

**RAMANA'S  
ARUNACHALA  
OCEAN OF GRACE DIVINE**

**BY SRI BHAGAVAN'S DEVOTEES**



**Sri Ramanasramam  
Tiruvannamalai  
2004**

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## FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

A work of this kind is not a record of facts and details. What this book records are the experiences of devotees, sages and saints who have felt Arunachala in the hill, Arunachala in the temple and Arunachala in Ramana. They live and breathe Arunachala. They speak of Arunachala as a mother would of her child or a lover of his beloved, not in measured terms, but in awed tones and with overwhelmed sensitivity. The reader is invited to join as a spectator of this love affair.

The joy and delight the writers feel, the choking emotions they try to express here are sure to capture the heart of the reader making him long for these experiences.

The divine is beyond thought. Yet He allows Himself to be reflected in a sigh, a tear, a gasp, a look of wonder. This is what this book is. Long after the words are forgotten, the details erased from memory, one can feel inwardly the sigh, the tear, the gasp, the look of wonder and say, "This is Arunachala, this is Ramana."

V.S. RAMANAN  
President  
Sri Ramanasramam

## FOREWORD TO THE FOURTH EDITION

In this revised and enlarged edition we have added a few chapters dealing with inscriptions (that are found in the temple of Arunachala) reproduced with the kind permission of Director, French Institute of Pondicherry, notes on shrines and other ancient sites found in Tiruvannamalai, a list of saints who have visited Tiruvannamalai, rare herbs found on the slope of Mount Arunachala and a list of literary works singing the praise of Arunachala.

The previous editions dealt mainly with the puranic, Vedic and devotional aspects of Arunachala while this edition is made a more comprehensive one dealing with the history of Tiruvannamalai in detail and with other aspects so as to bring out the glorious heritage of Tiruvannamalai.

26th November 2004  
Karthigai Deepam Day

V.S. RAMANAN  
President  
Sri Ramanasramam

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## DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Lord Arunachaleswara and at the Lotus feet of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi who taught us the worship of Arunachala. This is a humble offering to commemorate the Centenary of Sri Bhagavan's Advent at Arunachala.

# PART I

# I

## ORIGIN OF ARUNACHALA

THE SUPREME BEING, THE OCEAN OF GRACE, Lord Siva once had a desire — “Let me become the many”. In accordance with this desire, Brahma and Vishnu came into existence spontaneously. They were delegated the duties of creating the worlds and protecting them respectively. Once, out of egoism, they were caught up in an argument which resulted in a major conflict . Seeing the terrible rage they had fallen into while battling with each other, the Supreme Lord deemed it fit to reveal Himself in a form that would put an end to their fighting.

Here the *purana* says that Siva wanted to prove the *Vedic* truth that His glory transcended everything. Every creature, however lowly, considers itself superior to all others. The foolish who cannot concede the equality or supremacy of another must necessarily suffer defeat and fall. “It is time that I revealed Myself in a definite form on earth so that even a humble mortal can attain Me the moment he thinks of Me”. Thus decided the Lord and manifested Himself as a column of light before Brahma and Vishnu.

The fighting Gods became confused and unnerved on seeing the blazing column of Effulgence. A voice arose, “Children, why this foolish fight? He who finds the beginning or the end of Me is the superior of the two”. Upon hearing these words Brahma and Vishnu stopped fighting and decided to discover the limits of the column as ordained by Siva. For this purpose Vishnu assumed the

form of a boar and dug into the earth. He started with great vigour and enthusiasm. But as he went on digging he found the column extending further and further down and as time passed he lost his strength and grew weary. He was too weak even to return. He could not bear the burden of his own form and became distressed. He then thought of Siva, the universal refuge, and reflected thus: "On account of my immense folly caused by my ego I forgot the Supreme Self. He is truly the Supreme Siva. In my folly, assuming the form of a boar I tried to find his beginning. By His grace the Truth has dawned on me. Therefore I offer myself up to this column of Effulgence and surrender to Him". By the grace of the Supreme Lord the protector of the universe regained the surface of the earth.

As for Brahma he took the form of a swan and was flying for many years vainly searching for the top of the column of light till his eyes became dim and wings weary. Nevertheless, dogged in his determination, he continued only to see the Effulgence rising still higher. A few *siddhas* on seeing Brahma trying to find the immeasurable top of the column observed, "What vanity! He still perseveres in his search. Even when the body is about to fall the ego does not disappear. Even though his wings are broken and weary and his eyes dim he is under the delusion that he can discover the bounds of the boundless Effulgence. To realize the Effulgence the finite being should dive within himself and meditate on Siva who will give him knowledge so that his ego will vanish". These wise words made Brahma humble and he began to reflect thus: "Ah! How strange that with the egos born of Siva, both Vishnu and I fought each other, and how wonderful that He Himself should reveal His greatness and humble our pride!" Brahma

chanted the Vedas and praised Siva. He presently heard Vishnu praising Siva in his resonant voice. The Lord who can be easily pleased by his devotees emerged from the column of fire in all His glory.

Siva manifested as the column of light in the month of *Margazhi* (December-January) when the moon was opposite to *Ardra* and He emerged from this column in the month of *Masi* (February-March) on *chathurdasi* (the fourteenth day after the full moon, i.e., a day before the new moon), when Brahma, Vishnu and other *devas* worshipped him. He, the blue-throated one of tawny complexion, wearer of the crescent moon, wielding the axe and fawn, signalled with one hand to Brahma and Vishnu to be fearless and offered protection with the other. He further bade them ask for boons. The two then prayed to Him as follows, “Oh Lord, the sky, the galaxies and the intergalactic spaces are so flooded with Thy splendour that the worlds cannot be discerned. Therefore Thou must kindly withdraw Thy Effulgence and abide as an immovable *Linga* named Arunachala for the welfare of the world. Oh Arunachala! Proclaim Thy presence by healing all diseases, fulfilling all desires and granting liberation”.

Siva declared, “Be it so”.

Thus Siva assumed the form of the immovable *Linga* of Arunachala. This is what is known as the Effulgent *Linga* (*Tejolinga*). It is the origin of all the worlds. It is famous in the world as Arunagiri (the red hill). When the great elements are resolved into their quintessence this hill will contain within itself all the latent seeds of future generations. After the deluge the Vedas will be revealed to the devotees who have taken refuge at the feet of Arunachala. Arunachala manifests Himself as the five great

*murtis* which have become the five letters *Namasivaya*. Arunachala is also worshipped by the guardians of the eight quarters. This *Linga* is the sacred syllable *Aum*, the sacred *mantra*, the vital air, *prana*. It grants the boon of devotion (*bhakti*) to those who have renounced even the desire for liberation.

The foregoing account of the manifestation of Arunachala is the version found in the *Skandapurana*. According to *Lingapurana* where Nandikeswara tells the story of the Supreme Being's manifestation as Arunachala, we find a slight variation. According to this *purana*, Brahma, failing to reach the top of the column of light was unwilling to concede defeat. So he begs the flower of the screwpine (scented aloe or *thazhambu*) to bear false witness. The all-knowing Sankara, emerging from the column of fire, curses Brahma and proclaims that he shall not be installed for worship in any temple on earth and that He (Arunachala) shall not be adorned with the screwpine flower.

It is essential that we grasp the spirit of the *puranas* and overlook the slight variation in details in order to understand the glory of Arunachala. Both the *puranas* speak of Arunachala as being the most potent manifestation of the Supreme Being. For, Siva lovingly promises Brahma and Vishnu, "Let this sacred Arunachala which has been blessed by Me for your sake become a place where man can attain liberation. I ordain that those who live within a distance of three *yojanas* (about thirty miles) from this place shall become one with Me even without any kind of initiation or formalities. Those lowly creatures moving about and those that are stationary will be liberated by merely living here with a good intent. Those who see Me

or remember Me from afar will realize the essence of the entire *Vedanta*. My effulgent form will shine here for ever as eternal, immovable Arunachala. Neither water nor fire nor wind can submerge, burn or shake Me. All the celestial bodies go round the *Linga* of Effulgence perpetually. Even sinners who bow down to this hill from a distance or come near and circumambulate it will attain liberation”.

On hearing these words of the Lord, Brahma and Vishnu humbly bowed down to Siva and prayed, “Oh sustainer of the Universe, let this hill reveal for the sake of the welfare of the world its true Effulgence once a year in the month of *Kartikai* (November-December) on the evening of the full moon when the star *Krithika* is on the ascendant. Moreover, as the Aruna hill exists for the welfare of all how can mortals alone worship it? Only the rain bearing clouds perform *abhishekam* for Thee; only the trees that grow on the slopes can offer flowers to Thee; only the sun and the moon serve Thee by offering *aarti* and *deepam* (waving of lamp before the deity). Hence Oh Lord! Graciously respond to our prayers and abide here forever in the form of *Tejolinga* so that we may worship thee with all our ritualistic offerings. Thou shouldst therefore abide as a *Sivalinga* on the eastern side of the hill so that we may, by Thy grace, get rid of our innate tendencies. Thou must abide here as our *Guru* so that both of us as well as mortals may attain liberation”.

Arunachala, the very embodiment of compassion, said, “Be it so. Both of you may worship Me in the light of the *Kamika Agama*. I shall abide here eternally as a *Siddha*, and shall be known as Arunagiri Yogi”. Thereupon an auspicious self-created *Sivalinga*, full of majesty and grandeur appeared. Brahma and Vishnu gazed in wonder

and instructed the celestial builder, Viswakarma to erect a temple for the *Téjolinga*. Thus Siva in His grace who took the lustrous form of the Arunachala hill and also took the form of a *Linga*, so that His beloved devotees could perform *abhisheka*, *aradhana* and *puja* to their hearts' content. Again He abides as Arunagiri Yogi, and wearing a loin-cloth sits underneath a banyan tree on the Holy hill. This is the uniqueness of Arunachala.

The *puranas* also describe the penance undertaken by Parvati, the slaying of Mahishasura, and the merging of Parvati with Arunachala. The details of this sequence of events we shall see in the next chapter.

The *Skandapurana* and the *Lingapurana* mainly speak of the primal gods going in search of the boundaries of the column of Effulgence. This incident of Brahma and Vishnu searching for the upper and lower ends of the column has been mentioned by many sages and poets. This incident cannot be dismissed as mere myth, for then one would have to repudiate everything that men of wisdom earlier and later have said of Arunachala. It is impossible to think that *jnanis*, seers and mystics who have experienced Arunachala and become one with Him could be wrong. For them Arunachala ever shines as the endless column of brilliant and dazzling *jyothi* after destroying the innate tendencies of their minds. They still see Him as Brahma and Vishnu saw Him and to those who worship Him with intense fervour and faith, the Lord reveals His original form. Thus the column of light which appeared long ago can still be seen. As the Sage of Arunachala, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has cautioned his devotees, one should not consider even for a moment that Arunachala is merely a hill of rocks and boulders. The hill is the very essence of

wisdom and the Maharshi quotes Tirujnanasambandar's *Tevaram*, where the child saint hails Arunachala as the very embodiment of wisdom, who assumed, out of His supreme compassion, the form of the hill. Various saints and sages have narrated in their compositions the incident of the two primal gods searching for the top and bottom of Arunachala. This incident forms the central theme of all compositions on Arunachala, as the emphasis is not so much on the details of the incident, as on the spiritual significance of the gods being rid of their sense of separateness from the Supreme Being.

At certain places in the *Lingapurana* and *Skandapurana*, Siva refers to different Vishnus. In the cycle of creation Brahma and Vishnu emerge from the Supreme Lord at the time of creation and merge into Him at the dissolution of the universe. But Arunachala Siva does not merge into anything and even at the time of the great deluge (*mahapralaya*), He remains unaffected. Thus we realise the timeless concept of Arunachala. This is brought out clearly in the *Tevaram* where it is said that there can be many Vishnus and Brahmas but there is only one Arunachala Siva.

It grants every boon. Shambu Himself, with Gowri shines as Arunachala. Those who have *darshan* of it or meditate upon it attain liberation. All kinds of wealth accrue to one the moment one hears about the glory of Arunachala. Those who remember Arunachala will become pure in mind. They shall be absolved of their *karmas*. A mere *darshan* of Arunachala will grant the benefit of bathing in all the holy *tirthas* and performing all *yajnas* and *yagas*. He will obtain the grace of Sadasiva. Among the various places on earth which are sacred to Siva, it is only at this

place that Sambhu fell in love with His own majestic and magnificent form. He lost the desire to dwell at Kailasa. He asked Parvati and all the *rishis* and *devas* to come and perform penance, austerities and all rituals that are laid down in the scriptures.

A single *darshan* of Arunachala pleases Him much more than austerities, offerings and *yagnas* performed at other *kshetras*. The Vedas and the epics in the form of hills surrounding Arunachala pay their obeisance to Him. Neither Brahma nor Vishnu with all their skill can adequately describe the glory of Arunachala. Brahma, Vishnu, and the *devas* always worship it while remaining invisible. Disease, distress, mental worry and other miseries incidental to the dark age of *kaliyuga* do not affect those who always adore Arunachala. The power of Arunachala nullifies the malefic influence of planets and bestows Liberation in a trice on one who contemplates upon Him.

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## II

# ARUNACHALA AS ARDHANAREESWARA

### LIFE AT KAILASH

ONCE ON MOUNT KAILASH, IT WAS SPRING time and the place was filled with the balm, incense and scent of flowers. Bees swarmed and hummed among the hanging clusters of flowers. A cool and refreshing breeze from the rivers below wafted gently, carrying with it the sweet scent of flowers from the plains. Peacocks spread out their colourful feathers dancing to the tune of humming bees. Elephants and lions, natural enemies, strolled about in harmony and contentment. Sages chanted hymns from the Rig, the Yajus and the Sama Vedas, the last mentioned being most dear to Siva. *Brahmarishis* and *Rajarishis* were deeply absorbed in the Self, while *devas*, *siddhas*, *ganas*, the protectors of the quarters and holy devotees of Siva wearing sacred ash and *rudraksha* beads stood in prayerful attitude. Lord Siva and Parvati, the Universal Parents, sat on their throne in all their glory, pouring their Grace on their children who were worshipping them.

*Devas*, *rishis* and other hosts of devotees, after being granted the boons they desired, prayerfully took leave of their Lord. Now Lord Siva rejoiced in the company of Goddess Uma (Parvati) on the snow-clad peaks of the Himalayan mountains. In a joyous mood the Goddess, who thought

that her Lord's attention was entirely centred on her, slipped behind Him and playfully covered the three eyes of Sambhu with her lotus-like hands, and asked, 'Tell me, who is it?'

As soon as the three eyes representing the Moon, the Sun and the Fire of Knowledge were covered, a dismal darkness spread over the universe. It lasted for millions of years because half a moment for Siva is aeons for us. The darkness produced by the playfulness of the Goddess proved to be the cause of the untimely dissolution of the worlds, for in the dense darkness no activities were possible and consequently, living beings perished without giving birth to new generations. The *devas* became inert and the Vedas remained unchanted. By this unforeseen darkness cause and effects were nullified. Seeing this state of affairs, the ever glorious *siddhas* by their *yogic* powers understood the cause, but could not comprehend the divine play of the Lord.

The *siddhas* prayed to Sambhu with devotion and addressed him thus: "Glory to Sambhu! An untimely dissolution has now overtaken the worlds on account of the Goddess' sport. But your compassion is infinite. May it reveal itself now for the well-being of the universe. Therefore, Oh Embodiment of Compassion! Be merciful. Pray, stop this sport!

In response to this prayer of devotees and *siddhas*, Siva commanded: 'Gowri! Leave my eyes alone'. Immediately the Goddess removed her hands from Siva's eyes. Light pervaded the worlds. When He asked the *siddhas* who stood in an attitude of worship, as to how much time had elapsed, they replied, 'Half a second for thee, but millions of years for us.' On hearing this the Lord turned with a smile to His beloved and graciously

spoke some words on *dharma* and *artha*: ‘Gowri, how can you be so thoughtless! You who are the Mother of the world have been the cause of its dissolution. Oh, how can you, the very embodiment of love and compassion, cause pain to your children?’

On hearing Sambhu’s words of reproach, Uma, stricken with deep remorse, pleaded with him to advise her as to the course to be adopted for expiation of this seemingly ignorant act of hers. At this Lord Siva was pleased with the repentance and devotion of the Goddess and said: ‘What penance can you perform without me? You who symbolise my power and who desire to recreate the world are not different from myself. Therefore, Gowri, I shall prescribe a penance for you in accordance with prevailing practice. I cannot remain without you even for a moment. Being the universal Self, I shall myself go through the austerities. Let the entire world become sacred by the glory of your penance.

## GOWRI’S PENANCE

On hearing this the Goddess, with her companions, proceeded at once to the holy city of Kanchipuram situated on the banks of the Kampa to do penance. There she saw the pure and holy waters of the Kampa worshipped by hosts of sages and a magnificent mango tree full of fruits and flowers among which koels sang and sported. Amidst such a beautiful setting the Goddess meditated on her Lord.

Gowri continued to practise austerities on the banks of the Kampa. Thrice a day she bathed in the Kampa, lovingly shaped its sand into a *linga* and devoutly worshipped it with leaves as traditionally prescribed. The Goddess observed the *dharma* of alleviating the misery of

all creatures thus showering her compassion on her children. She respectfully welcomed the holy sages (*maharshis*) who came to pay homage to her. They were struck with wonder at her austerities.

One day as usual, Parvathi collected flowers from the forest and began to worship a *linga* made of sand on the bank of the Kampa. Siva, to reveal to the world her devotion to Him, made the waters of the river Kampa suddenly rise and overflow its banks. Seeing the spate of the river her companions raised an alarm, whereupon the Devi opened her eyes and saw the approaching flood. Distressed at the danger to her worship, she at once embraced the *linga* lest it dissolve and with open eyes meditated on Sadasiva with one-pointed devotion.

Then a divine voice was heard: Oh child, noblest of beings! This great flood was created by me to reveal to the world your devotion. Now that it has subsided you may let go of the *linga*. I now bid you proceed to Arunachala. I myself shine on this earth in the form of the Effulgent Arunachala for the liberation of mortals. The name signifies that the accumulated sins of the worlds will completely vanish at the sight of it. *Rishis, siddhas, gandharvas, yogis*, etc., come to Arunachala and fervently worship it, forsaking even the peaks of Kailash and Mount Meru. You may go there and learn from the Sage Gautama about devotion to me and the glory of Arunachala and perform further penance. I shall reveal to you my Effulgent form there in order that all sins of the world may be destroyed and the world may prosper.'

On hearing these words of Siva, the Devi said, "So be it", and proceeded at once for Arunachala. On arrival the Goddess saw *siddhas, yogis, rishis* and *devas* dwelling

there. Atri, Bhrigu, Bharadwaja, Kasyapa, Angirasa, Kutsa, Gautama and *siddhas*, *vidhyadharas* and *devas* were performing severe penances here for the fulfillment of their wishes. Gowri found the Ganga and other sacred rivers worshipping this *Linga*-Hill. She thus realised that this must be the noble and divine *Linga* known as Arunadri.”

The *maharshis* prayed to her to be their guest, but she expressed her desire to see Gautama first as per Siva’s command. So they directed her to his *ashram*. There she worshipped with great fervour the Effulgent Lord along with with her companions. As a result of worshipping the motionless *Linga* in such rigorous manner she became emaciated.

Gautama, foremost among sages, had gone out into the forest in the morning to procure flowers and other articles for worship. Devi went to his hermitage where she was received by his disciples with great respect and hospitality. With humility they entreated her to wait a little for the Sage.

Gautama returned from the forest. His disciples came to meet him and informed him about Gowri’s arrival. The elated Maharshi foresaw in the visit of the Goddess the fruition of his austerities.

Goddess Gowri came forward to welcome Gautama and addressed him, “My Lord bade me come to Arunachala and to learn its glory from you. Therefore, kindly enlighten me about the greatness of Arunachala.” To which Gautama replied, “Even a million tongues cannot delineate fully how the formless Supreme Being, out of compassion, took this holy form of Arunachala Hill. Nay, even if a million Brahmas came together, they would fail to narrate His glory satisfactorily. Arunachala in this form was in former times worshipped by Brahma, Vishnu, Soma (the moon),

Surya (the sun), Agni (fire), Indra and the other *devas*, *dikpalakas* (the protectors of the eight directions), *siddhas*, *charanas*, *yakshas*, *vidyadhara*s, *gandharvas*, *nagas*, serpents, birds, divine sages, *siddha yogis* and others, in order to get rid of their sins and to obtain the fulfilment of their desires.”

“The Lord of Arunagiri is capable of removing all the sins and fulfilling all the desires of those who devoutly worship him. He grants Liberation even to those who utter the word ‘Arunachala’ or meditate on His name even from afar. It is well known that what is called ‘Arunadri’ is the embodiment of Effulgence. *Yogis* meditate upon it and attain union with Siva. Offerings, sacrifices, and *japa* made in its vicinity yield immeasurable results.”

Gautama continued further: This Hill was fiery in the *Krita Yuga*, shining as emerald in the *Treta Yuga*, glistening as a golden hill in the *Dvapara Yuga* and as a lacklustre rocky hill in the *Kali Yuga*. In the *Krita Yuga*, when it spread out for several *yojanas* as a mass of fire, maharshis circumambulated it. Thereafter, at the humble prayer of the *devas*, Bhagavan Arunachala gradually became cool.

On hearing these words of the Sage, the daughter of the king of the mountains was pleased and said, ”The goal of my life has been attained by me, by duly learning from you the glory of Arunachala.”

The Goddess then decided to perform penance devoutly in the presence of Gautama. At Gowri’s behest a thatched hut was built for her. The Goddess with her slender form, lotus-like eyes, matted tresses, wearing a tree-bark and shining with the brilliance of a carbuncle was the very embodiment of penance. She followed the various scriptural injunctions and exhibited her devotion to her Lord in various ways, thus teaching the world the paths of *dharma*

as laid down in the Vedas and *sastras*. Her slender body withstood the severity of penance without exhibiting the least trace of weariness.

## SLAYING OF MAHISHASURA

The *devas* who were oppressed by Mahishasura, a demon who had taken the form of a buffalo, came down to earth and sought refuge with the Goddess. The Goddess assured the *devas* that she would protect them from the demon and would slay him.

Mahishasura, learned from his servitors about the enchanting beauty of the Goddess in *tapas*. In his lust he coveted her and wanted to make her his own. His unrighteous desire was however, thwarted by Gowri. He therefore approached her with his fearful *asura* army.

As soon as Gowri saw the *asura* army, she brought into existence fierce warriors, *bhuta ganas* and monstrous creatures. Then the Goddess blew her conch. As soon as the *asuras* heard the sound and saw her, they shot a host of arrows from all sides in order to show their valour, but the Goddess stopped them all with her arrows. The *bhutas* and *vetalas* created by the Goddess fought fiercely. The attendant goddesses quickly killed many of the enemies. Amidst the dead bodies of the *asuras* the *bhutas* danced in victory. The Goddess stood fully armed along with her maidens, Dundubhi, Satyavati, Anavami and Sundari.

As soon as Mahisha saw her he became enraged. He pierced the clouds with the tip of his horns, darted his flame-like tongue hither and thither, butted the earth with his horns, pawed the earth with his hooves raining clouds of dust on all sides, and roared fiercely. He lifted his hairy tail and shattered into bits many of the weapons of the

*devas* who became frightened. Then he turned towards the beautiful Bhavani who was mounted on a lion and charged towards her only to meet his doom!

Mahisha rained arrows and many other weapons on Goddess Gowri, but she stopped them all at a distance with her arrows and pierced his body in many places. While assailed thus with discs, axes, maces, spears and many other weapons, he disappeared suddenly and came back a moment later in the form of a fierce lion. Roaring terribly he raged about the battlefield attacking with his teeth and sharp claws. Each time he was defeated he took a new form. Thus he came as a tiger, then an elephant and then a fierce warrior with a sword. The Goddess, who was carrying a sword, shield and a disc fought with him and cut off his head. He however, resumed his form of Mahisha and fought with her tirelessly.

The Goddess pierced Mahisha with Her trident. His body was as big as a mountain range but he could not withstand the valour of the Goddess. He fell and rolled on the ground but could not extricate himself from the trident. He looked like a red sea with blood flowing from his face and limbs. The Goddess cut off his head with a sharp sword and stood dancing upon him. She was hailed by the denizens of heaven as Mahishasura Mardhani (the destroyer of Mahisha). They prayed that this form of hers should be a source of prosperity and happiness for all creation.

To wash off her sins of killing a devotee of Siva (for, despite all his sins, Mahishasura was a devotee of Siva) she was urged to bathe in the spring which gushed forth when she struck the rock with her sword. To commemorate this a temple was built, and to this day the spring can be seen there.

## GOWRI JOINS SIVA

At the end of one month the Goddess celebrated a festival. On the evening when *Krittika* was in conjunction with the Moon in the month of *Karthika* (November-December), She propitiated the Lord of Arunadri with all the prescribed offerings. The Goddess then went round the hill along with her companions. As she did so Arunachala shone like an emerald and her sacred body was enveloped by the lustre of the Hill. As she walked slowly, the lustre of her lotus feet made the earth look as if it had been strewn with lotus petals. Her radiant looks were like blossoms of *nilotpala* (blue lotus) scattered by worshippers all round Sonadri.

Goddess Gowri was devoutly walking round the Hill as if she were walking round the ceremonial marriage *havan* with the object of attaining union with Siva. She was joined at each step by Brahma and Vishnu and their consorts Saraswati and Lakshmi, the *devas*, the *dikpalakas* and their consorts and the celestial maidens with their fragrant offerings. It appeared that she was appeasing the hill of fire by her austerities she was. Constantly remembering Mahadeva she gave spiritual instruction to the divine *rishis*.

The Mother of the world bowed to the Destroyer of the three cities and prayed that she should attain union with Him. Noted for her sweet words, she prayed very devoutly in this manner for the welfare of the world, "Let not this form of thine which charms the eye and the mind be ever abandoned by thee. As this form of thine is enchanting, auspicious for the world and is full of divine bliss, let everyone always have thy *darshan*. Instead of thy former appearance of matted hair, wearing the serpent

round the neck, holding the skull of Brahma, smearing ash from the *Rudra Bhoomi* (cremation ground), pray, assume the form of the *Maha Purusha*, the Eternal Bridegroom, adorned with divine garlands, perfumes, robes and gem-set ornaments. Great Lord! Let *deva* and *gandharva* maidens adore thee, dancing and singing to the accompaniment of musical instruments. Let thy devotees also adore thee unceasingly. Let this vision of our united form *Ardhanareeswara* be always, by thy Grace, capable of inspiring intense devotion, of bestowing prosperity and of fulfilling all desires.”

On hearing this the Lord of Sonachala granted all the boons the Goddess asked. That Lord himself now appears as *Ardhanareeswara* who is adored by the world.

The term *Ardhanareeswara* literally means, half-woman (the Goddess) and half-Ishwara. The Supreme Being assumes the form wherein the left side appears as a woman and the right, as a man. In passing, we may mention an interesting incident which is described in the *Arunachala Purana*. When Parvati was born to Himavan, it was predicted in her nativity chart that she will assume a glorious form in which, her left side will contain tresses of dark hair, ear-ring, pierced nose and breast, while the right side of her frame will have matted locks, the chest of a man, etc. Thus we can say that, either Parvati has given her right side to Ishwara, or that Ishwara has given his left side to Parvati. In iconology, rules are laid down as to the sculpturing of *Ardhanareeswara* statue. Thus it is an accepted form of worship. Vishnu being the male aspect of Parvati, we also have Shankaranarayana, i.e., one half of the body being Vishnu and the other half, that of Ishwara.

### III

## ARUNACHALA IN THE VEDAS AND PURANAS

AN ASTROPHYSICIST MAY SMILE AT THE ignorance of one who says that the sun and stars are merely fires. Likewise, to describe ‘*agni*’ as ‘fire’ is to fall far short of the real meaning of the word. *Agni* as correctly interpreted has three forms: the gross, the subtle, and the gross-subtle. In its gross form it is one of the five elements (*panchabhuthas*). *Agni* in its gross-subtle state is the channel through which oblations to the gods are offered in all *Vedic* rituals. The oblation is offered after the desired deity is first invoked in the form of *agni*. In its subtle form *agni* represents Knowledge (*jnana*), Consciousness or Self-awareness. In the Vedas, *agni* is the flame of aspiration that finally fills the human heart with the all consuming fire of Pure Awareness.

*Agni* represents all forms and aspects of the Supreme Being and proclaims their ultimate unity. In fact, in the Vedas, the most important place is assigned to *agni*. The very first word in the Rig and Sama *sambhitas* is *agni*. The Rig Veda is one of humanity’s oldest scriptures. The ancient seers therefore attached great importance to the Rig Veda. The *Yajur Veda* has one whole canto (Canto IV) dedicated to *agni* called *Agnikanda*.

In the *Rig Veda*, *agni* is praised by Rishi Maduchandas as “the protector of all, glowing in spiritual striving, the light of truth that grows within.” (*Rig Veda samhita*, 1, 1.2)

In the next *mantra* the Rishi prays to *Agni*, “Like a father to his children, O *Agni!* be easy of access to us and dwell with us for our well being”.

Before proceeding further one should pause and reflect as to why the Vedas have given importance to the worship of *agni*. The reason is that Lord Arunachala, the Supreme Being, chose to appear as a column of *agni*. A column of Effulgence which has no dimension, pervading all space and time, transcends all human comprehension. As He chose to appear as *jnana agni* to quell *avidya* i.e. ignorance, the Vedas begin by singing His praise. Thus all *Vedic* hymns dedicated to *agni* are actually dedications to Arunachala! He is hailed thus:

The summit of heaven, as the heart of the earth, as the offspring of truth, the wise one, the poet, the sovereign, home of all nourishment, of great splendour and fame. (*Rig Veda*, VI-7-1 & 2).

Look, He is the light immortal within mortals. Established firmly He perceives all. (*Rig Veda*, VI-9-4).

Steady light faster than the mind is kept within flighty mortals. All *devas* with all their heart and understanding aspire for and go to that one Awareness. (*Rig Veda*, VI-9-5).

May the light immortal within mortals save us with His grace (*Rig Veda*, VI-9-7).

Sage Kashyapa hails *agni* (Arunachala) as all-knowing who confounds the machinations of evil forces, and like a ship takes us over to the shore, helping man transcend the cycle of births and deaths. (*Rig Veda*, I-9-7).

*Yajur Veda* occupies the mid position and its fourth canto which is the central part of this Veda is dedicated to *Agni*. *Sri Rudram* occurs in the central part of the fourth canto, and in the eighth chapter which is the

middle portion of *Sri Rudram* occurs the term “*arunaya cha thamraya cha*” . . . which describes Arunachala as the copper coloured one. Sama Veda which is very sacred to Siva begins, like the Rig Veda, with the verse “*agniyahi*”

. . . .

Apart from the above, the Rig Veda *Brahmana*, the *Kenopanishad* and the *Baskara Samhita* describe the *Lingodbhava*, that is, the dazzling column of light which covered the cosmic space, crossing the frontiers of time and space. The brilliance was far too magnificent for the sense organs to perceive or even the mind to imagine. Interestingly Rishi Parasara sang of *agni* and *agni* alone and one in his line of descendants was a manifestation of Arunachala Himself, our very own Bhagavan Ramana.

The grandeur of this  *jyoti*, this column stunned the lesser gods. Brahma, the creator of ego and Vishnu the protector of ego were not separate from that column of Effulgence. Yet they, in their own divine illusion, felt apart from it and failed to realize their oneness with that Supreme light. This ignorance born of duality caused them to fight. After a long verbal duel they tried to measure the light. One went in search of the source of the Effulgence and the other its ultimate end. But they failed in their endeavour. This is described in the Rig Veda *Brahmana*. Vishnu having taken the form of *varaha* (boar) delved deep to find the foot of the *tejolinga* and having searched for one thousand years failed to reach the bottom and hailed the Lord thus, “Such is Your power, Oh Lord. You are our father and mother, our brother and sister, our friend and our relative. The one who realises this, verily knows all of creation and attains Thee”. It also further says how Brahma took the form of a swan and searched the

head of the column of fire that stood mightily before him in vain for many years.

Not only did Arunachala in His brilliance humble the gods, He also removed the ignorance of the ruling deities of the elements. This is narrated in the *Kenopanishad* which is one of the ten principal Upanishads. The third section of the Upanishad describes how Arunachala appeared before the *devas* to make them realize the power that moves them. As narrated in the Yajurveda the *devas* and *asuras* fought against each other. This war and the subsequent winning of the battle by the *devas* was all ordained by the Supreme Power. Not realizing this truth the *devas* attributed to themselves the glory of the victory. When they were thus gloating, a brilliant column of light appeared before them. It was none other than Arunachala. Arunachala, who in His extreme compassion killed the sense of doership of Brahma and Vishnu, now chose to shower His mercy on the *devas*.

The *devas* were awed at the sight of this column of light and bade *Agni* (the god of fire) go and find out what the light was. The light asked *Agni* about his power and when *Agni* said that he could burn anything and everything in the universe, the light placed a blade of grass and challenged *Agni* to burn the blade. *Agni* tried but failed and returned to the *devas* crestfallen. Then *Vayu*, the god of the winds, was deputed but despite his might, he could not even move the blade of grass. Indra, the chief of *devas* approached the light and as he came near the light, it vanished. Indra then met Goddess Parvati who told him that it was none other than the Supreme Lord or Brahman who pervades the entire Universe and gave the *devas* the power they possessed. Thus we see a marked similarity

between the incident narrated above and the one recounted in the Vedas and in the *puranas* about the emergence of Arunachala as a brilliant column of light to humble Brahma and Vishnu. The Vedic meaning of *agni* presents *agni* as one who leads further.

## ARUNACHALA'S GLORY NARRATED IN THE PURANAS

Apart from the *Vedic* and *Upanishadic* interpretation of the manifestation of Arunachala, we have the *puranic* account of how the formless Supreme power took the form of light (*jjyoti*). It is an accepted dictum in Hinduism that both the Vedas and *puranas* are of divine origin and that they were revealed by divine grace and handed down to enlightened beings and sages. There are about eighteen *puranas* and the great sage Veda Vyasa is believed to have compiled all of them.

Vyasa reports that the sages who lived in Naimisaranya (now in Uttar Pradesh) asked Sootha Muni to name the place most sacred to Siva. Sootha tells the *munis* that the same question was put by Markandeya to Nandikeswara. Markandeya in his compassion towards fellow human beings asks Nandikeswara with great reverence to name the place where true knowledge can be acquired without rituals, book learning or elaborate religious injunctions; where even an ignorant person can attain enlightenment by merely smearing sacred ash on the forehead; where all residents overcome obstacles and attain the Supreme Knowledge without any conscious effort; where even the worst men, the lowest of animals and inanimate objects attain perfection. In answer to this request Nandikeswara describes in detail

all the places on earth sacred to Siva. He names the banks of rivers, the seashore, the sacred spots on the Himalayas and other shrines where Siva with the Goddess Parvati bestowed His grace on gods, *rishis* and aspirants. He narrates the greatness of Kashi, Chidambaram, Thiruvavarur, Gaya, Prayag, Sri Sailam, Madurai etc. But Markandeya cleverly corners Nandikeswara and asks him, “Bhagavan, please do not evade the question. Each of the places mentioned by you no doubt has its particular efficacy but which is the place that has the combined efficacy of all the sacred places? Please tell me the name of the place by remembering which even once, knowingly or unknowingly, all beings moving as well as stationary obtain liberation.”

According to Saiva Ellapar, the author of *Arunachala Purana*, at this stage, Nandi thinking of Arunachala became ecstatic and went into *samadhi*. With tears in his eyes and with a voice choked with emotion he says, “Yes, there is such a place”, and narrates the glory of Arunachala. It is noteworthy that the audience of great *rishis* to whom Nandikeswara narrated the glory of Arunachala included *jnanis* like Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara, Sanatsujata (for the four of whom the lord assumed the form of Dakshinamurti), Nidaga (disciple of Ribhu), Bharadvaja, Bodhayana, Valmiki, and Narada to name but a few. If these Self-realized sages gathered to listen to the glory of Arunachala with all eagerness, then the greatness of the Lord can well be imagined.

From then on the very name of Arunachala has drawn many a saint and Arunachala Himself descended and took human form to propagate His silent teaching and shower His grace in *kaliyuga* as Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Now we shall narrate the glory of Arunachala as found in the *puranas*.

Arunachala the most sacred place of Siva lies in the Dravidanadu in South India. It extends to three *yojanas* (30 miles or 48 kilometres) all around. Arunachala Siva, our Lord and Master has decreed that anyone living within this radius will attain liberation effortlessly. Mount Kailas is Siva's abode, but this hill has been declared by Siva to be Siva Himself. He has assumed the form of this hill for the welfare of the world and to grant liberation. It is said to be the heart of the earth. Arunachala is regarded as superior to Meru, Kailas and the Mandara by *rishis* as it is the Supreme Being itself. It is the abode of all the sages, saints, *siddhas*, *devas*, *vidhyadharas*, *yakshas*, *gandharvas* and *apsaras*. Eventually everyone has to come here as it is the source of all beings. Since all creatures living here attain liberation effortlessly, even the residents of *svarga* (heaven) prefer to dwell here. As the trees growing on the slopes of this hill have the good fortune of union with the Lord, they scorn even the Goddess Aparna. The rainwater falling on its top from the clouds is superior to the Ganges flowing from the Himalayas. The lions, tigers and elephants which live and die here are welcomed by the Lord of the hill and held in great esteem by Him. The trees growing here have the good fortune of worshipping Him in the form of this noble hill with their leaves, flowers and fruits and are therefore superior to *Kalpataru* and other trees growing in the celestial regions. The fireflies which give light to those who walk here in the darkness reach the abode of Siva. The birds, seeds and bamboo that dwell here enjoy a status that cannot be obtained even by celestial beings. Even hunters who are violent in their nature gain imperishable merit by merely circumambulating the hill by chance. Sonadri or Arunachala is worshipped by Indra,

Varuna, Yama and Kubera who live on the hills at the four cardinal points. Those hills from which Arunachala is visible are more blessed than Meru and the Himalayan mountains. Here the Lord humbled the creator and protector of ego-sense. Here *rishis* like Gautama, Durvasa, Agastya, Vasishtha and others performed severe austerities and realized the eternal Sadasiva within themselves.

As this is the source, everyone has to come here eventually. Even Parvati in order to merge with Siva had to come here. Durga abides here by the order of Gowri to remove all obstacles and enable the devotees to have *darshan* of their personal deities. Kings, celestial beings and *asuras* were all absolved of their sins by circumambulating the hill. Even if a person perversely thinks of visiting Arunachala to commit forbidden acts he becomes blessed, since his very intention to visit Arunachala purifies him. Arunachala shows Himself on earth in the form of this hill for the liberation of mortals. The name Aruna signifies the total annihilation of accumulated sins of the worlds merely at the sight of the hill. *Rishis*, *siddhas*, *gandharvas* and *yogis* come here and frequently worship the hill, forsaking even the peak of Kailas. Gifts, sacrifices, repetition (*japa*) of holy names made in its vicinity yield immeasurable benefits. By merely looking at its peak, not only will all sins be destroyed but the eye of wisdom will be opened. All evil produced by mind, speech and body will be destroyed the moment one sees Arunachala. This Arunagiri will remove all the sins of those who walk around it, prostrate themselves before it and offer flowers or praise it with devotion. Siva directed even Gowri, Indra and others to Arunachala to do penance here to get rid of their sins. Any penance

done at Arunachala yields better results than at any other holy place. While sneezing or while in the happiest moods or when one falls or after committing a wrong, the wise ones exclaim, “Arunachalam”. Thus, thinking of Arunachala purifies the mind. Likewise, the sight of the hill purifies the eyes, to speak of it purifies the tongue and to listen to the name purifies the ear. The Supreme Being abides on earth in the form of Arunachala. The moment one sees it one’s ignorance is destroyed.

Although originally effulgent, the *linga* cooled down into the form of the hill for the sake of the world. Nevertheless it is fiery, unmanifest, and of untold glory. This Arunachala confers *siddhis*, cures all diseases, destroys all sins and grants other boons. Nowhere else in the world can one see the *linga* in the form of a hill. Siva Himself once instructed Sage Gautama to make it clear to all that Arunachala in this physical form composed of earth was truly Himself. Thus Arunachala is worshipped by all beings, celestial and of the earth.

## IV

# ARUNACHALA HONOURED BY THIRUMURAI

THERE ARE TWELVE *THIRUMURAI* IN TAMIL corresponding to the four Vedas in Sanskrit. These *Thirumurais* were written by some Nayanmars who are considered as the foremost devotees of Lord Siva. The *Thirumurais* start with the letter 'O' and end with the consonant 'M', thus together constituting the primal sound OM (*pranava*).

### TIRUJNANASAMBANDAR

Tirujnanasambandar was born to Sivapada Hrudayar and Bagawathy Amma in Thiru Thonipuram which is also known as Sirkazhi and he was christened as Aludaya Pillai. At the age of three he had a vision of Siva and Parvati and was fed the milk of spiritual knowledge by the divine consort. The child of three sang verses describing the vision he had. He then visited many holy places and went to Arakanda Nallur near Tiruvannamalai from where he had the first *darshan* of the distant holy hill of Arunachala, and with overflowing love he danced and sang in divine ecstasy. He then went to Arunachala with his disciples. When they reached the outskirts of Tiruvannamalai, thieves robbed them of their belongings. Sambandar was not concerned about losing his belongings but he demanded of his Lord as to what crime they had committed to lose their entire

belongings. When the compassionate Lord heard the child saint's complaint, he at once returned the lost property and treated them with a sumptuous feast thus indicating to Jnanasambanda that it was all the Lord's divine play.

Jnanasambandar composed poems called *padhigams* (group of ten or eleven stanzas) and later these became part of the celebrated *Thevaram*. Sambandar alone in his songs describes the natural beauty of the shrines sacred to Siva. Thus even in the songs composed in praise of Arunachala, we see nature described in all its glory. It is an exhilarating experience to listen to him describing the sound of the waterfalls flowing down the hillsides, and the thunder claps on top of the hill, the cow taking refuge from rain on the slopes of Arunachala, the voices of the tribal women driving parrots from the top of wooden scaffoldings, the wild boars, elephants and deer descending the hill in large groups at night and the sound of gypsies heaping beads on the slopes. We see and hear them now even as he saw and heard them in those old, ancient times.

Apart from the exquisite poetry of his songs, we see the intense devotion with which he expresses in an exemplary and touching manner the love that Arunachala has for his beloved devotees. Arunachala, he says destroys not only the past sins of his devotees but also all future sins. There is faith, love and surrender, and whoever sings his songs is affected with the same feelings.

Like Manikkavasagar, Sambandar decries those who speak ill of Siva and advises us not to heed their worthless words but to put all our faith on Arunachala.

For him, Arunachala was no ordinary hill. It was not only the embodiment of the Supreme, but stood as a testament of the Lord's absolute graciousness in presenting

Himself in solid form, to first capture the hearts of devotees and then take them to the realization of the highest spiritual truth. The ninth stanza of every one of his *padhigams* stands testimony to this wherein he alludes to Arunachala. For example, in the *padhigam* describing the greatness of the *vibhuti*, he says, “Even Brahma and Vishnu cannot espy the greatness of *vibhuti*.”

## APPAR

In Appar’s hymns we can see his deep love and piety for Arunachala.

Appar whose real name was Tirunavukkarasar, embraced Jainism due to his previous *karma*. Appar’s sister Tilakavathi, an ardent devotee of Siva, prayed to her Lord to entice Appar unto His fold. Accordingly the Lord claimed him as His own and Appar became a *saiivite*. When they realized that Appar had abandoned them, the Jains treated him cruelly but with the Lord’s grace he escaped unscathingly from all the tests he was put into by the Jains and after visiting many holy places came to Arunachala.

The poet-saint Sekkizhar describes Appar’s coming to Arunachala as follows:

“Appar,” says the poet, “being a slave to Siva, on seeing Arunachala the nectar and worshipping Him with melting devotion, sang hymns and served the Lord”.

Appar has hailed Arunachala in four of his *Thevara padhigams* and in two *Thiruthandaka panns*. In these hymns, he professes again and again his unswerving love and his unceasing meditation on Arunachala. Without thinking of Him there is no redemption. With great gratitude he discloses the immense bliss and grace that Arunachala has bestowed upon him.

In the first decad, Appar goes on to say that his mind has no other thought but that of the cloud-clad Arunachala, Uma's Lord and the King of the *devas*. He hails in exquisite terms and epithets such as, "burnished gold, as a hill of corals and as the wearer of the crescent moon, the Lord with matted hair and praised by all celestial beings". Arunachala is verily the form and the spirit. He alone is the Creator of the cosmos and the source of all creation and liberator of all beings. Appar's mind refuses to dwell on anything but on Arunachala. On coming to Tiruvannamalai and seeing the mighty Arunachala, can one think of anything else?

In the first *Thirukkurunthokai* Appar asks fondly whether there is salvation for him if he forgets Arunachala. Further he says that Arunachala completely destroys one's past *karmas* (which like a wild tornado torments the mind) and bestows His bounteous grace upon those who meditate on Him. Again he says, one's sins are so powerful and swift like that of a striking lightning throwing one into bondage, but there is always Arunachala who removes the effects of such sins swiftly and claims the suffering spirit as His own. Annamalaiyar, says Appar, takes upon Himself all the ills that befall on his beloved children. Arunachala, declares Appar, has the Kingdom of liberation for his own. Is it difficult then for Him to grant liberation? In this decad, Appar with melting gratitude praises Arunachala as the Lord who absolved him of all his *karmas*.

In the next *kurunthokai*, Appar invites the whole world to participate in his good fortune. "Do only think of Him", he urges, "and He would come rushing to shower His grace on you."

In *Lingapurathanthogai* Appar explains why Vishnu and Brahma were unable to find Arunachala's feet and the

summit. They did not pick flowers for His worship, they did not bathe Him in fragrant waters or burn incense or sing his glory. So they went on searching in vain. But He is easy for His devotees to reach because they love Him and He becomes a slave to their love. In *Thiruthandagam*, Appar describes Arunachala as the fiery bodied Supreme. Arunachala appeared to Appar as Nataraja and Bikshatana.

## SUNDARAMURTI NAYANAR

They say that of the four ways, namely, devotion, *yoga*, action and knowledge, Sundarar followed the *yogic* way in his spiritual life. He regarded the divine as his friend and enjoyed His blessings fully. It is said that he wrote more than 3000 *padhigams* but only a few hundred are traceable now. He has sung in glorious terms about Arunachala in some of his songs. There is no evidence that Sundarar visited Arunachala, nevertheless Arunachala did not spare him and residing in his heart made him sing His glory.

While worshipping Siva, presiding at Thiruparankunram, Thuraiyur, Vanchiyam and Thenthiruvarur, Sundarar must have thought about Arunachala and speaks of all of them as Arunachala.

For e.g., he sings, “Vishnu taking the form of boar, threw away the earth and delving deep into the nether world, and the creator Brahma were finding it difficult to perceive your true primal form.” Yet in another place he sings that the Lord Arunachala could not be espied by Brahma and Vishnu who in ancient times were searching hither and thither wearily. Whereas Sambandar promises that Arunachala destroys His devotee’s bodily sense, in one of his decads Sundarar declares that only those who have let go of their attachment to the body can experience Him.

## MANICKAVACHAKAR

O Lord, the day you claimed me as Thine own,  
You coveted my body, spirit and belongings.  
My Lord of three eyes, can then any ill befall me.  
Whether you bless me or abandon me,  
That is Thy responsibility, not mine.

– *Tiruvachakam*

Oh Arunachala! As soon as Thou didst claim me,  
My body and soul were Thine.  
What else can I desire?  
Thou art both merit and demerit.  
Oh my life! I cannot think of these apart from Thee.  
Do as Thou wilt then, my beloved,  
But grant me only ever-increasing love for Thy feet.

– *Five Hymns on Arunachala, (Necklet of Nine Gems).*

The above two verses were composed at two different ages. The first one was composed about third century A.D., and the other in the beginning of the twentieth century. Although they were composed at different times, they convey the same sense. While Bhagavan Ramana was residing in the caves on the hill and later at Sri Ramanasramam, some of the devotees used to recite selections from *Tiruvachakam*. Bhagavan Ramana would listen with rapt attention to those recitations and his whole frame would melt, with tears gushing down his eyes. Ramana used to be immersed in deep *samadhi* and when people had *darshan* of him, some used to wonder whether any devotion could be felt by a person sitting like a statue. But when they saw Bhagavan's state when he heard *Tiruvachakam* being chanted, they changed their opinions, and with great reverence they would exclaim that here was the very embodiment of devotion.

It is said that those whose hearts do not melt on reading *Thiruvachakam*, will melt at nothing.

Manickavachakar is also known as Thiruvadhavoorar as he was born in Thiruvadhavoor near Madurai. As a young man he was so brilliant that the King Arimardhana Pandyan made him his Chief Minister. Manickavachakar was also a great devotee of Siva and he prayed that the Lord alone should be his *Guru* and give him initiation. He accepted the post of Chief Minister as he thought that it would help him visit sacred temples dedicated to Siva.

Once he was travelling to coastal Chozhanadu with gold and jewels to buy horses for his army. On the way when he was passing by a place called Thiruperundurai, now known as Avudayar Koil, he saw there sitting in the shade of a *kurunda* tree, an old, holy man. Manickavachakar stopped there and was accepted as disciple by the holy man who was none other than Siva. As ordered by his Master he spent all the treasures he had brought in building a Siva temple there.

Hearing this, the King was enraged and imprisoned Manickavachakar. Lord Siva, in human form brought the horses to the King, but they all turned into foxes and created confusion in the city by their howling. The King released his Chief Minister from prison, but accused him of practising black magic.

That night there were floods in the river. The next day, Siva in the form of a young man was helping an old woman do her share of work in building a dam. The king Arimardhana Pandyan struck him for loitering about lazily instead of working, and the entire crowd gathered there including the king, as also the animals, birds, the trees and the entire universe received the stroke, and the consequent mark of the stroke could be seen on everyone's person. Lord Siva then revealed

Himself and asked the king to allow Manickavachakar to devote his life to the worship of his beloved God. Manickavachakar composed *Thiruvachakam* and *Thirukovaiyar*, both literary treasures of the Tamil language.

Of the four saints, Manickavachakar alone visited just seven places sacred to Siva and sang in glorious terms about Lord Siva presiding in these holy places. Of these, Arunachala stands foremost, for, here he composed Tiruvembavai, the most popular of his compositions. Though the four poet-saints have sung about the Lord residing at various shrines, yet when they praise Arunachala, they reach the summit of devotion and take the reader along with them. It is thrilling to read Manickavachakar's songs wherein he speaks of Arunachala as a lover would of his beloved.

The special place Manickavachakar's poetry has in devotional literature is perhaps due to the fact that he brings to his relationship with Arunachala a very personal, private and may we say, even a domestic dimension. Every activity is mentioned as part of his worship of the Lord.

The first song in *Tiruvachakam* is *Siva Puranam*. In this he hails Arunachala as the hill that bestows unceasing bliss; in yet another composition he says: "Hail to Arunachala our Lord, darling of my eye, ocean of nectar." When he sees Arunachala, the fountain of love gushes forth in his heart. He is there for us to behold Him with great joy and pleasure. The very name Arunachala, Annamalaiyar is a word in Tamil which is the only word that contains all the epithets in it. Manickavachakar uses superlative language when he describes Arunachala and His glory.

Now we will see how Arunachala has claimed His beloved Manickavachakar. He hails Arunachala as a hill of ruby. He prays to Him to grant the boon of melting at His name. In

another composition he says, “O flawless hill, how come you have claimed me as your own.” And elsewhere with great love, he exclaims, “O hill, you have given yourself unto me.” Thus Manickavachakar lovingly says that Arunachala is his own valuable treasure. Further he praises Arunachala as “Hill of grace who could not be reckoned by the primal gods, the great hill containing all sacred incantations.” And in such endearing terms he praises Arunachala.

Manickavachakar and others, either to convey to us that we shall carry out our daily chores with our minds on God, or to tell the world that we worship him through work, have entitled their songs with the daily duties that people perform.

For example the simple act of picking flowers and leaves for the morning worship of the Lord has inspired Manickavachakar to compose twenty verses and call it *Thirupoovalli* (picking flowers for the beloved). *Chunnum* is a herbal powder which is used for bathing. This powder consists of various herbs which are powdered and mixed together. Following this tradition Manickavachakar invites us to partake in the act of pounding and preparing this *chunnum* for anointing the Lord using this powder. This composition is called *Thiruporchunnum*. In those days the kings used to be awakened with songs. Following this practice he composed the decad, *Thirupalliyezhuchi* to awaken the divine within us and *Thiruponnoosal* to make the mind to merge with the Lord. The above two compositions viz., *Tirupalliyezhuchi* and *Tiruponnoosal* are usually recited in the morning and in the night respectively, in Siva temples. Manikkavachagar also named some of his compositions after games, the dances of the ancient Tamils.

In the composition *Thiruthellanam* he says with great feeling that the whole world will laugh when they hear

that Arunachala who was dear for Vishnu and Brahma and all other *devas* chose him to serve and sing about Him. Young mothers would put their children on the cradle, and gently swinging it sing lullabies to put their infants to sleep. Manickavachakar too sings lullabies for his Lord (*Tiruponnoosal*). In one of the verses he says, Lord Arunachala, who cannot be espied by Brahma and Vishnu, has granted him (the poet), a creature meaner than a mongrel, the city of liberation.

In his *Tiruvachakam*, Manickavachakar has praised the Lord Arunachala who bestows love more than one's own mother in more than one hundred and fifty verses. It is impossible to mention all of them. We therefore restrict ourselves to a few verses.

Come all ye, let us surrender to the Lotus Feet  
of the Lord which Vishnu sought in vain

*(Tirupadayatchi)*

O my heart, tell me, can we repay the grace with  
which the Lord claimed me? The Lord, who even  
the primal gods, Brahma and Vishnu could not reach.

*(Pandaya Nanmarai)*

We are not frightened of anything, but we are  
frightened of those who do not surrender to the  
Feet which could be reached even by the mighty  
boar (Vishnu) when it delved deep into the earth.

*(Accha Pathu)*

O butterfly, tell my Lord how once, even the  
great Brahma and Vishnu were disappointed when  
they could not reach the bounds of my Lord  
Arunachala, but He in His boundless mercy has  
made me proud by placing me on a high pedestal.

*(Tirukothumbi)*

When Manickavachakar visited Tiruvannamalai he must have seen the girls dancing, singing and playing. There is a particular game in which they sing folk songs, each ending with the word *Ammanai*. The poet who saw everything through the eyes of devotion must have taken the cue from the songs and the Lord knowing his devotee's intentions must have inspired him to sing *Tiruvammanai* consisting of twenty verses. In the eighth verse he describes how the Lord in that ancient city of Madurai blessed the old lady Vandhi and in the tenth verse he hails Annamalaiyar as Ardhanariswara and tells us how Arunachala with a single glance made him a subservient.

In the Tamil month of *Margazhi*, (December-January) during the ten days preceding *Ardra* i.e., when the star *Ardra* is ascending, it is customary to sing *Tiruvembavai* and only *Tiruvembavai* in all the Siva temples in Tamilnadu. During that month even today, not minding the early morning mist and cold, the devoted after bath go into the streets chanting *Tiruvembavai*.

Manickavachakar when he visited Tiruvannamalai, chose a quiet spot on the western side of the hill and began to take in the beauty of Arunachala. During that time, it was *Margazhi*, and he must have seen young girls playing, gamboling and swimming in the tanks brimming with water filled by bounteous rain. While they were going to take their dip they must have visited the houses, waking up their friends by singing folk songs. With great beauty he converts the simple acts of the country damsels with a beautiful collection of twenty verses in which he beseeches the slumbering souls to wake up and get ready to unite with beloved Arunachala.

The mind of a devotee when it hears the name of the beloved Lord Arunachala even casually mentioned by

passers by in the street just melts and he forgets his surroundings and sheds copious tears. But alas, the same mind, instead of remaining in the same state goes in the way of the wayward senses. The poet says, “We shall install the beginningless and endless effulgent column of Arunachala in our heart forever and swim in that eternal sea.” Further, in the same composition, he points out the vagaries of the human mind. The devotee’s mind declares that all its love are only for the Lord at all times, be it day or night. Yet, it goes after worldly pleasures. Again in another verse he says, “The beloved’s mind hails the Lord as its father, nectar and embodiment of bliss; yet after a few moments the mind falls back into the dark chasm of ignorance. Even if we cry with great fervour, my Lord Siva, yet we do not realize His true glory and remain inert.” Manickavachakar with great wonder says, “How powerful is *maya* that it draws the sincere mind which craves for union with the Lord, back into *samsara*.

In the same composition, i.e., Tiruvembavai, he hails Annamalaiyar as older than the oldest, later than the latest. In another verse he asks, “Which is His kingdom, what is His name, who are His relatives, who are strangers to Him? Although He does not have any particular place or name which can be called His own, the poet says Arunachala is friend of the needy, the poor, for, like a servant, He hearkens to our call and does not hesitate to grace our homes and gives unto us His lotus feet.

## CHENDANAR AND THIRUMALIGAI THEVAR

Saint Chendanar composed *Thiruppallandu* which is one of the *Panchapuranas* along with *Thevaram* and *Thiruvachakam*. He has described in moving terms the scene of Nataraja of Chidambaram coming in a procession on the streets and his seeing Him as Arunachala. In this poem, he wishes long life to Arunachala, who having eluded Brahma and Vishnu, filled his whole being like nectar. Meditating on Arunachala with tears in his eyes and a heart choked with emotion, it is said that Saint Chendanar brought the temple car to its position all by sheer power of his devotion.

Thirumaligai Thevar's *Thiruvisaipa* is also one of the *Panchapuranas* wherein he sings, "I bow in surrender to Arunachala who spreads His Effulgence throughout the Universe".

## THIRUMOOLAR

Thirumoolar wrote the *Thirumandiram* which is the tenth *Thirumurai*. In the second *tantra* (canto) of the eighth chapter he speaks of the story of Brahma and Vishnu searching for the head and feet of Siva and relates it to *advaita* philosophy. Thirumoolar is said to have lived 3000 years, composing 3000 songs during that time, i.e., one song per year. *Tirumandiram* by Tirumoolar is a treatise on *Saiva* philosophy, *yoga*, devotion and many other subjects dealing with the worship of Siva and *jnana*.

The story goes that Thirumoolar was Lord Nandi's disciple and that he entered the dead body of a cowherd

called Moolan for the sake of his grieving family and cows. He came to be known as Thirumoola Nayanar. His descriptions of Siva in the form of the column of brilliant light possess the authenticity of actual inner experience. It is as if the great Thirumoolar saw in his mind's vision the whole episode of the search of Brahma and Vishnu. He describes the column of effulgence as embracing (*alinganam*) all creation before rising to its heights. This is *advaita* in its 'purest form'.

He says the *devas* do not know the qualities of Arunachala. When a devotee surrenders himself to Him, Arunachala gives Himself in return, that is to say, the compassionate Lord, if we give ourselves to Him, He gives Himself unto us. Alas the great gods, Brahma and Vishnu, the Lords of the five elements and *devas* do not realize this simple truth. The same idea is reflected in Sri Muruganar's composition on Sri Ramana, *Ramana Sannidhi Murai*. In *Kirti Tiruvagaval* Sri Muruganar says, "Lord Ramana gives himself entirely unto the devotee who asks for nothing, not even liberation." Thirumoolar's *Thirumandiram* gives us many rare and incisive insights into Arunachala, for he says, "Arunachala transcends matter, animate beings, form, atom, the suns, the moons and the cosmos." Further he says, "Vishnu who transcended the worlds within two steps and Brahma who in his arrogance thought that he could achieve anything by the power of the Vedas, could not reach the boundaries of the effulgent column of Arunachala. How then can they attain His nature?"

Thus, only great saints like Thirumoolar can describe the innate glory of Arunachala as they have experienced within themselves.

## NAKKEERAR, KABILAR, NAMBI ANDAR NAMBI AND KARAİKAL AMMAIYAR

Those who are acquainted with Tamil literature cannot but be familiar with the names of Nakkeerar and Kabilar. The major portion of Tamil literature are termed as eighteen upper works and eighteen lower works. The former consists of *Pathu Pattu* and *Ettu Thogai*. In the compositions of *Pathu Pattu*, there are certain texts called *Atru Padai*. They is so called because these compositions lead a poor poet to a generous king or an ardent devotee to his personal god. The first composition in *Pathu Pattu* is *Thirumurugatruppadaï*. The author is Nakkeerar. He belongs to the third *sangam* period which places him in the period between 1500 B.C. to 200 A.D. His works are included in the eleventh *Thirumurai* wherein he writes about Arunachala in glowing terms. In the part called *Thiruveengoymalai Ezubadhu*, he says that Arunachala is *pranava* sound in material form, that Brahma and Vishnu, taking the form the boar and the swan could not find.

Poet Kabilar was a *brahmin* sage belonging to the *Sangam* times. His works are included in the *Agathinai* literature. He has strung together a garland of praises for Lord Arunachala in the eleventh *Thirumurai*. He sings thus, "If Arunachala who occupies all space, fills my mind and dims my intellect, does not grant me His grace, I shall surely face extinction".

Nambiandarnambi set the *Thevaram* to music. In his *Thiruppanniyar Thiruvirutham*, he lyricises over Arunachala who could not be measured (i.e. found) by Vishnu and Brahma.

Karaikkal Ammaiyar has, in her work *Thiruvandhadi* hailed Arunachala in glorious terms.

## V

# ARUNACHALA: THE BELOVED OF SAINTS

MANY ANCIENT SAGES FROM THE Himalayas and other sacred places of India came to Arunachala, either on pilgrimage or to live in its vicinity. Some of these *rishis* were Pulastya, Vasishta, Marichi, Agastya, Dadichi, Nagana, Brigu, Atri, Jabali, Jaimini, Jamadagni, Bharata, Pipalata, Kasyapa, Kumudha, Varsha, Vibandaga, Vyasa, Mandavya, Matanga, Kukshi, Mandakarni, Chandilya, Maduchandas, Gargeya, Apasthamba, Romesamuni, Bhargava, Bharadwaja, Swetaketu, Koundinya, Pundarika, Valmiki, Narada, Vahini, Bodayana, Mrukandu, Durvasa, Gangavarya, Devadatta, Sushruta, Visravas, Mangalya, Rishyasringa, Ekapada, Krouncha, Angiras, Pathanjali, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara, Sanatsujata, Maithreya, Pushpajith, Nidaga, Parasara, Vaisampayana, Yajnavalkya, Aswalayana, Anantakaruna, Amalakupriya and Kapila. Of these Valmiki and a few others gave us the *itihisas*; Vyasa, Narada and some others gave us the *puranas*; Apastamba, Bodayana, Yajnavalkya, Parasara, Jaimini and others gave us portions of the Vedas. Pipalatha and others gave us the Upanishads. All these great sages were attracted by the magnetic power of Arunachala.

In the following pages we shall speak of saints who came to Arunachala to serve him and his devotees.

## DEIVA SIGAMANI DESIKA PARAMACHARYA SWAMIGAL

Some 700 years ago, Deiva Sigamani Desika Paramacharya lived in a cottage on the eastern side of Arunachala. He worshipped Arunachala and spread *Saivism* through his followers. Hearing of his greatness, a certain king came to see him. Just then his horse was bitten by a snake and died. The king was upset, but his minister persuaded him to meet the sage. When the saint heard about the horse, he came out, and praying to Arunachala, tapped the horse's body with his cane and brought it back to life. The saint asked the king to undertake the renovation of the Arunachaleswara temple. The king inscribed the story of the miracle performed by the saint on the south wall of the third *prakara* of the temple. The saint's *samadhi* is outside the limits of Tiruvannamalai town and is now the *Gurumurtham* of Kunrakudi Aadinam. It is known as *jeeva samadhi*. Kunrakudi Aadinam was established at Tiruvannamalai and then shifted to Piran hills. Now it is situated at Kunrakudi. The heads of the *mutt* bearing the title, 'Kunrakudi Aadinam' still pay their respects to their first *Gurumurtham* in Tiruvannamalai. Bhagavan Ramana stayed at *Gurumurtham* for six months in the year 1897 before shifting to the mango grove nearby.

### MANGAIYARKARASI

This celebrated saint had a deep love for Arunachala and his devotees. When the people of Tiruvannamalai suffered from water scarcity once, the saint constructed a large tank here. She also constructed a *mantapam* in the third *prakara* of the temple so that Arunachaleswara Himself could watch the Holy Beacon being lit on top of

the hill. This is known as the *deepa darshana mantapam*. She also made offerings of jewels to the Lord. She thus gave away all her wealth to Arunachaleswara and attained divine grace on her death. Her generous deeds are lauded in inscriptions on the walls of the temple *prakara*.

## PANI PATHRASWAMI

In the 13th Century A.D. many saints lived in Tiruvannamalai. Saints like Deivasingamani Paramacharya Swamigal, Mangaiyarkarasi, her brother and Pani Pathraswami constructed *mutts* in and around the temple and worshipped Arunachaleswara through songs and selfless, exemplary service.

Pani Pathraswami was one of the many saints attracted to Arunachala and ordained by the Lord to spread His glory. The real name of Pani Pathraswami was Giri Deva. When he wished to take water to the temple, the water from the *Brahma Thirtham* came of its own accord to his hands in the form of a vessel. Hence he came to be known as Pani (Water) Pathra (Vessel) Swami. It is said Arunachaleswara gave him a gold coin everyday to help him feed His devotees. The saint spoke of the glory of Arunachaleswara and bade others also do the same.

## AZHIA VRADAM POONDA TAMBIRAN

There was a *mutt* belonging to the *Thondaimandala Vellalars*, where the thousand pillared hall of the temple now stands. The head of the *mutt*, Azhiavradam Poonda Tambiran lived here, worshipping the *Sivalinga* and spreading *Saiva* philosophy. The *Sivalinga* he worshipped was the *samadhi* of a *jnani*.

When Krishnadevaraya of Vijayanagar wished to build the thousand pillared hall in the temple, he purchased the *mutt* from the Vellalas and gave them lands to build another *mutt*. Inscriptions inside this hall describe this event. Not wishing to move the *linga*, the construction workers raised the floor around the *linga*.

The *linga* came to be situated at a lower level and was called the *Pathala Linga*. A raised platform was built around it with descending steps for worship. The head of the *mutt*, Azhia Vradam Poonda Tambiran continued to live there worshipping the *linga*. It was in the *Pathala Linga* cellar that Sri Ramana Maharshi, during the initial months of his life at Tiruvannamalai sat for a few months, away from the attention of the world, without caring for basic human needs like food and oblivious to the biting stings of insects like mosquitoes and scorpions.

## DAKSHINAMURTI SWAMI

He was called Arunachalam because he was born by the grace of Arunachaleswara. He did not speak until he was five. An ascetic said to his parents, “Talk to him, he will speak now”. The boy’s parents asked him why he did not speak until then, to which he spoke words of deep spiritual significance, “I remained quiet — i.e., I had no mental activity”. The holy man then asked him “Who are you”? The boy replied “You are me, I am you”. The holy man praised the boy for his high spiritual state in which he felt one with all creation.

While performing many miracles in his life Arunachala Swami also spread the philosophy of *advaita*. When his parents grieved over the disappearance of their second son, he consoled them by pointing out to them

that they did not grieve for the separation of their sons from their previous births, so why should they grieve for a son from this birth. Thus did Arunachala Swami reveal the secret of life and death.

The parents of a boy who was born through the grace of Arunachaleswara named him Arunachala. As they were *Vaishnavites*, other people of their sect compelled them to change the name to Venkatachalam. The parents consulted Arunachala Swami who answered that Arunachalam was Venkatachalam. He explained that the first letter of Arunachalam referred to Hari (Vishnu), the second letter referred to Lakshmi, the third to Narayana and the word *achalam* referred to Tirumala.

Arunachala Swami came to be known as Dakshinamurti Swami. He lived in Tiruvarur. Once someone asked him how he managed to be everywhere. The swami replied that if the questioner felt that there was no difference among 'I' 'they' 'he' 'she' 'this' and 'that', then he would become the omnipresent Supreme.

On another occasion he lay on the steps of a tank under the scorching sun. When a friend begged him to rest in the shade of a tree, he replied that if the eternal soul can get protection from the transient shade, then the steps of the tank can be cooled by the mirage water. The significance of these words was explained by another holy man.

## EESANYA JNANA DESIKAR

Kandappa Desikar belonged to the Vellala community of Vellore. Even though very young, he possessed a keen intellect and lofty ideals. After visiting holy places he reached Tiruvannamalai, where he sat near the Eesanya *linga* and meditated on Arunachaleswara. He came to be

known as Eesanya Jnana Desikar. When devotees brought him gifts, he bade them offer it to Arunachaleswara.

Two tigers sat close to him always. When devotees came to see him, he would ask the tigers to go into the nearby forest.

A temple has been built over his *samadhi* and ritual worship is still being performed there.

## AMMANI AMMAIYAR

The Northern *gopuram* of the Arunachaleswara temple is known as Ammani Amman *gopuram*. Ammani Ammaiyar lived a holy life even from her early years and came to live in a *mutt* at Tiruvannamalai in answer to a call from Arunachala. She had the gift of curing diseases by giving holy ash. In order to raise funds for the renovation of the North side *gopuram*, she travelled widely and collected money from rich people and completed the renovation work.

It is an evidence of the supreme grace of Sri Arunachaleswara that a young woman in those ancient days could accomplish so much through sheer love of the Lord. Her *samadhi* is near the Eesanya *linga*. A temple has been built over it.

## VANNACHARABAM DANDAPANI SWAMIGAL

Of the many devotees of Arunachala from Tirunelveli, Vannacharabam Dandapani Swamigal was one. He visited all the holy places in the south dedicated to Siva and then finally came to live at Tiruvannamalai. He lived in Eesanya *mutt* and then in the Gopurathilayanar (Subramanya) temple *mantapam*. He renovated the Gopurathilayanar temple and started ritual worship there. He later went to live in the caves on the hill and composed thousands of devotional songs.

## ANGAPRADAKSHINAM ANNAMALAI SWAMI

He was thus called because all his life he worshipped Arunachala by performing *angapradakshina* (that is rolling on the ground in an anticlockwise direction) round the hill. He had immense love for the pillars of *Saivism* — the sixty-three *Nayanmars* (*Saivite* saints) and built a *mutt* in their name. When the idols of the sixtythree saints are taken in procession on the sixth day of the *Karthikai deepam* festival, they receive the homage from representatives of the *mutt*.

### IRAI SWAMIGAL

It is amazing to think of the various ways in which devotees express their love of Arunachala. They renovate His temple, beautify it, create gardens around it, repeat His name, offer feasts to His devotees, spread His Glory far and wide, go round the hill, do *angapradaksina*, or remain silent and immobile, resting in the divine. One of these devotees, Irai Swami had a novel way of worshipping Him. As it is believed that there are 1008 *lingas* under each step round the hill, he would recite Arunachala's name 100 times for each step he took while circumambulating the hill. After doing these for many hours, he would finish going round the hill and continue the chanting of the name 1008 times the next day, from where he had left off. Many devotees gathered around him to watch this.

He referred to himself as a beast and would say, "This beast is searching for food (*irai*), this beast has had food" etc. Hence he came to be known as Irai Swami. If he saw anyone wasting time in idle talk, he would rebuke them, saying that time was precious, and that they would reach heaven if they repeated the Lord's name ceaselessly.

Devotees requested him to go to Avaloorpettai from where he worshipped Arunachala till he reached the Lord's lotus feet.

## SADAICHI AMMAIYAR

Arunachala appeared to Sadaichi Ammaiyaar in her dream and bade her come to Tiruvannamalai. She stayed in a *mutt* in town. She worshipped the four *Saivite* saints, making garlands, going round the hill and spent all her life chanting Arunachala's name.

## AZHAGANANDA ADIGALAR

This devotee renounced the world as a very young man. He established many *mutts* in different places. He spread *Saiva* philosophy and the twelve scriptural works by the *Saivite* saints containing hymns to the Lord. He established a *mutt* on West *gopuram* street which is known as Azhagananda Adigalar *mutt*. He bade people read hymns written by saints and shed tears listening to them.

## GUHAI NAMASIVAYAR

It is indeed mysterious and awe inspiring to discover the effect and power Arunachala had over *jnanis* of the highest order, leave alone His influence over vacillating human minds. *Jnanis* who were known for their fortitude and *advaitic* experience were drawn to Arunachala. One such person was Guhai Namasivayar. A fifteenth century saint from Karnataka he came to Tiruvannamalai but refused to enter the temple or bow down to Lord Arunachala out of loyalty to his *Guru*. However Annamalaiyar converted him and made him His own. The

saint's miracles due to his devotion to Annamalayar are well known and testify to the omnipresence of the Lord. Once Namasivaya happened to bring back to life a dead sheep. Coming to know of this, some mischievous youths wanted to test him. They put a healthy man on a bamboo pad and had him pretend to be dead and took him to Guhai Namasivaya. They prayed to him to bring the man back to life. Namasivaya, through his powers knew their trick, got annoyed and declared that the man was truly dead. The youths to their consternation found that the man on the pad had died indeed. Guhai Namasivaya was so annoyed that he composed a *venba* in Tamil which says, "This (Tiruvannamalai) is a place for wicked men, where killings go on without being questioned and only rogues survive". He wanted to end the *venba* thus, "it is to be destroyed by my curse". But suddenly Arunachala caught him around the neck, saying "Oh, how can you say that when I am here". Hearing this Guhai Namasivaya changed the last line to, "The place that can never be destroyed is Tiruvannamalai".

When Guhai Namasivaya realized that his physical existence was coming to a close, he declared, "Do not take this body to be 'I'. I am not this body". He then entered the *samadhi* built for him.

Guhai Namasivaya composed three poems, two in quatrains on Annamalayar namely *Arunagiri Andadi*, *Thiru Arunai Thani Venba* and the third, *Sara Prabandam*. All the above show his extreme onepointed devotion to Arunachala. He advises, "Before this body withers with age, before the eyes lose their sight, before Yama comes to take away thee, Oh mind, walk towards Sonagiri. It is not easy to get His grace. Even the gods (Brahma and Vishnu) could not see

Him. Can we experience His grace without pining for it?” His poems combine in them excellent poetry with deep religious fervour. His *venba* metre has a charming rhythm and cadence of its own. Some of the verses set forth in glowing terms the transcendental glory of Arunachaleswara. Some sing of the futility of all other merits devoid of devotion to the Lord of Arunagiri and some other verses dwell upon the great variety of boons that Annamalayar showers upon His devotees. He shows the Lord of Tiruvannamalai to be the sole refuge and the only source of succour for man.

Two of the illustrious disciples of Guhai Namasivaya were Virupakshi Thevar and Guru Namasivayar. The former lived just above the cave of Guhai Namasivayar. At his death, his body naturally reduced to ashes. After about four centuries (in the beginning of the 20th century) these ashes were made into the form of a *linga* by Bhagavan Ramana himself during his stay at Virupakshi cave.

## GURU NAMASIVAYAR

Guru Namasivayar earned the esteem of his Master by his unswerving loyalty to his *Guru* and was sent to Chidambaram. Like his master, Guru Namasivayar has also composed *Annamalai venba*. The collection of 100 stanzas in *venba* metre shows the poet’s devotion to Arunachala. The first stanza contains the oft quoted phrase, “Annamalai who beckons *jnanis*”.

Guru Namasivayar in these stanzas, extols the glory of Arunachala and describes how He blessed him and how much He loved His devotees. This hill, he says, changes all the future lives of its devotees and cuts asunder the knots of the birth cycle of those who surrender at His lotus feet. Further, he asserts that the hill removes the darkness of

ignorance and to His beloved children the Lord reveals His *jjyoti* form. The hill manifests for the sole purpose of granting *mukti*. Lord Arunachala sports with His devotees and lives in their hearts. The power of Arunachala is greater than all other places sacred to Siva. It serves as medicine for the disease of birth and death. Arunachala penetrates deep into the hearts of His devotees and from head to foot He spreads Himself. For those who worship unswervingly he bestows His grace always. He is dearer than one's own mother.

A comparative study of the verses of the master and those of his disciple, shows that Guru Namasivayar's verses reveal his one pointed devotion to Arunachala. For him Arunachala is the one God. He says that we have heard poets singing about other gods taking birth. But we have never heard of Arunachala ever undergoing the cycle of births and deaths. Further he asks, of what use is worshipping other gods, when there is Eternal Arunachala to grant us *mukti*.

## ARUNAGIRINATHAR

Saint Arunagirinathar and Lord Muruga are inseparables like *Saivism* and Tamil. He lost his parents when young and was brought up by his sister living at Tiruvannamalai. He lived a life of pleasure. When his sister chided him for his conduct, he felt hurt and tried to kill himself by falling from the top of the Vallala Maharaja *gopuram* in the temple. Lord Muruga stopped Him and blessed him with spiritual knowledge. Arunagiri spent sometime in Tiruvannamalai meditating on the divine. He then visited all the temples of Lord Muruga in South India, worshipping him and composing hymns in his honour. He also visited Kadirgamam in Ceylon and defeated a *Vaishnavite* saint called Villiputhur Azhwar in theological

debate. He returned to Tiruvannamalai where he defeated the jealous Sambandandan in debate. He also converted King Prabuda Deva Raya from *Jainism* to *Saivism*.

The conniving Sambandandan incited the King to order Arunagiri to bring the *parijatha* flower. Accordingly Arunagiri left his body and took the form of a parrot and flew to heaven to get the *parijatha* flower. While he was flying back, the king incited by Sambandandan ordered Arunagiri's body to be burnt. When he smelt the spreading fragrance of the *parijatha* flower that Arunagiri had brought taking the form of a parrot, the king was filled with remorse for his misdeed and craved Arunagiri's forgiveness. Arunagiri said this was due to fate and asked the king not to grieve. He remained in the body of the parrot composing many devotional songs like *Kandaranuboothi*, *Kandarandadi* and *Vahuppugal*. The famous *Thiruppugazh* songs in praise of Lord Muruga contain over eighty hymns on Arunachala.

## VEERA VAIRAGYA MURTHY SWAMI

Veera Vairagya Murthy Swami established a *mutt* in a village called Seenandal near Parvata hill north of Tiruvannamalai. There he was immersed in deep meditation on Arunachala.

During the *Karthigai* festival in Tiruvannamalai, he resurrected a cow slaughtered by a Muslim king, He also made the stone Nandi (image of bull sacred to Siva) graze on grass. The Muslim king was amazed at his powers and praised the glory of Arunachaleswara.

When he came to Tiruvannamalai to perform these miracles, he was wearing sandals made of red hot iron. This explains his name Veera Vairagya Murthy, *vairagyam* standing for asceticism, staunch faith and strict austerities.

## JNANA PRAKASA SWAMIGAL

Born in Sri Lanka, Jnana Prakasa Swamigal came to Tamil Nadu and stayed in Chidambaram for sometime before coming to Tiruvannamalai where he spent his time in devotion to Arunachala, going round the hill, chanting His name and constantly meditating on the Lord. He wrote explanatory notes on the *Saiva* philosophy of Sivajnana Sidhiyar.

## SONACHALA THEVAR

Sonachala Thevar relinquished the position of *Thirupporur Mata Adinam* in order to live close to Arunachala. He went round the hill everyday without fail till he reached the Lord's feet.

## SIVA PRAKASA SWAMIGAL

Siva Prakasa Swamigal was born to Kumaraswami Pandaram who lived in Kanchi and was a great devotee of Arunachala. Sivaprakasa Swamigal became an adept at Tamil grammar and the treatise on the grammar of poetry, *yappu* and also *Saiva* philosophy. He stayed in Tiruvannamalai for sometime, going round the hill and composing the famous *Sonasaila Malai* consisting of one hundred songs glorifying Arunachala. In one song he says 'All hills have trees which help to build homes. But you take us straight to our (heavenly) home; In another song he says that the gracious Arunachala took the form of a hill so that His lovers may worship Him from wherever they may live around Arunachala. He describes the devotees going round the hill during the festival of lamps as a human garland for Arunachala.

## SADGURU SWAMIGAL

This saint from Kerala travelled all over South and North India, doing intense meditation at Kedarnath and Badrinath on the Himalayas. He finally came to Tiruvannamalai and found it much more helpful spiritually. He lived in the Banyan Tree cave on the eastern slopes of the hill, where, by the grace of Arunachala he continued his spiritual efforts.

## PAZHANI SWAMIGAL

Pazhani Swamigal renounced the world at a tender age and served Arunachala by maintaining the temple and the garden. He went into the town to beg and used the money to buy food and clothing for Arunachala's devotees. When disciples invited him he went to other cities too and continued his service. He was the first one to offer *biksha* to Bhagavan Ramana.

## BADRACHALA SWAMIGAL

Saint Badrachala Swami did not accept anything from anyone. He only ate what was available easily and what others did not want. He sat outside the temple in deep silence immersed in meditation on Arunachala.

## SRI SESHADRI SWAMIGAL

In 1870 in Kanchipuram, to a couple called Maragatammal and Varadarajan was born a male child whom they named Seshadri. When Seshadri was a young boy, his mother died contemplating on Lord Arunachala and said, 'He liberates you if you but think of Him'. This attracted Seshadri to Arunachala.

His family realized that Seshadri had rare spiritual qualities. He made strenuous spiritual efforts, reciting *mantras* in all kinds of places — at home, in the street, in the graveyard. As he progressed spiritually, he began to forget about himself. His family tried to make him live a worldly life. But Seshadri continued to go his own way. Once they shut him up in a room and locked the door. When later they opened it, they couldn't find him. They then realized his greatness. In 1889, at the age of 19, Seshadri left home to visit many places and finally reached Arunachala. From then on, till his *mahasamadhi* in 1929 he did not leave Arunachala. He kept wandering all over Tiruvannamalai like a crazed, possessed person.

## RAMANA AND SESHADRI

In 1896 Bhagavan Ramana came to Tiruvannamalai and sat immersed in deep *samadhi* inside the *Pathala linga* in the temple. There, urchins troubled Ramana by throwing stones at him. Seshadri shooed away the boys and sent some devotees to bring him out of the cellar. He sent spiritual seekers to Ramana. Sometimes he would refer to Ramana as a murderer, meaning he helped to destroy the ego. When Ramana was in Virupakshi cave, Seshadri told a disciple, "My salary is only a thousand rupees. There is someone there who earns ten thousand rupees. Should you not try and get at least ten rupees from Him?" He was of course speaking in spiritual terms.

Once Seshadri Swami said to Ramana, 'If one thinks of Arunachala one will get liberation'. Ramana countered with 'Who thinks? Who gets liberation?' Seshadri Swamy laughed heartily and said, 'That is what I don't know'.

Another time Seshadri Swamy sat for sometime before Ramana and then left saying, 'I don't know what this thinks'. A devotee told Ramana that everyone called Seshadri a mad man. Ramana smilingly replied that there were three mad men in Arunachala. One was Seshadri, the second was Arunachaleswara and the third was himself.

Seshadri performed many miracles to relieve the sufferings of his devotees.

As Thiruvankadar says, "They wander like ghosts, lie about like cadavers, eat like dogs the food thrown to them. They go round like the river, think of women as their mother, teach humility to all and are like children. They know the truth". This is an apt description of Seshadri Swamy.

When he attained the Lord's feet in 1929, Bhagavan Ramana was present when the *samadhi* was constructed and Seshadri Swami's holy body interred.

## VI

# ARUNACHALA — THE INSPIRATION OF MELLIFLUOUS TAMIL

THE Tamil language is hailed as being highly evolved, pure and unique. Of the languages like Latin, Sanskrit, Greek, the ancient hieroglyphic (Egyptian) script and Chinese which are considered the oldest, only Tamil is still widely spoken as a language. Chinese and Greek, although still spoken, have undergone significant changes and have lost their original form in course of time. Tamil alone retains many of the words used during the period 4000 — 3000 B.C. For Commerce, English, for Science, Latin, for Philosophy, German and for devotion, Tamil says the great linguist and Tamil scholar Aarumuga Naavalar.

Tamil Literature is rich in its variety and has been nourished by poets and kings belonging to the three main periods.

The first period is known as the first *Sangam* period. The first *Sangam* period extended over 4440 years and during this *Sangam* period, the country where Tamil reigned was spread over a large area, probably upto the present island of Mauritius. It formed a single continent by itself called Lemuria.

During the first *Sangam* period an association of writers of prose, poetry and drama was formed. The most famous poet of the first *Sangam* was Agastya. He composed *Agasthyam*, a treatise which laid down the rules for writing prose, poetry, and drama. This glorious period came to an end after a sea erosion.

The second *Sangam* period began with Kapaatapuram as its Capital. The leading poet of this period Tholkappier wrote the *Tholkappiam* which gives general rules of grammar and also deals with social ethics and conduct in life. Many of the words we use in our daily conversation can be found in *Tholkappiam*, which is the oldest available work.

Reference is made in *Tholkappiam* about Tiruvannamalai wherein it is called Anna Naadu. Tiruvannamalai was included in the region called Nadu Naadu. To give an example for combining two words Tholkappiar used the word *Annatheri*. This word refers to a lake (*yeri*) in Anna Naadu. Thus we know that Tiruvannamalai was known to poets of the second *Sangam* period. Tholkappiar uses a phrase, which commentators assert, refers to the beacon lit on Arunachala on *Karthigai* festival day. The second *Sangam* extended over 3000 years.

The end of the second *Sangam* came about when the Tamil country in which it was situated was engulfed by the ocean, as a result of which Sri Lanka got separated from India and the land mass south of Sri Lanka upto Mauritius submerged into the sea. To balance this, Andaman and Nicobar islands rose out of the sea. The third *Sangam* lasted for 1850 years and the most celebrated poets of this period were Nakkeerar, Avvaiyar, Thiruvalluvar, Kabilar, Baranar and others. The works of these writers are still available in parts and they are broadly classified as *Ettuthogai* and *Pathupaattu*.

Copious references are made in these works about Annamalaiyar. In works like *Kaar Naarpadu* and *Kalavazhi Naarpadu* and *Pazhamozhi*, *Karthigai Deepam* is mentioned. *Seevaka Chinthamani* by Thiruthakka Thevar, which is one of the five great epics, speaks about

Tiruvannamalai. Poets like Nakkeerar have written songs in praise of Annamalaiyar which we have already seen in an earlier chapter.

Now we come to the modern period.

In the past 500 years many smaller works on Arunachala have been written. Some of these are *Arunagiri Andhaadhi*, *Arunagiri Venba* and *Annamalai Venba*. The most famous of these is Saiva Ellappa Naavalār's *Arunachala Puranam*. This poet who lived 400 years ago translated *Lingapurana* and *Skandapurana* from the original Sanskrit into Tamil. This came to be known as *Arunachala Puranam*.

We shall now give a few selections from *Arunachala Puranam* as depicted by Saiva Ellappa Navalar.

Speaking of the glory of Arunachala, he says with great devotion that we have heard about all forms of *linga*. Where else does Ishwara (*linga*) abide in the form of a hill excepting in Tiruvannamalai. In another verse he says, "If Kanchi, Kasi and other sacred places are together placed in one pan of a balance, and Arunachala placed in another pan, the latter would go down." In yet another verse, he says that, "If a person contemplates committing the one of the five great sins at Arunachala, he is absolved of the sin, because the very thought of Arunachala is enough to redeem him." In a fourth verse he says that if a person goes in search of a place more sacred than Arunachala, or if he compares Arunachala with another holy place, all his good deeds and penance will be of no use to him. He speaks gloriously of *giri pradakshina*. Devotees who are well versed in Tamil should study this great work or at least selected chapters that speak of the glory of Arunachala. It shows the one pointed devotion for Arunachala.

Marai Jnanadesikar's *Arunagiri Puranam* is older than *Arunachala Puranam*, but is not as well known as this later work. So far sixty five works have been written about Arunachala. Fourteen of these are books by Saivathiru Sonachala Bharathiyar. All these works speak exclusively of Arunachala. Many other works mention Him. We do not know how many works about Him have been lost.

Two *sadagams* (containing 100 poems) about Arunachala called *Arunachala Sadagam* and *Annamalai Sadagam* exist. Also, there is a *sadagam* about *Unnamulai Amman*. *Arunachala Sadagam's* author Kancheepuram Sabapathi Mudaliar says, "You gave Brahma the work of creation and Vishnu the work of protection. You took upon yourself the task of destruction and gave me the task of praising you".

A *padigam* is a work containing about ten poems. Some of the sixty five works on Lord Arunachala are, *Tiruvannamalai Thiruvarul Padigams*, *Arunachaleswarar Varugai Padigams*, *Unnamulai Amman Varugai Padigam*, *Arunachala Aksharamalai* etc.

Works on Arunachala by Bhagavan Ramana shine like jewels among all works written in honour of Arunachala in any language to date and will remain so for ever. These are *Arunachala Aksharamanamalai*, *Arunachala Navamanimalai*, *Arunachala Padigam*, *Arunachala Ashtakam*, and *Arunachala Pancharatnam*. These are grouped together under the title, *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam*. We will speak of this in a later chapter.

That the hill would be the source of inspiration for thousands of years, right from the three periods of *Sangam* literature, to modern and future ones, must have been intuitively felt by Guru Namachivayar. It is therefore perhaps that he has described Arunachala in his *Annamalai Venba* as, "The hill that inspired Tamil".

# VII

## FESTIVALS

A number of festivals are celebrated in Tiruvannamalai, some for a few days and others lasting for just a day. To mark the sun's turning northwards, the *Utharayanam* festival is celebrated for ten days in the month of January. The quarrel between the Lord and Goddess and Saint Sundarar's efforts to reconcile their differences is celebrated as the *Thiruvoodal* festival. In this festival, the priests play the roles of the Lord, Goddess Parvati and Sundarar. The quarrel and reconciliation are vividly portrayed. This is the main attraction. The staging of this is done in the street named appropriately, Thiruvoodal street, very near the Arunachala temple. The same day also marks the day on which the Lord gave *darshan* to Nandi and sags like Bringhi.

Following the traditional practice, for a few days in a year, Arunachala goes in search of His devotees to various places. He visits small villages like Manalurpettai and Kalasapakkam in the month of January. When Arunachala starts for these villages, the temple opens around two in the morning and the day's *puja* is performed before the Lord's departure to these places. It is a great experience to be present at that time, alone with the Lord, without the disturbance of the crowds. The stillness of the place is striking and one can experience the profundity of meditation. For one who cares to be present on such occasions, the impression and the experience will last long and he will come to understand the power and grace of the Lord.

Then there is *Maha Sivaratri*, occurring in February-March. This is a very important, spiritually significant festival that re-enacts the story of Brahma, Vishnu and all other deities paying homage to the column of fire after the humbling of the pride of Brahma and Vishnu. At their request, Lord Arunachala, out of compassion takes the form of a *linga*. On the previous day itself a solemn atmosphere pervades the whole town and the temple. Since Tiruvannamalai is where *Saivism* began and flourished, *Maha Sivaratri* has a special significance here. The temple gates open around two in the morning on that day and after the initial *abhishekam* and *puja*, *laksharchana* (chanting the Lord's names one hundred thousand times) commences and continues till late afternoon. The temple is open the whole night with *pujas* at three hourly intervals, the first of which is held at six in the evening. People go for *pradakshina* throughout the day and night. Some do *pradakshina* continuously through the night, some, more than once, each according to his fervour. The true significance of *Sivaratri* was brought out by Ramana Maharshi on a *Sivaratri* day. When one of the *sadhus* sitting in Maharshi's presence requested Him to expound Adi Sankara's Dakshinamurti *stotra* (hymn), He said, "Yes, sit down". Devotees eagerly awaited the exposition, but Bhagavan maintained His usual posture and a steady silence. The clock ticked by and hours passed. There was spellbound silence. Everyone present was deeply absorbed within himself. With the break of dawn people began to regain their body consciousness. Bhagavan graciously asked the questioner whether he understood now the significance of the hymn. The *sadhu* and others nodded and made their grateful obeisance to the Master. Thus the real

significance of *Sivaratri* as demonstrated by Bhagavan Ramana was that, whatever the body might be doing on that day, the mind must merge into its source.

The *Vasantotsavam* festival in the months of April-May is observed to commemorate *Kamadahana*, the burning of Manmatha, the personification of desires. This festival also lasts for ten days.

Like *Mahasivaratri*, *Navaratri* too, which signifies the killing of the demon Mahishasura by Goddess Durga, has its origin here. While performing the *tapas* of atonement, Parvati had to fight the demon Mahishasura. When the demon tried to fight Her within the precincts of Tiruvannamalai she told him, "This is a sacred place where only sages and devotees of Arunachala can reside, therefore do not incur the wrath of my Lord and be burnt by Him. It is ordained that I should fight you and kill you". Hence she took him outside the borders of Tiruvannamalai. After a nine day battle she slayed him and returned to Tiruvannamalai triumphantly, where she continued her *tapas*. Thus the *Navaratri* festival although celebrated everywhere in a grand manner, has the greatest significance in Tiruvannamalai. It is celebrated in all other Amman temples in Tiruvannamalai. In the Durgai Amman temple the Goddess in the sanctum sanctorum is decorated as Mahishasura Mardini on the ninth day of the festival.

The *Dakshinayanam* festival lasts for ten days to mark the beginning of the sun's movement in the southern direction.

Like in January, when he visits Manalurpettai and Kalasapakkam, Arunachala goes to Keezhnathur in August-September on *Avani Moolam* day. This is observed to commemorate the incident of the Lord carrying mud for an old woman in return for a few pieces of *puttu* (a steamed dish

made out of flour and coconut). This took place in Madurai and is popularly known as “Puttuku mann sumandadu”.

There are also other festivals like, *Skanda Sashti*, *Thirukalyanam* and the ten day festival in honour of *Manikkavachagar*. Each festival in one way or another is related to Tiruvannamalai.

In the month of December-January, to commemorate Lord Nataraja’s darshan to various sages, the Ardra festival is celebrated. This also marks the day on which the Supreme Being appeared before the gods Brahma and Vishnu as a mighty column of fire.

These are some of the important festivals celebrated in the temple of Arunachaleswara. In fact about ninety days in a year, one or other of the festivals is celebrated in the temple, not to mention the minor ones which recur every Tamil month.

We now come to the oldest festival of South India which is also the most elaborate and most important — *Karthigai Deepam*. This festival falls in the Tamil month of *Kartigai* (November-December) when the star *Krithika* is on the ascendant and usually occurs on a full moon day. Before we describe the festival, let us take a glimpse into its antiquity. as we have mentioned elsewhere, in ancient Tamil literature, the oldest available work *Tolkappiyam* gives in concise verse form rules for Tamil grammar as well as other topics. Scholars agree that this work dates back to 2000 or 2500 BC. In one of the formulae Tolkapiyar in his treatise uses the phrase, “Like the lamp’s flame pointing upwards.” This phrase, says one of the commentators, refers to the beacon lit on the Annamalai Hill which burns brightly without flickering in the wind, and flares up towards the sky. In another epic *Seevakachintamani* written

by a Jain poet, Thiruthakka Thevar, the poet describes how people celebrated the *Karthikai Deepam* festival. In the other ancient Tamil literature of the *Sangam* period, the *Karthikai Deepam* festival is described vividly. In *Karnarpadu*, the poet in one of the stanzas describes how in the Tamil month of *Karthikai* during the time of the *Krithika* star, the lamps lit by people blossomed on earth, bringing rain in its wake. In another Tamil work, the *Kalavazhi Narpadu* dating back to the third *Sangam* period (after 1000 B.C), the poet says, “In the battle the blood oozing out from the dead soldiers’ bodies is like the red coloured flame of the lamps lit during *Karthikai deepam* festival”. In another *Sangam* work, *Pazhamozhi*, in stanzas ending in proverbs, one stanza ends with this phrase, “Like the beacon on the Hill.” This is a clear reference to the beacon lit on the holy hill of Arunachala.

In Sambandar’s *Tevaram*, while trying to raise a young girl Poompavai from the dead, he asks with deep feeling, “O Poompavai have you gone without seeing the ancient *Karthikai* festival?” Another song in *Tevaram* says that the Lord is verily the *Deepam* (lit during the *Karthikai* festival). There is a work on *Karthikai Deepam* consisting of a hundred stanzas praising the festival.

When Sri Muruganar asked Bhagavan Ramana about the significance of the *Karthikai Deepam* festival, Bhagavan composed a stanza of four lines in which he says, “The true significance of the *Karthikai Deepam* festival is to turn the intellect inwards and have it fixed in the Heart, thereby merging it with the indweller of the Heart”.

The *Deepam* festival is not confined to the temple alone, but involves the whole town. Once a small village, Tiruvannamalai has now grown into a small city. Yet the

charm and beauty of the *Deepam* festival remains the same as it was hundreds of years ago. In spite of modernity and the deteriorating quality of human life, the attraction of the *Deepam* festival will remain perennial.

The practices, rituals and ceremonies connected with the *Deepam* festival have endured for centuries. The routine and customary nature of the preparations made by the temple and civic authorities to gear up the town and the temple premises to receive visitors do not seem dull to the devotee of Arunachala. He might have witnessed the same preparations every year. But for him, every year it is a new experience. He notes with keen interest all the preparations. Changes are made keeping in mind the necessities of modern times. The old order gives way to the new, yet the devotion of the people has remained the same. In fact it has increased manifold, for amidst such noise and bustle, the devotee is able to inwardly experience peace and tranquillity, which one can obtain only in the environs of Arunachala.

The city prepares itself to receive lakhs of visitors on the *Deepam* day. In the temple the preparation for the festival begins with the *Pandalkal Muhurtham*, a simple ceremony held to mark the commencement of the various arrangements. Invitations are printed and distributed and arrangements for flowers, erection of thatched sheds for shops, and for providing resting places for the pilgrims are made. With great joy the devotee watches his beloved Lord's premises being cleaned. Voluntarily, devotees take upon themselves the task of removing the cobwebs and washing the enclosures around the sanctum sanctorum. Many of the gold and silver ornaments and vessels are polished under the watchful eyes of the temple authorities.

The copper cauldron in which the *Deepam* is lit is taken out and cleaned. It gives the devotee great pleasure to see the roads, particularly the four main streets running round the temple being repaired. The *giripradakshina* road is also well lit.

The true significance of all religious festivals is that the Supreme Being makes His presence felt during that time. The ardent devotion exhibited by devotees during the festival makes us feel His vibrant presence. During the observance of *Mahasivaratri* and the *Karthigai Deepam* festival, Arunachala opens up the heart of His beloved ones and reveals Himself as the Supreme Being. Shining as “I, I”, the sole occupant, seated in the centre of the Heart’s cave of his devotees, He supervises the proceedings of the entire festival.

On the first three days of the sixteen day festival the various deities are propitiated, while the last three days form a sort of epilogue to the lighting of the *Deepam* atop the Hill. Thus the main festival is of ten days’ duration only. The first day begins with the hoisting of the flag which ceremoniously ushers in the ten day festival. Called *dwajaroohanam* it marks the beginning of any temple festival. But the *dwajaroohanam* of the *Karthigai Deepam* festival is attended by large crowds. To describe the proceedings of the ten day festival, it is best to see it through the eyes of the devotee who possesses unsurpassing love and devotion for Arunachala. He is physically present whenever possible at each *abhisheka*, *puja*, procession, vehicle decoration etc. For the first day festival, that is at the *dwajaroohanam* which is usually early in the morning, he is there well before the event. He becomes absorbed in his Lord when the priests perform the *abhishekam* and decorate Him as if

He were their beloved child. The devotee settles himself in a secluded corner which is also a vantage point (known only to himself) where his eyes and ears do not miss anything. He sees the temple towers, the hill, and the pouring in of the faithful into the vast courtyard, first in twos and threes, then in tens and later in hundreds.

The decorated Lord with His entourage is brought out from the temple and placed in front of the flagpole from where He can witness the proceedings. At the appointed time the flag is hoisted to the *Vedic* chanting of the priests accompanied by *nagaswara* music, drums and cymbals. The priests then invite all the sacred rivers, all the deities, and all *rishis* to come and witness this occasion. After the *dwajaroohanam* ceremony is over, the Lord is taken around the main street along with other deities and then installed in the vast hall on the Southern side (in the third *prakara*), where He will remain during the following days giving *darshan* to the vast multitude of His children. From this event onwards a sublime frenzy possesses the beloved devotee. For him the next ten days pass by like a dream because he is in that state where food, sleep and other mundane activities matter little.

The rapid succession of events in each day's festival completely engrosses him. Arunachala has His ardent devotee in His tentacles. The devotee knows not the passing of days and nights. He visits the temple many times a day, listens intently to the *Vedic* chanting, watches the procession of idols and the *deepardhana*. The precision, beauty and grace with which each idol is mounted atop the vehicle by the bearers captures his heart. Particularly on the night of the fifth day festival, the Lord with His consort is taken on His mount, the *Rishaba* (the bull)

made of silver. Although it is repeated annually, the faithful gather in thousands in front of the *mantapam* to watch with great wonder the beautifully decorated Lord taken atop the *Rishaba* of majestic height and installed there with perfect co-ordination among the front side and rear side bearers of the palanquin. The eighth day festival is the day of the *Maha Ratham* (great chariot car) when Lord Arunachala and Goddess Unnamulai are taken round the main streets along with the other deities each in their own chariot. The smaller ones, that is, of Ganesa and Subramanya are taken in procession first, while the imposing and majestic chariot of the Lord is slowly hauled out at the appointed time from its usual place by thousands of men and women who have flocked just to participate in drawing their dear Annamalayar's *ratham*.

Two long chains made of iron links are connected to the chariot. Carpenters use wooden wedges as stoppers to check the speed on the downward slopes as well as to stop the *ratham*. The signal is given to lift the chain and the devotees pick up the chain. The men hold one side of the chain and the women the other. When the wedges are removed and the lever is applied at the back of the huge wheel to give the initial momentum, the second signal is given from the chariot. At once, men and women with great enthusiasm and cheering in unison "Hail to Annamalayar", draw the chariot with all their might. Slowly, inch by inch, the Lord's chariot moves and as the pull increases it gathers momentum. The sight of the huge chariot decorated fully with festoons, plantain stems and mango leaves, with Arunachala looking down graciously upon His children who have gathered there to pay their homage to Him and the Goddess, charms all hearts.

Particularly when the chariot is on the western street, it is evening time. The golden rays of the winter sun peep through the peaks of Arunachala Hill and bathe the crowd. The Hill on one side, the temple tower on the other and the Lord majestically riding the great chariot is a sight, fit for the gods to behold.

The tenth day festival marks the climax of the devotion which is dormant in the people's hearts. Their devotion triggered by the hoisting of the flag and increasing in intensity day by day, finally reaches its zenith on the tenth day, the day of the great *Deepam*. In the morning one can witness the *Bharani Deepam* as a prelude to the *Maha Deepam* or *Karthikai Deepam*. One can see people from all walks of life, from almost all parts of the State, some from other parts of India and yet a few from abroad, pouring into this small town. It is heartening to see that whatever the differences in language, culture or attitudes, they all come out of extreme love and devotion for Arunachala; to witness the *jyoti* that the Lord will reveal atop the Holy hill keeping His promise which He gave the gods, aeons ago.

On the previous night, the temple premises are cleared of people to prepare the temple for the *Bharani Deepam*. But a few regular devotees hide in niches or take shelter in one of the rooms within the temple. They manage to have bath in the middle of the night and enter the temple and sit at a place from where they can watch the *abishekam* and decorations. At about two in the morning, the usual ceremony begins. Then the *havan (yagna)* starts at the *Mahamantapam* (hall adjacent to the sanctum sanctorum) while the *abishekam* to Lord Arunachala commences. As the *abishekam* is performed with oil, herbal powders, turmeric, fruits, milk, curd, tender coconut, lime juice,

rice, *vibhuti*, sandalwood paste and gold, the whole temple becomes filled with devotees. There is a sea of humanity to witness this prelude to the *Karthigai Deepam*.

The floral decoration is done for the gold bedecked Lord. The curtain is then drawn back. The devotees with their breath indrawn have the first *darshan* of their Lord. He dazzles in all His splendorous glory. After the *puja*, *arati* is shown. The priest lights the huge chunk of camphor and waves it slowly up and down around the Lord in a circular motion. The twin bells peal forth, the drums beat and there is a sudden, spontaneous burst of thousands of voices, “Annamalayarukku Arohara” (Hail to Annamalaiyar). The refrain is taken up by others outside who hail their beloved Lord as if possessed. The *arati* is brought out and shown to the five lamps lit on the earthen plates for which *yagna* was performed.

The significance of *Bharani Deepam* is that the Universal Lord manifests as the five elements and during the evening He again becomes the One Entity and shines as *Tejolinga* when the *Deepam* is lit atop the Hill. (*Bharani* is one of the 27 stellar constellations through which the moon is purported to pass through successively each day and according to the Hindu almanac *Bharani* precedes *Kritika*). The earthen pot lamps are taken in procession around the temple. A fire torch is lit from these lamps and taken to the top of the Hill. A copper cauldron is kept ready on the summit filled with ghee, camphor and wick of cloth.

From morning till noon thousands throng the temple to have a glimpse of Annamalayar inside the sanctum sanctorum. At noon the deities are brought and installed at a small *mantapam* in front of the flag post. At about two in the afternoon devotees are let in. As soon as the

gate is opened, they rush forth to choose a vantage point. In the temple, *bhajan* singing goes on during the rest of the evening. Lakhs perform *giripradakshina*.

As the winter sun sinks below the horizon a hushed silence slowly pervades the whole atmosphere both within and outside the temple. Away from the temple on the streets, atop the houses, people intently gaze at the summit of Arunachala holding their breath for the great event to happen.

At Sri Ramanasramam there is a big gathering of worshippers. They sit around the portrait of Sri Bhagavan placed on the reclined chair on which He used to sit during His bodily lifetime. His stick and *kamandalu* (small water pot) are kept nearby. A small cauldron filled with ghee is placed in front of His portrait. The devotees sit around this chair and at the appointed hour all eyes are riveted at the top of the Hill. As time slowly inches towards six, a deep and eloquent silence slowly settles. There is stillness everywhere.

Exactly at 6 p.m. in the temple, the idol of Ardhanariswara is brought out and *aarati* is shown to the Lord. We may mention here, that this is the only occasion when the idol of Ardhanariswara is brought out just for a few seconds) A thundering blast of crackers signals to the men on the top of the Hill to light the beacon. As the moon rises in the Eastern sky, the first flame of the beacon bursts forth in the clear sky stirring emotions of ecstasy and devotion. Thousands, nay lakhs of voices hail in unison, "Hail to Annamalayar". Even the heretic and unemotional spectators are awed and moved by the sublime sight. The beacon burning brightly, the emotional hailing of the devotees filling the air, and the full moon

spreading its rays on the Hill, all create a magical spell and the vibrant presence of the Lord is powerfully felt in the innermost hearts of His devotees.

At Sri Ramanasramam the inmates and devotees, as soon as they sight the beacon, commence singing the melodious *Aksharamanamalai* (Marital Garland of Letters). The small beacon kept in front of Bhagavan's portrait is simultaneously lit. Here is an account of it by Smt. Suri Nagamma in her *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*:

In the afternoon from 3 O' clock onwards the devotees started making preparations for the festival. At the *asramam* the floor was decorated with lime and rice powder, floral designs, and mango leaf festoons. On such occasions the crowds which come to town for this festival usually visit the *asramam* in the morning as they go round the Hill; whereas in the evening it is mostly the *Asramites* who are present at the *Asramam* celebrations . . .

On this evening when Bhagavan went out the attendant placed his couch in the open space facing the summit. Opposite the couch a large shallow iron pan was placed on a high stool, ghee poured into it and a wick placed in the centre. We then sat in rows, the men on Bhagavan's right and the women on His left. The space in front of Bhagavan was filled not only with baskets of flowers but also with vessels of all sorts of sweetmeats and other preparations. When the ghee brought by the devotees was poured into the pan for kindling the light, the pan was overflowing. Camphor was then placed on the wick. The fragrance from the lighted incense sticks spread on all sides and created a holy atmosphere. Bhagavan sat lovingly looking at all the devotees and related to those near Him the significance of the festival of lights. He also pointed

out the exact place where the light was to be kindled at the top. Everyone was eagerly awaiting the lighting of the sacred beacon on the hill top. While His gaze was concentrated on the summit of the hill, ours was concentrated on His divine face, for it was just a reflection of Arunachala. With the firing of crackers at the temple, the light on the Hill top appeared. Immediately the *Akhanda Jyoti* (perennial light) opposite Bhagavan was lighted. The *brahmins* rose and chanted the *mantra*, “*Na karmana na prajaya dhanena*” and lit the camphor. After Bhagavan had partaken of a little fruit and some sweetmeats the rest were distributed amongst the devotees. Immediately after that the devotees divided themselves into two groups, singing the hymn *Aksharamanamalai*. After that, the five stanzas beginning with “*Karunapurana Sudhabhde*” in Sanskrit and its equivalent in Tamil were recited. Bhagavan sat resting His cheek on His hand, His characteristic pose. His face appeared as though mirroring His Self-illumination, what with His silence and His profound thought reflected on it. The moon rose in the East and cast its light on Him as though seeking its light from Him. . .

A comparison of the celebrations at Sri Ramanasramam, then and now, reveals that things have not changed at all. In fact Sri Bhagavan, residing in the hearts of His devotees watches His beloved Arunachala and the beacon.

After the beacon is lit the devotees start on their *giri pradakshina*. Some join the multitudes on the outer path, mind and gaze fixed on the beacon, while some, to be alone with Arunachala, take to the inner path. That night and successive nights the beacon leaves a strange and everlasting impression on the onlooker.

The *Deepam* burns for seven, nine, eleven or thirteen days and at about six every evening it flares up and burns throughout the night. During these few nights it is a rare experience to perform *giri pradakshina*. The *Deepam* is visible for miles around. There is a strange fascination about it. It keeps our sights riveted on it. To walk around Arunachala slowly with our attention fixed on the light, without thoughts is a unique experience. Nothing exists in the universe for the devotee, no stars, no moon, no sky, nothing except Arunachala. There is just the holy beacon and Arunachala. The individual merges in both.

Probably to witness this phenomenon, Arunachala Himself goes around the hill on the second day following the *Deepam*, when Lords from both the temples on the East and West come in a procession around the hill. They accept the worship due to them from their devotees.

This then is the glorious festival of *Deepam*.

# VIII

## ARUNACHALA: A SUBLIME MYSTERY

THE SACRED CITY OF TIRUVANNAMALAI with its temples, *ashrams* and *mutts* possesses a sublime mystery which is its true greatness. It is the abode of the Supreme, where sages and Self-realized beings walk the earth.

People residing within thirty miles of this holy city obtain liberation without any effort. This has been attested to by Bhagavan Ramana himself. In the *Arunachala Purana* this region is known as *maha mandalam* with Tirukoilur, Chengam, Polur and Gingee towns situated in the four directions, each within a distance of about twenty miles from Tiruvannamalai. Besides, the *puranas* say that God Indra and other deities ruling the four cardinal points have taken the form of hills in these four directions in order to worship Arunachala.

About sixty years ago there was a rule in Ramanasramam which forbade women remaining in the Ashram after 6 p.m. Protesting against this rule, an English lady Sujatha Sen went to the top of the hill, where she remained the whole night. As she implored Arunachala to help her in this hour of distress, she found herself being led gently into the interior of the hill by a mysterious force. She later reported seeing the whole cosmos inside the hill. People at that time did not give credence to her words. In 1970 a devotee named S.N.

Tandon went to the top of the hill and remained there the whole night. He too reported being taken into the hill and seeing many wonderful sights. His words corroborated the experience of Sujatha Sen. Others too have had similar experiences.

T. K. Sundaresa Iyer, an ardent devotee of Sri Rama, requested Bhagavan Ramana on his birthday, to enable him to have Sri Rama's *darshan*. For two whole hours, he had a splendid vision of Sri Rama, accompanied by Seeta, Bharata, Lakshmana, Shatrugna and Hanuman. When he later bowed to Bhagavan in gratitude, Ramana asked him if he knew where Ayodhya was and proceeded to explain that the *Vedas* locate it in the solar regions and say that it has eight corners and nine paths and the gods reside in it. Bhagavan said that Arunachala is also eight cornered with nine pathways, and that Arunachala is Himself Rama, Dakshinamurti and all other gods. One need not go to the solar regions to see Rama and Ayodhya. The *darshan* can be had here at Arunachala. Another time when the same devotee wished to see Brahma Loka, Ramana said that Arunachala was itself Brahma Loka.

Further, devotees have had strange experiences at Arunachala. In the Adi Annamalai temple at the Western foot of the hill, one can hear the sound of the *Vedas* recited if one puts one's ears to its walls.

Many people circumambulating the hill have seen *siddhas* and *rishis*. Once a group of *Vedic pandits* were doing *giri pradakshina* and chanting Sama Veda. Suddenly they saw tigers standing near the path. Terror-struck they stood like statues. After a few minutes the tigers receded into the nearby forest. The *pandits* recovered from their

shock and continued with their *pradakshina* and chanting. Later they reported the incident to Ramana. Ramana told them that those tigers were none other than *Siddha Purushas* who came eagerly to listen to their *Vedic* chanting and that they ought not to have stopped but continued nonchalantly. Probably, Ramana said that the tigers returned to the forest disappointed. On another occasion devotees while on their circuit heard *bhajans* sung by a chorus, but when they stopped and looked back they could neither see anyone nor hear the music. When they continued, the music again started. Bhagavan Ramana has said that he himself has seen *siddhas* in bright, astral bodies, i.e., in bright columns of light, going round the hill.

Even rational, well balanced devotees have affirmed that while going round Arunachala, they have had visions of hundreds of *rishis* performing *yagas* and that this vision continued for a few hours.

One night a devotee was going up the hill with Ramana when he heard the sound of wooden clogs. Seeing his fright, Ramana asked him if he too had heard the sound. When one goes round the hill especially at night, one has wonderful experiences which impress upon one the truth and power of Arunachala. On quiet cloudless nights one can sense the hill radiating power in silence to distant planets, to the galaxies far away and to worlds billions of light years away and receiving in return their adoration in silent tribute. This experience helps one to go beyond one's egoistic existence and merge with the Divine Consciousness.

The herbs growing on the hill sides are supposed to possess the power to satisfy hunger, slake thirst, cure

diseases, bring the dead back to life and turn base metals into gold. However a search for these herbs by people with base motives will be futile and they can be espied only by the most devoted. Devotees walking round the hill are benefited by the breeze wafting over the herbs.

Those who circumambulate the hill are liberated from the effects of their past sins. No danger visits them. Devotees regularly go round the hill. Many go round everyday. Truly does Arunachala, a loving mother to His children, protect His beloved devotees.

Wonderful is the name of Arunachala. Wonderful are His actions. Wonderful is the way He secretly absorbs His devotees unto Himself. He is ever a wonder and mystery.

## CAVES IN THE HEART OF ARUNACHALA

There are many caves on Arunachala. There are caves formed by two or three rocks which can accommodate only a single person and there are huge caves made of massive rocks where many people can live comfortably. Even a small cave can protect one from rain, cold and heat. Some have a small opening, enough only for a person to crawl through, but inside they are large. There are also mysterious caves which are beyond exploration. There are vast spaces inside the holy hill which contain delectable sights. There are pathways and gardens and waterfalls. The *puranas* say so and Bhagavan and other *yogis* have confirmed it. From these mysterious caves one can watch these wonderful sights and also see *siddhas* deep in *samadhi*, oblivious to the world, content with partaking and absorbing the abundant grace of Arunachala.

## IX

### CONCEPT OF ARUNACHALA

WE HAVE SEEN HOW ARUNACHALA HAS been worshipped by saints, scholars and simple folk alike. We also saw how the mode of worship is as varied as the worshippers themselves. Therefore no single spiritual concept can be attributed to Arunachala. We have the concept of *guru-sishya*, the concept of master and servant, where the devotee approaches Him as his Master and lovingly gives himself unto Him in bondage forever. There is the concept of the bride-bridegroom or the *nayaki-nayaka* concept.

The ancients who knew the innate tendencies of the human mind and how it clings to a particular form and worships according to its own chosen mode, broadly classified the spiritual and religious practices into seven types — the worship of Agni, Varuna, Rudra, Vishnu, Durga (Shakti), Aditya and Brahma, culminating in the practice of *atma vichara*, that is, the identification of oneself with the formless Brahman. However, with the advent of Buddhism and Jainism which attracted numerous people from other faiths, the wise sages simplified the concept of religious worship, reducing the types of worship to three, namely, the worship of Siva, Sakthi and Vishnu. All other modes of worship came under one of the above three.

However the concept of formless *Brahman* and the *sadhana* required to merge into *Brahman* continued to be the most important aspect of spiritual life. Further, if we

look at the attributes of Shakti (Durga or Parvati ) and Vishnu we find that both Shakti and Vishnu (considered as sister and brother in Hindu religious lore) have the same aspect and character, and that they differ only in their forms — Vishnu is the male form and Shakti the female form of the same divine force. While Shakti is the mother and therefore the protector of creation, Vishnu is also the protector of creation. Both derive their form and power from the supreme Lord Arunachala Siva.

Thus we see that Arunachala Siva has been worshipped by both *Saktas* (followers of Shakti) and *Vaishnavites* (the followers of Vishnu). Unenlightened worshippers do not realize this truth. But those *Saktas* and *Vaishnavites* who have been sincere and ardent in their practice have, through *yogic* (spiritual or devotional) intuition been drawn to Arunachala, where they have seen in Him their chosen deity.

The Vedas and *sastras* mention a number of signs and symbols and their significance. The symbol of *Sri Chakra* pertaining to *Shakti* has great mystical powers. Annamalayar and Tiruvannamalai itself possess the natural formation of *Sri Chakra*. This has been observed by the scholar devotee, Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni, who cited Adi Sankara's verse in support. This point was endorsed by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Also the symbol pertaining to Vishnu is the disc *Sudarsana*, the concentration of spiritual and temporal energy. Strangely enough Annamalayar has been worshipped as *Sudarsana giri* by the followers of Vishnu. The worship of deities in symbols and signs ascribed to them entails great care and responsibility. A slight error or deviation in the gross or mental form of worship will lead the aspirant astray.

However a sincere aspirant and worshipper of Shakti or Vishnu is steadily led to Arunachala, the embodiment of perfection, in both the gross and subtle aspects and is safely and surely conducted to the eternal realm.

Followers of other religious denominations have also been attracted to Arunachala where they have carried out spiritual *sadhana* in accordance with their particular denomination. Thus the tombs of sufi saints and the monasteries of Jains and Christians dot the land around Arunachala. Initially established by fervent religious aspirants, these still serve as sources of inspiration to present day followers. Although all may not possess the inspiration their predecessors had, many still find that Arunachala is the silent guiding beacon. This is the case with *yogis* too. It is well known that *yoga* has many branches. The *Bhagavad Gita* describes *bhakti yoga*, *karma yoga*, *jnana yoga*, etc. An aspirant following any of the above mentioned disciplines finds that his outlook changes after coming into the fold of Arunachala. Arunachala allows the aspirant to follow his own chosen discipline according to the innate tendencies of the mind and plays along with him. The aspirant performs whatever acts have been laid down by that particular system of *yoga* or what his Master has taught him. But as he progresses steadfastly and sincerely, Arunachala slowly turns him towards Himself. Finally the *sadhaka* and *sadhana* (*aspirant and aspiration*) cease to exist and all that remains is the eternal Arunachala. This can be explained by an analogy. There are famous rivers like the Ganga, the Brahmaputra, the Godavari, the Kaveri, etc., flowing along the length and breadth of India and on the banks of these rivers, empires have risen and fallen, cities have been built and destroyed, battles have been won and

lost, great civilizations have flourished and perished, and these rivers have been the sources of inspiration for all these momentous events, some inscribed in history, others totally forgotten. But finally all rivers merge into the sea where they lose their individual identity and it is all one expanse of water on which no civilization has been raised, about which no history has been written. It is only on the river banks that historic events have taken place. But the great rivers and the small insignificant streamlets become one with the ocean and there is no more commotion. One cannot distinguish the waters of the Kaveri from the waters of the Ganga. Likewise all systems of spiritual and religious practices have their individual distinctions as long as they keep away from the Lord of the Universe, Arunachala, but once the aspirant is drawn to Arunachala, the practices cease and merge with Arunachala; a union in which there is no *Sakta*, no *Vaishnavite*, no *Saivite*, no *sannyasin*, no *yogi*. All merge into the infinite expanse of knowledge. With the dissolution of the mind comes the dissolution of all systems and practices. Thus we have to abide in the Supreme Self in which,

There is no imagination  
Nor the one who inquires  
From which no universe emerges  
In which no universe exists  
Into which no universe merges  
In which other than Arunachala there is nothing  
In which all forms of meditation unite  
In which all forms of *yogic* practices die.  
In which all forms of ignorance are extinguished  
In which even *jnana* is annihilated.

The concept of Arunachala is enshrined in the four great *mahavakyas* of the *Upanishads*, viz., *Aham Brahmasmi*, *Tattvam Asi*, etc. Arunachala can be split as A+RUNA+ACHALA to mean destroyer of one's *karma*. RUNA literally means injury in Sanskrit. Figuratively it means *karma*. Further the first of the three terms viz., A in Arunachala signifies the Self. The second RUNA refers to *jiva*. The third ACHALA, the unification of Self and *jiva*. The four *mahavakyas* from the four Vedas, viz, *Ayamatma Brahmam*, *Aham Brahmasmi*, *Tattvamasi* and *Tadjananam Brahma*, each of which can be split into three syllables, each signifying ultimately *jiva*, Self and the unification of these two. Thus we see, even in the phonetic context, the syllables in the name Arunachala signify the great *mahavakyas*. In short, Arunachala is beyond thought and word.

# PART II

# X

## ARUNACHALA: A GEOLOGICAL PARADISE

IN THE 1970'S A GROUP OF GEOLOGISTS CARRIED out a detailed study of the terrain in Central and Northern Tamilnadu in South India. They selected an area of 10000 Sq.Km. in the then North and South Arcot districts. The field evidence supported by corroborative laboratory studies have led to deciphering the complex history of multistructural and polymetorphic events in this rocky terrain. Based on this study a chronological sequence of stratigraphy (layer) tectonism (earth quakes etc.) magmatism metamorphism (changes) migmatisation and minaralisation has been built up.

Before we proceed further a short note on our galaxy and planet earth may be appropriate here. Our own galaxy is a congregation of hundreds of brilliant stars gravitationally bound and rotating. There are billions of such galaxies and the human brain is yet to device a radio telescope which can reach the frontiers of the universe. A galaxy is not only a cluster of stars, it also contains star dust, quasars and pulsars (a strong source of radio signals) and black holes created by stars after supernovea explosions. The central bunch of our galaxy glows with a light of older stars which appears red in colour. Gas and dust which are the main constituents of stars condensing in the spiral arm of our galaxy are even now forming new stars. In one of the arms our old sun circles the galaxy centre once every 230 million

years travelling at 220 km/sec. New evidence suggests that the disk is enveloped by a large halo of very old stars and dark unseen matter which are termed black holes where the force of gravity is phenomenal. The age of the universe is estimated to be 15 billion ( $15 \times 10^{12}$ ) years.

Our own planet earth and the other planets of solar system were created probably by a wandering star which came within the gravitational field of the sun and drew a vast cloud of gas and dust from the sun some 4.6 billion years ago. Various materials condensed from the cooling matter, collided and coalesced to form the planets, moons, comets, asteroids, meteorites, dust and gas and commenced revolving round the sun. The fact that almost all the members of the solar system circle the sun mostly rotating in the same direction and revolving around themselves (anti clockwise) and almost in the same plane leaves little doubt that they all formed almost simultaneously. Different parts of the solar system should therefore be of the same age. For the moons, rocks and earth's crust have been calculated to be 4.5 billion years old.

The earth's molten mass condensed into rock. The earliest known rock formation took place in the period known as the Archean age (about 3.8 billions years ago). These earliest rock formations were termed as charnokite in honour of Job Charnock, the founder of the city of Calcutta. Incidentally his tombstone is made of this rock.

## **CONTINENTAL DRIFT**

Even before the postulation of the theory regarding spreading of the sea floor and the theory regarding the rising of plate tectonics, a study of the continental geology suggested that the continents were once a huge

mass of land, part of an ancient super continent Pangea. In course of time this huge mass of land broke up into fragments and these fragments began to drift forming the present continents. The way certain continents (S.America and Africa; Africa and India with Madagascar in between; India and Australia; and Antarctica) now far apart seem to fit together if joined. A study of positions of magnetic poles measured from rocks in two of the continents likewise indicated relative movement between the two continents. Also the geological structures and formation of rocks particularly charnockite seem to perfectly fit as one single mass when these continents are put together. The distribution of certain flora and fauna belonging to Gondwana Land (supergroup formations) as well as ancient climatic zones could not be satisfactorily explained unless the theory of continental drift was accepted. The pattern of drift is known in detail only for the last 200 million years which is the period of break-up of the Gondwana Land — supercontinent Pangaea, which is the convergence of the movements of continents about 350 million years ago.

Now we shall come to Tiruvannamalai and the surrounding area. The section from Tiruvannamalai towards Villupuram contains various stages of migmatization of the charnockite (of Tiruvannamalai it is 2.55 billion years) and the associated members culminating in the formation of Gingee pluton (2.5 billion years).

The evidence gathered from studies made in Tiruvannamalai during the 1970's, throws light on the formation of the charnockite and related assemblages of rocks older than 3000-3500 million years. The rock formation in this section as explained in the process of

migmatisation of Charnockite and associated rocks in phases culminated in the evolvement of Gingee Pluton consisting of Granite composition.

The detailed study of the world mountains, with particular reference to India, reveals the following features:

The world's famous mountain ranges, viz. Alps, Rockies, Andes, Himalayan and Appalachian ranges contain high peaks at very high altitudes, but Geo-chronologically they do not come under the Archaeon period and belong to younger ages.

The upheaval of the Himalayas was not a continuous process but took place in four phases or stages. Himalayan ranges (including Mount Everest and Mount Kailash) are less than 50 million years old, while the holy hill of Arunachala, the upheaval was at one single stage.

The Tiruvannamalai hill is an imposing landmark with an elevation of 2634 feet and is the highest peak in the hill ranges found conspicuously developed in the western and south-western part of Tiruvannamalai; the eastern and south-eastern part of Tiruvannamalai on the other hand is generally a gently undulating plain dotted with few knolls and mounds.

Also it would appear that among other mountainous belts, the Deccan Plateau in Southern India including Tiruvannamalai is one of the areas of little or no tectonic activity i.e. seismologically these belts have not changed drastically their characteristics over a long period of time.

In recorded history the origin & flow of rivers, homosapiens, flora and fauna are Geochronologically far later developments.

From the above it is clear that the Holy Hill of Arunachala (or Tiruvannamalai) is older than Himalayas

(Mount Everest or Kailash) and hence the oldest natural Shrine in the world.

This spiritual centre which has withstood the ravages of time in this manner has in recent times been defiled by indiscriminate human activity. It is our sacred duty to take effective steps and prevent further damage.

Geological antiquity of the area together with other geological processes in this area indicates that the planet 'Earth' in this part of Southern Peninsular shield was kept open as a classic type area for mapping Archaean terrain. In fact field training camps for prospective geologists are being arranged annually at Tiruvannamalai to study this classic model of geology. It is needless to emphasise that the Geoscientific community/fraternity owes its gratitude to 'mother earth' for providing such a classic area for studies for understanding and interpretation of the evolutionary history with its myriad details.

Manickavachakar, in one of his compositions hails the Lord as 'older than the oldest' and 'later than the latest'. Thus, we find, that even geologists consider Arunachala as a paradise and wonder on earth. The aim of this chapter is to draw the attention of the reader to the unique geological aspects of Arunachala. Hence, we could not but help using certain technical terms.

# XI

## HISTORY OF TIRUVANNAMALAI

SUCCESSIVE KINGS OF SOUTH INDIA HAVE given great importance to Tiruvannamalai and the temple of Arunachala. For a thousand years these kings have built *prakaras* outlying temples, *gopurams* and compound walls, dug ponds, offered jewels and donated gold for the upkeep of temple lands. Historically famous kings like Raja Raja Chola, Rajendra Chola, Harihara, Bukka, Krishna Deva Raya as well as other kings of the Chera, Chola, Pallava, Pandya, Rashtrakuta, Hoysala, Raya and Naik dynasties were proud to have Tiruvannamalai as part of their kingdom. Some of them made it their Capital. Though caught in political crises and engaged in battles, they continued to hold onto Tiruvannamalai which they considered vitally important to them.

Historical details about Tiruvannamalai and the Arunachaleswara temple are available to us through stone inscriptions on the *prakara* walls and copper plates. These inscriptions refer to a period of about thousand years starting from 750 A.D. The earliest archeological findings from these stone inscriptions point to the fact that the greatness of Arunachala was known to the kings from the spiritual works like *Tevaram* and *Tiruvachakam*. We come to know that Tiruvannamalai was historically and spiritually famous even from those ancient times. We have clues that the temple was small during the visit of Appar, Manickavachakar, Sambandar and others. Kings who read about the great glory of Arunachaleswara in the *Tevaram*

and *Tiruvachakam* began to expand the temple and beautify it. We owe a debt of gratitude to the four great *Saivite* savants, the kings, queens and chieftains for this service. They had great faith in and devotion for Arunachaleswara.

The temple and outlying areas, as also the town were built and maintained by successive kings. Many stone and brass inscriptions in Sanskrit and Tamil have been found giving further details of the history of this temple. These inscriptions also tell us about the economic and social changes of the times, and the great service rendered to the temple by the kings.

Tiruvannamalai was earlier known as *Thiru Anna Nadu* and the presiding deity was known as *Thiru Anna Nattu Mahadevan*. This region was called *Thondai Mandalam* and was ruled by the Pallavas. It then passed into the hands of the Rashtrakutas, a dynasty to which belonged Krishna III, who undertook important renovation work during the tenth century A.D. The region then came under the rule of chieftains like Kadavaraya, the Banas, and Sambuva Raya. From the thirteenth to the fourteenth century, the Pandya kings ruled over it. Then came the Hoysalas who made Tiruvannamalai their capital while they waged war against other kings to establish their supremacy and sovereignty. The Vijayanagar kings who came after the Hoysalas spent enormous amounts of money for the worship and other requirements of the temple. Poets like Saiva Ellappa Navalar have sung in praise of the Naickers of Tanjore who came to power after the Vijayanagar kings for the great service they rendered to the temple.

Important renovation work was done in the sanctum sanctorum by Aditya Chola-III in 750 A.D. and Parandhaka Chola-I in the tenth century A.D.

When we observe the general structure of the temple, we notice that there are five small *gopurams* on the inner boundary and four big *gopurams* on the outer boundary. The inner *gopurams* are known as *Kitti gopurams*. There are two *gopurams* in the East and one *gopuram* each for the other three directions. The first of the two Eastern *gopurams* is called *Kili gopuram*. There are indications that this was built in the 11th century. The *gopurams* built during this period have no more than five storeys. The *Kili gopuram* was built by Veera Rajendra Chola around 1063 A.D. He is referred to as Maharaja Tribuvana Chakravarthigal in the inscription. This name was also given to the *gopuram*. The *Kitti* (smaller) *gopurams*, except the top of the western one, were built by the Hoysala King Vallala Maharaja III. His name is given to the biggest *Kitti gopuram* which is in the East.

Let us now look at the outer *gopurams*. Historians say that the western *gopuram* is the oldest. The base was built by Vallala Maharaja. The top belongs to a later style. Inscriptions attribute this to Krishna Deva Raya of Vijayanagar. This king has undertaken important construction work in this temple. It is said that he built the base of the other three *gopurams*. But the architectural style of the base of the western *gopuram* alone belongs to this period. The other bases have a grander design. It looks as if the base of the Western *gopuram* was constructed first and then those of the South, East and North. Though the Eastern *gopuram*, known as the *Rajagopuram* looks older, it was built after the Western one. This was constructed by Krishna Deva Raya and renovated by king Sevappa Naicker of Tanjore. There is another view that this was completely built by Sevappa Naicker. Tamil and Sanskrit

inscriptions on the Western *gopuram* dated 1690 A.D. bear witness to this.

Krishna Deva Raya of Vijayanagar also constructed the hundred pillared and thousand pillared halls in the temple. He dug the *Sivagangai Tirtham* in front of the thousand pillared hall. As mentioned earlier, he built the base of the three *gopurams* and either began or finished the Eastern *Rajagopuram* with eleven storeys.

All the kings mentioned above and chieftains like Kadava Raya, Sambuvaraya and the Banas expressed their devotion to Arunachaleswara by building small temples inside the Arunachaleswara temple as well as around the mountain and elsewhere in the town. These kings were also responsible for digging the many ponds in this region.

To the devotees visiting the town and the temple, its architectural splendour and sculptured beauty, its rich lands and ponds, its jewels and appurtenances, the inscriptions and the wealth of literature praising the glory of Arunachaleswara are glowing evidence of the love that the Lord has commanded in the minds of kings and commoners through the centuries. Critics may take exception to the absence of harmony in the architectural style, but there is a better and a grander harmony, the harmony of devotion and piety of those architects of this temple and the town.

The atmosphere of the temple and the sensation one feels inside it are indescribable. The variegated architectural styles of generations of kings who built and renovated its massive *gopurams* and halls, the living presence of the great saints who stayed here and sang the Lord's praise, and above all, the infinite compassion and grace of Arunachala gives this holiest of holy places a timeless quality.

## XII

### TEMPLE OF ARUNACHALESWARA

THERE ARE THREE TEMPLES DEDICATED TO Arunachala. One of course is the main temple on the eastern side, the other the temple of Adi Annamalai on the western side and the third is the Arunagirinathar temple on the banks of Ayyankulam.

The Adi Annamalai temple is a comparatively small one and that on the banks of Ayyankulam is still smaller. Nevertheless, being dedicated to Arunachala they have their own charm and beauty. We shall therefore describe the main temple of Arunachaleswara which lies on the eastern side of Mount Arunachala.

As one enters the Arunachaleswara temple through the Eastern Tower one gets tuned to the sacred atmosphere of the temple and is able to immediately feel its spiritual power. The towers built by the ancient kings as tribute to the Lord have been praised in glorious terms in *Tevaram* and *Tiruvachakam*. The walls enclosing the courts (*prakara*) each contain the shrines of the various deities, the halls housing the processional vehicles, the tanks, the gardens and the most sacred shrine dedicated to the Effulgent *Linga* of Arunachala. For the sages of yore and for pious devotees it is not merely an external physical object but the Omnipresent, All Pervading spirit that drew them, that still draws them and shall continue to draw countless more.

A brief description of the temple will be useful. The temple has six enclosures (*prakaras*). The North and South

walls of the sixth *prakara* are 1479 feet and 1590 feet respectively (approximately 450 metres and 485 metres respectively), while the Eastern and Western walls of the same *prakara* are 700 feet each (220 metres approximately). These walls, as one goes round them, are found to be very thick and strongly built and are about nine metres in height. But the inscriptions on these walls are said to have no continuity. This is probably because these stones were brought from elsewhere. The walls join the four main *gopurams*.

The temple has four outer *gopurams* (spires). The base of these *gopurams* was constructed by Krishna Devaraya of Vijayanagar. In fact his contribution is immense in the construction of the temple. The Eastern tower which is the *Rajagopuram* was built by him, and is the largest and tallest of its type in South India. He also built the thousand pillared *mantapam* which is on the Northern side next to the Eastern entrance. On the Southern side is the *Sivaganga tirtham* dug by him. Initially the water feeding this tank was brought by digging a canal called "Thirumalai Amman Devi Samudram". On the banks of the *Sivaganga tirtham* there is a temple dedicated to Subramanya which is also called *Valaikapu mantapam* where the festival of adorning the Goddess with bangles is held once a year. In this temple there is a pillar from which Lord Subramanya gave *darshan* to Saint Arunagirinathar. The festivals for Lord Muruga are celebrated here.

After this we come to the *Patala Lingam*, an underground cellar. Although forming a part of the thousand pillared hall, the *Patala Lingam* was left undisturbed, it being a *Siddha's Samadhi*. The *Samadhi* existed even before the hall was built. Hence it appears as

an annexe to the thousand pillared hall. In no other temple having a thousand pillared hall do we come across such an annexe. An old photograph of *Patala Lingam* shows it to be covered with bush and mud and only in 1949 was it renovated. Interestingly the land on which the thousand pillared hall stands belonged to a particular community that sold it to Krishna Devaraya for 500 sovereigns.

On the pillars of the hall, at the top and bottom, one can find figures depicting the various incarnations of Vishnu, various sages, gods and floral decorations, sculpted in the Nayaka style. On the platform are depicted the various war games played and gymnastic performances by the warrior heroes of those times. In the Tamil months of *Ani* (June-July), and *Margazhi* (December-January), Lord Nataraja is ceremonially taken and installed in the hall. After performing *puja* and *abhishekam* in a grand manner, the Lord is then taken in a gaily decorated open palanquin through the streets around the temple.

The thousand pillared hall measures 275 feet (East-West) by 395 feet (North-South). In olden times the temple in general and halls like the thousand-pillared hall in particular, served not only for meditation but also as a sanctuary for the people whenever the town was struck by natural calamities. For those pilgrims to the temple who know about the history of Bhagavan Ramana, the *Patala Lingam* offers a very fine niche for spending some time silently in meditation.

After the *Patala Lingam* one finds the vehicles room. Adjacent to the vehicles room is the *gopuram* of Subramanya Swami temple (also known as *Gopurathu Ilayanar* temple). The repentant Arunagirinathar who wanted to commit suicide, jumped from the top of the

*gopuram* and was saved by Lord Subramanya at that spot. To commemorate the event the temple was built adjacent to *Sivaganga tirtham*. On the Northern bank is situated a temple for Lord Ganesa known as Sarvasiddhi Vinayaka temple, also known as Sivagangai Ganesa temple.

As one walks from the Eastern *gopuram* one comes to the second inner *gopuram*. This is the Vallala Maharaja *gopuram* built by King Vallala III of the Hoysala dynasty. He seems to have built the Big Nandi (Periya Nandi) and the *mantapam* over it. On the southern side of Vallala *gopuram* is situated the Kalyana Sundarar *sannadhi*. This is a small Siva shrine containing a flower garden and a *mantapam*.

We come to the fourth *prakaram* when we ascend the steps and cross the Vallala *gopuram*. On the left side of the *prakaram*, that is on the southern side, is situated another tank called *Brahma tirtham*, on the banks of which stands the shrine of Kala Bhairava, a manifestation of Rudra, who is supposed to be the guardian angel of the temple. Various small shrines are also situated here. As we walk further and ascend the steps we come to *Kiligopuram* which is the entrance to the third *prakaram*. At the entrance is the sixteen pillared *mantapam* which is called *deepa darshana mantapam* from where the idols installed there face the hill on which the Holy Beacon is lit. We have in front of this *mantapam* the flag post (*dwajasthambam*), Nandi, the mount of the Lord and the sacrificial altar *bali peetam*). The Southern side houses the *madapalli* (kitchen) and along the kitchen throughout the *prakarams*, there are numerous rooms which served various purposes. There is a huge hall called the marriage hall (*kalyana mantapam*) at the South-West corner where Arunachala and other

gods are installed during the *deepam* festival. At the back, that is at the Western side of the third *prakaram* there is a *mantapam* for Arunagiri Yogi. On the Northern side of the *deepa darshana mantapam* we have various small Siva shrines and what is now the *devasthanam* office. Also near the office there is a shrine for Pidari Amman, the Goddess guarding the village. During the fourteen day *Deepam* festival the second day festival is dedicated to Pidari Amman to appease her.

On either side of the entrance to the second *prakaram* there stand Sambanda Vinayakar and Palani Andavar. From the Eastern outermost entrance as one crosses each *gopuram* or each *prakaram* one can see a Vinayaka shrine on the left side of the entrance and Karthikeya shrine on the right. Before the entrance to the second *prakaram* there stands the *dwajasthamba* where the flag is hoisted to mark the commencement of the ten day *Utharayana*, the *Dakshinayana*, and the *Karthikai Deepam* festivals. The flag hoisting on the *dwajasthamba* at the temple of Goddess Unnamulai Amman marks the commencement of the *Aadi Puram* festival. In the *Aksharamanamalai* there is a verse where Bhagavan Ramana says, "Having raised the flag in the hearts of your devotees you kill them (i.e. their egos). How to live with thee, Oh Arunachala!" Similarly, in *Ramana Stuti Panchakam* (Five hymns to Ramana) it is written, "Having raised His flag in the minds of those who devoutly worship him, He shows them the true shores of liberation by giving them *jnana*". Thus *dwaja* (flag) has great significance. The *Karthikai Deepam dwajaarohanam* (flag hoisting) is attended by thousands of people.

We now enter the second *prakaram*. As we cross the threshold having two huge doors, we find on either side

two huge bells whose tone is deep and resonant. At the time of *aarti* the peal of the bells can be heard for miles around. Particularly for those residing in the caves on the hill it makes a deep impression. As we walk around the *prakaras* we find innumerable idols. We have the *Ashta Lingas* just as we have *Ashta Lingas* round the hill at each cardinal point, the four sons of Brahma, the sixty three Saivite saints, the festival idols (*utsavamurtis*) of Annamalayar and Unnamulai Amman, Venugopalaswami, Lakshmi, Ganesa, Muruga, Saptakanyas, Bikshatana, Bhairava and Nataraja as well as bronze idols of the sixty three saints. These are taken out in procession during festivals. Also there is the *palliyarai*, a small room serving as the *shobaana* room (sleeping chamber) for the Lord and the Goddess.

On the walls around the first *prakaram* we have the idol of Dakshinamurti adorned with snake, *rudraksha* garland, fire and a book. He is seated in the famous *chinmudra* posture under the banyan tree teaching in eternal silence, the truth of existence to the four sons of Brahma. Dakshinamurti is the first *Guru* in the line of *sadgurus* imparting *jnana*. On the Western wall is the *Lingothbava*, the idol of Lord Siva appearing as a column of fire. On one side Vishnu in the form of a boar seems to dig, while Brahma as *hamsa* is seen perching, though he is supposed to be depicted as flying. On the Northern side of the wall we see the idol of Durga and some of the demons apparently holding the structure. Outside the sanctum sanctorum there are two halls. The *Pradosha* Nandi is installed in the outer hall. During the auspicious time of *pradosha* which occurs twice in a lunar month (two days before the full moon and two days before the new moon), *abhisheka* is performed for this Nandi; hence the name.

## THE SANCTUM SANCTORUM

Then we come to the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Arunachala, the self-created *Linga* (*swayambu*), which is one of the most beautiful and captivating *lingas*. Lord Arunachaleswara is enthroned on a circular *Aavudayaar* (platform). The bottom portion of the *Linga* where it meets the *Aavudayaar* is encircled by a gold band. It is one of the five *lingas* associated with the five elements, this being the *Tejo* or *Agni Linga*, which is centrally placed among the five elements. With centuries of *abhishekam* performed on the *Linga* and sandalwood paste smeared near the top of it, the *Linga* at this spot appears different from the other portions. Since Arunachaleswara has parts assigned to Brahma, Vishnu and Shakthi in Him, one need not perform rituals or worship these deities separately. If one worships Arunachala one has worshipped the entire pantheon of Hindu deities. Just outside the sanctum sanctorum is situated the *ardha mantapam*.

It is mistakenly believed by some that the sacred tree (*sthala vriksha*) assigned to Arunachala is the *magizha* tree. Actually it is the banyan tree which is the *sthala vriksha* under which Arunagiri Yogi sits on the hill facing South. In the fifth *prakara* on the Northern side of the temple, there was a banyan tree which withered some years ago and in its stead a new sapling was planted. As the roots of the banyan tree penetrate deep and may affect the structure, the *magizha* tree whose roots do not reach as far or as deep was planted in the third *prakara* on the Southern side.

There is a tunnel running right through the hill from East to West. It opens at one end inside the temple strong room, in the North East side of the second *prakara*. The

other end of the tunnel is in the Adi Annamalai temple premises on the Western side of the hill. The tunnel is said to provide access to the caves inside the hill where many *yogis* and *siddhas* are immersed in the bliss of union with Arunachala. Probably to stop the uninitiated and the curious from entering the tunnel, Bhagavan Ramana advised that the opening from the Adi Annamalai temple side be closed.

This temple stands as a glorious monument of the devotion and gratitude that the emperors, kings, dynasties, chieftains bore for Arunachala. We shall see in a later chapter the history of the temple and the town of Tiruvannamalai.

# XIII

## INSCRIPTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

#### Topography

TIRUVANNAMALAI, IN THE NORTH ARCOT district in Tamilnadu, has been known to be an important place from the 7th Century A.D. Although nothing definite is known about its earlier history, the area around it was known to the poets of the Tamil Sangam literature (*circa* 100 B.C. to 200 A.D.). For instance, the ruler of this region has been described as the Chevvarai natan in the *Perumpanatruppatai*. Here Chevvarai, i.e., the Red Mountain is said to refer to the hill range, anciently called Coral hill, but now going by the name of Javadi hills. The well known river the Cheyyaru in this district is stated to have been so called owing to the fact that it traverses the region, which is marked not only by the Red Mountain but also by red soil. This river is also mentioned by the name Cheyyaru in the *Malaipatukadam*, another Sangam work. Further, in the same work, there is a reference to a hill called Naviram, which is identified with the hill, on the northern bank of the Cheyyaru, at a distance of about 15 km to the north west of Tiruvannamalai. This hill and the region around the modern town of Chengam, situated to the west of Tiruvannamalai is said to have been ruled over by Nannan in some works of the Sangam age where the hill is given the name of 'Nannan verpu' i.e., the

Nannan's hill. The pass in this hill range was the one used by the people of the Tondainadu to go to the Takatur nadu of which the ruler was Attiyaman Neduman Anchi during the period of the Sangam literature mentioned above.'

The hill at Tiruvannamalai, forming part of the Javadi hill range belongs to the gneiss variety also called igneous rock in Indian tradition through the ages. It is, however, noteworthy that the memory that the rocks of this area were, in remote geological ages, in a molten form and that they caused havoc, lingered on in the minds of the people of ancient India, this matter was given a religious garb and texts were composed, at a later time, which glorified the importance of Siva who has been conceived from at least the time of the Vedas as identical with Agni or Fire whose colour is red or cupric who is also described as the Stambha or Sthanu by the Vedic people, who is known for saving the universe from destruction on several occasions, and who is considered as the personification of supreme knowledge and wisdom.

When exactly the above mentioned concepts came to be associated with Tiruvannamalai is difficult to know. For, though the places and hills and rivers nearby this place were known to some of the Sangam poets, they had not made any mention of this place, nor about the legends. Absence of reference to the place is surprising especially bearing upon it.

Recently a number of epigraphs of the 6th and 7th centuries A.D, belonging to the Pallava rulers of the period were discovered at several places in the Chengam taluk which is adjacent to the Tiruvannamalai area, but they also have no reference to this place. This absence of reference to the place is surprising especially area, but they have also

no reference to this place. This because it was and continues to be on an important road connecting Tondainadu with Cava nadu and Takatur nadu, connecting Kanchipuram with Takadur on the one side and with Chidambaram on the other side.

The traditions and legends having a bearing upon this place seem to have grown up only in the 6th or the 7th Century A.D., at the earliest, as attested by the Thevaram hymns of the Saiva saints Appar and Gnanasambandar. The hymns are based entirely upon the hill at the place. The sudden shooting up into the sky to an eminence of about 800 metres and with a circumference of 13 km. at bottom, together with its geological gneissic character, this hill had provided an ideal setting which seems to have inspired the imagination of the ancient Indian Pauranikas to superimpose on the hill the god Siva, fire and pillar aspects and weave a story around it to tell that it was here that his superiority over the other two gods of the Hindu Trinity, viz Vishnu and Brahma was established by his appearing in the form of an immeasurable and terror striking Fire Pillar (Tamil Talar pirampu), whose bottom and crown could not be seen (Tamil adiyum mudiyum kanata) or in other words who is without a beginning and an end.

The concept that the highest principle is nothing, but an all pervasive effulgence was an established one already in the period of the Upanishads (*circa* 6th Century B.C.), the *Kenopanihaad* being the foremost amongst the texts to demonstrate it in a beautiful manner. This was known to the Tamil people in the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. It is proved by the references to it met in the hymns of Karaikkal Ammaiyar, Appar and Jnanasambandar.

In the subsequent centuries, Tiruvannamalai became much celebrated for its sanctity. Nadurally during this period texts in Sanskrit describing its importance were composed entitled *Arunahcalamahstmya* and these were incorporated into some well known *Puranas*. Such texts are found in the *Sivamahapurana Vidyasara kotirudra samhita; Arunacalamahatmya, Adhyayas 1-31*, in the *Maha Sivapurna, Vidyedara samhita, Adhyaya 9*, verse 21 for Arunachala and for stories *Adhyayas 6-12*; and *Skandapurarn, Sambhava kandarn, Adhyaya 48* and *Daksa kandam, Adhyaya 37*. The *Vidygsarakotirudra samhita* of the *Sivamahapurana* referred to above seems to belong to the 16th or the 17th Century. For, it refers to the Sivaganga tank in the temple, and this we know was dug up in or about A.D. 1517 on the orders of the Vijayanagara emperor, Krishnadevaraya. So, the stories must have been those which were current during this period in Tamilnadu. One of them pertains to a Pandya king named Vajrangada. No such king is known to have existed in the various historically important Pandiyan families that ruled over the Madurai or Tirunelveli regions, which were their home territories. Probably he was a legendary ruler or was a chief of little consequence who existed in the southern Tamilnadu in the 17th Century and who happened somehow to be associated with Tiruvannamalai. It is interesting to note that a *prakara* wall at the place bore his name in A.D. 1806-18, when the temple inscriptions were copied by the assistants of Col. Mackenzie. But the description of the wall makes it clear that it was the one put up during the time of Rajendra Chola-I (A.D. 1012-1044), and the new name was given to it some years prior to A.D. 1800, which also proves that this Pandya was a fictitious person.

As a consequence of this popularity, many saints and men of letters went and stayed there to enjoy the spiritual bliss afforded by it. Some of the enlightened and evolved immigrants to the place and also some divinely inspired local residents composed poems and hymns extolling its grandeur and beauty, its importance as a centre of Saivism and its greatness in matters spiritual. The legends pertaining to the place have also been recorded in some copper plate inscriptions discovered here and dealt with below. Although their genuineness is open to doubt, they are valuable for having preserved this Information.

## **NOTE ON INSCRIPTIONS COPIED FROM THE TEMPLE**

The temple at the place, which has been celebrated for its holiness through the centuries, was patronised by the rulers of almost all the royal families of Tamilnadu including the Hoysalas and the Vijayanagara kings. During their rule, the kings themselves had made a variety of donations to the temple. Besides, some private individuals too had contributed their mite for its upkeep and maintenance. Such transactions had invariably been put into writing and engraved on the various parts of the temple. In the course of the centuries the temple received additions, alternations and modifications. During these times, some inscribed slabs were broken of which some fragments were reused in the new constructions but some others were probably lost. Between A.D. 1806 and 1818, when Col. Colin Mackenzie was engaged in copying the inscriptions in the temples of the Madras Presidency, he had arranged for copying the epigraphs in the temple in question. Curiously, of about

500 items of epigraphs found here, his assistants had copied only ten (South Indian Temple Ins., I, Nos. 105-114, pp. 114-24). Of these, S.I.T.I., Nos. 105, 107, 109, 110, 111 have been subsequently copied and the rest are not traceable. Besides, one line notices of nineteen items prepared by two assistants are also found in the Mackenzie Mss. (D. 2869 and 2760 of *S.I.T.I* pp. 124-25). The Office of the Government Epigraphist visited the place in 1902 and copied 106 epigraphs which were reported in that year's Annual Report as Nos. B 469-574. Subsequently their texts alone were published in South Indian Inscriptions; Vol. VIII (Madras 1937), as Nos. 57 to 165 totalling to 109 because of the fact that *A.R.E.*, Nos. 476, 488, and 539 were each split into two. That office visited the place again 1928-29 and copied ten more inscriptions, which are, reported as *A.R.E.*, 1928-29, Nos. B 419-28. In 1945-46, they visited the place once more and copied sixteen new inscriptions and reported them in the *A.R.I.E.*, 1945-46, as Nos. B 66-81. Lastly they paid a visit to the place in 1952-53. In this trip they copied only two stone inscriptions (*A.R.I.E.*, Nos. B 212-13 of 1952-53) and four copper plate epigraphs (*ibid.*, A 8-11) which were in the custody of the Executive Officer of the temple there. The epigraphy office had been able to bring 134 inscriptions and four copper plate records from 1902 to 1952-53 of this place to the notice of the scholars. A Few French Epigraphists and Scholars from Pondycheril made a comprehensive and sustained survey of the temple for inscriptions conducted intermittently from 1979 to 1984 and they were able to copy about 360 new inscriptions, many of them in their full form containing important pieces of information, and the rest fragmentary. Besides, four new copperplate

inscriptions have also been copied in this survey. The inscriptions thus copied range in date from the last decade of the 9th Century to about A.D. 1800.

## THE CHOLA PERIOD

There are 180 inscriptions belonging to the Chola period in our collection. That Tiruvannamalai and the Siva temple there received good attention from the early Chola kings and their subordinates from about A.D. 885 to about A.D. 1065 is known from twenty nine epigraphs (1-12, 15-18, 30-42), from 13-14 of Kannaratevan of the Rastrakuta dynasty and another eleven fragmentary epigraphs (19-29). No records of the later Chola kings like Kulattunka-I, Vikrama Chola, Kulottunka II and Rajaraja-II spanning a period of about a Century are found. This is a strange phenomenon. However this period is represented by thirty eight fragmentary records (43-80). But there are a hundred epigraphs (81-180) to show the attention that the kings like Rajadhiraja-II, Kulotunka- III, Rajaraja- III and Rajendra-III bestowed on the place and the temple, the patronage of Kulottunka-III to the temple being outstanding as revealed by forty nine records of his time, the largest number to be met with here for any Chola monarch. In fact this period may be said to be the golden period in the history of the temple.

### Aditya-I (circa A.D. 870-907)

The earliest of them, which is indeed the earliest so far to be discovered by us from the central shrine of the temple is 1. It is a fragmentary epigraph containing parts of two separate inscriptions; Palaeographically this inscription may be assigned to the end of the 9th Century A.D. While the

purport of one of the fragments cannot be made out, that of the other relates to a certain action performed by a Vanakovaraiyar (details lost) in the 14th year of the reign of the king Iracakesaripanmar, and it mentions the god Tiruvannadu Mahadevar. On these two grounds the record may be assigned to the time of the king Racakecari Aditya-I, and its date would then be A.D. 885. The second reason, viz., the name of the god Tiruvannattu Mahadevar in a record of a Racakecari seems to play a decisive role in the attribution of the epigraph to this king. For, in an inscription (5) belonging to Parakesari Parantaka-I's 15th year also (A.D. 922), the god is called in the same manner, although in a few other inscriptions of his time (2,3,4). the god gets the name Tiruvannamalai Mahadevar, suggesting thereby that, according to the available epigraphical evidence, the god who was called Tiruvannattu Mahadevar during the time of Aditya-I came to be called also as Tiruvannamalai Mahadevar, after his time. The god's name was changed to Tiruvannamalai Alvar in about A.D. 961 and it is known from the inscription of the Rashtrakuta king Kannaratevan (14) assignable to that date. This shows that the practice of calling the god as Mahadevar was given up from about the middle of the 10th Century. That the god came to be called as Tiruvannamalai Andar in about A.D. 968-69, is known from two records of Aditya-II's period. Still later in a record assignable to the period of Uttama Chola, the god is called Tiruvannamalai Alvar. In later inscriptions the god is invariably called as Tiruvannamalai utiyar.

The foregoing discussion will show that the central shrine built of stone was in existence before the 14th year of Aditya-I, and it is not easy to know whether it was erected during his period or in an earlier period. If this is

accepted there does not seem to exist any reason to reject it then, the inscription in question would be the earliest epigraph to be discovered from this region. Since no epigraph earlier than Aditya-I's time mentioned above has been met with in the temple, or at Tiruvannamalai itself, it may not be unreasonable to think that the stone structure was constructed during Aditya-I's reign, replacing probably the original structure built of brick, mortar and other perishable materials. For, as a staunch devotee of Siva, he is credited with having built on both banks of the river Kaveri rows of tall temples to Siva which stood, the monuments of his success from the Sahyadri to the wide ocean, according to the Anbil copper plate record of the time of Sundara Chola. It is, however, known from the hymns of Tirujnanasambantar and Appar or Tirunavukkarasu of the 7th Century A.D. that there existed at the place a shrine to the god even then. The inscription of Aditya-I under discussion is interesting as it makes mention of a Vanakovaraiyar which shows that even as early as the 14th year of the reign of this Chola king, a member of the Banas, an ancient family of rulers having sway over the region around Chittoor, was a subordinate under Aditya.

### **Parantaka-I (circa A.D. 907-955)**

As many as eleven inscriptions, mostly fragmentary, but in 10th Century characters, have been discovered from the central shrine of the temple, four in 1902 by the Epigraphy department (2, 3, 5, 10) and the rest by us recently (4, 6 to 9, 11, 12). All belong to a king called Parakesari Varman. Since five of them mention the title Matiraikonda which is specific to Parantaka-I, the son and successor of Aditya-I, there is no difficulty in assigning them to him.

The others, though without this title, may be attributed to the same king on palaeographical grounds. The purport of the fragmentary inscriptions cannot be made out. However, in one of them the name *Sti Kantaratittar* occurs which certainly refers to a son of the same name of Parantaka-I. Another makes mention of Pankala nadu and Vana Kopati two of the territories which, as we shall see, occur in many records of the subsequent periods. A complete record of the king copied in 1902, is dated in the 15th year (i.e., A.D. 922) of his reign. This epigraph furnishes us with some interesting points viz, that the god is called here as Tiruvannattu Mahadevar, that the gift was of a nunda (perpetual) lamp to the god, that the donor was Arkkunran Anparukkati who belonged to Vichur in Kantalur nadu on the northern bank of the Pennai in Vana Kopati.

The two epigraphs belong to the 3rd (i.e., A.D. 910) and 4th (i.e., A.D.911) regnal years of king Parakesaripanmar whose identification with Parantaka-I is supported by their contents also, besides palaeography, in spite of the fact that the title *Matiraikonta* which is known to have been born by him from the 3rd year is not given in them. The former registers a gift of a lamp to the god Tiruvannamalai Mahadevar by the lady Kilanatikai, the queen of Cheramanar. One of the queens of Parantaka-I was a Keraka princess. Kilanatikai figuring in the present record may be related to this princess. In a latter epigraph the donor is one Tennavan Brahmadhirajan the son of some one (name lost) of Vankipuram in Nenmali nadu in Chola nadu. A person of the same name of Rajamalla Chaturvedi Mangalam figures as the donor in an inscription from Utaiyarkutil dated in the 2nd regnal year of king Parakesarivarman. It is suggested that Rajamalla after whom the village was named to which

the donor belonged may have been a title of either Aditya-I or Parantaka-I. In this case, the donor of this record may be the same as the donor of our Tiruvannamalai record. It registers a gift of a nanda lamp by the donor Tiruvannamalai Mahadevar, and the burning of the lamp was entrusted to Kausikan Vayiri Chemanan who had the right of worship in the temple of Tiruvannattu, and his progenies. In both these records the shepherds of Tiruvannattu were given the charge of the sheep for the daily supply (of ghee) for burning the lamp. These two records furnish for the first time some distinction between Tiruvannamalai and Tiruvannattu. It has been seen above that in the records of Aditya-I the god of the place was called Tiruvnnattu Mahadevar while in the two records under discussion the same god is called Tiruvannamalai Mahadevar although the temple and the shepherds are called Tiruvannattu tirukkoyil and Tiruvannattu manratikal respectively.

At this juncture one fragmentary record requires examination. Its palaeography is of the early 10th Century, and it refers to a gift of a nanda lamp to the god Tiruvannamalai Mahadevar during the 14th year of the reign of king ( ... ) ripanmar. This has been assigned to Parantaka-I's time not only on the basis of palaeography but also on the basis of the name of the god as has been discussed above.

### **Rastrakuta Kannaratevan**

One of the inscriptions of this period which is damaged, records a gift of 20 cows to provide for the offering of curds to the god Tiruvannamalai Alvar during the time of Kannaratevan. Interestingly he is neither called a king nor is he given any attribute which would enable us to be certain of his identification with the Rashtrakuta

king Krishna-III. Since, however, he is known to have been having a sway over this region during the middle of the 10th Century this record may be one of his and its date may be about A.D. 961. The change of the god's name from Mahadevar to Alvar in this record is noteworthy. Another record of this king, was discovered recently. It is very fragmentary but the year of his reign viz. twenty second (*circa* A.D. 961) is preserved in it.

### **Aditya-II (circa A.D. 956-969)**

The two inscriptions belonging to the king Parakesarippanmar described as Virapandiyanralai konta and dated in the 3rd and 4th year of the king's reign are attributed to Aditya-II on the basis of the title. He was the son of Rajakesari Sundara Chola and became the heir apparent, but died during his father's life time itself. On the basis of the regnal years given in these two records their dates are 959-60. They record each the gift of a lamp to Tiruvannamalai Andar.

### **Uttama Chola (circa A.D. 969-985)**

One inscription copied in 1902 also belongs to a king named Parakesari. Though it might also be one of Parakesari Aditya-II's time, it is considered to be one of the time of Uttama Chola from the name of the god given here. The epigraph registers a gift of a lamp by Perunteviyar, the senior queen of Perumantikal evidently referring to the king, to the god here called as Tiruvannamalai Alvar. It appears that during this period Siva of several places was called by this name as known from an inscription from Vedaranyam where the god is called Tirumaraikkattalvar and another from Tiruverumbar where the god is called Tiruverumbiyuralvar.

## Rajakesari-I (circa A.D. 985-1014)

An epigraph in the 10th Century characters is another fragmentary one. Its characters are more developed than those of the epigraphs detailed above. On this basis it has been assigned it to the end of the 10th Century. It belongs to the 13th year of a king called Rajakesari who must be Rajaraja-I, and the date of the record must therefore be A.D. 998. It registers a grant of 20 kalanchu of tulaipon (specific gold) from the annual interest of 5 kalanchu on it, the tank of the village of *Puliyurnaticaturveti mangalam* should be kept in good repairs. The village was a *tevetanap piramateyam* in Tiruvannanadu. The donor was *Cirranpuliyur natan* (one belonging to the place called *Cirranpuliyur nadu*), the son of Vankovaraiyar (i.e., a Bana chief) named Kunamantan Kurumpakolalan Vayiramekanar. The details like the name of Tiruvannanadu and the name of the caturvetimangalam, and the term *tevetanap piramateyam* occur for the first time in this epigraph and they appear to support our assigning the record to Rajaraja-I's time. For, this *chaturvetimangalam* seems to have been established during this king's time and it continued to exist for a long time during the subsequent periods, and the nadu called Annanadu seems to have come into vogue only from now on.

## OTHER 10th CENTURY FRAGMENTARY EPIGRAPHS

Eleven more badly damaged and fragmentary inscriptions in 10th Century characters have been found in the temple, nine of them from the central shrine, one from the floor of the portico of the Davasthanam office and one from the second *prakara* wall. Even in their

mutilated condition they are seen to furnish some interesting pieces of information. For instance, one inscription which registered a gift of a lamp refers to the Tiruvannattu manratkal, the name Tiruvannattu being a characteristic appellation of the place in the 10th Century. Another one is similar to the above, but here a certain person called Malaiyan Vaja. . . of Chenchi in Cinkapura Nadu and a shepherd named Putan figure. It is interesting to note that in an inscription of about the 10th Century from Toudur in Gingee taluk, South Arcot district, a chief named Vinnkovararyan Vayiri Malaiyan figures. It is not known if this Vayiri Malaiyan had any relationship with Malaiyan Vaja ... of Chenchi of our inscription. Another inscription refers to Tiruvannattu tevakarmakal i.e., god's servants of Tiruvannattu. Yet another inscription probably has a reference to Tiruvannamalai Mahadevar and seems to register a gift of a couple of nanda lamps to the god. Another inscription also refers to the god Tiruvannamalai Mahadevar, besides mentioning Merkovalurnadu in Vana Kopati and Vira cholana apparently refers to Parantaka I "who earned this name by his victory over the invincible Krishnaraja". The year 18 occurring in this epigraph probably refers to the regnal year of Parantaka-I. Another inscription is also of the 18th year of the reign of a king who cannot be identified and it refers to the god Tiruvannamalai Mahatavar. From the repeated occurrence of the god's name Tiruvannamalai Maha devar, all these fragmentary epigraphs may be said to have belonged to the first half of the 10th Century.

At this point it must be stated that among the above mentioned epigraphs, some are built upside down and some are found paved on the floor in other places Besides,

the presence of such fragmentary epigraphs which belong to various other periods but which may have formed part of the central shrine, are found on the floor at other places in the temple, suggest unmistakably that the shrine was dismantled and rebuilt at some time in the past, perhaps more than once. (See chapter on Building Works below). Fortunately, at the time of rebuilding, the slabs bearing the above mentioned fragmentary epigraphs were also fitted into the body of the shrine.

### **Rajendra-I (circa A.D. 1012 1044)**

Three complete records engraved on the south wall of the 2nd prakara and seven fragmentary epigraphs found at different parts of the temple, belong to the king Rajendra Chola-I, the son and successor of Rajaraja-I. Of the three complete records, one is dated in the year 18 of the reign of the king and so its Christian equivalent is A.D. 1030. It records the sale of land by the people of four villages namely Adaiyur in Ataiyur nadu in Maturantaka valanadu, Cori *alias* Rajendra Chola nallur in the same nadu and division, Maicarrur in the same nadu and Mattur *alias* Eripattikantanallur in the same nadu. Besides, the people of Kulakkuti on the northern bank of the Pennai, also of the same nadu sold to the same deity some land in their village for a sum of 80 *kalanbcu* of *pon* (gold sovereign). While in the case of the villages of Adaiyur and Cori, the land sold by them is stated to be for the purpose of providing for the feeding in the hall called Sri Rajendracholan salai(choultry) within the precincts of the god Tiruvannamalai utaiyar, in the case of the other three villages no mention is made of the purpose of the sale of land. In all the cases, the people of the respective villages have

undertaken to defray the expenses relating to the payment of taxes etc. in respect of the lands sold to the temple, and so they belonged to the category of iraiyili (tax free) lands. Among the boundaries of the lands sold in each village certain interesting particulars are mentioned. For instance, among the boundaries of the land sold in Adaiyur, the land called Tanrippattu belonging to Iravi Isvaramudaiya Mahadevar is mentioned; similarly the land sold in Cori *alias* Rajentracholanallur had as one of the landmarks on its eastern side, a temple called Rajendrachola I svarmudaiya Mahatevar, evidently built during the time of Rajendra-I. Chakkiliyankuntil is also mentioned as a boundary in this village. In the case of the land sold by the village of Maicarrur, its boundaries are marked by lands owned by several individuals whose names are given, one of them being called Atiraman kuthadi i.e., Atiraman, the drama actor.

The other epigraph dated in the 19th year i.e., A.D. 1031, of the king registers five items of gift made by a panimakan (servant) of the king named Panti Utaiyativakaran of Rajarajanallur in Arvalakkurram in Arumoliteva valanadu in Sri Chola mantalam. This person set up an image of Pichandavar (i.e., Bhiksatana) at Tiruvannamalai, i.e., in the temple at Tiruvannamalai and provided for food offerings to this deity. The second item of gift by the person related to the provision of *Katti choru* (mixed rice to be eaten while on travel) to the devotees attending the procession of the Tiruvannaamalai utaiyar during the Tirukkartikai festival. The third item of the gift was that he arranged for the daily pancha kavya bath of the god Tiruvannamalai utiyar. The fourth item related to the gift of the nunda lamps to the deity Pichandavar set up by him for the burning of which he endowed 192

sheep. The fifth and the last item of gift made by the same person was the provision made for burning 14 *anukka* lamps around the Sri Vimana (i.e., central shrine) during nights by endowing 336 sheep.

The third inscription belongs to the 27th year (i.e., A.D. 1039) of the king and it has three sections each registering a grant in kind or cash for a specific service to be done in the temple of the god Tiruvannamalai utiyar on the northern bank of the Pennai in the Maturantaka valanadu. According to the first section a number of merchants (names given) of Tiruvannamalai had undertaken to pay annually, for ever, 32 *kalanchnu* of *pon* (Gold coin) to the treasury of the god in lieu of some land, using which the *Devakanmikal* of the god should perform the bathing of the god with 1000 pots of water each during the Uttarayana sankiramam and the Dakshianamaya sankiramam as well as offering peruntiruvamutu (mahanaivedya) on these occasions. This service is stated to have been instituted by the officer Nilan Venkatanar *alias* Rajarajamuventavelar of Arintavanallur in Tiruvaluntur in Tiruvaluntur nadu in Uyyakkontan valanadu in Chola mantalam. This was engraved on the 128th day of the 27th year. According to the second section, the pop and paddy received as god's share from the village of Amarttikantappereri brought under cultivation by Kovanackan *alias* Gangaikonda Chola Animurinatalvan of Atippuliyur, after exempting 4 veli of land from the village meant for some temple servants, was to be used, from the 129th day of the 27th year, for feeding the devotees including the Civacokikal and others attending the festivals in the months of Kattikai and Pankuni. This was also arranged by the officer Rajarajamuventavelar. The third section of the inscription records the endowment of

26 *kalanchnu* of *pon* for ghee and camphor for burning lamps in the temple. This service was also instituted by the same officer *Nilan Venkatan* mentioned above.

The three long inscriptions dealt with above record interesting transactions relating to the temple that had taken place during the later half of the reign of Rajendra-I. They contain a variety of information on matters not known from other inscriptions noticed earlier. Their position on the southern wall and its beautiful round *kumuda* part of the 2nd *prakara* is proof for the existence of this *prakara* in A.D. 1030. The neat way of engraving of the characters and the blemishless language of the texts are noteworthy. The statement contained in one inscription, that the record was engraved on the 128th day of the 27th year (of the king's reign) reveals the meticulous manner of transacting the business in those times. That the temple business came to be done in the name of the deity Kantesvarar is known from these records. Yet another inscription refers for the first time to the god of Tiruvannamalai as Tiruvannamalai utaiyar deviating from the practice of calling the god as Tiruvannamalai Mahadevar, Antar, Alvar. From the time of Rajendra-I onwards the name of the god came to be called as Tiruvannamalai utaiyar only.

Besides the names of individuals and those of the villages and divisions, we, for the first time, come across, from this inscription, the name of taxes like *urkatamai*, *urkkalancu*, *kumarakkakavam*, *tari irai* and *tattarpattam*, and about a revenue official called *puravu vari tinaikkalattuk kanakku* belonging to the *chirutanam* establishment.

Seven other fragmentary epigraphs of the collection copied by the French epigraphists recently belong to Rajendra-I's period. Of these, four preserve a part of the

king's *meykkirtti* (Skt. *Prasasti*) and two of the inscriptions related to some gifts. The most interesting fragment is the one which refers to a hitherto unknown queen of Rajendra I named Kalliyana madiviyar who is known for the first time from this epigraph.

### **Rajadhiraja-I (circa A.D. 1018-1054)**

Two inscriptions of Rajadhiraja-I, the son and successor of Rajendra-I have been found engraved on the north wall of the 2nd *prakara*. One of these is much damaged while the other, copied in 1902 is preserved better. Both contain the meykkirtti Tinkalar piravalara and are dated in the 32nd year (i.e., A.D. 1050) of the reign of the king. While the above inscription registers a grant of paddy to provide for food offering to a deity (details lost) during the deity's car procession to the sea (?) another inscription records the acceptance of a couple of *kalanču* of *pon* by the members of the tiruvunnalikai *sabhai* (executive committee of the temple), from the royal servant (*panimakan* Arankanaravanaiyan *alias* Vajavativakara muventavelan of Etti Ciruvelur in Tirunaraiyur nadu in Ksattriyasikamani valantu and their agreement to perform from the interest thereof every year, for ever, the service of providing sandal paste to the god Adavalar (i.e., Nataraja) of the temple of the god Tiruvannamalai utiyar during Kartikai festival every year as well as providing sandal paste for spraying during the deity's procession. The particulars noted above about the deity Adavalar's procession etc., and about the designation of Valavativakaramuventavelan as a *panimakan* are noteworthy. While this person is stated to be a *muventavelan*, Pandi Utaiyativakaran figuring in another inscription, belonging to the 19th year of Rajendra-I is

called merely as a *panimakan* only, suggesting that he did not hold any office under the king.

### **Vira Rajendra (circa 1063-1069)**

Of this king who was a younger brother of Rajadhiraja I there is a single fragmentary epigraph containing some passages of his *meykkirtti* and it may be dated to about A.D. 1065. The stone containing this inscription is now found paved on the floor on the south side to the north of the *Alankara mandapa* in the 3rd *prakara*.

At this juncture a word about an inscription from the wall of the Kili gopura has to be said. It is engraved in an insignificant place, its palaeography is of the late 12th Century and it starts abruptly with the name of the king Viraracehntiracholatevar. Above all, the persons Narpattennayirap pillai and Mangaiyarkkarasi figuring in this record also figure in another inscription copied from the same place belonging to the 24th year of Kulottunka III. So, the epigraph in question doubtlessly belongs also to the latter king's time and not to Virarajendra of the 11th Century as has been wrongly held so far.

## **FRAGMENTARY EPIGRAPHS IN 11th CENTURY CHARACTERS**

Ten fragmentary epigraphs in the characters of about the 11th Century have been discovered recently. Of these one refers to a member of the *tiruvannalikai sabhai* of the temple named An. ival Kunamantalatikal belonging to the Kausika gotra whose wife had given a lamp to be burnt in the temple for which 96 sheep were endowed and entrusted to the care of the Tiruvannamalai manradikal. Another

inscription, engraved on the *kumuda* part of the west wall of the 2nd *prakara*, is a fragment of a big record, registering gifts of paddy made to meet the expenses connected with the festival of Tirukkartikai of the god Tiruvannamalai utiyar. The items of expenses included the payment in paddy made to a person bringing water for the holy bath of the god, for providing clothes, pasting, flower garlands, *peruntiruvamutu* including various side dishes, for providing *katti choru* to the *Pan Maesvarar*, for a fuel supplier, etc. It is stated that paddy should be regularly measured out every year to meet these expenses. It appears that this arrangement was made under the supervision of a certain Kantiyur ..... Atavalan *alias* Ara ... Arkattu nattumuventavejan, evidently an official of the government.

The other fragments are much damaged and so nothing could be made out of any of them although they may be useful for a study of palaeography and of the language.

It is curious that no inscriptions, which can be attributed to the kings, like Kulottunka-I, Vikrama chola, Kulottunka-II and Rajaraja-II are found. These kings owing to the fact of their being preoccupied with political activity in the south and the north as well as with Ceylon, had little time to devote to the affairs of the temple at Tiruvannamalai which lay at some distance to the west of the north-south trunk route. Further this region was under the safe management of their loyal feudatories like the Banas who seem to have been looking after the temple well during this period as testified to by inscriptions belonging to some members of this family. (See the Banas below). Hence the absence of epigraphs of the Chola kings mentioned above at Tiruvannamalai.

## Rajadhiraja-II (circa A.D. 1166-1178)

After a gap of about a Century Virarajendra's record being dated to *circa* A.D. 1065 — we come across 5 inscriptions of the time of Rajadhiraja-II, earliest of which is dated in his 4th regnal year (i.e., A.D. 1170). As regards his relationship with his predecessor Rajaraja II and successor Kulottunka-III, certain amount of ambiguity exists. In the absence of an heir in the direct male line Rajadhiraja-II, a grandson of Vikramachola by a daughter, was chosen by Rajaraja-II as heir apparent towards the end of his reign, and Rajadhiraja-II reigned as co-regent with Rajaraja for some, years. The recent study while confirming this, gives the details that Rajadhiraja-II was the son of Rajaraja-II's sister Neriyutaipperuma and that his precoronation name was Etirili.

Of the five inscriptions of this king, four were copied by the Epigraphy department, three in 1902 (81, 82, 84) and one in 1945-46 (83), and the fifth (85) recently. Three inscriptions are dated in the 4th year of the reign of the king. One of them engraved on the walls of the Jambukesvara shrine in the 2nd prakara to the north of the Kili gopura, while confirming the existence of this shrine in A.D. 1170, registers a gift of a nanda lamp to Tiruvannmalai utaiyar by Eccian Amutavallavakkon, the son of Damodiran of Vakur in Vacalippati nadu. He made an endowment of 32 cows and a stud bull for the purpose of burning this lamp and they were left in charge of a manrati named Viruntan. Another epigraph of the same year engraved on the wall of the Chidambaresvara shrine near the above mentioned shrine, while confirming the existence of the shrine in A.D. 1170, records another gift of a nunda lamp to the same god by the above mentioned donor who is here stated to be the

son of Malartali (evidently his mother) together with the endowment of 32 cows and one stud bull which were left with the same Viruntan.

The third record of A.D. 1170, on the wall of the same shrine supplies us with an interesting information. It records the gift of one and a half *nunda* lamps to the same god here called Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar by Kulattutaiyan Nakan Kayilayan residing at Kala..yam on the northern bank of the Pennai in Vanakappadi, in order to expiate the sin of killing one Cholan devan. It is stated that this act of killing was inadvertent because, while hunting, the former aimed an arrow at a wild animal which, missing its target, pierced the latter. For burning the 1½ lamps he endowed 52 cows and a stud bull. The inscription of the 7th year i.e., A.D. 1173 registers a gift of two *nunda* lamps for which 64 cows and two bulls were endowed by Marutan *alias* Ayarkula Nayakakkon, to the god Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar, the endowed animals being left in charge of Malaiyan Puman *alias* Aruuakirikkon who is described as “this god’s *tiruvilakku manrati*. The donor, the son of *manrati* Vatavikkon is stated to have belonged to Palanakar in Palkunrak kottam in Jeyankontachola mantalam. The recently discovered fragmentary epigraph also of the 7th year, i.e., A.D. 1173, is interesting in that it registers an undertaking given by three persons (names lost) not to do anything against Appakayan Kuttatuntevar *alias* Piritivi Kankan who was probably a feudatory of the king. The record is said to have been engraved in the temple of the Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar. This is the first epigraph to register an oath of fealty given by three men to a feudatory chief of the king, indicating the surfacing of unrest amongst locally important personages.

## FRAGMENTS OF EPIGRAPHS IN 12th CENTURY CHARACTERS

Over twenty stone pieces containing fragments of epigraphs in characters of the 12th Century are found fixed in several places of the temple like the floor on the south side of the 2nd *prakara*, on the platform in the same place where the *sthala vrksha* are standing, on the Rishi gopuram, on the edge of the barricade like part around the central shrine, the *antarala* — like part in front of the *ardha* mantaps of the central shrine, on the Kili gopura, on the south wall of the 1st *prakara*, and on the north wall of the 3rd *prakara* (inside), in the godown to the north of the Amman shrine. Evidently these fragments formed part of long records, which went into an original building, which was at some time in the past remodelled. It is unlikely that the original blocks of stone that contained the complete records formed part of the central shrine proper as well as its original first enclosure wall. While the latter does not exist any longer, the extant central shrine shows distinct marks of reconstruction. (See chapter on Building works).

These fragmentary epigraphs are noticed here to show the vast quantity of writing that existed in the temple before the remodelling work was undertaken. Besides, they are given here just to enable a study of the manner of writing of those ages as well as to show how certain words and phrases were used then. A few particulars of interest culled from some of these fragments are as follows: one refers to a gift of a lamp for which 32 cows were endowed by Kankeyarayan; a second makes mention of Periyamudaliyar pillaikal, probably referring to the disciples of a head of an

institution; a third refers to Vinnavatirapputteri, *cittirameli* and Kannaramutap perumal; while a fourth mentions (Jayankon tachola mantalam); another refers to a capacity measure called Alalacuntarankal, to Perumalnacci, Tirujnanacambant(an) and Kalinkantai and also refers to the god as Tiruvannamalaiyudaiya naya(nar).

The Inscriptions of Rajadhiraja-II and of his time discussed above do not give us any inkling about the fierce political activity between the Cholas and the Pandyas that marked the last years of the rule of Rajadhiraja-II and throughout the period of Rajadhiraja-II. Neither do they contain information about his fight with the chiefs of the regions in the west or the north. No information about any of the feudatories like the Cenkenis and the Kadavarayas of his period is also revealed by these epigraphs. So, we cannot either confirm or dispute the growth of feudal conditions during this king's time in this place and their bad effect on the central government from the inscriptions of this king in our collection. However, one of the inscriptions referred to above, is a solitary instance noticed up to the 7th year of the reign of Rajadhiraja-II from this place, on the development of a new situation in which the local chieftains began to enter into political compacts calculated to regulate their conduct towards the emperor. These compacts seem to have had an important role in effecting the transition by which the class of official nobility, which had at first grown with the growth of the Chola empire, converted itself into a number of petty local chieftaincies of a hereditary character. It is remarkable that the binding power of these compacts is often sought to be secured by the most fearful imprecations some of which are too shocking to be reproduced here.

### Kulottunka-III (circa A.D. 1178-1218)

Inscriptions belonging to Kulottunka-III's time are numerous. This seems to get support from the fact that the collection of epigraphs from this single temple includes as many as forty nine items attributable to the period of reign of Kulottunka-III, the successor of Rajadhiraja-II. Kulottunka-III ruled for forty years and his records upto that year are known. Only records belonging to the regnal years 2 to 35 excepting those of the years 7 to 9, 12, 15, 16, 22, 23, 31 and 34 are available. One of the second year commencing abruptly with the name of the king Virarajentiracholatevar which was attributed by others to Virarajendra of A.D. 1067. Another epigraph of the 11th year is included here just because the title of Tribuvana Viracholatevar of the king occurs in it, although the king is stated to have borne the title only from his 24th year and that the astronomical details preserved by this record were found by Keilhorn not to work out correctly for this reign. Amongst the epigraphs under study only one genuine record of the 35th year contains the title Tiribuvanaviratevar. One epigraph which does not preserve the date particulars but containing the name Virarajentiracholatevar coupled with the title Tiribuvanaccakkaravattikal is included on the basis of the title. Two inscriptions engraved one on each wall of the Kili gopura, which are in Sanskrit and in the Grantha script of the 12th Century find a place here in spite of the fact that they do not contain the name of the king or any other particulars relating to him, on the assumption that Mantrivara Bhaskara who, according to the epigraphs, was responsible for the coming into existence of the gopura (gopur odaya karanam) and was an important Mantri of Kulottunka III. As shown below (see chapter on Buildings

Works), the *gopura* along with the enclosure wall and other adjuncts associated with it might have come into existence by the 2nd year of the king's reign because of the existence on its wall of the 2nd year record already referred to.

The meykkirttis of the king are not seen in any of the inscriptions dealt with here. Neither do they contain descriptive titles mentioning about his campaigns and conquests of Karur and Kanichipuram or about his performing anointments (*vira or vijayabhiseka*). However, in five records, three of the 27th year one of the 28th year and one in which the date is not preserved, the title *Maduraiyum Ilamum Pandiyan mutittalaiyun kontaruliya* occurs. This means 'who was pleased to take Madurai, Ilam and the crowned head of the Pandiya'. The occurrence of this single title amongst his 49 inscriptions dealt with here gives room to infer that the king valued the achievements mentioned here as important and characteristic of his regime while the other ones were of an ephemeral nature.

## OTHER NOTEWORTHY POINTS FURNISHED BY THESE INSCRIPTIONS

### A) Temples, gifts made to them, worship in them, etc.

The temple of Tiruvannamalai has been, naturally, the object of veneration and so a majority of the inscriptions relate to the gifts made to it. The god is invariably called as Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar. A number of inscriptions register grants made for *nunda* (perpetual) lamps. According to a recently discovered inscription a gift of 53 *canti* (twilight) lamps is referred to in an epigraph. Another epigraph records the gift of 600 *kuli* of land as *tiruvilakkuppuram* for burning

an *anukkan* lamp in front of the god in the name of the donor's mother, Nilammai. Except in the last case where land was endowed for the burning of the lamp, in other cases cows and bulls are said to have been endowed for the purpose. Generally 32 cows and a stud bull (*poli erutu* or its Sanskrit equivalent *rihsabam* in several epigraphs) were given for a *nunda* lamp. In one epigraph, 32 cows alone are stated to have been endowed and they were left in charge of Kantan Matattan *alias* Alalasantarakkan who was one of the *tiruvilakku manradikal* of the god. This term, which occurred in a record of an earlier period also, implies that there were certain families of shepherds or cowherds (*manradi* whose main work was to maintain the cows or sheep endowed by donors and to provide ghee for the burning of the lamps gifted by them to the temple. It is interesting to note that none of the gifts of lamps was accompanied by the endowment of sheep.

Gifts of lands as tirunnalliezhuchippuram (i.e., the service of waking up the god in the morning) are recorded in a couple of records. For another early morning service to the god (*chiru kalac canti*) lands were gifted as *tirumantiraponakopuram* according to a couple of epigraphs. Lands are said to have been given to provide for service to the god during the late night (*ardhajama*). Some inscriptions register gifts of lands to provide for the kitchen (tirumadaippallipuram). One inscription records the gift of 51 *kalanchu* of gold for making ornaments to adorn the god, while another refers to the gift of 110 *kalanchu* of gold for a necklace to be provided for the god. There is an inscription recording the gift of a plantain grove and associated land to provide for the sandal paste and civet and another granting the revenue from the

*makamai* in gold and paddy to provide for the clothes, camphor and sandal paste to the god. Two epigraphs register gifts of land together with their incomes for worship and works in the temple (*pucaikkwn tirunnanikkum*).

As regards festivals, two epigraphs refer to three festivals, but they do not state anything about what they were and when they were held. In one epigraph, a body of merchants called the Tanmavaniyar had undertaken to provide flag cloth during the 3 festivals. The other epigraph is primarily intended to register the gift made by a body of merchants called the Cattiyavacaka Tanmavaniyar probably identical with the above mentioned body of 500 *kuli* of land as *matappuram* to a *matam* named *Ukkirar cattiyavacaka tanmavaniyar* *matam* for the purpose of feeding the *Mahesvaras* during the 3 festivals. The inscription, however, mentions *Tirukkartikai tirunal*. It states that from this festival of the 32nd year (of the king's reign) twenty persons were employed as *tiruvitiyantar* to maintain whom some lands were gifted, probably by the king.

One inscription, is interesting in that it records the setting up of an image of the goddess (*Nachiyar*) in the *Tirukkamakkottam* (i.e., the goddess' shrine) and also gifting of gold for ornaments to the image and of lands to provide for food offering to the deity. Amongst the epigraphs this record dated A.D. 1180 is the earliest to refer to a *Tirukkamakkotam*. Another epigraph, dated A.D. 1202, refers to the setting up of an image of Suntarapperumal and his consorts and to the provision in gold made for an eye ornament to the Goddess (*Nachiyar*).

All the above mentioned inscriptions refer to the deeds connected with the god and the goddess of the main temple. There is an epigraph, dated A.D.1181, which,

however, registers a gift of land in a village made by the temple authorities to provide for worship and offering to a temple called Chempiyan Madevisvaramutaiyar and to the deity ... pillaiyar (probably Kshetrapala pillaiyar). From a couple of other records, this temple is said to have stood near the southern gateway. The name indicates that the temple should have been raised in honour of the queen Chempiyanmatevi, the wife of Gandaradityachola, or by herself. At present no trace of any such shrine exists in any part on the southern side of the present temple precincts. But from the epigraph in question we know for certain that the shrine existed in A.D. 1181.

## DONORS

The donors were generally the chiefs of the region who were evidently subordinate to the king, and we will be dealing with them later. There were also donors belonging to some other communities, organisations, and individuals. According to the epigraph, dated A.D. 1202, two individuals, named Narpattennayirappi, the *kilaiyan* (probably a mistake for kilavan meaning 'headman') of Arunkunram and Mangaiyarkarasiyar did some charitable works in the temple including the setting up of the images of Suntarapperumal and his consorts, mentioned already, and building a stone *mantapa* named Mangaiyarkkarsi *mantapam* to house them. They seem to have been locally important personages noted for their high sense of compassion and charitable disposition, which is acknowledged in this record. The inscription states that when during the 24th year of the reign of the king, there was famine in the place and rice was sold at *ulakku* per *kasu*, they, utilising their wealth comprising of jewellery

(*punta pon* and acquired money and paddy (*tetina arttamum nellum*) brought an area of fallow land of the temple under cultivation for the benefit of the people. The village thus formed was called Tiruvannamalaip perumalnallur. In recognition of their service, the temple *tanattar* gave them land in Alakiyacholanallar *alias* Tirumenipiriyatanallur. That they were persons of distinction even in earlier days is proved by the epigraph dated A.D. 1180, which, though a private record of theirs containing the information that they gave away the village of Cimakecuranallur to a certain Tondai manachiyar, the daughter of Kankaiyar, is engraved on the wall of the Kili gopura.

In another epigraph certain Kalitevan *alias* Immati Chokkaperumal *alias* Muraiyatarayan, the son of Madavar, figures as a donor. He was probably a big landlord, as his gift consisted of a village.

A couple of records relate to the gifts made by a certain body of merchants. In an inscription dated A.D. 1183, the body called *Tanmavaniyar* was the donor. The epigraph states that the body of Kattiyavasaka tanmavaniyar gifted lands as *madappuram*. As has been suggested above, these two may refer to one and the same organisation.

According to another epigraph, dated A.D. 1181, the temple authorities including Mahecurarakkankani ceyvarkal and *koyir kaoakkan* themselves were the donors.

### **Rajaraja-III (circa A.D. 1216-1260)**

The epigraphs from Tiruvannamalai include as many as 39 numbers belonging to the time of Rajaraja chola-III. They range in date from the 3rd year of the reign of the king to the 32nd year. Though records of some years are not found, the range of date indicates that the king's sway

over the region of which Tiruvannamalai was the focus, extended from the earlier years to the 32nd year of his reign period.

It is not yet certainly known if Rajaraja-III was Kulottunka-III's son or not. It is known, however, that he was chosen heir apparent by the latter in A.D. 1216 itself, i.e., two years before his death. Amongst the epigraphs under examination here, none contains any of his two known *meykkirttis*. Six out of the 39 numbers have particulars of date. Only two of them give correct equivalents in the Christian era, while the rest are either irregular or defective in one or two details.

A.D. 1232, May 22, Saturday.

A.D. 1234, March 9, Ashtami; but the *nakshatra* was Ardra, not Rohini.

If the year was 17, the equivalent is A.D. 1233, November 13, Sunday. The 10th *tithi* was for. 12 of the day. For year 18, the data does not work out correctly. So, there is some mistake somewhere in giving the date particulars.

A.D. 1246, December 7, Friday, not Sunday, the *tithi* and *nakshatra* agreeing.

A.D. 1248, February 7, Friday.

Not regular, but probably equal to A.D. 1248, April 3. Wednesday.

These equivalents afford us an opportunity to fix the approximate date of accession of Rajaraja-III. On the first occasion Kielhorn fixed it between the 17th March and the 13th August, A.D. 1216 after calculating the dates of ten inscriptions. Subsequently, he had calculated the accession date as lying between the 27th June and the 10th July, A.D. 1216. This means that the 24th year was

current before June-July of A.D. 1240. According to an inscription given above, the regnal year 32 was current in February 7, A.D. 1248, meaning that the 1st year was current in February A.D. 1216. According to another inscription the regnal year 17, was current in March 1234. This means that regnal year 16 ended before this date. Taking these two dates together, the 1st year of the king's reign may have begun some time after February 7 and before March 9 of A.D. 1216.

## POLITICAL CONDITION DURING THE PERIOD

Rajaraja-III inherited a vast kingdom from Kulotunka-III. For the reason viz, the lack of strong support from loyal blood relations, Rajaraja-III also experienced a good deal of difficulties in managing his dominions, caused by his subordinate chiefs and by enemies from outside, and his strategies ended in failures. Some families of subordinate chiefs like the Vankovaraiyas and the Katavarayas which showed signs of asserting their independence during the time of Kulottunka-III, became more vigorous in their efforts during the period under discussion. In fact, two Katavaraya chiefs, named Kop Peruncinka-I and II, father and son, are known to have declared their independence from their Chola suzerain. Similar was the case with the Gandagopala chiefs of Nellore. Apart from these chiefs, the Paradyas of Madurai under Maravarman Sundarapandya-I (*accn. circa* A.D. 1216) began to wreak vengeance on Rajaraja III for the sufferings the latter's ancestors inflicted upon the former's ancestors. In order to contain these troubles Rajaraja III is said to have sought and obtained the help from the Hoysala king Narasimha-II (*circa* A.D. 1222-1234), who was related to Rajaraja.

The Hoysala king readily obliged him and intervened in Tamilnadu politics effectively to the advantage of his Chola ally and at the same time gaining a strong foothold there which was held by his successors till A.D. 1342, the last year of Ballala-III. The Tiruvannamalai epigraphs of Rajaraja-III do not give us any idea of such matters. But Inscriptions of the Pandyas, the Hoysalas, the Katavarayas etc., unequivocally attest to the happenings of the period. The absence of Rajaraja's records of years 4, and 6-10, at Tiruvannamalai seems to indicate that his reign was under strain during these early years.

Despite the difficulties that Rajaraja-III experienced, he was recognised as the ruler over a considerable territory. This is proved by the existence of inscriptions in several places of his dominions, which recorded, endowments made by vassals and friends citing Rajaraja's regnal years. For instance, one inscription, of our collection, issued in the 30th regnal year of the king (i.e., A.D. 1246), records a gift of a *nunda* lamp by Venautaiyan Perumal pillai, the younger brother of Cenkanivayan Chola kon, a *mutali* of Avani Alappirantan Kop-Peruncinka, the enemy of the king. The donor named Nampirattiyar Nachiyar of an inscription, dated in the 31st regnal year was the daughter of this same chief herein named Kutalalappirantan Kittavarayan Catum Perumal. According to inscripition, dated in the 29th regnal year of the king (A.D.1245), a certain Kollai Iruceyan, a servant (*adikal*) of Nayanar (king) Kantakopalar of Nallur (? Nellore), the same as the Gandagopala chief, donated a *nunda* lamp to the god of Tiruvannamalai. Thus Rajaraja-III continued to be the sovereign ruler for 44 years i.e., till A.D. 1260.

## DONATIONS OF LAMPS AND LANDS

About 15 epigraphs record as usual gifts of *nunda* lamps, except one (135) which refers to a gift of a *canti* lamp. Barring two of them which refer to the endowment of sheep, 100 in one epigraph, and 24 in another epigraph, the rest state that the endowment consisted of cows and bulls, generally 32 cows and 1 bull for a *nunda* lamp, with, some exceptions, one of which mentioning the endowment of 30 cows and another mentioning the endowment of 50 cows. The rationale for this deviation from the number of animals usually endowed is not known. Similarly the reason for the endowment of 100 sheep for a *nunda* lamp in one case and 24 sheep for a similar lamp in another case is not known while normally 96 sheep used to be endowed for the gift of such a lamp. In the case of the gift of the *canti* lamp the endowment consisted of 5 *kasu* which was given to a Sivabrahmana, from the interest accruing on this amount, the lamp was to be burnt. The cows and sheep were left usually with cowherds or shepherds. But in one instance where the endowment was of 100 sheep, they are said to have been entrusted to a *tiruvilakku manrati*. It may be mentioned that while the epigraphs of Kulottunka-III's time do not contain any record registering an endowment of sheep in respect of the gifts of *nunda* lamps, two inscriptions of Rajaraja-III's period examined above record endowment of sheep for the same purpose.

The donors of the *canti* and *nunda* lamps, mentioned above included ordinary men and women, officials, and feudatory chiefs. Among the more common donors mention may be made of the woman named Kamanai,

the daughter of Maruntantal who was the daughter of another woman (name lost) belonging to Nakattampunti, dated A.D. 1219; a certain person named Eranampi chetti, of the Chetti community hailing from Kulamukku in Malai mandalam or Kerala dated A.D. 1241; a person named Kollai Iruceyan stated to be *peratikal* (a servant ?) of the chief Kaptakopalar of Nallar nadu (epigraph dated A.D. 1245); one woman named Vatavgyilantai, wife of Kattiaracar (epigraph, dated A.D. 1247) and one TalaikkgviriAlumpillai *alias* Nayakkar Narayanan belonging to Tirumayilappur i.e., Mylapore in Madras (ep. dated A.D. 1248). The group of officials included Utaiytan Mutiyan *alias* Nittavinota Makatarayan who figures in one epigraph dated A.D. 1229) ; Kulattulan Tirukkalatti utaiyan Ammai Appan *alias* Villavatarayan of Ninrai (ep. dated A.D.1231) who is stated to be a *mudali* of Cennatikkanai *alias* Yatavarayar in ep. dated A.D. 1234 and whose daughter Komalavalli was a donor of a lamp as per this epigraph; Tirumalaiyalakiyan *alias* Vira Vira Pallavaraiyan, son of Aramutaiyal and a *kaikkala* of the temple of the god Atkontatevar of Piramatocam Tiruvennai nallar (ep. dated A.D.1237); and Perumal pillai *alias* Venavutaiyan, the younger brother of Cenkanivayan Cholakan, a *mudali* of Avani Alappirantan Kop Peruncinkan (ep. dated A.D.1246). Only a single feudatory chief is known from our epigraphs to have donated a *nunda* lamp. He was Vira Cholan Attimallan Sampuvarayan *alias* Etirilicholac Sampuvarayan (ep.dated A.D. 1235). It is not unlikely that he is identical with Cenkeni Attimallan Sampuvarayan *alias* Etirilicholac Sampuvarayan figuring in an inscription dated A.D. 1232 from Tiruvennainallar.

Two epigraphs (of the 11th year and of the 32nd year) relate to the gifts of lands to provide for flower garlands to the god. In the former, the donor was Umaiyalval, the daughter of a Chetiyarayar and wife of Chittiyaracar. In the latter the donor was Umaiyalvar who is said to be the wife of Ilakkumatevar. This woman was apparently different from her namesake of the earlier record. Three inscriptions (of the 17th year; of the 24th year; of the 30th year) record gifts of lands to provide for the requirements of the kitchen of the temple called as *tirumadaippallipuram*. The donor of the first record was Arakalur Tempaiyalvan Iraratevan Vankovaraiyan who gave away the village of Kuvanur, in a specified area, together with its incomes for the purpose as well as for the purposes of a *canti* and a festival. The donor of the second record was *Kiliyur Akaracuran* Tiruvannamalaipperumal *alias* Iracakempiras Cetiyyarayan who gave away the village of Koti *alias* Cholaner Kop irantan nallar together with all its incomes as *Devadanam* to the god for this purpose. The donor of the third record was Tiyakasamuttirappattai Sittamarachar Tikkanaipperumal *alias* Tirukkalattidevan. He gave away the village of Sirramar situated in the specified area, together with its incomes (names given) to meet the expenses of the gift. The incomes from the village were also meant for the service called Calamikkakantan Santi. One of the inscriptions (ep. of the 17th year relates to the assignment of Paraiyan ental and another place together with all its incomes as *matappuram* by the temple tanattar to Pataiv .. vanacciyar, the daughter of Villiyalvi for for the welfare of her daughter Katampandai and her younger brother Kettanayan. The incomes from the gift lands were intended to feed the *Mahesvaras* eternally.

Three inscriptions refer to the gift of lands to provide for the special services instituted in the temple by certain individuals. One of them, dated in the 17th regnal year, registers a gift of the village of Kuvanur together with its incomes to provide for the service called Ponparappinaperumal Santi, as well as for the kitchen of the temple and a festival called Etuttu turvalap perumal tirunal. The donor was Arakalur Tempaiyalvan Iraratevan Vanakovaraiyan. Another epigraph, dated in the 25th regnal year records the gift of the village of Kottappunti situated in the specified area, as Devadanam together with all its incomes by Chenkeni Kannutaip Perumal Alakiya Pallavan *alias* Vikkrama Chola Sampuvarayan to provide for food offering during the service called the Alakiya Pallavan Santi, named after him, instituted by him. The third epigraph dated in the 30th regnal year registers the gift of the village of Chirramur, in the specified area, together with its incomes, by Tiyakacamuttirappattai Chittamaracar Tikkanaip perumal *alias* Tirukkalattitevan to provide for the service called Calamikkakautan santi, instituted by him, to the god. The gift, it is stated, was intended to provide for the kitchen also.

Among the inscriptions under study one dated in the 30th regnal year refers to the gift of a standing lamp, evidently a *nunda* lamp, by Umaiyalvar, the wife of Ilakkumatevar, who is already referred to above. Another epigraph belonging to the 31st regnal year records the gift of some amount of pon by Nampirattiyar Nachiyar, the daughter of Pennarasi *alias* Otaiyalvar, the wife of Katalalappirantan Kathavarayan Catumperumal for making some ornaments for the god. A third epigraph refers to the re-erection of the damaged tiruvetuttukkatti

of the temple by a certain TirrUnnatic Ceyapalan Tontan, son of Mananceri Kutaicciar Tevanral.

The record belonging to the 16th year of the king's reign has been considered important by some scholars. The date particulars contained in this epigraph correspond to A.D. 1232, May 22, Saturday. This inscription records the order of the authorities of the temple of the god Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar, viz. *Cimahesvarak kankani ceyvarkal tevarkanmi*, and *koyir kankkan*, stipulating the rates of *katamai* etc. to be paid by Tiruvennainallur Meykantatevan Urutaiyaperumal *alias* Etuttatuvaliyavelar in respect of the new hamlet called Meykautatevapputteri which he caused to be dug up in the god's *devadana* village of Iiranallur in Cenkunra nadu. The order further specifies that one third of the new village would become the *devadanam* to provide for worship and offering to the god Meykanticu ramudaiya nayanar which was caused to be set up there. It also stated that since the individual dug up the land and tank by using his own money, they were given to him as *kuti ninka devadanam* to be his perpetual *kani*. One scholar referring to this inscription has said that in view of its date, and of the main person Meykantadevan figuring in it, his native place, and his charitable deeds, he must be the learned man of the same name, who composed in Tamil the theological work called the *Sivajnanabodam* which forms the basic text for all the latter Saiva Siddhanta works.

But other scholars has not said a word about the identification of Meykantatevan of our inscription with the author of the *Sivajnanabodam*, although the Tamil verse quoted by him in praise of the author and his work contains two names Vennai and Meykantan which are

respectively the same as Tiruvennainallur and Meykantatevan of our record. The inscription in question refers to the formation of a new hamlet by Meykantatevan and the record is not clear as to who caused the Siva temple at Iraranallur to be built, although the name of the god Meykanticuramudaiya nayanar may suggest that the temple was the work of this person. These two deeds, may not be considered as very important ones; and except for these works there is nothing in the inscription to indicate that this Meykantatevan *alias* Etuttatuvaliyavelar was, though a man of religion was also a man of letters to warrant his identification with the homonymous author of the great *Sivjananabodam*.

## OTHER MISCELLANEOUS TRANSACTIONS

Two inscriptions of this group are of interest in that they are records of transactions done by the authorities of the temple of the god, pertaining to allotment by them of temple lands to private individuals. One of them dated in the 20th regnal year registers the reassignment of lands in the village of Simahesvaranallar, a *devadanam* of the god, by the temple *tanattar* consisting of *Srimahesvara kankariseyvar*, *tanattar*, *tevakannikal*, and *koyil kanakkar*, to eight persons (names given). This epigraph reveals the fact that the two persons, a brother and his sister, who were active in A.D. 1180 and who did some noteworthy charitable and philanthropic deeds during the period of Kulottunka-III were alive till the 19th year (i.e., A.D.1235) of Rajaraja-III. Further it shows that a number of new allottees who were probably settled in the village, hailed from different places like Arumulai, Vitur, Putuvar, Tiruvampur, and Vetci and they included

a *tevaradiyal* named Tiruvampa lampiriyata pillaiyar. The manner of settlement of the rates of annual payment of rent is also interesting.

The other epigraph, dated in the 26th regnal year also deals with a similar assignment of the village of Tikkanaipperumalnallur which was reclaimed on the opposite side of the tank of the village of Kalamularpunti in Anna nadu and the settlement of the rates of annual payment of rents, by the *Cluruttira Cimahecurar*. *Cimahecurak kankani seyvar tanapatimahecurar tevakanmikal* and *koyir karakkar*. But here, the allottee was a single individual named Tiyakacamuttirappattai Cittamaracar Tikkanaipperumal and the village was made his *kani*.

### Rajendra III (circa A.D. 1246-1279)

Five epigraphs, three of which are very much damaged and fragmentary, are considered to belong to the period of Rajendra III. However, only one of them) of the 5th year contains the king's name Rajentirachola tavar coupled with the title *Tiripuvanaccakkaravattikal*. In two other inscriptions, dated in the 4th regnal year and another ep. (which does not preserve the date particulars), the king's name is given as Vijaiya Rajendra Cholatevar. But on the basis of the presence of the above mentioned title and other internal details the king mentioned in these inscriptions is taken to be Rajendra III. The other two fragmentary records are assumed to be of this king's time on grounds of palaeography although they can also go with the fragmentary inscriptions of the 13th Century. No doubt the inscriptions under examination are few in number; and the pieces of information they contain are fewer.

In spite of the fact that this king is stated to be abler than his predecessor Ra jaraja III and that his inscriptions especially after A.D. 1250, 'when Rajaraja III was continuing as the king and whose inscriptions of this period are restricted mostly to North and South Arcot districts, are relatively more numerous and some are from practically all parts of the Chola kingdom, there is only a single, genuine record of his time. The king's *meykkirtti* which is interestingly in Sanskrit and which is found in inscriptions of the 7th year of his reign is not met with in the epigraphs under reference, since two well preserved items belong to the king's 4th and 5th regnal years and in the rest the portion containing the date particulars is badly damaged.

It has been stated above that the relationship between Kulottunka-III and Rajaraja-III is not yet definitely known. The same uncertainty prevails in respect of the relationship between Rajaraja-III and Rajendra-III also.

According to a scholar, the increase in the activities of Rajendra were due to an understanding between him and Rajaraja-III, and that there is no evidence for the statements made by the above scholars. It should be mentioned here that as there is no clear evidence to tell us about his real relationship with his predecessor, so also vagueness shrouds his political deeds and military exploits. About one matter, however, there is some amount of certainty viz., that he was friendly with the Telugu Coda chief Tikka or Ganda gopala. Though Hoysala Narasimha assisted Rajaraja-III and helped him on more occasions than one against the Pandyas and the Kadavarayas, Somesvara, the son of Narasimha who was contemporary of both Rajaraja and Rajendra and who was addressed as '*mama*' by the latter helped the Pandya to whom also he

was 'mama', against Rajandra. It is also known that the feudatory chiefs like the Sambuvarayas and the Kadavarayas were like thorns on his body and in controlling them he got good support from Tikka, the Telugu Coda chief mentioned above. It is said that all his activities should have been done before A.D. 1253, the date of his *prasasti* containing a narration of them.

However, that a couple of years before this date, i.e., in A.D. 1251, Rajendra was on friendly terms with the Hoysala king Somesvara is known from one of our inscriptions which registers a gift of a village as *tirurmadaippallipuram* to the god of Tiruvannamalai by Sinkana tannayakkan, described as illustrious *Mahapradanan* and *Mantalikar Iyamaracan*, who was the general of Hoysala Somesvara, although in A.D. 1241, this self same general according to an inscription is said to have created troubles in the Chola kingdom and another *dandanayaka* of Somesvara named Ravi deva, as per some other epigraphs, is said to have captured a part of the same kingdom in A.D. 1245, which were evidently adverse actions against the Cholas. It is, there fore, clear from the Tiruvannamalai record mentioned above and from similar records found in other places in which the Hoysala officers figure as donors quoting the Chola king's regnal years, that Rajendra's policy towards the Hoysala king, had borne fruit and that he was justified in possessing the titles "the restorer of the race of Manu" and "the ruler who avenged the humiliation of the Cholas". But there was also a political reason for the coming together of these two powers, for the Pandyas grew strong under the powerful Jatavarman Sundara pandya-I (*accession*. A.D. 1251), and posed a threat to the other powers in the South. There was,

therefore, an urgent necessity for the Cholas and the Hoysalas to combine and offer resistance jointly to the Pandyan forces. Their efforts, however, were apparently feeble compared to the might of the valiant Sundarapandya who within a short period after he ascended the Pandyan throne forced Rajendra to become his subordinate and Somesvara to return to Mysore region for safety, and the latter i.e., Hoysala Somesvara, was slain in A.D. 1264 at Kannanur near Tiruchirappalli, when he renewed a war with this Pandya ruler. Rajendra-III, whose jurisdiction was limited to the Chola nadu after A.D. 1261, continued till 33rd regnal year i.e., A.D.1279, as a subordinate of the Pandyan king and died leaving behind no successor to rule the Chola kingdom which eventually got merged with the Pandyan empire.

## DONATIONS OF LANDS AND LAMP

Two of the epigraphs deal with the gift of lands as *tirumadaippallipuram* (i.e., to provide for the kitchen requirements) to the god Tiruvannamala it udaiya nayanar. In one dated in the 4th regnal year (i.e., A.D. 1250), the donor is said to be Kankaiyadevan Kannutaipperumal *alias* Iracatiraja Karkatamarayan of Arappur. He gave the village of Kattari situated on the northern side of the Puramalai nadu which is said to be the donor's *nadu*. The gift included also the taxes accruing from the village. That Puramalai nadu, which comprised part of the present Salem district, belonged to the donor named Kankaiyatevan bearing the title of Karkatamarayan shows that the family of this chief belonged to this region and that it was an ancestor of this chief who is stated to have been defeated by a Katavaraya during the last years of Kulottunka-III's reign. The other

title of Kankaiyan namely Rajadhiraja reminds one of Rajadhiraja-II. Probably the family of this chief benefitted much from this Chola king or brought into prominence by him. That may be the reason for the chief of the inscription in question to continue to cherish the name of Rajadhiraja-II by adding it to his own name.

The other record dated in the 5th regnal year (i.e., A.D. 1251) which has been already mentioned above, registers the gift of the village of Makulampunti situated on the southern bank of the Cheyyaru together with its incomes in taxes (names given), as *tirunadaip pallipuram* to provide for food offering during the service instituted in the temple of the god by *Mahapradanan Mantalikal iyamaracan* Chinkana tannayakkan for the physical welfare of his maternal uncle Kampaya tannayakkar. Cinkanatannayakkan who is described in the Sanskrit verse in line 7 of the text, as *gosthapa harana* meaning the capturer of a *gostha* (Tamil *kottam*, a territorial division), although the name of the same is not mentioned, was the general of Somesvara and as stated above, ten years earlier i.e., in A.D. 1241, he, evidently, on the orders of this king, worked against Rajaraja-III and caused destruction of temples. But the Tiruvannamalai inscription states that the occasion for his gift to the god was his conquest of Prthviganga and the village he donated served as the pillar of this victory. We have seen above that for a long time before, the family of chiefs bearing the name of Pirutivikanka was a prominent ally or agent of the Cholas in charge of the Tiruvannamalai area. Why and when he fell out of grace of the Cholas that provoked the Hoysala general to intervene in the matter, perhaps in aid of Rajendra, and defeat Pirutivikanka is not easy to know.

The gift village is said to be also intended to meet the expenses of the festival called *Tiruvacantan alias Tiruvekampamutaiyan* in the month of Chittirai as well as for the construction of the enclosure wall (*tirumadil*) called *Tiruvekampamutaiyan*. His uncle Kampaya tannayakkar for whose physical welfare the gift was primarily made was another Hoysala general.

The damaged and fragmentary epigraph in the 13th Century characters, bearing the regnal year probably of Rajendra-III relates to a gift of a *nunda* lamp. The fragmentary record, also in the 13th Century characters contains the interesting information that the people of the *nadu* situated to the north of the Karuvilliyaru gave a certain undertaking (details lost) to two persons one of whom was Enakkunallaperumal. The last epigraph also damaged but containing the regnal year 27, perhaps of the same king, refers to the setting up of a deity Kamaladevesvara.

## CONCLUSION

There are eighteen records (1 to 18), mostly fragmentary, representing the period from Aditya I's time (1, A.D. 885) to the time of Rajaraja-I (18, A.D. 998) and a majority of them belong to the time of Parantaka I indicating his interest in the temple. During this period the place was called either as Tiruvannattu or Tiruvannamalai. The god of the temple bore the name of Tiruvannattu Mahadevar, Tiruvannamalai Mahadevar, Tiruvannamalai Andar, or Tiruvannamalai Alvar. Several records of this period relate to the gift of one *nunda* (perpetual lamp) to the temple. It is noteworthy that the donors of lamps included some distinguished persons like Kilanatikal, the queen of Seramanar, Perunteviyar, the

queen of Perumanatikal, and Tennavan Brahamadhirajan. Presumably these people visited the temple at the time when they gifted the lamps. No other information, on building works, on festivals, on special worship, etc., is, however, available from these records. References to *sabhai* in some epigraphs indicate that there were in and around Tiruvannamalai *brahmin* settlements in those places. Mention is made of Kantalur nadu, Marunkur nadu, Pankala nadu, Ilataipatti, Cirraupuliyur nadu, Cinkapura nadu, Merkovalur nadu. This indicates that the region around Tiruvannamalai was a flourishing one. It seems that the people of this region have sustained the temple.

Then we come to the period of Rajendra-I to whose reign belong three complete records and some fragmentary ones. Apparently the second *prakara* was in existence in A.D. 1030 although there is no record showing when it was put up. In all probability it was built earlier in the reign of this king. Of the three epigraphs of Rajendra 1, the first one registers the purchase of lands by the temple from some *urars* which were intended to defray the expenses of feeding (perhaps the visiting devotees, free of charge) in the feeding house named Rajentra Cholan chalai after the name of the king, established in the precincts of the god Tiruvannamalai utaiyar. The second epigraph dated A.D. 1031, records certain gifts of land made by a servant (*panimakan*) named Panti Utayativakaran, These records clearly indicate that there was increase in the population in the area around Tiruvannamalai, increase in the activities of the temple, probably including the building of the second *prakara*, and the flow of visitors to the place was also on the increase necessitating the establishment of a feeding house. The mention made of *nakarattars* of the place and

the cash transactions in gold referred to in suggest that the area was flourishing economically also.

As in the previous period, so also now, very important persons visited the place. One of them was no less a person than Rajendirachola's queen Kalliyana madeviyar who is also known for the first time from this record. The other was an officer (*atikarikal*) named Nilan Venkatan *alias* Rajarajamuventavelar of Arintavanallor in Tiruvaluntur nadu, in Uyyakontar valanadu in Chola manadalam.

Of the two epigraphs both dated A.D. 1050 of the time of Rajadhiraja-I, refers to the procession of the deity to the sea probably in the month of Vaikasi and registers an endowment of *pon* to meet the expenses of the annual *Kartikkai* festival of the god Adavalar (i.e., Nataraja), made by an officer of the king named Arankanaravanaiyan *alias* Vajavativakara muventavejan of Etticiruvellar in Tirun araiyur nadu in Kshattriyasi kamani valanadu.

It may be noted that according to the records of the two Chola kings mentioned above the god of the place was called Tiruvannamalai utaiyar which was the one met with in the epigraphs of all the subsequent periods. Further there is no mention made of the goddess Umamulai nachiyar. Apparently there was no separate shrine for the goddess upto about A.D. 1050. The province in which Tiruvannamalai of Adaiyur nadu was situated was called Maturantaka valanadu.

At Tiruvamamalai, the Chola kings of the period after about A.D. 1065 to A.D. 1170 seem to have performed some deeds also recorded in inscriptions. But no complete record of any of the kings of the period has survived, although a number of fragmentary inscriptions assignable on palaeographical grounds to the 11th and 12th centuries may be said to be fragments of full inscriptions of the

rulers. Even in their present condition, they are seen to furnish some interesting particulars like references to donation of lamps, provision made for *tirukkarttikai* festival, and referring to the god as Kannaramutapperumal to whom land was given as *devadanam*.

The history of Tiruvannamalai after about A.D. 1170 to about A.D. 1260 is filled with a variety of activities and transactions pertaining to the temple there and the places around it. Of the five records of Rajadhiraja-II's time four relate to donations of *nanda* (note the change of spelling from nonta of the early Chola period) lamps, one of them referring to the donation by a person of 1½ *nunda* lamps to the god in expiation of his act of killing another person inadvertently and the fifth relates to a compact given by three men to some one (name not preserved) which is the earliest of the kind of a record to be met with here.

A rich fare of information is available about the life of the people in Tiruvannamalai and on the temple there in the forty nine epigraphs of Kulottunka-III which range in date from A.D. 1180 to A.D. 1213 and after. Above all, they show the extraordinary interest that the king evinced in the temple. Interestingly Tiruvannamalai is stated to be situated in Anna nadu in Iraraja valanadu with no mandalam being mentioned in a second year epigraph (A.D. 1180), of the king, but in a third year record of his (A.D. 1180-81), it is stated to be in the same *nadu* but in Iradjentirachola valanadu in Jeyankondachola mandalam. This is a very first reference to Tiruvannamalai being in this *mandalam*. In all probability, the third *prakara* with its *gopura* now called Kili gopura was constructed in this king's time. From the epigraph 86 dated A.D. 1180 we deduce that there was a shrine to the goddess, called Tirukkamakkottam.

According to one epigraph, Iraratevan Ponparappinan *alias* Vanakovaraiyan dated A.D. 1213, gilded the temple of Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar. During Kulottunka III's time feudatory families like the Sambuvarayas, the Katavarayas, the Pirutivikankas, the Banas, the Malaiyamans etc. became prominent in this region. Our epigraphs show that certain members of these families gifted lands, lamps and jewellery to the temple. During this period, many compacts of understanding between groups of chiefs of this area took place as reflected in such epigraphs. Reference to three festivals (names not given) occur in one of the epigraphs, and to the *tirukkarttikai* festival another epigraph.

The prominence gained by the local chiefs in this period coupled with the fact of their gifts of lands to the temple shows that the people's political consciousness was roused as never before. This was possible because of the generation of wealth in the form of agricultural production. Development of cattle wealth and tapping of the mineral resources of the region were also there to boost the economy of the period. This is evidenced by the endowment of cows and bulls only for lamps donated by the people of this period and by the gilding of the temple with gold by a chief and by gifts of jewellery to the deities made by a larger number of people now rather than before. Thus Tiruvannamalai and its surrounding areas were flourishing during this period, as a consequence of which the importance, wealth, size, and the rituals of the temple also increased.

Coming to Rajaraja-III's time, there are thirty nine epigraphs of his time in the collection. The large number of records of this period, clearly show the great interest that the king and his feudatory chiefs evinced in the temple. Several records also reveal the increase in the number of

compacts of mutual help amongst the local chiefs. This greatly weakened the central rule. Tiruvannamalai inscriptions show that upto his thirty second year of reign and probably for some time more, Rajaraja-III's rule was recognised here. Notwithstanding the political troubles, the region around Tiruvannamalai, according to the epigraphs of Rajaraja-III's time here, was prosperous, and consequently the temple at the place was well cared for.

The reign of Rajendra-III experienced much political troubles, with the result his authority became restricted mostly to the Chola mandalam. This is reflected in the small number of epigraphs of this time of our collection. As usual they are seen to register gifts of lands to the temple by some chiefs. The influence of the Hoysala king of the time is revealed an epigraph which records a gift of a village by a Hoysala chief named Cinkana tennayakan who bore the titles *Srimanumahapradanan* and *Mantalikariyamaraman*. This inscription is important as it states that the gift village was also meant for the expenses of the building of the *prakara* wall called *Tiruvekampamutaiyan tirumadil*. The latest of Rajendra-III's epigraphs is probably the very fragmentary epigraph mentioning his twenty seventh regnal year (A.D. 1272-73), a short while after which the Chola dynasty disappeared from the political scene of Tamilnadu. However, the interest of the Cholas in the region in which Tiruvannamalai is situated and the Siva temple there was continuous from about A.D. 884 to A.D. 1272-73, with of course a break for a Century between *circa* A.D. 1065 to A.D. 1170, although even this break may be attributed to the loss of epigraphs of the period due to some inexplicable destruction of structures that contained them rather than to the lack of interest of the kings that ruled during the period.

## THE KATAVARAYAS

Thirty one epigraphs issued by one or two chiefs bearing the same name of Kop Peruncinka are found at Tiruvannamalai. An examination of them reveals that they fall into two distinct groups. The inscriptions from 181 to 196 are found issued by Kop Peruncinkatevar with the titles *Sakala puvana chakkaravattikal*, *Katavan* or *Katavarayan*, *Alakiyaciyan* or *Kutal Alakiyaciyan* (183), and *Avani Alappirantan*. Several of the rest were issued by Kop Peruncinka who bore only the title *Sakalapuvanaccakkaravattikal*, with the additional title of *Sipallavan* and the title of *Avani Alappirantan* in. The absence of the titles *Kutal Alakiyaciyan* and *Katavan* in the epigraphs of the second group shows that it belongs to a ruler different from the one possessing them. That these two individuals were father and son seems to be suggested by one epigraph. It purports to be a record of Katava Kumaran (the son of Katava) with titles like *Vilvallaperumal* (Skt. *Khadgamalla*) who was the son of *Sakala puvana chakkaravatti Kutal Avani Alappirantan Kop Peruncinkan*. It appears that this Katava Kumaran, when he succeeded his father, assumed his father's name Kop Peruncinka and issued inscriptions under this name. So, the chief who issued the first set of epigraphs may be Kop Peruncinka-I and the one who issued the second set of epigraphs may be Kop Peruncinka-II. The large number of epigraphs of these chiefs found at Tiruvannamalai clearly show their power and influence in this area and their extreme devotion to the god of the place. The Katavas also called the latter Pallavas were known from epigraphs of the earlier Chola period. But the chiefs of the family began to be prominent from the time of Kulottunka-III.

It may be noted that here there is no mention made of Rajaraja-III; neither is there any indication as to the date of commencement of Kop Peruncinka's rule, although the separate reference to this chief's 11th regnal year makes it certain that he ruled independently.

The Tiruvannamalai epigraph undated, purports to be a record of one Katava Kumaran, the lord of Mallai, Mayilai, Kanhi, Tantaka nadu etc., who is stated to be the son of (ivan makan) of Pallavar peruman Sakalabuvana Chakravarti Kotal Avaniyalap pirantan Kop Peruncinkan described as *Mallaikavalan*, *Niccankamallan* and *Paratamvallan*. Though the latter's son, the hero of the record, is called merely as Katava Kumaran (the son of Katava), from the many achievements of his detailed in the record, one may infer that he was in all probability the same as Maharajasimha or Kop Peruncinka of the Tripurantakam epigraph. It is, therefore, clear that these two epigraphs, together with the other ones discussed previously, furnish enough proof to show that there existed two Kop Peruncinkas, the first being the father of the second. The astronomical details contained in the epigraphs of this family also point to the same conclusion because they are seen to correspond to dates of two reign periods: one beginning in A.D. 1231-32 and another in A.D. 1243. In the light of the above discussion the mother of Kop Peruncinka-II was Silavati who was the wife of Jiyamahipai or Kop Peruncinka.

Kop Peruncinka-I who was a feudatory under Kulottunka-III, had gradually begun to assert his independence from the commencement of the reign of Rajaraja-III (A.D. 1216-1260). Establishing himself at Centamankalam identified with the village of the same

name close to Tirunamanallur, Kop Peruncinka-I seemed to have pursued vigorously his ambition to set up an independent principality by defying his Chola suzerain. The Chola king's difficulties were evidently brought about by Kop Peruncinka-I. The fact of this chief's vanquishing of Rajaraja-III at Tellaru which is not known from any other source till now, but attested by three recently discovered fragmentary inscriptions is considered to have taken place about A.D. 1231-32 from which year he is credited with the issuing of records independently using the title *Sakala buvana chakaravattikal*. Other interesting points mentioned in this record which consists of 5 Tamil verses in different metres, are that Kop Peruncinka possessed 'the titles of Avaninarayana, patron of Tamil Katava, Tondai mannavan, Nrpatunka, Tribhuvanatti rajakkal tampiran, and ruler of Mallai', and the record speaks about his prowess, fame, victory over the Cholas, the Pandyas, and the Kannadas and his abiding devotion to the god at Chidambaram. An important point to be noted is that the chief gets here the title of *Virapratapar* which, though reminding one of his father Pallavantar's title Virarvira and his grandfather's title *Viracekara*, was one of the titles borne by the Hoysala kings. Another point to be noted here is that the king is called Alkiya Pallavar which reminds one of his father of the same name as mentioned by us above.

### **Kop Peruncinka-I (circa A.D. 1231-1263)**

This chief who is mentioned in an epigraph of the 35th year (A.D., 1213) of the reign of Kulattunka-III, and who, never reconciling himself as a subordinate of Rajaraja-III began to increase his power in the following years, seems to be

the same as the one who in A.D. 1229 recognised as his sovereign Rajaraja-III. But in A.D. 1231-32, he overpowered his suzerain, became almost independent and began to issue records in his own right.

Sixteen epigraphs of our collection are attributed to Kop Peruncinka-I. Three of them recently discovered by us, certainly belong to him, because, though fragmentary and have not preserved the date particulars, one of them contains parts of his unique *meykkirrtti* found in his Vailur record. Two others, also fragmentary may be his on account of the occurrence of the name Mintan Ciyann Annakankakkar coupled with Kop Perunchinkan in one and the name alone without the chief's name in the other, the name Mintan Ciyann being borne by Kop Peruncinka I in his definite record of the 13th year recently discovered. The rest are considered to belong to this chief on the ground that in all of them, except in one epigraph, he is called as Sakala buvana chakkaravattikal Kutal Alppirantan Katavarayan Alkiya Ciyann *alias* Kop Peruncinka. The epithet *Alakiya Ciyann* occurring in an epigraph of this family, supported by the internal evidence and astronomical details would help its attribution to this chief, according to the collection, the presence of the title *Katavarayan* or *Katavan* along with *Alakiya Ciyann*, in an epigraph seems to be a better indicator for attributing it to this chief. That the prince figuring in one epigraph is called as Katavakumaran (the son of Katava) is noteworthy as it means that his father Kop Peruncinka I was known chiefly by the title of *Katava*. It should however, be mentioned here that none of the 130 epigraphs attributed to Kop Peruncinka-II, contains one or the other of these two, titles, as the

distinguishing epithet of this chief, and in a majority of them he is called *Sakala buvana chakkaravartikal Avani Alappirantan alias* Kop Peruncinka.

Kop Peruncinka-I's epigraphs under study, range in date from the 4th year to 31st year. Two belong to the 27th year; two to the 14th year, one to the 13th year and amongst the remaining ones containing date particulars two are of the 9th year; and two belong to the 5th year. Here we are faced with a problem. Until now records of this chief dated beyond the 13th year are not stated to have been found.

How then one can account for records of the 14th, 27th and 31st years? The only reason that can be adduced for this is that in the records of this chief with high regnal years also, he bears the name in its full fledged form, which is not found applied in the epigraphs of this family to any other chief. If this is accepted then it will follow that though his son had become the ruler from A.D. 1242-43, Kop Peruncinka-I continued to be powerful till at least his 31st year. Five epigraphs of this group contain date particulars, which yield the following equivalents in the Christian era.

- 1) Year 5, Cinka (*paksha* omitted) 5, Friday, Revati
- 2) Year 9, Mitunaba (The *tithi* omitted), Sunday, Mula
- 3) Year 14, Viruccikas. 15, Sunday
- 4) Year 27, Meshasu. 3, Friday, Mrgasirsa
- 5) Year (lost), Purattathi 21st, (*paksha* omitted) 13,

Param

Probably A.D. 1236, August 22 Friday. But on this day the *nak.* was Asvini that too was current for .12 part of the day only. Perhaps the *naksatra* is wrongly quoted. The *paksha* was ba.

Probably A.D. 1241, May 26, Sunday, ba. 1 after .46, and Mala after .47 of the day.

A.D. 1245, November 5, Sunday. Probably A.D. 1259, March 28, Friday, su. 3, but the *nakshatra* was Krttika, not Mrgasirsa.

Probably A.D. 1256, September 17, Sunday, ba 12 up to .33 and Magha up to .34 of the day. If this is accepted then the regnal year may be 25.

The calculation of the equivalents for the date particulars is vitiated by the omission of some detail or by wrong quotation of some other detail in giving them in all the four above mentioned cases. Usually such difficulties are met with while calculating the equivalents in many an instance.

No. 124 has: Year 10, Sirnhagu 5, Monday, Revati A.D., 1241, July 29, Monday.

Considering this with the three dated records of ours (Nos. 1, 2 and 4 given above), the date of accession of the chief appears to fall between May 26, and July 29 of A.D. 1231. The date of fragmentary epigraph (No. 5 above), assuming its regnal year was 25, is also seen to support this finding.

## **DONORS AND DONATIONS OF LANDS, UTENSILS AND GOLD**

The number of inscriptions for this small chief is high, and they reveal some interesting information. We have seen that quite a few epigraphs of the Chola period recorded donations of lamps to the god of Tiruvannamalai. Strangely, none of the epigraphs dealt with here relates to this matter, except one. On the other hand, five of these

are records registering gifts of utensils and gold for ornaments. The chief himself is said to have donated in the 4th year (A.D. 1235) of his reign a *patakamalai* (necklace) composed of pearls, coral and sapphire strung in a golden thread, all together weighing 302 *kalanchu*, for adorning the god Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar. According to another epigraph, a lady, named Nampirattiyar Nachiyar, gifted in A.D. 1241 three plates made of silver. Though not stated, the gift should have been made to the temple only. She is also the donor in the undated epigraph gifting some more utensils and some ornaments here stated to be to the god. The fragmentary inscription dated A.D. 1244 registers a gift probably by the chief, here bearing the title *Mintan Ciyar*, instead of *Alagiya Ciyar*, a golden aureole (*tiruvasikai*), probably to the god's Nataraja aspect (*atirudkalatika*), indeed a beautiful expression), and also a couple of white flywisks made of silver. One epigraph of this period, which is extremely fragmentary, seems to have been a record of donation of some ornaments to the god.

The remaining epigraphs are seen to be records of land gifts. The chief himself in his 5th year (i.e., A.D. 1236) gave away the incomes in paddy and cash derived from such taxes as *ayam* and *patikaval* and other incomes from the god's *tevanapparru* and Anna nadu to provide for the worship and for works in the temple. Again he figures as the donor in the epigraph dated in the same year (A.D. 1236), gifting the village of Pattanankadu together with a number of taxes (names given), to the Lord, as (*tiruma*) *tappallippuram* (to provide for the requirements of the kitchen). According to the ep. dated A.D. 1240, the *tanattar*, *tevananmi* and *koyilkanakkan* passed an order,

based on the chief's instructions, that the rate of incomes in paddy and cash derived from the lands in Anna nadu and from other *devadana* villages should remain as it was in the chief's 8th year (i.e., A.D. 1239) and that, receiving the incomes at this rate from the 9th year, the worship and works in the temple should be conducted in the temple without diminution, evidently by the temple authorities. In the ep. dated in A.D. 1245, the chief is said to have gifted the village of Kilaichirupakkam in Adaiyur nadu together with a number of taxes (names given) as *madaippallip puram* to the image of a god (name lost) set up in the temple by his senior queen Alagiya Pallavar Nachiyar. Three persons (names not preserved fully) are stated to have given (or sold) some land (details lost) to the wife of Avani Alappirantan Nilakankaraiyar for her to gift it for use as *Tiruvannamalai nantavanam* (flower garden) as per the ep. dated A.D. 1258. According to another ep. of the same year, the temple authorities are stated to have sold to the above mentioned lady named Nankayalvar Nayanar for 10,000 anratu narkasu a site of the extent of 13½ *kuli* within temple precincts, for her to raise a shrine there to the god named after her. In the 31st year of the chief (i.e., A.D. 1262), a certain subordinate of the chief named Vanakovaraiyan Tayilunalla perumal Tirunirruviramaka tacholan is said to have given the village of Tachar together with incomes from taxes, to the Lord to provide for a service instituted in his name and for works in the temple. Two fragmentary epigraphs which have not preserved the date particulars, record gifts of the villages of Kottapunthi and Nenmali respectively together with their tax incomes, made by a certain Mindan Siyan Annakankakkar, to the God.

## SOME INTERESTING POINTS FROM THE INSCRIPTIONS

Of course the gifts of ornaments referred to in some of the epigraphs are interesting; but of all of them the gift of the necklace made by the chief, is very interesting as it furnishes the various articles like big pearls, small pearls, ripe coral etc. that went into its making.

Among the land grants the following are noteworthy. Probably the income of the temple dwindled in about A.D. 1239 either on account of some reduction proposed on the rates of taxation or due to inflation. So, perhaps, on the representation of the temple authorities made in A.D. 1240, the chief ordered that the taxes should be paid at the rate, which prevailed in the previous year, and the incomes from them should be used for worship and works in the temple without any diminution. It is noteworthy that the chief is referred to as Aiyatevar. The inscription of the chief's 3rd year from Munnur (S.A. Dt.), (S.I.I., XII, No. 134), also refers to Aiyatevar seems to refer to Kop Peruncinka I only and not his father Manavalapperumal as concluded in S.I.I. XII, p 68.

The epigraph dated A.D. 1245, reveals for the first time the name of the senior queen of the chief. She was Alagiya Pallavar Nachiyar. The name Alagiya Pallavar borne by the queen is both interesting and intriguing. It has been shown above that Kop Perucinka I was always called as Alagiya Siyan and that his father Pallavantar possessed the title or additional name of Alagiya Pallavan. The possession of the name of Alagiya Pallavar by this queen requires an explanation. The only one that suggests itself is that Alagiya Siyan being her husband's name was taboo

for a Hindu lady to bear, for a Hindu lady, can neither speak out her husband's name nor be called by that name, and so she was not given the name of Alakiya Siyan. Instead, the name Alagiya Pallavar, meaning a handsome Pallava, after the family to which the chief belonged, seems to have been preferred by the queen. We have seen above that Kop Peruncinka-II also called Maharajasimha was the son of Jiya mahipati identified with Kop Peruncinka I, through Silavati. It is not known if this Silavati was identical with Alagiya Pallavar Nachiyar, stated to be the senior queen of the chief under reference. Probably not, and Silavati was a junior queen as distinguished from the senior queen mentioned above.

The inscription, dated A.D. 1258, is interesting from the point of view of building works in the temple. It shows that after this date there was to come into existence a shrine of the god named Natlkaiyalvicuramutaiyar, after the donor Nankayalvar Nayanar, close by on the south side of the present temple of the goddess. There is no trace of this shrine now, either because it was never built or because of its demolition at a later date. That a Vanakovaraiyan chief was either a subordinate under Kop Peruncinka-I or was a friend of his is revealed by the epigraph, dated A.D. 1262.

The fragmentary epigraph recently discovered, is unique. It records the gift of a village by a certain Mindan Siyan Annakankakkar Kop Perunchinkan. The purpose for which the gift was made is stated to be to take out the deity in procession daily for the reason that this donor was affected by the evil time brought by the transit of Saturn in the 8th house of his horoscope. That it was an expensive affair needing much financial support is proved by the fact that this person

had endowed an entire village to meet the expenses. Thus, this epigraph for the first time brings to our notice the very rare information that in the middle of the 13th Century A.D. in Tamilnadu, a man of importance like the donor of the epigraph had not only had strong belief in the predictive astrology but also had acted according to its dictates.

### **Kop Peruncinka-II (circa A.D. 1243-1279)**

Kop Peruncinka-II was the son of Kop Peruncinka-I identified with Jiya mahipati, through his queen Silavati. His inscriptions are numerous.

Fifteen epigraphs in our collection may be assigned to Kop Peruncinka-II. They range in date from the 2nd year to the 36th year of the chief's reign. With the help of date particulars of three records of Sakala buvana chak karavattikal Sri Kop Peruncinkateva, the date of accession of this chief approximately lay between the 11th February and 30th July of A.D. 1243. Five of the epigraphs of our collection contain astro nomical details, which are given below with their equivalents. We may see if these dates help us in fixing the date of accession of the chief with greater precision.

1) Year 2, Sinlha gu. 1, Wednesday, Maka - A.D. 1242, July 30, Wednesday

2) Year 2, Mina Su. 5, Thursday, Anusam - Irregular

3) Year 15, Mituna 25th, Wednesday, Attam - A.D. 1257, June 30, Wednesday.

4) Year 18, Kumpa ba. 3, Friday Revati - Irregular

5) Year 36, Makara ba. 5, Wednesday, Uttiram - A.D. 1279, January 4, Wednesday.

The first date does not seem to quote the regnal year correctly.

But calculations made from the data contained in ten epigraphs enable us to know that the date of accession of Kop Peruncinka-II lay between the 2nd and the 27th July, A.D. 1243.

### **Kop Peruncinka-II's personality**

Earlier something has been said about this chief while comparing his qualities and achievements with those of his father and predecessor. It appears that the record was put up when Kop Peruncinka I was alive as evidenced by the fact that its beginning portion is devoted to the praise of Kop Peruncinka I and by the fact that the hero of the epigraph is called as Katava Kumaran (literally meaning 'the son of Katava') who bears besides, the names of Atkondadevan and Kankayan. If this is accepted, then it may be dated prior to A.D.1263, the last year of Kop Peruncinka-I, according to our study.

This inscription depicts Katava Kumaran i.e., Kop Peruncinka II as a dutiful son, a valiant fighter, a sincere devotee of the god Annamalaiyar or Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar, and a great benefactor to the people of Tiruvannamalai. After stating that he was the possessor of Mallai (modern Mamallapuram), Mayilai (modern Mylapore in Madras), Kanchi Tantakanadu, Pali, the Pennai and Koval, the inscription makes mention of the chief's success in wars against the Karunatar (i.e., Hoysalas) and the Telunkar (i.e., the Telugu Cholas). He seems to have borne a number of titles, after each one of them one or the other of his charitable deeds like digging wells, rearing gardens is named. They are: Venavudtaiyan, Nichankamallan, Valvallaperumal, Nicharikamallan, Tamilnadukattapertunal, Senattalaivan, Venrumankonta perumal, Paratamvallaperumal and

Virarayan. It is seen that some of them like Avaniyajappirantan, Nichankamallan and Paratamvalla were borne by Kop Peruncinka-I, and that Katava Kumaran simply used them for himself.

This chief appears to be either a subordinate or an ally of the Kakatiya king Ganapati then, at the time of the Tripuratakam inscription which, as has been stated above, should belong to a date later than A.D. 1262, perhaps later than A.D. 1263 when Kop Peruncinka-I was no more, was an independant ruler 'who was the destroyer of the pride of the king of Karnata' (Karnataraja mana marddana), 'who was the sun to the lotus tank of the Chola dynasty' (*Chola kula kamala divakara*), 'who was the manager in the act of installation of the Pandyaraya' (Pandyaraya sthapanam sutradhara) and 'who elevated the Chola (to the throne) who was shuddering with fear' (*bhaya cakitam = avacyarn potam = aropya cholam*). These claims do not seem to be empty boasts, and they probably reflect the real political conditions of the time. Kop Peruncinka-II, as per this record, seemed to have helped Rajendra Chola-III and to have supported the Pandya ruler of the period Jatavarman Sundarapandya-I (accn. A.D. 1251). We have seen in connection with the history of Kop Peruncinka-I, that the Chola and the Pandya contemporary of this chief were his bitter enemies. Especially the hostility of the Pandya king Jalavarman Sundara Pandya and Jatavarman Virapandya, given expression to in their epigraphs may have been directed towards Kop Peruncinka I rather than towards his son. But, apparently, after the demise of his father, Kop Peruncinka-II seemed to have adopted the policy of being friendly with his southern neighbours with a view to keep away the Karnata king of

the time from interfering to the politics of Tamilnadu. His title 'destroyer of the pride of Karnata king suggested that he was successful in the implementation of this policy.

## DONORS AND THEIR GIFTS

Of the fifteen inscriptions dealt with here, two relate to gifts of lands. One of the epigraphs apparently refers to the gift of some lands together with the incomes from taxes (names given) by a certain person (detail lost) who was probably associated with Maturantakap Pottapic Cholan Vijayakanta Gopaladevan. The presence of some one connected with this chief indicates that he was on friendly terms with Kop Peruncinka-II, who, as we have shown above, appeared to have followed the policy of friendship with his neighbours, which seemed to have helped him greatly. Another epigraph dated A.D.1261, recently discovered, is interesting in that it records the gift made by Atkontan *alias* Kankeyarayan of the village Kalamulanpunti after purchasing it from the temple (evidently the temple of the god Ttruvannamalai udaiya nayanar), for 30,000 *kasu* and endowing the same to the temple of Avani Alappiranticuramudaiya nayanar for worshipping, and offering to its deity. The epigraph states that the donor intended to build this temple in the 3rd *prakara* of the main temple, for the physical welfare of the chief, which shows that Kop Peruncinka-II was unwell then. The donor is said to be one of the *Cimantamutalis* of the chief and he bore the name Atkontan *alias* Kankayarayan after the chief who is known to have had these names from his Tamil verse inscription already discussed. This epigraph contains information on the various gifts made to the main temple and on a variety of charitable works done by Kop

Peruncinka-II called here as Katava Kumaran and also by his father. Another epigraph deals with the assignment of land on certain conditions (details lost) by the temple authorities to the temple *devakanmi* Tillaimuvayiranampi.

Nine epigraphs relate to the gifts of lamps to the god and goddess of the temple for which cows and bulls were endowed by the respective donors. Interestingly none of the epigraphs records the endowment of sheep. One of the inscriptions, belonging to the 2nd regnal year records the gifts of three standing lamps, for burning as *nunda* lamps to the god and goddess of the place. It is stated that two of them were placed in the *snana mantapa* (bathing hall) in front of the god's (shrine) and one was placed in front of the Tirukkamakkottam. To provide for ghee for the lamps 96 cows and 3 bulls are said to have been endowed. The donor was Amur Alagiya Tiruchitrampalamutaiyan Nilakankaraiyan, the son of Amur Nilakankaraiyan Avani Alappirantan. Two inscriptions, ascribed to the time of Kop Peruncinka-I record gifts by Nahkaiyalvar Nayanar, the wife of Avani Alappirantan Nilakankaraiyar. The donor of the inscription in question may be the son of this officer. An officer named Panchanadivanan Nilakankaraiyar figures in some inscriptions of the time of Kulattunka Chola-III and in some epigraphs of the time of Kop Peruncinka-I. This officer is sometimes given the epithet of *Pillaiyar*; also. It appears that this officer is the same as the one mentioned in two records from Tiruvannamalai referred to above, although in these two records, the officer is not distinguished by the title Panchanadivanan, who is stated to be one of the sons (*kumararkalil*) of Pillaiyar Pancanadivana Nilakankaraiyar. This epigraph is dated A.D. 1261, and belongs to the time of the chief under discussion.

Thus two of the sons of Pancanadivana Nilakankaraiyar who was active during the period of Kop Peruncinka-I, were active during the period of the latter's son Kop Peruncinka-II. This is but natural. It is, however, not known if both or any one of these two sons of Pancanadivana Nilakankaraiyar were born to his wife Nankaiyalavar Nayanar referred to above.

Another officer of the chief named Chilampanintan Kuttatuvan *alias* Chetirayan of Paramesuramangalam *alias* Cholakula pati chatur veti mangalam, gave 1 ½ lamps for burning on every Tiruvathirai day, to the god. He endowed 48 cows and one bull for this purpose (of the 20th regnal year). According to another epigraph, of the 36th regnal year, Kakkunayakadevan, the son of Matisutanatevar, the younger brother of Maruta (Matura) nataka Pottappic Cholan Vijaiya Katakopalatevar, gifted one *nunda* lamp endowing 32 cows and one bull therefor. We have seen above that some one associated with this Katakopalatevar gave some lands to the temple. Here a blood relation of his was the donor. This testifies to the close relationship that existed between our chief and Vijaiya Katakopala's relatives.

According to the epigraph of the 2nd regnal year, Periyayanan, the son of Kotantai, apparently an ordinary person belonging to Eyil nadu, gave ½ a *nunda* lamp for which he endowed 16 cows and one bull. Another person, belonging to the *Chetti* community, named Mallikarjuna chetti, the son of Vima chetti, a Telungan (Telugu speaking or hailing from the Telugu country) of Araiarrumankalam gifted a *nunda* lamp, endowing 32 cows and 1 bull for its upkeep, which were left in charge of Suran, the son of Pattikkon (ep. dated 12th regnal year). A reference to this donor and Suran, the custodian of the cows and bull is

found in the ep. of the 13th regnal year, the purport of which is that the temple servants like *Srimahesvarak kankaniseyvar*, *devakanmi* and *koyil kanakkar* took away from some *tiruvilakku* manratikal, the cows and bull left in their charge and gave them over to Maruntan Appan *alias* Periyantattukkon of Naraiyutaiyanpatti who was to take care of 2¾ lamps with the yield of the cows. A certain Pennottuvan *alias* Irasakampiramarayan, the son of Tukkai *alias* Tiruvannamalai Manikkam one of the *devaratiyar*, gave one *nunda* lamp and 32 cows and one bull for its maintenance (ep. of the 21st regnal year). An undated epigraph registers several gifts made by a certain Penno Arivan, the son of Tukkaiyar Tiruvannamalai Manikkam, one of the twenty four *devaratiyar* enjoying right at Tiruvannamalai, consisting of some utensils, and one *nunda* lamp, to the god Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar; provision made for feeding during the five festivals of that year; digging of a well in the west street; setting up of the image of Tatapillaiyar; building of the doorway of the shrine of Kaikkolapillaiyar; provision of gong to the village; digging of a well for the Narpat tennayira matam and another for some other purpose; and digging up of a step well and a well at a place in Kannan taipunti in Naralokaviran kilental. It is interesting to note that a private individual, a son of a *devaratiyar* could not only make gifts to the temple but also accomplish certain public welfare measures like digging up wells. Resources for his deeds which must have cost him quite a substantial amount of money may have been obtained from the estate of his mother Tukkaiyar Tiruvannamalai Manikkam who must have been a very wealthy *devaratiyar* amongst her twenty four compatriots.

This chief's inscription with the regnal year 15, records the gift made by Nampirattimar Nachiyar, the wife of Mittantar, and the daughter of Pennarasiyar *alias* Utaiyalvar who was the wife of Kudal Alappirantan Katavarayan Sadumperumal, of two utensils to the god. As has been already mentioned, this Sadum perumal has been identified with Kop Peruncinka-II, is not likely, because the epithet *Alagiya Siyan* characteristic of him is not given to the chief here. On the other hand the manner of calling him as Avani Alappirantan *alias* Kop Peruncinka is exactly the same as obtains in several of the records of Kop Peruncinka-II, as we have noted above. The chief figuring in the epigraph in question is almost certainly the same as Kop Peruncinka-II. It is interesting to note that he had the additional name of Sadumperumal (meaning the lord who is capable of striking). If this is so, then, this record becomes very important in that it furnishes not only the name of the chief's queen but also the name of his daughter and that of her husband.

## CONCLUSION

Kop Peruncinka-I and his son were remarkable personalities. Imbued with the spirit of independence and an irrepressible urge to improve the conditions of the people of Tondai mandalam, the former rebelled against his suzerain and succeeded in establishing his sway about A.D. 1231 over a major part of the Tondai mandalam and ran a government parallel to the rule of Rajaraja-III and his son Rajandra-III. The seat of his government was at Sendamangalam. He was an able warrior and so could offer resistance not only to the Chola army but to the armies of the Pandyas and the Hoysalas of the time. He

was very active and seemed to have enthused the people under him to bring more areas under cultivation and produce more wealth. It appears that by his military exploits he could collect some booty, which enriched his treasury. Being a pious person and devotee of the god Siva, he used a part of his wealth to build additional structures and to rear flower gardens in the temple at Tiruvannamalai; these activities must have improved the economic conditions of the people, promoted the fine arts and must have given a fillip to the religious and cultural activities of the people. The causes that were dear to his heart were fulfilled at Tiruvannamalai according to his records found here. That agricultural activities were in the forefront during his time is known from the fact that a majority of the epigraphs registered gifts of taxes from villages by the chief and land by his senior queen Mutha Tampirattiyar Alagiya Pallava Nachiyar. The gifts of jewels and utensils made to the temple by the chief and by Mittandar Nachiyar show that the use of a variety of metals was in vogue and that the craftsmen doing these works were patronised. That there was *tirunnani* (temple building) work then is known from three records two of which were of the chief's and one of Nangaiyalvar Nayanar; wife of Avani Alappirantan Nila Kankaraiyar to whom a plot was allotted in the temple premises for building a shrine named Nangaiyalvicuramutaiyar after her. The point to be noted here is that as per the record, the plot was situated to the south of the temple of the Tirukkamakkottamudaiya Tampirattiyar showing that the goddess' temple was already there. The above mentioned fresh building works in a temple indicated that the agamic practices were flourishing then, because they were needed to consecrate the newly put up structures.

Kop Peruncinka-II was equally brilliant like his father. He ignored his contemporary Chola king Rajendra-III, and continued his independent rule in this region as did his father. According to us even when he was a son of the Katava i.e., Kop Peruncinka-I, he did so much at Tiruvannmalai and half of one of the epigraphs is devoted to the listing of his deeds which included the building of new streets, *mantapas*, *matams*, tanks and flower gardens. After he became the ruler he is known to have visited places like Tripurantakam in the Kurnool district and Draksarama in the East Godavari district where he put up his records. His records at Tiruvannamalai showed the continued attention paid to the temple and the area by him, by his subordinates and allies. An epigraph dated A.D. 1242 or 1243 records the gift of land to the god and goddess by Alagiya Tiruchitrampalamutaiyan Nilakankaraiyan, the son of Amar Nilakankaraiyan Avani Alappirantan. The noteworthy point here is that the goddess is called here not only by the name Tirukkamakkottamudaiya nachiyar known from a record noticed above, but also by the name of Unnamulai nachiyar which name comes into use for the first time here and which became the popular one in later times.

That a new temple was built during this period is known from one of the epigraphs. According to this a Samanta mutali named Atkondan *alias* Kankeyarayan built a shrine named Avani Alappiranndacuramudaiya nayanar. Though its identification is difficult, the information that it was in the third *prakara* of the main temple is noteworthy. As in his father's reign period, now also gifts of utensils were made to the temple by a royal lady Mittandar's wife, named Nampirattimar Nachiyar and also by a certain

Pennottuvan who also donated a lamp. This person was the son of a *devaratiyar* named Tukkai (Skt. Durga) *alias* Tiruvannamalai Manikkam who was one of the twenty four *devaratiyar* having *kani* in Tiruvannamalai. These records are interesting as they not only reveal the existence of the *Devaratiyar* community there but also that some of them were rich so as to be able to make considerable donations to the temple. Since one of the activities of the *Devaratiyar* community was performing dance before the god in the temple, we may presume that this art was in vogue in the place at that time. Two epigraphs make mention of a Chetti named Mallikarjuna chetti, son of Vima chetti, described as a Telunga, meaning either they were Telugu speaking or hailed from the Telugu country. This, coupled with the fact that an associate of Maturantakap Pattappicholan Vijaiyakanta Gopalan probably a native of Nellore region, indicates the increase in the visitors to this place from other regions. The presence of *Chettis* here from other regions showed the flourishing nature of commerce and trade. Thus the two Katavarya chiefs who were a force to reckon with in the politics of the 13th Century Tamilnadu had contributed much to the prosperity of the region around Tiruvannamalai and to the growth in all aspects of the Siva temple there.

## THE BANAS

The inscriptions copied at Tiruvannamalai include over twenty epigraphs, which contain references to the Bana family and to some of its members. Before making a study of them in some detail, a brief account of this family which had had connections with Tamilnadu from about the 5th Century A.D. is given below.

The progenitor of this family is stated to be the demon king Bali, the son of Virochana. His descendants were ruling over the territory called Perumpanappati, which lay between Punganur in the west and Kalahasti in the east. The members of the family were powerful in this area in the 4th and 5th centuries A.D. In order to reduce them to subordination the early Pallava king Simhavarman (about A.D. 450) made the first Ganga king as the ruler of the territory which later on came to be called Gangavadi. The Talagunda pillar inscription of Kakutsavarman (*circa*, 5th Century A.D.) refers to Brhad Bana. The Bana chiefs of this early period were forced to move southwards in the 6th and 7th centuries when the Chalukyas of Badami were expanding. In the early period the chronology of the kings of this family is not clear. When they were independent they had the place called Parivi as their capital. This place may be identified with Parigi in the Hindupur taluka of the Anantapur district. For a comparative statements of the pedigrees of this family as given by various writers. The last ruler of this family was Vikramaditya-III Vijayabahu, who was a friend of the Rasthrakuta Krishna-III. "About A.D. 915 the Banas were completely defeated by Parantaka Chola-I, and their country was given to the Ganga subordinate Hastimalla Prthvipati-II who was also conferred with the title of 'Banadhiraja". However, their history in Tamilnadu did not end with this. 'After Perumpapappadi was transferred to the Gangas, or perhaps at an earlier period in their history, the Banas seem to have moved further south, crossed the river Palar which seems to have been originally the southern boundary of their territory, and settled on the banks of the river Southern Pennar, calling the new piovince Vanakoppati or Vanakappati. From this

time, references to Vanakovaraiyar occur in several inscriptions of North and South Arcot districts and in some places in the former Pudukkottai State.

In so far as Tiruvannamalai epigraphs are concerned, we have some damaged records which make mention of Vanakovaraiyar. One of them belongs to the 14th year of a Rajakesaripanmar whom we have identified with Aditya-I. Another similar epigraph of the 15th year (A.D. 922) of Parantaka Chola-I refers to Vanakkappati Pennai vatakarai. An inscription which refers itself to the 13th regnal year of a certain Rajakesari panmar probably Rajaraja-I, registers a gift of land made by Vanakovaraiyar Kunamandan Kurumpakolalan Vayiramekanar kotukkan Chirranpuliyur nathan.

A number of epigraphs of the reign of Kulottunga Chola-III from Tiruvannamalai and Kutumiyamalai refer to Magadesan, Vanakulottaman and Viramagadan Rajarajadevan Ponparappinan Magataipperumal from Tiruvannamalai. The Tiruvannamalai epigraphs of the 21st regnal year of this king refer to him as Arakalurutatya Iraratevan Ponparappinan *alias* Vanakovaraiyan. From them we come to know that this Vanakovaraiyan had his headquarters at Arakalur. His title *Ponparappinan* (one who covered with gold) has been considered obscure a scholar who surmised that this might refer to his having gilt the temple at Tiruvannamalai and also his having regilt the Siva temple at Chidambaram. For, in the epigraph of the 35th regnal year (A.D. 1213), the same chief is stated to have gilded the temple at Tiruvannamalai on Sunday, the 8th day of the month of Mithuna when the asterism Anusham (Anuradha) was current which correspond to June, 1213, and gave lands as *matappuram* to the same.

An inscription of Kulottunka Chola-III's 29th year (A.D. 1207) registers a gift of a village by a certain Chatiran Vanarayan of Arakalur. Another record of the 33rd regnal year (A.D. 1211) of the same king refers to a Vanakovarayan Samanta mutali named Cholakon Tevaramalakiyan. The relationship of these chieftains to Ponparappinan Iraratevan of the other epigraphs is however not known. This chief seems to have left the service of the Cholas and had become a feudatory of Sakala buvana chakravartin Kop Peruncinka-I. It appears that during the transitional period this Bana chief began to engrave inscriptions in Tamil and Sanskrit verses in his own name without mentioning any overlord. The epigraphs in Tamil verse are noteworthy for their poetic qualities.

This chief who had joined the rebel Kop Peruncinka-I had to be overcome before the latter could be attacked by the Hoysala generals commissioned to liberate the Chola king Rajaraja-III from captivity.

This chief probably experienced some difficulties in the 17th regnal year (A.D. 1233) of Rajaraja-III. The last epigraph of our collection refers to a Bana chief belonging to the 7th year (*circa*, A.D.1275) of the reign of Kulacakara pandiya. It registers a gift of cows to provide milk for the *abhiseka* (*pal ati arula*) of the god Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar made by Makatesan Ulakankatha Vanakovaraiyan of Arakalur. This chief may be a descendent of Tempaiyaivan Irarate van Vanakovaraiyan referred to above. This epigraph reveals the fact that when the Pandyas of Madurai became powerful in Tamilnadu, the Banas had accepted them as suzerains and become their feudatories. Subsequently one

or more branches of them appear to have moved to the Madurai and Ramnad districts *via* the Pudukkottai region, and settled down there. Inscriptions of the members of these families found in these regions show that they existed till the 16th Century A.D.

## POINTS OF INTEREST GLEANED FROM THEIR EPIGRAPHS

We know from one epigraph which is in Tamil verse probably composed by the chief that Ponparappinan *alias* Makataipperumal possessed epithets like *Virapperumal Makatecan*, *Makataiyarkoman*, *Vanativakaran*, *Vana purantaran* and *Vanakulatipan*. It appears that he put up this record on the north wall of the second *prakara* of the temple, when he ceased to be a feudatory of Rajaraja Chola-III and became an ally of Kop Peruncinka-I both of whom rebelled against the Chola king. It appears that this chief encountered the army of the Hoysalas and achieved a measure of success in the encounter and this caused trembling to the Cholas (lines 3-4). He is said to have taken Kanchi and Vanchi (line 4). Lines 5 and 6 of the epigraph refer to this chief's battles at Periyakuricchi etc. and with Malaiyaman. There is also a reference to his fight with the Vatukar, probably the Telugu Cholas, in lines 7-8. It is noteworthy that this chief did not go to war on the days when the asterism Uttiradam was current. This might be due to the fact that he was born in this asterism and so considered it unholy, to fight on the days when it was current.

One epigraph, which is also in Tamil verse, seems also to belong to the same Bana chief Ponparappinan of

the record discussed above, although this name is not mentioned in this record. Here he is called Makataiyar peruman (line 4). According to this epigraph he was the lord to the Pandyas and the Cholas.

To the same chief belongs another epigraph, which is in Sanskrit verse. It is inscribed on the Kiligopura and copy of it was discovered recently, on the wall of the Rajagopura. It appears that the text of this epigraph was also composed by the chief. He is addressed as Banasvara in these epigraphs, which refer to his having defeated a group of five Pandyas and taken their crowns. He is stated to have given one of them to a Chola king, and the rest to the Arunasailendra. This inscription also refers to the chief having bestowed the booty, which he obtained from his conquests on the god Svarnnamayesvara of the place.

A short epigraph in Tamil verse which seems to have been a composition of the same chief refers to the tradition relating to the carving of fish symbol on the mountain Meru.

The damaged epigraph discovered recently belongs to this chief who is stated to be the chief of Arakalar. The record begins with 'yantu 3. It is not known if this year pertains to this chief's regnal year or to that of his suzerain whose name is lost. This record mentions the Tiruntikai River.

## **TOPOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FURNISHED BY THE EPIGRAPHS**

Kanchi, Vanchi, Kongu; Kalingam, Chenkunram, Periyakurichi, Karaikkadu Maturapuri Aruna sailendra, Meru, Meyur in Ataiyur nadu Vanniyan ental and Tottan ental in Murukamankalapparru, Arakalur, Tiruntikaiyaru.

## THE SAMPUVARAYAS

Chiefs bearing the title of Sampuvaraya figure in some epigraphs of our collection.

They belonged to the Chenkeni line, and bore also the names of Attimallan and Ammaiappan. During the hey day of the Cholas, they allied themselves with the Chola kings when they affixed the titles or names of their masters to their names, e.g. Attimallan Ammai Appan *alias* VikkiramaChola Sampuvarayan. When the Cholas became weak, the Sampuvaraya chiefs associated themselves with whatever power was then ascendant, as for instance the Katavarayas, the Telugu Cholas, and the Pandyas in the 13th Century which is testified to by the inclusion in their names, the titles of the new associates as for instance *Alakiyaciyan*, *Alappirantan* etc. of the Katava chiefs and *Kulasekara* of the Pandya king. These chiefs continued for long in the 14th Century when Tamilnadu experienced a worst kind of political disaster brought about by the invasion more than once of the Muhammadan armies from Delhi and their occupation of several parts of Tamilnadu till A.D. 1363 when they were dislodged from here by the viceroys of the newly emerging Karnataka empire, popularly known as Vijayanagara empire. The Sampuvaraya chiefs of this period seemed to have been free and independent until they were completely wiped out of the political scene of Tamilnadu in the last quarter of the Century, by the Vijayanagara viceroys.

In the reign of Kulottunga Chola-III (A.D. 1178-1218), the activities of the Sampuvaraya chiefs increased. Ammaiappan Pantinadu kondan *alias* Kandar Suriyan Sampuvarayan who built a *gopura* to the temple at Tiruvakkarai in Rajadhiraja II's time, is said to have built

the 1000 pillared *mardapa* at the same place in Kulottunga's 2nd year (A.D. 1179-1180). One Sankeni Ammaiappan Kannutaiperumal *alias* Vikkrama chola Sampuvarayan, who is known for the first time in this reign, figures in some epigraphs of the king dated in his regnal years like 10 (A.D. 1187-88), and 13 (A.D. 1190-91).

An epigraph dated in the 27th year of Kulottunga-III (A.D. 1204-05) from Tiruvantlamalai four Sampuvarayas are mentioned including Pandinadu kondan *alias* Sampuvarayan Pavantittan *alias* Irajendra Chola Sampuvarayan, Senkeui Attimallan Virandan *alias* EthiriliChola Sampuvarayan and Attimallan Pallavantan *alias* Kulottunka Chola Sampuvarayan. Apparently they are each an independent individual and their mutual relationship is not known, though sharing the dynastic name in common. The titles *Virandan*, *Pallava*, and *Pallavantan* borne by two of these suggest that they had some connection with the Katavarayas. Similar is the case with the chief named Mindan Siyan Sampuvaratittan *alias* Mintan Siyan Chetiyarayan figuring in a damaged epigraph recently discovered at Tiruvannamalai. It is interesting to note that this chief bore the title of Chetiyarayan indicating his connection with the Chetiyaraya family or with the rulership of the Cheti region. Another point to be noted in his case is that he called himself as Sampuvaratittan (the Sun amongst the Sampuvarayas). Then comes Senkeni Ammaiappan Alagiya Cholan *alias* EthiriliChola Sampuvarayan, also called Chola pillai.

Several Sampuvaraya chiefs of Rajaraja-III's time are known from epigraphs. Of these Senkeni Ammaiappan Kannutaiperumaj *alias* Vikkrama Chola Sampuvarayan of an epigraph discovered recently at Tiruvannamalai,

belonging to the 25th year (A.D. 1241) of Rajaraja-III, is the same as the one who was in the service of Kulottunka-III in A.D. 1197-98. His son Senkeni Ammaiappan Alagiya Cholan *alias* Ethirili Chola Sampuvarayan of the 35th year (A.D. 1212-13) of Kulottunka-III continued to be in the service of Rajaraja-III also as known from the inscriptions of the king's 16th and 19th Regal Year A.D. 1234-35) from Tiruvannamalai. Like his father Kannudaiperumal Sampuvarayan, who continued to serve Rajaraja-III till A.D. 1240-41, Ethirili Chola Sampuvarayan seems to have been also loyal to the king. From about A.D. 1229, Rajaraja-III was in trouble in managing his kingdom. He was helped by the Hoysala Narasimha against the rising rebel the Katavaraya chief Kop Peruncinka-I who, in spite of the check imposed on him by the Hoysala king, had established his independence from A.D. 1231-32, and continued to work for the downfall of the Chola king. It appears that during this troublesome period Kannudai perumal Sampuvarayan and his son Ethirili Chola Sampuvarayan stood firm supporting Rajaraja-III in stemming the progress of Kop Peruncinka. Probably in recognition of this, Ethirili Chola Sampuvarayan got the titles of *Virsani* (thunderbolt to heroes) and *Tanininruvenran Tani vasikattuvan* (who vanquished singlehanded and who showed his unequalled valour).

In view of the fact that this chief was no longer heard of, it is possible that he did not survive the violent political events of the period. There was another chief named Virapperumal Ethirili Chola Alappirantan *alias* Rajaraja Sampuvarayan, the grandson of Cenkeni Virakaran Ammaiappan dated A.D. 1245. He was evidently a subordinate under Rajaraja-III at the fag end of his reign.

Rajendra-III's reign marked the decline of the Chola power in the Tondaimantalam. The Katavarayas, Telugu Cholas and the Kakatiyas, as well as due to the Pandyan invasion of the Chola kingdom brought this about. As a consequence of this political situation, the Sampuvaraya chiefs of these times changed their allegiance frequently from one powerful dynasty to another.

About A.D. 1260 the Telugu Coda chief Vijaya Gandagopala was killed by Jatavarman Sundarapandya-I (accession c. A.D.1251) and his territory was annexed to the Pandyan kingdom. So, his allies and subordinates including the Sampuvarayas had to switch their loyalties over to the Pandyan king, losing in this process whatever independence they possessed during the earlier years. After this till A.D. 1322, the Sampuvaraya chiefs appear to have served as subordinates of the Pandyas.

It appears that by A.D. 1359 Bukka I of the newly established Vijayanagara Empire held sway over the Rajagambhira rajya, which has been rightly identified with the territory possessed by the Sampuvaraya family. This territory may be said to comprise the taluks of Tiruvannamalai, Cheyyaru and part of Chengam in the North Arcot district. In fact the range of hills to the northwest of the Tiruvannmalai region goes by the name of Rajagambhiranmalai. According to epigraphical evidence in A.D. 1352, and 1359, Kampana II, the son of Bukka I was already ruling in this region.

Sakala loka chakkaravarti Rajanarayana Sampuvaraya was the most powerful member of the Sampuvaraya family of the 14th Century. This unmistakably shows that Rajanarayana Sampuvaraya began to experience the pressure of the mighty Vijayanagara empire from A.D. 1352 onwards.

An epigraph recently discovered at Tiruvannamalai refers itself to the reign of one Sakala loka chakravattikal (...)nna Sampuvarlyar. The name is damaged but seems to read as (Ariya)nna. Ariyanna evidently was after the Vtjayanagara emperor Harihara-II (c. A.D.1377-A.D.1404), some of whose epigraphs are met with in our collection. It seems that the Sampuvaraya chief, though issuing this record in his 11th year, was a subordinate under Harihara-II. It is not impossible that he succeeded Rajanarayana Sampuvaraya and was put in charge of the Tiruvannamalai area by the Vijayanagara emperor. It is not known how he was related to his predecessor and when he began to rule, and so his 11th regnal year cannot be equated to any year in the Christian era. It is not unlikely that after Rajanarayana's demise, this chief was put in charge of the North Arcot region by Chaluva Mangi due to which the latter got the title of *Sambuvaraya Sthapakacarya*, as per an epigraph dated about A.D. 1770 and the literary works the *Sijuvsbhyudayam* and the Jaimini *Bharatam*. For the time being this chief may be considered to be the last representative of the Sampuvaraya family which like that of the Katavarayas had played an important role in the 13th and 14th centuries in the history of Tamilnadu, by checking the advances made by the Kakatiyas, the Hoysalas and the Muhammadans into the Tondaimantalam.

## GIFTS OF LAMPS, LANDS ETC. MADE DURING RULE OF THE CHIEFS

In the 13th year (A.D. 1190-91) of the reign of Kulottunka chola-III, (97) Cenkeni Ammaiyappan Kannutaipperumal *alias* Vikkiramam Chola Sampuvarayan gifted a *nunda* lamp to the god Tiruvannamalai udaiya

nayanar for which he endowed 32 cows and one bull which were left in charge of one Irantayirakkon. Another chief named Vira Cholan Attimallan Sampuvarayan alias Ethirili Chola Sampuvarayan who was a subordinate under Rajaraja-III, gave in the latter's 19th year (A.D.1234-35), a nunda lamp to the same god with a similar endowment of 32 cows and one bull. In the 25th year of the reign of the same king (A.D. 1240-41) Cenkeni Kannutaip Perumal Alagiya Pallavan *alias* Vikkiramachola Sampuvarayan gifted the village of Kottapunthi in Uttamachola valanadu in Palkunrak kottam as *devadanam* together with a number of items of income to the same god to provide for a service called Alagiya Pallavan canti to the god instituted in his name.

One Mintan Siyan Sampuvaratittan stated to be the brother of Prithvti Kankchar and Chetiyarayan had gifted gold for making handles for flywhisks etc. to be given probably to the same god as per the epigraph which is badly damaged. This chief may have been an associate of Kop Peruncinka-I who had the same name.

## MINOR DYNASTIES

### THE MALAIYAMANS

Twelve records in our collection make mention of chiefs of the Malaiyaman family. Of these nine belong to the period of Kulottunkachola-III ranging in date from his 14th to 27th regnal years, i.e., A.D. 1192 to 1205 and the remaining three to the period of his successor Rajaraja-III.

This family which ruled over the territory round about Tirukkivilur in the South Arcot district, which later came

to be called Milatu or Malatu, was one of the ancient ruling families of Tamilnadu, like the Atihamans of Thakadur. The chiefs of this family are mentioned in the Changam works of the early centuries of the Christian era. Tirumutik kari, a Malaiyaman figures in several poems of the *Purananuru* sung by Kapilar and Marokkattu Nappachalaiyar. This chief was celebrated for his patronage to the poets of his time. This is revealed by a poem of Kovur Kilar by which he succeeded in releasing the children of the Malaiyaman from a cruel death to which the victorious Chola monarch (probably Killivalavan) had condemned them. It is interesting to note that Sundara-Chola (*circa* A.D. 956-973) took for his queen a Malaiyaman princess named Vanavan Mahadevi who performed *sati* at the king's death. After this time till we come to the reign of Kulottunka-I, this family seems to have been under eclipse due to the fact that the Banas became the rulers of this area in Rajaraja-I's time, and some others who called themselves Milatutaiyar became the rulers in the time of Rajendra-I. A certain Narasingavarman ruled the Maladu 2000 country in A.D. 1058 who built the *Vishnu* temple at Tirukkoyalur (*A.R.E.*, 119 of 1900).

Among the important feudatories of Kulottunka-I (*circa* 1070-1120), the Malaiyamans of the hilly regions in the North and South Arcot districts were one. They had their headquarters at a place called Kiiyur. The members of this family bore the title Chetiyarayar (king of the Cheti country which is represented by the hilly area round about Tirukkovilur, Kiliyur etc.). Some of them and some of their subordinates ruled from Tirumunaippadi in the South Arcot district. The chiefs of this family continued to be the subordinates of Vikrama Chola. Kulattunka-II's reign was a peaceful one. The Malaiyamans continued to serve him.

A number of chieftains of this family figure in the inscriptions of the time of Rajadhiraja-II and Kulottunka Chola-III, testifying to the fact of the increased influence of this family during the period. Unlike the Banas and the Katavas who rebelled against the emperors, the Malaiyaman chiefs continued to be loyal subordinates of their Chola masters. It may be mentioned here that several such local families of chieftains gradually became powerful in their areas and the people here looked to them for favours more than to the central authority. This trend naturally weakened the influence of the Chola kings, and in the process paved the way for the interference of the neighbouring kingdoms in the politics of Tamilnadu.

However, it was during the reign of Kulottunka Chola-III, that the Malaiyaman chiefs seem to have been very active as attested by the epigraphs of this period. As before, they had Kovalur (i.e., Tirukkivilur) as their capital and so were called Kovalarayas. But the other title of Chetiyaraya, which they also used to bear assumed special significance. It evidenced the new tradition that was growing then by which these chieftains sought to establish a connection with the Haihayas of Cheti country at a time when all ruling chieftains were busy finding a Puranic pedigree for themselves. One of them is even called Sisupalan. Numerous Malaiyaman chiefs figure in inscriptions of Kulottunka Chola-III's time with similar names, although each seems to be different from the other. Among the chiefs mentioned in the epigraphs of the time of Kulottunka Chola-III, two distinct groups are met with. One group bears the title *Malayarayan* or *Malayakularoyan* or *Malaiyan* and the other group bears the title *Malaiyaman*. It is also seen that the chiefs bearing the title *Malaiyan* etc.

were generally called Karikala Chola Ataiyur nadalvan while the Malaiyaman chiefs are said to belong to Kiliyur. Further in more than one epigraph a *Malaiyan* chief and a *Malaiyaman* chief figure together. This is known from an epigraph of the 17th year (A.D. 1195) and from an epigraph of the 19th year (A.D. 1197) which is a counterpart of the previous record, where Malaiyan Vinaiyvenran *alias* Karikala Chola Ataiyur nadalvan is mentioned along with Kiliyur Malaiyaman Alakiyanayan Akarasuran *alias* Irajagambira Chetiyarayan. This shows that these two chiefs belong each to a different family, one having its residence at Kiliyur and the other at Adaiyur. The latter place being very near to Tiruvannamalai, the family residing here seems to have been known as the *Malaiyan* family, while the Kiliyur chiefs always were known as belonging to the Malaiyaman family.

Three or four members of the Malaiyan or Malaiyakularayan branch are known from the epigraphs in question. They are Ninraperumal *alias* Kulottunka Chola Malaiyakularayan according to an epigraph of the 14th year — A.D. 1192, Munaiyataraiyan's son Tiruvarankamutaiyan *alias* Irajithi raja Malaiyakularayan *alias* Tanmaparipalan as per an epigraph of the 14th year — A.D. 1192; Malaiyan Vinaivenran *alias* Karikala Chola Adaiyur nadalvan (epigraphs of the 17th year A.D. 1195; of the 18th year - A.D. 1196; of the 19th year - A.D. 1197) and Malaiyan Narasinka panman *alias* Karikala Chola Adaiyur nadalvan (epigraphs of the 27th year — A.D. 1205).

As regards the three epigraphs of Rajaraja-III's time, the chief mentioned in each of them is styled *Malaiyaman*. There figures in the epigraph of the 17th year (A.D.1232-33) of the

king the chief named Kiliyur Malaiyaman (Periy)utaiyan *alias* ..... and also in the epigraph which has not preserved the details of date and also the name Perya utaiyan. He is probably connected with the chief named Kiliyur Malaiyaman Iraiyanan Pekka utaiyan *alias* Irajara Chetiyarayan mentioned in the epigraph of the 18th year (A.D. 1196) of Kulottunka-III's reign. Similarly the chief Kiliyur utaiyan Akarasuran Tiruvannamalai perumal *alias* Iraja gembira chetiyarayan of the epigraph of the 24th year (A.D. 1239-40) may be related to Kiliyur Malaiyaman Alagiyanayan Akarasuran *alias* Iraja kembira Chetiyarayan mentioned in two records of Kulottunka Chola-III's period. In the epigraph of the 27th year (A.D. 1204-05) of Kulottunka-III, one Akarasuran of the same family is mentioned but without his proper name. Whether he is identical with the other two chiefs mentioned above is, therefore, not known.

The contents of the nine epigraphs of Kulottunka Chola-III's time referred to above are interesting. The chief Ninraperumal was the donor of some jewels to the god as per an epigraph of the 14th year. Tiruvaranga mutaiyan of the epigraph of the 14th year, gifted *nunda* lamps to the temple. Epigraph dated 17th year of the king and the epigraph dated 19th year contain matters relating to an agreement of understanding reached between two groups of chiefs. According to the former, Malaiyan Vinaiyvenran *alias* Karikala Chola Adaiyur nataivan gave an undertaking of friendship to Kiliyur Malaiyaman Alagiyanayan Akarasuran *alias* Iraja gembira Chetiyarayan and to Pirutivikankar. As per the second record Malaiyaman Alagiyanayan Akarasuran *alias* Raja gembira Chetiyarayan gave a similar undertaking to the other two. It is interesting to note that the latter record is dated two years later than the former.

The chief Vtnaiyvenran mentioned in the epigraph of the 18th year (A.D.1196) gave lands to provide for food offerings to the god; Vanakovaraiya Malaiyaman's son Pavanthirthan *alias* Akaracuran gave lands to the temple as *Tiruvannamalai nunda vilakkuppuram* according to the epigraph of the 25th year (A.D.1203); and as per the epigraph of the 27th year (A.D. 1205), Malaiyan Narasinkapanman *alias* Karikililachola Alaiyur nadalvan gave lands as *tirumadappallippuram*.

Of the three inscriptions of Rajaraja-III's reign two of the 17th year, A.D. 1232-35; and another one (date particulars damaged) relate to the agreement of friendship and help between two groups of chiefs. The third inscription of the 24th year, A.D. 1240 registers a gift of land as *tirumadappallippuram* by Akaracuran Tiruvannamalaippuram *alias* Iraja gembira Chetityarayan of Kiliyur.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION REVEALED BY THESE EPIGRAPHS

Six of the twelve epigraphs examined above, deal with compacts between chiefs. We have referred to this phenomenon while dealing with the same epigraphs under the later Cholas. As regards the vogue of this tendency during the period of Kulottunka-III and his successors, became much more general, and there can be no doubt that we have here unmistakable evidence of the approach of the end. The empire is dissolving into a number of warring principalities before the eyes of the king, now no longer powerful to enforce his will on his vassals who, though they still own allegiance to him, generally act very much by themselves and as best suits their divergent interests.

## THE PIRUTIVIKARIKAS

In some epigraphs of the time of the later *Cholas*, the Pandyas, the Katavarayas and Sampuvarayas, chiefs bearing the title of *Prthvikanka* or *Pirutuwikanka* figure. This family like the other feudatory families was playing a prominent role in the political life of the people of the 12th Century, but the activities of the members of the family were confined mostly to the area comprised of the present North Arcot district. It is not unlikely that this family had descended from the Western Ganga Prthvipati-II who was a subordinate first under Parantaka Chola I and later under Rashtrakuta Krishna III, and whose records are found in some places near Vellore in the North Arcot district. The chronology and genealogy of these chiefs are not possible to chart out because of the absence of details in this regard.

In our collection earliest reference to a chief of this family is met with in the much damaged epigraph of the 7th year (A.D. 1170) of the reign of Rajadhiraja-II. He is called Appakaiyan Kuttatuntevar *alias* Pirutivikankar. The inscription registers a compact of friendship between this chief and his son Coma .... and three others whose names are damaged. The reason for entering into this agreement by them is not known. But it is learnt from some later records that the Prthvikanka chiefs were loyal to their Chola masters, and they were probably entrusted with the maintenance of order in this region, and with the work of curbing, whenever necessity arose, the tendency of revolt against the central authority, of the other feudatory chiefs or locally influential persons. The epigraph in question seems to provide an example of this type of activity by the Pirutivikanka chief Kattatundevar.

The epigraph dated in the 13th year (A.D. 1191) of Kulottunka Chola III registers a grant of land to the god at Tiruvannamalai made by Kattatuntevan Piratikankan. He bears also the names of Vanniya Madevan Alagiya Cholan. This chief appears to be the same as the one referred to above, but during the period of rule of Kulotunka-III, he got the two special titles, one referring to his being the leader of the Vanniyas and the other probably after an epithet of the Chola king.

Another instance of compact of the type mentioned above is registered in the epigraph of the 17th year (A.D. 1195) of the same Chola king. Here a person named Malaiyan Vinaivenran *alias* Karikala Chola Adaiyar nadalvan promised allegiance to Kuttlatuntevan Coman Pirutivikanka and Kijiyar Malaiyaman Alakiyanayan Akarasuran *alias* Irajagembira chetiyarayan. The Pirutivikanca chief Coman of this record was evidently the same as the one figuring as the son of Kuttatuntevan Vanniya Madevan Alagiya Cholan in the previous inscription. The same Coman Pirutivikanka whose name is damaged figures in the inscription of the 19th year (A.D. 1197) of Kulottunka-III, of which the purpose is the same as another epigraph.

The epigraph of the 27th year (A.D. 1205) of the same Chola king is interesting because here ten chiefs jointly gave an undertaking, evidently to the king, that they would never swerve from their loyalty to the king and would never back the two Vana chiefs (names given). Among the ten are two Pirutikanka chiefs named Coman Tiruvannamalai utaiyan *alias* Kulottunkachola Pirutikankan and Coman Varantaruvan *alias* Colentirachinka Pirutikankan, who were obviously the sons of Kuttatuntevan Coman Pirutivikankan referred to above. The latter of the two brothers now with

title Alagiya Cholan was the donor of land to the god in the epigraph of the same 27th year of Kulottunka-III. This Piritikanka is stated to have become the chief of Pankala nadu in this epigraph.

A Pirutikankar addressed as Piallaiyar but without any other name is mentioned in the epigraph of the 5th year (A.D. 1221) of Rajaraja-III as well as in a fragmentary epigraph most probably of this king's time. The endearing term meaning 'Prince' employed here for this chief indicates that the high status the Chola king gave him. The purport of the former record is that two locally important persons gave an undertaking to the servants of Pirutikankar that they would remain always loyal to the latter. In the much damaged epigraph of the 15th year (A.D 1231) of the same Chola king, some chiefs of the family figure, one of them being called Coman. (Whether this Coman was the same as the one figuring in some epigraphs of Kulattunka-III's, time is not known.).

In another much damaged record in which the name of the king and details of date are not preserved, a Pirutivikanka chief named Kuttatuntevan *alias* Rajagembira Pirutivikankan figures as one of the three who gave an undertaking of mutual loyalty to some other chiefs whose names are lost. This Rajagembira Pirutivikankan's identification is difficult. A chief named Appakaiyan Kuttatuntevan *alias* Irajaraja Pirutivikankan figures in an epigraph in which the name of the king and other particulars are not preserved. In this record this chief gave an undertaking to the chief Kiliyur Malaiyaman (Periyutai)yan Iraiyan *alias* ..... The counterpart of this record where the latter gave a similar undertaking to the former is met with in another epigraph which is also much

damaged although here the name of the king Rajarajadevar is preserved.

An epigraph of the 13th Century belonging to Mimta Ciyana Sampuvaratittan calls him as the younger brother of a Pirutivikankatevar whose name is, however, not preserved in the epigraph. We have taken this Sampuvaratittanasa member of the Sampuvaraya family. When he was the younger brother of a Pirutivikanka chief, it goes without saying that either Sampuvaratittan was not of Sampuvaraya stock or that the latter family was connected with the Pirutivikankas by blood. In case of accepting the latter theory, which seems more plausible, Sampuvaratittan may not be a Sampuvaraya.

In a record of the 5th year (A.D. 1245-46) of the Pandya king Vikkirma pandiyatevar, reference is made to a land, situated in Pankala nadu and bought by Satvesvaradevan, the head of the monastery called Kal matam, from Prithivikankar. The identity of this chief is not clear. In another record of the 18th year (A.D. 1269) of Emmantalamum kontaruliya Cuntara pandiyatevar, reference is made to a land in Pankala nadu, which was obtained by the chief of Golaki matam from Prithivikankar.

Thus, the Pirutivikanka family according to our collection of epigraphs continued for at least a Century. A majority of the epigraphs having a bearing on the chiefs of this family are seen to register political compacts, in which members of this family are shown to be supporters of their Chola over lords. Unlike the Banas and the Katavarayas and Sampuvarayas to some extent, who tried to revolt against the Chola kings, the Pirutivikanka chiefs were trusted and loyal subordinates of the Cholas, and they looked after the Vanaappadi region with great care on behalf of their suzerains.

## THE NILAKANKARAYAS

Like the Sampuvarayas, chiefs of a family named Nilakankaryas figure in seven inscriptions of our collection. Of these inscriptions four are of the time of Kulottunka Chola III (88, of the 2nd year; 114 and 116 of the 27th year and 121 of the 29th year); two are of the time of Kop Peruncinka-I of the 27th year) and one of the time of Kop Perunicinka-II of the 2nd year). It is seen from these epigraphs that the chiefs were subordinates either under the Chola king or under the Katavarayas.

An epigraph recently discovered belonging to the 2nd year of Kulottunka Chola-III (A.D. 1179-80) refers to Kurukulattaraiyan Panchanativatanan Nilakankaraiyan also called Kali Pancanativanan. He is no doubt identical with the chief figuring in an epigraph from Chingleput now stored in the Madras Museum, and in several other records of the 5th, 10th, 16th and 33rd years of the same Chola king. This chief seems to have borne different titles like 'Pillaiyar Kulottunka Chola Kannappan Nallanayanar' and 'Chola Kanka' in different years of his suzerain's rule. One Kuntan Nampural *alias* Yirara Nilakankaraiyan figures in an inscription of the 27th year (A.D. 1204-05) of the same Chola king. This individual seems to be different from Pancanati vanan Nilakankaraiyan mentioned above. In another epigraph of the same year of the king one Araca kalalayan Nilakankan Kariyaperurnal figures. He is the same as the one mentioned in a recently discovered epigraph of the 29th year (A.D. 1206-07) of the king. He is also different from Panchanativanan Nilakankaraiyan.

Some epigraphs of the time of Rajaraja Chola-III refer to chiefs of this family. They are apparently different

individuals and connection between them and the earlier chiefs is not easy to establish.

During the conflict between the Chola kings Rajaraja-III and Rajendra-III and the Katavarayas the members of the Nilakankaraya family sided with the latter. In two epigraphs of the 27th year of the Katava king Kop Peruncinka-I (A.D. 1258), reference is made to Natikaiyalvar Nayanar, the queen (nampirattiyar) of Avani Alappirantan. This chief was in all probability the same as Amur Nilakatikaraiyan Avani Alappirantan whose son Alagiya Tiruchitrampalamutaiyan Nilakankaraiyan is referred to in belonging to the 2nd year (A.D. 1244-45) of Kop Peruncinka-II. It is not, however, known if Nankaiyalvar Nayanar was the mother of Alagiya Tiruchitrampalamutaiyan Nilakankaraiyan.

## THE TELUGU CHOLAS

The History of the Telugu Cholas (i.e., the Cholas settled in the Telugu country), like that of the Banas is interesting and their origins are to be traced to a great antiquity. Some inscriptions found in the Cuddapah district and a couple of copper plate records give the history of a dynasty of kings bearing the Chola name, tracing their descent from Karikala and holding sway in this region.

In the epigraphs of the period of Kulottunka-III, two or three chiefs of this line figure, and always in a subordinate capacity only. The most important of them was Tammusiddha or Tammusiddhi.

Of the three inscriptions of this family in our collection two inscriptions attest to the various political pacts among various factions. The third one is of the 29th year (A.D. 1245) of Rajaraja-III. It registers a gift of a *nunda* lamp by

a certain Kollai Irujeyan who is stated to be a servant of Nayanar Kantakopalar. In the absence of details it is difficult to identify who this Telugu Chola chief was. But it is not unlikely that he was the same as Marutantaka (Maturantaka misspelt) Pottappi Cholan Vijaya Kantakopalatar whose younger brother Matisutanatevar's son Kakkunayakatevan was the donor of a *nunda* lamp in one of the other epigraphs belonging to the 36th year (A.D. 1278) of Kopperuncinka-II. It must be noted that Vijaya Kantakopalatevar is mentioned as an uncle of the donor in order probably to claim respectability by him. The chief Vijaya Kantakopalatevar who ascended the throne in A.D. 1250-51, was a powerful person.

The third epigraph of our collection, which is much damaged, also belongs to a Katava chief, but details about his identity and date of the record are not available, although he might be Kop Peruncinka II. This inscription registers a grant of land probably by the same Telugu Chola chief Maturantaka Pottappi Chola Vijaiyakantakopalatevar, although due to the damaged condition of the record, we are not sure.

## THE PANDYAS

From Jatavarman Vikrama pandya (A.D. 1244-1248?) onward, some of the members of the Pandya dynasty of Madurai, who became powerful after the decline of the Cholas of Tanjavur in the 13th century, had been active at Tiruvannamalai and in the neighbouring region during the 13th and 14th centuries. During this period these rulers as well as some of their subordinates had made grants of land and lamp to the temple at the place. This is substantiated by as many as

twenty three epigraphs of this dynasty in our collection. Of these, four were copied by the Epigraphy Department in 1902. The same department in 1945-46 copied three more. The rest have been copied by the french institute recently. A majority of them are found engraved on the walls (outside) of the existing second *prakara*. Some are found on the walls of the third *prakara*, which is marked by the elegant Kili gopura at its east wall. The remaining ones are met with on the walls of the fourth *prakara* which, in all probability, was put up only after A.D. 1317 under the aegis of the Hoysala king Vira Ballala-III whose name the east main *gapura* of the *prakara* bears. Mention is made of the location of the epigraphs in order to arrive at their most probable date, for, there is the problem of identity of some of the kings to whom the respective epigraphs belong. Earlier structures can be and are used by the contemporary people as well as by those of later times for engraving their records on. But a structure erected at a later period cannot bear an inscription of an earlier period unless the slab bearing it was removed from its original place and used in the new structure or the epigraph was copied *de novo* on the newly put up structure for some reason.

In the epigraphs belonging to this dynasty there are kings of the same name bearing different epithets. Evidently they are not identical and each of them may belong to a different period. There are others without any epithet at all. Neither do the epigraphs contain *meykirttis* characteristic of the kings by which one can distinguish them, except in one instance. Owing to the uncertainty of the accession dates of some of them, the astronomical particulars available in a few of the records do not help us in fixing the date

and position of the king in the chronology. In fact in many a case the astronomical details themselves are vitiated by wrong quotations of week days, *thithis* and *nakshatras*. All these handicaps have made the study of the history of the Pandyas of this period complicated if not confused.

## Jatavarman Yikrama Pandya

The earliest king whose records are included in our collection is Jatayavarman (Jatavarman) Vikrama pandya. His historicity, however, has not been recognised by some scholars. The recent study of the later Pandyas has shown clearly the existence of this ruler during the reign of Mara Sundara pandya-II.

In an inscription of the seventh regnal year of Vikrama pandya (with no title), a certain Karatiatevar figures as a donor. It is evident that this chief served as a subordinate under three kings looking after the royal affairs in this region just as Kantan Alutaiyan was in the Pudukkottai region. In another inscription of the eighth year of Jata Vikramapandya, a chief named Kantatevan *alias* Sundarapandiya Kankeyan figures. The name Sundarapandiyan borne by the chief is probably after Mara Sundara-II. Perumal Kulasekaratevar referred to in the epigraph of the second year of this king seems, likewise, to be identical with Jata Kulasekara-II.

Let us examine the question of this Pandya king's date of accession and the duration of his rule. Of the five epigraphs ascribed to this king, only one contains particulars of date. They are: year 5, Simha, 7, Friday, Rohini. They are found to correspond to 26th August 1244. Accordingly this king's accession date appears to fall in A.D. 1240.

He was ruling jointly with Mara Sundara pandya. An examination of a larger number of inscriptions of this king is necessary to say if he had any characteristic *meykkirrtti*. The latest year of his reign was eight as per our inscription, that is he ruled upto A.D. 1246-47 or 1247-48. Perhaps he died prematurely. The five inscriptions of this king dealt with here include one each of the year two, five, seven and eight and the regnal year is lost in the fifth record. In spite of the small number, they furnish some interesting and important pieces of information.

### GIFT OF LAMPS AND LANDS

Three of the epigraphs deal with gifts of lamps to the god Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar. One registers the gift of a single lamp for which some cows and bull were endowed. The number of the animals is lost. The donor was a certain Vikkiram Cholatevar *alias* Irunkolar stated to be a *mutali* of Perumal Kulasekaratevar. A group of eight *nunda* lamps was donated to the same god according to the above inscription. To provide for these lamps 250 numbers of cows and bulls were endowed by the donor Kantatevan *alias* Kankeyan, the son of Narasinkatevar of Catai in Pandi nadu. According to another inscription, Tirunattapperumal *alias* Kankeyan, another son of the same Narasinkatevar of Karunkulam *alias* Catavacaka nallur (i.e., Catai of the other record), in Venaikkuti nadu in Pantimantalam, gifted two *nunda* lamps to the same god for which he endowed cows and 2 bulls.

It should be mentioned here that the donors mentioned in the above epigraphs donated 600 he-buffaloes and donated 14 he-buffaloes together with 3 calves for the purpose of construction work in the temple (*tirpani*). The gift of such a

large number of these animals evidently suggests that during that time a big project of construction work by way of either additions or renovations to the temple was under way.

Another noteworthy information contained in the epigraphs of this period relates to the gift of 250 goats or sheep by Tirunattap Perumal for the purpose of providing milk to children in front of (the image or shrine) of the goddess Unnamalai Nachiyar.

Epigraphs, dated in the fifth regnal year, and that, dated in the seventh year, register gifts of lands. According to the former Sarvesvaradeva, the head of the Kalmatam at Tiruvannamalai donated the village Kulattutaiyanpati on the northern bank of Pankala nadu together with its wet and dry lands and incomes in cash and kind, to the god Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar to provide for food offerings to the god during the Ardhajama service as well as for worship of Tirujnana Sampantar. It is stated that the village was obtained as *matappuram* by the *mata* head from Prithivikankar. Here is an example of transfer of a *matappuram* village to the temple.

The latter inscription, however, records the gift of the village Nallanpillaipetral ental (boundaries specified) together with its incomes and privileges, by Tevar Kantiyatevar's mother . . . cantiralmulaiyal, as *matappuram* to a *matam* (name not mentioned) presided over by Tirujana Sampantar.

## DONORS

In another inscription a certain Vikkiram Cholavevar *alias* Irun kolar was the donor. The name Irunkolar reminds one of the family of chiefs of the same name who lived in and around Kodumbalur in the former Pudukkottai State.

It is noteworthy that he was an important official under Perumal Kulasekaratevar who, as already stated, was possibly the same as Jata Kulasekara-II.

The two brothers figuring as donors in the inscriptions are stated to be the sons of a certain Narasinkatevar who was an officer of *Akapparivaram* of the king and who belonged to Karunkulam *alias* Catavacaka nallur in Panti nadu. Apparently the sons of this official had accompanied the king to Tiruvannamalai when they had made the donation. Or it is also possible that the king employed these men to supervise the big temple building or renovation project that was being carried on then at Tiruvannamalai.

Another epigraph states that the donor was Sarvesvaradeva the head of a *matam* called Kalmatam at Tiruvannamalai and that he transferred his *matappuram* village to the temple. The reason given is that it was the desire of his preceptor to do so.

From one inscription we know that . . . Chandira Mulaiyal, the mother of Tevar Kantiyatevar gave a village as *matappuram* to a *matam*. Kantiyatevar, as stated above, figures prominently in the records of some other Pandya kings of the period also. The name of his mother known from this record is interesting to note. Such names are usually borne by women of the *devaratiyar* group.

## MATTERS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Two matters of interest are revealed by the epigraphs examined above. One of them relates to the temple building activity of the time to which attention has already been drawn.

The other matter is that we know for the first time the existence, at Tiruvannamalai, of the *matam* called *Kalmatam* and its head named Sarvvesvaradeva. This is

evidently one such institution connected with the revival of Saiva activities in the thirteenth century by the Saiva teachers (Santana guravar) beginning with Meykantatevar who popularised and spread the tenets of Saiva Siddhanta philosophy. This *matam* continued to exist in the subsequent periods also according to some of the later day epigraphs, which will be dealt with later on.

### **Jatavarman Sundaraplodya-I (Circa A. D. 1251-1283)**

Jatavarman Sundara pandya-I was one of the most important and brilliant monarchs known to the mediaeval history of South India, and an honoured and celebrated king of the main line of the later Pandyas.

Only three inscriptions of this important ruler are found at Tiruvannamalai, dated in the 15th, 17th, and 18th year of his reign each containing his distinguishing title *Emmandalamum kontaruliya*. The reason for this is not known. Under the Cholas we have seen that except for a doubtful record no epigraphs of the time of the great Rajaraja I have been found here. It seems that busy kings, engaged always in warfare, were not able to pay attention to the temple in question.

### **DONATIONS OF LAMPS AND LANDS**

Two of the three inscriptions deal with gifts of lamps to the god of the temple at Tiruvannamalai. One of the 15th year (A.D. 1265-66), registers a gift of a *nunda* lamp by an individual named Sankaran Kantanayakkar of Tirunallur, for which 32 cows and one bull were endowed by him. The other epigraph dated in the 17th year (A.D. 1257-58) records a gift of one *nunda* lamp by Suntaranayan Vanchirayan for which he endowed the same number of

cows and bull as in the other record. This donor is stated to be the *kilavan* of Palaiyur and he belonged to Irajentira Cholapperunteru in Malainadu i.e. the Kerala country. Apparently this donor was an important person of his place.

The third inscription relates to the transfer to the god Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar of all lands together with the incomes thereof, except 500 *kuli*, in Tenkampattu *alias* Tiruvannamalai Perumalnallur, a *matappuram*, by the ascetic Hrdaya Siva, the disciple of Siddhantavyakhyatakkal Varata Siva who was a disciple of the *mudaliyar* of Tirukkotunkunram of the lineage of Laksadhyaya mudaliyar of Sri Golak matam who had his residence in the Kankayarayan tirumatam *alias* Vidyavinodan tirumatam located in Tiruvannamalai. This gift was intended to provide for food offerings to the god during the service on the days when the asterism Punarpusam the natal asterism of Varata Siva was current and on the days when the asterism Sataiyam, the natal asterism of Hrdaya Siva was current. It is stated that the village was gifted as tax-free *matappuram* by Tiruvannamalai Perumal *alias* Prithivikankar to the above mentioned teacher.

## INTERESTING INFORMATION

Besides furnishing an instance of transfer of a *matappuram* village to the temple, this is the only epigraph from Tiruvannamalai to furnish the interesting information about the existence of a branch of the well known Golakimatha at the place. It seems that Saivism of the Siddhanta variety was vigorously practised in the Tondaimandalam region for a long time. The Saiva teachers belonged to various groups each of which had a principal monastery at a place with branches at various

other places. One of the groups, called *Santanas*, was the *Laksadhyaya santana*. A *matha* (monastery) of this *santana* named Patanjali devar matham was at Melaicheri of Perumparrappuliyur (Chidambaram). The epigraph in question refers to Varata siva as a disciple of a teacher of the Laksadhyaya mudaliyar santana of the Sri Golaki matam. It shows that the *Laksadhyaya santana* was closely connected with the Golaki matha.

### **Jatirvarman Vira Pandya-I**

Jatavarman Sundara pandya-I was assisted by a powerful co regent named Jatavarman Vira pandya. He may be Jatavarman Vira pandya-I. It has preserved the date particulars like year 5, Isapa su. (. . .), Rosani (Rohini) and Thursday. They work out correctly to 27th April 1256, when the *tithi* was su. till .36 of the day and Rohini was current throughout the day. If this is accepted then the date of accession of the king would fall in A.D. 1252, rather than in A.D. 1253. There are other equivalents in A.D. 1273, 1283, 1317, 1344 etc. for the data but none of them suits the so far known accession date of any of the Jatavarman Vira pandyas known so far. Owing to its extremely damaged condition, this epigraph has not preserved other particulars of interest, except for stating that a certain Dennyayaka (name not clear) made a grant of land as *tevatanam*.

### **Maravarman Vikrama pandya-II**

Along with the two kings the history of whose reigns has been dealt with above, there was one Maravarman Vikrama pandya-II whose inscriptions are seen to overlap with those two. Here we are not dealing with this king's reign as no epigraphs of his time are found at Tiruvannamalai.

## Maravarman Kulasekara pandya-I

Of the later Pandya rulers who dominated the political scene in the second half of the 13th century A.D., Maravarman Kulasekara pandya-I was the most prominent. 'Marco Polo who visited part of the Pandyan kingdom towards the end of the 13th century, speaks of 'five royal brothers' and 'five crowned kings' of this great province of 'Malabar,' and that 'Ashar or Ascjar (corruption for Sekar) was the eldest of the five brother kings'. Chinese sources of about A.D. 1280 also refer to the five brothers who were Sultans.

Unlike his predecessors whose epigraphs are rarely found at Tiruvannamalai, ten inscriptions of our collection may be attributed to Maravarman Kulasekara I. However only three of these definitely belong to this king, and the rest are assigned to him on grounds of palaeography and internal evidence. The donee of one epigraph was the daughter of the queen of Jatavarman Sundara pandya I. This king's epigraphs in our collection range in date from the 7th to the 35th year of his reign. Some of them give astronomical particulars in full and some give them partially.

Though badly damaged, the epigraph dated in the 14th year is important and interesting. For it contains a *meykkirtti* of the king which is, available only in pieces. It is curious that in the grant portion of the epigraph some passages have been erased apparently wantonly. It appears that these passages contained the name of a gift village. The contemporary or a later day owner of that village seems to have caused the disappearance of this name of the village in an attempt to misappropriate the village for himself. As the beginning of the record is damaged it is not known if it commenced with the words *Terpol* of the

*meykkirtti*. Nevertheless, some points of interest can be gleaned from this mutilated text. References to Sinkhalar (i.e. Ceylonese), the Chetiyar and Konkar are found in line 1. Levying tribute(?) from Vira Posala (i.e. the Hoysala king) and subduing of Cheralan (i.e. the Chera king) are mentioned in line 2. Again in line 6 Posalan (i.e. the Hoysala king) and his army general Chinkana tentanayakkar are referred to. A certain Villavan (a Chera king?) figures in line 7. References to Kanni valanadu, Sundara pandiyan, and the Ponnipperiyaru (i.e. the Kauveri) are mentioned in line 8. Irajalarayatan, evidently the Sampuvaraya chief and Kop Peruncinka, the Kattavaraya chief are referred to in line 9. Tirunelveli and Cinkalan appear in the next line. In line 11 the army of the Pallavan, and the breeze of the Potiyir (hill) are mentioned besides the statement that the king Ko Marupanmar *alias* Tirubuvana chakkaravatti Konerinmaikontan was seated on the pure gold lion throne along with his queen Ulakamuzhutum utaiya.

The king's name Kulasekara is given in the business portion of the record in lines 12 following. The purport of the record is that on the representation made by his official Kalinkarayar, the king made a tax-free gift of Pakkam in Makarai mandalam and another village (name erased as stated above), after renaming them together as Kulasekaranallur with all its incomes to the temple of the god Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayanar to provide for the service instituted in the temple in the name of the king. A badly damaged epigraph dated in the 35th year of the reign records the gift of land probably by the king. It contained the name of a chief of a place (name lost) of Takadur nadu but it is not preserved.

## DONATION OF LAMPS AND COWS

Only one of the inscriptions, dated in the 16th year relates to the gift of a *nunda* lamp made by an important person named Sirakanatar *alias* Maluva chakkaravattikal of the village of Varanavasi for which he endowed 32 cows and one bull.

Another important person, named Makatesan Ulakankatta Vanakovaraiyan the chief of Arakalur, donated, according to the epigraph, dated in the 7th year, 54 cows to the god for the purpose of supplying milk for the milk bath (milk abeshekam) of the Lord.

## OTHER INTERESTING TRANSACTIONS

The epigraph dated in the 10th year, registers a sale of land for an amount of 10 *pon* by the *Simakesu rakkani seyvarkal*, *tevakanmi* and the *koyirkanakkar* of the Tiruvannamalai temple to Pulukkuney perumal who is enjoined to pay some specified quantity of paddy annually to the temple. The land was situated on the eastern border of Adaiyar. The purchaser was an important person, she being the daughter of Tennanaimulutum utaiyar, the queen of Tevarkal evidently referring to Jatavarman Sundara pandya-I, as mentioned above.

According to the epigraph of the 15th year, the same temple officials had sold some land for 4 *pon* to Kulasekaratevar, the son of Kalavali nadu Alvar, a Kaikkola of Tiruvannamalai with a stipulation that he should pay some specified quantity of paddy annually.

We are informed about a transfer of landed property on a permanent basis between two private parties by the inscription, dated in the 14th year. According to this record two military captains (names given) owners of the hamlet

Karumanikkanental had sold it for 50 *panam* to a certain Arunagiri perumal *alias* Iyatavarayar who was the son of Kulasekaratevar the daughter of Eppotuminiyar a *tevaradiyal* of Ttruvannamalai. The reasons for the sale of the land were that the owners did not have resources to cultivate it; it therefore became ruined, that tax was demanded of them and that they were unable to pay the tax.

The epigraph dated in the 33rd year, records a royal gift of money obtained from a levy of 5 *panam* on every *veli* of land in all the *devadana* villages to provide for musk for smearing the god with it. It is stated that the king ordered this gift on the collective representation made by Sri *Mahesvarar*, the *sthanajanamkal* (i.e. the *tenattar* of the temple, the *tirunnalikaiyar*, the *nattavar* of Anna nadu the *nattavar* of the villages included in Adaiyur nadu, Pankala nadu, Vanakappati nadu, Pakkap parru and Sinkamulaipparru, the *Tirmalai velaikkarar*, and Tiruvakampatiyar headed by the royal official Kanainiyar *alias* Kulasekara kantiyatevar hailing from Ampalattatinallur *alias* Manappatai Vitu in Panti Mandalam.

A fragmentary epigraph seems to refer to an assignment (details lost) to the *tevar adiyar* apparently for reciting such sacred hymns as the *Tiruvempavai*. This hymn was a composition of the Tamil Saiva saint. Manickavachakar who is said to have lived at Tiruvannamalai and to have recited some hymns of his celebrated holy philosophical poem entitled the *Tiruvachakam*.

### Maravarman Vikkiram Pandya-III

A much damaged epigraph of this king bearing the title *Tiribuvana chcakkaravattikal* was discovered the french institute. The text registers an allotment of lands to forty *tevaradiyal* who were to do service at the time of a service

called Irajakalnayan Santi and of a festival called *Irajakkalnayan tirunal* in the temple of the god at Tiruvannamalai. Evidently Irajakkalnayan was the title of this king. The Hoysala king Ramanatha, the son of Somesvara had the surname *Rajakkalnayan* which is said to have been assumed by Maravarman Vikrama pandya.

## **KINGS AFTER MARAVARMAN KULASEKARA-I**

It has been mentioned above that during the reign period of Maravarman Kulasekara-I some other kings, probably related to him by blood, were also exercising regnal authority. In fact his sons Jatavarman Virapandya and Jatavarman Sundara pandya are also known to have assisted their father, becoming eventually responsible for the confusion brought about in the politics of the country. However, since our collection of epigraphs from Tiruvannamalai does not include records of these rulers we shall gloss them over here. A likely reason for the absence of records of the brothers and others, if any, at Tiruvannamalai was that they, being busy with their own personal affairs did not find time to visit this place to cause donations to be made to the temple.

## **TRIBHUVANA CHAKARAVATTIKAL SIVALLAPATEVAR**

Two epigraphs of this king are included in our collection. Except for the title *Tribhuvana chakkaravattikal*, the king in either record is not distinguished by any other title. They are one dated in the 21st year and the second dated in the 22nd year. The former is engraved on the west wall outside of the 2nd

*prakara* while the latter is found in the Vallala gopura. This gopura, having come into existence after A.D. 1317, can receive engravings of epigraphs only after that date. So, the second can be certainly ascribed to a date somewhere in 1320's. The other record though found at a different place, may be of the same period and ruler, since it refers to king in the same manner as other epigraph does as well as on palaeographical grounds.

## DONATION OF LAMPS

According to the first epigraph on the western wall, on the 30th day of the month of Masi in the 21st year of the king, the official Oppichan Kachirayan of Maruvur gifted three *nunda* lamps, two to the god and one to the goddess at Tiruvannamalai. He endowed 92 cows and a bull for this purpose. It may be noted that usually 32 cows and a bull were given to provide for a lamp, and at this rate 96 cows and 3 bulls should have been endowed, as is seen in a few instances of this kind of donation recorded in some epigraphs of our collection. So the provision of 92 cows and one bull for 3 lamps in the record in question is rather peculiar.

## OTHER TRANSACTION

The other inscription inscribed on the Vallala gopura states that on the 15th day of the month of Kartikai in the 22nd year, the king issued an order to the *tanattar* of the temple of Tiruvannamalai to ask the *tevaradiyal* of the place to stop the payment of a certain levy due to the chief of Kalattur from the *tevaradiyal*. This is an interesting document given by the king in favour of the *tevaradiyal*, who probably represented to him, probably because the levy was oppressive and unprecedented.

## Maravarman Kulasekara pandya-II

According to our collection of inscriptions, this king seems to be represented by two items viz., the one, dated 20th day of Adi of the 5th regnal year of the king who bears the titles *Tribhuvana chakkravartti* and *Konerinmaikontan* and the second one, dated 27th day of Vaikasi of the 20th year of the reign of the king who gets the titles Marupanmar and Tirupuvana chakkaravarttikal here. That these two epigraphs belong to a Mara varman Kulasekara who reigned after A.D. 1317 is proved by the engraving of the 5th year record on the wall of the 3rd *prakara* which, as stated above, came into existence after that date and the figuring of a king named Pararajaraman Parakrama pandya of accession date in A.D. 1314, in the 20th year epigraph. Incidentally the former epigraph proves that the third *prakara* was already in existence in July, 1319. We are not able to say anything important about the achievements of this king, for want of full texts of his inscriptions.

### DONATIONS

One epigraph registers evidently a gift made by the king of the village of Deviyar ental on the northern bank of Makatai mandalam together with all its incomes, to provide for the worship and construction in the temple of Chempiyan madevi suramutaiyar wherein the god Tirunilai Alagiya Vayirava nayanar was installed. The name Chempiyan madevi reminds one of the Chola queen of the same name of the 10th century who was known for piety and for building several temples in various places in the Chola and Tondai mandalam. The temple bearing her name of our

epigraph was probably one such built by this queen, although its vestiges are not traceable. The same temple is referred to again in another epigraph, about which we shall say something more later on. Another epigraph of the same period records the gift made by a joint ruler named Pararajaraman Parakrama pandya, of 73 cows together with 23 tender calves, to the god of Tiruvannamalai for the cow's milk bath of the god. We have come across already an instance of this kind of gift for the god's milk bath (*milk abhisekha*) which, though may have been a regular feature of a daily temple ritual, has assumed importance during the time when the inscriptions in question were put up.

### Pararajaraman Parakrama pandya

This king figures, as shown above, in one epigraph, belonging to Mara varman Kulasekara-II, dated A.D. 1335 and no other epigraph of his has been found at Tiruvannamalai. Here he bears the peculiar title *Pararajaraman* (Rama to opponent kings), and *Vayyantola ninra peruml*, but is not distinguished either by the name Jatavarman or by the name Maravarman. The occurrence of a Sanskrit verse at the end of the record glorifying this ruler as world-honoured (*vshiva-vandya = vayyam-tozhaninra*) and one who inspires awe in the minds of his enemies, both alive and dead, indicates that he was the *de facto* ruler, at least in the Tiruvannamalai region. In view of the fact that the titles mentioned above are not met with in the epigraphs belonging to Parakrama pandya, it is difficult to be sure of this king's identification. Yet he may probably be the same as Jatavarman Parakrama-I who ascended the throne in A.D. 1314 and ruled upto A.D. 1347.

## Marvarman Vikkirma pandya-IV

The last king of the later Pandyas to be noticed is Vikkirma pandya without either Jatavarman or Maravarman associated with his name but bearing the titles *Tribhuvana chakravatti* and *Konerinmaikontan*, of the epigraph dated Vaikaci 17th in his second regnal year. For want of other details, no equivalent can be given for these date particulars. So, the period of this king cannot be precisely mentioned. However, since the epigraph in question is engraved on the south wall of the fourth *prakara*, which as has been stated above, was built after A.D. 1317, the king has to be assigned to a later date. He was probably Maravarman Vikramapandya-IV who ruled from A.D. 1333 to 1340. The palaeography of the epigraph seems to support this identification. He was in all likelihood related to Kulasekara devar of an epigraph dealt with above.

Again on palaeographical grounds the milestone epigraphs along the pradakshina path are assigned to this king. They clearly show that Tiruvannamalai possessed a number of streets with subdivisions in them during this period. As some of them are found on the road around the hill, they seem to point to the existence of the streets or lanes in those places. These are the only records to show this practice. Apparently not long afterwards, Vikkirma pandya, of the inscription in question, made a similar grant of land as did Kulasekara, to the gods. The significance of the name Chempiyan madamilnadu experienced an unprecedented political turmoil due to the invasion of the Muhammadan rulers of North India, who are known to have occupied Madurai and ruled almost the entire country from there for about half a century till they were vanquished by the Vijayanagara prince Kumara Kampana about A.D.

1378. At this time the Pandyan dynasty was badly hit and several branches of it carved out small principalities of their own in the Madurai, Tirunelveli, and Ramnad districts and in the Pudukkottai region. None of them had the power and resources to conquer territories in the north Tamil country. Further, this part of Tamilnadu came to be gradually annexed to the Vijayanagara empire, which sounded the death knell to the local ruling houses like the later Pandyas. Hence the absence of inscriptions of this once glorious Pandyan dynasty at Tiruvannamalai, belonging to periods after about A.D. 1340.

## THE PANDYAS: CONCLUSION

The thirty two epigraphs ranging in date from about A.D. 1241-42 to A.D. 1338 and belonging to eight kings of the Pandyan dynasty of Madurai each furnishes a brief account of a transaction that took place on the date of the epigraph at Tiruvannamalai and its neighbourhood. Some of them register the gift of *nunda* (perpetual) lamps. Of these, one epigraph dated A.D. 1328 refers to gift of a lamp to Unnamulai nachiyar, and that Unnamulai nachiyar is Tirukkamakkottamudaiya nachiyar is made known by the epigraph dated A.D. 1303. We have seen above that according to the inscription dated A.D. 1180 of the time of Kulottunga Chola-III, there was a shrine to the goddess Tirukkamakkottam. Later on in the epigraph dated A.D. 1242-43 of Kop Perunchinka-II's time the goddess of the Tirukkamakkottam was described as Unnamulai nachiyar. But the simple general name of Tirukkamakkottamudaiya nachiyar was still in use in the 13th century as known from the record dated 1258 of the time of Kop Perunchinka-I. The epigraph dated A.D. 1247-48 of the time of Vikkrama

pandya refers to the goddess Unnamulai nachiyar. As per the Pandya record of Kulasekara-I mentioned above the combined name was in vogue in A.D. 1303 because of the old habit. This vacillation seems to have disappeared and the latter name Unnamulai nachiyar became popular from A.D. 1328 according to the epigraph belonging to Sivallapa pandiya. The existence of a temple named Chempiyan madavi suramudaiya nayanar on the south side of Tiruvannamalai is made known by two epigraphs, dated A.D. 1319, and A.D. 1334).

Two epigraphs register gifts of cows to provide for the milk bath of the god. Of these, one dated A.D. 1334 of the time of Kulasekara-II is interesting in that it records the gift of seventy three cows and twenty-six tender calves.

Two inscriptions both dated A.D. 1247-48 and both belonging to the reign of Sadaiyan Vikrama pandiya are specially noteworthy as they relate to gifts of he-buffaloes, the former mentioning 600 of them and the latter 17 of them, for the purpose of *tiruppani* or temple work, made by two brothers viz, Kantatevan and Tirunattapperumal *alias* Kankayan (Mottai) Arapputipatam, sons of Narasinkatevar, hailing from Satai or Satavasakanallur in Pandi nadu. It is evident that the use of 617 *kitas* (he-buffaloes) for the temple work meant that construction or renovation or repair work on a large scale was in progress in the temple at that time, although it is difficult to know about the nature of the work.

Tamilnadu witnessed the growth of the Saiva monastic establishments in the 13th century and Tiruvannamalai seems to have been one of the centres where a number of Saiva *matams* existed then. The Pandya epigraphs under reference reveal the existence of two or three *matams* in the

place. They were the Kalmatam mentioned in 269 dated A.D. 1244 of the time of Cataiyan Vikrama pandiya and 276 dated A.D. 1268-69 of the time of *Emmandalamum kondaruliya* Sundara pandiya which refers to the Golaki matam being housed in the Kankayarayan tirumatam or the Vidyavinotan tirumatam. Another *matam* named Tiruvasal matarn also existed at Tiruvannamalai and Somanatatevan of the *matam* is said to have donated land to provide for a special worship to the god according to the epigraph 298 dated A.D. 1336, belonging to the reign of *Tiribuvana chcakkaravattikal Vikkirama* pandya.

The land transactions referred to in such epigraphs of A.D. 1244, A.D. 1246-47, 13th century, A.D. 1268-69, A.D. 1338 etc. indicate the agricultural activities that were going on during the 13th and the early 14th Century A.D. in this area.

The inscriptions under review reveal the fact of the participation in the temple affairs not only by the rulers themselves but also by certain royal personages like Pararajaraman Vayyantolaninranperumal Parakrama pantya and Pulukuneypperumal, daughter of Nampirattiyar Tevarkal Tampirattiyar and also by some chiefs and other important persons like ... chandiralmulaiyal, the mother of Kantiyatevar, Ulakankatha Vanakovaraiyan, and a Kacciyarayan.

Surely, the visits of these eminent persons to the temple and the place would have caused not only rejoicings in the people but also encouraged them to put forth better efforts to make the area flourishing.

Indeed the prosperity of the place during the time to which the Pandyan inscriptions belong is attested by some of them, which deal with the community of *Tevaradiyal*. It

is an axiom that the place where a number of people of this group reside is a prosperous place. From the epigraphs belonging to the Katavarya chiefs we know that there were a number of families of this group at Tiruvannamalai then. The epigraphs under examination being for the most part contemporary with the Katavaraya ones, attest to the fact that this community was a prominent and flourishing one. For instance, the epigraph dated A.D.1281 of the time of Kulasekara-I deals with a land transaction in which the sons of two army captains (*pataittalaivan*) and one Arutakiri perumal Iyatavarayar, a grandson of a *Tevaradiyal* named Eppotuminiyar were involved. The former were selling their lands to the latter showing the affluent nature of the *Tevaradiyal's* grandson. The inscription dated A.D. 1287 of the time of Maravarman Vikkiramapandiya records the assignment of land to forty four *Tevaradiyal* whose names are not preserved because of the damaged condition of the record. These women were perhaps expected to do service in the temple during the special occasions like the Irajakkalnayan santi and the Irajak kalnayan tirunal. This record underlines the growing importance of these people then. This is supported by the epigraph dated A.D 1330 of the time of Sivallapatevar which states that the king restrained the people from collecting a certain levy from the *Tevaradiyal* of the place. That the *Tevaradiyal* were performing the important service of reciting the Tamil Saiva scriptures like the *Tiruvempavai* a work of Tiruvadavurar or Manikkavacakar is known from the damaged epigraph probably of the beginning of the 14th century.

The Pandyan rule over this region seems to have benefitted Tiruvannamalai town. Though no specific instances of structures being put up then are recorded in

the epigraphs under study, a group of five milestone inscriptions, which are assigned to Vikkirma Pandya (accn. A.D. 1233) suggest that there existed a number of streets with subdivisions or lanes in them at Tiruvannamalai. This is the only instance to show the practice of erecting milestone in this town. As some of these stones are located in places around the hill (Giripradakshina) they seem to indicate the lanes or streets that existed in those places then.

Thus the Pandyan epigraphs can be said to give an interesting picture of the place during a period of about a century, which is also attested by the records of other royal families like the Katavarayas.

## THE HOYSALAS

Tiruvannamalai temple has yielded nine epigraphs of the Hoysala dynasty. They belong to the reign of Vallala-III (A.D. 1292-1343). Of these one, which was discovered recently is dated A.D. 1317. Three of the rest are dated A.D. 1341, and the others are so badly damaged that no useful information could be got from them. The members of this dynasty had had a connection with Tamilnadu from at least A.D. 1026 until A.D. 1342-43. The early members like Niupakama, Vinayaditya, Ereyanga and Ballala who were subordinates to the Western Chalukyan kings had occasions to fight with the Chola armies on behalf of their masters. From the time of Bittiga Visnuvardhana, who freed himself from the Western Chaukyan yoke, this dynasty had engaged itself directly with the Cholas and the Pandyas of the Tamil country. For over a century in the 13th and 14th centuries (i.e., from about A.D. 1220 to A.D. 1342-43) the Hoysala kings of the time, viz., Narasimha-II, Somesvara, Ramanatha and Ballaja-III were not only directly

involved in the politics of Tamilnadu but also were intimately connected with the Chola and Pandya royal houses by marital ties.

The Hoysala kingdom, which included the whole of the Chola territory under Sonmesvara, was bifurcated by him in about the middle of the 13th century. He gave the home region to his son Narasimha-II and the southern part to his other son Ramanatha. The latter was dissatisfied with this arrangement and wanted to take possession of the whole kingdom. This resulted in frequent fights between the brothers. But Narasimha died in A.D. 1291 and his son Ballala-III succeeded to the throne of Vijayanagara in the same year but got coronated on January 31, 1292 when he was thirty years old. He ruled for over fifty years till A.D. 1343 or so and died fighting as valiant warrior. Ramanatha tried to oust Ballala-III but could not and he died sometime in A.D. 1295 when his son Visvanatha succeeded him. But he could last only for a couple of years till A.D. 1297. Ballala-III took advantage of this situation and became the master of the whole of the Hoysala kingdom by about A.D. 1301. From the beginning he had to face one enemy after the other, like the Seunas and the Kadambas. About A.D. 1310 he went to the Tamil country to help Sundara pandya, the son of Maravarman Kulasekara and heir to the throne of Madurai against the claims of Vira pandya, the illegitimate son of Kulasekara favoured by the latter. At this juncture on the orders of Ala-ud-din Khalji, Malik Kafur invaded the south for the second time with the intention of going upto Madurai. He was at Dorasamudra (modern Halebid) in February 1311. Ballala-III having come to know of this, hurried back from the Tamil

country, offered stiff resistance to the Muslim army but being overpowered by the superior army surrendered to the enemy offering his wealth.

Some time after the return of Malik Kafur to Delhi, Ballala-III again intervened in the politics of the Tamil country siding with Sundara pandya and gaining in the process some territories in Tondaimandalam including an area around Tiruvannamalai. This area is described in his earliest so far known an epigraph from Tiruvannamalai dated A.D. 1317 as Annamalai rahstra in Vauakappati visaya comprising Ada desa (Adaiyur nadu Pankaladesa (Pankala nadu) and Annamalai pattana. This epigraph also says that here he established in his Hasala mandala, a capital (*Rajadhani* named Arunasa mudra in affectionate memory of his father. Though the actual date of the foundation of this capital is not mentioned, we may presume that it should have happened some time in A.D. 1315 or 1316. Epigraphs of this ruler have not been found here for twenty four years after A.D. 1317, as the next record of his time is dated A.D. 1341.

During this period Ballala-III was active on the northern borders of his kingdom where he had to fight with a powerful chief of Kambili, (a region situated near Hampi), named Kambiladeva. Some time in A.D. 1327, the new Sultan of Delhi Muhammad Bin Tughlak, sent an army to Dorasamudra to take it. Ballala was unable to resist and it is said that he retreated to Tiruvannamalai. But, as stated above, no epigraphs of his of this period are found at this place. The Muslims could annex the Seuna, Kakatiya and Pandya kingdoms to the Delhi Sultanate. The Kambili kingdom and the Hoysala kingdom were the only independent kingdoms. In A.D. 1327, the former kingdom was captured and Ballala-III

survived the Muslim onslaught by submission and this enabled him to get the permission of the Delhi Sultan to govern his kingdom. The period of Muslim rule was an extremely trying period for the Hindus of South India and the Hoysala king and his subordinates were guarding their interests by diplomacy, and submissiveness. Ballala-III had a son named Virupaksha Ballala-IV and he was weak. But there were numerous able subordinates and feudatories under Ballala with the help of whom he contrived to keep the Hoysala kingdom going. Amongst the subordinates, the five brothers headed by Harihara-I and Bukka-I who were the sons of a certain Sangama were prominent and Ballala-III owed not a little to these brothers in preserving the integrity of his kingdom. Further, he tried secretly to unite the opponents of the Muslims so as to liberate this part of India from the latter. Prolayanayaka and Kapayanayaka of the Andhra country readily responded and Kapayanayaka even defeated Malik Magbul and sent him away from Telungana to Delhi. Ballala-III on his part defeated the Muslims from the northern part of the Pandya country and placed it under the Sampuvaraya chiefs. In A.D. 1340 Jalaluddin Hasan Shah of Madurai invaded the Hoysala kingdom but Ballala-III was successful in it by chance. He on his part besieged the fort at Kannanur some 15 kms. north of Tiruchirapalli town which once belonged to him.

But here, by a chance, Ballala-III was caught by his enemy forces unawares and he was taken to Madurai by the Muslim general Nasiruddin and presented before the Sultan Ghiyas-ud-din who had him killed. According to Ibu Batuta, the manner in which Ballala-III's corpse was treated by the Sultan was inhuman. Such was the end of the great Ballala-III and his death occurred some time in A.D. 1342 or 1343,

at the ripe old age of 80 years. His personal valour and diplomacy were a model to Harihara-I and Bukka-I and the excellent training they underwent in the administration of the last surviving Hindu kingdom of South India enabled them to found the glorious Vijayanagara empire subsequently. By A.D. 1346, which is the latest known date of Ballala-IV, most of the Hoysala dominions had come under the sway of these Sangama brothers.

It is to this illustrious Vira Ballala-III that all the records mentioned above belong. One of them is on the third *prakara* wall, the rest are engraved on the second *prakara*. It is noteworthy that none of them has any reference to the main *gopura* on the east side of the fourth *prakara*. This *gopura* is called the Vallala *gopura* at present, and it appears to have been so called traditionally too. Interestingly none of the 500 odd epigraphs copied from the temple, except one, refers to the *gopura* named so. The exceptional epigraph, which is found engraved on the west side of the north wall of this *gopura* where it is referred to as *Vira Vallalln tiruvasal*. This inscription belongs to the time of the Vijayanagara king Harihara-II and is dated Saka 1299, Pinkala, Adi 3 corresponding to 30th Jutre, 1377. This epigraph, being removed in date by 60 years from the earliest record dated A.D. 1317 of Ballala-III may be taken to prove the fact that the *gopura* was built during this king's time. In fact as we have stated in the chapter on building works, one epigraph contains a hint to the effect that the third *prakara* together with its eastern *gopura* was under construction in A.D. 1317, and it was perhaps completed some years later.

The above epigraph although incomplete and damaged is an important document, is written in Sanskrit in Grantha characters and in Tamil and is dated in the current Saka

1239, Anala, Phalguna su.3, Tuesday corresponding to 15th February 1317. In the Tamil section of the record particulars of another date are given as Saka 1240, Pinkala Avani 8th day. Here too the Saka year was current and the particulars may correspond to Friday, 5th August 1317. This was evidently the date when the epigraph was put on the wall. It refers to the king as the son of Narasimha who was the son of Somesvara, who belonged to the race originating from Soma or the Moon (i.e., Lunar race), and as residing at his own capital called Arunasamudra, which was in his Hosala mandala. Here Arunasamudra means Tiruvannamalai. The expression *Arunasamudrakhyam nijaraja dhanim = adhivasat* meaning 'while residing at his own capital called Arunasamudra' clearly indicates that this place had, even prior to A.D 1317, been made by Ballala-III, his capital. According to some Kannada epigraphs Arunasamudra became this king's southern capital in A.D. 1310 itself and its full name was Arunasamudra Vallala pattana according to some other epigraphs.

The other interesting pieces of information briefly given in the Sanskrit section of the epigraph are the following: It appears to refer to the kingdom annually (?) yielding one *lakhsa* (100,000) of *niskas*, which was most probably obtained from Kulasekaradevar, evidently the contemporary Pandya king. Annamalai rashtra was included in it. In this *rashtra*, a *visaya* (district) yielding ten thousand (*niskas*) comprising lands in the district of Vanakkappadi visaya, yielding 5,000, lands in Adadesa yielding 2,000, and lands in Pankaladesa yielding 2,000, besides an amount of 1,000 obtained from tolls, shops and taxes from the town of Annamalai, all totalling to ten thousand (*niskas*) were gifted by the king. The gift was made to provide for the worship

to be done thrice daily to the god Annamalainatha and the goddess Unnamulainachi, and also for meeting the expenses connected with the festivals like the Pancha parva dipotsava and the festival held in the month of Jyestha (June-July) lasting for twelve days.

The Tamil section of the epigraph (lines 4-16) deals in detail (*sa prapancam*, line 4) with the gift etc. mentioned above made on the first date, besides recording new gifts made, of lands and the uses to which they were to be put, on the second date. All the important titles of the king Vira Vallaladeva (Vira Ballaladeva) are given here, including the four noteworthy ones viz, *Makara rajya nirmulana* (the destroyer of the Makara kingdom), *Pandyakula samuddharana* (the uplifter of the Pandya family), *Cholarajya sthapanacharya* (the preceptor in establishing the Chola kingdom) and *Pandyaraya pratisthacharya* (the preceptor in establishing the Pandya king). These claims proclaimed at Tiruvannmalai indicate that Ballala-III was, by A.D. 1317, not only the master of the Makara kingdom comprised of North Arcot and parts of South Arcot district but also a guide and leader of the Chola and the Pandya kings.

Then follows, in the Tamil part, the passage relating to the gift of 10,000 *pon* for the worship and offerings to the deities and for the festivals mentioned above. In this connection some special details of expenses pertaining to the offerings made, for persons fed and remunerated and for temple repairs are mentioned, including those for a service named *Vira Valllatevan santi*, after the king, and for the procession (of the deities) taken out during the days when Rocani (Rohini), the natal asterism probably of the king was current. The lines 7-10, register the second gift of 22,000 *pon* made by the king on the second date

and gives details about the various places whence this amount was collected, and about the different items on which it was to be expended, including the festivals conducted in the name of the *tevar* i.e., the king, one in the month of Purattatsi and the other in the month of Masi. Another item of work for which an amount was set apart was the building work including the *Tirumatil* or enclosure wall (*tirumatil ullitta tiruppanikku*, line 11). Obviously this is the clinching reference to the building of the third *prakara* together with its eastern *gopura* which came to be called Vira Vallalan tiruvasal according to an early Vijayanagara epigraph dated 60 years after it was built and called simply as Vallala gopuram from an unknown subsequent period.

A third gift of 1,000 *pon* made by the king in the month of Avani, most probably the same month in which the second gift was made, is mentioned in line 11, and there it is stated that it was intended for the worship and offerings to the deities Vira Vallancura mutaiar and his consort. The name of the deity shows that it was Siva in the form of a *linga* set up in a shrine built probably by the king. It is, however, difficult to locate this shrine now, unless it is one of those that stand on either side of the Vallala gopuram. Of the 1,000 *pon* gifted to the deities, 600 *pon* is said to be obtained from Somasipadi and other villages and the remaining 400 *pon* is to be got from Kuntani nadu. The present day Somacipadi is no doubt the same as the one referred to in this epigraph. Kuntani after which the *nadu* is called, has been identified with 'a village above the ghats of the same name near Hosur in the Salem district. The place still shows ruins of fortifications and structural monuments indicating its past

greatness. This place was chosen as the seat of government by Vira Ramanatha in A.D. 1283-84, and it became a kingdom with twenty *nadus*, in A.D. 1287. It apparently continued to be an important territorial division during the time of Ballaja-III also, from the revenue of which, according to our epigraph, the king, in A.D. 1317, could gift 400 *pon* to the deities mentioned above. Two lists, one containing 43 villages and the other containing 23 villages are appended in lines 13 to 16, which are damaged. Apparently, it is from these villages that the amount of 33,000 *pon* donated by the king to the temple, was realised.

The other three well preserved epigraphs of Ballala-III found at Tiruvannaimalai relate not to any gift to the temple but to an establishment of a Brahmana settlement by a general of the king named Vallappa tennayakar and gifts of land made to the Brahmanas by two parties. It may be mentioned here that in on epigraph only the king Vira Vallala deva is given a string of epithets. Some of them are also found in the epigraph dated 1317 dealt with above. Several of them are new and they are: *Apurvvarapakandarppa* (possessing excellent form like Cupid), *Komkana chakra vartti* (emperor of Komkana), *Sapta maha puruva Chola Malava Gaudha Garjjara....* (vanquisher of Chola Malava Gaudha and Garjjara countries each prefixed with *Saptamaha*), *Katava raja Kadakuddalaraya* (tormenter of Katava king), *Huliraya gandabharunda* (Gandabharunda to Huliraya), and *Nissamka pratapa chakravartti* (emperor of proven valour). The omission here of the epithet *Pandyaraya pratishacharya* and the use of *Magadharajya* *nirmulaka* for *Makararajya* *nirmulaka* of A.D. 1317 epigraph indicating that *Makara* was an alternate name or a misnomer for *Magadha*, are

noteworthy. The new epithets like *Komkana chakravartti* borne by the king show that between A.D 1317 and A.D. 1341, the date of the epigraph in question, he had acquired the rulership over such countries also.

Another epigraph contains the astronomical data Saka 1262, (year omitted but it was apparently Vikrama) Makara ba. 1, Thursday, Pusam corresponding exactly to January 4, 1341, registers that Vallappa tennayakar, the brother of Mahapradhanan Tati Chinke tennayakkar, established, in the name of the king, an *akaram* (= agraharam) called Rupanarayana chaturveded mangalam on the southern bank of the Cheyyaru in Pankala nadu in Palkunra kottam, in Cheyankonta chola mandalam, and that he had assigned all the lands in Pattiyappati (which was the original name of the settlement village) as well as in some other villages together with a number of items of income from these villages, to fifty two Bhattars (i.e. Brahmanas), as, *sarvamanya*. Interestingly one of the levies was named *Vallaladevar kanikkai* which was evidently a new levy imposed during this king's time to augment the revenue from his possessions.

The other two epigraphs while referring to the establishment of the Brahmana settlement by Vallappa tennayakar, record the grant of lands by two parties. According to the epigraph dated Saka 1262, Vikrama, Makara su. 4, Sunday, Uttirtathi corresponding exactly to January 21, 1341, Ponnulan Tiruvannamalai perumal Sampantanatar, the *koyil ketku* (manager ?) of the temple of the god Tiruvamamalai Udaiya nayanar, gifted his *madappuram* village of Matiyalayan punti after retaining for him 1200 *kuli* of *nanjai*(wet) land, 500 *kuli* of *punjai*(dry) land and one house site in the habitation area of the village,

to the Bhattars of Rupanaryana chaturvvedi mangalam, as *dharmadana* (gift for obtaining religious merit). Several persons of the village had attested this document.

Another epigraph which is very much damaged, has date particulars like Saka 1262, Vikrama, Kumbha su.4, Tuesday, Asvani corresponding to 20th February 1341, and it records the gift of some *madappuram* lands including 700 *kuli* in some hamlets (names damaged) within Pattiyapati *alias* Rupanarayana chaturvvedi mangalam, by their owners Arakkurutaiyan Tiruvannamalai perumal and a lady stated to be the wife of Marutatturutaiyan Nanaprakasar to Bhattars of the above village as *dharmadana*. It may be noted that the transaction recorded in this epigraph was done 46 days after the grant of all the lands in Rupanarayana chaturvvedi mangalam as well as in several other villages mentioned in this epigraph, to the 52 Bhattars of the settlement village. It appears that there remained the lands of the two donors and they seem to have gifted their lands in the village either voluntarily or under administrative pressure, so that the entire village, without anybody else owning any part of it, became the property of the donees. This record is also attested by a large number of persons.

Amongst the remaining five, all of which are badly damaged, one epigraph which is extremely badly damaged is a long and important one. This was discovered recently and it is found engraved on the south wall (inside) of the third *prakara*. The readings even though disjointed, give us an idea that the epigraph was dealing with many activities that took place in the temple, for which a break up of expenses is given item wise. The money for this purpose seems to have been obtained from some villages like Kulappakkam,

Kuvalaippati, etc. (line 2). The record refers to Vira Vallalan santi, and the festivals held in the months of Ani and Purattasi (line 4). The most important information supplied by this epigraph is that money was allotted for such *tiruppani* (temple works) as the (building of the) *tirukkopuram* and *tirumatil (prakara)*, which may be taken to refer to the fourth *prakara* and the Vallala gopura on its eastern side. The other four items are fragmentary and damaged and they preserve parts of the king's *pragasti* and contain names of certain places.

The epigraph discovered recently states that Ballala III was staying in February 1317 at Aruna samudra, i.e. Tiruvannamalai which was his capital of his Hosala mandala. It also furnishes the very important information that Vanakappadi visaya was yielding perhaps annually, 10,000 *niskas* and it was in his kingdom (i.e., Tamil nadu) yielding 100,000 *niskas*, which prove that the numerical figures suffixed to the names of towns, districts, and kingdoms in epigraphs of this period refer to the total annual cash income yielded by these territorial units and not to the number of people, or to the number of families or to the number of villages contained in them. Tiruvannamalai seems to have continued the southern capital of this king for long, where he is said to have resided in A.D. 1318, 1328, 1341, 1342 and 1343. But no other epigraph of his, dated after A.D. 1317 has been met with here, till we come to A.D. 1341 to which year three epigraphs dealt with above belonged. The latter ones make mention of the king but they were put up by the general Vallappa tennayakar, who is stated to be the younger brother of *Mahapradhanan* (Chief Minister) Tata or Tati Sinke or Sinkeya tennayakar. The presence of Vallappa tennayakar at Tiruvannamalai in A.D. 1341 shows that

there was military activity then at the place. Vallappa tennayakar (Ballappa dannayaka of the Kannada epigraphs) is said to be the nephew of Ballala III, and he is said to have wielded the greatest power in the Hoysala kingdom. Even in AD. 1309 he was a lieutenant of the king and an important one at that. He was given certain special privileges by the king, which enabled him to issue records in his name without reference to the king, and several such records belonging to late 1320's are found in the Malur taluk. With his help, Ballala-III was able to have a peaceful time in A.D. 1339 at Vira Vijaya Virupakshapura.

That he never proclaimed independence is known from an inscription dated A.D. 1342, which mentions the supremacy of Ballala. He continued to serve under Ballala-IV also which is known from a royal order dated August 1343 issued jointly in the name of the king and Ballappa dannayaka.

We come to know from the above epigraph that an enclosure wall (*tirumatil*), evidently of the fourth *prakara* was being built in A.D. 1317. It is reasonable to suppose, as we have done above on more occasions than one, that the Vallala gopuram on the eastern side of the *prakara* was constructed during this time. The prosperous condition of the country then is indicated by the donation of 33,000 *pon* donated by the king to the temple, as per the same epigraph. This represents the largest gift so far known made by a donor. This epigraph also furnishes two lists of villages totalling 66, largest number known from a single epigraph from Tiruvannamalai, from which the amount of 33,000 *pon*, mentioned above, was obtained.

From another epigraph, we know about a few new epithets borne by Ballala III, in A.D. 1341, about his important general Vallappa tennayakar, about the creation

of an *akaram* (agraharam) with 52 Bhattars by the *tennayakar*, and about a new tax named *Vallaladevar kanikkai*. The remaining two epigraphs of this period are only supplementary to the above as they register further grants of lands by two other parties, most probably under pressure from the *tennayakar*.

## VJAYANAGARA PERIOD

There are more than 150 epigraphs belonging to the Vijayanagara period at Tiruvannaamalai. This huge number testifies to the interest shown in the temple by the Vijayanagara kings and their feudatories as well as to the growing importance of the temple.

## THE SANGAMAS

During the last two decades of the rule of Hoysala Ballala-III, South India experienced a great political upheaval brought about by the Muslim invasions from Delhi. His empire extending from Hampi in the Bellary district to Ramesvaram in the south was put to great strain by these invasions. However, Ballala-III, as stated above, used his sagacity, valour and administrative experience to great advantage in preserving the only Hindu kingdom that survived the Muslim inroads into the south after about A.D. 1327. In this task he enlisted the willing co-operation not only of his relatives and feudatories but also of subordinate officers. Among the latter, five brothers viz, Harihara, Kampana, Bukka, Marappa and Muddappa, who were the sons of a certain Sangama who in later years was considered to have belonged to the Yadu race, figured prominently. Their place of origin and the community to which they belonged are not known. But from the epigraphical evidence, we come to know that they may have

belonged to a place in the neighbourhood of modern Hampi in the Bellary district of the Karnataka State. Though the community to which they belonged is not known, that they were Kannada people has been established in recent years. Having entered the administrative service under Ballala-III, they strove hard to assist their sovereign in all sincerity and unswerving loyalty. In the years of A.D. 1330's, Ballala-III gave these brothers some special privileges to issue records independently and to bear some of the titles like *Bhasage tappuvara yaraganda* etc. Harihara and Bukka, of these brothers, distinguished themselves as good administrators, supported their emperor in a solid way. Gradually the power and influence of these brothers increased and they became popular in all the four directions of the empire. Ballala-III having become engrossed in stemming the tide of the alien invasions and in preserving the last Hindu kingdom of South India could not help the Sangama brothers growing in strength. In fact their support was much needed by the Hoysala king in his noble mission. Owing to the fact that his son Virupaksha Ballala IV was incapable of taking up his father's mantle, Ballala III had to rely heavily on the Sangama brothers. They, however, served him loyally till he died sometime in A.D. 1343 and also his son Ballala IV. According to some late Kannada literary works of Virasaiva inspiration, Harihara established his independent rule in A.D. 1336. There are stories included in them, which proclaim that this happened due to the blessings of the sage Vidyaranya of the Sringeri Sankaracharya math.

However, the epigraphical evidence attests to the fact that though Harihara and Bukka became very powerful even while they served under Ballala-III, they established themselves as rulers of the erstwhile Hoysala Empire only in

A.D. 1346. This is deduced from a stone inscription in Sringeri, dated in that year which register an extraordinary gift of land to a pontiff of the matha there, by Harihara in the company of his four brothers, a prince and a close relative, to celebrate the event of his having conquered the land between the eastern and western oceans. It is of interest to note that this inscription pays homage to the sage Vidyatirtha and the gift is said to have been made to his disciple Bharati tirtha. Thereafter, while Harihara and Bukka looked after affairs of the southern and central part of the kingdom, the other three brothers were entrusted with the rulerhip of the territories in the other three directions. During a period of about a decade or more, they had administered the kingdom with Dorasamudram, Anegundi, Virupakshapura etc as the seat of the central government.

This was the case as long as Harihara-I was alive i.e., till A.D. 1356. It appear that Bukka I built a capital in the vicinity of the modern Hampi (formerly called Hampe, a Kannada variant of the Sanskrit Pampa) which came to be variously called as Vidyanagara (perhaps after the sage Vidya tirtha also called Vidya samkara), Virupaksha pattana (perhaps after the presiding deity of Hampi or after Ballal-IV whose original name was Virupaksha Ballala and Vijayanagara (perhaps to commemorate the extraordinary event of the brothers becoming the rulers). However, the last mentioned name stuck firmly not only to the capital but also to the empire, which shone with a rare splendour for over two centuries since its foundation by the Sangama brothers. Bukka I ruled as the sovereign from A.D. 1356 to A.D. 1377 when his son Harihara-II became his successor. These two kings were devoted not only to the sage Vidyanarya who became the pontiff of the Sringeri

math after Bharati Tirtha but also to the Suddha saiva teacher named Kriyasakti who was their *raja guru*. These sages were extremely learned and wise, and they strove hard to propagate the *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and the *Sastras* and supported and guided their royal disciples to preserve and promote the Hindu tradition, learning and culture.

Though Tiruvannamalai was a place of importance in many respects and served as a second capital for Ballala-III, neither Harihara-I nor Bukka I seems to have involved themselves directly in the affairs of the place or in that of the temple. This is known from the absence of epigraphs of these two builders of the Vijayanagara Empire in the collection of epigraphs from the temple of the place. But the very large number of epigraphs of Bukka I's son and other relatives found in the temple abundantly prove the abiding interest that this dynasty had for this region and its temple.

## **Kampana-II, the establisher of Vijayanagara rule in Tamilnadu**

Amongst Vijayanagara epigraphs found in the temple at Tiruvannamalai the earliest ones belong to Kampana-II, the son of Bukka-I, and they not only reveal the keen interest that this prince displayed towards the temple but also the fact of his having firmly entrenched himself here as the ruler.

Harihara-I or Bukka-I seems to have appointed Kampana-II to administer the tract in the North Arcot district. This may have happened in A.D. 1352 because the earliest so far known inscription of this prince discovered at Avur near Tiruvannamalai is dated September 24, 1352.

It is necessary to clear two doubtful points about Kampana-II before proceeding further. One pertains to his being called Kumara Kampana instead of calling him simply

as Kampana-II. Almost all his epigraphs found in Tamilnadu and Karnataka mention him only as the *kumara* or son of Vira Bukkana odeyar or utaiyar. All other sons of Bukka-I are also called as *kumara* of his. Very rarely, certain inscriptions repeat the word *kumara* in such passages as *sriVira Bukkamna udaiyara kumara sri Vira Kumara Kampana udaiyar*. This is obviously a mistake. So, to call him Kumara Kampana as if *Kumara* was a special title of his is a misnomer. Secondly, it was considered previously that Kampana-II was ruling independently in Tamilnadu. This is not borne out by epigraphs of his time, a great majority of which, while referring to Bukka I's reign states that Kampana-II did this work or that work in his reign.

As regards the date of the conquest of the Sampuvaraya territory by Kampana-II, the final conquest of the territory was made by Kampana-II in November 1363. A word may be said about Rajagambhira rajyam. It is said that Rajagambhira was a title of Rajanarayana Sampuvaraya and his stronghold was Padaividu also known as Raja gambhira malai. But according to the *Madhuravijayam*, Kampana-II laid siege over the mountain called Raja gambhira where Campa had hidden himself and that finally the latter came out from it, fought a sword fight with Kampana and died. In fact, the range of mountains to the north and northwest of Tiruvannamalai goes by the name of Rajagambhiran malai and this is what is referred to in the poem and in the epigraphs. The mountain and the adjoining regions ruled over by the Sampuvaraya chief may have been named after the chief's title. The other territories in the South Arcot district etc. ruled over by this chief, which were also taken over by Kampana-II, bore other names.

After establishing himself in the Tondai mandalam, Kampana-II turned his attention to the Pandi mandalam with Madurai as its capital where the rule of the Muslim Sultans was continuing.

During the Muslim invasions of Tamilnadu and the rule of Muslim Sultans of Madurai, many temples had been plundered and left uncared for. Irrigation works were neglected and this neglect would have certainly resulted in famines. Brahmins were persecuted and prevented from performing sacrifices; cows were slaughtered and the cultivation of fine arts completely given up. It was this disturbed social, religious and economic conditions that Kampana-II tried successfully to set right. A number of inscriptions of his time bear ample testimony to these acts of Kampana-II.

In his hectic activities Kampana was assisted by several loyal officers and feudatories. They included Somappa dannayaka, Marappa nayaka, Anegundi Vittappar, Gapanarya and Caluva Manku. Of these, Gopana was instrumental in restoring the image of Sri Ranganatha swami which was removed to Tirupati during the Muslim invasion of Stirangam, to the temple at the latter place. On account of many such dharmic deeds Kampana-II was hailed as the saviour by the peaceloving, pious and god-fearing Tamil Hindus. Kampana's last known epigraph is from Tiruvannamalai dated December 17, 1374, referring to Kampana's son Jamma gift of lands for the purpose of reciting the Vedas during the Rajavipatan santi in the temple during the *sraddha* ceremony of Kampana-II.

Nine inscriptions of Kampana II's time are available in our collection. They range in date from A.D. 1361 to 1369. Except the one dated January 23, 1335 when the

day was Thursday, not Monday as in the epigraph, which registers a gift of a lamp each to the god Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayinar and to the goddess Unnamulai nachiyar for which 64 cows and two bulls were endowed by a certain (Pokkaya) utaiyar, son of Panaiy(?) Marappa Utaiyar, the rest of the epigraphs relate to land transactions. Two epigraphs, one very fragmentary and another containing two Sanskrit verses in the Grantha script of the 14th century, may also be assigned to this king's time.

## A VARIETY OF LAND TRANSACTIONS

The epigraph dated September 13, 1361, registers a gift of land together with a number of items of income, as *sarvamanya iraiyili* (tax-free), and as *tirumalaippuram* made by Sriman Mahapradani Somappar, to Mandalapurushar Iramachandra devar, the son of Virachiyar Atkondan of Perumparrappuliyur, for providing daily 600 red lilies to the god of the temple.

Another *sarvamanya Iraiylili* land transaction is the subject matter of the epigraph dated A.D. 1367. The conferment of tax-free land was made by the *nattar* of Sinkamulaipparru on three persons named Ilakkichinayingar *alias* Aruppalatevar and his sons Tanma Pulutinai perumal and Tanma Tiruvampalam udaiyar, the latter two being called as *Vidhvankal* (i.e. learned men). A number of items of income are also included in the gift.

From the one dated July 2, 1363, we learn that the members of the different groups such as Madathil Mudalikal, Mahesvaras, . . . . Mudaliyar, Tevakanmi, Koyil kanakku, Kaikkolars of the two streets, Virabhadrar and Tiruvakampatiyar, assembling at the Vinnavadiran

Tiruvannamalai mantapam of the temple, sold some lands to Annamalaiyan Otentiya Selvar with specified annual returns in kind and cash, apparently to be paid to the temple. The sale of land is said to be of the category of *kani atsi* with the rights to sell, mortgage etc. accompanying it. A similar *kani atsi* land transaction is met with in the epigraph dated November 11, 1367. Here the assembly is said to have consisted of Mudaliyal, Simahesvarar, Sthanajana, Koyil kanakku mudaliyar, Tevakanmi, and Koyil kanak ku, and the place of their assemblage was the same Vinnavadiran tirumandapam. They had assigned some lands to Tevakalnayan Tiruvannamalai nambi, one of the *tevakanmi* of the temple of Tiruvannamalai, with a stipulation of annual returns in kind and cash to be paid by him evidently to the temple. A third example of the *kani arsi* type of land transaction is furnished by the epigraph dated A.D. 1368. Herein is stated that since the land under reference remained uncultivated from the day it was gifted as devadanam, it was now sold under this category so as to derive income in kind and cash annually according to the stipulations made therein. As the inscription is damaged, the details about the seller and the purchaser of the land are lost. It also registers a *kani atsi* land transaction concluded on January 22, 1369 between the temple administrators of Tiruvannamalai such as those known from the previous records and also Taliyar Sampantandar, and Kannaramutam Perumal Viravetiya nambi, one of the *tevakanmi* of the temple. The land was sold for 30 *panam* and the purchaser should, as in the case of other examples referred to above, pay annually the stipulated amounts in cash and kind.

## KAMPANA'S OFFICIALS FIGURING IN THESE RECORDS

Sriman mahapratanan Somappar of the epigraph dated A.D. 1361 is no doubt the same who figures in a number of epigraphs of Kampana-II's time. In one epigraph dated A.D. 1365, one Pokkaya udaiyar is the donor and he is stated to be the son of Panaiy(?) Marappa udaiyar.

Some important points noticed in the epigraphs -

An assembly of individuals and bodies including Madathu Mudalikal Mahesvarar, Mudaliyar, Tevakanmi, Koyil kanakku, Kaikkolas of the two streets, Virabhadrar and Tiruvakampatiyar was in charge of the sale of lands to purchasers who were ordained to pay annually certain specified amounts in cash and kind to the temple.

A *mantapa* named Vinnavatiran tirumantapam is referred to in three epigraphs. A certain Taliyar Sampantandar figures in the epigraph dated A.D. 1369. He may in all likelihood be the same as the one referred to in some hymns of the *Tiruppugal* by Arunagirinatar. Some new taxes were levied during this period, like *makkal peral kollum mudal*.

### Jammana, son of Kampana-II

During the viceroyalty of Kampana-II in Tamilnadu Bukka I seems to have only occasionally camped here. This was apparently due to the fact that this region was very well administered by Kampana-II. His son Jammana seems to have assisted his father when the latter was alive. After his father's demise, some time in November of 1374, he seems to have moved to the Tiruvannamalai area. An inscription of his in our collection dated Saka 1296,

Ananta, Dhanusu. 13, Sunday, Rohini, regularly corresponding to December 17, 1374, registers a grant of land as *sarvamanya iraiyili* to the god of the place to provide for the payment to a person (a Brahmana) employed to recite the *Vedas* before the god during the Rajavibhatan santi instituted by Jammana as part of the *sraddha* ceremony of his father.

His only inscription at Tiruvannamalai has been referred to above. Its importance lies in the fact that it refers to the gift of land as *sraddhanga* of the *sraddha* of Kampana-II. (the gift is *sraddha vrtti*. *Sraddha* is not a funeral rite, but it is a ceremony performed periodically, after the funeral rites are over, on the 29th day, 45th day etc. It is not known to which day's ceremony the epigraph in question refers. If the record in question relates to the ceremony held on the 29th day (*una masika* ceremony) after the death of Kampana-II, then his death may have taken place on November 19, 1374. It is interesting that Jammana instituted a service of chanting of the *Vedas* by a person (Brahmana) in the temple on this occasion.

## Reign of Harihara-II

Harihara-II, the son of Bukka I succeeded to the Vijayanagara throne some time after February 1377, and he was the first ruler to assume full imperial titles. A few months after this, in June of the same year, his rule in and around Tiruvannamalai was acknowledged in an epigraph. Thereafter he was visiting Tamilnadu now and then, as known from some epigraphs. As instances we may cite the following epigraphs? They are 335 of our collection (A.D. 1378-79); *A.R.E.*, 27 of 1905 from South Arcot district (A.D. 1378); *A.R.E.*, 205 of 1912 from Chingleput (A.D.

1380); *A.R.E.*, 122 of 1921 from North Arcot (A.D. 1381); *A.R.E.*, 222 of 1910 from Chingleput (A.D. 1396); and *A.R.E.*, 671 of 1904 from Chingleput district (A.D. 1400). Apparently his visits to Tamilnadu were more frequent than his father's. Harihara-II, or Bukka-I, appears to have appointed Virupanna, the son of the former as viceroy of the Tamil country after the death in 1374 of Kampana-II, although for about a year after that year Jammaana seems to have been temporarily in charge of the Tondaimandalam. Another son of Harihara-II, viz., Bukka-II, is also known from some epigraphs discovered from the Tanjore district. Our Tiruvamamalai collection, too, includes one or two epigraphs of this prince about whom we shall see later on.

Two inscriptions of Harihara-II are in our collection. The earlier one dated June 30, 1377, registers the order relating to the wages and privileges of Perraperumal the son of Mandalapurushar Virasinkadevar, who served as the watchman (*tirumeykaval*) at the *gopura* entrance of Vira Vallalan tiruvasal. This is the earliest so far known reference to this *gopura* in the temple, which is even now called as the Vallala *gopura*. The other record, which is much damaged preserves the year Kalayukta, and the month Kumbha (A.D. 1379) registered a gift of a *nunta* lamp, other details being lost.

## Reign of Virupanna-II in Tamilnadu

This prince was Harihara-II's son by Malladevi. 260 Virupanna's inscriptions are found mostly in the North and South Arcot districts, and also in places outside this region.

Nine epigraphs of Virupanna's time are available in our collection. Of these, one epigraph dated May 25, 1380, is from the ruined temple called Tondar koyil, which is

west facing, in the Tiruvannamalai town. It registers a sale of land for 15 *panam* by the assembly of individuals and bodies already met with in the epigraphs of Kampana II, which had assembled in the same Vinnavadiran tirumandapam, to Kannaramutapperumal Viravetiya nambi. This is a *kani atsi* type of transaction. This sale was for the specific purpose of worship and repairs to be done to the temple of Tondarkanayanar (i.e., the present Tondar koyil which went into ruins, and which had lost its previous endowment.

The next inscription which is badly damaged bears the Saka year 1303 corresponding to A.D. 1381-82. It registers a *kani alchi* transaction of some property (details lost) by the assembly consisting of the same groups of people as we have noticed earlier. The purport of the record seems to be that the proceeds from the transaction were to be used for the conduct of the Tiru Uttarayana tirunal at Tiruvannamalai. The epigraph is dated November 9, 1386 and it relates to the gift of a *nunda* lamp to the god by a servant of the king, and endowing of 32 cows and a bull for the purpose by him. The epigraph with date particulars corresponding to June 22, 1388 contains a royal order exempting the temple *danathar* from paying various items of articles in cash and kind that they used to give to the king. Another epigraph of which the date particulars correspond to June 1, 1389, contains the royal order exempting the collection of *rakhsa bhogam* (i.e., *patikaval* from a village gifted by Jammana, stated to be the elder brother of Virupanna, as *sraddha vrtti* in honour of Kampana-II, and the reinstatement of the Veda chanting service daily by a person.

The epigraph with date particulars corresponding to October 8, 1389 registers a sale of two villages for 25 *panam* by the state to Ilakkichanayinar Arappaladevar who,

after this assignment became entitled to all the rights pertaining to the land and who should pay annually to the temple the stipulated quantities of paddy and cash. The last inscription, which is extremely badly damaged, contains the name of the year Prajapati and on the basis of palaeography it is equated to A.D. 1391-92 and thus assigned to Virupanna's period.

## POINTS OF INTEREST FROM THE EPIGRAPHS

From one epigraph, we come to know that the assembly of the various groups mentioned in it was in charge of temples other than the Tiruvannamalai udaiyanayanar temple and they used to transact business by assembling in the Vinnavatiran tirumantapam which served as the assembly hall for them. It also reveals that the Tonndar koyil was in ruins on the date of the record in question and that it was for the purpose of rebuilding and reintroduction of worship in it that the land was sold to *Kannara mutapperumal* Viravetiya nambi. It is not known whether the temple was rebuilt and if so when it was done. It is also interesting to note that the temple was allowed to remain for some period, how long there is no means to know about it, in its ruined condition and without worship being offered to the god in it.

The conduct of Tiru Uttirayana festival in the temple is known from one epigraph. From another epigraph we come to know that a servant calling himself as *aranmanaiyilen* (i.e., belonging to the palace) of Viruppana udaiyar was the donor of a lamp. His name Kannathai and the group *Katathi* to which he belonged are noteworthy. It is difficult to know if he came from the Mysore area or he was a local man, employed in the service at the local palace of the ruler. Some items of

incomes and free services due to the king were exempted from payment by the *danathar* of the temple by the ruler as per one epigraph. Noteworthy amongst them are the *uluppai* (presentation of articles to royally and honourable people) and *uliyam* (rending of free labour to the masters), which occur for the first time here. Another epigraph is interesting in that here Viupanna calls Jammana respectfully as his *annan* (i.e., elder brother) and reorganises in A.D. 1389 the rendering of a sacred service in the temple instituted by Jammana fifteen years earlier in A.D. 1374.

One inscription is interesting in that while it registers a *kapi ifci* type of land transaction, this phrase is not used in it.

## **Bukka-II, the son of Harihars-II**

As shown above, the latest record of Virupannaa's rule in and around Tiruvannamalai is dated A.D. 1391. But he continued to remain in the North Arcot district till A.D. 1399. Then our collection includes a couple of epigraphs of the time of Bukka-II, another son of Harihara-II and the brother of Virupanna-II. Bukka-II seems to have been in Tamilnadu at least from A.D. 1381.

Harihara-II, as stated above, was the emperor all along, and Bukka-II was serving under him. But the emperor died on August 16, 1404, leaving the empire in charge of his sons Bukka-II, Devaraya-I and Virupaksha who struggled amongst themselves for the succession to the throne. It seems that Bukka-II became king after the death of his father. But, for a short while between. 5 and 27 of October 1404 Virupaksha was considered the king and he bore the imperial titles, like "sovereign of the whole kingdom" and "sitting on the throne of Vijayanagara" But he was thrown out from the throne by Bukka-II some

time before July, 1405. Thereafter he was supreme and his rule in Mysore, North Arcot, Tiruchirapalli, Chingleput districts etc, is known from epigraphs. Virupaksha was not heard of after this.

Of the two inscriptions of Bukka-II, both dated in A.D. 1402 when he was serving as viceroy of his father, one contains date particulars corresponding to March 19, 1402, and it registers an order, made by the assembly of the different groups of people, already referred to above, assembling in the hall called Kankeyarayan tirumandapam, instituting the service of dancing to be performed in front of the shrine of the god in the temple and making provisions for it.

The other epigraph, which is very much damaged and so some particulars from its date portion are lost and some others are doubtful, is assigned to the time of Bukka-II on palaeographical grounds. Accordingly the Christian equivalent of the date is taken to be May 7, 1402, assuming that the Saka year was 1324 and the cyclic year was Chitrabhanu and the month was Vrhasabha as the *tithi*, *vara* and *nakhsatra* agree only for this month. It registers most probably a sale of land by four or five persons to one Perraperumal the son of Vira Kankadevar.

## SOME POINTS OF INTEREST FROM THESE RECORDS

One epigraph reveals the interesting information that on the date of the record, performance of dancing in front of the god, accompanied by the playing on the *mathalam*, probably the same as *mrdanga*, was in vogue. This epigraph also informs us that there was an assembly hall called Kankeyarayan tirumantapam, which was different from

the Vinnavadiran tirumantapam, of earlier records. This Kankeyarayan hall was most probably the one erected by Kadava Kumaran. The other record contains the interesting name Tennanaimuzhudum udaiyan.

## Devaraya-I, Son of Harihara-II

Under Devaraya-I, more than one son of his, such as Harihara-III and Bhupatiraya also called Bukka-III or Vijaya Bukka, looked after the Tamil country.

In spite of the fact that Devaraya's sway extended over the entire Tamil country, only a couple of epigraphs of his time are available in our collection. The particulars of date of one of the epigraphs are regular and correspond to January 5, 1414. It refers itself to the rule in this part of Vijaya Bhupatiraya, the son of Devaraya, and registers a gift of a nunda lamp to the god by Annatata, the son of Savundapputaiyar, who was a *Mahapradtanar* of Bhupatiraya. The other epigraph with regular date particulars corresponding to December 7, 1418 was also issued in the reign of the same prince and records an order granting the traditional privileges to the Kaikkolars of the two streets.

## INTERESTING POINTS FROM THESE EPIGRAPHS

The first epigraph furnishes a couple of noteworthy points. Firstly it contains a Sanskrit verse in Grantha script at the end giving the gist of the content of the record. Secondly, this verse gives the details of the donor's family. He is called a Vasistha, i.e., belonging to the Vasistha gotra and his father was Saundapa called Savuntapputaiyar in Tamil (text line 4). It is to be noted that the *sutra* and *sakha* of Saundapa are not given here. This Saundapa seems to be identical with Saundapacarya of Vasistha gotra who

was entrusted with the work of commenting on the sacrificial ritual as followed in the school of Apastamba, by Bukka-II. If this is so, then the donor of our record whose real name is not given but is called as *Annadata* which means the 'giver of food' belonged to a distinguished family, and that this gave him the elevated position of *Mahapradana* under Bhupati Raya.

The second epigraph is interesting in that according to the Government of the times there was no *idankai* and *valankai* distinction at Tiruvannamalai. Probably on account of the observance of the distinction, the Kaikkolars of the two streets, considered to belong to the *Idankai* group, were not allowed to enjoy certain traditional privileges like conch, staff, elephant, flywhisk and other items, which were enjoyed by the people belonging to the *valankai* group. According to the order contained in the epigraph in question these privileges were restored to the Kaikkolars.

### **Bukka III or Vijaya Bukka, the son of Devaraya-I.**

As has been stated above, on or before September 21, 1422, Bukka-III succeeded to the throne of Vijayanagara. As a viceroy of his father, he is known to have done certain acts in Tamilnadu including those mentioned in the two epigraphs of his father's reign from Tiruvannamalai. He was on the throne of Vijayanagara for a few months only and seems to have died some time in A.D. 1423.

### **Vira Pratapa Devaraya or Gajavettai kanta Devaraya**

Bukka-III or Vijaya Bukka was succeeded by his son and heir to the throne, Devaraya-II. It is likely that he ascended the throne some time before February 10, 1423.

Altogether there are six inscriptions), ranging in date from A.D. 1432 to 1443 of this king's time in our collection. Interestingly they make mention of him only and no ancestor of his is mentioned. In all of them except the fragmentary epigraph he is called Vira Pratapa Devaraya. In all of them, except two epigraphs he is given the titles of *Mahamanta esvaran*, *Harirayav ibhatan*, *Bhasaikkuttap puvarayar kandan*, *Muvarayarkaratan*, *Kantanatu kontu kondanadu kutatan* and *Satussamudratipathy* (with the variant of *purva daksina paschima utara satush samudratipathy*). In some of them the title *kasavettai kartaruliya* occurs. In the second epigraph the higher titles of *Irajatiraja* and *Iraja paramesvara* coupled with *gajavettai kandu aruliya* are given to him but the other titles are conspicuous by their absence, although in another epigraph the title *Maha rajadh iraja*, is given along with the other usual ones.

His period is marked by a trend of irregular and unlawful activities amongst people, that too amongst those in charge of temples, which had to be corrected by official intervention. His earliest record in our collection dates only from A.D. 1432.

## LAND AND OTHER GIFTS

According to the epigraph dated March 5, 1432, the danathar of the temple at Tiruvannamalai gave some land and two houses to a certain person. The grantee was asked to pay annually certain amount into the temple treasury in lieu of the assignment.

The articulators of date of one epigraph are irregular, but may be equivalents of July 24, 1437, and it registers the gift of seven villages on the orders of the king to the

*danikar* to provide for a service, named after Gauradevi avvai, in the temple of Tiruvannamalai.

A sale of land probably by the *tanattar* for the purpose of raising a flower garden to provide garlands to the god and goddesses of the temple of Tiruvannamalai is recorded in another epigraph. Its date particulars are not regular but may be equated to June 26, 1439, if the *tithi* Purnima is taken as correctly given because on this date the *naksatra* and day are different. It also registers a sale of land for providing offerings to the god and the goddess of the temple and for rearing a flower garden for supplying flowers to the same deities.

In the third of which the date particulars would be all right if the Saka year was 1364, and in which case the equivalent would be January 6, 1443, records an interesting royal order to the effect that the people in the different villages mentioned must pay a visit to the temple of Tiruvannamalai and stay there for ten days from the day of flag raising during a certain festival, failing which each absentee should pay a certain amount as fine.

## SOME INTERESTING POINTS FROM THE EPIGRAPHS

A noteworthy information supplied by one epigraph which relates to two beautiful names of persons; one of them is Tirumalai suri (an) orayiram udaiyar and the other is Onkara devan. A comparatively long list of taxes is also found here. Another epigraph furnishes the name of an important lady called Gauradevi avvai in whose name a service was instituted in the temple of Tiruvannamalai and for which seven villages were granted on the orders of the emperor himself. Who this Gaura Devi was is difficult to know.

In a third epigraph, a certain Unnamulai nayinar figures and he is stated to be the son of Sampandan. It is not unlikely that the latter was the same as the one who figures in the epigraph of A.D. 1369 where he is called Taliyar Sampandan.

Another epigraph furnishes us with a very interesting matter in which the emperor himself was interested. According to the inscription at the time of the function of flag hoisting by one of the four *nayanmars* at Tiruvannamalai, the people of the Padai vidu district must be present there and continue to remain for ten days thereafter. If any one did not obey this, he should pay a fine of 120 *pon* a year to the treasury of the palace. A royal edict of this kind compelling people of a region to attend a festival in a temple is very rarely met with in inscriptions. The imposition of a high amount of *pon* as fine on an individual for failure to observe the edict is indeed a rare phenomenon in Indian epigraphy.

### **Mallikarjuna makarayar, the son of Gajavettai kandaruliya Vira Pratapa Devaraya-II**

It is suggested that Mallikarjuna, the son and successor of Vira Pratapa Devaraya-II, ascended the throne on May 24, 1446, the day on which his father died.

A word about his appellation and titles may be said before we proceed further. There are two records of Mallikarjuna in our collection. In the first epigraph, he is given the simple title of *Maha mandalesvaran*. In the other record he gets the titles *Arirayavipatan*, *Bhasaikkuttappuvarayarakantan* and *Satush samudradhipati* besides the simple title mentioned above. In some records of his son Irajaasekararayar, Mallikarjuna is called, after

the usual titles, as Gajavettai kandaruliya Sri Vira Pratapa Devaraya Mallikarjuna irayar. This must be the phrase describing him in many of his records and in many records of his successors. This phrase simply means “Mallikarjuna irayar, the son of Gajavettai kandaruliya Vira Pratapa Devaraya”. We know it for certain that Pratapa Devaraya-II bore the title *Gajavettai kandaruliya*, and his name itself was Vira Pratapa Devaraya. It was the practice amongst some members of the royal dynasties to prefix to their names, the names of their parents, so as to clearly indicate that they were the sons of so and so. Mallikarjuna too appears to have adopted this practice. Hence to say that he bore also the name of Vira Pratapa Devaraya and the title of *Gajavetta ikandaruliya* which was a distinctive title of Pratapa Devaraya-II does not seem to be correct. Mallikarjuna, however, had the name of Immadi Devendra or Devaraya.

During the period of Pratapa Devaraya-II the empire was put to strain by frequent wars with the Bahmani Sultans as well as by the revolt of a feudatory chief or two. This weakness became pronounced in the time of Mallikarjuna.

Mallikarjuna died in A.D. 1465 and as the regent for his one year old child, Virupaksha-III his brother was placed on the throne. As stated above, Saluva Narasimha was for some years administering the Tamil country with power. His power increased after the death of Mallikarjuna.

Only a couple of epigraphs of Mallikarjuna are included in our collection. Of these, the first epigraph with date particulars exactly corresponding to December 30, 1451 registers a gift of two *nunda* lamps to the goddess Unnamulai nachiyar by Opala pandithar and he endowed 64 cows and two bulls for the supply of ghee for the

lamps. The other epigraph, the date particulars of which do not yield an exact equivalent but may be equated to July 8, 1453, records a deed of settlement, by a certain *chetti* of Padaividu in favour of Periyamadathu mudaliyar, of some land and garden, after informing the *Mahajanas* of Unnamulai nachiyarakaram.

An interesting point to be noted here is that both the donor and his father are given the title of *pandithar*. The father of the donor Ponnampala pandithar is said to be a *vaidyam*, i.e., one belonging to the medical profession. Putting these things together we may say that a medical man was called *pandithar* at the time when the epigraph was engraved. It may be said that this practice was continued over the centuries, because even today persons practising native medicines in villages and towns are called *pandithars*.

### Virupaksha III, the son of Pratapa Devaraya-II

He was another son of Devaraya-II, and he became king in Saka 1388. In this matter, an inscription of Rajasekara's time to be discussed presently throws a welcome light (epigraph dated July-August A.D 1486). In it Saluva Narasimha figures as a subordinate of the prince. It shows clearly that only after August 1486 Caluva Narasirinha should have ascended the throne. What happened to prince Rajasekara thereafter is not known.

Virupaksha-III's inscription, which is badly damaged and contains irregular date particulars, though its date is July-August 1482 being the equivalent of Saka 1404, Simha in the record, seems to register a *kani atsi* type of land sale transaction with the usual stipulation of amounts of things in cash and kind to be paid to the temple treasury. This epigraph gives the king all imperial titles.

## Rajasekara irayar, the son of Mallikarjuna irayar

Rejasekara was a son of Mallikarjuna, and very little information about him is available from epigraphy. But our collection contains five inscriptions of his ranging in date from A.D. 1479 to 1486. He must be sixteen years old when two of the epigraphs were issued and twenty three years old when the third was issued. Except in two of the epigraphs the beginning is damaged and so the passage contained therein is lost, in the remaining three epigraphs the prince is called as the son of Mallikarjuna irayar who is given not only the usual high titles but also significantly the titles of *Gaja vettai kandaruliya Vira Pratapa Devaraya* which was the name and title of Mallikarjuna's father Pratapa Devaraya-II, and used here to show Mallikarjuna was the son of that Devaraya.

Another noteworthy point met with in these epigraphs is that the person transacting the business which is recorded there was Kattari Chaluva Narsimhayadeva maharajar possessing the titles *Maha mandaleswaran*, and *Metinim surakada*, which were conferred usually by the kings on viceroys. Chaluva Narasimha, according to the three records in question, appears to have sided with Mallikarjuna's son Rejasekara who was at this time, though young, ruling over the Tiruvannamalai region. Narasimha was as stated above considered himself to be a subordinate of Virupaksha. The above details show that both Virupeksha and prince Rejasekara were ruling over Tondaimantalam in the period to which our epigraph belonged and that Chaluva Narasimha was assisting both. But as has been stated above, this viceroy who was a subordinate under prince Rajasekara irayar in July-August 1486, seems to have usurped the throne of Vijayanagar, after setting aside this prince who was not heard of subsequently.

## GIFT OF LANDS ETC

The fragmentary record contains partial date particulars, which correspond to January 7, 1479. It registers a sale of a village according to *kanipparru kani yatchi* arrangement. Another epigraph, of which the passage containing some of the details of date are lost but which should belong to June-July 1479, registers a grant of a village as well as tax incomes from some other lands made by Narsimhayadeva maharajar, to provide for the repair works in the temple of Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayinar. The gift is stated to have been made by him on the day when the asterism Anulam (Skt. Anusa) which was his native asterism.

Another inscription is much damaged and the passages containing the name of the king and particulars of date are lost, as also many other passages in other places. It has been, however, assigned to prince Rajasekara irayar's time on the basis of its location amongst other inscriptions of the prince under discussion now. Further, taking the cyclic year, though written in a peculiar way, as Subhakrt, its date would fall in August-September 1482, when the prince may have continued to rule here. The inscription seems to record an order made by the officer Kanikkatitai kuttar seated in the hall called Urupanarayanan mantapam in front of the door way of the god Annamalaiyar, that certain articles like coconut etc. used to be given to some persons, need not be given.

The badly damaged epigraph of which the details of date are lost but assigned to A.D. 1482 on account of the Saka 1404 preserved partly, registers some gift to provide for a service one each for the god and the goddess made by Chaluva Narasinkayyadeva maha iraja udaiyar, probably

on the day when Anusham asterism was current, which as stated above was Narasimha's native asterism.

The other epigraph, also much damaged, of which the particulars of date are irregular but could be equated to July-August, 1486, registers a similar gift as met with, in the previous one. Here, however, the details pertaining to the gift are available, and they were certain items of tax incomes due to certain temples, which were transferred to one Viravetiya nampi who was entrusted with the work of conducting a special service each for the god and goddess of the temple, probably on a day when the asterism Anilam was current.

## **POINTS OF INTEREST NOTICED IN THESE EPIGRAPHS**

In three of the four records the gift recorded there related to the conduct of special service in honour of Chaluva Narasimhayadeva on the day of his native asterism Anusham . It is noteworthy that in one or two of them the gift consisted of transfer of incomes which were due to some temples, to the person who was to conduct the service mentioned above.

The new temples mentioned in the epigraphs are: Tirukkamicuramudaiya nayinar and Perumal Virrirundha perumal; Karaikandisuramudaiya nayinar and a Vishnu temple (name lost); and Chattisuramudaiya nayinar and Ulakalanda perumal Chikkana vinnakaram of Ulakalandacholapuram. It is interesting to note that in each epigraph a Siva temple and a Vishnu temple are mentioned. This confirms the prescription in the texts on temple rituals and building that in villages and towns there should be temples dedicated to both these gods.

Chaluva Narasirnhayateva bore the title Kattari Chaluva, which was also borne later on by Krishna devareya and his successors.

The existence of a hall named Urupanarayanan mantapam at the doorway of the god Annamalaiyar is revealed by an epigraph. But its identification is difficult. From this epigraph we also come to know of an officer (*adi kariyar*) named Kanikkatitaikkuttar.

In one or two of the epigraphs in question a number of taxes including a few new items are mentioned.

## THE CHALUVAS

After Chaluva Narasimha became the emperor of Vijayanagara in A.D. 1485-86, and till A.D. 1509 when the celebrated Tuluva Krishnadevaraya ascended the throne there was confusion in matters relating to the succession of rulers, their period of rule, and their mutual relationship. This is due mainly to the paucity of records bearing on the matters, absence of clear-cut references in the Muhatnmadan chronicles and the same name Narasimha being borne by all the successors of Chaluva Narasimha. Three Narasitnhas followed Chaluva Narasimha. They were (1) his son Narasimha-II, (2) the second usurper Narang of the Tuluva family; and (3) his son Vira Narasirnhha who was the half-brother of Krishna devardya.

### Chaluva Narasimha, the emperor of Vijayanagara

As the emperor, Chaluva Narasimha is known to have camped in Tamilnadu.. A limited number of his inscriptions have been found in Tamilnadu but none at Tiruvannamalai where we have only the records issued by Chaluva Narasimha as viceroy of Rajasekara rayar between A.D. 1479 and A.D. 1486, dealt with above.

At Narasimha's death, he was succeeded by the elder of his two sons; but he was murdered by an enemy of Narasa Nayaka, named Timmarasa. But Narasa Nayaka put the younger son named Tammadeva or Tammayya on the throne with the name Immadi Narasimha who was recognised as king on January 27, 1493 in an inscription from Mysore. Narasa Nayaka, however, kept all the powers in his hands.

### **Immadi Narasimha, the son of Chaluva Narasimha**

The collection of epigraphs from Tiruvannamalai does not include any epigraph definitely attributable to Chaluva Immadi Narasimha or to Tuluva Narasa Nayaka, the *de facto* ruler of Vijayanagara empire although the badly damaged epigraph in Sanskrit language and Grantha script of about the 16th century may be tentatively attributed to the former on the basis of the name of the ruler Narasimhadeva bhupati mentioned in it. The reason for this is not far to seek. On behalf of the nominal emperor, Narasa Nayaka had to go to different parts of the empire to quell one rebellion or the other; and in the Tamil country he had to subdue the revolting subordinates and a Pandya ruler. These activities naturally should have occupied most of his time. So neither he nor his master had any occasion to visit the area around Tiruvannamalai.

The damaged inscription with date particulars corresponding to August 9, 1502, does not refer to any of the above mentioned rulers, but refers itself to a certain Kottai Mayana iraja and records the employment of a certain person as *tiruvilakkuk kuti* (a person entrusted with the work of supplying ghee for a lamp) to the god Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayinar by an agent of the chief. The importance of this epigraph lies in the fact that on

this date the Vijayanagara rule over the area was in eclipse so that the local chief Mayana could issue a record with no reference to any superior. The identification of this chief and the *kottai* (fort) is difficult.

## THE TULUVAS

Tuluva Narass Nayaka was a great general, notable minister and a clever strategist who was instrumental in keeping the Vijayanagara Empire intact against several odds during the rule of the last Chaluvvas. After the murder of Chaluva Immadi

Narasimha in A.D. 1505, Narasa Nayaka became the *de jure* ruler of the empire and seemed to have exercised his imperial authority for a short period thereafter. Though he was active in many places, no epigraphs referring to him are available in our collection.

### Vira Narasimha (or Immadi Narasa Nayaka)

This second Tuluva emperor ascended the throne in A.D. 1505 and ruled till some time in 1509. Since his assumption of power was in the wake of his father's usurpation of the throne, he faced many troubles even from the beginning.

In Tamilnadu his rule was acknowledged in Tiruvannamalai in the epigraph in A.D. 1506. During the short period of four years and odd of his rule Vira Narasimha tried his best to contain the Mussalmans, and the rebellious chiefs, improved the efficiency of his army, encouraged his subjects to cultivate warlike spirit, took active interest in the civil administration of the kingdom and tried to alleviate the distress of the people as much as possible as for instance the attempt to abolish the oppressive marriage tax (*kallana kauam?*).

Nine epigraphs of our collection belong to this ruler's reign and all of them have been discovered recently. Of these one is badly damaged and it is in the Grantha script and Sanskrit language. It refers itself to Sri Narasimhadeva bhupati who may be either the Tuluva king in question or anyone of the two Chaluva Narasirnhas also. In the case of the others, some peculiarities are noticed in respect of the date particulars. Another epigraph is interesting in that it was engraved first and its letters were wantonly chiselled out later. It contains the date particulars Saka 1427, Kurotana Khshaya, Mesa su. (...), Pooram and Tuesday. The *thithi* is lost and the *nakshatra* and the day do not go together. Evidently some mistake had crept into this statement, except in respect of the Saka year, cyclic year and the month. Perhaps due to this, the whole inscription seems to have been defaced originally. This inference is based on the fact that another epigraph, which is engraved by the side of the above record, appears to be a copy of the same except for the Saka year 1429 wrongly given for 1427, and for the *nakshatra* Punarpusam which is correct here. With the Saka year 1427, the equivalent for the date particulars agree exactly to March 31, 1506. There is some difference in contents of both the epigraph. For instance, in one epigraph, the king is given the titles of *Mahamantalesuran*, *Arirayavipatan*, *Pasai kuttappuvarayara kandan*, *Muvarayara kandan*, *Kandanatu kondu konta nadu kudatan*, *Inturaya suratana*, *Irajatiraja*, *Iraja paramesvaran*, *Purva tekshina paschima utara catu samuthiratipati*, *Kasavettai kandaruliya*, and *Vira piratapan*. In another epigraph, however, the king, here called Immati Narasa Nayakka, gets all the above mentioned titles except *Irajati raja* and *Iraja paramesvaran*. The manner of giving the date particulars in both is noteworthy. The

passage reads as “sakattam 1427 mel Chella ninra Kurotana samvatsarattukku chellum Kshaya samvatsarattu Mesha nayarru purvapakshathu.” It means that “the bright fortnight of the Mesa month of the year Kshaya, belongs to the year Kurotana.” This statement is in explanation of the fact of counting the bright fortnight of the Mesha month of each year as belonging to the previous year. These are the only records known so far to make mention of this fact. In another epigraph *purvapaksha dasami* seems to be a mistake for *purvapaksha Pournami*. If this correction is admissible, then the date particulars correspond to July 5, 1506. the third epigraph contains almost the same date particulars as found in the previous epigraph, but here the *thithi* is *purvapaksha ekadasi*. If the latter’s su. 10 is taken as correctly given, (which does not seem to be the case), then the record in question may be said to have been issued on the day next to that on which the epigraph was issued. But in view of the existence of the other irregularities, our inference in this regard may not be all right, although the matter of both would be taken as correctly given. The fourth inscription gives the date particulars such as Saka (14) 30, Vipa ( . ), Mituna su.3, Thursday corresponding to June 1, 1508, but the nakshatra being not given, one cannot be sure of the exactness of this equivalent. The next three epigraphs, give the Saka year 1431 coupled with the cyclic year Vipava. In fact the cyclic year corresponds only to the Saka year 1430, as in the epigraph dealt with above. So, the Saka year 1431 of the three epigraphs in question should be considered either as wrong or as current. With this emendation, the Christian equivalents of the three records would be August 10, 1508, January 22, 1509, and January 25, 1509.

## LAND TRANSACTIONS AND GIFTS

Two epigraphs deal with land transaction of the type of *kanivilaip piraṁanam* or of the *kanipparru kani atci* type. According to them certain villages had been sold by the *tanattar* of the Tiruvannamalai koyil to a certain Reddyar with the stipulation that he should pay into the temple treasury annually without diminution certain amount of *panam* and paddy. Another epigraph deals also with the same category of transaction. Here the beneficiary and places are different.

The hird epigraph relates to the gift of lands as *tanma catanam* and *charuvamaniya iraiyili* to.. *vetiya nampi* by Mummati Iratti, perhaps the same as the one figuring in two other epigraphs, so that the donee looked after the conduct of a *santi* (service) each to the god and the goddess of the temple instituted in the name of the donor with the specified provisions made for the purpose.

Another epigraph registers a transaction of land of the type of *palatali kani atci* to a certain person by the *tanattar* of the temple to meet the expenses called *mandapa thevai* (providing necessary things during the occasions when the deities were kept in view for the public in a hall).

Another inscription records a gift of a village probably by the king himself to a person to provide for worship and temple works to the temple of the god *Ilaiya nayinar* (i.e., *Subrahmanya*) situated on the north street.

## POINTS OF INTEREST NOTICED IN THE EPIGRAPHS

From two of the epigraphs we come to know of the existence of a community of people called Reddiyar. A chief named *Mallaiyateva maharajar* who is described as

Sriman Mahamandalesvaran and Rajakal Cinkara Arayapanti Chola cinkanisura karanan of which the meaning is not clear.

In the third epigraph reference is made to the service to the god and goddess called *upaya santi* and to the measure called *Vinnavatirankal*. From this record we know that *tanma sadanam* and *saruvamaniya iraiyili* are one and the same.

Another epigraph furnishes us with an interesting matter bearing on the provisions made for keeping the deities for public view in a hall during festival days.

The incomplete inscription contains a reference to streets of Piramanas (Brahmanas) and to a street named Kankaiyarayan tiruveethi. This street was probably one of those put up by Kadava Kumaran.

That there was a temple of Ilaiya nayinar (i.e., Subrahmanya) on the north street at Tiruvannamalai is known from the epigraph. This is dated January 22, 1509, while the main *gopura* on the east is said to have been built in A.D. 1517 by Krishnadevaraya. The building of this *gopura* may have happened after the building of the four walls. Before these walls were put up, the space within this enclosure must have been unoccupied or occupied by a street. Whether the street on the north side before the building of the outermost enclosure wall is meant in this record and that the temple to Ilaiya nayinar was in it there is no means of knowing now, for there is no Ilaiya nayinar temple in the present north street on the northern side of the temple at Tiruvannamalai. The mention made here to the village named Kunram erina perumal nallur (Kunramerina perumal probably referring to Ilaiya nayinar) is to be noted.

## KRISHNADEVARAYA THE MAGNIFICENT

Krishnadevaraya was recognised as the emperor in the Tiruvannamalai area in an epigraph dated March 21, 1910, shortly after having been crowned on January 28 of the same year. His empire now embraced the whole of Southern India with a few local exceptions.

The details of his subsequent campaigns are contained in the *Amuktamalyada* and also in a number of inscriptions, which give lists of fortresses and chiefs, conquered by him. Interestingly our collection contains three such inscriptions, and two others, one in Tamil and the other in Telugu, discovered recently. The date particulars of the first of these inscriptions correspond to January 5, 1517. According to this record the king was at Sri Kalasti (text lines 44-47) on this date. But in the recently discovered Tamil inscription which contains the same date particulars as in the above he is stated to have been at Tiruvannamalai instead of at Sri Kalasti on this date (text line 5). How could he have been simultaneously at two places? There is evidently a mistake. This is, however, cleared by the third inscription, which is in Telugu. The date particulars of this record correspond to January 19, 1517 and the king is stated to be at Tiruvannamalai on this date, which was 15 days later than the day on which he was at Sri Kalasti as per the epigraph referred to above. It is apparent that the gifts recorded in the Tamil epigraphs were made, while the king was at Sri Kalasti but when the matter was engraved in Tamil on the north wall of the second *prakara* the place name was changed to Tiruvannamalai, without changing *su. 13* into *ba. 13* as is given correctly in the Telugu epigraph.

Krishnadevaraya was an excellent administrator. His ideas on administration are found in his books like the *Rajaniti* and the *Amuktamalyada*. His kingdom was vast and he had no trustworthy blood relatives to assist him in the management of the state. So, he seems to have favoured the strengthening of the system of entrusting the administration of the various regions to governors or Nayakas who had under them subordinate chiefs to look after the local affairs. This system was there earlier, but its role was increased. Thus came into existence Nayaka families at such places as Ikkeri, Chenji, Madurai and Tanjavur. As long as the king was powerful the Nayakas were subservient. But later, when the central power weakened they began to assert their independence. In so far as Tamilnadu was concerned, a number of Nayakas are known from inscriptions to have been in charge of the various territories. In the North Arcot district with which we are concerned, there were Ramappa Nayaka in Cheyyar in A.D. 1510, and one Cinnappa Nayaka was in the Tiruvannamalai region. A number of other chiefs of this category are known from other parts of Tamilnadu (see *T.C.U.V.*, pp. 184 ff. for more details). For their services to the crown, the Nayakas were given fiefs and privileges. According to Nuniz only when they failed to discharge their allotted duties and responsibilities, their properties were confiscated and punished.

Krishnadevaraya was generally friendly to the governors and the Nayakas. But if they showed rebellious tendencies, they were cheked. There were some troublesome Nayakas in the Tondaimandalam region. An army was sent to put them down. Subsequently the Tamil country was divided into three main regions and a Nayaka was put in charge of each of them.

The collection of epigraphs from Tiruvannamalai contains twelve items belonging to the period of Krishnadevaraya. Compared to the eminence and widespread activities of the king this number is small. Only two of them were copied and published earlier. The rest have been discovered recently.

## LAND TRANSACTIONS, GIFTS ETC

Among the epigraphs, three are most important. While two are almost identical, the third one, in Telugu, is somewhat different from the other two in detail, especially in date particulars. This matter has been already dealt with above. Attention to their significance in giving a list of triumphant activities of Krishnadevaraya upto date has been drawn above. The latter part of these epigraphs records the emperor's pious deeds at the temple and gifts of jewellery etc. to the deities. Here, we may only make mention of Krishnadevaraya's greatest contribution to the temple viz., the building of the grand eleven-storeyed *gopura* on the eastern side of the outermost enclosure. Though not stated, this enclosure may also have been put up at the same time. When the other three big *gopuras* on the other sides of this wall were put up is not known, although it is not unlikely that they were erected in the same period or a little later. For, to build such gigantic towers is possible only for emperors like Krishnadevaraya. Lesser men cannot even dream of a project like this. Next in importance to the building of the *gopura* was the erection of the majestic 1000-pillared *mantapa* by the king. Other noteworthy constructional activities of his included the construction of a tank near the above *mantapa* for the summer floating festival and a bigger tank outside the town, named

Tirumalaitevvi amman Samuthiram after a queen of the king, to supply water to the former tank.

Four of the remaining epigraphs relate to the employment of persons as *tiruvilakku kuti* by certain other people.

Two deal with a land sale (*kani vilaiṭṭi piraṁaṁam*) of the *kanipparru kani atci* category, by the *tanattar* of the temple. The purchaser, as usual, was to pay certain specified quantities of paddy etc. to the temple annually. The last item is interesting in that it registers a gift of 1000 *kuli* of land to Viruppakshatevar, the son of Virasinka tevar Konerinayakkar made by the *tanattar* as *kudai maniyam*. It appears that the donee was made responsible for carrying the big temple umbrellas over the deities taken out in procession on festival occasions or otherwise.

## SALIENT POINTS NOTICED IN THE EPIGRAPHS

Taking up the three long inscriptions of A.D. 1517 first, it is seen that they furnish some very interesting pieces of information other than those having a bearing on the king's campaigns. For instance in all the three of them two of his queens named Chinnachi amman and Tirumalaidevi amman (with variant spellings), are mentioned in this order. It is not known if this order signifies the seniority and juniority of the queens concerned. From one epigraph, we know that a big *gopura* and a 100-pillared *mantapa* were caused to be constructed at Kalasti by the king. References to the gateways named Vanavatarayanavasal and Uttama cholan tiruvasal occur in them. While provision is made of persons for doing certain kinds of work during the service instituted in the name of the king, it is stated that two persons should recite the *Periya Thiruppattu*. In all probability it refers to the Tamil Saiva

scriptures called the *Tirumurai*. It is also interesting to note that two persons were employed to recite the *Vedas* during the time of the deity being taken out in procession in a palanquin. A variety of jewellery items were donated by the king to the deities, and their details can be had from the translation of the texts of epigraphs. The reference to a gift of land as *kudai maniyam* is interesting. Its explanation is given above. In another epigraph, a member of the *reddiar* community is mentioned. Two of the epigraphs make mention of persons who belonged to the community called Kopala chettikal of Kanchipuram.

## ACHUTHA DEVARAYA

Achutha tevaraya ascended the throne in 1529. The first epigraph referring to him, found in Tiruvaimamalai, is dated A.D. 1532. King Achutha devaraya should have died between June 25 and 26, 1542. His son Venkata-I also called Chikkaraya may have ruled for a couple of days only, but he was caused to be assassinated by Chalakaraju Chinna Thirumala, who was subsequently defeated and killed by Ramaraja, who, after placing Cataciva on the throne, began to rule the empire as if he was the king.

There are altogether seventeen epigraphs belonging to his period in our collection and they range in date from A.D. 1532 to 1540. Except two items March 3, 1539 and August 15, 1539, the rest have been discovered recently. They are of January 17, 1532; probably May 18, 1534; (but the day was Monday), August 12, 1534; September 10, 1534; September, 1534; November 17, 1534; probably = January 8, 1535; March 13, 1537; October 17, 1537; probably = November 2, 1538; November 25, 1538; 1539-40 and May 15, 1540.

As regards the date particulars given in these epigraphs, we find that a majority of them give correct equivalents and the rest are defective in one or two particulars only. Anyway compared to this aspect of the records of Krishnadevaraya's time dealt with above, this matter of the inscriptions in question has been handled well, although the reason for this superiority is not easy to know.

From the point of view of the titles, these epigraphs furnish one or two new titles not mentioned in the records of the earlier rulers. For instance the title of *Emmandalamum konda* (conqueror of all countries) occurs in two epigraphs and the titles of *Tulukka talavipadan* (destroyer of the Muhammadan army), *Tulukka moharram* (this word is usually wrongly read as *mukam* (camp) by the epigraphist office) *tavittan* (who stopped the conduct of Moharram festival of the Muhammadans) and *Eelam tiralkonda* (who levied tribute from (the king of) Eelam i.e., Srilanka) occur in one epigraph. These need not be considered empty boasts but may be taken to signify the king's actions.

The stopping of the conduct of the important festival of Moharram by the Mussalmans was probably necessitated by the fact that they exceeded the limits of propriety and caused thus annoyance to the Hindu subjects of the kingdom. It is not known if ever Achutha thevaraya or his generals crossed the Palk Straits and waged wars with the Stilankan kings. But as per the title found in our epigraph, skirmishes between the Vijaya nagara and the Srilankan armies might have taken place at the time when Chalakaraju Tirumala's conquest of the southern Tamil country and the chief of Tiruvadi territory, when the Vijayanagara general routed the Srilanka army and compelled that

country's ruler to pay tribute to his emperor. Anyway this title is pregnant with significance and it adds to Achutha devaraya's glory.

## LAND TRANSACTIONS AND GIFTS

Of the seventeen epigraphs, eleven relate to the sale of land under the *kanipparru kani atci* category by the *tanattar* of the temple to various persons. One epigraph registers the sale of five *madappuram* villages by the head of the Annamalainatar Periyamadam. Another epigraph registers a gift of land by an individual in honour of the king from the earnings of which certain services to the god were to be done and expenses relating to the conduct of festival to be met. Similarly another epigraph also deals with the institution of a certain service in the temple in honour of the king by an individual who endowed some land to meet the expenses thereof and also to meet the expenses of the first day's festival. One of the epigraphs is badly damaged and so its purport is not clear; however it appears to register some gift and refers to *vishesa pasai* (special worship, line 5). One of the remaining epigraphs which is very badly damaged probably refers to certain gifts made to Pandaranki Vittalesurar on the occasion of a Makara Sankranti day, on the banks of the Tungabhadra river.

## INTERESTING POINTS NOTICED IN THE EPIGRAPHS

The measure called *Alala suvantirankal* is mentioned in two of the epigraphs. In another epigraph references to certain food offerings like *appam* (sweet cake) and *payasam* (pudding) and to the institution of a certain service called

mukamal are found. In five of the epigraphs individuals belonging to the community of Nayakkar figure. The last of the epigraphs refers to the god Pandaranki Vittalesurar and to the Tungabadra theertham.

### **Cataciva Deva Maharaya, the puppet king**

Cataciva deva maharaya was placed on the throne by the Araviti Ramaraya on June 25 or 26, 1542 and his coronation took place a year later about the middle of A.D. 1543 and his nominal rule continued upto A.D. 1576. However the empire was actually ruled by the Araviti brothers, Ramaraya up to A.D. 1565 and by his brother Tirumula from that year to A.D. 1571. Thereafter till A.D. 1576 Stiranga I, the son of Tirumala was the real ruler. All of them, however, ruled, for the most part of the period, having Cataciva maharaya as the emperor. Even after Araviti Tirumala and his son Stiranga-I proclaimed themselves, as the new emperors, a section of the people did not recognise them as the rulers and continued to owe allegiance to Cataciva till A.D. 1576 since he was the lawful king.

In so far as Cattaciva's inscriptions at Tiruvannamalai are concerned, there are eighteen of them and their dates range from A.D. 1543 to A.D. 1568. Only three of them were copied by the Epigraphy office previously while the rest were discovered the French Institute.

### **LAND TRANSACTIONS, GIFTS, ETC**

The first epigraph registers a sale of five villages as *kanipparru kani atci* to some one (name lost) by the Periyamadathu mudaliyar, who was a member of the *tanattilavarkal* (i.e., *tanattar*) of Tiruvamamalai, with the stipulation of paying certain quantity of paddy and certain

amount of pop annually to the temple treasury. The next inscription also deals with a similar land transaction, the seller here being the entire *tanattilavarkal*. Further, the *kani atci* is stated to be of the first rate category (text line 3). The following two epigraphs register ordinary transactions of this type. The next epigraph registers an ordinary sale by a *Mudaliyar* belonging to the Tiruvannamalai madam of his *madap puram* land, to the temple treasury for the amount of 800 *pon*. The next record registers a sale of land of the *kani aksi* type by the *tanattilavarkal* to a certain person with the stipulation that he should meet the expenses connected with the float festival instituted for the merit of Catacivateva maharayar.

Another epigraph is an interesting record which relates to the caruvamaniya gift of the amount of 6 *pon* paid annually by the *kankal* who, along with the people of 56 countries, visited Nartampundi pettai. This happened when a certain officer of Aliya Iramappateva marasayyan was administering this area. One of the epigraphs registers a sale of land by the *tanattilavarkal* to a Kammanayakapati to provide for the article with which to smear the body of the deity. Another epigraph registers an establishment of an almshouse named Unnamulaiyammai chattiram, but being much damaged, other details are lost. An epigraph of the same period registers a royal order in favour of the *tevaradiyar* of the west and east streets at Tiruvannamalai instructing them not to provide certain services freely rendered all along to the officials, hereafter. Further another relates to the employment of three *kon* families as *tiruvilakkukuti*. The remission of levies obtained from the petty shop-keepers and others who came to sell their articles on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, as ordered during the time

of Arulu nitiyateva pandaram, forms the purport of one epigraph, and this is stated to be for the merit of Sevvappa Nayakkar ayyan, evidently the Tanjavur Nayaka chief.

The last three epigraphs deal with the land transaction of the *kanipparu kani atci* type. Of these the last epigraph registers the sale of three villages to the minor chief Venkata rajaiyan, the son of Irama raja Tirumalaiya deva makarajaiyan. One of the above three inscriptions which is fragmentary and damaged, relates to the matter of arranging for worship and repair works in the (temple) of the god Visuvanatha udaiya nayinar of a place of which the name is lost.

## NOTEWORTHY POINTS FROM THE EPIGRAPHS

The Tanjavur Nayaka chief Sevappa Nayakkar ayyan figures in one epigraph. Aliya Iramappateva marjaiyan, evidently Araviti Ramaraja, is mentioned in one of the epigraph. Venkata rasayyan, the son of Iramaraca Tirumalaiyateva makarayan figures in the epigraphs.

The communities of Kamma nayakka-II and Kavari nayakka are known from the epigraphs mentioned. We come to know that a *Mudaliyar* of the Tiruvannamalai madam sold a *madap puram* village to the temple for an amount of 800 *pon*. A float festival was instituted for the merit of the emperor Catacivateva maharayar, to provide for which lands were sold by the *tanattilavarkal* to a certain individual. The same body had said that the annual payment of 6 *pon* made by the *kankal* who visited Narttampundi, was made a *sarurva maniyam*. They are said to be amongst those who hailed from the 56 countries.

A reference to an almshouse named Unnamulaiyammai chattiram is met with the epigraph dated December 14, 1564. An interesting royal order pertaining to the exemption

from providing several free services, given to the *tevaradiyar* of two streets at Tiruvannamalai is contained in the epigraph dated July 27, 1567. It is stated that these persons possessed this exemption during the times of the Cheras, Cholas and the Pandiyas and of the time of Vallalarayar and his general Somayatenayakkar, and that they were forced to render the free services by Irayapparajar.

A reference to the holding of a shandy twice a week and to a variety of items like grass, straw etc., that were sold there is found in one of the epigraphs. A temple of the god Visuvanatha udaiya nayinar at a certain place (name lost) is referred to in one epigraph.

## THE ARAVITU FAMILY

### Aliya Ramaraja and Tirumala

In our collection Tirmula's brother Aliya Ramaraja is referred to in a single inscription dated June 14, 1559, which refers itself to the reign of Sadasiva devamaharaya. In this record Ramaraja is mentioned as Aliya Ramappateva maharajaiyan in the characteristic Tamil manner. Similarly Tirumala is mentioned as Iramaraja Tirumalaideva maharajaiyan in an epigraph of the time of Sadasiva deva maharaya. Obviously at the time of the issue of these records, these brothers were only "subordinates" to the emperor.

Only one epigraph referring itself to Tirumala as the *maharayar* possessing the imperial titles *Mahamandalesvara*, *Irajatiraja*, *Yirsa paramesvaran*, *Purva dakshina paschima uttara catu samudhrathipathi*, *Emmandalamum kondaruliya*, and *Vira pratapan*, is met with in our collection. It contains the astronomical details Saka 1492, Piramoduta, Makara su.10, Monday,

Tiruvomam, which do not give a correct equivalent for the expired Saka. If we consider that the Saka year was current and the cyclic year was wrongly given, the details correspond only partially to January 16, 1570, because on that day the *nakhsatra* was Karttikai upto .13 of the day followed by Rohini and not Tiruvonam. Since the people are generally familiar with the name of the cyclic year correctly, in their daily life, Pramoduta may be correct and it is coupled with the correct Saka year 1492. Only, there is defect in giving the other details. So, the tentative equivalent might be January 5, 1571, when the day was Friday and the *nakshatra* was Karttikai. On this assumption, we may say that Tirumala was ruling in January 1571. An interesting but damaged record has been recently discovered at Tiruvannamalai which without reference to any king, abruptly starts with the date particulars viz., Saka 1495, Srimuka, Vaikasi ba, (...) which roughly correspond to April-May, 1573. The omission, of a reference to the king seems to indicate that the political situation then was unsettled. Probably Tirumala died about this time, and his action of putting his son Sriranga-I on the throne was not liked by the nobles. So, there ensued a contest between the parties who aspired to capture the throne, and therefore there was uncertainty as to who was the king. Hence the epigraph under reference coolly omitted mentioning any ruler.

However, since Tirumala seems to have ruled till A.D.1573, this inscription may be considered along with his only epigraph mentioned above. After A.D. 1573, Tirumala was not heard of much.

The inscription of his time is interesting in that it refers to his subordinate Tanjavur Nayaka chief Sevvappa Nayakkar ayyan who is stated to have placed about seven villages at the

disposal of his overlord Tirumalai deva maharayar, for the specific purpose of construction work in the temple.

The other inscription of A.D. 1573 appears to register a gift for an endowment for (the god's) oblations.

### **Sriranga Devamaharaya-I**

The relationship of the Tanjavur Nayaka chiefs with the Vijayanagara rulers of the 16th century was cordial. Two Nayakas of this house, viz, Sevappa and his son Achutappa dominated the Chola country, nay even the western Tondaimandalam in this period. Indeed these two chiefs appeared to have been specially devoted to the god of Tiruvannamalai, and their epigraphs found here reveal their magnificent contributions to the temple of the god. These two chiefs, father and son, were loyal feudatories of Satasivadeva maharaya, Ramaraja and his brother Tirumala. We have noted above an epigraph from Tiruvannamalai in which the handing over of some villages to Tirumala by Sevappa to meet the expenses connected with the temple work is the subject matter. The loyalty of these chiefs to Sriranga and Venkata was unquestioned as proved by several epigraphs.

The case of the Madurai Nayakas was also the same. May be sometimes, they delayed payment of tribute to the emperor which necessitated the latter to send a general with an army to threaten the defaulting Nayaka and collect the tribute from him. May be in epigraphs of the Nayakas during certain years, their overlords are not mentioned, out of inadvertence.

For our present study, we are not concerned with the Cenji Nayakas or the Madurai Nayakas as neither of them seem to have played any role during the 16th and 17th

centuries in the Tiruvannamalai region. Neither did they make any contribution to the temple with which we deal here. It is all the more stranger to know that the Chenji chiefs who resided so near Tiruvannamalai nor their subordinates, the Vellore Nayakas had anything to do with the Tiruvannamalai temple. The Tanjavur Nayakas alone had done much to this temple, and perhaps their dominant position in this region prevented Nayakas of other places including those of Chenji from intruding upon it.

Three epigraphs belonging to this king's period are included in our collection. Another damaged epigraph in Grantha and Sanskrit, which has not preserved either the name of the king or the date particulars may also be assigned to Sriranga's time in view of the fact that it describes in detail (of course not clear) the activities of Achutappanayaka, the Tanjavur chief who figures in another epigraph also. The first three inscriptions contain astronomical data. They are of poor quality, for two of them are defective in particulars while the third gives only two out of five or six details. The particulars and their approximate equivalents are given below.

1) S. 1496, Pava, Avittam, Friday. May be - November 11, 1574 Defective. The thithi was 6 and Avittam began only after.25 of the day.

2) S. 1498, Dhathu, Kanniba.10, Chittirai, Friday. May be - September 17, 1576. Defective. The day was Monday and the *nakshatra* was Poosam.

3) S. 1507, A.D. 1583-84. Incomplete

These records serve as indexes to the prevailing unsatisfactory conditions of life of the people of the period. Of the four epigraphs, the one which is incomplete registers the gift of money levied from certain number of looms

and incomes from other taxes made jointly by temple treasurers Sivanesa pandaram, and Anaiyappa pillai and the *tanattilavarkal* to the *Mudalikal* of Elupettai, etc, for the merit of Ayyan Sevvappa Nayakkar. Another inscription is badly damaged and so its purport cannot be made out. But it makes mention of Vanataraya pandaram and Pancanativana.. Nayakkar. According to this, several persons including Vanataraya pandaram, Kiriyaappan, Virapakshi Ayyan, *tanattar*, etc., together resolved to exempt the articles like unguent, sandal, camphor, etc. brought to the temple from being taxed. The other epigraph, which is very badly damaged, seems to describe in Sanskrit verses, the works carried out in the temple by Achutappa Nayaka.

The small number of epigraphs making mention of Sriranga I and the comparatively less important matter dealt with by them go to prove that during this king's reign Tiruvannamalai area was not looked after well by the administration although the Tanjavur Naya ka chiefs, had rendered some noteworthy services to the temple in this period, about which we shall see more later when we examine the epigraphs of these Nayakas.

### **Venkatapati Deva Maharaya**

The successor of Sriranga I was his younger brother Venkata who was the viceroy of the Tamil country. Some nobles did not like his elevation to the throne, but considering his long experience in the state administration and age, the people in general accepted him as their emperor. On becoming king, he left Chandragiri and went over to Penukonda. According to some he was king till A.D. 1614. According to others, he ruled till A.D. 1617-18. A newly discovered

epigraph from the Kumarankoyil in Tiruvannamalai is of this king and gives him all imperial titles. It is dated Saka 1540 (for 1541), Siddharthi, and Chittirai, 10, corresponding probably to April 7, 1619. This is proof enough to show that he was recognised as king by the people of Tiruvannamalai in April 1619. His period was more than twice the duration of the rule of Sriranga I. The long period of stay on the saddle coupled with the intimate knowledge of the statecraft and vigorous approach to state problems, enabled Venkatapathi I to achieve many things, of which the most important was the restoration of the imperial authority and rehabilitation of the ruined economy of the country.

After becoming the king, the first act in which Venkatapathi-I, was engaged in seems to have been the recovery of the territories of the empire lost to the Muhammadans during Sriranga I's rule.

In the Tamil country, the Tanjavur Nayakas continued to be friendly with Venkatapathi-I. In fact Achutappa Nayaka's son, Raghunatha Nayaka's services were requisitioned by the emperor for fighting the Muhammadans at Penukonda, and that this Nayaka prince distinguished himself in the battle. The Chenji Nayaka seems to have fallen out with Venkatapathi-I, in connection with the support he gave to Lingama Nayaka of Vellore who defied the authority of the emperor, when he latter bestowed upon Yachama Nayudu, the son of Velugoti Kasturi Rangappa, Perumbedusima, which formed part of Lingama's territory. Angered at this, Lingama sought and obtained help from several chiefs and Nayakas and sent a big army to Uttaramallur to take back his territory. Yachama Nayudu, Venkatapathi's lieutenant, though helped by a comparatively smaller force, was able to rout Lingama's army and gained a

resounding victory. This success of Venkatapathi caused alarm to several Nayakas of the Tamil country who, therefore, opposed his authority. But he sent a force under the command of Matli Anata to subdue the chiefs. Ananta and his assistants succeeded in this campaign, and most of the rebel chiefs submitted to the royal forces. But Lingama alone offered some resistance by shutting himself within the Vellore fort. But he was also captured by the royal army and ultimately the fort was taken, where Venkatapathi I shifted the seat of his government.

The epigraph of this king dated A.D. April 1619 found at Tiruvannamalai shows that he ruled till this year. It is interesting to note that this king was closely associated with Tamilnadu as revealed by the large number of his inscriptions met with here. This is also corroborated by the existence of seven epigraphs of his in our collection, with two more very badly damaged items, which may be considered to belong to his time. Of these epigraphs only one was copied previously by the Epigraphy office, the rest having been discovered by the French Institute recently.

### **GIFTS OF LAND ETC.**

Only two of the nine epigraphs register a gift of villages and money to provide for the expenses connected with the worship and offerings to the god and the goddess and certain festivals in the temple. One of them, dated A.D. 1590, says that this endowment was made by Vettavalam Tadava Vanatarayar in the presence of the eighteen administrators. The other epigraph, which registers a gift of lands and money for a similar purpose made by the group of persons belonging to fifty six countries. They did it on the advice of one Venkata Dikshitar. The record is dated A.D. 1590.

## OTHER INTERESTING MATTERS

According to one epigraph Achutappa Nayakkar Ayyan, evidently of the Tanjavar Nayaka family, had built a *mantapa* on the north street, for keeping the processional images of the deities on certain occasions. At this time, he was to receive a silken cloth as a privilege. But as per this record, in place of Achutappa Nayaka, Viruppakshayyan, the temple manager, was made to receive the cloth, probably on behalf of the chief. The order seems to have been issued by the king himself.

The epigraph registers restoration as *saruva maniya* gift of some privileges and other incomes that were formerly taken away by a certain officer, from the temple maid servants.

The order that certain persons should pay certain amounts annually, probably to the temple, issued during the period of administration of the area by Achutappa Nayaka is contained in the inscription dated July 7, 1590.

From one epigraph we get information about the festivals like Avani Mulam tirunal, the Periya tirunal held in the month of Markazhi and the Pankuni uttiram festival which lasted for eighteen days. Of these festivals Mulam tirunal (i.e., Avani Mulam tirunal) was perhaps conducted on the orders of Sevvappa Nayaka.

## CONCLUSION

Venkatapathi I is the last Vijayanagara emperor whose Epigraphs are found in Tiruvannamalai and our collection does not contain records referring to Sriranga-II, Venkata-II and Sriranga-III whose death in A.D. 1672 marks the end of the rule of the Vijayanagara kings in the Tamil country.

In fact very few epigraphs of little worth have been found at Tiruvannamalai belonging to periods later than A.D. 1619.

The reason for this was that on account of Venkatapathi-I's wrong policy of installing his nephew Sriranga-II against the prince's wish and against the wishes of some prominent nobles of the state, a civil war broke out in the country. It was aggravated by the incapable manner of handling the affair by Sriranga-II as well as by the strength of his opponents of whom one Jaggaraya was the leader. This person saw to it that Sriranga-II and his family were done away with. But the latter's loyal supporter Yachama Nayaka and his associates helped Sriranga-II's son Ramadeva the last surviving member of the royal family to ascend the throne. This should have taken place sometime in A.D. 1619 and he seems to have ruled till A.D. 1630. During the time of Ramadevarayar's rule also the civil war in Tamil country continued. In this war this king was helped by the Tanjavur Nayakas only, those of Cheingi and Madurai being against Ramadeva. Owing to the weakness of Ramadeva, even the Tanjavur Nayakas lost interest in him with the result that the empire became emasculated. This paved the way for the conquest of the Tamil country by the Galkonda forces during the reigns of Venkata II (A.D. 1630-42) and Sriranga-III (A.D. 1642-72). No wonder when these rulers were fighting for their survival they hardly had time and resources to bestow upon the progress of the temple at Tiruvannamalai or upon the development of the region around it.

Though the last phase of the rule of the Vijayanagara emperors in Tamilnadu witnessed troubles and turmoils, their rule from about A.D. 1360 to about

the end of the 16th century provided the people of this country with a peaceful existence and a stable and efficient government, which helped greatly the sustained growth of refined activities amongst the people. The rulers took special care to preserve and promote the ancient Hindu culture, tradition, learning and religion by removing the impediments if any in the process of their doing this.

In administering the country on the above lines, the rulers took personal interest and though their seat of government was at Vijayanagara (Hampi), far away from the Tamil country, they used to visit this country frequently although it was placed in charge of their trusted, capable and valient sons and close relatives, who were also imbued with the same spirit of promoting the all round welfare of their subjects as their sovereigns. The innumerable inscriptions of the Vijayanagara kings discovered all over the Tamil country amply bear out the above observations. The large number of their epigraphs found here proves that Tiruvannamalai temple and the area around the place received the Vijayanagara rulers' special attention. The people in those times depended mainly on agricultural activities. The Vijayanagara inscriptions reveal that these activities reached a high level, which was never before reached. Not only the villages already in existence were developed to the maximum so as to provide enough means for the promotion of religious and cultural activities as recorded in one of the inscriptions but quite a number of fallow lands were brought under cultivation. Naturally this increased the prosperity of the place, and as most of the land transactions were intended to bring in revenue to the temple, this institution throve very well.

There was promotion of Vedic learning during this period is attested by epigraphs, according to which lands were gifted as *sraddha vrithi* to some Brahmanas for reciting the Vedas everyday in front of the god during the service called Rayavibhatan santi instituted in the temple by Jammana udaiyar, the son of Kampana-II in connection with the ceremony after the latter's demise. Other activities like dancing, music, flower garland making, jewellery making and putting up of new structures in the temple were patronised by the rulers' and their subordinates. Of these, temple building activity reached its zenith in the reign of Krishnadevaraya. The credit of making the temple a magnificent complex goes to him, for, the grandeur that the temple now possesses is entirely due to his building the eleven storeyed eastern most *gopura*, called the Raya gopura as per his epigraph dated January 5, 1517. This epigraph also shows that this king built the 1000 pillared mandapa adjacent to the *gopura*, a tank for the float festival and dug out a tank outside the town to store water to supply the tank inside the temple. The number of other costly gifts Krishnadevaraya made to the temple seems to indicate that the king out of his extreme devotion to the god, spent a vast amount of his wealth on the development and embellishment of the temple and the promotion of rites and rituals connected with it. As per the saying *yatha raja tatha prajah* (as the king acts, the people follow suit), the people of Tiruvannamalai region should have been impressed not a little by this emperor's pious deeds and they should have also contributed their mite to assist him. That the movement started by this king continued unabated is known from a number of epigraphs datable to about A.D. 1570-1580 of the time of the Tanjavur Nayakas, Sevvappa and Achutappa, engraved on the walls of the Raya gopura. They

are in praise of the god and the *gopura*. In fact, according to these the final finishing of the *gopura* or its renovation seems to have been done in about A.D. 1570 and it was consecrated on November 19, 1572 as per one epigraph. Thus the Vijayanagara rule contributed much to the development of the temple at Tiruvauamalai and the area around it. Indeed it was a memorable period for the temple in particular.

## FRAGMENTARY EPIGRAPHS OF THE 14th , 15th AND 16th CENTURIES

Several stone fragments with inscriptions on them are seen fixed at various places in the temple. They formed part of full records engraved continuously on stone slabs which went into the original constructions of earlier periods, but which were dismantled during renovations or reconstructions done in the temple during later periods. The beginnings or ends of many of these fragmentary epigraphs; are not preserved. So, it is not possible to assign them to any definite date or dynasty. However, on the basis of their palaeographical features they are tentatively assigned to the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries A.D. Some of them are seen to contain certain pieces of useful information and they are noted below for comparison with similar details met with in some of the full and complete inscriptions of the respective period.

### EPIGRAPHS OF THE 14th CENTURY

Fifteen fragmentary epigraphs are identified as belonging to this century. One refers to a *madapattiyam*, and also probably to the deity Dakshinamurti. They register the following items:

1. A gift, made by a person after paying obeisance to the god and goddess, for the purpose of the god's oblations and food offerings. The details of the gift are lost.

2. A gift of a village probably to provide for the god Chokkanayinar. A garden where trees like jack trees were grown.

3. Existence of the street named Vikkirapandiyan. Vikkirapandiyan is a mistake for Vikkirama pandiyan and a number of milestones of this Pandya king bearing his name are known and included in our collection.

4. Several names ending in *manikkam*, evidently the names of the *tevaradiyar* of the temple are mentioned. One of the names preserved in full is Sampanta manikkam.

5. Early morning service *kala santi* (performed in the temple) which is one of the six services done in a temple.

6. A gift of a village named Nallanpillaipetral (woman who gave birth to a good son) to defray the expenses connected with the worship on the day of Makara as well as the expenses for the temple work of the deity Piramisvaramutaiya nayinar who was caused to be consecrated by Nallan pillaipetral A...nar. Besides, a gift of village is also recorded, to provide for the worship of Tiruvannamalai udaiya nayinar and for the worship of Gopuram Ilaiya nayinar. Another significant point mentioned here is that a *Pariyushitar* (early morning) worship was held for the god Annamalaiyar for which provision was made. A deity named Akkanayinar is referred to in these epigraphs who is stated to have possessed flower gardens.

## EPIGRAPHS OF THE 15th AND 16th CENTURIES

We gather following information from the epigraphs:

1. An order for doing oblation and offerings to the god Annamalaiyar and Unnamulaiyammai.

2. Sale of Chendamangalam or Chendavamangalam to a certain person or persons (details lost) with the stipulation that annually certain fixed quantities of paddy, pulse and oil as well as some amount of *pon* in cash should be given to the temple treasury.

3. Names like Pumantai Ponparappina manikkam, which were usually borne by tevaradiyars of those times.

4. A single line epigraph reads *Annamalai sivakati servai* meaning that a person made obeisance in order to know the path leading to Siva at Annamalai.

5. Fifteen inscriptions without mentioning the names of kings but containing the date particulars without the Saka year have been copied from the Puravi mantapa of the temple.

6. On the south entrance of the same mantapa, there is an inscription of the Vijayanagara king Mallikarjuna maharayar of the date December 30, 1451. It is clear that this *mantapa* must have come into existence only during the reign of this king. The epigraphs which we have referred to above, were in all probability engraved subsequent to A.D. 1451 to which Mallikarjuna's record belongs. The cyclic years that are mentioned in some of them are therefore taken as those coming after Prajapati. Accordingly approximate equivalents are given for the available astronomical details of the epigraphs concerned. All of them are records registering the employment of some persons as *tiruvilakkukuti* for the

temple who were entrusted with the care of the sheep or cattle endowed for purpose of lamps donated by devotees, and to supply ghee for burning the lamps.

7. These epigraphs are as follows: June 1465; June 16, 1467; May 1, 1471 or January 31, 1472 if the month was Vaikasi or Masi; January 6, 1496; February, March 1500; July 4, 1503.

## POINTS OF INTEREST KNOWN FROM THESE EPIGRAPHS

Mention is made of Amarakal nayinar. Some members of the *konar* community are stated to belong to *panchur vakai* meaning that they originally belonged to a group hailing from five villages. References to Amarakainayinar, Piratani Tirumalai Nayaka and his agent Malla(ya) Nayaka are found.

Some of the other items contain a piece or two of information, which is interesting to note. An assignment of land for his life, a wage and an allotment daily of a quantity of offering made to the deity to one Santesura Tipayaraja for his *kattiyam* service in the temple. A perpetual obeisance of one Meypokarayan who is said to be the son of one Annamalai Appar a donor to (the temple of) the god Annamalai Isvara. There were fifty two *ataippus* meaning probably as many *tevaradiyars* who rendered services in the temple, and one more *ataippu* was also introduced. This *ataippu* was conferred on Mathi, the daughter of Karunai Manikkam Nallai. At the time of conferment of the *ataippu* she was given the name of Arunachala Manikkam. She was also permitted to receive the temple *prasadhham* consisting of three *nazhi* (of rice ?) and one *dosai* (a kind of eatable prepared out of rice and black gram) daily.

An order made by some one (not preserved), in the presence of Tiruvampala pandaram Kalappa mudaliyar's 18 administrative officials and servant maids.

Inscription found in the Chidambaresvara temple on the Tiruvudal street contains astronomical details like Viya after Parthiva, Vaiykasi 20th without mentioning the Saka year, which might correspond to May 16, 1466 as well as to May 17, 1526. However, on grounds of palaeography the latter date is preferred here. It registers a gift of lands in Anna nadu, Adaiyar nadu and Pankaja nadu, probably for the construction of the temple mentioned above.

## THE TANJAVUR NAYAKAS

In the latter half of the 16th century, the temple of Tiruvannamalai was patronised not only by the Vijayanagara emperors like Achutateva maharaya and Sadasiva deva maharaya but also by their subordinates Chinna Sevvappa Nayaka and his son Achutappa Nayaka. Chinna Sevvappa was the son of Thimmappa Nayaka who held the post of vacal or door keeper under Krishnadevarayar in A.D. 1519 and was an *amara nayaka* of a part of the territory of the modern North Arcot district. According to some inscriptions he served his master in the Raichur campaign. Further Sevvappa was a *Dalavay* (general) under the same emperor. This close connection of Sevvappa with Krishnadevaraya endeared him to Achuta devamaharaya, the successor of Krishnadevaraya to the Vijayanagara throne, and he was made the *Adaippam* to himself by Achutateva maharaya. His loyalty and capacity seem to have earned for Sevvappa a further closer relationship with his emperor Achutateva by the former marrying the latter's queen's sister Murtimamba. According

to two Telugu works the *Tanjavuri Andhrarajulu charitham* and the *Tanjavuri vari charitham*, Sevvappa obtained Tanjavur Nayakship as *stridhana* for his wife from the emperor, but according to the *Sahitya ratnakara*, he got it by his own valour. The Tanjavur Nayakship came into existence only in A.D. 1532, by bifurcating the region around Tanjavur which till then was included in the Pandya country. Achutateva maharaya appointed Sevvappa as the viceroy over this Nayakship. His family continued to rule over this territory for long, and was called the Nayakas of Tanjavur. Throughout, the members of this family were loyal to their suzerains. In fact Sevvappa's loyalty to his master was demonstrated by his naming his son Achutappa, after the emperor. The Vijayanagara supremacy over the Tanjavur Nayakship was always accepted by this Nayaka family and it is corroborated by the existence of a number of epigraphs of the emperors in the Chola country. Besides, the inscriptions of Sevvappa invariably recognised the suzerainty of his masters, Achuta and Sadasiva. Sevvappa and his son Achutappa ruled as Nayakas from A.D. 1532 to A.D. 1600. When Sevvappa was ruling he extended his 'help to Ramaraja Vitthala in his campaign against Travancore and against the Paravas of the fishery coast.' There exist a number of inscriptions in the Chola country dating prior to A.D. 1565, the date of the battle of Rakshasa Tangadi referring to the allegiance owed by the Nayaka chiefs to the emperors of Vijayanagara. This shows that Sevvappa and his son Achutappa should have rendered help to Ramaraja during his fights with the Muhammadan enemies from the Deccan, especially at the battle of Rakshasa Tangadi although the contemporary chronicles and epigraphs do not attest to this.

Even after the battle of A.D. 1565, the Tanjavur Nayakas were loyal to Satdasiva deva maharaya and his regent Tirumalaraya. Sevvappa was the chief from A.D. 1541 to A.D. 1560, and seems to have abdicated the throne in that year in favour of his son although he continued to live till A.D. 1580.

During the period after A.D. 1560 Sevvappa Nayaka seems to have devoted a lot of his time in rendering service to the temple at Tiruvammamalai. His son Achutahppa Nayaka too assisted his Father in this pious work. A number of inscriptions of these two Nayakas are found on the walls of the Rayagopura. They are mostly in Sanskrit language and in Grantha or Telugu script. An equal number of Tamil epigraphs mentioning these Nayakas but belonging to their suzerains' reign period are also met with.

## SEVVAPPA NAYAKS

The earliest epigraph of our collection to refer to Sevvappa is dated March 7, 1569 of the reignperiod of Satdasiva deva maharaya. This registers a certain grant by an official for the religious merit of Sevvappa Nayaka. The next epigraph, which refers to him, may be assigned roughly to January 1570. This inscription is very important in that it records the handing over of some villages by Sevvappa Nayaka to his emperor Tirumalaiteva maharayar, for the specific purpose of temple construction work. We shall see presently about Sevvappa Nayaka's own efforts in building or renovating with embellishments, of the Raya gopura. He seems to be referred to again in an epigraph, which is, however, badly damaged, though from what is preserved of its date particulars it appears to belong to A.D. 1573. He figures in another epigraph of which the astronomical data

do not yield a correct equivalent although they may be said to correspond roughly to a date in December 1574, which is about two years later than the record mentioned above. It belongs to the Sri Ranga deva maharayar. The epigraph in question, registers an order for gifting a levy on looms and a certain number of looms by Sivanesa pautaram and others to some people, for the religious merit of Sevvappa Nayaka. To the same emperor's reign belongs another epigraph of which the date particulars are irregular, although they may be equated to a day in September 1576. The Nayaka chief Sevvappa figures here, but due to the damaged condition of the epigraph the details of the transaction recorded are lost. At this juncture it is necessary to examine the epigraphs engraved in the name of Sevvappa Nayaks himself without any reference to his overlord. The most important and interesting of them' is dated Saka 1494, Avani month which corresponds to July-August, 1572. This inscription in Sanskrit and Tamil records the building of the Raya *gopura* in this year, by Sivanesa and Lokanatha, the elder and the younger brothers, under the orders of Sevvappa nayaka. This matter is first stated in Sanskrit by Sakti mangalam Srinivasa diksitar (lines 1-16). The same matter is stated again in Tamil by Ellappa nayinar who has added the particulars that the *gopura* was eleven storied (lines 17-23). Kalinkarayar Unnamulai nayinar Ellappar and Kalmatattu Mudliyar have also said in Tamil about the building of the *gopura* by Sevvappa (line 24-28). Then follow in lines 29 to 38, some passages in Sanskrit in praise of the same *gopura*.

The inscription though without the Saka year, seems in all probability to belong to the same Sake year 1494 of the epigraph discussed above, in which case the astronomical

data contained here viz, Amgirasa, Krttika su.15 Wednesday, Rohini would yield November 19, 1572 as their equivalent. It is interesting to note that this was the day when the Karttikai dipa festival fell in that year. According to the epigraph on this day golden pots were placed on the *gopura* built in front of the god Sonadharani dhara nayaka by Lokanatha, probably on the orders of Sevvappa.

The words *trayodasa tala* occurring in line 5 do not seem to be correct; perhaps they are *trayodasa kalasa* which means, the golden pots placed on the *gopura* were thirteen in number. The text of the inscription, which is in Sanskrit, is said to have been composed by Sonadrinatha guru described as a mine of good qualities (*sagunakara*) and as immersed in the ocean of Saivagama. The fact that the *gopura* was constructed by Sivanecan, Ulakanathan, Anantakkuttan and Ampala thathiya punniyan is mentioned in one epigraph. While according to another only the first two persons were responsible for the building of the *gopura*, it is noteworthy that as per the epigraph in question, two more persons assisted the former in this work.

The south and north walls of the Raya *gopura* contain a number of inscriptions some of them in Tamil, and others in Sanskrit. Some of the Sanskrit epigraphs are in the Telugu script and others are in the Nagari script. Some inscriptions in the Nagari script contain texts in Marathi language. In some of them the names of the Nayaka chiefs mentioned above occur. So, it is reasonable to presume that they were engraved in their time. The engraving of the records has been done in a shallow manner and the surface on which it is done is rough. So, in each of them many letters have not been preserved well. Owing to their damaged condition, the estampages of these epigraphs

have not come out clearly. As a consequence it has not been possible to read them correctly and interpret them properly. Whatever could be read of these ill preserved records has, therefore, been given, and the interpretations or translations of them attempted here are tentative. It appears that the set of epigraphs in Telugu script engraved continuously in various bays of the wall as also the set of writings in Grantha script engraved similarly, form each part of a whole record which is in praise of the glory and grandeur of the *gopura* and also in praise of Sevvappa Nayaka, who was responsible for its building as stated above. We are able to know from the preserved parts of the texts that they are in a good *kavya* style employing a number of metres and possessing beautiful imageries. If we can retrieve them fully, we may possibly be able to know who the composer or composers of them were.

One of the epigraphs copied from the south wall, contains the Saka year 1502 only without other date particulars. This year may be equated to A.D. 1580. The record which is in Sanskrit and which is damaged in parts states that it was composed by one Gavinda suri who was a constant companion of Sevvappa bhupa. It is known that Sevvappa Nayaka and his son Achutahppa Nayaka had as their chief minister Govinda dikshita, a Telugu Brahmana, who was celebrated for his vast learning, wise statesmanship and extraordinary ability in administration. This minister was also interested in architecture and other fine arts and he is credited with the building of *tantric* oriented structures like the Mahamagham tank at Kumbhakonam. It is possible that he was instrumental in the building or renovation of the Raya gopura in the temple at Tiruvannamalai. If this is so, then Govinda suri of the

epigraph mentioned above was identical with Govinda dikshita, the well known minister of these two Nayaka chiefs. Since he was learned in many Sastras and an author of Sanskrit works it may not be unreasonable to suppose that he was mainly responsible for the composition of the texts of the Sanskrit inscriptions referred to above. Being a Telugu himself, he may have arranged for writing the texts of some epigraphs in Telugu and causing them to be engraved in the Telugu script on the walls. The epigraph in question, which specifically mentions that Gavinda suri was a constant companion of Sevvappa bhupa, it is probable that the latter was alive in A.D. 1580 in which year the epigraph is dated.

The incompletely deciphered epigraphs are found on the south wall and similar epigraphs are found on the north wall. As stated above, all of these speak highly of the Raya *gopura* and its builder Sevvappa nayaka. Here it is necessary to examine the question as to what exactly is meant by the references in these records to Sevvappa Nayaka building the *gopura*. For, the records of Krishna devaraya dated A.D. 1517, of our collection, state unequivocally that he caused the building of the 1000 pillared *mandapa* and also the eleven storied *gopura*. Can this categorical statement by an emperor repeated thrice in the same place, be brushed aside and consider that Sevvappa Nayaka constructed the *gopura* in A.D. 1572 as true? It is common knowledge that enormous resources are required for building the *gopura* of such dimensions and its associated structures like the walls and the other three *gopuras*. Such resources can be spared only by an emperor of Krishnadevaraya's stature and not by any lesser man. According to us the statements contained in the

epigraphs of both the emperor and the Nayaka appear to be true in parts. In all probability, the construction of the *gopura* which was started in about A.D. 1517 in the time of Krishnadevaraya was not completed for years, because of its stupendous dimensions. The successors of Krishnadevaraya were not able to continue the work steadily due to political reasons, which left little room to spare resources necessary for this charitable purpose. Then there was the battle of Rakshasa Tangadi of 1565 which caused great catastrophe to the empire. It appears that some years after this when Tirumalai deva maharaya became the emperor, the idea of completing the construction of the *gopura* was mooted. In all probability this was done by Sevvappa Nayaka who was then the ruler in this area and who was an ardent devotee of the god of Tiruvannamalai. The idea was accepted by the king, but to defray the expenses connected with this immense work a large amount of money was required. Sevvappa Nayaka himself seems to have offered to bear the entire cost of completing the work, and so he handed over some of his villages situated nearby Tiruvannamalai to his emperor, the earnings of which were earmarked for the specific and sole purpose of the temple work. This is what seems to be intended by the epigraph already dealt with above. This was issued in A.D. 1570. Two years later in July-August, 1572 the *gopura* was completed in all respects and in November of the same year the final consecration was done by placing the golden pots on the top of the *gopura* on the Karttika dipotsava day at the auspicious kumbha lagna which was current between 10.30 A.M. and 12.30 P.M. on that day. The work of completion of the structure also involved its embellishments like stucco decorations

and mural paintings before its consecration. They are probably of a glorious nature which coupled with the deep piety associated with the whole endeavour naturally evoked great admiration from the people. The chief Sevvappa Nayaka was elated over his achievement which was truly remarkable. His sincerity of purpose and the nature of his achievement seem to have inspired his court poets to compose the beautiful texts of Sanskrit inscriptions which were duly put on the walls of this edifice for posterity to understand and appreciate the significance of this magnificent work.

### **Achuthappa Naya+ka**

This Nayaka was a true follower of his father and like him was loyal and devoted to his emperors Sriranga deva maharayar and Venkitapati deva maharayar. The earliest epigraph of our collection to refer to this Nayaka is dated A.D. 1584-85 belonging to the rule of Sri ranga deva maharayar. Probably Achuthappa Nayaka began to show active interest in the affairs of the temple of Tiruvannamalai only from this year. The epigraph in question registers remission of levies on a number of articles brought into the temple. This is stated to have been ordered for the religious merit of the Nayaka by certain persons including Vanataraya pandaram who figures in one of the epigraphs dated A.D. 1576 of Sevvappa Nayaka's time. The other inscriptions containing references to this Nayaka are with irregular date particulars but assignable to June 1587, the second epigraph which is badly damaged, and third epigraph also with defective date particulars but assignable to December 1589 and belonging to the time of Venkitapatiteva maharayar, and the last epigraph with astronomical data exactly agreeing with July 7, 1590.

## SALIENT POINTS GLEANED FROM THE EPIGRAPHS REFERRING TO HIM.

1. People who were bringing such articles as unguent, sandal, camphor, musk, rose water, saffron, country benzoine, silk thread and also elephant and horse were exempted from payment of levy from the date of this record (A.D. 1584-85). Evidently, earlier, some tax was levied on these articles and it was discontinued from this date. The reason for this remission appears to be that all the listed articles were used in the worship of the deities in the temple. The remission was announced by a group of persons whose names are given.

2. The Nayaka chief had not only built a *mantapa* on the north street for installing the god but also the information that he authorised his agent Viruppashayyan to receive the privileges of the silken cloth which should be offered to the Nayaka on that occasion.

3. The epigraph dated A.D. 1587 is interesting in that although full particulars are not available due to its damaged condition, it states that certain facilities which were probably denied by a former officer to the women employed in temple work, were restored to them permanently on the orders of Achutahppa Nayaka.

4. According to the epigraph dated A.D. 1590 when Achutahppa Nayaka was administering the town of Tiruvannamalai, his agent Vanataraya pandaram and some one whose name is lost, ordered the payment of certain amount of *panam* annually as *makamai* by the *manradiyal* (shepherds) of the East street.

5. Vanataraya pantdram of this record also figured in some earlier records of this Nayaka and in a record of Sevvappa Nayaka. It is, therefore, evident that he was an important assistant under both these Nayakas.

## PART III

This section deals with the physical aspects of Arunachala including a brief description of the ancient sites, tanks and shrines found in Tiruvannamalai and along the giripradakshina path. The Notes mentioned in Chapter XVI should be read in conjunction with the adjoining map (the numbers referred to are found in the map). The other chapters give general information about Tiruvannamalai.

## XIV

### ASPECTS OF ARUNACHALA

THERE ARE NINE ENTRANCES TO THE town of Tiruvannamalai. As we enter the town from any one of these, Arunachala can be seen from a distance of ten to fifteen miles, sometimes when the atmosphere is clear, from even farther away. A visitor who has already been to Tiruvannamalai looks out eagerly for his first glimpse of Arunachala as he approaches Tiruvannamalai. People who have read about it and come for the first time eagerly await their introduction to the hill. The first glimpse of the hill while entering the town and the last lingering look while leaving are the finest impressions one can have of Arunachala. In spite of a long stay at Tiruvannamalai, going round the hill often and experiencing its various aspects, one can never forget the initial experience of Arunachala *darshan* from afar. With emotions that very often lie too deep for tears, the mind silently praying and with folded hands, unknown to others, the pilgrim worships Arunachala with gratitude for drawing him unto His fold. When the devotee departs from Arunachala and as he moves away from the hill, he keeps looking back from time to time at the hill, tearing himself away reluctantly from that awesome physical presence. As the distance increases, Arunachala takes on a tender expression and bids a sweet adieu. A deep impression of his beloved hill is etched in the mind of the visitor; the Presence is permanently enshrined in the heart.

Of all the aspects presented by Arunachala the most sublime ones are those seen from a distance. From each of the entrances to the town, He presents a different view and yet each of them brings out a unique facet of His haunting beauty.

People who have been to the Himalayas, the Alps and other mountain ranges have said that the Arunachala hill possesses a grandeur and majesty surpassing all the others. Paul Brunton's description of Arunachala and Anne Marshall's impressions recorded in her book, *Search for a Guru in India*, are eloquent statements of the beauty of Arunachala.

Paul Brunton says:

I stand at the door and look up at the Hill of the Holy Beacon — Arunachala, the Sacred Red Mountain, as the people of the countryside prefer to call it. It has become the colourful background of all my existence; always I have but to raise my eyes from whatever I am doing, whether eating, walking, talking or meditating, and there is its strange, flat headed shape confronting me in the open or through a window. It is somehow inescapable in this place, but the strange spell it throws over me is more inescapable still. I begin to wonder whether this queer, solitary peak has enchanted me. There is a local tradition that it is entirely hollow and that in its interior dwell several great spiritual beings who are invisible to mortal gaze, but I disdain the story as a childish legend. And yet this lonely hill holds me in a powerful thrall, despite the fact that I have seen others, infinitely more attractive. This rugged piece of Nature, with its red laterite boulders tumbled about in disorderly masses and glowing like dull fire in the sunlight, possesses a strong personality which emanates a palpable awe creating influence.

Anne Marshall says:

After an all night train journey, I arrived at Tiruvannamalai just as the sun was clearing the horizon. The stars were fading out of the sky and the *gopurams* of the temple were silhouetted against the perfect cone of the Arunachala hill. It rose out of flat terrain and being so close it completely dominates the scene. The summit was at that moment hidden in a cloud which deepened to a crimson coronet as it caught the first rays of sunlight. I had seen the Taj Mahal by moonlight and the vast expanse of the snow clad Himalayas stretching for a hundred miles, but in all India I never saw anything to equal this first glimpse of the holy hill, rose crowned by the glory of the morning light. It so dominated my mental horizon that I feel unequal to the task of impartial judgement. To many Arunachala is just an ordinary and rather uninteresting hill covered gross and shale, but I always see it through the rosy glow of that cloud on the summit.

The hill at a height of 2668 feet runs more or less from West to East. The range though small is discontinuous in that the peaks and intervening slopes are broken by irregular patterns of smaller peaks and do not conform to any particular configuration.

The Western face is narrower in comparison to the Eastern one. The Eastern portion is comparatively smoother. The Southern part of the Eastern side, which face the town, abounds with caves where, from the time that Arunachala took the form of a hill, earnest seekers have been pursuing their *sadhana*, practicing severe austerities. On the Eastern slopes can be located the legendary, great banyan tree, under which Arunagiri *yogi* (Arunachala in the form of a *siddha*) sits. A rough path

winds its way to the top through which people carry the cauldron for lighting the *deepam* on the peak. From the valley just above Skandasramam, rain water collects and results in a waterfall near Skandasramam which later on runs as a stream passing Virupaksha cave and then flows on to the plains. The Southern face of Arunachala is narrower than the Northern one which is the largest side both in length and height. At the Eastern end of the Southern face there are layers of peaks while the central portion caves in, forming a valley, which during torrential rains displays one of the biggest waterfalls on the mountain side. The middle side is densely covered with a forest of trees of all kinds. The Southern end also has a path leading to Skandasramam which meanders through the newly planted saplings. It is heartening to see this stretch of mountainside behind Ramanasramam, which was barren thirty or forty years ago, now full of greenery.

The view of Arunachala from Ramanasramam is usually the impression etched in the minds of the inmates and visitors to the *asramam*. From here one can see three successive elongated folds, one rising above the other. Standing in front of Bhagavan's shrine, one is thrilled to see Arunachala in His various elemental accoutrements, that is, adorned variously by the fierce glare of the sun, clouds, mist, gently falling rain or crowned by a rainbow; lit by thunderstorms with the accompanying lightning reflecting brilliantly off the hill's wet slopes.

Stretching from the South-Eastern Side to the South-Western side, dense forests once existed but the area now is covered by lemon grass used locally for roofing. Probably on the Northern slope which remains uninhabited and unexplored except by occasional woodcutters, some rare

herbs can still be found. This Northern portion being the largest appears not to have any folds, unlike the Southern and Eastern Slopes. However the Northern side presents the five peaks, and as seen from the inner *pradakshina* path they are widely spaced and clearly marked. From the outer path they are seen closer together and the last peak on the Western end is too small to be clearly distinguished. On the South-Western side of the hill, the folds throw the contours into step like ridges which give it the appearance of a *Meru* (a typical pattern symbolically representing Shakti in the form of a *Sri Chakra*). Probably for this reason, the hill is also worshipped by *Sakthas*, the followers of the Shakti cult.

## XV

### GIRIPRADAKSHINA

ONE OF THE THOUSAND AND EIGHT names given to Arunachala by Adi Sankara is *giripradakshinapriya* — the Lord who loves *giripradakshina*. On a *Maha Sivaratri* morning, a devotee of Arunachala was thrilled to hear the loud chanting of *Om giripradakshinapriyaya namaha* by the priest performing the *sahasranama archana* inside the sanctum sanctorum, especially because he had just entered the temple after completing *giripradakshina*. Lord Arunachala Himself is so fond of the hill that He along with His consort Uma goes round the hill twice a year.

The significance of *giripradakshina* has been pointed out in the *puranas*, in the compositions of saints and in the letters and reminiscences of the devotees of Bhagavan Ramana. We get an interesting insight into *giripradakshina* from Suri Nagamma's book, *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*. One of the devotees asked Sri Ramana, "Several people here go round the hill frequently. What is its greatness?" Bhagavan then recounted the following story:

It seems Amba who was doing *tapas* went round the hill on the day of the *Karthigai* star in the first quarter of the night. Immediately after the *darshan* of the holy beacon (*deepam*), She was absorbed in Lord Siva.

B.V. Narasimha Swami in his book, *Self-Realization*, a biography on Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, says, "Almost from the time the young Maharshi came to Tiruvannamalai and until 1926, he used to perform *pradakshina* of the hill several times a year". Although

Bhagavan Ramana had nothing to gain by the act, he set an example to generations of devotees and impressed upon them the importance of *pradakshina*. Formerly only sages and villagers living in and around Tiruvannamalai used to perform *giripradakshina*. It was observed once by an old devotee of Bhagavan that many came to know the significance of *pradakshina* only after Bhagavan's advent at Arunachala. Bhagavan said to a devotee:

The greatness of this *giripradakshina* has been described at length in *Arunachala Purana*. To go round this hill is good. The word *pradakshina* has a very precise meaning. The letter 'pra' stands for removal of all kinds of sins; 'da' stands for fulfilling desires; the syllable 'kshi' stands for freedom from future births, 'na' stands for giving deliverance through *jnana*.

Once Muruganar, a great devotee of Bhagavan Ramana, asked him to elucidate on the spiritual benefit of going round the hill. Bhagavan asked him to go round it first and then come to him. Sri Muruganar followed his advice and told Bhagavan that he lost his *dehatma buddhi* (body consciousness) after a while and regained it only after reaching Adi Annamalai. He reported to Bhagavan that the experience was unexpected and unique. Sri Bhagavan smiled and asked, "Do you now understand?"

Sadhu Bramaniam a physician who was a devotee of Sri Ramana Maharshi writes:

On one of my early visits I went on *giripradakshina* with some friends. When I returned my feet were blistered and I entered the hall limping. Bhagavan asked me the cause of the limp and then said that I should bathe the feet in warm water for a few minutes and repeat the *pradakshina* the next day and the day after. I did so; the feet gave no more trouble.

When a devotee of Bhagavan thought that *giri pradakshina* was meant only for novices and not for advanced *sadhakas* Bhagavan Ramana in his mercy made the devotee change his notion and made him go round the hill which helped him immensely in his *sadhana*. On another occasion a *sadhu* going regularly round the hill, requested Bhagavan for a *Vedantic* text. When one of the devotees said in a casual tone, “He only goes round the hill. What will he do with any *Vedantic* text”. Bhagavan immediately retorted, “What better *sadhana* can there be than going round the hill?” There are thus innumerable anecdotes to prove the great importance Sri Ramana attached to *giri pradakshina*, of which we have mentioned only a few.

Hindu mythology also explains the significance of circumambulating the hill. The story goes that Parvati on the advice of sage Gautama worshipped Arunachala. She circumambulated the hill everyday in the company of Her friends with the aim of getting Her desires fulfilled. She adored the Lord of Arunachala and gave Herself to Him mentally. She thus practiced penance in the prescribed manner.

Another story says that Sage Durvasa, king of sages, once cursed two *vidyadharas* who beseeched him to be merciful, forgive their trespasses and redeem them from his curse. To which Durvasa unequivocally stated, “The curse cannot be lifted by any act except that of circumambulating the Arunachala hill”. He then proceeded to relate what Siva Himself had declared in an assembly of *devas* and others: “He who circumambulates with devotion the Arunachala hill which is my form, attains a form like mine (*saroopya*). He becomes the Lord of the entire world and reaches the highest state”. The two *vidyadharas* then advised King Vajrangada who was

suffering, “The Lord of Aruna hill is a repository of compassion and His glory is great. Circumambulate the Aruna hill on foot as a means of release from suffering”.

Description of the *Giripradakshina* Path:

There are three paths available for going around the hill. They are the inner, the middle and the outer paths. The inner path starts from behind Ramanasramam and runs westward right round the hill upto *Pavalakunru*. The inner path hugs the mountain, walking along which, one can avoid the noise of the traffic and the crowds. However, one has to be prepared to tread part of the way over rough ground scattered with sharp stones and thorns, and the occasional appearance of snakes, though the latter pass by harmlessly. Though there are numerous snakes there are no reported cases of people being harmed of snake bite while doing *pradkashina*. Along the way there are a few tanks and lakes, but the majority of lakes or *theerthams* lie along the outer path. The physical features of the hill are easily and clearly seen. But one obtains a better perspective of the hill the further one moves away. The contours and outline of the hill are better appreciated from the outer path rather than the inner path. One can of course experience the majesty and power of the mountain from close quarters while traversing the inner path and the silence that spontaneously envelops one’s heart is overwhelming. During the rains the inner path is strikingly beautiful, presenting a picture of greenery and serenity all round. Countless small streams run off the hill and crisscross the path, the waters being sweet to drink and energizing. Rare birds, colourful and chirpy fill the early morning air with sweet song. The jungle with its wild green growth and many a rare tree contained in its breast contributes to the virgin nature of

the landscape. The air is pure and mystical. It rejuvenates the tired human mind and fills the heart.

Description of the Inner Path:

One begins *pradakshina* on the inner path from the back gate of Sri Ramanasramam. After passing *Palakothu*, a charming, shady abode of *sadhus* one comes out onto an open field from where Arunachala suddenly seems to awe us by his majestic presence. A little distance away bold red and white marks painted on small rocks begin to guide pilgrims on the right track. The path is pleasant though narrow at places and has its ups and downs. Throughout on the right, a unique panorama unfolds as twin peaks begin to emerge on the mountain top. Time stands still as one pauses, not only to rest for a while but also to drink in the splendourous sight afforded by Arunachala. As one continues, a small hillock at the base slowly removes from our eyes the peak of the mountain, but Arunachala is firmly etched in our hearts. Further down one comes across a rock wide in base — a comfortable place for resting awhile.

As one proceeds, one comes across a small hermitage, now in a dilapidated condition. It was once occupied by Kattu Siva. This is also a place where can rest on a sunny day. It has a charming tank. From here the path turns towards the right and one walks on under the shade of jungle trees. Before long the pilgrim comes across the Kannappa Nayanar temple. A small temple, it was renovated by the devotees of Bhagavan and is used at present for meditation. As one skirts the temple and moves northwards, the path takes a sharp right turn and we walk facing eastwards. A few minutes ahead one walks along the banks of a lake which has water only during the rainy season. When one walks along the inner path during or

after the rains, one comes across small rivulets and streams feeding the many tanks and *theerthas* particularly on the South Western side. After crossing the lake, the path runs straight Northwards and becomes rough terrain. This is the toughest stretch and extends right up to the *Panchamukham*. Along this stretch one can identify the five peaks gradually emerging against the skyline.

The five peaks represent the five faces of the Lord viz., *Satyajatam*, *Vamadevam*, *Tatpurusham*, *Esanam* and *Aghoram*. Near the *Panchamukham*, at sunrise or sunset, especially during the winter months, the sun's rays pierce the mist and spotlight the peaks. The interplay of light and shade creates patterns, highlighting the transcendental beauty of the outline of the hill. The successive peaks split the light into ribbons that trail off. The interspersing light re-emerges, exhibiting the majestic and imposing splendour of the Lord in all His glory.

After crossing *Panchamukham* we enter the edge of the town and from then on the path proceeds along the backstreets of the town. Between *Panchamukham* and Pachiamman temple there are not many residential blocks. However after Pachiamman temple one can either continue to walk through the backstreets or approach the edge of the hill and proceed further. This is the Eastern side of the mountain and walking along this rough path one can reach Virupaksha Cave, passing on the way *Amaiparai* (turtle rock) where Bhagavan had his second death experience in 1912, and *Mulaipal tirtham*, where Goddess Unnamalai is supposed to have suckled a divine child. One also passes three streams between Pachiamman temple and Virupaksha cave. On this section of the path where one traverses along the hill side, one may, if blessed

enough, be able to view the banyan tree, called the Great Northern banyan tree (*vada valai vriksham*) under which Arunagiri *Yogi* sits facing south, the *darshan* of whom gives immediate liberation. The other path, through the backstreet, reaches the western gate of the Arunachala temple (*Peygopuram*) skirting *Pavalakundru* on the way.

*Pavalakundru* is a small hillock on the Eastern face of Arunachala. It is at the foot of this hillock that Goddess Parvati is said to have performed penance under the guidance of Rishi Gautama who had his hermitage here. Nearby, is the hermitage that the Goddess built for Herself. Also nearby is the Durgai Amman temple where Parvati sent Durga, a manifestation of Herself, to fight the demon Mahishasura. On completion of Her task Durga took a sacred dip in the tank attached to the temple to expiate the sin of killing a *Siva bhakta*.

The road after *Pavalakundru* along the inner path is blocked by tenements and branches into smaller by-lanes. Thus from the *Pavalakundru* one joins the main thoroughfare and continues up to Sri Ramanasramam. Although the inner path may be taken to avoid the crowds, especially during festivals, the different aspects of Arunachala can be better viewed and appreciated only while traversing the outer path.

Of those who perform *giripradakshina* for the first time a few are curious to know merely the names of the temples and *tirthas* which they pass by; a few others are interested in the details of the mythological stories if any, connected with these temples. The rest are interested only in looking at Arunachala and observing the changes in His contours while experiencing His eloquent silence. This is especially true of those who do *giripradakshina* in the early morning hours.

For the benefit of those who are interested, a map showing the various temples, *tirthas* (tanks), *mantapas*, etc., is appended. However, a brief description of the salient features marking the outerpath will be helpful.

#### Description of the Outer Path:

Let us start early in the morning along the outer path from Ramanasramam. Immediately after leaving the main gate of Ramanasramam, and turning right we come across *Palitirtham* and a *mantapam* opposite to it and a small Vinayakar temple next to the *mantapam*. As we walk further in the vast open space west of *Palakothu*, Arunachala seems to wait with open arms welcoming devotees to His fold. Further from this is a tank (*Simha tirtham*) with the figure of a lion in the centre of the arch at the entrance facing South. This tank is fed by stream water from the mountain like all other tanks along the hill. Opposite to this is one of the many shrines dedicated to Lord Subramanya. The temples dedicated to the various deities dotting the path though small, add beauty to the landscape and blend artistically with the imposing figure of Arunachala in the background. Some of these temples have gardens around them, remnants of the extensive lands that were temple property once and which were used for the upkeep of the temple. Most of them have *tirthams* or tanks attached to them and depending on the rainfall these are partially or fully filled with water. Also along the way are stone *mantapams* to provide resting places and shelter from rain and sun for the sake of pilgrims. These are now mainly used during festival time. Special mention should be made here of the stone idols of Nandi, of various sizes, installed on stone pedestals in the characteristic posture, seated facing Arunachala. These idols are found at intervals along the

path. Nandi, one of the foremost devotees of Arunachala pays silent homage to the hill and serves to remind us that we are circumambulating Siva Himself.

We find temples in the eight directions built by the *dikpalakas* (guardian deities of the four cardinal and four inter cardinal points) to propitiate their beloved Lord. These deities are Indira for the East, Yama for the South, Varuna for the West, Kubera for the North, Esanyam for the North-East, Agni for the South-East, Nirudi for the South-West and Vayu for the North-West. Facing the hill, between the South-East and East there is an artistically decorated *mantapam* containing a *Sivalinga* called *Edirner Annamalai*, so called as it directly faces Arunachala. There used to be a temple for Amman next to it, but the idol is now installed in the temple at the police station. In between lie fields of paddy, groundnut, maize, and commercial flower gardens, especially fields of marigold. Also there are various hermitages and temples situated along the path. As one completes the circuit and enters the town, one finds that contrary to expectation, the crowds, the noise and the dust do not disturb one's absorption because the physical presence of the hill is still overpoweringly felt inwardly. Entering the Arunachaleswara temple we feel as if the entire power and sacredness of the hill is concentrated at this spot. After paying homage to Arunachala as *Lingothbava* in the temple we complete our *giri pradakshina* at Bhagavan Ramanas's shrine.

The middle path although clearly discernible in the beginning, passes through fields and is not easily identifiable. Hence we have omitted describing this path. Further we have not explained in detail the shrines which can be found along the outer pradakshina path, for the reason that this work deals essentially with Arunachala and we have avoided

details other than the essential ones. Further, we have also avoided other than the most marked ones, the various forms taken by Arunachala as one goes round the hill. Numerous are forms that Arunachala presents to His devotees, each according to his imagination.

The importance of giripradakshina cannot be overstressed. One has to perform it to realize its importance and its effect on body and spirit.

# XVI

## NOTES ON SHRINES

### 1. Sri Ramanasramam

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharishi lived here from December, 1922, till his Mahanirvana at 8 47 p.m. on Friday, 14th April, 1950. Here can be seen the Hall where Sri Bhagavan lived continuously for twenty seven years, His Samadhi shrine (Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam), the Samadhi shrine of His Mother (Sri Matrubhuteswara), the small room where He attained Mahanirvana, etc.

### 2. Pali Mandapam

This type of mandapam is found all around the Mountain and is used as a shelter by pilgrims and as a temporary altar for deities when they are going on pradakshina. They were built by kings, rich merchants, some castes and communities.

### 3. Pali Thirtham

This tank is situated just adjacent to Sri Ramanasramam. Pools like this variously called Tanks, Thirthams or Kulams were dug for pilgrims for their ablutions, Some are nourished by natural springs but most by rainfall during the monsoon.

### 4. Palakothu

Palakothu (Pala jackfruit; Kothu orchard ) is an ancient garden where flowers were grown for the worship of Sri Arunachaleswara. In Sri Bhagavan's days it was a thickly

wooded forest, and He often used to go for a walk there. Many of His devotees, such as Sri Muruganar, Kavya Kanta Ganapathi Sastri, Paul Brunton and S. S. Cohen, used to live there.

#### **4(a). Sri Manakkula Vinayaka Temple**

Manakkula is the Tamil name for Pali Tirtham. Vinayagar is another name of Ganesh or Ganapati, the first son of Lord Siva.

#### **5. Agastya Tirtham (Cave)**

Agastya is one of the seven *rishis* who are known for their knowledge of the Self.

#### **6. Narasimha Swami Cave**

B.V. Narsimha Swami (b. 1874 ), a famous advocate and statesman gave up his practice and came to live at the feet of Bhagavan for some years. His biography of Ramana (Self-realisation) is the first authentic English biography. He lived in this cave from 1928 to 1930., which bears his name since.

#### **7. Temple**

Has been turned into a storehouse.

#### **7(a). Sri Vinayagar Temple**

Dedicatied to Ganesa, where worship started again from November, 1978, after restoration.

#### **8. Sri Draupadi Amman or Dharmaraja Temple**

She is the daughter of Drupada, King of Panchala and the wife of the five Pandava Brothers. (of Mahabharatha)

## 9. Dharmaraja Tank

Dharmaraja is Yudhisthira, one of the main characters in the Mahabharata as the eldest of the five Pandavas.

## 10. Simha Tirtam

The Lion Tank.

## 11. Sri Arumuka Swami Temple and Mandapam

Subramanya (or Muruga) is the second son of Lord Siva. He is the chief of the Celestial Armies. He has a peacock as a vahana (vehicle).

## 12 & 13. Tanks

## 14. Rajeswari Temple

Formerly known as Aravan koil.

## 14 (a). Idaichi Mantapam

Idaichi means milk maid

## 15. Tank

## 16. Yama Lingam

This is the *lingam* worshipped by *Yama* (the god of death, he is also the guardian Angel of the Southern direction). There are eight such *lingams* round the Hill, one at each of the eight directions (see also serial numbers . 31, 50, 64, 75, 86, 235, 128). Each Lingam is a form of Lord Arunachala Siva, installed and worshipped by the respective dik palaka (guardian of that direction) or from where they worshipped Arunachala.

## 17. Yama Tirtam

According to mythology this *lingam* and tirtam were established by Yama himself for his worship of Lord Siva.

## 18. Sri Vinayagar

## 19. Nandi Tirtham

## 20. Nandi

Is the prime worshipper of Lord Siva. He is always sitting facing Him. He is also Lord Siva's mount.

## 21. Mantapam

## 22. Thongu parai kulam Tirtham

## 23. Varatu Kulam

## 24. Sri Durvasa Rishi Temple

There is an important story in the Arunachala Purana concerning the Sage Durvasa, who is an amsa (part or aspect ) of Lord Siva and who is especially noted for his temper. Once two Gandarvas (celestial beings) happened to come to the garden of Durvasa, where the sage grew flowers for his worship of Lord Siva. The first Gandarva started to pluck and smell each flower, while the second started to trample on the flower beds. Seeing this, Durvasa cursed them, the first to be born as a civet (a sweet smelling wild cat) and the second to be born as a horse. They immediately begged forgiveness and prayed to him for mercy, so he graciously granted them a boon by telling them that if they once did Arunachala *Pradakshina*, they would at once regain their former forms as Gandarvas.

They were accordingly born on earth, one as a beautiful civet cat in the forests near Arunachala, and the other as a fine looking horse in Madurai. The King of Madurai, Vajrangada Pandya, took that horse as his

favourite mount. One day he happened to come hunting in the vicinity of Arunachala, when he saw the beautiful civet. He immediately resolved to chase it and catch it alive. It started to run away, and the course it took happened to take it right round Arunachala in *pradakshina*. As soon as the *pradakshina* was completed, both the civet and horse fell down dead, and the bewildered king saw two Gandarvas rising out of their dead bodies.

The king asked them to explain what had happened. They told the story of how they had been cursed by Durvasa and of his boon. The king then asked why he had got no benefit, since he had also gone round that Hill. They explained that it was not correct to do *pradakshina* on a vehicle, as he had done, or with any footwear, but that if he wanted to become Indra, as he had been in his previous birth, he should worship Lord Arunachaleswara and do *pradakshina* barefooted.

Renouncing his kingdom, the king started to worship Arunachala and to go round the Hill three times a day, with the intense desire to become Indra. It was he, Vajrangada Pandya, who first paved the road round the Hill and who constructed many of the shrines and tirtams on the way. After three years of such worship, Lord Arunachala Siva appeared before him and offered him any boon he wished for. Though his original ambition had been to become Indra, his mind had now become matured and his power of discrimination had been kindled by his doing so many *pradakshinas*, so he prayed only for the state of oneness with Arunachala the state of egolessness.

This story is important not only because it tells how human beings first came to know of Arunagiri pradakshina, but also because it illustrates how the mind gains proper

discrimination (*viveka*), desirelessness (*vairagya*) and love for Self (*swatma bhakti*) by doing such *pradakshinas*.

## 25. Nandi

## 26. Tank

### 26 (a). Krishna Temple

## 27. Sona (gold) Tirtam

Sri Bhagavan used to rest at this cool place and to partake some food whilst on *pradakshina*. Sonachala or Sonagiri is one of the names of Arunchala.

## 28. Sri Vinayagar

## 29. Nandi

## 30. Varatu Tirtham

## 31. Niruthi Lingam

The Lingam worshipped by Niruthi, one of the ashta dik palakas (guardians of the eight directions), the guardian of the south west (see note to number 16). Niruthi is the chief of the rakshasas (demons).

## 32. Nirudhi Tirtham

## 33. Sani Tirtam

Sani is the name of Saturn, hence Saturn Tank.

## 34. Ner Annamalaiyar Lingam and Mantapam (adjacent to Unnamulai Amman shrine)

Unnamulai Amman means: The Goddess of unsuckled breast. She is the consort of Annamalaiyar (Lord Arunachaleswara)

### **35. Sri Unnamulai Tirtham**

### **36. Nandi**

### **37. Palaniyandavar Temple**

### **38. Vedapari Mantapam (Echo Temple)**

### **39. Sri Kannappar Shrine**

This shrine is built at the foot of the Hill on a raised level. Sri Kannappar was one of the sixty three Nayanars (Tamil Saiva Saints) whose lives are narrated in the 'Periya Puranam'. Though a hunter, Kannappar had such great devotion to Lord Siva that he plucked out his own eyes to offer them to the Lord. (Refer to \*Guru Vachaka Kovai, verse 164, where the significance of this story is revealed by Sri Bhagavan.)

### **40. Sri Padarvettu Amman Temple**

### **41, 42 & 43 Gautama Temple Tirtam Asramam**

Gautama is a great sage belonging to vedic ages. He initiated Parvathi into austerities (tapas) to win over the grace of Arunachala. He also narrated the glory of Arunachala to Parvathi. According to legend he had his hermitage close to Pavalakkunru an offshoot of Arunachala on the Eastern side. He is also one of the Sapta Rishis (seven rishis). Sri Bhagavan refers to Gautama in verse 26 of 'Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamai'.

### **44. Sri Hanuman Koil**

A little shrine built by one of Bhagavan's devotees and dedicated to Hanuman.

**45. Sri Vedyappan Koil**

Vedyappan, one of Lord Siva's manifestations.

**46. Sri Vedyappan Kulam**

**47. Surya Lingam**

From this point, Surya purported to have worshipped Arunachala.

**48. Surya Tirtham**

**49. Sri Durvasa Rishi Temple**

**50. Varuna Lingam**

Varuna, the guardian angel of the west believed to have worshipped Arunachala at this point.

**51. Varuna Tirtham**

**52. Pancharishi Tirtam**

The tank dedicated to five sages.

**53. Sri Vinayagar**

**54. Kasi Tirtham [Varanasi or Benares Tank]**

**55. Nandi**

**56. Mariamman Koil**

Temple dedicated to the village diety

**57. Raja Kulam**

King's Tank.

## **58 & 59. Manickavachakar Temple and Tirtam**

Manickavachakar, one of the four principle Tamil Saiva Saints, visited Arunachala, and it was at this place that he sang ‘Thiruvembavai’ and ‘Thiruvammanai’

## **60. Aadi Annamalai Temple or Ani Annamalai Temple**

(Aadi = ancient, Annamalai is another name of Arunachala) This temple is dedicated to Lord Arunachaleswara, who is also worshipped in the big temple of Tiruvannamalai. Sri Bhagavan used to spend the nights here sometimes when He went round the Hill, and on one such occasion He heard celestial beings chanting the Sama Veda here. (refer to ‘Day by Day with Bhagavan’, 10-1-946). The linga supposed to have been consecrated by Brahma.

## **61. Brahma Tirtam**

Tank named after the creator Brahma.

## **62. Arumuga Swami Kulam**

Arumugam same as Palani Andavar or Subramaniaswamy.

## **63. Dasiyappar Kulam or Vannan Kulam and Muniappar Koil**

## **64. Vayu Lingam**

The Lingam worshipped by Vayu, the Dikshitar palaka of the north west (see note to serial number 16).

## **65. Vayu Tirtham**

## **66 (a). Sri Bhagavan’s Bridge**

On this bridge Sri Bhagavan often used to sit while going around the hill. This is half-way from Sri Ramanasramam.

### **67. Vettavalathar Mandapam**

This Mandapam was built by a rich Zamindar of Vetavalam (a village near Tiruvannamalai) who was a great devotee of Lord Arunachala.

### **68. Sri Chandra Lingam**

Chandra (Moon). According to the Puranas he was cursed by Daksha. He saw his body shrinking. He came to Arunachala and worshipped Lord Arunachala (Now this lingam does not exist).

### **69. Chandra Linga Tirtham**

### **70. Sowra Tirtham**

Sowra, another name for Sun.

### **71. Eluthu Mandapam**

On the ceiling are tracings of old painting. One day while staying at Skandasramam, Sri Bhagavan wanted to fast. The story what happened that day is recorded by Devaraja Mudaliar in his book, 'My Recollections of Bhagavan Sri Ramana' (pages 69-71). This mantapam was the place where Ramaswami Aiyar found Sri Bhagavan during the afternoon and gave Him a special rasam. Sri Bhagavan had been resting in this mantapam, and He was spotted here by Ramaswami Aiyar just as He was peeping out to see if any one was coming (see also note to number 185). From this mantapam one can see the northern spur of Arunachala coming directly in line with the peak.

## 72. Nandi

## 73. Vaisva deva Tirtam

Vaisva deva is a form of sacrifice/yaga.

## 74. Soma Tirtam

Another name for Moon.

## 75. Kubera Lingam

The Lingam worshipped by Kubera, the god of wealth, the treasurer of heaven, and the dik palaka of the northern direction (see note to number 16)

## 76. Kubera Tirtham

## 77. Marattu Kuttai

Cowshed Tank.

## 77 (a). Sapta Kannika Shrine

Shrine of the seven maidens

## 78. Idukku Pillayar Koil

Small shrine dedicated to Ganesh. People have fun in going through the small narrow passage (idukku) in between the two columns.

## 78 (a). Siddhar Parai (the rock of the Siddha)

Once a devotee of Sri Bhagavan, a leper, came to His presence and told Him that he was much disgusted with life and therefore wished to die. Sri Bhagavan kept quiet, but another devotee in His Presence pointed out the eleventh verse of 'Sri Arunachala Patikam' in which Sri Bhagavan says:

Lo! How many are those like me who have been ruined (i.e. have lost their ego) by thinking this Hill to be the Supreme! O men who, having lost the desire to live because of intense misery, are roaming about seeking a means to give up the body, there is on earth a rare Medicine which, without killing, will kill anyone who thinks of it even once within the heart. Know It is verily Arunachala!

Hearing this verse, the leper devotee immediately fixed his mind on Arunachala and started to go round the Hill. Because his whole body was ravaged by disease and covered with wounds, he was only able to proceed slowly and with much difficulty. After many hours he reached this spot and, being very tired, he lay down on this rock and fell asleep. Soon he was awakened by a voice asking him why he was lying there. He looked up and saw a figure clad in white, but before he could answer anything, that person started to beat him with a bunch of neem leaves, saying, "Get up at once, you have no business to be here!"

Being much afraid, the leper jumped up and started to run away, and only after running some distance did he notice that the wounds on his feet, hands and face had disappeared and that his whole body was completely cured. Wondering at the great Grace of Sri Bhagavan, he returned to His Presence and told his story. Though as usual Sri Bhagavan denied any doership.

## 79. Pancha Mukha Darshanam

Shrine from where one can have the vision (*darshan*) of Lord Arunachala's five faces. i.e. five peaks of Arunachala.

## 80. Panchamuka Tirtham

## 81. Balaji Kulam

Another name for Vishnu, the creator.

**82. Bhatrava Tirtam**

**83. Bhairava Tirtham**

**84. Sri Isanya Lingam**

**85. Isanya Lingam**

Isanya, the dik palaka of the north east direction worshipped Lord Arunachala. (see note to number 16).

**86. Nelli Kulam**

**87. Nandi**

**88. Sri Isanya Jnana Desikar mutt & Samadhi Temple**

Kandappa Desikar came to be known as Isanya Jnana Desikar since he settled down near Isanya Tirtam. It is said that tigers used to keep guard round this sage when he was absorbed in meditation. He attained Mahasamadhi in 1829.

**89. Sri Sanjivini Swami**

**90. Siva Tirtam**

**91. Anandappa Chetty Tank**

**92. Vaniyan (chetty kulam) Tank**

Dug by the oil makers caste. (The Vaniyars caste)

**93. Sri Subramanya Swami**

**94. Sri Kaliamman**

The Goddess Kali is one aspect (the fearsome) of Siva's Sakti. She symbolizes the transcendental Power of Time.

### **95. Sri Kamakshi Amman Tank**

She is an aspect of shakti 'who grants boons to her devotees'

### **96. Sri Kamakshi yamman Tank**

### **97. Sri Sunai Lingam**

Sunai - spring

### **98. Udaya Tirtham**

### **99. Sri Vinayagar**

### **100. Kadga Tirtam**

Kadga means sword. Sword is one of the weapons used by the Goddess Durga during her fight against Mahishasura.

### **101. Sri Durga Amman Temple**

By killing the demon Mahishasura the Goddess Parvati, (Durga) Lord Siva's consort, got the name Mahishasura mardini. She is worshipped during Navaratri.

### **102. Sri Vinayagar**

### **103. Sri Subramanayamman**

### **104. Sri Vinayagar**

### **105. Sri Ammani Tank**

### **106. Sri Vinayagar**

### **107. Artharaja Tank and Cave**

## 108. Siva Ganga Tank

## 109. Brahma Tirtham

## 110. Apeeta Kulam

Apeeta Kuchamba is the sanskrit name of the Goddess Unnamulaiyar.

## 111. Sri Arunachaleswara Temple

A large temple developed during the past 11 centuries by various south Indian dynasties. It has many shrines, the main one being that of Lord Arunachala. The temple has five court yards and situated in area of 26 acres. It has five inner towers and four outer towers.

As soon as He arrived in Tiruvannamalai on Tuesday, 1st September, 1896, Bhagavan Sri Ramana went directly to the inner Shrine of the Temple. He lived at various places in the Temple during His first six months in Tiruvannamalai. For about forty or fifty days He lived without any food or drink in the 'Patala Lingam', an underground temple in the thousand pillared mantapam. He was completely unaware of His body at that time.

## 112. Periya Matam(now no longer exists)

## 113. Sri Draupadi Temple

## 114. Pillai Tank

Built by the Pillai Caste

## 115. Sri Vinayagar

## 116. Svaji Tank

### **117. Sri Karpaga Vinayagar Temple**

Lord Ganesh is here associated with Karpaga, the wish fulfilling tree.

### **118. Sri Kamakshiyamman Temple**

### **119. Thevara Patasala**

School of Tamil Hymns (Thevaram) on Siva.

### **120. Sri Kumaraswami**

Another name of Subramanya.

### **121. Vira Tank**

### **122. Somavara Tirtham**

### **123. Siva Lingam**

### **124. Periya Swami Iyer Tank**

### **125. Sri Vinayagar**

### **126. Vallala Kulam**

Maharaja Vallala had this tank built. (This king of the XVth century is known for having built one of the main gopurams of Arunachaleswara Temple).

### **127. Sri Durgai Amman Temple**

### **128. Agni Lingam**

The Lingam worshipped by Agni, the God of fire and the dik palaka of the south-east (see note to number 16).

### **129. Siva Lingam**

### **130. Lingam**

### **131. Sri Bhavaji Samadhi**

Sri Bhavaji was a North Indian Saint who came and settled in Tiruvannamalai.

### **132. Muthu Mari Amman**

### **133. Mahakali Temple**

### **134. Sri Dakshinamurthi Temple**

Dakshinamurthi means the God facing South. He is one aspect of Lord Siva when he teaches through silence (Mouna).

### **135. Sri Seshadri Asramam**

Sri Seshadri was born in 1870 in Kanchipuram and came to Tiruvannamalai when he was nearly 20 years old. This sage used to take care of Bhagavan Ramana when the latter stayed in Arunachaleswara Temple. This Jivanmuktha spent all his life here in an eccentric way but was loved and worshipped by all. He attained Mahasamadhi in 1929.

### **136. Sri Agni Mantapam**

### **137. Sri Agni Tirtham**

On the and near the Hill

### **138. Pandava Temple**

### **139. Bhima Tirtam, or Pandava Tirtam**

### **140. Vannatti Cave**

(Washer woman Cave). The biggest known cave on the Sacred Mountain.

**141. Cave**

**142. Alari Sunai**

Alari Flower Spring (Alari = oleander)

**142 (a). Aravan Koil**

Aravan was a great warrior in Mahabharatha war, was on Pandava side and was sacrificed for the opening of the war.

**143. Pungamarathu Sunai**

Punga Tree Spring.

**144. Uthu Sunai**

Water Spring.

**145. Orathukai Sunai**

**146. Nellimara Sunai**

**147. Thallan Kundru Sunai**

**148. Cave**

**149. Kall Thimara Sunai**

**150. Ellu (Ezhu) Vellu or Elu Sunai or Sapta Jahari**

‘The Seven Springs’ are natural wells dug in the rock itself. Three or four of them are perennial. This place is about one hour’s walk from the mountain top. Near these wells there are two or three caves in which some sadhus used to live. (see ‘Letters from Sri Ramanasramam’ Page No. 58 by Suri Nagamma)

## **151. Skandasramam and Sri Ramana Maharshi Tirtam**

Named after one Kandaswami, a mason devotee of Bhagavan Ramana who built the asramam.

Sri Bhagavan Ramana stayed here from 1916 to Dec.1922.

There is a perennial spring here. The small cave, which was here, has been turned into a small asramam. Sri Bhagavan's Mother attained Samadhi here on May 19th, 1922.

## **152. Sri Virupaksha Cave**

Sri Virupaksha Devar was of the Saiva Sect. He hailed from Mallikarjuna in Andhra Pradesh. He came to live in this cave during the time that Guhai Namasivayar and Guru Namasivayar used to live in a cave adjacent to his. He practised great penance in this cave which has the form of the Pranava (Aum). He attained his Samadhi, his body was turned into Ashes.

Sri Bhagavan stayed in this cave from 1899 to 1916. Many events are connected with his life here (see Nagamma's Letters, Talks with Ramana etc.) For example, his mother came and joined him here in 1909.

## **153. Pada Tirtam and Temple**

## **154. Sri Guhai Namasivayar Temple**

This saint (Guhai Namasivayar) was born in the Veera Saiva Sect in the Kannada country. He came to Tiruvannamalai and practised hard penance in a cave and hence he was called Guhai Namasivayar. After a long time he took Jiva Samadhi in this place. He composed amongst others a beautiful hymn in praise of Arunachala namely:

‘Arunagiri Anthathi’. ‘Annamalai Venba’ was composed by Guru Nanasivayar, disciple of Guhai Namasivaya.

Sri Bhagavan stayed for a few days in this cave.

### **155. Mango Tree Cave**

Sri Bhagavan lived in it in 1899 and used to spend the summer here while living in Virupaksha Cave, Ganapathi Muni also lived in this cave during his stay on the Mountain.

### **156. Mulaippal Tirtam**

A tank nourished by perennial Springs.

### **157. Jadai Swami Asramam**

Because of his long matted hair this swami was called Jadai Swami. He came to Arunachala at the beginning of this century and meditated in a cave, near which runs a perennial spring.

### **158. Lakshmi Devi Hermitage**

This Yogini called Mouni, came like other saints to perform very hard *tapas* on the slopes of Arunachala. She was a disciple of Sri Ramalingar.

### **159. Arutpal Tirtam**

Small tank just below Jadai Swami Asramam. Arul means ‘Grace’ and Pal means ‘milk’.

### **160. Dandapani Asramam**

### **161. Pavala kunru Temple Coral Hill**

Pavala Kunru means ‘coral hill’. The Puranas say that Lord Siva appeared to Uma, delighted by her *Tapas* and prayers.

Sri Bhagavan stayed for some time on this part of the Hill from September, 1898, when He started to live on Arunachala. His mother paid Him her first visit here in December, 1898.

### **162. Coral Hill (Pavalakunru) Sunai**

This tank dug in the rock itself is just below the temple.

### **163. Varatu Tank**

### **164. Uthu Kuttai Sunai**

### **165. Uthu Kuttai Sunai**

### **166. Tortoise Rock (Amai Parai)**

In 1912, Sri Bhagavan had His second death experience here. During this second death experience, the physical symptoms of death were very pronounced (refer to 'Self Realisation' by B.V. Narasimha Swami).

### **167. Sri Periya Andavar**

### **168. Mannar Swami Kulam**

### **169. Pacchiamman Koil and Kulam**

Temple of Goddess Pacchai Amman Temple. and Tank dedicated to the Mother of the Universe. She is named Pacchai amman because she is said to be of a green emerald colour. (Pacchai means green emerald.) The huge idols of smaller deities made of brick, mounted on their carriers can be seen at the entrance.

Sri Bhagavan lived here for 6 months when plague was prevalent in Tiruvannamalai (1905). Ganapati Muni came with Him during His three months stay in 1908.

**170. Cave**

**171. Brahmi Tirtam**

Consort of Brahma. Brahmi is another name of Sarasvati.

**172. Sarasvati Tirtam**

Consort of Brahma, the creator also Goddess of learning. She is also the Goddess of Wisdom, knowledge, of Arts and of Music. She is the Mother of Poetry.

**173. Ganga Tirtam**

**174. Pillai Kulam (see 114)**

**175. Lakshmi Tirtam**

Consort of Lord Vishnu, the protector. She, is the Goddess of Wealth.

**176. Ashvini Tirtam**

The Ashvins are the twin sons of Surya, the Sun God. They have a human body and a horse's head. They are the physicians of the celestial beings.

**177. Sri Isanya Tirtham**

**178. Vazhukkupparai Sunai**

**179. Idukkam Sunai**

**180. Arasan Sunai**

**181. Thurinji Kuttai**

**182. Mayiladumparai Sunai**

\*Rock where the peacock dances, spring.

### **183. Alamara Sunai**

Banyan Tree Spring.

### **184. Kumara Sunai**

### **185. Kasappan Kuttai**

On the day when Sri Bhagavan wanted to fast (see note to number 71), He met the seven ladies for the second time in this area. They asked Him where they could find water, so he brought them to this pond (kuttai), and here they served Him His midday meal.

### **186. Pandara Kuttai**

### **187. Cave**

Artificial underground cave built by Swami Kattusiva.

### **188. Akala Kuttai**

Broad Pool.

### **189. Sri Siddhar vanam or Kattu Sivasramam**

Kattu Siva was a Yogi who had some siddhis. He was the founder of this small forest hermitage.

### **190. Iluppai Kulam**

### **191. Umachi Kuttai**

### **192. Kordi Kuttai**

### **193. Irali Kuttai**

### **194. Pukundu kudithan Sunai**

Spring where one should bend and drink.

195. All Sunai

Spring of the All Flower.

## TOWN AND SURROUNDINGS

196. Sri Agasthiya Tirtham

197. Chinna nayakan Tank

198. Kunthar Kulam

199. Pillayar Kulam

200. Sri Vinayagar

201. Manthopu Kulam

202. Tenimalai Kulam

203. Thandava Viran Tank

204. Thirumanjana Kulam

205. Chola Samudram

Ocean of Chola.

206. Vaishnava Tirtam

Tank of Vishnu's devotees.

207. Sri Mariyamman Temple

208. Sri Mariyamman Tank

209. Shona Kulam

210. Inna Kulam

211. Nandi

212. Sri Vinayagar

213. Azhagu Tirtam

The beautiful Pool

214. Karambu Kulam

215. Ilai Pillai Kulam

216. Kilaval Kulam

217. Kalvai Kulam

218. Tiruvankan Kulam

219. Pillai Kulam (see 114)

220. Salai Kulam

221. Melathikan Tangail Tank

222. Maranayanagan Tank

223. Pandari Kulam

224. Nasiyar Tank

225. Uppu Kulam

Salt Pool.

## 226. Gurumurtam Temple and Mango Grove

Small shrine in which Sri Bhagavan came to live when he left Sri Arunachaleswarar Temple in February 1897. He stayed here for 18 months. It was in Gurumurtham that Sri Bhagavan first revealed His name and birth place. He received the first visits of his family (through his uncle Nelliappa Iyer).

## 227. Alavaran Tank

## 228. Sengazh nir Tank

## 229. Sri Vinayagar

## 230. Vishnu Temple

## 231. Sri Vinayagar Temple

## 232. Sri Vedyappar Temple

## 233. Rishaba Tirtam

## 234. Rishapa Kunru

## 235. Indra Lingam

The Lingam worshipped by Indra, the dik palaka of the East (see note to number 16).

## 236. Sri Sundareswarar Temple

## 237. Sri Ikambariswar Temple

## 238. Sri Vinayagar Temple

### 239. Indra Tirtam or Ayyan Kulam

Sri Bhagavan when He reached Tiruvannamalai in 1896 threw away the few coins, clothes, sacred thread, etc., and took to wearing loin cloth.

### 240. Sri Sani Divinayagar Temple

### 241. Sri Vinayagar Temple

### 242. Thondari Koil

### 243. Mathalan Kulam

### 244. Mannan Tank

### 245. Raja Kulam

### 246. Arunachalaga Vundam

### 247. Parvathan Kulam

### 248. Devadasi Tank

### 249. Salai Tank

### 250. Chakra Tirtam

### 251. Nandi

### 252. Vasistha Tirtam

### 253. Voterreddi Kulam

### 254. Vellai Kulam

### 255. Sennakal Kulam

## XVII

# ECOLOGICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS OF TIRUVANNAMALAI

ECOLOGICAL ANGLE. THE HERITAGE OF Tiruvannamalai comprise both natural and man made elements. The Arunachala Hill is one of the oldest geological formations in the sub-continent and its fiery birth, according to Hindu Mythology, is said to have been Lord Shiva asserting His presence on earth. While the *Arunachala Hill* with its geological and spiritual significance makes up the natural heritage, the famous Tiruvannamalai temple, the *Girivalam* path and the various shrines, wells and tanks which are part of an ancient water conservation system designed to harness the surface run off from the hill represents the man made heritage. Natural, Religious and man made heritage were thus inextricably linked in the traditional settlement of Tiruvannamalai. In recent years these links have been considerably eroded by incompatible development and it is now sought to re-establish them in order to save the heritage of Tiruvannamalai.

The following paragraphs will give an idea of the canals and reservoirs around the hill.

1. There is a ring of inter connected reservoirs about one to one and a half km. From the base of the hill which receives the run off from the hill.

2. There is an inner ring of ancient wells and tanks constructed along the base of the hill (including

Tiruvannamalai Town) which are part of an ancient water conservation system.

3. There is a strong relationship between the hill, the ancient water conservation structures at its base and the rich of reservoirs further away which needs to be protected in order to manage water resource effectively.

This assumes special significance in view of the fact that Tiruvannamalai Town is dependent totally on surface water to meet its water requirements. The per capita consumption is also very low (32 ipcd).

*Arunachala Hill* is like a natural sponge holding water by virtue of its rich foliage which sustained by ground water from porous rocks, springs and rivulets. In addition to the rich foliage of the annual cattle fair, adding to the ecological complex, which draws a lot of manure. The vegetation on the hill and adjoining areas, is essentially a sub-tropical shrub, jungle type, with some arboreal forms. There is enough support to establish the medicinal values of the flora of the hill and those who go around the hill do gain better health and cheer due to wind draft from the hill. The greenery affords enough moisture and also draws rain pouring clouds to a certain extent, which is a blessing in an arid zone, like Tiruvannamalai. The greenery of the hill provides enough oxygen to photo synthesis, thus serving the environment, as a lung's space. The damage done to the ecological complex, is caused by wood cutters, grazers and fire setters, who kill many saplings, which could have grown into big trees, thereby preventing the arboreal forms on the hill as well preservation of the humidity immediately above the soil level. The slopes of the Hill, which are now barren without humidity, is not only an eye sore, but is a pointer to the increase in the rate of erosion of the soil, consequent

to the lack of strong roots, which normally develop into bigger trees. The saplings consequent to the lack of strong roots, which normally develop into bigger trees;wither. The hill soil has now become highly spongy, resulting in easily getting washed down, during monsoon, blocking the natural drainage system. The soil erosion, if allowed to continue, can affect the bigger boulders in the hill, posing a serious danger to the inhabitants at the foot of the Hill. In 1966 such a land slide did occur .Fortunately the boulders fell on the south-western side of the hill and thus there was no human casualty. Improvement of fertility on the mountain, would reduce siltation of ponds below the mountain, and the dislocation caused by flow of floods during rains. The insensitive and indiscriminate human activity witnessed on the slope of the Hill, in the last few decades will not only rob us of opportunity to study the evolution of mountain formation in its proper perspective, but also lead to geological degradation of the area. Geological antiquity of the area, coupled with other geological process details, do dictate preservation of the area as a heritage site.

## XVIII

### ALL NATURE WORSHIP HIM

ON AN EARLY SUMMER MORNING A devotee after worshipping Arunachala with fragrant waters and flowers, was going round the hill, feeling proud of his offerings, when there appeared a whole grove of trees, plants and bushes lavishly covered with multi coloured flowers as though nature was offering a bouquet to her divine Lord! His pride disappeared. As the great poet Sambandar mentions in his poems, birds, beasts, plants and all nature worship Arunachala, each in their own way.

Clouds gathering on top of the hill scatter their rain drops on Arunachala. These raindrops gather into waterfalls and hug Him as they come sliding down the hill. Cows take refuge from the rain at His Feet. Bamboo trees shower their berries on him in worshipful gesture. Deer, bears and elephants come together in amity and shower their love on Him. All around Him are situated ponds, pools, lakes and waterfalls which reflect His Image. The sun, the moon and the stars are silent worshippers among the vast concourse of devotees.

In the four directions are the hills from where Indra and other gods adore Him. All around Him are gardens, fields and meadows which bask in His gracious presence. The birds shower on Him pollen and twigs, their humble offering.

Like Kannappa Nayanar of old, the tribal folk here also have their own mode of worship. They carry the cauldron up the hill during the *Karthikai* festival. This is their unassailable right.

The potter community in this area have the privilege of walking on burning coals, on the day of the *Pooram* star in the month of *Adi* (July-August). On this day they fast, bathe in the temple tank, wear yellow clothes and enter the temple. After being garlanded by the administrators of the temple, they worship Arunachala with minds and hearts fixed devotedly on Him, and enter the bed of burning coals. The privilege thus given to these tribal people is a special feature of this sacred place.

The priests of Arunachaleswara temple, whose duty it is to bathe, dress and decorate their Lord are truly a privileged lot. It is an impressive sight to see them walk proudly with the *Rudraksha* garlands around their necks and holy ashes smeared on their body. Proud of this honour which is their birthright, they will not allow any change in the mode of worship which they follow strictly and elaborately. They do not bow to anyone nor do they fear anyone. With unlimited love for the deity and privileged to touch and worship their beloved Arunachala, they serve Him unerringly and unfalteringly. Their words come true. Their deeds bear fruit. It is they who fix the date and time for the temple festivals and oversee the smooth conduct of the festivities.

There is the story of a priest, a great devotee of Arunachala, who once fixed the time for the beginning of the procession. Finding that the time was not auspicious, some people hesitantly mentioned this to the priest. The priest refused to change the time, saying it was not he who fixed the time but Arunachaleswara Himself. The administrators agreed to it with misgivings. But to everyone's joy, the temple car arrived back at the stand safely and well before the usual time. Another priest gave

up his duties at the temple in order to meditate in a cave of Arunachala. He attained *kapala moksham* (liberation through *sahasrara chakra* of the head)

The bearers of the *Utsavamurti* during festivals are also worthy of our respectful regard. This is not an easy task. But they carry Him with love and rock Him in tune to music, thrilling spectators.

Thus we saw how Arunachala is worshipped by birds and bees, flora and fauna and human beings.

What about the seasons? People who live close to Arunachala see Him change with the seasons, revealing an eternal panorama of pristine beauty.

In spring He is green all over. During summer He throws off His green cloak and becomes a red fiery *linga*. During the rainy season He wears a stylish fur stole of soft, caressing clouds. He also puts on a mantle of variegated colours with waterfalls on His slopes shining like silver ribbons. The tanks and pools shine in the sunlight. He presents a glorious sight indeed. After the rains, comes winter when His heights are covered by mist like wraith. When touched by the sun's rays they shine with unearthly colours dazzling spectators. As Arunachaleswara in the temple is honoured with drum beats and fiery torches, so Arunachala the Hill has His own drumbeats and fiery torches in thunder and lightning. The mist covering the base of the temple's *gopuram* during winter, makes one visualise the temple as being situated at Kailash. The sight teases one out of thought. The sunrays falling on the *gopurams* covered in mist thrills the viewer. When summer begins flowers cover the Hill here and there. He stands in a riot of green and rainbow colours, all nature eager to clothe Him in beauty.

Standing in front of Him one sees Him showering His Grace on all life forms, small and great. One sees the compassion rushing out to meet the adoration. One feels fulfilled.

# XIX

## LITERATURE, SAINTS, HERBS AND SHRINES

### 1. LITERATURE PERTAINING TO TIRUVANNAMALAI

The following is the list of texts hailing the glory of Arunachala  
(Annamalaiyar)

- 1 - Kenopanishad
- 2 - Two Slokas in Rig Veda
- 3 - 9 Songs in Tirumandiram (372-380)
- 4 - 20 Songs entirely on Arunachala and every 9th Song in each of His Padikam (Collection of 10/11 Sang) refers to Annamalaiyar in Sambandar's Thevaram
- 5 - 30 Songs in Appars Thevaram
- 6 - 40 songs in Thiruvachagam
- 7 - A few songs each the rest of 12 in Thirumurais
- 8 - 87 Songs in Tiruppugazh
- 9 - Aruna Giri Puranam
- 10 - Arunachala Puranam
- 11 - Two songs in Peria Puranam
- 12 - Arunachala Puranam and Aruna giri Puranam
- 13 - A part of Skandapuranam
- 14 - Tiruvarunai Andadi by Saiva Ellappa Navalar
- 15 - Tiruvarunai Kalambagam by Saiva Ellappa Navalar
- 16 - Arunagiri Andadhi by Guhai Namasivaya Swamigal
- 17 - Annamalai Venba by Guru Namasivaya Swamigal
- 18 - Thiru Annamalaiyar Vannam by Cherai Kavirasa Pillai (Kavirasa Singam)

- 19 - Thiru Annamalai Kovai by Saiva-Ellappa Navalar (book not available)
- 20 - Thiru Annamalai Kovai by Kamalai Gnanaprakasara (book not available)
- 21 - Sonasailamalai by Sivaprakasa Swamigal
- 22 - Sara Prabandam by Guhai Namasivayar
- 23 - Annamalai Sadagam by Thiru Chitrambala Navalar
- 24 - Thiruvannamalai Tiruvarut Padigangal by Ramalinga Adigalar
- 25 - Arunachalesar Varugai Padigam by Pradabam Saravana Perumal Pillai
- 26 - Arunachalesar Padigam by Pradabam Saravana Perumal Pillai
- 27 - Unnamalai Amman Varugai Padigam by Pradabam Saravana Perumal Pillai
- 28 - Unnamalai Amman Padigam by Pradabam Saravana Perumal Pillai
- 29 - Unnamalai Amman Sadagam by Kanchipuram Sababathi Mudaliar
- 30 - Arunachala Sadagam by Kanchipuram Sababathi Mudaliar
- 31 - Arunachaleswarar Padigam by Purisai Ashtavadanam Sababadhi Mudaliar
- 32 - Arunachalesar Viruttham
- 33 - Arunachalesar Nava Karigai Malai
- 34 - Arunachala Akshara Malai
- 35 - Thiruvannamalai Padigangal by Kurugur Gnanananda Swami
- 36 - Annamalai Pancharatnam
- 37 - Annamalai Nanmani Malai
- 38 - Annamalayiar Vannam by Jafna - Thyagarasar Pillai
- 39 - Arunachala Mahatmiya Vachanam
- 40 - Akshara Paa Malai
- 41 - Sri Arunachalesar Uyir Varukai Padaitha Paamaalai
- 42 - Arunachala Aksharamanamalai by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi

- 43 - Arunachala Padigam by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi  
 44 - Arunachala Nava Manimalai by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi  
 45 - Arunachala Ashtakam by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi  
 46 - Arunachala Pancharatnam by Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi  
 47 - Arunai Siledai Venba Maalai  
 48 - Arunachala Purana Keerthanaigal  
 49 - Vallala Maharasan Drama  
 50 - Vallala Maharasan Kummi  
 51 - Sri Arunachala Ashtakam by Sri Adisankarar  
 52 - Sri Apitakuchambal by Sri Appaiya Dikshadhar  
 53 - Jura nivaranashtakam by Sri Appaiya Dikshadhar  
 And 14 works by Sonachala Bharathiyar

## **WORKS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

- 1 - Tiruvannamalai (Vol 1-5) by French Institute of Indology  
 PARIS  
 2 - Secret of Arunachala - by Abisikhanandha originally in  
 French - trans in to English  
 3 - Message from Arunachala by Paul Brunton  
 4 - A Search in Secret India by Paul Brunton  
 5 - A Search for a Guru in India by Anne Marshall (Some  
 portion referring to Tiruvannamalai)  
 6 - Arunachala Holy Hill - in French & in English

## **II. DRAVIDAN SAINTS WHO HAVE VISITED/ LIVED IN ARUNACHALA**

Deiva Sigamani Desika Paramacharya Swamigal, Saint Mangaiyarkarasiyar, Pani Pathraswamigal, Azhiya Viradam Poonda Thambiran, Pakshna Murthy Swamy, Eesanya Gnana Desikar, Ammani Ammaiyar, Vannacharabam Dandapani Swamigal, Angapradakshinam Annamalai Swamy, Irai Swamigal, Sadaichi Ammaiyar, Alagananda Adigalar, Guhai Namasivayar,

Guru Namasivayar, Arunagiri Nathar, Veera vairagya Murthy Swamy, Gnana Prakasa Swamigal, Sonachala Thevar, Siva Prakasa Swamigal, Satguru Swamigal, Pazhani Swamigal, Badrachala Swamigal, Saint Seshadri Swamigal, Appaiya Dikshidhar, Kumara Swami Pandaram, Natesa Swamigal, Siva Swamigal, Adimudi Swamiyar.

Sambandar, Appar, Sundara Murthy Nayanar, Manickavachakar, Chendanar

Thirumaligai Thevar, ThiruMoolar, Nakkeerar, Kabilar, Nambi Andar Nambi, Karaikal Ammaiyar And Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi

#### **IV. SHRINES AROUND TIRUVANNAMALAI**

<b>Sl.No</b>	<b>Name &amp; Shrine/mutt/</b>	<b>No.of Shrines</b>
1.	Ganesa Temples	16
2.	Muruga Temples	9
3.	Siva Temples (inclusive of Ashtalinga)	17
4.	Amman temples (inclusive of Mariamman/Kali Amman)	14
5.	Nandi Deva -Mantap temples	8
6.	Guru Murthas	4
7.	Ashrams 6	
8.	“Pada” (Divine Feet) Mantaps	2
9.	Rishaba vahana Darshan Temples	2
10.	Ancient Sages Shrines	3
11.	Kannappa Nayanar Temple	1
12.	Manickavachakar Temples	2
13.	63 - Saivite Saints Math	1
14.	Hanuman Temple (at Chinna kadai St)	1
15.	Bootha Narayan Temple	1
16.	Veera Badrar Temple	1
17.	Theradi Muneeswarar	1
18.	Navagragha temple	1
19.	Thirumalai Vision	1

20. Five Face(Pancha Mukham) Darshan	1
21. (Without Deity) Vinayaga Temple	2
22. (Without Deity) Siva Temple (Chandra Linga)	1
23. (Without Deity) Amman Temple	2
<b>Total number of Old Shrines</b>	<b>97</b>

## **V. LIST OF COMMON AND RARE HERBS FOUND ON THE SLOPES OF ARUNACHALA**

1. *Cynodon dactylon*, pers; Poaceae.
2. *Euphorbia hitra*, Linn; Euphorbiaceae.
3. *Indigofera tinctoria*, Linn; Fabaceae.
4. *Sida caprinifolia*, Linn; Malvaceae.
5. *Aristolochia beracteata* Retz; Aristolochiaceae.
6. *Datura metel*, Linn; Solanaceae.
7. *Calatropis gigantea*, R.Br; Asclepiaceae.
8. *Lonidium suffruticosum*, Ging; Violaceae.
9. *Solanum jacquini*, Solanaceae.
10. *Osimum canum*, Sims; Labiatae.
11. *Eclipta Hassk*; Compositae.
12. *Smilax Zeylanica*: Linn; Liliaceae.
13. *Jatropha Curcas*, Linn; Euphorbiaceae.
14. *Commelina bengalensis*, Linn; Commelinaceae.
15. *Clitoria ternatea*, Linn; Fabaceae.
16. *Phyllanthus niruri* Linn; Euphorbiaceae.
17. *Acalypha indica*, Linn; Euphorbiaceae.
18. *Aloe vera*, Linn; Liliaceae.
19. *Coccinia india*, W & A; Cucurbitaceae.
20. *Sylvestre*, R.Br; Guttifera.
21. *Paronia Zeylanica*, cav; Malvaceae.
22. *Tinospora cardifolia*; Miers; Menis permaceae.
23. *Ocimum Sanctum*, Linn; Labiatae.
24. *Leucas aspera* spreng; Labiatae.
25. *Aoutilon indicum*, G. Don; Malvaceae.

26. *Solanum trilobatum*. Linn; Solanaceae.
27. *Hemidesmus indicus*, R.Br; Asclepiadaceae.
28. *Gynandropsis pentaphylla*, DC; Capparidaceae.
29. *Achyranthus aspera*, Linn; Amarantaceae.
30. *Cleome Viscosa*, Linn; Capparidaceae.
31. *Catheranthus roseus*,(L) g.Don; apocyanaceae.
32. *Cassis angustifolia*, Vehl, (c. Lanceolate, W & A);  
Leguminosae.
33. *Tribulus terretris* Linn; Geraniaceae.
34. *Belpharis boerhaviaefolia*, pers; Acanthaceae.
35. *Opuntia dillenii*, Haw; Cactaceae.
36. *Cissus quadrangularis*, Linn; Vitaceae.
37. *Argemone mexicana*, L; Papaveraceae.
38. *Anisomeless malabarica*, R.Br; Labiateae.
39. *Croton Sparsiflorus*, Morong; Euphorbiaceae.
40. *Cardiosperumum halicacabum*, Linn; Sapindaceae.
41. *Aegle marmelos*, Corr; Rutaceae.
42. *Evolvus alsinoides*, Linn; Convolvulaceae.
43. *Enicostemma littorale*, Bl; Gentianaceae.
44. *Azadirachta indica*, A.juss; Meliaceae.
45. *Daemia extensa*, R.Br; Asclepiadiceae.

## XIX

### THE WORSHIP OF ARUNACHALA

ONCE a devotee of Arunachala asked another devotee as to how he worshipped the Lord. The reply was that he worshipped with flowers. The first devotee said that instead of flowers, he felled the trees in the forest and offered them in worship. Seeing the surprise on the other's face, the first devotee explained that his worship was purely mental. "If that is so", countered the other, "Why don't you offer Him the entire universe?"

The wise say that recipients of divine grace offer flowers and water for the worship of the divine. Indeed, it is possible for everyone to worship Him with just a green leaf, so declared Saint Thirumoolar. Of all objects that nature offers us for the worship of Arunachala only flowers and water are pure and therefore fit for offering in worship. Anything else is likely to be contaminated without our knowledge.

Arunachala asks not for silks and precious jewels. He takes delight in wild flowers you may pick by the wayside. He likes us to adorn Him with things that are available easily and cheaply and unwanted by humans like *bilva* and *umattam* flower. That may be so, but just as a mother would bathe her child and dress it up in pretty frocks and ornaments, so the devotees revelling in their love for Lord Arunachala bathe him with fragrant powders, fruits, milk fragrant water, honey, sandal paste, vibhuti etc. With great love and devotion the devotees then drape around Him costly silver and brocade cloth, adorn his forehead with

diamond jewellery, burn frankincense before Him. They further with heart-melting devotion offer sweets, savouries and fruits.

At times they find joy and pleasure by bathing Him only with pots and pots of water cascading through His body and offer Him a simple garland. Yet others immerse Him with flowers of all shapes, colours and hues.

He, with his heart melting with devotion, worships Him by cleaning His temple, or circumambulating His *Linga* form in the temple or the hill. Some meditate on Him in the mountain caves. Others perform their worldly duties with His form firmly and constantly established in their thoughts. Yet some devotees of the Lord combine all these. At times they perform pujas, they clean his temple, at times they go deep into the caves to meditate. At times they carry out their mundane duties with their minds firmly fixed on Him.

The aim of all these forms of worship is the worshipper's unswerving, one pointed concentration on the Divine. The beloved always likes his mind to dwell on Arunachala. But his fickle mind runs and craves after mundane things and it is troubled by distracting thoughts, rebellious and impatient emotions. The true devotee hates to be a hypocrite. He strives to be honest. He likes to treat everyone alike, and shower his love on all beings, animate and inanimate. He likes to shun desire of woman and wealth, be free of fear, sorrow, anger, hatred and all failings likely to take his mind away from Arunachala. His only desire is to do his Lord's bidding, to follow the path as per divine will. generally to follow the path of righteousness. He strives hard to be like Arunachala, transcending name, form, virtues and faults and remain

in the state of Pure Awareness. If the lover of Lord Arunachala places his faith firmly in Him, he will pass through his trails smoothly and emerge triumphant to win the grace of his beloved Master.

A good washerman uses every effort to remove dirt from the clothes that he washes. Similarly Lord Arunachala, a good washerman of souls, with all the tests and adversities cleans his devotees minds and hearts thoroughly and claims them finally as His own.

The trials and tribulations of life and the mental depressions that a devotee comes across during his *sadhanas* are but a part of the Lord's divine play, to enable a true devotee to progress and examine and evaluate himself and consolidate his position in the spiritual realm.

Just as a good cook in the process of cooking, examines the preparations, so a true devotee should often check with care and diligence, whether his devotion to Arunachala is deep, unselfish, without caring even for *mukti* and without seeing Him as being apart from the Self. Thus the devotee should progress. He should shun all other activities as far as possible and having his love for Arunachala as the principle, he should engage in this single activity alone. This alone is true service unto Him. This alone is true worship unto Him. To worship Arunachal with mind is far superior to bodily worship and through words. Whatever the body may be engaged in and wherever it may dwell, mental wordhip can goon undetted, the body may be diseased, mental faculties and limbs may lose their strength. yet by force of habit, the mental worship will continue unceasingly. For this kind of worship, there wont be final obstacles. This is the goal and aim of a true devotee. To reach this highest state, we follow all forms of worship.

So far we have discussed the supreme excellence of Arunachala in various ways. The Supreme lord Arunachala, the column of Effulgence, hiding His lustre in the solid form of the hill, later presented Himself to His worshippers as a *Linga* and then as *Arunagiri Yogi*.

How thrilling then to have Him amongst us in human form, personifying love, compassion, devotion, spiritual knowledge and sacrifice, the very embodiment of the Supreme. The whole of cosmic creation came together in one physical manifestation. He became like us, came to us in human form, lived with us, ate with us talked and laughed with us, obeyed all laws of nature, yet transcended all this and like Arunachala, is drawing us unto him, making us one with him without sense of duality and absorbing us one with him. About this Sadguru Ramana who transcends the realm of time and space, this Arunachala's Ramana, Arunachala Ramana, Ramana who sought abode in Arunachala, Ramana who merged with Arunachala, Ramana who is verily Arunachala himself, of him we shall speak in the next part.

# PART IV



# ARUNACHALA RAMANA

In the previous chapters we saw how deep was the impression that Arunachala has made in the lives of saints, irrespective of their varied backgrounds. Further we saw how He drew them to Himself and conquered their hearts. However, His greatness as liberator of souls, His powerful influence and His unlimited grace were known only to a few. People generally knew of the injunction in the scriptures that, “Thinking of Arunachala grants Liberation.” *Giripradakshina* was performed only by sages, *yogis* and the villagers living in and around Tiruvannamalai, and by others during the *Karthikai Deepam* festival. *Sannyasis* and other spiritual aspirants from all over India trekked to far off Kasi, Badrinath and Kedarnath, or to the remote parts of the Himalayas to perform penance. Only a few knew of Tiruvannamalai and its assigned role of being a haven of the highest spiritual practices, and of these, fewer still ventured to do penance in the benign presence of Arunachala. In this part we will speak of Him who revealed to the suffering humanity the direct path and the glory of Arunachala.

Before we proceed further, we have to see the influence of the Upanishads upon people. In Vedic ages the rishis and sages were standing witnesses to the advaitic truth laid down by the Upanishads. They lived in eternal bliss and passed on their experience to their disciples. But the Divine did not wish to continue this trend and the knowers of the truth dwindled in number.

As time passed by, *Upanishadic* truths became mere theoretical knowledge, as there was none with first hand experience of the *advaitic* truth to expound them with

authority and authenticity. A few centuries of foreign rule drastically altered the way of life. The highest truths contained in our ancient treatises had very few takers. The teachings of Mandukya, Vyasa, Ashtavakra, Sanatsujata, Ribhu, Gaudapada, Sankara, and others became obscure and removed from reality. Experience became the concern of academics. Simultaneously this was reflected in the practice of rituals whose true significance was lost and which deteriorated into mechanical observances. Cynicism and contempt for all that was ancient and sacred became the order of the day; philosophy and true spirituality were the targets of attack from intellectuals and the high priests of modernity. Agnosticism was gradually spreading in society. Sincere seekers of the truth were adrift, floundering, without any real guidance from elders or a society that was being torn apart on the one hand by obscurantism and on the other by misdirected forays into Western ways of living. The *bhakti* movement that was rightly restored to its pristine glory by the saints of both North as well as South India was showing signs of weariness. The cultured who really cared for revival of ancient truths and the faithful who were groping in the dark searched in anguish for a Master who could lead them with sure steps. This then was the situation in the South during the nineteenth century.

There is another aspect to it this point of view. The *bhakti* movement was a continuous one. Saints and sages have come and proclaimed the path of devotion from almost every part of India and in every century. There appeared from time to time giants in spirituality like Adi Sankara, Nayanmars and Alwars, Ramanuja, Madhva, Guru Nanak, Gnaneswar, Tukaram, Mirabai, Ramadas, Sadasiva

Brahmendra, Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, to name but a few. Some of the above sages also advocated the doctrine of *advaita*. After all *jnana* and *bhakti* are not separate but one and the same. These luminaries stressed the importance of devotion to God and stressed upon leading a virtuous life. Their contributions towards renewing the faith of the people and restoring confidence in the ancient teachings are by no means insignificant. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886) paved the way for true knowledge, by warning the aspirant to avoid *siddhis*, visions and powers which they would gain in the course of their practice but which would only make them swerve from their chosen path. Sri Ramakrishna thus stressed faith and true devotion as the sole means of union with the divine, showing also that the path of *jnana* and *bhakti* are one and the same. Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) carried forward the message of Sri Ramakrishna to the whole world and in a sense, was responsible for the awareness that began to dawn in the minds of the Indian people that their religion and culture possessed sufficient depth and vitality to serve as beacon light to the whole of humanity.

The greatest event was yet to happen. Humanity sorely needed a person who would combine in Himself all the qualities of all the saints and sages and seers right from Vedic times onwards. Such a one would have to come in human form to demonstrate with finality and absolute authority the way to Self-realization. The age needed a Master ever present, readily accessible, offering never failing guidance, available both at the physical plane and the spiritual plane at all times; a Master who had transcended the limitations of time and space, yet suitable for modern times; who was the very embodiment of all the ideals that

humanity stood for since creation; a *Sadguru* who could raise mankind to His own level, a most compassionate Master. This indeed was the crying need of the hour. It was the need of humanity since the beginning of time. A few sincere souls lost in the cycle of births and deaths, alternating between hope and despair, pain and pleasure, began hoping against hope for a true Master, who would lead them surely, “From darkness to light, from falsehood to truth, from death to immortality”. They prayed and yearned for such a Master.

They had to wait till a male child was born in a remote village in South India, the Land of Siva, in the early hours of December 30, 1879. He was named Venkataraman. He grew, studied and did whatever he had come to do, till the day He realized His true identity, His oneness with Arunachala. The young Ramana came home to Arunachala *kshetram*. He was to change the course of human destiny for all time to come.

In the following pages we shall recount the sublime story which has moved people to tears.

One day in November 1895, while living at Madurai, Venkataraman then aged fifteen, heard one of the visitors to his home say that he had just come from Arunachalam. No one knew then the effect the name Arunachalam had on Venkataraman. For, when Arunachala strikes it is very subtle and deep. Only the young Venkataraman must have realised the impact. He must have cleverly hidden it from others. As he would later say in the *Arunachala Padikam*, “Lord ! Thou didst bring me by stealth and all these days hast held me at Thy Feet”. (stanza five); and again in *Arunachala Aksharamanamalai*, “Unknown to all, who was it except Thou that stupefied my mind and ravished it, O Arunachala?” (stanza eighty-nine).

In Tamil literature when writing about lovers, poets describe how the man steals his beloved and carries her away to his abode. They use the phrase “*Kalavinil Konarthal*”. Thus it was with Bhagavan. Language proves itself an inadequate instrument in describing the full gamut of intense emotions that Sri Bhagavan must have experienced when Arunachala claimed Him as His own.

The mutual affinity between Ramana and Arunachala can be traced to his very early days at Tiruchuzhi. The fascination young Venkataraman had for Arunachala was dormant and it just needed a triggering mechanism which came through one of his relatives. It is beyond anyone’s power to understand the storm raised by the name in the lad’s mind. It filled him with ideas of eternal heaven where only the Supreme Power reigned, which is in fact accessible and is on this very earth. Both Arunachala and His abode are not in some faraway extra-terrestrial space which can be reached only through imagination. The haven of spiritual rest, the essence of divine compassion is available here and now. Such must have been the reactions of young Ramana.

In 1896, in mid-July, he had the spontaneous Self-realisation which is termed the first death experience. We shall narrate briefly the circumstances leading to this event.

One afternoon, about six weeks before he left Madurai for good, the young Venkataraman, sitting alone in his uncle’s house had a sudden, violent fear of death. Boys of his age would naturally have run to elders or doctors to confide. But Venkataraman did not take to any such recourse. He did not even pray to God or to a Guru. He alone can be His own *Guru*. He faced the question boldly and dived inwards. He vividly experienced the eternal truth that although the body may be taken to the crematorium

once death occurs, he was the spirit transcending death (and birth). This experience was total and eternal. After this experience his attitude towards life changed. He only made a pretence of studying, eating etc. His mind, now freed from bondage began to delve deeply into bliss and began to seek solitude. However, his pretences did not deceive his elders for long. They began to notice his indifference towards studies, games and other activities that a normal healthy boy would engage in. Venkataraman was marking time when he could join his beloved Arunachala and Arunachala afforded him the opportunity.

His elder brother one day taunted him with words that for one who was like this, why all these i.e., studies etc. It was Saturday, 29th August, 1896 that Venkataraman realizing the truth behind his brother's admonition, left his home leaving a note informing the elders that he was proceeding in search of his father. He had entered into a good venture and hence no money be spent or effort made to find him. With this parting note he left Madurai for good. Arunachala's unseen hands guided the youth to his destination. On the day he left home, Arunachala made the train wait for Venkataraman, came in the form of a Maulvi to give him directions and showed him His column of effulgence at the temple of Ariyaninallur. Finally Venkataraman came to his true home, Arunachala, when he landed at Tiruvannamalai on 1st September 1896.

He had come to his home. Who can imagine the way Bhagavan felt when he saw the hill for the first time? Indeed there was no reaction, for all reaction ceased on that day on the first floor of his uncle's house at Madurai. He himself says:

I came up here and saw, and found Thou stood as a hill,  
But who then is the seer..... no seer then remained.

No mind survived at all to say that I saw this, or even to say I didn't.

Just as the forester heeds not when the seeds of the trees are sown by the birds, so also humanity in general and the people of Tiruvannamalai in particular, on that first day of September 1896, remained ignorant of the arrival of Arunagiri Yogi amidst them. His arrival at Tiruvannamalai on that September morning was a momentous event in the spiritual evolution of mankind.

Young Venkataraman on arrival at Tiruvannmalai walked hither and thither taking in deeply the rich spiritual atmosphere prevailing there. He then went to the majestic temple of Arunachaleswara.

It is not known to many that the doors of the temple which were closed at the time of his arrival began to open one by one by themselves as he entered.

At the sanctum sanctorum, "Perfection" joined "Perfection". All activities of Ramana were centered at Arunachala. He immersed himself in the uninterrupted bliss that Arunachala gave him, that is, the bliss "He Himself gives unto Himself". He surrendered himself to Arunachala in the temple and then went wherever Arunachala's Divine Will bade him go.

While speaking about his life at Arunachala, one can see it slowly passing from the first stage to the second stage and then on to the third stage. In the precincts of the temple and later on at Gurumurtham we find in him a perfect example of all that is written in the *Upanishads* and other scriptures describing the state of a *jnani*, an enlightened being. During this first period, his body was unmoving; we see him sitting motionless, apparently oblivious of the external world or the movements of his own body. He

knew not the difference between the passing of days and nights or the changing of seasons. Even the morsel of food put into his mouth the previous day by people who wanted to feed him remained in his mouth and had to be scooped out on the following day by his attendant. Such was his state that even the natural functions of the body were minimal. Nowhere in the history of sages does one come across a human being capable of such concentration, yet aware of things happening to his body. For, in later years, he recalled the first *biksha* he received from Arunachala, the disturbance caused by the urchins and the moving within the precincts of the temple from one place to another.

We judge Bhagavan from our own frame of mind, hence it may appear incredible to us that such concentration of mind simultaneous with the knowledge of the activities of the external world could ever be achieved. In the case of Ramana, He was both the doer and the witness.

## **FIVE HYMNS TO ARUNACHALA AND HIS INTENSE LOVE FOR ARUNACHALA**

It was at the Virupaksha cave that Venkataraman was given the name Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni, a great Sanskrit scholar and *tapasvin* came to the Virupaksha cave in 1908. He was able to discern the greatness and state of the young Sage.

Except for a few works, all of Bhagavan's works were composed while He lived at Virupaksha cave and Skandasramam. While translations from Sanskrit works to Tamil were done as a sublime expression of abidance in the Self, the five hymns to Arunachala came with a tearing force that completely engulfed Bhagavan. They were

spontaneous outpourings of the deep love, springing from the intimacy with Arunachala who was mother, father, *Guru* and beloved for Bhagavan.

In the second stage, at Virupaksha cave, we find him expressing in sublime hymns his state as being one with Arunachala. The composition of each hymn was unpremeditated and spontaneous, except on a few occasions. Commentaries and translations of these hymns have been made in various languages. They are all right as they stand. But to comprehend the true significance of those hymns one should tune one's mind towards Arunachala Ramana. These hymns bring out various experiences in the listener or the reader, depending on individual circumstances. The main purpose of Arunachala coming down as Bhagavan was not so much as to give us pleasure but make us discover the pleasures of pain. People run away from Masters if they find that life is too much for them in spite of the Master's presence. It is very strange that devotees cling to Bhagavan, and Arunachala even in extreme adversity. The more the grief, the more intense becomes their love and devotion for Bhagavan. There are devotees who even pray for adversities, so that they may realise His unbound grace and compassion for them.

The five hymns composed by Sri Bhagavan on Arunachala, offer perfect guidance and solace to the suffering mind. Each of the circumstances under which these hymns were composed is thrilling. When Bhagavan composed *Aksharamanamalai* for the benefit of humanity, he walked around the hill composing the couplets with tears flowing from his eyes and it is reported that when he wrote the thirtyfourth verse (*If thou fail to unite with me, my whole frame will melt into tears and I shall be destroyed*), he wept and sobbed, with his whole frame shaking.

This hymn i.e. *Aksharamanamalai* surpasses in beauty and sweetness any other composition made in any language by any of the saints. We come across in this hymn the whole gamut of human emotions and those transcending the human mind.

If we find the world is too much with us we may find solace in these hymns. When troubled by the complexities of our own mind, Bhagavan makes Arunachala readily available for us to cling to, to surrender, to give ourselves unto him. He had no need to compose these hymns, nor to go round the hill and openly express his deep love for Arunachala. He did all this for the benefit of suffering souls.

In *Aksharamanamalai* he implores Arunachala on our behalf to act as saviour, as otherwise we are like tender vines that would wither away without his support. Such is his compassion for us. In the same hymn Ramana assures us that Arunachala is a perfect murderer. He leaves no trace of his victims but devours them whole. When He ensnares His victims casting His net of grace, there is no escape at all. Ramana calls Arunachala the nectar flowing from the hearts of His (Arunachala's) beloved devotees, the ocean of grace, the darling, the beloved, the father and mother who brought him (Bhagavan) into this world, compassionate Lord, Lord of life, destroyer of ego, rare medicine — all these are epithets used by Sri Bhagavan to describe Arunachala.

In verse 19 of *Arunachala Aksharamanamalai*, He entreats Arunachala to shine within Him as *Guru*:

Making me free from faults and endowing me with virtues accept me (as thy devotee), O Arunachala that shinest as the Guru!

In the earlier chapter we saw how sages and saints have sung about Arunachala in glorious terms; but they have also sung about other deities or at least about Siva in other shrines. As for Bhagavan, only Arunachala Siva existed. Bhagavan's reply to the Dikshitar from Chidambaram who invited him to have *darshan* of Nataraja is a case in point:

All the five elements come into existence only when *Shakti* seemingly forsakes Her identity with Lord Siva, the Supreme Self. Since the five elements are only the creations of *Shakti*, She is superior to all of them. Therefore, more important than the place where the elements merge, is the place where *Shakti* Herself merges. Because *Shakti* is dancing in Chidambaram, Lord Siva has to dance before Her and thereby make Her motionless. But in Arunachala Lord Siva remains ever motionless. Hence *Shakti* effortlessly merges in Him through great love. (*Arunachala Navamani malai*)

In *Arunachala Padikam*, in the last stanza, Bhagavan wonders as to how many people has Arunachala destroyed, people who have like himself accepted Arunachala as their own Lord.

We have briefly seen Bhagavan's manifestation as Arunachala Himself, though He sang in praise of Arunachala assuming the role of His devotee. Bhagavan, although a perfect *Advaitin*, also demonstrated the qualities of a perfect *bhakta*. In fact he never discriminated between *jnana* and *bhakti*; He used to say that *bhakti* is *jnana mata* — the mother of *jnana*.

In the third stage Bhagavan guided His flock through certain outward actions and expressions. A few instances will serve as illustration. Whenever Bhagavan began to write, He always began by writing the name — Arunachalam. He

observed once to Dr T.N. Krishnaswami that just as we identify ourselves with our body, so Siva has identified Himself with Arunachala. A seeker doing his *sadhana* in the vicinity of Arunachala will get guidance from Him. He often used to say that while all sacred places and shrines were but the abodes of various gods, Arunachala is the Supreme God Himself, and that going around Arunachala is the direct worship of the Lord Almighty.

Once a devotee expressed a wish to go to the forest near the foothills. Ramana assented eagerly and said that there was no place on the hill which His feet had not touched.

Once there was a delay in Bhagavan returning from the Hill. Devotees went in search of Him. Bhagavan smilingly told them that the morning time was so charming, that He felt like taking an extended walk on the hill. He said He forgot Himself while on the hill, that it was so much a home to Him. The scholar devotee Ganapathi Muni composed forty Sanskrit *slokas* in praise of Ramana. In one *sloka* he declares that Arunachala must have acquired great spiritual merit for Bhagavan to come to Him. He won this merit by giving refuge to the many saints who came to Him. When a devotee pointed this to Bhagavan He smilingly asked what merit did Arunachala possess that those great saints came to Him.

Many times Bhagavan would, from the old hall, watch Arunachala intently through the window for long. The very mention of Arunachala's name brought deep emotion to His face. Once during the *Kumbabishekam* festival at the temple, Ramana went unknown to others on the East side of the hill and enjoyed the blessed sight of the Lord's *kumbhabhisheka* festival (consecration ceremony).

A devotee wrote “Namasivaya” a few times and presented it to Bhagavan with a request, that Bhagavan should grant him the boon of dying at Kasi, as it is written, that to die in Kasi results in liberation. Bhagavan was silent after looking at the note and subsequently said, quoting from *Arunachala Puranam*, “To say just once ‘Arunachala Siva’ is equivalent to repetition of Namasivaya thirty million times.”

As mentioned earlier, the experiences of Ramana are beyond the scope of any pen. We can only make a feeble attempt at recounting.

When later questioned why he went through all the hardships inside the temple (Patalalingam), Gurumurtham, Pavalakundru and at the two caves, Bhagavan merely waved his hand as much to say that he did not know why it all happened. Probably it was the love of Arunachala for Ramana that, inspite of all the hardships, Arunachala never made Bhagavan leave the precincts of Tiruvannamalai.

When Bhagavan lived in the caves on the Hill, he was very close to the birds and the beasts, the plants and the simple folk living there. After coming to Arunachala, Ramana never went beyond its limits. Though His mother and other relatives begged Him weepingly to return, He held His own, conveying the message that nothing and no one could separate Him from His Father who had given Him spiritual refuge.

## **BHAGAVAN AND GIRIPRAKSHINA**

In order to drive home the importance of *giripradakshina* Bhagavan used to go round the hill with His devotees. During the circumambulation, He used to walk very slowly. The devotees accompanying Him would recite the *Tevaram* and *Tiruvachakam* hymns, while

Bhagavan deeply absorbed in the Self walked around the Hill with His gaze fixed on Arunachala. This *giripradakshina* would take hours or sometimes even days to complete. Occasionally Bhagavan gave detailed explanations of His poetic compositions. One day while Bhagavan was going round the Hill, a devotee requested Bhagavan to explain the highly philosophical *Appalapattu*. Bhagavan complied with his request and gave him detailed explanations and commentary for every word in the poem. This exposition continued even after they had reached Virupaksha cave. Once while doing *giripradakshina* Bhagavan compared the state of the *jnani* to the sleeping cart-driver whose cart moved on without his volition or knowledge. Bhagavan also said that He had seen *siddhas* go round the Hill. A devotee once asked Bhagavan about the efficacy of doing *giripradakshina* and whether it would confer the desired merit even when done without faith. Bhagavan's reply was that *giripradakshina* was like fire which, whether one believed in it or not, would burn anyone who touched it. Thus *giripradakshina* bestows immense benefit whether done with faith or otherwise and makes one go round the Hill again and again.

Sri Ramana did not approve of devotees fasting or undergoing physical mortification in the name of *sadhana*. But He never stopped anyone from going round the hill even if they were old, weak, sick, handicapped or very young. At the most he advised them to go slowly. He discouraged vows of any kind except the vow to go round the Hill. He made many feel the urge to take this vow. One devotee who thought he was far too advanced in his spiritual *sadhana* to need this discipline which was meant for novices, was made by Ramana to change his mind and realize the significance of the circuit round Arunachala.

Many people thus came to realize the importance of the circumambulation. Muruganar once wanted to know the benefit of going round the Hill. Bhagavan's reply was, "Do it once; you will find out". Muruganar obeyed him and later said that while going round, at some places he lost his physical consciousness and forgot his ordinary human condition. "So, now you know!" replied Sri Bhagavan. He further explained that holy men in ancient times went on pilgrimages in a state of *samadhi* known as *sanchara samadhi*. Going round Arunachala, said Ramana, was equal to attaining *sanchara samadhi*.

## RAMANA: THE OCEAN OF COMPASSION

From time to time great *siddhas*, *avatars*, saints and Self-realized souls have been born in India in order to help spiritual seekers. Some of them were compassionate beings, some were kind to animals and others to their disciples. Ramana had universal love and compassion and no one and nothing was exempted from this.

Ramana's compassion knows no limits. Once a devotee compared His mercy to the ocean. Ramana replied that unlike the ocean, His mercy had no shores, or limits. Scholars and laymen alike received great help and support from Him. Once on the Hill, a goat fell into a narrow cleavage between two rocks. Ramana jumped in and rescued the goat. He waited for the poor people who collected wood on the Hills and gave them gruel or cold water. He has never asked any of His devotees to undertake rigorous spiritual effort. Scriptures speak of sages subjecting their followers to strict spiritual discipline in the form of fasts and rituals. But Bhagavan never insisted on anything and let his children go their way. They would always begin

to follow the spiritual path of their own choice because that was the way of Ramana. He never called anyone a sinner, or even mentioned the word 'sin'. Especially, He avoided controlling children. Once when He was sitting on a rock above *Mulaipal Thirtham*, a few young boys jumped into the rocky tank and swam about. Though the rocks were dangerous, Ramana did not stop them. Why, is an intriguing question. Was it because He did not want to frighten them, or was it because they were safe in His presence? A young girl felt afraid to go to the hospital to visit relatives. Bhagavan told her that the hospital where diseases are cured and difficulties removed was like a temple and there need be no fear about visiting it. He thus helped her get rid of her fear.

Bhagavan's words and glance are divine. They have a power of their own to effect changes in personality and situations. Once a young girl who lost her husband soon after her wedding, visited many holy places and met holy men seeking redressal of her sorrow. She did not find peace anywhere and finally came to Bhagavan, still unable to overcome her distress. When Bhagavan's divine eyes fell on her and she beheld His compassionate look, her sorrow melted away, like snow that melts at the sight of the sun. She was filled with a deep peace. Hardly a word had passed between Bhagavan and herself.

On another occasion a couple who had lost all their children came to Ramana. They felt peace only in His presence, but when they went away they were again assailed by grief. After staying at Sri Ramanasramam for two weeks when they prepared to leave, they met a person in the book shop who said, seeing their travail, "Why should you grieve for your dead children? Even if they came back

to life they or you must still die sometime or other and experience the feeling of loss again. Which is a greater miracle, a change of heart or a change in the date on the tomb stone?" The couple were stunned to hear this which sounded so much like Bhagavan's own words. They took leave of Him with solace in their hearts.

Bhagavan Ramana was like a father and mother to his devotees, fulfilling their needs and wishes. People who wanted jobs, promotions or money received them by His grace. The sick were healed or received the strength to bear their sickness. Bhagavan took over or changed the destiny of people who took refuge in Him. A young son of a devotee was bitten by a poisonous snake. His parents brought his body which had turned blue, due to the effect of the poison. Ramana rubbed *vibhuti* (sacred ash) on him, saying, 'It is nothing', 'It is nothing' and the boy arose, as if waking up from sleep. When He received the news that a devotee called Subbulakshmi had passed away, He sat still for an hour. The Ashram then received the news that the dead devotee had come back to life. She lived for a long time.

Devotees living far away would write or send telegrams to Bhagavan for relief from difficulties and always received help from Him. Many were saved and given succour without their knowing it. Bhagavan surely had taken it as His mission to destroy the *karma* of His devotees.

## THE GOD OF GODS

Now we shall delineate how Sri Bhagavan revealed himself and showed to his devotees in various ways that He and Arunachala were but one.

Who but Arunachala Himself, in the form of Bhagavan could be the perfect Master to lead generations of seekers and lost souls unto eternity! Though from time immemorial the Vedas, Upanishads, *puranas*, *ithihasas* and numerous other saints, *jnanis* and poets have sung about Arunachala, it was Sri Bhagavan alone who could reveal the true glory of Arunachala and guide man along the most practical path. It was Lord Arunachala as Bhagavan Ramana who assured guileless devotees like Manavasi Ramaswamy Iyer when they earnestly sought redemption and salvation, assuring, “There is hope, yes there is hope.” Bhagavan’s assurance in response to queries put to Him are applicable not just in that particular circumstance or to one particular person but to humanity as a whole.

Only Lord Arunachala can say with the authority with which Sri Bhagavan replied to another devotee, “You wanted to see my form. You saw my disappearance. I am formless. So that experience might be the real truth...” Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni, a great Sanskrit scholar and a highly evolved soul said that Bhagavan was Skanda incarnate. Others see Him as Dakshinamurti and yet others see Him as Sankara. People who worship Him as an incarnation of Kartikeya quote incidents from His life and His own utterance, “*Appavukku Pillai Adakkam*” (The son is absorbed in the father), where the father referred to is Arunachala (see the first letter in Suri Nagamma’s *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*). Elsewhere in the same book, it is mentioned that during a discussion as to His true identity, Bhagavan smiled approvingly when Nagamma quoted Bhagavan’s own reply to a devotee’s question (7th verse, *Arunachala Pancharatnam*), wherein he says that right from Hari down to *jivas*, Arunachala Ramanan shines in their heart-caves as True Knowledge.

It has been said that when a devotee asked pointedly whether Bhagavan was not Arunagiri *Siddha*, Sri Bhagavan became motionless and still and after a while smiled at the questioner as if to reply in the affirmative.

Bhagavan has remained supreme then and now, the brightest luminary in a land of spiritual stalwarts. Attracted by this mighty magnet, countless sages, saints, and spiritual leaders have come to Him, experienced a resurgence of spiritual power in His presence and gone back to tell others about Him. The name of these visitors reads like a veritable roll call of spiritual hierarchy. Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh who had established many *ashrams* where spiritual and social service is rendered, came to Tiruvannamalai. He stayed for a few days and composed songs in praise of Bhagavan in English and received His blessings. Mahatma Gandhi sent his followers to the Ashram whenever they were in need of peace. Former President Rajendra Prasad was a frequent visitor. He once asked Bhagavan if He had any message for Mahatma Gandhi. Ramana replied that when hearts speak to each other, there is no need for a message. Sarojini Naidu and her poet-brother Harindranath Chattopadhyaya came to meet Bhagavan and composed many poems in His praise. When Bhagavan was in Virupakshi cave the famous poet Subramanya Bharati spent an hour sitting silently before him and returned with renewed spirit. Dr. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, the great Tamil scholar complained to Bhagavan that try as he might, he could not give up his love of Tamil. Bhagavan asked him, “Who told you to give up love of Tamil or love of Siva”.

The Puri Sankaracharya of those times visited Bhagavan and asked Him a few questions. Bhagavan looked at him in silence. The Sankaracharya went into a

deep *samadhi* and later look leave, shedding tears of joy and expressing heart-felt gratitude for the exalted experience he had felt. This incident has been recounted by many devotees. The Puri Sankaracharya later said that Bhagavan cannot be compared with even Adi Sankara, rather He was the Primal *Guru* Dakshinamurthy Himself.

There is a well known story of a devotee wanting to make a list of gods according to their greatness. He pointed with his little finger, calling out Arunachala's name, but thereafter could not count any more as no god was worthy of being second to Arunachala. Therefore the finger next to the little finger is called *anamika* (nameless) in Sanskrit. The finger that could not name any god became the nameless one. It is the same case with Bhagavan. If sages and saints, spiritual giants in their own right, were unable to describe adequately Bhagavan Ramana's glory and were rendered speechless in His presence, how can ordinary mortals describe Him and with what shall they compare Him? What words can describe Him who is not moved by mountains being uprooted or by the falling sky, but sits unperturbed on a high inward pedestal, beyond joy and sorrow. One who came in the form of the golden bodied Venkataraman can only be compared with the Supreme who came as Dakshinamurti as described in Sri Muruganar's *Ramana Sannidhi Murai*.

Sri Paramacharya of Kanchipuram had great love and regard for Ramana. He sent some devotees who came to him, to Tiruvannamalai. One of them was Paul Brunton. Finding his spiritual doubts cleared by Bhagavan whose very presence was a source of great spiritual power, Paul Brunton wrote in his book, *A Search in Secret India* that Bhagavan belonged to the whole world.

Sri Narasimha Bharathi, Sankaracharya of Sringeri Mutt used to express his great love for Bhagavan by enquiring of visitors from Tiruvannamalai about the *Balayogi*. He advised many of his followers to visit Tiruvannamalai and have *darshan* of Bhagavan. who he said, was a standing witness to the *Upanishadic* truth. Two persons who were thus sent to Tiruvannamalai offered to initiate Bhagavan into *sannyasa*. When Sri Narasimha Bharathi heard of this, he took them severely to task, saying that, an evolved soul like the *Balayogi* of Tiruvannamalai did not require any kind of formal initiation. The same pontiff sent another student of Vedanta to Ramana telling him (i.e. the student) that Ramana was the living embodiment of the Upanishadic teachings.

The great teacher and social reformist of Kerala, Sri Narayana Guru met Bhagavan with his disciples at Skandashramam and had his doubts cleared. He praised Bhagavan calling Him 'A king cobra'. When Swami Ramdas of Kanhangad could not get spiritual inspiration anywhere he came to Bhagavan and received His grace. He later stayed in a cave on Arunachala hill performing rigorous *tapas* and had a cosmic vision of Lord Rama. Trees and plants and human beings appeared to him as Rama. Delighted with this, Ramdas praised Bhagavan and went to Kanhangad near Mangalore where he started an *ashram*. He took Ramana as His *Guru* and sent his devotees to Tiruvannamalai.

The great scholar and saint Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni from Andhra Pradesh fell at Bhagavan's feet, saying that all his learning and spiritual effort did not give him peace and implored Bhagavan for His grace. Ramana briefly explained to him the truth about spiritual *sadhana* and showed him the true path. Once when Ganapati Muni

suffered because of excessive *yogic* power, he prayed to Bhagavan and acquired the skill to bear the power and was at peace. It was Ganapati Muni who changed Venkataraman's name from *Brahmana Swami* to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Many heads of *mutts* and *Adhinams* and *sannyasis* have spoken in glowing terms of Bhagavan's spiritual knowledge and His proficiency in the Tamil language. Once when a king visited Him, Bhagavan's devotees subtly requested him for monetary support for the Ashram. Bhagavan told them that the king had come here begging for grace. He admonished them for begging from the beggar himself. The devotees realized that it was foolish to seek favours of the king, when the King of kings was living with them in flesh and blood. The daughter of Woodrow Wilson, the then American President visited the Ashram. She did not reveal her identity and sat quietly by herself and left the next day. When she went back she wrote in American journals that after meeting Bhagavan she knew how Jesus Christ lived and that she could understand the Bible better.

One of the most astonishing facts was that many *siddhas* and sages came to see Bhagavan in the form of dogs, crows, leopards and snakes and were helped to attain spiritual liberation. The doors of the hall where Bhagavan sat were always kept open. This was because many souls came seeking His grace at all times of the day and night and in all shapes and forms. One of the devotees sleeping in the hall woke up one night to see a dazzling light enter through the door, stand before Bhagavan for some time and then slowly go out. Later when he asked Bhagavan about this, Sri Ramana replied it was a *siddha* who had come in that form to have His *darshan*.

Many spiritual aspirants who had worshipped God in His different manifestations, were guided by these gods to Ramana in Tiruvannamalai in whose presence they continued their spiritual effort. A devotee called Sundaram was a worshipper of Subramanya at Tiruchendur. A voice from the inner most sanctum of the Tiruchendur temple directed him to go to Tiruvannamalai and follow Sri Ramana's guidance. Sundaram took it as a command of Lord Subramanya and came to Tiruvannamalai where he became a *sannyasi* and a staunch devotee of Ramana. He served Sri Ramanasramam with distinction and reached great spiritual heights.

Another devotee of Rama was instructed in his sleep to accept Ramana as his *Guru* and continue his *sadhana*. The devotee obeyed and after retirement settled at Tiruvannamalai and continued his spiritual efforts. A devotee of Ramakrishna Paramahansa came to visit Bhagavan and saw in Him the form of the Paramahansa. He then became Bhagavan's devotee. Bhagavan appeared as Krishna and Dakshinamurti and Muruga to various people. He appeared before His mother as the *Lingam* of *Thirumeninathan* at the Tiruchuzhi temple. Another devotee called Rudra Raj Pandey of Nepal who went to the Arunachaleswara temple saw Bhagavan instead of the *Lingam* of Arunachala in the sanctum sanctorum and everywhere around it. Lost in ecstasy he stayed long in the temple and later expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan for making him realize that He and Arunachala were one and the same.

We can go on and relate such incidents where Ramana appeared as God of gods, Yogi of yogis to innumerable devotees.

## A RARE PERSONIFICATION OF SIMPLICITY

APART from scholars and saints, many simple folk approached Ramana to partake of His grace. Once when He was living at Skandashramam, simple village people came hesitatingly to see Him, standing far away from Him. Bhagavan filled their beings with joy through His compassionate eyes. A poor peasant walked fifty miles to have *darshan* of Bhagavan. He fell at Bhagavan's feet sobbing with emotion. Bhagavan showered His grace on him and sent him filled with joy. Bhagavan's grace was vouchsafed to simple folk more readily than to scholars and *sannyasis*.

Once an old lady came to meet Bhagavan. She had lovingly brought millet pancakes (*dosai*) for Him. The devotees with Bhagavan stopped her from offering her pancakes to Him. Bhagavan chided them and ate them with great relish and gladdened the heart of the old lady. Once when Bhagavan was going round the hill with some of His devotees, He suddenly left them and went into a jungle tract, walking fast. Finally He went and stood near a poor old man who did obeisance to Him saying that he was waiting for Bhagavan. Ramana drank with relish the porridge which the old man offered and told his followers of the old man's devotion and made them give His share of the food they had brought along.

*Keerai* (spinach) patti, *Mudaliar* patti and *Echamma* patti were some of the simple folk who brought food for Bhagavan in the early days. Later when the Ashram had grown and food was cooked there for Bhagavan and His devotees, Bhagavan still waited for these loving devotees to bring their food and only after eating what they had

brought would He have His meal. Thesuramma, Mastan Swami, Venamma and Thenamma were some of the devotees who were given special privileges not given to others. The list of simplefolk who enjoyed Bhagavan's special love is long and unending.

## HIS TEACHING

'*WHO AM I?*' is a treatise given through a devotee in which Sri Bhagavan speaks of the truth that is beyond all religions. It is capable of attracting even atheists and rationalists. A scientist who read Ravana's teachings said that they were comparable to Einstein's theory of relativity, that they were clear and simple and at the same time compatible with the logic of everyday life. As a certain verse says, Ravana's teachings are as ancient as Arunachala, and as modern as the world today. They belong to all times and all countries. Atheists deny God. They do not deny their own existence. '*Who am I?*' makes them think beyond their mental quibbling. The logic of '*Who am I?*' cannot be refuted by rationalists because it prods them into thinking and realising spiritual truth through rational questioning.

Ravana's devotees have realized the supreme truth in the words, *Who am I?* and have followed this path of spiritual enquiry to attain realization. This is a simple method suited to human nature. Man is always in search of happiness. He tries hard to attain this happiness, but as he identifies himself with his body and his mind true happiness eludes him. If he can kill his mind, he can attain eternal happiness and eternal existence. One should have no doubts about this and should not think of one's sins and feel helpless in one's efforts. One should besiege the fortress of one's mind till all thoughts which are our enemies

are destroyed. One can only get over one's sickness by taking medicine oneself. Likewise happiness can only result from one's own effort. One's *karma* will protect one's body. *Guru's* grace will crown one's efforts with success. As far as possible, one should not interfere in other's affairs. One should have moderate food and sleep. To conquer the mind, one should indulge in Self-enquiry or surrender to Bhagavan. Bhagavan made surrender easy, without any conditions, saying that one need only surrender to Him in one's mind. Even if the surrender is partial, it will grow gradually and become complete surrender.

Once a Vaishnavite asked Bhagavan why He did not include in His *Bhagavad Geethasaram*, an important *sloka* wherein Krishna tells Arjuna that if he sacrificed everything and surrendered only to Himself i.e. Krishna, He would protect him and give him salvation. Bhagavan replied that He had included a *sloka* with a better idea. He pointed out to the devotee the *sloka* wherein Krishna tells Arjuna, that if he surrendered to the divine, with His grace he would attain ultimate liberation. Bhagavan explained that surrender was enough, and that no sacrifice was needed. This made the devotee very happy. There are incidents which show how simple it is to follow Bhagavan's teaching. Some villagers came to Him and asked, "Tell us something". Bhagavan very painstakingly and with infinite grace explained to them in a way they could understand the Self-enquiry method. When they left, a follower asked Bhagavan what could these simpletons understand of meditation or Self-enquiry. To which Bhagavan graciously replied that if he told them to perform *pūja* or chant a *mantra*, they would be back, saying that these did not help beyond a point. So He always gave people the highest, yet simplest method of Self-inquiry.

Bhagavan has explained the ‘*Who am I?*’ method very compassionately and elaborately to these simple village folk. On another occasion, He was telling some young children about *Upadesa Undhiyar* when a devotee standing nearby smiled to himself as if to say, ‘What will these children understand about *Upadesa Undhiyar?*’, Bhagavan answered his thought, saying, that they might not understand now but later when they went through the vicissitudes of life they would remember this and get mental courage and peace. Truly they were blessed to whom Bhagavan showed so much compassion.

In order to conquer the mind, Ramana has prescribed many ways like Self-enquiry, devotion to Arunachala, going round the hill, studying scriptures like *Ribu Geetha* and *Saiva Thirumurais*, controlling thoughts before they arise, surrender to Bhagavan and singing His glory. He took the form of Arunachala Ramana so that one and all could get rid of the ego and be immersed in divine bliss.

Bhagavan always remained in *sahaja samadhi*. *Samadhi* is the state of thoughtlessness. As our mind is silent during sleep, so in *samadhi* one is thoughtless and abides in one’s true nature. *Samadhi* can be temporary or permanent. When it is permanent it is called *nirvikalpa samadhi*. In this state, one loses consciousness of one’s body and remains motionless like a statue, a stone or a log of wood. But to be in deep *samadhi* while performing one’s worldly duties is known as *sahaja samadhi* or *sahaja nishtai*. This is a very rare state and only very few have attained this. Often sages who reach the *samadhi* state, give up their bodies in a very short while. Bhagavan remained in *sahaja samadhi* for more than fifty years in order to teach us about this.

It is the mind that tells us of this world and creates joy and sorrow, life and death. Our true state is a state beyond the mind, thoughtless and changeless. Bhagavan advises us to attain this state through constant practice.

## ONE WITH NATURE

A lot is being said now about protection of the environment and wild life and there are many organizations to further this cause, all over the world. But eighty or ninety years ago Bhagavan lived close to nature, looked with tenderness on the wealth that nature gave, its varied flora and fauna and took all care to protect them from danger. He moved closely with tigers and cheetas observing their habits and protecting them from people and the people from them. Snakes are feared by all. But they crawled freely all over His body. He told everyone that they need not fear snakes and asked them not to harm them. He was matchless in the eagerness and attention with which He watched nature's countless denizens. He would point out and explain how wasps, bees and birds build their nests, how the worm becomes the wasp and how ants and termites build a whole miniature city with streets, and live in them. Also He did not permit plucking of flowers and leaves or cutting the branches of trees.

One summer, a lady devotee searched all over for *bilva* leaves for her *puja* but could find none. She complained to Bhagavan that there was not a leaf to pluck. Bhagavan replied that she should pinch (pluck in Tamil also means pinch) herself and then she would know how much pain human beings caused the poor leaves. While going round the hill, a lady devotee plucked flowers along with their branches. Bhagavan asked her if she had watered

and nurtured them. Why was she destroying them? Wouldn't they look more beautiful on the plants?

One day people working in the Ashram were plucking mangoes from the trees. They plucked the branches and the leaves too. When Bhagavan saw the leaves and branches in a heap on the ground, He thundered at them, scolding them for punishing the trees cruelly for giving fruits. He looked sadly at the heap and said, "What a terrible thing to do". He urged people to use wooden hooks to pluck fruits and coconuts instead of iron hooks. It is obvious that the Supreme Being, the Creator Himself came to earth as Ramana to protect His creation.

He moved closely with dogs, monkeys, peacocks, squirrels, sparrows, cows and other animals. He knew their language and whenever needed, He consoled them. He made them understand His language and through this mutual relationship demonstrated His universal Consciousness.

## BESTOWER OF SALVATION

AN ancient astrological prophecy speaks of Ramana as, "The one who came to prove that Arunachala gives you liberation, if you but think of Him". Bhagavan heard the name of Arunachala when He was fifteen. When He was sixteen, He came to live in Arunachala. He gave unto His devotees all that He possessed. Bhagavan's mother and Lakshmi the cow were liberated by Him. He tried to give *mukthi* to Pazhani Swamy, a great devotee who served Him with dedication, but before it could happen, Pazhaniswamy passed away. Bhagavan said that Pazhani Swamy would not be born again and will attain *mukthi* in gradual stages. These are the instances that we come to

know by hearing and reading. Who knows how many beings were liberated by Bhagavan! He never spoke of such beings and therefore we know nothing of them. The *puranas* say that the trees and plants on Arunachala also will receive *mukthi*. From some strange incidents in Bhagavan's life we know this is true. The trees under which He sat while at Skandasramam did not bear any fruit. When He touched the seeds to be planted, nothing grew out of them.

Once Bhagavan was given some seeds for sowing at Sri Ramanasramam, when a young devotee came running and with tears in his eyes said, "Don't give the seeds to Him. The seeds will not sprout like it happened at Skandasramam. Bhagavan's touch will destroy rebirth". Bhagavan's grace liberated countless beings.

Many people seeking spiritual succour toured the length and breadth of the country but in vain and at last through Bhagavan's grace were able to go into *samadhi* and feel contented. An old person visited Bhagavan after many years of vain spiritual effort and was able to reach great spiritual heights. He praised Bhagavan in his ecstasy. Thus Bhagavan gave many devotees the experience of *samadhi* so that it would prod them to make further efforts to make it permanent.

## HOW HE SHOWED THEM HIS GREATNESS

THOUGH Bhagavan gave many indications of His supreme stature, not everyone really understood. The mind is handicapped in dealing with spiritual truths. So Bhagavan would sometimes briefly indicate. Once He joined His devotees in singing *Ramana Sadguru*. When the devotees expressed surprise that He

should sing His own praise, He replied thus, “Ramana is the only *Sadguru* to the whole world”. On another occasion He said, “Dont think Ramana is this six-footed body. He is everywhere.”

Once when a person did not obey some instructions of Bhagavan, He said, “Do as I say! Everything emerged from me! Everything will merge into me”. We can imagine the state of the devotee when he heard this. In His works He has referred to ‘Arunachala Ramana’ and ‘Arunagiri Ramana’. Only one third of *Ramana Purana* in *Ramana Sannidhi Murai* was written by Muruganar. The other two parts comprising over three hundred lines were composed by Bhagavan Himself. Writing His praise, He has shown them His true nature. There is also the fact that the day on which Siva stood before Brahma and Vishnu while they failed to find His feet and head was the same day that Bhagavan Ramana was born. It was the day of the *Arudra* festival in the month of *Margazhi*.

On a full moon night when Bhagavan was coming down the hill, He suddenly turned to Kavyakanta Ganapathy Muni who was with Him and asked in an ecstatic voice, “Nayana, who am I in truth? I see the sun and moon and the stars and planets going round my hip? Who Am I?” Ganapathy Muni revealed this to other devotees and they were immersed in wonder.

## IN HIS SERVICE

MANY were the devotees who spent their lives looking after Bhagavan’s comfort, doing His errands and serving Him in several ways. Pazhaniswamy, Annamalai Thambiran, Uththandi Nayanar, Kunju Swamy and Madhava Swamy were some of them. They never for a moment forgot that it

was Arunachala who was living amongst them and treated Him with the greatest love and affection.

Some devotees constructed paths and buildings on the hill and in the Ashram, cultivated gardens for *puja*, and planted trees for shade. Ramaswamy Pillai and Annamalai Swamy took great interest in these tasks. Devotees expressed their great love for Bhagavan in many ways, some of them strange to us. One devotee appointed himself as bodyguard to Bhagavan and kept walking up and down with a big stick. He once got the idea that Bhagavan was going on a long tour (*digvijayam*) and spent all his money to purchase horses for His travel. Another devotee was so awed by Bhagavan's presence that he never went in His presence. When Bhagavan left His seat, he would go there and worship it. Yet another devotee could not bring himself to mention Bhagavan's name. When he heard someone mention it, he slapped him in a fit of anger. Some devotees would recite the Vedas and the *Thirumurais* in Bhagavan's presence. Thus each devotee did his *sadhana* that was his calling while expressing his love for Bhagavan. If their actions were strange, Bhagavan did not mind it. He accepted the love that their actions expressed.

Many devotees of Ramana have written eloquently about their experience of Ramana. *Nan Yaar?* i.e., *Who am I?* was the collection of Bhagavan's replies to the queries of Sivaprakasam Pillai. In sheer gratitude Sivaprakasam Pillai composed *Ramana Paada Malai*, *Ramana Saritha Agaval*, *Ramana Devamalai* and other works.

Gambheeram Seshayyar was another devotee who compiled Bhagavan's answers to his queries in *Vichara Sangraham*. Ganapathi Muni has composed *Ramana*

*Geetha* in Sanskrit which also comprises Bhagavan's answers to many devotees' questions. He has also spoken of Ramana's greatness in it. Another work of his written in praise of Bhagavan is *Ramana Chattvarimsat*. This is recited every morning in the Ashram. He also composed in one night, through Ramana's grace, three hundred songs in Sanskrit in praise of Unnamulai Amman.

Subramanyam, known as Muruganar wrote in Tamil the *Ramana Sannidhi Murai* along the lines of *Thiruvachagam*. He also wrote *Ramana Jnana Bodham* consisting of more than twenty thousand verses which speak of the high spiritual state that Ramana helped him to attain. *Guru Vachaka Kovai* was another of his creations. He was a Gandhian and patriot and a highly venerated Tamil scholar, but he turned to Ramana and devoted all his energies to praise Him. Sadhu Natananandar was another scholar who wrote about Bhagavan's teachings. *Upadesa Manjari* is his important work.

Apart from this, Kunju Swami, Suddananda Bharathi, B.V. Narasimha Swamy, Paul Brunton, F.H. Humphreys, Devaraja Mudaliar, Munagala Venkataramayya, Suri Nagamma, T.K.Sundaresa Ayyar, Arthur Osborne, Cohen, Major Chadwick, Sadhu Om, all well-known devotees, wrote of their days with Bhagavan, their experiences, Bhagavan's life, His answers to devotees' queries and compiled them all in book form. These are famous writings and have brought many of their readers to Arunachala.

There are many other works on Ramana in several languages including foreign ones. These have served to bring thousands of people from different parts of the world into Sri Bhagavan's fold.

## THE PEERLESS HUMAN

GOD of gods, Sage of sages, Teacher of teachers, Bhagavan Ramana was, but He always moved with human beings as if He were an ordinary man. He carried out His daily duties like bathing, having His food etc. Whatever task He did, He did it to perfection. When He cut vegetables He did not waste any part of it, not even the root of the spinach. When He bound old books He did a thorough and professional job. Books, whether written by scholars or children's nursery rhymes, costly or cheap, all received the same care and attention from Him. His handwriting was so beautiful that one felt like worshipping it. When He cooked food it had a flavour that was out of this world. Once He asked a devotee to give his clothes for washing as He had no work to do.

He was sensitive to love and suffering, He was moved to read about the king who came to serve Kamban, the Tamil poet. He shed tears when devotees spoke of their sufferings. At whatever time guests came, He urged His devotees to give them food and not to show any distinction between Himself and others. He wanted to share everything with others. He made the people working in the Ashram have the same food as others. Bhagavan's generosity was legendary. Whether it was simple gruel or nectar, He shared it with everyone. But when a devotee gave Him the bitter *Etti* fruit, He ate it all by Himself. What could the *Etti* fruit do to Him, the one who kept the *Alakala* poison in His throat!

While reading the story of Lord Siva's devotees He would put the book down, overcome with emotion and unable to read further. In *Aksharamanamalai* He says to

Arunachala, “You have heard the sweet verses of your devotees. Now listen to these crude verses of mine”, thus elevating the status of the devotee, He was indeed the epitome of all virtues.

## THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

THERE is nothing more moving than the story of Ramana’s sacrifices, the difficulties He had to bear after leaving home as a young boy, the ill-treatment he received at the hands of miscreants and the small little pinpricks of loving devotees. They may not have affected Him but they bring tears to our eyes. He was born in a large family and lost His father at the age of twelve. At sixteen He left His mother, relatives and friends and went in search of Arunachala. He threw away all the money He had and His clothes and with a loin cloth on His body and passionate Love in His Heart, He came to the temple. On the night of His arrival He braved stormy winds, rains, and the biting cold and spent the night outside the temple, hungry and weak. He stayed in the thousand pillared hall where the urchins troubled and teased Him, so He went to the *Pathalalinga* under the hall. In this dark niche, rats, ants and centipedes feasted on His flesh freely. He went to *Gurumurtham* from here, where He ate the fruits which the bats had half-eaten and dropped on the ground in the garden. From there He went to Arunagirinathar temple and then to *Pavazhakunru* where He stayed in a small cave-like place. His mother and other relatives came in search of Him there and begged Him to return home. But Ramana maintained silence.

After staying in *Pavazhakunru* for six months, He went to Virupaksha cave where He lived for sixteen years. There

he had either nothing to eat or ate tasteless food. The *sadhus* living on the Hill troubled Him out of jealousy. They rolled big rocks and threw stones at Him. He had the death experience a second time. Asthma, cough and stinging wasps made up the full complement of His experience here.

When His loin cloth came to tatters He sewed it up with a thread from the torn cloth and a thorn. To wipe His body He had a towel full of holes which He rolled into a ball and hid after using lest His devotees found out. When an aspirant could not control his *yogic* power, he beseeched Ramana for help. Ramana controlled the *yogic* power and remarked, "He called me for help. Whom can I call for help?" Who indeed! Wasn't He the source of all succour and strength? He left Virupaksha cave and came to Skandasramam. There was, of course, no change in His life style. The hunger and spartan life continued; the pain and effect of intemperate weather continued. When two students offered Him plantain fruits one night, He told them that He was eating at night for the first time in a year.

When He came down to Ramanasramam, a devotee who was serving Him slapped a legal case on Him. He suffered from pains and rheumatism of the knee joints. Courage and forbearance are heavenly qualities. The divine Ramana lived them. He who bore the sting of the rod to teach the king the greatness of His devotee at Madurai once, bore the pain of cancer to teach His devotees the truth about Himself at Arunachala! For more than a year He prepared the minds of His devotees for the coming event. "They say I am going. Where can I go? I am here", He said, and, "They say I am departing, but I shall be present more than before". He thus made them realize that He was not the body.

In order to please His devotees He underwent surgery and native herbal treatment. While treating Him the doctors had deep spiritual experiences.

The three months during which the disease had taken a turn for the worse, the body weakened, blood flowed from the wound and He needed help to walk, He was still expressing His love for His devotees, consoling a crying child here and enquiring with a gesture if a devotee there had had his meal. When devotees begged for His grace, He assured them they already had it, thus illustrating the great glory of Arunachala who gave without asking. “God is love”, they say. We need search no further than Ramana for proof. It makes us forget all theories and all philosophies and cling only to the one entity called Ramana.

Devotees for whom Bhagavan was the sole refuge of their present and the hope of their future, saw His body weakening day by day and were in anguish. They performed *yagas*, special *pujas* in temples praying to God to give Bhagavan back to them. Many begged Him to cure Himself. Some appealed to God to let them bear the disease and revive Ramana. They stopped eating and sleeping and stood helpless. This was a situation which brought out the love of the Supreme for His devotees and the devotion they had for Him.

But there was something else happening at the same time. It was utterly different, giving a whole new perspective to the situation. A strange force, standing stalwart like Arunachala Himself, manifested itself as infinite grace in the hearts of everyone there. The experience they had had of Bhagavan for many decades, paled before this force, which not only consoled them but actually filled them with ecstasy.

On the night of 14th April 1950, as He lay on the small couch in the room opposite to His mother's temple, the crowds spontaneously started singing *Arunachala Aksharamanamalai*, the hymn composed by Him on Arunachala. Tears started pouring from the corners of his eyes. At 8-47, the breath subsided. A shooting star was seen to trail, blazing forth its tail extending from zenith to horizon, slowly moving towards Arunachala and merging with the hill. It was divine light. The divine light came from His body and united with the "Other Arunachala". The night was serene. There was then a profound, indescribable peace all over and in everyone's heart. It was a promise, a foreboding of things to come, of the future.

## AFTER MAHANIRVANA

Many devotees, used to seeing Ramana every moment of the day, talking, laughing and sitting still and being steeped in the charged atmosphere of His presence left Ramanasramam after the *Nirvana*. They could not visualise Bhagavan's declaration that He is always here. But in a few months they realized the truth of what He said and started coming back to the Ashram one by one. They realized that Ramana was in the Ashram and in their hearts. They also felt that Bhagavan's grace was working more intensely now.

Many people come to Ramanasramam after reading books by Him or about Him, hearing His name, seeing His picture or seeing Him in visions or dreams. People who come to know of Him after the *Nirvana* may feel that they were not fortunate enough to meet Ramana or, listen to Ramana. As Christ once said of Himself, we

may also say of Sri Bhagavan, “Blessed are they who saw Him yet believe in Him. But twice blessed are they who did not see Him yet believe in Him.” We can console ourselves thinking of St. Luke and others who never saw Christ but were still able to write of Him in the Bible. Bhagavan once said, “The devotees who were with me may boast to future seekers that they are superior as they have seen me in flesh and blood. But Ramana is not this body”. Thus Bhagavan assures us that those of us who have not seen Him can still have Him as friend, *Guru*, lover and God.

Bhagavan’s followers come from all walks of Life. Scientists and sailors, pilots and students and others have seen His grace working in their lives. Ramana is a balm to heal the wounds of life. These are not just words but the truth of everyday life.

Bhagavan gives His grace to His devotees without their knowing. He sees no distinction between rich and poor, simple and intellectual, old and young and good and bad. He spreads the net of this grace far and wide and many are the souls caught inescapably in it. One may be more hopeful of redeeming a leaf from a flooded river or a typhoon than retrieving a soul caught in Bhagavan’s net. Many extremists have been known to have changed their attitudes after coming to meet Him.

Manickavachagar says that ‘those who weep, get Him’. People seeing Bhagavan or Arunachala lose themselves in intense emotion and weep. Some weep at His name. In the olden days, people travelling on buses going out of Tiruvannamalai could recognize devotees leaving Ramanasramam. They always looked as if they had lost something. Devotees are seen crying and sobbing in love

of the divine. But Arunachala Ramana moves unmoving hearts and fills their hearts with love and emotion. Rationalists, young playful boys and people immersed in worldly affairs and pleasures have found all their old ways falling off and a deep yearning filling their hearts, a yearning that could be appeased only by Sri Bhagavan. Great men appeal to the intellect through their wise teachings. What was there in Ramana's silence to enslave people?

People who read His life history and about His compassion and His kindness in consoling others even during His terrible illness cannot but melt with tears. Because of a devotee's carelessness once, Bhagavan fell down and injured Himself. Ramana told him not to reveal this to anyone, as the other devotees would scold him. Can words describe His infinite mercy? As it was said in the World War II days, we may say of Ramana: Never was so much owed by so many to just one being. Day by day His fame grows and His grace works more intensely.

The life of Ramana devotees is like a suspense story or a beautiful love story. They always look expectantly for signs of His grace and love. They meet many ups and downs but their difficulties have remedies. Arunachala gave the ocean of milk to a child crying for milk. As we had mentioned earlier, a few yearning souls asked for a drop of nectar in the form of a *Guru*. But they got in return a boundless ocean of nectar called Ramana.

One is a gigantic hill open to the elements. The other is a divine being open to all souls. They are there to help us, redeem us and give us salvation. Why wait to surrender to them?