-168, 191-208.
137. V. Ananda Kuttan Nair, *op.cit.*, pp. 67-93.
138. *Ibid.*, pp. 99-109.

139. M.V. Vishnu Nambudiri, *Folklore Nigantu*, Tiruvananthapuram, 1989, rpt.2000b, p.523; Cirakkal T. Balakrishnan Nair, *op.cit.*, pp.34-36.
140. Azeez Tharuvana, *Vayanadan Ramayanam*, Trissur, 2009, pp.21-45.
141. T.H.Kunji Raman Nambyar (ed.), *Mappila Ramayanavum Naatan Paattukalum*, Kottayam, 2007, pp.25-33.
142. Anandakuttan Nair, *op.cit.*, pp. 148-153.
143. M.V. Vishnu Nambudiri, *op.cit.*, 2000, pp.102-103.
144. G.Venu, *op.cit.*, pp.84-85.
145. M.V. Vishnu Nambudiri, *op.cit.*, 2000b, p.228.
146. *Idem*, *Nammute Pandathe Pattukal*, Kottayam, 2005, pp.225-235.
147. M.D. Raghavan, *op.cit.*, pp. 20-21.
148. Aditya Rangacharya, *The Indian Theatre*, New Delhi, 1971, pp.69-89.
149. *Ibid.*, pp.85-86; Balwant Gargi, *Folk Theatre of India*, Calcutta, 1991, pp.14-15.
150. Darius L. Swann, "Ras Lila" in Farely P. Richmond, Darius L. Swann and Philip B. Zarilli, *op.cit.*, pp.177-214.
151. Anuradha Kapur, *Actors, Pilgrims, Kings and Gods; The Ramlila at Ramanagar*, Calcutta, 1990, pp.4-29.
152. Darius L. Swann, "Nauntaki", Tevia Abrams, "Tamasha", in Farely P. Richmond, Darius L. Swann and Philip B. Zarilli, *op.cit.*, pp.249-304.
153. M.V. Vishnu Nambudiri, *op.cit.*, 2000b, p.128;
154. *Ibid*, pp. 16, 179, 186, 287, 431.

Chapter X

CONCLUSION

The foregoing study enables us to outline some broad conclusions regarding the history of Vaiṣṇāvism in medieval Kerala. The Brahmin migration was a catalyst that promoted Vaiṣṇāva religion in Kerala. Vaiṣṇāvism was introduced in Kerala with the popularization of Sanskrit language, Brahminic knowledge and religious ideas by immigrant Brahmins who settled in thirty two settlements. These Brahmin settlements were part of the chain of settlements that sprouted up in Tulūnātīu in coastal Karnataka. Śaivism was dominant among the early Brahmin settlers in Kerala. The fortunes of Śaivism further got advanced in the early decades of the ninth century when the Cēra kingdom of Mahōdayapuram was established by Rāma Rājaśekhara who was a Śaiva saint. Many Śaiva centres proliferated and various literary compositions on Śaiva religion were produced during this period.

An obvious shift in the religious situation ensued in the middle of the ninth century with the large scale patronage to Vaiṣṇāvism by Sthānīu Ravi Kulaśekhara¹. The king was a celebrated Visṇīu *bhakta* known as Kulaśekhara Ālīvār and his poetic compositions in Tamil and Sanskrit and stage plays on *Mahābhārata* themes had a key role in the popularization of Vaiṣṇāvism in Kerala. Royal patronage to Visṇīu temples, introduction of Ōṇam festival and revival and promotion of stage arts such as *Kūttu*, *Kūṭiyātīam* and *Pātīhakam* paved the way for the growth of Vaiṣṇāvism. The king was particularly instrumental in the foundation of a new temple, Tirukkulaśekharpuram, in the vicinity of Mahōdayapuram to check the prominence of Tiruvancikkulām Śiva shrine in the Cēra capital. The king

selected Tirumūlīkkaḷam Viṣṇū temple as the venue for drafting a new temple code known as *Mūlīkkaḷamkaccam*. This temple code which attained pan-Kerala acceptability spread the name of Tirumūlīkkaḷam temple which was a *divyadēśams* and a *grāmaksētra*.

This study reveals that the ideology of Viṣṇū *bhakti* which was enshrined in the songs of Sthānū Ravi had political overtones². Both the initial Cēra rulers- Rāma Rājaśekhara and Sthānū Ravi Kulaśekhara- relied upon Brahmins who formed a strong oligarchy of 32 Brahmin settlements in Kerala. The Brahmin settlers exerted tremendous influence on the Cēra royalty. The Cēra kingdom of Mahōdayapuram owed its political sustenance to Brahmin support. This support paved the way for the transformation of Cēra kingship into ritual sovereignty. Being a dominant Brahminic ideology, Viṣṇū *bhakti* was an effective factor for the Cēra kings in cementing the friendship with Brahmin settlers. Glorifying Viṣṇū *bhakti* was a means to gain the goodwill of the powerful Brahmin oligarchies. In this context, the Viṣṇū *bhakti* credentials of Sthānū Ravi were intertwined with political expediency and pragmatism.

An ardent *bhakta* who wandered in search of god in sacred centres, singing the glories of the benign qualities of Viṣṇū and Vaiṣṇava centres, is the image that we get about Kulaśekhara Ālīvār from his songs in *Perumāḷi Tirumolī* and *Mukundamāla*. However, this image does not conform to the image of the king reflected in the inscriptions. An image of a detached monk is not projected in the inscriptions of the king. As Tillaisthānam inscription reveals, Sthānū Ravi formed a grandiose alliance with the Cōḷās against the Pāṇḍīyas. The inscription reveals that the king had ambitious plans to protect the Cēra kingdom. It is all the more significant that the nascent Cēra kingdom of Mahōdayapuram raised its political claims

in the West Coast of South India under Sthanu Ravi as the king aligned with Cōlīa, Āy and Mūsāka rulers to assert the political claims of the Cēras. Along with Āditya Cōlīa, Sthānū Ravi conferred military honors on Vikki Anñān to re-enforce the Cēra-Cōlīa alliance. The political aspirations and ambitions of the king are again evident from the titles assumed by the king such as ‘Keralādhinātha’, ‘Keralakulacūdāmanī’ and ‘Mahodayapuraparamēswara’. Unlike a mystic saint, the king claimed himself as an overlord of Kerala and a crest jewel in the Kerala dynasty. As Tarisappalīi Copper Plates reveal, the king wholeheartedly patronized the West Asian traders on Kerala coast and ensured security to them. Having constituted a *Nagaram* of West Asian merchants at Kollam, the king revealed that he was not indifferent to the material progress of the kingdom. It may be summarized that the trade prospects of Kerala got instilled under the king. All these points make clear that Sthānū Ravi was not a wandering saint and he never disregarded his responsibilities as a king.

The ideology of Visñū *bhakti* originated and sustained discipline and obedience in society. The principle of complete surrender (*śaranāgati*) as envisaged by the royal saint inculcated the values of obedience and discipline in society. The concept of the obedience to god was equated to obedience to king which strengthened the position of monarchy. This is the trend found in several other states in contemporary South India. Hence it is certain that the adoption of Visñū *bhakti* by Sthānū Ravi was aimed at advancing the political interests of the Cēra dynasty and the Visñū *bhakti* tenets of the royal saint were entwined with the political ambitions of the King.

The temple-centred emotional Visñū *bhakti* movement spearheaded by Ālīvār saints swept the Cēra country in the ninth century. Three Ālīvārs – Tirumankai Ālīvār, Kulaśekhara Ālīvār and Nammālīvār – spread the

temple centred *bhakti* cult in Kerala³. Identification of thirteen temples in Malaināṭu or Kerala as *divyadēsams* by the Āḷṿārs who lived in ninth century indicates that the Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult reached the Cēra and Āy countries after traversing entire Pallava, Cōḷā and Pāṇḍya kingdoms. The ideology of temple-centred Viṣṇu *bhakti* projected temple cult and a temple-centred culture. Temples proliferated and projection of temple cult expanded the socio-cultural functions of temples. Temples had to perform multifarious functions and many allied institutions sprang up in temple premises as and when the functions of temples got expanded. The Cēra inscriptions also testify to the proliferation of Viṣṇu temples and the growth of temple culture in Kerala. Temple arts such as *Kūttu*, *Kūṭiyāṭṭam* and *Pāṭhakam* were developed under the impact of the ideology of Viṣṇu *bhakti*. Temple arts, theatre, hospitals, academies and feeding houses sprang up in the premises of temples. This gradually paved the way to the rise of a temple-centred society and culture in Kerala.

The popularity of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult of Āḷṿārs did not produce considerable number of Tamil literary works. On the contrary, large number of literary works in Sanskrit was produced. This does not denote the meager influence of Āḷṿār movement on the literature and culture of Kerala. Kerala had a rich legacy of Sanskritic knowledge and the Brahmins of Kerala were known for their scholarship in Sanskrit and *Vedic-Itihāsic-Purāṇic* knowledge systems. This early tradition was strengthened by the Āḷṿār led *bhakti* movement which drew inspiration from the *Itihāsic-Āgamic-Purāṇic* culture. The production of several Sanskrit works on *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* themes in Kerala in the aftermath of the spread of Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult point to the further popularization of the ideology of *bhakti* on the poets and dramatists of Kerala. The *bhakti* cult that spread to Kerala from the Tamil countries did not

impose Tamil literature and it enriched the *Itihāsic-Purānīc* culture in Kerala. What was popularized in Kerala was a Keralised form of Visṅṅu *bhakti* movement.

The temple-centred Visṅṅu *bhakti* movement was the product of the second cultural wave that swept Kerala after the migration of Brahmins⁴. *Bhakti* was fundamentally a Brahminic ideology and it originated and grew in temples and it glorified *Itihāsic-Purānīc* culture. If the first cultural wave of Brahmins in the form of the Brahmin immigration popularized *Itihāsic-Purānīc* culture and Brahminic traditions in Kerala, the Visṅṅu *bhakti* movement socialized and popularized further the *Itihāsic-Āgamic-Purānīc* traditions. It was instrumental in the evolution of an organized Brahminic social system centering on temples. The consolidation of the social position of Brahmins and the development of a temple-centred society paved the way to the development of a caste-ridden society in Kerala in subsequent years. The tenets of Visṅṅu *bhakti* such as ‘complete surrender’ and the portrayal of *bhaktas* as submissive followers strengthened feudalism as these doctrines legitimized submissiveness of tenants and their surrender before the *Bhudevas* or Brahmins⁵. The concept of god as an overlord and as a master legitimized feudalism. Further the rise of temples as powerful socio-economic institutions under royal patronage in the Cēra age transformed temples into the status of landlords. Land donations and stockpiling of wealth in temples created a sect of *Ūrālīars* and *Kārālīars* which gradually developed into landlordism.

The present study reveals that the Vaisṅṅava centres of Kerala were located on inter-regional and intra-regional trade routes⁶. The location of Vaisṅṅava centres on trade routes enabled pilgrims from distant areas to come to these shrines. Therefore mass pilgrimage was fostered and cultural exchange was made possible. The *divyadēsams* of Kerala were linked to the chain of sacred spots of Vaisṅṅavites and the institution of pilgrimage

connected Kerala temples with other Vaisṇava centres in other parts of South India. Tiruvanparisāram, Tiruvatīṭār and Tiruvananthapuram *divyadēśams* were connected by the trade route that stretched through Aramboli Pass. Tiruppuliyūr, Tiruccirīrār, Tiruārānmulā, Tiruvanvandūr, Tiruvalla and Trikkotiṭtānam were well connected by the south-north trade route and the Achankōvil Pass. Trikkākkara and Tirumūlīkkalāam temples were connected to other parts of South India by south-north trade route and Bodinayakkannūr Pass. Tirumirīrākkotū and Tirunāva were made accessible to the devotees from other parts of South India by south-north trade route and Palakkad Pass.

A cluster of six *divyadēśams* - Tiruārānmulā, Tiruvalla, Tiruppuliyūr, Trikkotiṭtānam, Tiruvanvandūr and Tiruccirīrār - is found in Cengannūr-Tiruvalla region in the erstwhile Nanrūlīainātū. This is the only cluster of Vaisṇava centres found in Kerala. The study brings out that the presence of a cluster of five Brahmin settlements in the vicinity of Cengannūr-Tiruvalla region in Nanrūlīainātū namely Ārānmulā, Cengannūr, Tiruvalla, Kaviyūr and Venmanīi was a catalyst in the proliferation of six *divyadēśam* shrines that constituted a cluster in the region⁷. Two temples in the cluster- Tiruvalla and Tiruārānmulā - were *grāmaksētras* of respective Brahmin settlements and three shrines- Tiruppuliyūr, Tiruccirīrār and Tiruvanvandūr - were associated with the Brahmins of Cengannūr settlement. The remaining temple, Trikkotiṭtānam, was associated with the Brahmins of Tiruvalla *grāmam*. The presence of these settlements produced a large Brahmin population and a strong Brahminic cultural sway in the region. Apart from the presence of a cluster of Brahmin settlements, the inter-regional trade route from the Pāndīyan kingdom through Achankōvil Pass proceeded to Mahodayapuram via Cengannūr. The proximity of the trade route facilitated *bhaktas* from Tamil countries to reach the shrines easily. Frequent movement

of people across Western Ghats through Achankōvil Pass to Cengannūr is attested in the traditional account of *Kēralōlpatti*.

The abstract idea of Viṣṇū as supreme god underwent fundamental transformation in the aftermath of the popularization of temple cult and the ideology of *bhakti*. Viṣṇū got concrete form when the God was identified fully with the deities in shrines⁸. This trend was started during the heydays of *Ālīvār* movement which received more popularity in the subsequent period too. The deities in Viṣṇū temples were called *appan* or ‘father’. Hence the deity of Tiruvalla was known as Tiruvallavālīappan, the deity of Guruvāyūr was known as Guruvāyūrappan, the deity of Ārānmulā came to be known as Ārānmulāappan and the deity of Mūlīkkalāam as Mūlīkkalāathappan.

The temple-centred Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult gave rise to the development of temple festivals⁹. Festivals popularized the temple cult, cemented the nexus between Viṣṇū temples and society and disseminated the ideology of Viṣṇū *bhakti*. During the post-Cēra age, the kings and chieftains acted as royal patrons and functionaries in temples and took part actively in temple festivals as patrons and protectors. Royal patronage was rewarded with ritual legitimacy. The development of *Ōṇāam* is a result of Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult in Kerala. This festival had agrarian rudiments and it was celebrated in Viṣṇū temples in *Tamilīakam* during the heydays of Viṣṇū *bhakti* cult. During the age of *Ālīvārs*, *Ōṇāam* celebration was confined to temple precincts as a ritual festival associated with the birth day celebrations of deities. The festival ceased to exist in Tamil Kingdoms in the period that followed the age of *Ālīvārs*. Contrary to this, *Ōṇāam* developed into a major celebration in Kerala. The nature of the festival transformed considerably in the post-Cēra age. The festival developed into a public revelry and many folk elements got

incorporated into it. This resulted in the growth of *Ōnīam* as a public festival and a pan-Kerala festival.

This study brings out that the rise of royal temples is a new cultural phenomenon that developed in the post-Cēra age when petty chiefdoms proliferated from the vestiges of the Cēra kingdom of Mahōdayapuram. The establishment and promotion of temples as royal shrines, mostly in the case of Visṅṅu temples, are examples of this trend¹⁰. Among the royal Visṅṅu shrines of post-Cēra age Tiruvananthapuram and Guruvāyūr temples were prominent Vaisṅṅava centres. The quest for ritual legitimacy was a catalyst in the rise of royal temples. The same trend was prevalent in contemporary South Indian kingdoms. The rise of Tiruvananthapuram temple as a prominent shrine was the result of the rise of independent Vēnīātṅu. The temple played the role of a legitimizing institution of the political claims of the Rājas of Vēnīātṅu. The Guruvāyūr temple rose to prominence under the Zamorins of Calicut. This temple emerged as a focal point of royal patronage chiefly due to the location of the temple in the strategically significant region in the southern part of the kingdom of the Zamorins. The Visṅṅu temples continued to prosper as Brahminic institutions in the post-Cēra age. The kings and local chieftains patronized and promoted temples. The royal functionaries had several hereditary positions in temples known as *mēlkōima*, *akakōima* and *purīakōima*. Apart from ensuring safety to temples, the presence of royal functionaries paved the way for greater collaboration between kings and Brahmins.

Another aspect of Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult in the post- Cēra age is that a vigorous temple-centred *bhakti* cult originated and developed in the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries with Guruvāyūr temple at the nucleus¹¹. This is one of

the striking features of the Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult of the age too. Five *bhaktas* namely Pūntānam Nambūdiri, Mēlppattūr Nārāyanā Bhatītātiri, Vilvamangalam Swāmiyar, Mānavēda and Kurūramma spearheaded a Guruvāyūr temple cult. The *bhaktas* glorified Guruvāyūr temple as the focal point of Visṅṅu *bhakti*. The royal patronage of the Zamorins was another catalyst for the rise of Guruvāyūr temple. Mānavēda was a prince of Calicut who invented *Krīṣṅṅanātītām* to extol the devotion to the deity of Guruvāyūr. Apart from this, the *bhaktas* fabricated new *ksētramāhātmyas*, identified the deity with Krīṣṅṅa of *Bhāgavatapurāṅā*, composed *bhakti* works and put forward a new place-name. Mēlppattūr Nārāyanā Bhatītātiri invented the place-name Guruvāyūr. The old place-name was replaced by this Sanskritised place-name to use in Sanskrit work on Guruvāyūr temple. This contributed to the growth of the popularity of the temple. As a result Guruvāyūr temple emerged as a prominent centre of Visṅṅu *bhakti*.

With the decline of the Ālīvār movement, the organized and temple-centred Visṅṅu *bhakti* movement lost its momentum. Pilgrims from outside Kerala are found in the epigraphic records and, contemporary literature and also oral traditions suggest the continuation of the pilgrimage tradition. But mass pilgrimage to Visṅṅu temples discontinued. *Bhakti* was diffused chiefly through literature¹². This gave rise to many *bhakti* poets who compiled free renderings on *Itihāsas* and *Purāṅās* and wrote devotional works on Rāma and Krīṣṅṅa. They popularized the stories of Rāma and Krīṣṅṅa and socialized the *Itihāsic- Purāṅic* world view. The poets played a vital role in the dissemination of *Itihāsic- Purāṅic* culture. Tunchathu Ramanujan Ezhuthachan, the foremost among Visṅṅu *bhakti* poets of Kerala, stressed simple *bhakti* and he never stood against the claims of different social segments in worshipping god. He reaffirmed the right of women and the

downtrodden to chant the names of Viṣṇu. Ezhuthachan's devotional works remain as a source of spiritual, moral and literary inspiration to Keralites of all streams.

A striking feature of the *bhakti* cult of *bhakti* poets is that it never took up an offensive campaign against Brahminic claims in socio- intellectual life¹³. Ezhuthachan was not an exception to it. Though he wrote on epics, he did not reject Brahminic claims and caste norms. On the contrary, Brahminic claim as lords on earth was accepted and the poet was apologetic to the Brahmins for expounding on *Itihāsas* in a non-Sanskrit language. The eulogy of *bhūdēvas* or Brahmins had an impact on the social life of Kerala. It strengthened the consolidation of caste norms and landlordism. The Brahmins were accepted as the lords on earth with greater conviction which paved the way for the further development of a caste ridden social structure. The deterioration of caste claims did not happen. Instead, conservatism in terms of caste rules got strengthened. This was a consequence of *bhakti* cult. Unlike Ezhuthachan, Pūntānam Nambūdiri, another *bhakta*, nullified openly the Brahminic caste norms and underlined simple devotion as the most apt means for a *bhakta* to worship Viṣṇu. Pūntānam makes a scathing attack in *Jnānappāna* on Brahminic claims and the caste system. May be he did so because he was a Brahmin and he could criticize his fellow Brahmins for their misdemeanors. The majority of people, constituted by the non- Brahmins, were not enabled by these criticisms of Pūntānam to disown caste norms and the supremacy of Brahmins.

The expression of Viṣṇu *bhakti* through *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* literature by Ezhuthachan paved the way for the transformation of Nāyars who until seventeenth century remained as an arms bearing community of warriors.

Ezhuthachan's compilations spread *Itihāsic-Purānīc* knowledge among Nāyars¹⁴. The upgradation of Nāyars was again augmented by the invention of performing arts such as *Krīśṅānātīam*, *Rāmanātīam* and *Kathakalī* in sixteenth- seventeenth centuries. Unlike *Kūttu* and *Kūṭiyātīam*, which were monopolized by Cākyars, Nāyars performed *Krīśṅānātīam*, *Rāmanātīam* and *Kathakalī*¹⁵. The Nāyar soldiers of Calicut kingdom were trained in the performance of *Krīśṅānātīam* and the Nāyar bodyguards of the Rāja of Kotṭārakkara were the earliest performers of *Rāmanātīam*. Similar to this, the Nāyar militia of Kottayam was trained in the performance of *Kathakalī*. With this the monopoly of Cākyars in stage performance eclipsed. More over it resulted in the awakening of Nāyars from the status of a caste of warriors. Again, they were made more familiar with *Itihāsic-Purānīc* culture and values.

This study also reveals that the development of Malayalam language and literature owe a great deal to Vaisṅava narrative literature¹⁶. The most popular themes of narrative literature in medieval Kerala are the stories of Rāma and Krīśṅa. This is illustrated from the literary works like *Rāmacaritam*, *Kanīśā Rāmāyanā*, *Bhāratamāla*, *Kanīśā Bhāgavata*, *Bhāśā Bhagavad Gītā*, *Rāmakathappātīu*, *Bhāśā Rāmāyanā Campū*, *Krīśṅāgātha*, the works of Pūntānam Nambūdiri and the works of Ezhuthachan such as *Rāmāyanā Irupattināluvritam*, *Mahābhāratamkilīppātīu* and *Adhyātma Rāmāyanāmkilīppātīu*. These works were produced in different stages in Malayalam and they represent various stages in the evolution of Malayalam language and literature. Similar role was played by the Vaisṅava literature in the development of regional languages in different parts of India.

The Rāma and Krīśṅa stories provided thematic substance to medieval Kerala sculptors and painters¹⁷. This is a trend which is found

extensively in different states in medieval India such as the kingdoms of Tamil Nadu, Orissa, Andhra, Karnataka and in North India. The Vaisṇava sculptures from places like Mahodayapuram, Kalakkūtām, Eramam, Nīrmanāka and the wood carvings of Cāttankulāngara, Cunakkara, Kaviyūr, Vālappalī, Tiruvangātū and Triccambaram temples illustrate the influence of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa stories as enshrined in *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata* narratives. The *avatāra* tradition and the *Itihāsic-Purāṇic* literature were the favorite themes for medieval Kerala artists. The mural paintings of Matīāncherry palace, Totikkalām, Tiruānmulā Pundarikapuram, Pāṇḍāvam, Ettumanur, Tricakrapuram, Arppūkkara, Mitrānandapuram, Tirunāyattotū, Triprayar and Trikotittānam temples demonstrate how far did Vaisṇavism impress the medieval Kerala painters. The evolution of a typical Kerala idiom in the iconic and pictorial arts - pot bellied and dwarfish figures with bulged eyes, round face and corpulent lips – evolved in the sculptural and the pictorial representations of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. The literary works on *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bhāgavata* and *Mahābhārata* which got produced in abundance in medieval Kerala provided thematic substance to artists. The Vaisṇava religion provided the repertory for performing and folk arts too. The performing arts like *Kūttu*, *Kūṭṭiyāttam*, *Rāmanāttam*, *Kṛṣṇanāttam* and *Kathakalī* have Vaisṇava themes as repertory. The stories of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa form the repertory of several folk arts like *Ivarkalī*, *Tōlppāvakkūttu*, *Nilalkuttu*, *Kuravarikalī* and *Kurattiyāttam* and folk songs too. The temple arts addressed the elite sections in the society. However, gradually the Brahmanic ideology filtrated deep down to the society which, as a result, influenced the non-elite segments too.

How far was Vaisṇavism popular in medieval Kerala? The geographical distribution of Vaisṇava centres in medieval Kerala is a pointer

to the wider popularity of Vaisṅṅavism. The Vaisṅṅava centres got distributed through out the state and temples were patronized by kings and ordinary devotees alike. Several Cēra- Āy inscriptions attest to the prevalence of the system of offering materials like lamp, food items, oil, flowers and paddy fields to the temple. The system of making offerings to the temple originated and developed under the stamp of Visṅṅu *bhakti* cult. The endowments to Visṅṅu temples are again an indication to the popularity of Visṅṅu temples in society. This practice continued unabatedly in the post-Cēra age too. The temple records of the age reveal that kings, local chieftains and merchants gave endowments to temples and made offerings. A large number of literary works on Vaisṅṅava themes such as *Rāmāyanā*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata* plots and the wider use of Vaisṅṅava themes in temple theatre and arts as thematic substance denote the popularity of Vaisṅṅavism. All these are clear indicators of the popularity of Vaisṅṅavism in Kerala.

Again the popularity of Vaisṅṅavism in the medieval period is ascertained from the wider use of Vaisṅṅava personal names. Both the Cēra inscriptions and post-Cēra temple records along with the literature of the age reveal that Vaisṅṅava personal names were widely used in medieval Kerala. The oral traditions on Śankaramangalathamma and her *bhakti* to the deity of Tiruvalla and Kurṅṅamma and Manjulā and their devotion to the deity of Guruvāyūr throw light on the popularity of Vaisṅṅava *bhakti* cult among women in medieval period¹⁸. However all these women *bhaktas* hailed from the upper strata of the society- the first two were Brahmins and the other one belonged to an Ambalavāsi community. The wide use of the stories of Rāma and Krṅṅśṅā as thematic substance in folk arts and folk songs also indicate the

popularity of Vaisṇāvism among rural and downtrodden sections among whom folk arts and folk songs were mainly popular.

A unique feature of the religious life of medieval Kerala is the absence of acrimonious feud between Vaisṇāvism and Śaivism. No competition or conflict between Vaisṇāvism and Śaivism is found in medieval Kerala literature and arts. Why was the spirit of competition absent in Kerala? What was the reason for the lack of Śaiva -Vaisṇāva conflicts in Kerala while there were long lasting and furious conflicts between them in the neighbouring Tamil kingdoms? Why did religious harmony exist between Śaiva and Vaisṇāva religions in Kerala? The peculiar system of Brahmin settlements known as *grāma* with *grāmaksīetra* at the nucleus existed only in Kerala. The Brahmin families were organized on the basis of *grāma* and the identity of Brahmin families was closely linked with the *grāma* with which they were affiliated. Such *grāma* organization in which different Brahmin families coexisted irrespective of Śaiva and Vaisṇāva affiliation acted as a catalyst in the advent of the spirit of religious harmony.

Another striking feature of the Brahmin settlements in Kerala is that no settlement was exclusively occupied by either the Śaivas or the Vaisṇāvas. The co-existence of Śaiva and Vaisṇāva shrines in *grāmas* is a peculiar religious norm prevalent in Kerala. The topography and the geographical features of Kerala were instrumental in the rise of a harmonious religious life among the Śaivas and the Vaisṇāvas. The *Kēralōlpatti* tradition narrates how the first batch of migrant Brahmins returned to their homeland due to the torture inflicted upon them by serpents. This tradition points to the existence of a difficult terrain in Kerala with wild forests. Such a difficult topography forced the Brahmin settlers to nurture a spirit of coexistence and harmony. In

this circumstance, royal patronage was a decisive factor in popularizing Vaiṣṇavism.

Being landlords, Nambūdiri Brahmins were custodians of wealth and they were associated with political and economic affairs. The post-Cēra literature testifies to the prevalence of a dominant urge for worldly life among Nambūdiri Brahmins. The Nambūdiris were chiefly landlords. This lessened conservative and ritual differences between the votaries of Viṣṇu *bhakti* and Śiva *bhakti* among the Nambūdiri Brahmins. Nevertheless heinous caste rules and social customs were pursued by Kerala Brahmins to establish their social claims upon other castes. The Brahmins placed themselves as infallible masters through the imposition of caste norms. It is striking that while Nambūdiri Brahmins followed less sectarian differences among themselves, they pursued strict caste norms in society to reinforce their superior claims as lords on earth.

In other parts of South India, the age of the Ālīvārs was followed by an age of Ācāryas who were Brahmins and conservative votaries of Brahminic ritualism. The Ācāryas and Matīhoms preserved and advanced sectarianism in the Tamil countries where they spearheaded organized *bhakti* movements with obvious sectarian outlook. Thus the followers of Rāmanujācārya and Mādhvācārya developed into organized sects and they preached sectarian and orthodox form of Vaiṣṇavism. Similar to this there were sectarian Śaiva sects like Vīra Śaivas or Lingāyats, Kāpālikas and Kālamukhas. On the contrary, no Ācāryas emerged in Kerala in the age which followed the Ālīvārs. Instead of Ācāryas, *bhakti* poets, both from Brahminic and non-Brahminic sections, led the Viṣṇu *bhakti* cult in Kerala. In the absence of sectarian leaders, no organised Viṣṇu *bhakti* movement swept Kerala after the decline of the Ālīvār movement. Absence of sectarian leaders

and an organized *bhakti* cult minimized the chances for sectarian conflicts. The absence of both sectarianism and dogmatic organizations of *bhaktas* had its impact on the absence of a sectarian Vaiṣṇava religion in Kerala.

The popularity of composite deities such as Śankara Nārāyaṇa and Ayyappa who is identified in legends as the son of Śiva and Viṣṇu testify to the prevalence of syncretism in Kerala society. The syncretic deities were worshipped as prominent divinities. No bar was imposed upon the worship of the composite deities. A harmonious combination of the worship of five gods was formulated in *Tantrasamuccaya* by Cēnnās Bhatṭatiri in fifteenth century to reorganize the ritual system of Kerala Brahmins. Śankara Nārāyaṇa is included in the list of five prominent divinities. This was an attempt to reassert the spirit of syncretism. The popularity of the worship of syncretic deities is a pointer to the non-prevalence of the spirit of conflict and religious rivalries in medieval Kerala.

The Cēras of Mahodayapuram had a legacy of pursuing the policy of religious harmony. The Cēras patronized Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism alike. While Rāma Rājaśekhara, the first Cēra ruler, was a Śaiva saint, Sthānu Ravi Kulaśekhara, the successor of Rāma Rājaśekhara, was a Viṣṇu *bhakta*. Though these early kings were saints of two *bhakti* cults, they never resorted to persecution of the opposite sect on religious ground. The successive Cēra rulers also pursued a policy of religious harmony. The kings and chieftains in the post-Cēra age were also not averse to follow the policy of religious harmony. The only known case of inter-religious rivalry between Śaivites and Vaiṣṇavites in Kerala is found in Tirumirakkotu where the sanctum sanctorum of Śiva is superimposed in front of the sanctum sanctorum of Viṣṇu. The location of the sanctum sanctorum of Śiva ensured that the devotees who enter the temple are forced to see Śiva shrine before seeing the

shrine of Viṣṇu. The songs of Kulaśekhara Ālīvār on Tirumirīrakkotū do not mention the Śiva shrine in this temple. The Tirumirīrakkotū inscription of Ravi Kota Rāja Simha, the Cēra king, reveals that the Cōlīa influence was well established in Tirumirīrakkotū in eleventh century AD. Tirumirīrakkotū was located on the highway that passed through the Palakkad pass which facilitated the Cōlīa conquest of the region. Being hardcore champions of Śaivism, the Cōlīas often patronized Śiva temples and built Śiva temples wherever they conquered. The Cōlīa penetration into Tirumirīrakkotū produced elements of Śaiva - Vaisṇava rivalries in the region.

The Viṣṇu temples received royal patronage in the eighteenth century when the kingdoms of Travancore and Kochi emerged. Anilīam Tirunālī Mārtānīdīa Varma, as an act of political expediency, presented the newly carved kingdom of Travancore as a gift to Padmanabha, the deity of Tiruvananthapuram temple. The Rājas of Kochi took keen interest in promoting Trippūñithura Viṣṇu temple into a shrine of *kuladēvata*. The kings of Kochi started a ritual procession known as *Attachamayam* in connection with *Ōñam* festival. The Vaisṇava themes in *Rāmāyanā*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāgavata* continued to provide thematic substance to both literature and arts. The stage art known as *ōtīntūlīlīalī* and the dance form known as *Mohiniātītam* developed on Vaisṇava themes. *Kathakalī* which developed into a leading performing art in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries also extensively have Vaisṇava themes. The Vaisṇava themes continued to influence the mural paintings and wood carvings which got produced in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries.

This study reveals that Vaisṇavism had key role in the evolution of Kerala society and culture. What failed to emerge in Kerala is an anti-Śaiva sectarian Vaisṇava cult. The existence of a weak sectarian sect of

Vaisnavites does not denote that the Vaisṇāva devotional cult was totally absent in Kerala. Even in the absence of an organized sectarian Vaisṇāvism, the religion influenced and dominated the literature, art and thought of medieval Kerala. *Ōṇāṁ* which emerged as a Vaisṇāva ritual festival developed into a regional festival of Kerala and Visṇū temples prospered. Lack of religious conflicts and the prevalence of syncretism created harmonious atmosphere to develop a healthy religious life in Kerala.

Notes and References:

1. This is discussed in chapter II. See chapter II.
2. See chapter II.
3. See chapter II.
4. See chapter II.
5. See chapter II.
6. See chapter III.
7. See chapter II.
8. This is discussed in chapters II and IV.
9. This is discussed in chapter VII.
10. See chapter V.
11. See chapters IV and V.
12. See chapter IV and VIII.
13. See chapter IV.
14. See chapter IV.
15. See chapter IX.
16. See chapter VIII.
17. See chapter IX.
18. See chapters II and IV.

APPENDIX- I
Ālīvārs of South India

Sl. No.	Name of the Saint	Native Place/ country	Period (Approximate)	Social Background	Chief literary works
1.	Poigai Ālīvār	Kāncipuram; Pallava country	7 th century	Brahmin	Tiruvantāti
2.	Bhutattālīvār	Katānmallai(Mamallapuram); Pallava country	7 th century	Brahmin	Tiruvantāti
3.	Pey Ālīvār	Mayilai (Mylapor); Pallava country	7 th century	Brahmin	Tiruvantāti
4.	Tirumalisai Ālīvār	Tiruvallikheni (Tirumalisai); Pallava country	7 th - 8 th centuries	Śūdra	Tiruccandaviruttam; Nānmugan Tiruvantāti
5.	Tirumangai Ālīvār	Mankai; Cōlīa country	8 th century	Śūdra (Kalīlīar)	Peria Tirumolīi
6.	Periyālīvār	Śrīvilliputhūr; Pānīdīya country	9 th century	Brahmin	Periyālīvār Tirumolīi
7.	Āntīāl (daughter of Periyalvar)	Śrīvilliputhūr; Pānīdīya country	9 th century	Brahmin (woman)	Nācciyār Tirumolīi; Tiruppāvai
8.	Tiruppanālīvār	Tirurayūr; Cōlīa country	9 th century	Śūdra (Pānīa)	
9.	Tondaratīppotī Ālīvār	Madangutīi; Cōlīa country	9 th century	Brahmin	Tirumalai; Tiruppallieluchchi
10.	Kulaśekhara Ālīvār	Mahodayapuram; Cēra country	9 th century	Kṣātriya (a royal bhakta)	Perumālī Tirumolīi; Mukundamāla (Sanskrit)
11.	Nammālīvār	Kurugūr; Pānīdīya country	9 th century	Śūdra (Velīlīalīa)	Tiruvāimolīi; Tiruviruttam; Tiruvisaippa; Periya Tiruvantāti
12.	Mathurakavi Ālīvār	Tirukkōlur; Pānīdīya country	9 th -10 th centuries	Brahmin	

APPENDIX-II

List of 108 Divyadēsams

Of 108 Vais̄ṅṅava centres, on which the South Indian Vis̄ṅṅu *bhakti* cult of Āl̄ṅṅvārs centred, 22 belonged to *Ton̄ṅṅaiman̄ṅd̄alam* or Pallava country, 40 belonged to the Cōl̄ṅṅa kingdom, 18 belonged to the Pān̄ṅṅd̄ya kingdom, 13 to *Malaināt̄ṅṅu* or Kerala, 2 to *Nat̄ṅṅunāt̄ṅṅu* or middle region, 11 to the *Vat̄ṅṅanāt̄ṅṅu* or northern region and 2 to the celestial world. The northern region corresponds to all territories north to Tiruvēnkat̄ṅṅam. It is notable that Tiruvēnkat̄ṅṅam or Vēnkat̄ṅṅam hills got considered as the northern boundary of *Tamil̄ṅṅakam*. Therefore, Vis̄ṅṅu *bhaktas* also termed the regions north to Vēnkat̄ṅṅam hills as *Vat̄ṅṅanāt̄ṅṅu*.

I. Divyadēsams in Ton̄ṅṅd̄aiman̄ṅd̄alam:

(*Ton̄ṅṅaināt̄ṅṅit̄ṅṅutiruppatikal̄ṅṅ*)

1. Tirukkacci
2. As̄ṅṅt̄ṅṅapūyakaram
3. Tiruttanka
4. Tiruvēl̄ṅṅukkai
5. Tiruppatakam
6. Tirunīragam
7. Tirunilāttingal̄ṅṅtun̄ṅṅd̄am
8. Tiruūragam
9. Tiruvekha
10. Tirukkāarakam
11. Tirukkārvanam
12. Tirukkāl̄ṅṅvanūr
13. Tiruppaval̄ṅṅavannam
14. Tirupparamēccuravin̄ṅṅagaram
15. Tirupput̄ṅṅkul̄ṅṅi
16. Tiruninravūr
17. Tiruevvūr
18. Tirunīrmalai
19. Tiruvid̄ṅṅavēntai
20. Tirukkat̄ṅṅalmallai
21. Tiruvallikkēni

22. Tirukkadāigai

II. Divyadēśams in the Cōlā Country:

(Cōlānātītiruppattikalī)

1. Tiruarangam (Śrīrangam)
2. Tiruuraiyūr
3. Tirumāmanīkkōyil
4. Tiruanpil
5. Tirukkarampanūr
6. Tiruvelīlārai
7. Tiruppulīlāmpūtankutī
8. Tiruppērnākār
9. Tiruātanūr
10. Tiruvalīuntūr
11. Tirucciruppuliyūr
12. Tiruccērai
13. Tiruttalaiccankātī
14. Tirukkuṭāntai
15. Tirukkanīdīyūr
16. Tiruvinīnāgar
17. Tirukkanīnāpuram
18. Tiruvālīi Tirunakariyūr
19. Tirunākai
20. Tirunārai yūr
21. Tirunantipuravinīnāgaram
22. Tiruintalīūr
23. Tiruccittrakūtīam
24. Tirucīrkālīi
25. Tirukkūtīalūr
26. Tirukkanīnānkutī
27. Tirukkanīnāmangai
28. Tirukkavittālam
29. Tiruvelīlīyāngutī
30. Tirumanīmatakkōyil

31. Tiruvaikunṭṭāvinṅāgaram
32. Tiruarimeyvinṅāgaram
33. Tiruttēvanārtogai
34. Tiruvanpurutōttamam
35. Tiruccemponceykōyil
36. Tirutteriyambalam
37. Tirumanṅikkūtṭam
38. Tirukkāvalampātṭi
39. Tiruvelṅṅakkulṅam
40. Tiruppārttanpalṅṅi

III. Divyadēsams in the Pānṅṅya Kingdom:

(Pānṅṅyanātṭṭṭiruppatikalṅṅ)

1. Tirumālirumcōlai
2. Tirukkōsṭṭiyūr
3. Tirumeyyam
4. Tiruppullānṅṅi
5. Tiruttankalṅṅ
6. Tirumogūr
7. Tirukkūtṭal
8. Tiruvilliputtūr
9. Tirukkurukūr
10. Tiruttōlaivillimangalam
11. Tiruccīrvaramangai
12. Tiruppulṅṅingutṭi
13. Tiruppērai
14. Tiruvaikunṭṭam
15. Tiruvaragunṅamangai
16. Tirukkulṅṅantai
17. Tirukkurunkutṭi
18. Tirukkōṅṅūr

IV. Divyadēsams in Malainātṭṭu or Kerala:

(*Malainātīttiruppatikalī*)

1. Tiruvanparisāram
2. Tiruvatīttār
3. Tiruvananthapuram
4. Tiruppuliyūr
5. Tiruārānmulā
6. Tiruccirīrār
7. Tiruvalla
8. Tiruvanvanīdūr
9. Tirukkotīthānam
10. Tirukkākkara
11. Tirumūlikkalāam
12. Tirumirīrākkōtū
13. Tirunāva

V. Divyadēsams in Natīunātīu or Middle Region:

(*Nātīunātīttiruppatikalī*)

1. Tiruvāyintirapuram
2. Tirukkōvalūr

VI. Divyadēsams in Vatanātīu or northern region:

(*Vatanātīttiruppadikalī*):

1. Tiruvēnkatāam (Tirupati Tirumala)
2. Tiruccingavēlkunram
3. Tiruayotti
4. Tirunaimicāranāyam
5. Tiruccālāgrāmam
6. Tiruvatariyāśramam
7. Tirukkanīdāngatīnagar
8. Tiruppiriti
9. Tiruttuvāragai
10. Tiruvatāamaturai
11. Tiruvāyppātī

VII. Divyadēśams in Celestial World:

(*Tirunāṭṭīṭtiruppatikalī*)

1. Tiruppālkkatīal (Milk Ocean)
2. Tirubrahmapadam or Paramapadam (Sacred feet of Viṣṇu or Salvation)

APPENDIX - III
The Cēra Inscriptions Relating to Viṣṇu Temples in Kerala

Sl. No.	Name of the Temple/location	King	Year	References
1.	Kūtāl Māṅikyam temple, Irinjālakkutā	Sthāṅu Ravi Kulaśekhara	855AD	<i>B.R.R.I.</i> , Vol. IX, Part-I, p. 43; <i>Index. No. A.3.</i>
2.	Cokkūr Viṣṇu temple, near Calicut.	Kōta Ravi	898 AD	<i>S.I.I.</i> , Vol. VIII, p. 72; <i>Index. No. A. 8.</i>
3.	Kurumattūr Viṣṇu temple, Areekkode	Rāma Rājaśekhara	9 th century	<i>The Hindu</i> , dated February 11, 2011.
3.	Indianūr temple, Kotīttakkal.	Kōta Ravi	910AD	<i>Index. No. A. 15.</i>
4.	Trippūṅṭhura temple near Ernakulam.	Kōta Ravi	913 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. VI., p. 64; <i>ARADC</i> , 1927-28, II, pp. 11-12; <i>Index. No. A. 16.</i>
5.	Trikkākkara temple near Ernakulam.	Kerala Kēsari	Early decades of 10 th century	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.III, pp. 186-188; <i>Index. No. A. 19.</i>
6.	Mānipuram temple, near Calicut (Private temple).	Indu Kōta	946AD	<i>S.I.I.</i> , Vol. VII., pp. 71-72; <i>Index. No. A. 20.</i>
7.	Tiruvanvandūr Viṣṇu temple near Cengannūr.	Indu Kōta	948 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. V., p. 34; <i>Index. No. A. 22.</i>
8.	Tirumūḷīkkalāṁ Viṣṇu temple near Ernakulam.	Indu Kōta	948AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. III, pp. 189-191; <i>Index.No. A. 23</i>
9.	Trikkākkara temple	Nil.	c.950 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. III, pp. 174-175; <i>Index. No. B.7</i>

10.	Trikkākkara temple	Nil.	c.950 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. III, pp. 173-174; <i>Index. No.</i> B.8.
11.	Trikkākkara temple	Indu Kōta	953AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. III, pp. 169-171; <i>Index. No.</i> A.24.
12.	Trikkākkara temple	Nil.	958 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. III., pp. 177-179; <i>Index.No.</i> B.9.
13.	Trikkākkara temple	Indu Kōta	959AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. III., pp. 161-169; <i>Index.No.</i> A.25.
14.	Trikkākkara temple	Indu Kōta	960AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. III., pp. 171-173; <i>Index. No.</i> A. 26.
15.	Trikkākkara temple	Nil.	c.960AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. III., pp. 176-177; <i>Index. No.</i> B.10.
16.	Trikkākkara temple	Bhaskara Ravi	968AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. III., pp. 179-182; <i>Index. No.</i> A. 28.
17.	Tiruvanvandīūr temple	Nil.	c.973AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. II., pp. 22-24; <i>Index.No.</i> B.13.
18.	Tiruvanvandīūr temple	Nil.	c.973AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. II., pp. 24-25; <i>Index.No.</i> B.14.
19.	Trikkākkara temple	Bhaskara Ravi	975AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.II., pp. 38-40; <i>Index.No.</i> A.30.
20.	Trikkotiṭṭānam temple near Canganacherry.	Bhāskara Ravi	976AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.V., pp.176-178; <i>Index.No.</i> A.31.
21.	Trikkotiṭṭānam temple.	Bhāskara Ravi	976AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.V., pp.187-189; <i>Index. No.</i> A. 32.
22.	Triprayār temple near Triśśūr.	Nil.	c. 10 th Century	<i>B.R.R.I.</i> , Vol. IX, Part II, p. 137., <i>Index. No.</i> C.31.
23.	Tirukkulaśēkharapuram temple at Kotṭungallūr	Nil.	c. 10 th Century	<i>S.I.I.</i> , Vol. V., p.340; <i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. VI, Pt. II, pp. 192-193; <i>Index.No.</i> C. 32.
24.	Trikkotiṭṭānam temple	Bhāskara Ravi	991 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol., II., pp.34-37; <i>Index. No.</i> A.42.
25.	Trikkākkara temple	Bhāskara Ravi	999 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol., III., pp.182-184.
26.	Kūṭṭal Mānīkyam temple, Irinjalakkuda	Bhāskara Ravi	c. 10 th Century	<i>B.R.R.I.</i> , Vol. IX, Part I, p. 44; <i>Index.No.</i> A.74.

27.	Cēnamangalam temple near Ernakulam.	Nil.	c. 10 th Century	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. VI., Pt. II , pp.189-190; <i>Index.No.</i> C. 34.
28.	Tirumirīrakkotū near Pattambi.	Bhāskara Ravi	c. 10 th Century	<i>Index. No.</i> C.15.
29.	Trikkotiṭṭānam temple.	Bhāskara Ravi	c. 988 AD or c. 1004 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. V, pp.178-180; <i>Index.No.</i> A. 47.
30.	Trikkotiṭṭānam temple.	Bhāskara Ravi	c. 988 AD or c. 1004 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol., II, pp.40-41; <i>Index. No.</i> A. 48.
31.	Tiruvangūr temple near Calicut.	Bhāskara Ravi	c. 997 AD or 1013 AD	<i>S.I.I.</i> , Vol. VII, p.75; <i>Index.No.</i> A. 50.
32.	Trikkākkara temple.	Bhāskara Ravi	1004AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.II., pp.46-48; <i>Index. No.</i> A.35.
33.	Tirunelli temple in Wayanad district.	Bhāskara Ravi	1008 AD	<i>I.A.</i> , Vol. XX, pp.285-290; <i>Index No.</i> A. 36; V.R. Parameswaran Pillai, <i>Pracinalikhitangal</i> ,pp.175-180.
34.	Trikkākkara temple	Bhāskara Ravi	1009 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.II, pp.42-44; <i>Index.No.</i> A.45.
35.	Tirumūlīkkalāam temple.	Bhāskara Ravi	1010 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.II., pp.45-46; <i>Index.No.</i> A.37.
36.	Trikkotiṭṭānam temple	Bhāskara Ravi	1010 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.V., p.45; <i>Index.No.</i> A.38.
37.	Pullūr Viṣṇū temple near Kasargodu.	Bhāskara Ravi	1020 AD	<i>Index.No.</i> A.39; M.G.S. Narayanan, <i>Kerala Charithrathinte Atisthana Silakal</i> , pp.69-78.
38.	Eramam temple near Kanūr.	Bhāskara Ravi	1020 AD	<i>Index.No.</i> A.40; M.G.S. Narayanan, <i>Kerala Charithrathinte Atisthana Silakal</i> , pp.79-92.
39.	Trikkākkara temple	Bhāskara Ravi	1020 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol., II, pp.48-49; <i>Index.No.</i> A.41.
40.	Tirunelli temple	Bhāskara Ravi	1021 AD	<i>E.I.</i> , Vol. XVI, pp. 339-345; V.R. Parameswaran Pillai, <i>Pracinalikhitangal</i> , pp. 170-175; <i>Index.</i> ,

				No. A. 46.
41.	Tirumirṛṛakkotṛṛu temple	Ravi Kōta	1028 AD	<i>Index. No. A. 52; M.G.S. Narayanan, Foundations of South Indian Society and Culture, pp.251.</i>
42.	Triccambaram temple.	Rāja Rāja	1040 AD	<i>Index. No. A. 61.</i>
43.	Indianūr temple.	Rāja Rāja	1040 AD	<i>Index. No. A. 63.</i>
44.	Trikkotiṛṛttānam temple.	Ravi Rāma	c. 1050 AD	<i>T.A.S., Vol. V., pp. 172-176; Index.No.A.64.</i>
45.	Trikkākkara temple.	No Name of Kings	c. 1050 AD	<i>T.A.S., Vol. III., pp. 184-185; Index.No. B. 18.</i>
46.	Tiruvalla temple, Tiruvalla.	Many kings- Vīra Cōlīa, Queen Kilīān Atīikalī, Bhāskara Ravi and several local governors.	A set of copper plates of different periods which got edited and rearranged at a later period.	<i>T.A.S., Vol. II., pp. 131-207; Index.No.A.80.</i>
47.	Tirukkulaśēkharapuram temple	Nil.	c. 1075 AD	<i>S.I.I., Vol. V., p. 340; T.A.S., Vol. VI, pt. II, pp. 193-194; Index.No.B.22.</i>
48.	Trikkotiṛṛttānam temple	Nil.	c.11 th Century	<i>T.A.S., Vol. V., pp. 181-183; Index.No.B.20.</i>
49.	Trikkākkara Temple	Nil.	c.11 th Century	<i>T.A.S., Vol. III., pp. 188-189; Index.No.B.19.</i>
50.	Triccambaram temple	King's name not given	c. 11 th Century	<i>Index. No. C.1.</i>
51.	Panniyūr temple near Kuttippuram.	Nil.	c. 11 th Century	<i>S.I.I., Vol. V, p. 336; Index. No.C.16.</i>
52.	Alanallūr temple near Manṛṛnṛārkātṛṛu.	Nil.	c. 11 th Century	<i>Index.No.C.24.</i>

53.	Alanallūr temple.	Nil.	c. 11 th Century	<i>Index.No. C. 25.</i>
54.	Trikkākkara temple.	Nil.	c. 11 th Century	<i>T.A.S., Vol. III, p.185; Index.No.C.39.</i>
55.	Kāmapuram temple, near Ambalapulīā.	Nil.	c. 11 th Century or 12 th century	<i>Index.No.C.40.</i>
56.	Tiruvanvanīdīūr temple.	Nil.	c. 11 th Century	<i>TAS., Vol. V., pp.31-33; Index.No.C.41.</i>
57.	Navāyikkulīam Śankara Nārāyanīa temple near Attingal.	Nil.	c. 11 th Century	<i>T.A.S., Vol. VI., p.83; Index.No.C.44.</i>

APPENDIX- IV

The Āy, Mūsāka and Ālūpa Inscriptions Relating to the Viṣṇu Temples in Kerala

Sl. No.	Name of the Temple/Location	King / Dynasty	Year	References
1.	Pārthivapuram temple in Kanyakumari district of Tamil Nadu	Karunandadakkan; Āy dynasty.	864AD.	<i>T.A.S., Vol. I, pp.17-34.</i>
2.	Rāmantali or Nārāyanī Kanṇūr in Kanṇūr district	Vikrama Rāma ; Mūsāka dynasty	929AD	<i>Index. No. B.3; M.G.S Narayanan, Kerala Charithrathinte Atisthana Silakal, pp.93-113.</i>
3.	Rāmantali or Nārāyanī Kanṇūr in Kanṇūr district	Kunda Varma ; Ālūpa dynasty	1075 AD	<i>Index, No. 21; M.G.S. Narayanan, Kerala Charithrathinte Atisthana Silakal, pp. 106-109.</i>
4.	Pārthivapuram temple	Nil.	c. 10 th or 11 th Century	<i>T.A.S., Vol. V, pp. 170-171.</i>
5.	Pārthivapuram temple	Rājādhi Rāja of Valīlūvanātū. He was a local chieftain in southern Kerala.	c. 11 th Century	<i>T.A.S., Vol.III, pp. 52-56.</i>
6.	Kanṇāpuram temple in Kanṇūr district	Udaya varma or Rāmakutā Mūvar; Mūsāka dynasty	c. 1122AD	<i>Index.No.B.24</i>

APPENDIX-V

The Post-Cēra Inscriptions Relating to the Viṣṇu Temples in Kerala

Sl. No.	Temple	Name of the King/Chieftain mentioned/ Dynasty/ Donor	Year	References
1.	Trippākkatāḷ	Vīra Udaya Martanda Varma Tiruvatī (Crown Prince); Vēṅṅātīu	1168 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. V, pp. 63-85.
2	Tiruvatītāṛ	Vīra Udaya Martanda Varma Tiruvatī; Vēṅṅātīu	1173AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.I.,p.418.
3	Velīlāyanī	Vīra Rāma Varma Tiruvatī; Vēṅṅātīu	1196AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.III., pp. 33-37.
4.	Mitrānandapuram	Vīra Maṅṅikanīṅṅā Rāma Varma; Vēṅṅātīu	1196 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.III., pp. 28-29.
5	Tiruvambātī in Tiruvananthapuram temple complex	During the age of Kota Martanda Varma; Vēṅṅātīu	1196 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.III., pp.46-52.
6	Tiruvambātī in Tiruvananthapuram temple complex	Śankaran Dēvan; Devotee	12 th Century	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.III., pp.44-45.
7	Nelvēli Viṣṇu temple, Kulīṅṅitturai	Nil.	c.12 th Century	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., p.96
8	Tiruvatītāṛ	Nil.	12 th Century	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., p.119.
9	Tiruvananthapuram temple	Pallavarāyan; Trader	1209 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.IV., pp.66-68.
10	Tiruvallam	Vīra Kerala Varma; Vēṅṅātīu	1224 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.III., pp. 40-43.

11	Kotīttattala	Tāyan Kēśavan; Devotee	1235AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., pp. 65-66.
12	Tiruvallam	Vijayan Iravi; Devotee	1236AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.III., pp. 43-44.
13	Aruvikkarai temple	Nārāyanā , Kumara Swāmi and Rāma Mani; Devotee	1236 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., p.113.
14	Tiruvallam	Nil	1237 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.III., pp. 37-40.
15	Aruvikkarai temple	Śrī Kanḍīan Jātavēda Bhatīā; Devotee	1238AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., p.114.
16	Aruvikkarai temple	Nārāyanān Tuppan, Sēnnan Tuppan and Kanḍīan Tuppan	1241 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., p.114-115.
17	Varkala	Padmanabha Mārtanḍīa Varma Tiruvatī; Vēnātī	1252 AD	<i>TAS.</i> , Vol. IV, pp. 151-152.
18	Mitrānandapuram	Several donors including various chieftains, princes, devotees, priests and landed magnets	Datable to 13 th century	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.III., pp. 1-21.
19	Pirappankōtū	Nil. Fragmentary and damaged record.	Immediate post-Cera age.	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., p.99.
20	Okkal	Nil.	Date is not traceable. Datable to the post-Cera age	R. Vasudeva Poduval, <i>A Topographical List of Travancore Inscriptions</i> , p. 148.
21	Krīśnānkōvil	Āditya Varma Sarvanganatha	1373AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.V., pp. 127-128.
22	Tiruvambātī in Tiruvananthapuram Temple	Āditya Varma Sarvānganātha; Vēnātī	1375AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.I., pp.251-253.
23	Vatāśēri	Āditya Varma Sarvānganātha;	Last quarter of the	<i>TAS.</i> , Vol. I, pp. 252-253.

		Vēnīātīu	14 th century	
24	Cāttankulīangara	Dēvan Śankaran of Mēlkkātīu and several Brahmin nobles	c. 14 th centruy	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. IV., pp. 161-166
25	Parakkai	Periya Nainār Mayilempuram	1452AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI., Pt. II., pp. 109-110.
26	Krīśnīankōyil , Podiyal	Nil	1460AD	R. Vasudeva Poduval <i>A topographical List of Travancore Inscriptions</i> , p. 173.
27	Vatīāśseri	Dīrgha Bhatītīa; A Brahmin pilgrim from Āryadēśa.	1464 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. V, pp. 124-127
28	Parakkai	Vīra Ravi Ravi Varma; Vēnīātīu prince- Trippappūr Mūtta Tiruvatīi.	1465AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI.,Pt.II pp.110-111.
29	Kariyamānīkkapuram	Kulaśēkhara Nambirātīīyar	1468 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI., Pt.I, pp. 43-44.
30	Mitrānandapuram	Several devotees including Brahmin priests.	1485 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. III.,p.27.
31.	Visīnīu temple, Talaikkulīam	Vīra Kerala Pallavarāiyar	1485 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., pp.35-36.
32	Kochaipitīāram	Four devotees from different parts of South India	1494AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol. VI., Pt. II., pp.135-137.
33	Ganīapati temple at Kollam (About Nētrapura temple)	Jayasima or Vīrakerala Varma; King of Desinganātīu	1496AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.II., pp.26-27.
34	Tirumanīi-Vēnkatīapuram	13 chief men of the place.	c. 15 th century	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., Pt.II., pp.138-139.
35	Śrī Krīśnīa Temple, Kāvumbhāgom	Rāma Patītīar ; A Tamil Brahmin	Datable to c. 15 th Century	R. Vasudeva Poduval, <i>A Topographical List of</i>

				<i>Tranvancore Inscirptions</i> , p. 251.
36	Viṣṇū temple, Peringara.	Nārāyaṇan Cēnnaṅ; Priest	Datable to c. 15 th Century	R. Vasudeva Poduval, <i>A Topographical List of Tranvancore Inscirptions</i> , p. 249.
37	Kariyamāṅṅikkapuram	Arangan Perumān ; Devotee	1510 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI., pt. I, pp. 45-46.
38	Parakkai	Śankaran Paramēswaran; Devotee	1515AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI., pt. II pp. 113-114.
39.	Krīṣṇāṅkōvil	Udaya Mārtanḍīa Varma; Vēṅṅātū	1533AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.V., pp. 127-128.
40.	Parakkai	Nil	1545AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI., Pt. II.,pp.114-115.
41	Parakkai	Perumālī Ponnarai; Devotee	1558 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI., Pt.II., pp. 115-117.
42	Kariyamāṅṅikkapuram	Madhusūdan Mangalacēri; Devotee	1559AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI.,Pt. I., pp.47-48.
43	Kariyamāṅṅikkapuram	Āditya Varma; King of Vēṅṅātū	1559 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI., Pt. I, pp. 48-50.
44	Parakkai	Seruppallī Hari Swāmi Bhatīṅ; Devotee	1560AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI., pt. II pp. 111-113.
45	Kēśavapuram	Vāman Dēvan and Vikraman Dēvan	1571 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., pp.100-101.
46	Parakkai	Bhūṅtala Vīra Rāma Varma; King of Vēṅṅātū.	1587 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI.,Pt.II., pp.119-120.
47	Kochaipitīāram	Śankaran Kōta	1603AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI.,Pt.II., pp.138-140.
48	Tiruvatīṅār	Vīra Ravi Ravi Varma; King of Vēṅṅātū	1603AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.I., p.260.
49	Tiruvatīṅār	Vīra Ravi Ravi Varma; King of Vēṅṅātū	1605AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.I., pp.258-260.
50	Parakkai	Sāvitri Amma; Devotee	1611 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI., Pt.II., pp.120-121.

51	Tiruvanparisaram temple	Śambhu Nārāyaṅan Nambi	1614AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.V., pp.157-159.
52	Krīśṅa temple, Kotṭārakkara	Kanḍan of Vānapparambil	1649AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VI., Pt.II.,p.141.
53	Narasimha temple, Peringōṭṭu	Nil.	1651 AD	<i>E.M.</i> , p. 94.
54	Aruvikkarai temple	Jātavēdan Sāvītiri; Devotee	1655AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., p.113.
55	Narasimha temple, Peringōṭṭu	Kokkam Kanṅattiyār; Devotee	1659AD	<i>E.M.</i> , p. 94.
56	Krīśṅaswāmi temple, Keralapuram.	Siliya Pilḷai Ariyakutṭi (During the reign of Ravi Ravi Varma)	1663 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.V., pp. 116-120.
57	Narasimha temple, Peringodu	Nārāyaṅan; Devotee	1665 AD	<i>E.M.</i> , pp.93- 94.
58	Pirappankōṭṭu	Īsvaran Nārāyaṅan ; Devotee	1670AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., p.100
59	Vatāśṣeri	Mangammal; Regent queen of Nayaka Kingdom.	1697 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.V., pp. 209-210.
60	Tiruvanparisāram	Kuppan Cetti; Devotee	1786 AD	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.V., pp.159-160.
61	Pirappankōṭṭu	Karakkattu Narasimhan Govindan, Ayyappan Kaliampi and Karunakaran	Late medieval period	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., p.100.
62	Kodumon, Adoor	Damaged inscription	Late medieval period	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VIII., p.12.
63	Tiruvatṭār	Kōta Mārtanḍa Varma	Late medieval period	<i>T.A.S.</i> , Vol.VII., p.118.

APPENDIX VI

Some of the Important Vais̄n̄ava Literary Works of Medieval Kerala

Sl. No.	Name of the work	Name of the Author	Language, Nature and Affiliation to <i>Ithāsas</i> and <i>Purān̄as</i> .
1.	Perumāl̄ Tirumol̄ī	Kulaśēkhara Āl̄īvār	Tamil; Temple eulogies and summation of Rāmāyan̄a and Bhāgavatapurān̄a; Part of Nālāyira Divya Prabandham.
2.	Mukundamāla	Kulaśēkhara Āl̄īvār	Sanskrit; Devotional work on Vis̄n̄u.
3.	Tapatisamvaran̄a	Kulaśēkhara Āl̄īvār	Sanskrit; Drama; Mahābhārata.
4.	Subhadradhananj-aya	Kulaśēkhara Āl̄īvār	Sanskrit; Drama; Mahābhārata.
5.	Āścaryacūd̄āman̄i	Śaktibhadra	Sanskrit; Drama; Rāmāyan̄a.
6.	Śaurikatha	Vāsudēva or Vāsu Bhat̄t̄ā	Sanskrit; Yamaka work; Bhāgavata.
7.	Yudhis̄t̄īravijaya	Vāsudēva or Vāsu Bhat̄t̄ā	Sanskrit; Yamaka work; Mahābhārata.
8.	Sītāharan̄a	Nārāyan̄a	Sanskrit; Yamaka work; Rāmāyan̄a.
9.	Syānandūrapurān̄asamuccaya	Anonymous	Sanskrit; Panegyric on Tiruvananthapuram; Glorification of the place as a Vais̄n̄ava tīrtha.
10.	Rāmacaritampāt̄t̄ū	Cīrāma	Pāt̄t̄ū work; Rāmāyan̄a.
11.	Śrīkr̄is̄n̄āvilāsam	Sukumārakavi	Sanskrit; Bhāgavata.
12.	Amogha Rāghavīya	Divākara	Sanskrit; Rāmāyan̄a.
13.	Pradyumnābhuydayam	Ravi Varma Kulaśēkhara	Sanskrit; Drama; Mahābhārata.

14.	Nambyār Tamil	Anonymous	Malayalam of the 14 th century; Rāmāyanīa.
15.	Yadunāthacarita	Āditya Varma of Dēśinganātīu	Sanskrit; Bhāgavata
16.	Bhāratamāla	Sankara Panīkkar (Kanīnīaśśa Poet)	Malayalam of the 14 th -15 th centuries; Mahābhārata.
17.	Bhāsīa Bhagavad Gīta	Mādhava Panīkkar (Kanīnīaśśa Poet)	Malayalam of the 14 th -15 th Centuries; Bhāgavata.
18.	Kanīnīaśśa Bhāgavata	Rāma Panīkkar (Kanīnīaśśa Poet)	Malayalam of the 15 th Century; Bhāgavata.
19.	Kanīnīaśśa Rāmāyanīa	Rāma Panīkkar (Kanīnīaśśa Poet)	Malayalam of the 15 th Century; Rāmāyanīa.
20.	Rāmakathapātītīu	Ayyipilīlai Āśān (Kōvalīam Poet)	Malayalam of the 15 th Century; Rāmāyanīa.
21.	Bhāsīā Rāmāyanīam Campu	Punam Nambūdiri	Malayalam; campu work; Rāmāyanīa.
22.	Kalyānīasaugandhika	Nīlakanītīa	Sanskrit ; Drama; Mahābhārata.
23.	Nārāyanīyam Campu	Nīlakanītīa	Sanskrit; Malayalam campu work; Summary of Bhāgavata and eulogy of Trippunithura temple.
24.	Rāvanīavijayam Campu	Anonymous	Malayalam campu work; Rāmāyanīa.
25.	Pārijātaharanīam Campu	Anonymous poet from Tarakkal family.	Malayalam campu work; Mahābhārata.
26.	Samksīēpa Bhārata	Vāsudēva	Sanskrit; Summary of Mahābhārata.
27.	Govindacaita	Vāsudēva	Sanskrit; Summary of Bhāgavata.

28.	Samksīēpa Rāmāyanīa	Vāsudēva	Sanskrit; Summary of Rāmāyanīa.
29.	Krīśnīagātha	Ceruśēri Nambūdiri	Malayalam; Bhāgavata.
30.	Śrī Krīśnīavijaya	Śankara Kavi	Sanskrit; Bhāgavata.
31.	Bhāratagātha	Anonymous	Malayalam; Mahābhārata.
32.	Mahābhāratam Kilīpātītu	Tunchathu Rāmanujan Ezhuthachan	Malayalam; Mahābhārata.
33.	Adhyātma Rāmāyanīam Kilīpātītu	Tunchathu Rāmanujan Ezhuthachan	Malayalam; Rāmāyanīa
34.	Harināma Kīrtanam	Tunchathu Rāmanujan Ezhuthachan	Malayalam; Devotional songs on Visīnu.
35.	Rāmāyanīam Irupattināluvritt-am	Tunchathu Rāmanujan Ezhuthachan	Malayalam; Mahābhārata.
36.	Bhāgavatampātītu	Anonymous	Malayalam; Bhāgavata.
37.	Sētubandhanam pātītu	Anonymous	Malayalam; Rāmāyanīa.
38.	Yadunāthacarita	Anonymous	A fifteenth century Sanskrit; Bhāgavata.
39.	Daśamastōtram	Anonymous	Malayalam; Bhāgavata
40.	Nūrīretītu Hari	Pūntānam Nambūdiri	Malayalam; Bhāgavata.
41.	Santānagōpalampāna	Pūntānam Nambūdiri	Malayalam; Bhāgavata.
42.	Kucēlavrittampāna	Pūntānam Nambūdiri	Malayalam; Bhāgavata.
43.	Kucēlavrittamgātha	Pūntānam Nambūdiri	Malayalam; Bhāgavata.
44.	Śrī Krīśnīakarnāmritam	Pūntānam Nambūdiri	Malayalam; Bhāgavata.

45.	Jnānappāna	Pūntānam Nambūdiri	Malayalam; It contains a brief summary of the moral teachings of Bhāgavata.
46.	Pūrva Bhāratam Campu	Mānavēda	Sanskrit; Mahābhārata.
47.	Kṛṣṇāgīti	Mānavēda	Sanskrit; Bhāgavata.
48.	Nārāyaṇīyam	Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇīa Bhatīatiri	Sanskrit; Bhāgavata.
49.	Vāmanavatāram Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇīa Bhatīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Bhāgavata.
50.	Ajāmilāamōksāam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇīa Bhatīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Bhāgavata.
51.	Kucēlavrittam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇīa Bhatīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Bhāgavata.
52.	Santānagōpalam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇīa Bhatīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Bhāgavata.
53.	Rājasūyam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇīa Bhatīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Mahābhārata.
54.	Dūtavākyam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇīa Bhatīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Mahābhārata.
55.	Pāncālīswayamvaram Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇīa Bhatīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Mahābhārata.
56.	Nalayānicaritam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Narayanan Bhatīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Mahābhārata.

57.	Sundopāsundopākhyānam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyanīa Bhatīṭīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Mahābhārata.
58.	Subhadraharanīam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyanīa Bhatīṭīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Mahābhārata.
59.	Kauntēyāsīṭīakam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyanīa Bhatīṭīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Mahābhārata.
60.	Kirātam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyanīa Bhatīṭīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Mahābhārata.
61.	Matsyāvatāram Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyanīa Bhatīṭīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Bhāgavata.
62.	Nrigamōksīam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyanīa Bhatīṭīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Bhāgavata.
63.	Nirānunāsikam or Sūrphanīakhā- pralāpam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Narayanan Bhatīṭīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Rāmāyanīa.
64.	Ahalyāmōksīam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyanīa Bhatīṭīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Rāmāyanīa.
65.	Rāksīasōlpatti Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyanīa Bhatīṭīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Rāmāyanīa.
66.	Bālakānīdīam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyanīa Bhatīṭīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Rāmāyanīa.
67.	Gajēndramōksīam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyanīa Bhatīṭīatiri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Bhāgavata.
68.	Syamantakam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyanīa	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Bhāgavata.

		Bhaṭṭatīri	
69.	Rukmāngadacaritam Prabandha	Mēlppattūr Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭatīri	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Bhāgavata.
70.	Śrīswayamvaram Prabandha	Anonymous	Sanskrit; Yamaka poem; Bhāgavata.
71.	Gopikōnmādam Prabandha	Anonymous	Sanskrit; Yamaka poem; Bhāgavata.
72.	Śrīmatiswayam- varam Prabandha	Anonymous	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Bhāgavata.
73.	Kuśābhyudaya Prabandha	Anonymous	Sanskrit; Prabandha; Rāmāyaṇa.
74.	Śrīkrīṣṇakarnāmrītam	Vilvamangalam Swāmiyar	Sanskrit; Summary of Bhāgavata.
75.	Pāṇḍāvacarita	Anonymous	Sanskrit; Mahābhārata
76.	Rāsakrīḍākāvyaṃ	Anonymous poet of Mahisāmangalam	Sanskrit; Bhāgavata
78.	Uttara Rāmācarita	Anonymous of Mahisāmangalam	Sanskrit; Rāmāyaṇa
79.	Rāmāyaṇa Samgruha	Ravi Varma of Vēṅṅāṭṭu	Sanskrit; Rāmāyaṇa
80.	Rāmākarnāmrītam	Anonymous	Sanskrit; Devotional work on Rāma; Rāmāyaṇa.
81.	Bhāratam Campu	Anonymous	Malayalam campu work; Mahābhārata.
82.	Rukminī Swayamvaram	Anonymous	Malayalam campu work; Bhāgavata.
83.	Krīṣṇācarita	Chandraśekhara	Sanskrit; Bhāgavata.
84.	Bhāgavatatīka Samuccaya	Ravi Varma of Vettatūnāṭṭu	Sanskrit; Bhāgavata.

85.	Dēvanārāyanīam	Puratam Tirunal of Ambalapula	Sanskrit; Bhāgavata.
86.	Syamantakam Campu	Anonymous	Sanskrit; campu; Bhāgavata.
87.	Kṛīśnīavatāram Campu	Anonymous	Campu; Bhāgavata.
88.	Rāmārjunīyam Campu	Anonymous	Campu; Brahmandapurana.
89.	Kamsavadham Campu	Anonymous	Campu; Bhāgavata.
90.	Śaryāticaritam Campu	Anonymous	Campu; Mahābhāratam.
91.	Kālīamardanam Campu	Anonymous	Malayalam; campu; Bhāgavata.
92.	Ēkādaśī Māhātmyam Kilīpātīṭṭu	Anonymous	Malayalam; Description of the importance of Ēkādaśī.
93.	Śrī Rāma Swargārohanīam Kilīpātīṭṭu	Anonymous	Malayalam; Rāmāyanīa.
94.	Bhāratam Samksīpam	Anonymous	Malayalam; Mahābhārata.
95.	Rāmāśwamēdham Kilīpātīṭṭu	Anonymous	Malayalam; Rāmāyanīa.
96.	Kṛīśnīalīla	Anonymous	Malayalam; Bhāgavata.
97.	Uttara Rāmāyanīam gadyam	Anonymous	Malayalam; Prose work on Rāmāyanīa.
98.	Rāmakatha	Anonymous	Sanskrit; Prose work; Rāmāyanīa.
99.	Sītavijayam Kilīpātīṭṭu	Anonymous	Malayalam; Rāmāyanīa.
100.	Bhāgavatam Kilīpātīṭṭu	Anonymous	Malayalam; Bhāgavata.
101.	Nāsachēdam Kilīpātīṭṭu	Anonymous	Malayalam; Rāmāyanīa.
102.	Gajēndramōksīam	Anonymous	Malayalam; Campu work; Bhāgavata.

103	Prahlāḍacaritam Campu	Anonymous	Malayalam; Campu work; Bhāgavata
104	Kālīamardanam Campu	Anonymous	Malayalam; Campu work; Bhāgavata

APPENDIX- VII

Some of the Important Vaiṣṇava Mural Paintings in Medieval Kerala Temples

Sl. No.	Temple	Vaiṣṇava Themes and Their affiliation
1.	Mitrānandapuram temple, Tiruvananthapuram	Pārthasārathi, Kalki and Daśavatāra panels.
2.	Tiruāranmulīa Pārthasārathi temple, Āranmulīa	Ananthaśayanam and Viṣṇu
3.	Subrahmanīya temple, Perunna	Viṣṇu
4.	Trikkotīthānam temple, Changanācherry	Śrī Rāma Patītīābhisīkām, Vēṅṅūgōpala, Yōga-Narasimha, Ananthaśayanam, Vaikunṭīānātha, Vastrāpaharanīam and Rāvanīavadham.
5	Mahādēva temple, Ettumanur	Ananthaśayanam, Vastrāpaharanīam and Sītaswayamvaram.
6.	Pundarikapuram temple	Śrī Rāma Patītīābhisīkām, Krīṣṇīalīla, panels, Unīnīkrīṣṇīa, Vastrāpaharanīam, Paksīivadham, Balarāma, Gōvardhanadhāri, Vastrāpaharanīam, Vēṅṅūgōpala, Pūtanāmōksīam, Krīṣṇīa with Gōpikas, Śankara Nārāyanīa, Kālīamardanam, Viṣṇu, Navanīta Krīṣṇīa, Narakāsuravadham and Krīṣṇīa with Satyabhāma.
7	Panayannārkāvu, Mānnār	Mandodarivilāpam, Rāma –Rāvanīa Battle, Sīta beneath Aśoka tree, Sīta and Rāma in Lanka, Vēṅṅūgōpalamūrti, Rāma - Rāvanīayudham, Rāvanīavadham, Śrī Rāma Patītīābhisīkām, Krīṣṇīa with Yaśoda, Krīṣṇīa stealing butter, Krīṣṇīalīla, Daśavatāra forms, Narasimha, Pūtanāmōksīam and Sūrya Nārāyanīa.
8	Pānīdīavam temple, Kottayam	Krīṣṇīa as Vēṅṅūgōpalamūrti and Pūtanāmōksīam.

9	Triprayār temple	Yōgāsana Kr̥ṣṇa, Śrī Rāma as king of Ayodhya, Śrī Rāma Pat̥t̥ābhis̥ēkam, Gajēndramōks̥am, Vaikun̥t̥ānātha, Narasimha, Vāmana and Pūtanāmōks̥am.
10	Pal̥l̥īman̥n̥a temple, Vadakkānchēry	Śrī Kr̥ṣṇalīla, Gōvardhanadhāri, Vastrāpaharan̥am and Śrī Rāma as king of Ayodhya.
11	Vat̥akkunnātha Temple, Triśśūr	Pārthasārathi, Gajēndramōks̥am, Santānagōpālam story, Daśaratha's sorrow, Rāmānyan̥amāhātmyam, Śrī Kr̥ṣṇalīla, Vaikun̥t̥ānātha, Narasimha and Vēn̥ugōpālamūrti.
12	Elangunnapul̥l̥a Temple	Śrī Kr̥ṣṇalīla, Gōvardhanadhāri and Śrī Rāma Pat̥t̥ābhis̥ēkam.
13	Tricakrapuram temple	Bhāgavata panels such as Śrī Kr̥ṣṇalīla, Kr̥ṣṇa with Vasudeva and Dēvaki, Kr̥ṣṇa with Balarāma, Bālakr̥ṣṇa, Narasimha and Balarāma.
14	Tot̥ikkal̥am temple	Vēn̥ugōpāla Kr̥ṣṇa, Śrī Rāma Pat̥t̥ābhis̥ēkam, Śrī Rāma as Vīra Rāghava, Rukmin̥iswayamvaram, Paraśurāma, Lankāmardana Hanumān and Rāvan̥avadham.
15	Mūnnumūrti temple, Trikkat̥īri	Narasimhāvātāram, Trivikramarāma and Śrī Kr̥ṣṇalīla.
16	Śankara Nārāyan̥a temple, Tiruvēgappura	Ananthaśayanam
17	Kil̥l̥īkuriśśimangalam, Śiva temple.	Gajēndramōks̥am and Narasimhāvātāra.
18	Tiruvat̥t̥ār	Gajēndramōks̥am, Paraśurāma, Vēn̥ugōpālamūrti and Ananthaśayanam .
19	Vaikun̥t̥apuram temple, Kot̥ūmon̥.	Ananthaśayanam, Gajēndramōks̥am and Vēn̥ugōpālamūrti.
20	Pāliam Śrī Kr̥ṣṇa Temple	Vaikun̥t̥ānātha.
21	Ārppūkkara temple	Śrī Rāma Pat̥t̥ābhis̥ēkam, Vastrāpaharan̥am, Kumbhakarna's battle, Vaikun̥t̥ānātha, Indrajitvadham and Rāvan̥avadham.

22	Tirunāyattōṭṭu temple	Gajēndramōkṣam, Narasimha and Śrī Rāma Patītābhishekam.
23	Māngānam Narasimha temple.	Daśāvatāra forms, Narasimha, Paraśurāma, Balarāma and Śrī Rāma Patītābhishekam.
24	Kotītakkal temple	Rāmāyanāmahātmyam, Varāhamūrti, Narasimha, Paraśurāma, Pārthasārathi, Yōgāsana Krīṣṇā and Dhanwantarimūrti.
25	Triprangōṭṭu temple	Narasimha and Sūrya Nārāyanā.
26	Ālathiyūr temple	Vāmana and Śrī Rāma.
27	Pāzhūr temple.	Vāmana, Yōgāsana Krīṣṇā and Śrī Rāma as king of Ayodhya.
28	Morazha temple	Paraśurāma, Vastrāpaharanā, Rāvanāvadham and Vīra Rāma.
29	Lokanārkāvu temple	Paraśurāma, Vēṅugōpāla Krīṣṇā, Dhanwantari and Vīra Rāma.
30	Elāngunnapuzha temple	Pūtanāmōkṣam, Kālīamardanam, Gōvardhanadhāri, Ahalyamōkṣam, Sītaswayamvaram.
31	Pānjālī temple	Śrī Rāma Patītābhishekam, Rāmāyanāmahātmyam, Gōvardhanadhāri Krīṣṇā, Vēṅugōpāla Krīṣṇā, Vatāpatrasāyi, Sūryanārāyanā and Hanumān with Marutvamala.
32	Kitāngūr temple.	Vastrāpaharanam and Sītaswayamvaram.
33	Cemmentitā temple	Vēṅugōpālamūrti and Śrī Rāma Patītābhishekam.
34	Udayanāpuram temple	Vēṅugōpālamūrti, Santānagōpalam story and Kumbhakarnavadham.
35	Trikkatīri temple	YōgāsanaKrīṣṇā and Rāmāyanāmahātmyam.
36	Marutvōrvatīam temple	Dhanwatarimūrti.
37	Kizhūr temple	Dhanwatarimūrti.
38	Śucīndram temple	Putrakāmēsītī Yāga and Śrī Rāmāvatāram.

39	Munnūttimangalam temple	Sītaswayamvaram.
40	Kānjiramkōtīu temple	Lankamardana Hanumān, Ravanavadham and Śrī Rāma Patītibhisīekam.
41	Matīiyankulōm temple	Śrī Rāma worshipping Śivalinga and Kumbhakarnīavadha.
42	Vaikkom temple	Rāvanīa in court.
43	Atīakkaputtūr temple	Rāmāyanīamāhātmyam.

GLOSSARY

Ācārya	- Preceptor
Accicaritams	- Literary works on devadasis.
Adhikārikal	- Officials
Advaita	- Monism or Non dualism, An Indian philosophic school.
Akakōima	- A royal functionary in temple service.
Akanālīkai	- The sanctum sanctorum of a temple.
Ākkiram	- Brahmin feeding
Aksāamāla	- Rosary
Alīagachu	- An old coin
Amaicci	- Minister (Amātya).
Amāvāsi	- The day of the new moon.
Ambalapatīsthānam	- The right of kings to perform certain religious ceremonies in temples.
Anyōnyam	- Vedic competition.
Appan	- Father.
Arasthānam	- A position in temple administration enjoyed by kings.
Ārātītu	- The ritual bathing of the deity at the end of annual festivals
Ārūnātīlprabhukkanmar	- The chieftains of 6 chiefdoms.
Āsanamūrti	- A sculptural pose. The image of the deity in sitting pose.
Āsāda	- The month of Mithunam- Karkkidāgam.
Asītamangalyavilākku	- The ritual lamp with 8 auspicious objects.
Atīacānipuja	- A ritual sacrifice in temples.

Atasi	- Jute.
Attam	- The 13 th lunar asterism.
Āturaśāla	- Hospital.
Aṭai	- A sweet cake.
Āvaṇi	- The month of Leo (August-September).
Āvaṇippalaka	- A particular kind of seat of wooden plank of tortoise shape. This is used exclusively in rituals by Brahmins.
Avatāras	- Incarnations.
Avarōdham	- Installation
Bālālaya	- A temporarily built sanctum sanctorum.
Bali	- The ritual sacrifice in temples.
Balikkal	- The sacred stones that represent divine powers in temples. Various rituals are performed on these stones.
Balikkalpura	- The pillared hall raised above the principal balipīṭha in front of the eastern entrance in temples.
Bhajanam	- Worship, service.
Bhakta	- Devotee.
Bhakti	- Devotion.
Bhaṭṭas	- Scholars; Learned Brahmins.
Bhūdēvas	- Lords on earth, Brahmins.
Bhūlōka Vaikuṇṭā	- Viṣṇu's world on earth. Temples.
Bhūtabali	- The ritual service in temples.
Biruda	- Title.
Brahmahatya	- Killing of Brahmins.
Brahmaswomsthānam	- A royal office in temples to protect Brahmins and temple culture.
Cakra	- Discus.

Cāttirar	- Students; Pupils.
Cāturmāsyā	- The vow of four months.
Cāvers	- Suicide squads.
Cērikkal	- Land of the crown; Colony of the low class people.
Cillithālām	- A musical instrument.
Cingam	- The first month in Malayalam calendar (August-September).
Cirāppu	- A ritual celebration.
Cōti	- The 15 th lunar asterism.
Curīrīumanīdīapa	- Pillared hall around the sanctum sanctorum.
Curīrīuvilākkū	- The range of lights, an offering in temples.
Danīdīu	- Stick.
Dāsa	- Servant.
Daśāvatāra	- Ten incarnations of Viṣṇū
Dēśams	- Regions; Localities.
Devadasis	- Dancing girls in temples.
Dharmakkinīar	- The well for distributing drinking water to the pedestrians.
Dhwajastambha	- The Flag staff in temples.
Dīpikagriha	- See Vilākkumātām
Dipōtsava	- A temple festival of lights.
Divyadēśams	- Sacred centres of Vaiṣṇāvism.
Dvaita	- Dualism; A philosophic school.
Dvārapālas	- Gate keepers.
Dwādaśi	- The 12 th day from new moon and full moon.
Dwādaśiganāttār	- The committee which looked after the celebrations of Dwādaśi.
Ēkādaśi	- The 11 th day from new moon and full moon.

Elīamkūr	- The heir apparent, Heir apparenecy.
Etīṭīarayōgam	- The executive committee of Tiruvananthapuram temple.
Gada	- Club, Mace.
Garbhagriha	- Sanctum sanctorum.
Garva	- Arrogance
Gopika	- Cowherdess.
Gōpuram	- Tower.
Grāmaksīētra	- Central temple of the Brahmin settlement.
Grāmas	- Settlements.
Grandhavaris	- Chronicles.
Grīvakosītas	- Niches on the clerestory raising the roof above the sanctum.
Guru	- Master; Preceptor.
Guruparampara	- Hagiology.
Hiraṇyagarbham	- A ritual performed by kings to attain Kṣātriya status.
Idakka	- A musical instrument.
Japa	- Chanting or singing the names of gods.
Jīvita	- Life; Payment of livelihood or maintenance.
Jnāna	- Knowledge.
Kaccam	- Agreement or pact.
Kadali	- The best kind of plantain.
Kaivilīakku	- A variety of lamp.
Kalīānju	- A unit of measure.
Kalam	- A unit of measure; ship; seat.
Kalaśam	- Pot; vessel.
Kali	- The Kali era ie., Kaliyuga,
Kamanīdīalu	- The water jugs of gods and ascetics.
Kāmyōtsava	- Temple festival.

Kānīam	- Right of tenancy, a measure of weight.
Kānīdīa	- Chapter
Kārālīar	- Tenants.
Kārānmai	- Tenancy rights.
Karanīdīamakutīa	- Long cylindrical crown.
Karkkidīagam	- The 12 th month in Malayalam calendar (July-August).
Kārttika	- The 3 rd lunar asterism; A month.
Kataiyam	- The tax imposed on traders and businessmen.
Katīakamudra	- A gesture in classical dance.
Katīakavalīaya	- Bracelet
Katīyavilīambita	- A posture in which the hand is placed on the hip.
Kēyūra	- An ornament.
Kilīīitu	- Subordinate property.
Kirītīamakutīa	- Crown.
Kīrtanams	- Devotional songs.
Kō	- King.
Kōima	- Authority; Kingship; A royal officer in temples.
Kōkam	- The Indian cuckoo.
Kotītīai	- A measure of weight; A basket.
Kotītīi	- Drummer.
Kōyil	- Palace; Prince.
Krīśīnīakatha	- The story of Krīśīnīa.
Krīśīnīālaya	- The temple of Krīśīnīa.
Ksīētramāhātmyas	- Eulogies of temples.
Kuladaivam	- Patron god, Family deity.
Kuladēvata	- Patron god, Family deity.

Kumbham	- The 7 th month in Malayalam calendar (February-March).
Kūttu	- Dance, Mono-act.
Kuttuvilāku	- A variety of lamp.
Kūṭṭiyāṭṭam	- The Sanskrit theatre in Kerala.
Lamgalam	- Plough, A flower; A kind of palmyra.
Maddalāam	- A Musical drum.
Matṭhoms	- Brahmin residence; An academy; Monastery.
Māgha	- Festival celebrated at Tirunāva; The month Makaram (see Makaram).
Mahāmanṭṭapa	- Pillared hall.
Māhātmyas	- Eulogies.
Makara	- The 6 th month in Malayalam calendar (February- March).
Makutā	- Crown.
Manṭṭigrāmam	- A trade guild.
Manṭṭapa	- Pillared hall.
Manṭṭipravālāam	- A particular literary style which combined Sanskrit and regional languages.
Māpāratampatṭars	- Scholars who lectured on Mahābhārata in temples.
Marumakkattāyam	- Matrilineal system of inheritance
Marutam	- An ecological and geographical zone in early South India.
Matṭappalṭṭi	- The temple kitchen.
Mēlkōima	- The royal officer in charge of protecting temple and its properties.
Mēlmuri	- Upper chamber.

Mēsīa	- Aries (See Mētīa)
Mētīa	- The 9 th month in Malayalam calendar (April-May).
Mētīamuri	- An upper storey; Room in the upper storey.
Mithunam	- The 11 th month in Malayalam calendar (June-July)
Moksīa	- Salvation
Mukkuṭī	- A temple ritual and a festival.
Mūlam	- The 19 th lunar asterism.
Mūsari	- Brazier; Belleter.
Nagaram	- Trade centre.
Nāgavilīakku	- A particular kind of lamp.
Naimittikōtsava	- Temple festival
Nālambalam	- The cloister around the main shrine.
Nālu Talī	- Managers of the four temples of Mahōdayapuram. They were members of the council of ministry of the Cēras.
Nālīī	- A unit of measure.
Namaskāram	- Brahmin feeding.
Nandavilīakku	- Lamp that is kept burning permanently.
Nangicci	- Respectable women, Dancing girls.
Nantāvanam	- Garden.
Nenmēnikaliyugarāyanpanīam	- A medieval coin.
Nilavilīakku	- The stand lamp.
Nilīīal	- Shadow, companion.
Nirīanālīī	- A unit of measure.
Nirīaparīa	- A unit of measure.
Nīrarīa	- The water room.
Nirātīṭīupalīī	- Sacred bath.
Nirgunīa	- Formless

Nīṭṭiṭṭu	- Royal order.
Nityōtsava	- Temple festival, Daily festivals.
Nivēdyam	- Ritual feeding of the deity.
Nūrṛṛuvar	- The Hundred, The provincial militia.
Olīṭṭikkavi	- Customary or daily sacrifice.
Ōṇṭakkālīṭṭca	- Agricultural products presented during Ōṇṭam festival by tenants.
Ōṇṭam	- The 22 nd lunar asterism.
Ōṇṭanel	- The paddy payable to the king or lord on the occasion of Ōṇṭam, Paddy distributed during Ōṇṭam days.
Ōṇṭappukkalīṭṭam	- The flower mat prepared during Ōṇṭam festival in houses.
Ōṇṭaputīava	- The new clothes presented during festival Ōṇṭam.
Ōṇṭathallu	- The competitive physical combat performed as part of Ōṇṭam celebrations.
Ōṇṭavillu	- The ritual bow of Ōṇṭam.
Padma	- Lotus
Palīṭṭankāśu	- An old coin.
Palīṭṭiōṭṭāms	- The ritual snake boats of Āranmulīa temple.
Palam	- A unit of measure.
Palīṭṭiikkuruppu	- Sacred sleep of deities.
Palīṭṭittāmam	- Garland of the deity.
Palīṭṭivētṭīa	- The ritual hunting of deities during festivals.
Palīṭṭivillu	- Divine bow.
Panṭam	- Coin
Pancamukhaviṭṭakku	- A particular kind of stand lamp.

Pancasambadam	- Five great musical sounds, Five musical instruments used in temples.
Pan̄i	- Employees.
Pantalkkān̄am	- The tax paid by merchants for erecting sheds.
Pantīrāti	- Twelve feet time.
Pantirat̄ipūja	- The rituals in temples at the time of twelve feet time.
Pantrandutulapāyasam	- An offering in temples.
Pan̄am	- Coin.
Par̄a	- A unit of measure.
Par̄aet̄ippu	- Ritual procession in temples to collect paddy from houses.
Parat̄ai	- Committee.
Parityāgam	- Abandonment, Abdication.
Par̄odhānisthānam	- The right to sit on carpet in temples. This is a right enjoyed by kings in medieval Kerala.
Pāsurams	- Songs
Pat̄it̄ābhis̄ēkam	- Coronation.
Pataiyan̄imel	- The tax collected by local chieftains.
Patti	- A line or row; Verandah.
Pāt̄it̄akkān̄am	- Rent paid by the tenant.
Pat̄it̄ar̄kal̄i	- Scholars, Learned men.
Pat̄iyēr̄r̄am	- The ritual performed by Vēn̄āt̄u kings in Tiruvananthapuram temple,
climbing the	sopanam steps.
Pat̄it̄in̄i	- A ritual custom practiced by Brahmins in medieval Kerala as pressure tactic, starvation.
Pāt̄it̄ū	- A literary style.
Pāyasam	- Sweet porridge.
Perumāl̄i	- God, King, Overlord.

Peruntamrutupūja	- A ritual offering in temples.
Peruvalīi	- Highway, Road.
Pītīha	- A seat or pedestal.
Potuvālī	- A temple official.
Pournāmi	- The day of full moon.
Prākara	- Enclosure, Outer wall.
Pūja	- The ritual in temples.
Purākōima	- The royal functionary in temples.
Purāpoduvalī	- A temple official.
Pūrātīam	- The 20 th lunar asterism.
Pūrurūtīāti	- The 25 th lunar asterism.
Pūtapali	- The ritual sacrifice in temples.
Rāmakatha	- The story of Rama.
Rāśi	- The zodiac sign.
Rōhinī	- The 4 th lunar asterism.
Sabhāyōgam	- The temple assembly, assembly.
Sagunā	- Having form.
Sālagrāmas worship	- The sacred stone associated with the of Viṣṇu
Śālai	- Hall; Accademy.
Sāligai	- An old coin.
Samīram	- Wind.
Śanka	- Conch.
Sankētam	- Temple administered units, the geographical area under the administrative authority of temples.
Sankētamalīkkuka	- The closure of temples or cancellation of temple festivals, A pressure tactic
Sankētamaryāda	- Law of Sankētam.
Sankramā	- Change of equinox or zodiac sign.

Sankrānti	- Change of equinox or zodiac sign
Śānti	- Routine worship in temples, Priests.
Sānyasikal	- Monks.
Śaranāgati	- Complete surrender.
Sarpakunḍāla	- An ornament.
Śayana	- The images of deities in reclining pose.
Śilpavritti kārāṇmai	- Tenancy rights enjoyed by architects and sculptors.
Ślōka	- Hymn, Verse
Ślōkas	- Hymns, Verses.
Snāpanam	- Bathing the deity.
Śrāvanā	- The month of Cingam (See Cingam).
Śrībali	- An offering in temples.
Śrīkariyam	- The temple official.
Stabakas	- Chapters.
Sthalamāhātmyas	- Panegyrics.
Stutis	- Eulogies.
Swarūpam	- Dynasty of medieval Kerala, the matrilineal political units of post-Cēra age.
Swayamvaram	- Marriage.
Sōdaśādānas	- The 16 great charities.
Tambirān	- Lord, King.
Tattarākkūli	- The tax paid by merchants for constructing strong rooms as store houses.
Tēvar	- God.
Tēvatīcci	- Dancing girl, Devadasi.
Tīrtham	- Pilgrim centre, Sacred water.
Tīrtha	- Pilgrim centre.
Tiru	- Sacred.

Tiruākkriam	- Divine feeding.
Tiruamr̥utu	- Divine feeding.
Tiruārāt̥t̥u peruval̥i	- Highway used for ārāt̥t̥u procession.
Tirumāl̥igaippattis	- Rows of wooden planks in the verandah or Portico in temples.
Tirumat̥ambu	- The ceremony of investing a prince with sacred thread.
Tiruōn̥acilavu	- Expenses for Tiruōn̥am celebration.
Tiruōn̥am	- The 22 nd lunar asterism, Festival of Vis̥n̥u in the form of Vāmana.
Tirupatis	- Sacred pilgrim centres of Vis̥n̥u bhaktas.
Tiruvaraakam	- Inside the sanctum sanctorum.
Tiruvātira	- The 6 th lunar asterism.
Tiruvil̥akku	- Lamp; An offering in temples.
Tithi	- The lunar day.
Tribhanga	- Body in three parts with the bends emphasized in figure sculptures.
Trikkēt̥t̥a	- The 18 th lunar asterism.
Tripputtari	- The ritual celebration and an offering in temple.
Tulām	- The 3 rd month in the Malayalam calendar.
Tulāpurus̥adāna	- The gift of gold equal to one's weight to Brahmins and temples.
T̥anka	- Mace, Borax.
Udaiyar	- Owner.
Ul̥akku	- A unit of measure.
Upanayana	- Invocation ceremony of Brahmins by which a boy is allowed to wear the sacred thread.
Ūr	- Village.
Ūrāl̥ar	- Proprietors of temples and villages.

Ūrar	- Residents of the village.
Urīyaīti	- A religious festival which enacts Krīśṅā's vagaries.
Usīapūja	- The ritual worship in temples in the early morning.
Utram	- The 12 th lunar asterism.
Uttamāgrapūja	- The temple ritual.
Uttamākkiram	- Brahmin feeding
Utthapānōtsava	- A Vaiṅava temple festival.
Uttiraviṅa	- The temple festival.
Ūttūkku	- A musical instrument.
Ūtīupura	- Dining hall.
Utīrātīam	- The 21 st lunar asterism.
Uvaccan	- Drummer.
Vadham	- Killing.
Vākkāṅikka	- To describe or narrate.
Vanamāla	- Flower garland.
Varada	- A posture of deities.
Vastra	- Clothes.
Vāilmātīam	- Platforms on either side of the chief door.
Vattelīuttu	- Script used in Cēra inscriptions.
Vatīakkar	- The people from the north.
Vatīukar	- The people from the north.
Vāyu	- Wind.
Vazhiyam	- The tax collected from pedestrians and travelers.
Vēdapālanam	- The royal functionary in temples with the task to protect Vedic rituals.
Velīchapātīu	- An oracle in temples.

Vilākkumātāṃ	- Lamp pavilion in temples, the structure for lights.
Vīrapāṇḍīyancilavu	- The ritual offering at Tiruvananthapuram temple by a Pāṇḍīyan king.
Virutti	- Land assigned in remuneration for service.
Viṣū	- Equinox, A festive and auspicious day.
Viṣūkkanī	- The custom of seeing good sights on Viṣū day.
Vriscika	- The 4 th month in the Malayalam calendar.
Vriscikavilākku	- An offering which ensures lighting lamps in the month of Vrischika.
Vrīṣṇīkula	- The dynasty of Vrīṣṇī.
Vyākhyāna	- To narrate; To describe.
Yadupati	- The lord of Yadu dynasty.
Yaduvamśavibhusānam	- A title, An ornament for the Yadu dynasty.
Yajnopavita	- The sacred thread of Brahmins.
Yālī	- Motif of mythical animal used in sculptures.
Yōgakkār	- Temple councilors.
Yōgam	- Temple council.
Yōgikal	- Ascetics.
Yudham	- Battle.
Zamorin	- Title of the king of Calicut.

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Field Work:

Field work was conducted in several Visṅṅu temples in Kerala to survey and analyse the impact of Vaisṅṅavism on the sculptures, wood carvings and mural paintings.

Sculptures (Stone)

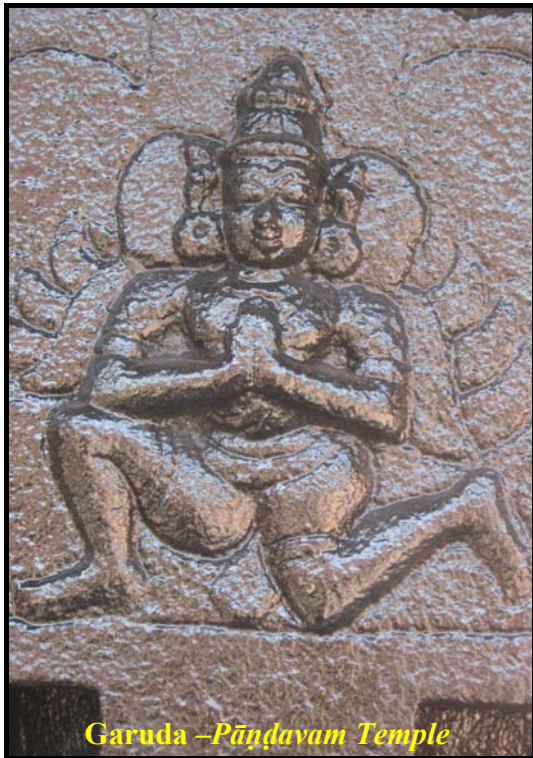


Vēnugopāla Kṛṣṇa – Kaviyūr Temple



Maha Viṣṇu – Nṛamaṅkara Temple

(Courtesy- Stella Kramrisch, J.H. Cousins & R.Vasudeva Poduval- *The Arts and Crafts of Travancore*)



Garuda – Pāṇḍavam Temple



Kṛṣṇa killing Bakasura – Pāṇḍavam Temple

Sculptures (Wood)



Ananthaśayanam- Vāḷappallī Temple



Vēṅugopāla Kṛṣṇa with Gopikas- Vāḷappallī Temple



Trivikrama- Vāḷappallī Temple



Pūtanāmōkṣa- Vāḷappallī Temple



**Kuvalayapīthavadham-
Cāttankuḷangara Temple**



**Yōga Narasimha-
Cāttankuḷangara Temple**



**Kāliamaṛḍnam –
Cāttankuḷāngara Temple**



**Anguliyapradāna to Sītā by Hanumān–
Cāttankuḷāngara Temple**



Matsyamūrti – Kaviyūr Temple



Kūrmamūrti – Kaviyūr Temple



Varāhamūrṭi – Kaviyūr Temple



Kalki – Kaviyūr Temple



Vēṅugopālakṛṣṇa - Kaviyūr Temple



Ugra Narasimha – Kaviyūr Temple



Pūtanamōkṣa - Kaviyūr Temple



Kṛṣṇalīla Scenes- Cunakkara Temple

Mural Paintings



Maha Viṣṇu – Trikoṭittānam Temple



Kovalayapīthavadham– Trikoṭittānam Temple



**Garuḍārūḍa Viṣṇu with Lakṣmi –
*Trikkoṭṭānam Temple***



**Uṇṇikṛṣṇa -
*Pāṇḍavam Temple***



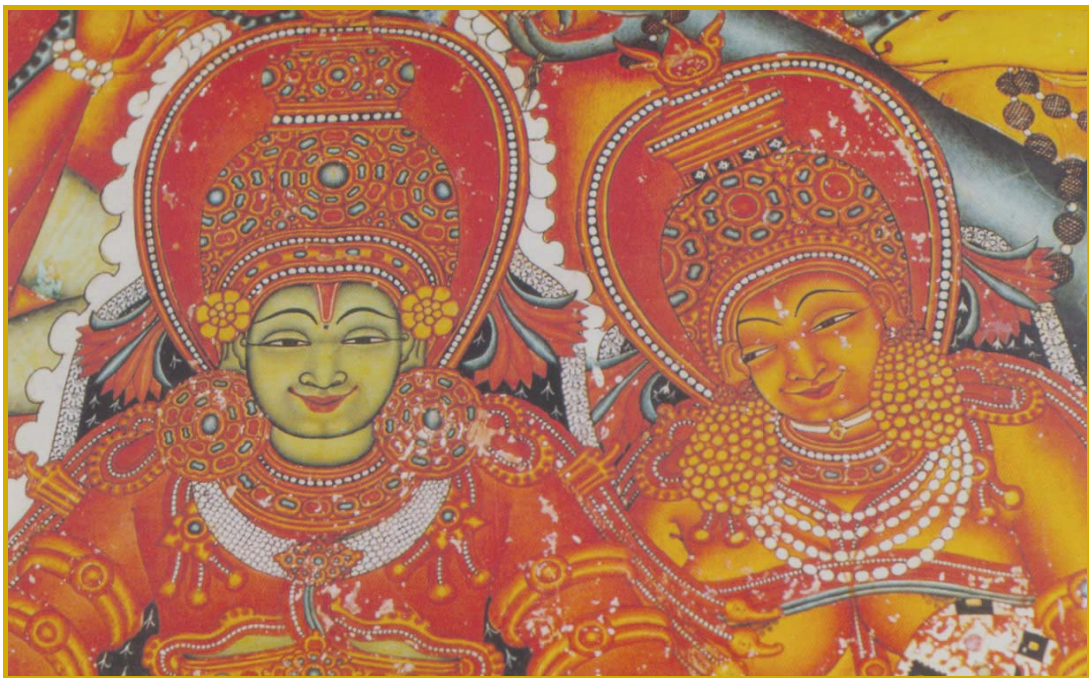
Kṛṣṇa with Gopikas – *Pāṇḍavam Temple*



**Vēṅugopālakṛṣṇa—
Pundarikapuram Temple**



**Śrī Rāma on Hanumān's Shoulder—
Toṅikkaḷam Temple**



Śrī Rāma and Sīta - Pundarikapuram Temple



Maha Viṣṇu – *Ettumanur Temple*

Coins with Vaiṣṇava symbols



Copper Coin – Vēṇāṭu

*Standing figure with lamp and cakra (obverse)
and Paraśu Rāma with axe, pellets & letter 'Ra' (reverse)*
(Courtesy: Beena Sarasan)



Copper Coin – Vēṇāṭu

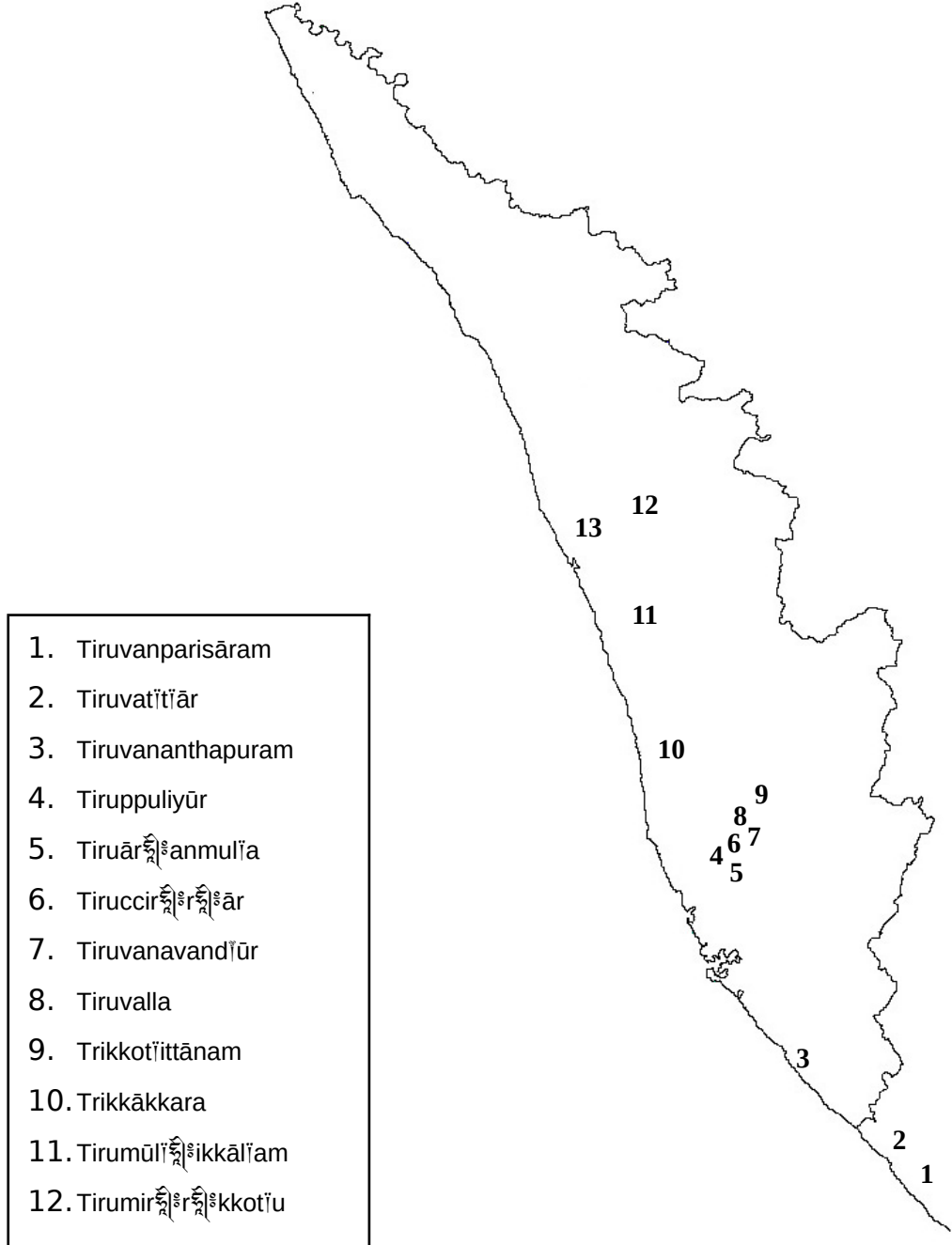
*Conch with lamp and sword (obverse)
and the same emblems on the reverse side*
(Courtesy: Beena Sarasan)



*A seated figure with axe and cakra (obverse)
and Ananthaśayanam figure (reverse) - Travancore*
(Courtesy: Beena Sarasan)

MAP I

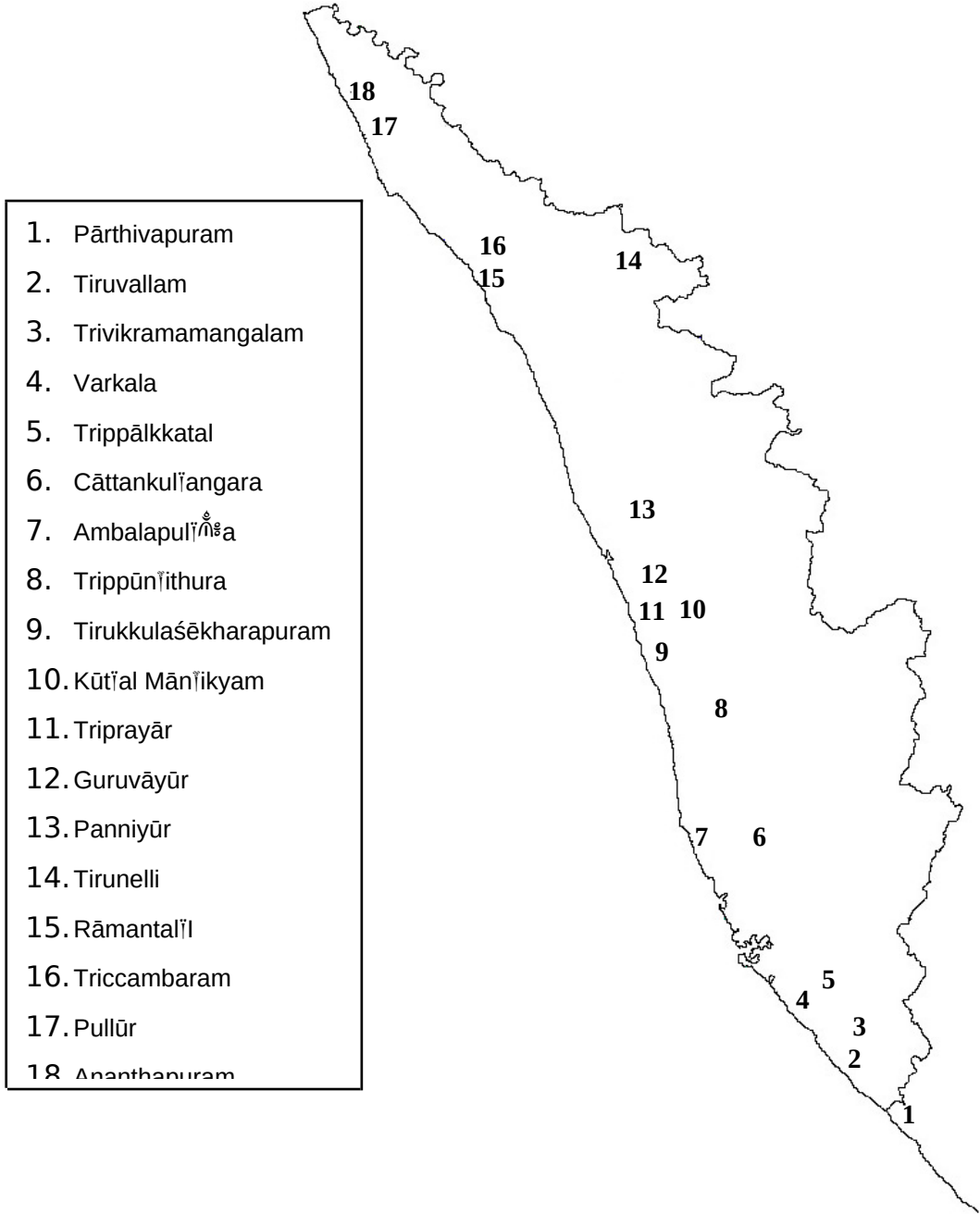
The Divyadēśam Shrines of Kerala



(Not to scale)

MAP II

Important Vaiṣṇava Centres in Medieval Kerala (Non-divyadēśams)



(Not to scale)