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## **Caturviṃśati-Mūrti forms of Viṣṇu Additional notes on Daśāvatāra and Dvādaśa**

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### **Abstract**

The *Acta Orientalia* (2012, 2015) in the recent volumes has published blue-ribbon articles on the *Daśāvatāra*-10 and the *Dvādaśa*-12 with special reference to the Tamil *bhakti* literature. An elaborate codification of the assemblage of iconographical forms of Viṣṇu is perfected in the *Caturviṃśati*-24. Philosophies, *āgamas* and [*śilpa/vāstu*]-*śāstras* may speculate on concepts of coagulated (cf. Stietencron 1977: 127, 137) forms of the gods (e.g. Ekādaśa-Rudras) and the goddesses (Sapta Mātṛkās and Yoginīs-64). Are they represented in the pictorial arts (Jeyapriya 2015: 101)? *Daśāvatāra* and *Dvādaśa*, the Mātṛkas and the Yoginīs have been supported by archaeological and art historical evidences. Do we find any visual corroboration for Caturviṃśati? The present article is an eye-opener. I am not concerned with Śiva and Devī.

Keywords: *Caturviṃśati*, *Dvādaśa*, *Daśāvatāra*, *āgama*, iconography, Tiruvaraṅkam/Śrīraṅgam, *gopura*, visuals.

Forty years ago the Department of Art History and Sculpture of the Tamil University of Tañcāvūr directed a national, rather international Conference on “Facets of Temple Cities; their Arts and Culture” in the Araṅkam (Tiruvaraṅkam, Śrīraṅgam) Temple (cf. Michell 1993)<sup>1</sup>. Part of the proceedings was published in the *Tamil Civilization* (1993-95, vols. 11-13), journal of the host university nearly a decade later<sup>2</sup>. At that point of time in 1986 the crowd of devotees in the temple was negligible with no “pull and push” in long queues. We were able to lead the delegates all over the temple, including the *garbhagrha* to experience the *darśana* of Raṅganātha and the *raṅga-vimāna*<sup>3</sup> of the *Rāmāyaṇa* fame<sup>4</sup>. Thus the scholars felt the presence of the *mūla*-Raṅganātha with their mortal eyes. It was during this visit that I spotted a long row of *sthānaka*-Viṣṇu Mūrtis on cornice of a *maṇḍapa*-wall along the western bank of the Candra-*puṣkariṇī* (Auboyer 1994: Plan 2). My long-felt desire was an article should be written on these unreported sculptures. I had visited the temples several times but the idea of an article on the subject was lingering in

<sup>1</sup> The conference was sponsored by the University Grants Commission, New Delhi. National conferences directly sanctioned by the UGC are scarce today. Mostly the conferences are reduced to regional or sub-regional level; the universities granting Rs. 10,000 to 20,000 (100 to 200 Euros!). The experts deliberating in the Śrīraṅgam Conference (24-27 September 1986) were professors K.R. Srinivasan, K.V. Soundararajan, Pierre Filliozat, Vasundhara Filliozat, S. Settar, R. Champakalakshmi, Y. Yasoda Devi, M.S. Govindaswamy, R.S. Misra, Rama Sivaram, Shivaji Panikkar, S. Manickam et alii. George Michell met me in the Palace Complex of the Tamil University of Tañcāvūr on eve of his ‘Temple Towns’ project. Accompanied by Dallapiccola, we visited the *tērs* in the Tañcāvūr region (Kalidos 2006: II, pl. VIII); see Adam Hardy with family in Kalidos (2006: III, pl. VII.2).

<sup>2</sup> What all articles were found in an old file were published. Some delivered extemporaneous lectures (e.g. S. Settar), and others (R.S. Misra) promised to post the article (in those times type-written) that did not reach me.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the *Kōyil Oḷuku*, traditional register of the Śrīraṅgam Temple in its inaugural part says the *raṅga-vimāna* present in Brahmā’s Satyaloka was awarded to kings of the Sūryavaṃśa, which in turn was gifted to Vibhīṣaṇa. By folly or divine grace it was consecrated in the present venue. The *Koyil Oḷuku* formed part of the pioneer V.N. Hari Rao’s (1945) work. Added with historical notes from epigraphy, literary works in Sanskrit and āgamic traditions *śrīvaiṣṇavaśrī*-Krishṇamācārya (2005-2009: 23-32) has published the work in seven volumes. He has given shape to a New *Oḷuku*.

<sup>4</sup> Professor P. S. Filliozat told me personally: “I have visited the temple many times but not the *garbhagrha*. You have taken me into the holy of the holies (*Tamil Civilization* 1993-95: 6).” Entry for non-Hindus is restricted beyond the Āryahattā-*vācal* (third *prākāra*).

mind. During the summer (2017) R.K.K. Rajarajan, R.K. Parthiban, Jeyapriya-Rajarajan and their colleagues visited the temple again in connection with their papers. I was with them. R.K.K. Rajarajan did the photographic work with his inquisitive kite-like eyes (in Tamil we say *karuṭap-pārvai* to denote keen observation). I specifically advised him to get photo copies of the “coagulated” Caturviṃśati Viṣṇu-mūrtis. The present communication fulfills my long-felt aspiration, especially in the light of the two articles published in the *Acta Orientalia* (Jeyapriya 2015: 91-117 on *Dvādaśa*, Ganeshram 2012: 1-16 on *Daśāvatāra*). The location of the images is within an area where non-Hindus are not permitted, and so had evaded the attention of inquisitive scholars that could be reported in scholarly journals or books. Several books and articles were published on Śrīraṅgam but the images under study had dodged the concern of scholars remaining in splendid isolation since I noticed forty years ago. The present article sheds light on visuals relating to the Caturviṃśatimūrti. Interestingly, we find *Daśāvatāra*, *Dvādaśa* and Caturviṃśati in different parts of the Tiruvaraṅkam<sup>5</sup> temple.

<sup>5</sup> For frequencies see TI 6, 98; TII 28, 46, 70, 87; TIII 62, CAN 21, 49, 51-55, 119; TM 2.7.2, 8, 4.8.1-10, 4.9.1-11, 4.10.1-10; NT 11.1-10; NTV 36; PT *triumolis* 1-3: 30 hymns); AMA 1-2, 4-6, 8-10; PL 1-10; Mālai (passim) 1-3; MOLI 7.2.1-10; TAN 11, 14; KUR 19; CTM 71; PTML 118; PTM 1.8.2, 3.7.6, 5.5.4-7, 9-10, 5.6.1-10, 5.7.1-10, 5.8.1-10, 7.3.4, 8.2.7, 11.3.7; totally 247 occurrences (cf. Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos 2017a: 139-40). The Lord is Araṅkaṇ, Aḷakiya-maṇavāḷaṇ (Handsome Groom); Tāyār: Araṅkanāyaki or Śrīraṅga-nācciyār; *vimāna*: *vedaśṛṅga*; *tīrtha*: Candra-puṣkariṇī; eleven Ālvārs excepting Maturakavi have extolled the holy land and the Lord. The *divyadeśa* is located in the heart of Kāvirināṭu.

Araṅkam is known as Aṇiyaraṅkam “Decorated State” (TM 4.9.3, TAN 12, 19); Araṅkam “Stage” (KUR 12, TM 4.8.6); Araṅka-nakar “City of the Stage” (PT 3.6, PTM 9.9.2); Cīraṅkaṅkam, popularly Cīraṅkam or Śrīraṅkam “Celebrated Stage”, “affluent” (TM 4.8.7, CAN 50); *neṭu*-Mālūr “city of the Tall Black”, an archaic name (TM 4.7.9); Poṇṇaraṅkam “Golden Stage” (INA 35); Tirumāl-Kōyil “Temple of the Sacred Black” (TM 4.9.1); Tiruppati “Sacred Venue” (TM 4.0.11); Tiruvaraṅkam/Śrīraṅgam “Sacred Stage” (TM 4.8.2, 4.9.6-7, 10; TAN 18, 23; KUR 7); Araṅkattu-araṅkam (Raṅga-raṅga-Raṅgapati-Raṇanātha of Telugu Aṇṇamayya; Ramesh 2001), and Vāṇaraṅkam (for more details see Kalidos 1991-93: 137, Jeyapriya 2001: 612-15).

The Mūrti is Araṅkamānakaruḷāṇ (Mālai 1-3, 8, 25, 29, 31, 36, 39-40, 43), Araṅkaṇ/Raṅganātha (NTV 60, PT 1.10, PL 10, Mālai passim), [Tiruv]Araṅkar (NT 11.4, 10), Araṅkattammāṇ (AMA 1-2.5, 8, PL 1-10), Araṅkanakarappā “Patriarch of the Araṅkam city” (PTM 11.8.8), Araṅkattanaiyāṇ (TM 1.4.9), Araṅkattaravaṇai-palliyāṇ (TM 4.10.1-10), Teṇ-Araṅkaṇ (TM 2.9.11, 5.6.1-10), vaṇ-Tiruvaraṅkaṇ (NT 11.1-10,

### Concept of Caturviṃśati

The pioneer, T.A. Gopinatha Rao writing in 1914 (1999: 225-44) has included a section on Caturviṃśati-mūrtayaḥ. He has summed up the notes obtained from the *Rūpamaṇḍana* and *Pātāla-kāṇḍa* of the *Padma-purāṇa* (Rao 1999: 229-30, 231-32, cf. Desai 1973: 151). The *Pāñcarātrāgama* is cited in the context of the philosophical orientations (Rao 1999: 224). The multiplied forms of Para-Vāsudeva are representations of the *guṇāṃśa* of the Lord such as *jñāna* (wisdom), *śakti* (energy, *kriyā* “creative power”), *bala* (strength), *aiśvarya* (supremacy, “[never decreasing] riches” *nīṅkāta-celvam* PVP 3), *vīrya* (potency, heroism) and *tejas* (dissemination of light, illumination). The Lord above all is *nirdoṣa* (free from evil, anti-terrorist). Rao has cited some photographic illustrations from Hoysala art that are independent representations. They are not narrative. S. Settar (1991: II, pls. pp. 22-23, 54-55, 88-91, 118-119, 238) has illustrated several narrative forms. The individual icons are not identified. The problem is it is difficult to detect the emblems (e.g. c-ś-g-p) meant for each typology in the meant order. Mostly, the *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, *padma*, *gadā* or *abhaya mudrā* are the hallmarks of identification; the *aimpaṭai/paṅcāyudhas* are not only weapons but ornaments for the Lord (TM 1.3.5).

H. Krishna Sastri (1916: 55) talks of the “twenty-four well known names of Viṣṇu” repeated by *brāhmaṇas* in their daily prayers (cf. Stietencron 1977: 127). They are *sthānaka* endowed with the *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, *gadā* and *padma*. A conference proceeding of the Birla Archaeological Institute, Hyderabad, *Vishṇu in Art, Thought and Literature* has not inducted any article bearing on Caturviṃśati. This

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MOLI 7.2.10, Viru 28), Tiruvaraṅkac-celvaṇār (NT 11.3, 6-8), Tiruvaraṅkar (TM 4.9.2) and Tiruvaraṅkattāṇ (Mālai 42). The *bhujāṅga-śayana*-Mūrti is *teṇ-ticai-nōkki* “south facing” (PT 1.10); head placed on the west, legs extended to the east, back to the north and facing southern Laṅkā (Mālai 19).

Aḷakiyamaṇavālap Perumāl is noted in inscriptions of Kulottuṅga I by about 1085 CE, also Vikramacōḷa 1118 CE and Kulottuṅga III 1185 CE (ARE 1936-37: [no.] 15, 1948-49: 37, 1936-37: 17, 34, 76). Anatanārāyaṇasvāmi “Nārāyaṇa who was pleased to recline on bed of the Eternal Snake” is noted by Kulottuṅga I, dated 1091 CE (ARE 1938-39: 130). Tiruvaraṅkattālvār is another name (ARE 1938-39: 131). Raṅganātha comes to light during the time of Hoysala Vīranarasimha II by about 1232 CE (ARE 1936-37: 69, 1892: 54). In Telugu inscriptions of the Nāyakas (1734 CE) the Lord is Śrīraṅganāyakulu (ARE 1938-39, no.101).



book (Kamalakar and Veerender eds.1993: 19-33) notes fourteen forms of Nṛsiṃha (cf. Vīrabhadra in note 21). The *Rūpamālā* (Gooneratne 1995: 26-38), a *śilpa* compilation of Śrī Laṅkā talks of the *daśāvatāras*, including the Buddha in place of Balarāma. Nothing is told of Dvādaśa and Caturviṃśati.

Kalpana S. Desai has listed the Dvādaśa based on *Pārameśvara-saṃhitā* and *Ahīrbudhnya-saṃhitā* (cf. Jeyapriya 2015), and Caturviṃśati based on *Padma Purāṇa* and *Rūpamaṇḍana* (Desai 1973: 151). The *Padma Purāṇa* is dated during 600-750 CE (O’Flaherty 1994: 18) and the *Rūpamaṇḍana* a century later. However, the *Viṣṇusahasranāma* (Mahadevan 1976, Svāmi Tapasyānanda 1986) part of the *Mahābhārata* in *Śānti Parvan* sporadically notes the twenty-four epithets<sup>6</sup> listed below<sup>7</sup>:

Keśavaḥ<sup>8</sup>-23/648, Nārāyaṇaḥ-245, Mādhavaḥ-72/167/735, Govindaḥ-187/539, Viṣṇuḥ-2/258/657, Madhusūdanaḥ/Madhuḥ-168, Trivikramaḥ-530, Vāmanaḥ-152, Śrīdharaḥ-610, Hṛṣīkeśaḥ-47, Padmanābhaḥ-48/196/346, Dāmodaraḥ-367, Saṃkarṣaṇa,

<sup>6</sup> The suffixing numeral denotes the number of epithet listed in Svāmi Tapasyānanda (1986). The *Viṣṇusahasranāma* epithets are alphabetically arranged in Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos (2017a: 1652-57). The Tamilized nom/nāma appears redundantly in the *Nālāyirativiyappirapantam* (Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos 2017: 4 vols).

<sup>7</sup> The Tamil morphological forms of these terms are discussed in the present context (see Rajarajan, Parthian and Kalidos 2017b: chap. VI). Few samples are cited here point out how the Sanskritic thought was recast in Tamil. For Dvādaśa see Jeyapriya 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Kēcavaṇ (TI 100; CAN 20; NTV 59; TM 1.2.1, 1.8.10, 2.9.8, 3.3.2, 8, 3.7.5, 7, 4.4.10, 4.5.1, 4.6.1; PAV 7; NT 2.5; PTA 65; MOLI 1.5.6, 2.7.1, 4.9.11, 6.4.11, 7.5.3, 6, 10.6.2) is *prasasta-keśa* excessively fond of His locks (PVP TM 1.8.10), *keśa* “locks of hair”; i) one with beautiful locks of hair, ii) he who admonished the horse-demon Keśi, iii) the Lord reclining on the Ocean of Milk, *kiṭanta-em-Kēcavaṇ* (MOLI 10.9.7); chief of Brahmā and Rudra (PVP PAV 30); Kēcava-nampi Lord Keśava (PTM 9.9.6), “Keśava endowed with all *kalyāṇa-guṇas*” (TM 2.3.1, NT 1.8); *Keṭum-ṭṭarāya-ellām Kēcavāṇṇa* “all evils vanish if the name Keśava is uttered” (MOLI 10.2.1); *keśa* means “rays of light spreading within the orbit of the sun”; the all-knowing holy men call the Lord Keśava; *trayāḥkeśavaḥ* the merger of the divine powers of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva (Santhana-Lakshmi-Parthiban 2015); the primordial energy, *śaktimarkeśauvasudhāta*; Brahmā and Īśvara-Śiva are born in Keśava (*Harivaṃśa* 3.88.48 cited in Svāmi Tapasyānanda 1986: 127-28, cf. *Īṭu* VII, 229 note 3). The ‘Nālāyiram’ annotations are cited from Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos 2017a.

Vāsudevaḥ <sup>9</sup> -332/695/709, Pradyumnaḥ-640, Aniruddhaḥ-185/638, Puruṣottamaḥ-24, Adhokṣajaḥ-415, Nṛsimha - Nārasimha-vapuḥ-21, Acyutaḥ <sup>10</sup> -100/318, Janārdanaḥ-126, Upendraḥ-151, Hariḥ-650/698, and Kṛṣṇaḥ <sup>11</sup> -57/550.

<sup>9</sup> Vacutēvar/Vācutēvaṇ (PT 6.1, 6, 7.3; TM 1.3.6, 16, 1.8.2, 8, 2.2.5, 3.3.8, 3.6.3; NT 4.3; MOLĪ 5.2.6; PTM 6.8.10); Vācutēvā (TM 2.2.3) was first among the Vṛṣṇis; father of Kṛṣṇa; identified with Kṛṣṇa as Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa (NT 7.3, 7).

<sup>10</sup> Accutaṇ (CAN 117; TM 1.3.6, 1.4.8, 2.3.13, 4.10.10; NT 6.9; MOLĪ 3.4.4-5, 9, 3.5.11, 3.6.8, 3.10.4, 4.5.3, 5.2.9, 7.3.11, 7.8.2, 7.8.10); see Acyuta; Endless, Eternal; ‘Unfallen’, ‘He who does not perish with created things’, ‘He who is not distinct from final emancipation’, ‘He who never declines (or varies) from his proper nature’ (Dowson 1998: 2); Ekam, *ekarūpa* (PVP Mālai 2).

<sup>11</sup> For copious concordance see Rajarajan et al. (2017a: 515-18): TI 7, 56; TII 64, 100; TIII 8; CAN 25, 37, 47, 86, 93, 105; NTV 50, 80, 84, 93; PT 1.4, 7.4.; TM 1.10.2, 2.8.4; Viru 2, 11-12, 18, 25-26, 37, 47, 57-58, 63; PTA 4, 12, 25, 36, 67, 85; Mālai 18, 29, 32, 45; TM 1.2.1, 2.5.2-3, 2.10.10, 3.4.3, 10, 3.8.8, 5.1.8; MOLĪ 1.5.7, 1.8.2, 1.9.1, 3-4, 10-11, 1.10.11, 2.2.1, 9, 2.3.7, 9, 2.4.7, 2.5.5, 2.6.2-3, 11, 2.7.1, 9, 13, 2.8.10, 2.9.3-4, 3.2.7-8, 10, 3.3.3, 3.4.1-3, 3.4.8-9, 3.5.1, 3.6.1-2, 5, 10, 3.7.2, 7, 3.9.2, 3.9.11, 3.10.2, 6, 8, 10, 4.1.3, 11, 4.2.10, 4.3.5, 4.4.7-8, 9-10-11, 4.5.2-3, 4.6.9, 5.1.4-5, 11, 5.2.10-11, 5.3.4, 11, 5.4.2, 5, 8, 6.1.9, 6.3.4, 8, 6.5.4, 6.6.7, 6.7.1, 8, 6.8.6-9, 7.1.8-9, 7.2.2-3, 7.2.7, 7.3.2, 5, 7.5.7, 7.5.11, 7.7.1, 4, 7.8.4, 7-9, 7.10.4, 7, 8.2.3, 11, 8.5.1, 6, 8.9.9, 9.1.9-11, 9.4.7, 9.5.1, 4, 9.5.8, 9.6.5-7, 9.9.1, 7, 9.9.8, 10.3.2, 5, 10.4.11, 10.5.1; PTM 4.1.10, 4.2.6, 4.3.9, 4.6.1-2, 10, 4.8.1, 9, 5.2.10, 7.3.4, 7.6.1, 10.8.10, 11.3.7.

*Paripāṭal* 15.49; Kaṇṇā (TIII 87, PT 7.6, TM 2.3.6, 2.9.4, 3.3.9, 5.1.6, PAV 4, MOLĪ 10.3.1, PTM 1.9.10, 7.1.9), Kaṇṇa (PTM 7.10.10), Kaṇṇapirāṇ TM 2.4.10, 2.9.2, NT 10.6, MOLĪ 7.3.5, 9, 8.9.6, PTM 6.9.7), Kaṇṇap-perumāṇ; Kaṇṇāḷaṇ (MOLĪ 9.8.5, PTM 11.6.7), Kaṇṇar (PTM 4.4.1, 4), Kaṇṇanār (PTA 49, PTM 4.10.2), Kaṇṇāṇ (PTM 2.5.8); Kaṇṇaṇ-eṇ-Kaṇṇaṇ “Kṛṣṇa, my dear Kṛṣṇa” (PTM 11.3.6); cf. the *divyadeśas* Kaṇṇapuram-128, Kaṇṇaṇkuṭi-10 and Kaṇṇamaṇkai-14, totally 152 hymns.

One with beautiful eyes; *āḷimaḷaik*-Kaṇṇā “Governor of the majestic ocean-like rain [*varṣa*]” (PVP PAV 4); *tāmarai-pōl*-Kaṇṇāṇ Kṛṣṇa with the lotus eyes (CTM 76). Kaṇṇaṇ is *kaṇ*, *aṇ-kaṇṇaṇ* “with beautiful eyes” (TM 2.1.8); there is no *kaṇ* other than Kaṇṇaṇ (MOLĪ 2.2.1); *Kaṇṇāṇ*-Kaṇṇaṇ “Kṛṣṇa is Lord of the Eyes” (Viru 23); *kaṇ-peruṇ*-Kaṇṇaṇ with big eyes (MOLĪ 9.5.9), *periya-kōlat-taṭaṇ-kaṇ-ṇaṇ* He with big rolling beautiful eyes (MOLĪ 4.5.6); *kōlac-centāmarai*-Kaṇṇaṇ “the eye-beauty as the belle red-lotus (MOLĪ 6.6.1); *puṇṭarikaṇkaḷ-pōlum-kaṇṇaṇ* “eyes resembling lotus flowers” (MOLĪ 6.8.7); *paṇkayakkaṇṇaṇ* “Kṛṣṇa with lotus-eyes” (PAV 14).

Kaṇṇā or Kaṇṇē “my eyes” (MOLĪ 8.1.2, 9.4.2) is a soul-stirring invocation; *nam-Kaṇṇaṇ* “our Kṛṣṇa” (Viru 27); e.g. Draupadī invoking the Lord when stripped in the Kaurava court PTM 2.3.6); *Kaṇṇaṇ-tirumūrtti* “Sacred *vigraha* of Kṛṣṇa” (MOLĪ 5.2.10).

The epithets under Dvādaśa have been systematically Tamilized in the hymns of the Ālvārs (Jeyapariya 2015: 104-10); e.g. Kṛṣṇa = Kaṇṇaṇ (Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos 2017b: chap. VI, 139-219). We do not get a consolidated chronicle of the Caturviṃśati-mūrti in the Tamil hymns; for Adhokṣaja and Upendra we do not find equivalences in the ‘Nālāyiram’. Mātavaṇ/Madhava, Caṇārttaṇaṇ/Janārdana, Cītarāṇ/Śrīdhara (cf. *cī* and *śrī*), Patumaṇāpaṇ-Untipūttōṇ/Padmanābha, Kōvintaṇ/Govinda, Viṇṭu-Viṭṭu/Viṣṇu, Vāmaṇ-Vāmaṇaṇ-Kuṛaḷaṇ/Vāmana, Tirivikkiramaṇ/Trivikrama (cf. *tiri* and *tri*), Kēcavaṇ/Keśava, Accutaṇ<sup>12</sup> /Acyuta, Tāmōtaraṇ/Dāmodara, Matucūtaṇaṇ/Madhusūdana, Kaṇṇaṇ/Kṛṣṇa, Naraciṇkaṇ/Nṛsiṃha, Iruṭikēcaṇ/Hṛṣīkeśa, Tacāvatāraṇ/Daśāvatāra, Vācutēvaṇ/Vāsudeva, Arimāl/Hari and Nārāyaṇaṇ/Nārāyaṇa are listed in the *Piṅkalam* (v. 130), a later medieval (c. 12<sup>th</sup> century) lexis (cf. Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos 2017b: chap. VI). This list also fails to appraise the Tamil equivalent of Adhokṣaja and Upendra. Upēntiraṇ<sup>13</sup> is cited from other sources (*Peruṇcollakarāti* III, 250).

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Tamil Kiruṭṭiṇam (Kṛṣṇa *Īṭu* I, 322; TL II, 930-31); *kaṇ-avan*Kaṇṇaṇ [K] “dear to the eyes” or the eyefuls (Settar 1993: 223-40, Kalidos 2006: 142); *Karunteyvam* “Black God” (MOLI 9.3.4); Kaṇṇaṇ-*eṇṇuṇ-karunteyvam* “Kṛṣṇa, the Black God” (NT 13.1). Kaṇṇaṇ*allālteyvamillai* (MOLI 5.2.7), Kaṇṇaṇ*allālilaikaṇṭīr* “no God other than Kṛṣṇa” (MOLI 9.1.10); Lokāḥ Lokapālāḥ... Devā Devakīputra eva “He is the world, Guardian of the world, Lord, son of Devakī (*Īṭu* V, 60 note citing the *Mahābhārata*); “Whoever worships in a form desirable to him, I appear in such a form” (*Gītā* 7.21):

*Yoyoyāmyāmtanuṃbhaktaḥśraddhayārcitumicchati/  
Tasyatasyācalāṃśraddhāṃtāmevavidadhāmyaham//*

<sup>12</sup> Paccaimāmalaipōlmēṇipavaḷavāyṅkamalacceṇkaṇ

Accutāvararērēyāyartanōḷuntēyēṇṇum

Iccuvaitavirayāṇṇōyintiralōkamālum

AccuvaiperiṇumvēṇṭēṇAraṅkamānakaruḷāṇē

(Mālai 2; Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos 2017: Vol. III)

*Paccai māmalaī pōl meṇi* the body is as the *Marakatagiri* “Hill of Emerald” (PVP), *pavaḷa vāy* coral lips, *kamalac ceṇkaṇ* lotus red-eyes, *Accutā* Acyuta, *amarar ērē* bull among the gods, *yāyar taṇ koḷuntē eṇṇum* sprout of the family of cowherds, *iccuvaī tavira* excepting this bliss [*rasa* PVP] (of enjoying Thee), *yāṇ pōy Intira lokam ālum* if I am to rule the world of Indra, *accuvaī perīṇum vēṇṭēṇ* I do not prefer that pleasure, *Araṅkamā nakaruḷāṇē* Thou, the Lord of Araṅkam.

“Lord, Thy body is the ‘Hill of Emerald’, lips coral, and red-eyes lotuses. Acyuta is the bull among gods. He is the sprout of the family of cowherds. Excepting the bliss of enjoying the Lord, I do not desire any other pleasure even if I am offered the kingdom of Indra. Thou are the Lord of Araṅkam.”

<sup>13</sup> He was the son of Indra, and identified with Viṣṇu-Trivikrama.

The Caturviṃśati-mūrti are mainly identified with reference to their *sthānaka* mode and the alternating *cakra* (c), *śaṅkha* (ś), *gadā* (g) and *padma* (p) grafted to the *caturbhujas*<sup>14</sup>. Of the twenty-four, twelve are Dvādaśa listed in Jeyapriya (2015: 95) with the emblems ear-marked. Basing on the canon, *Rūpamaṇḍana* the emblems of the twenty-four are stipulated as follows (Desai 1973: 151)<sup>15</sup>:

1. Keśava	PSCG	Nārāyaṇa	SPGC	Mādhava	GCSP
4. Govinda	CGPS	Viṣṇu	GPSC	Madhusūdana	CSPG
7. Trivikrama	PGCS	Vāmana	SCGP	Śrīdhara	PCGS
10. Hṛṣīkeśa	GCPs	Padmanābha	SPCG	Dāmodhara	PSGC
13. Saṃkarṣaṇa	GSPC	Vāsudeva	GSCP	Pradyumna	CSGP
16. Aniruddha	CGSP	Puruṣottama	CPSG	Adhokṣaja	PGSC
19. Nṛsiṃha	CPGS	Acyuta	GPCS	Janārdana	PCSG
22. Upendra	SGCP	Hari	SCPG	24. Kṛṣṇa	SGPC

This is the only clue to identify the images (Jeyapriya 2015). Desai (1973: 151) naïvely suggests the emblems in respect of Janārdana, Upendra and Hari are not traceable in the *Paḍma Purāṇa* (cf. Rao (1997: 232 citing the *Rūpamaṇḍana*). Desai wrote sixty years after Rao. Obviously they must have consulted different manuscripts available in the south and the north. Presumably, when Rao (1914) wrote his magnum opus, the *śilpa* and *āgama* or *purāṇa* texts under

<sup>14</sup> *Āyudha*, *astra*, *paṭai* “weapon” (TM 4.9.11), missile\*; *palpaṭai-taṭakkai* several weapons in hands (CAN 104), *paṭaikkalam* “armaments” (TM 4.7.5); the Lord’s true weapon is *satyā*, *dharma* and *nīti* directed toward *śāntiḥ*, and annihilate terrorism. The *āyudha* is an ornament, not a destructive weapon in literary sense. Most desired among the weapons are *cakra* (right *parahasta*) and *śaṅkha*/Pāñcājanya (left *pūrvahasta*; the other two being female-*gadā* and *padma*. The *Īṭu* (V, 185) says the *cakra* and *śaṅkha* are *divyāyudhas* (*Īṭu* VI, 457) and abstractions of Sūrya and Candra. Other weapons are *vil-dhanus* “bow”, *taṇṭu-bāṇa* “arrow/missile”, *vāl-khaḍga* “sword”. For a brief summation see Santhana-Lakshmi-Parthiban (2014: 81). For more details see Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos 2017a. The presiding God of *divyadeśa*-Aṭṭapuyakkaram in Kāñci (Rajarajan 2007: 30) is known as Aṣṭabhujasvāmi TIII 99; PTML 128; PTM 2.8.1-10; cf. Sastri 1916: fig. 11). The weapons are *cakra*, *khaḍga*, *puṣpa*, *bāṇa* (right), *śaṅkha*, *dhanus*, *kheṭaka* and *gadā* (left).

\* *Brahmāstraṃ* (nuclear weapon of those times) could not be even touched to solve petty quarrels, which peace loving nations (e.g. Russia, US, all European counties and India) follow today.

<sup>15</sup> Basing on *Padma Purāṇa* a list of emblems is presented in which the attributes meant for Janārdana, Upendra and Hari are missing (Desai 1973: 151, cf. Rao 1997: 232).

note were unpublished. Scholastic contribution to Hindu iconography was just sprouting.

## Visual evidences

All the three categories, viz., Daśāvatāra (cf. *pattiṇāyatōṛram* “ten (*avatāra*) forms” CAN 79), Dvādaśa and Caturviṃśati are present in Śrīraṅgam. These are accommodated in different parts of the macro-temple (Fig. 1) in the micro-temple city. The images are located on *gopuras* and *maṇḍapas*, including the exterior landscape of the city (Fergusson 1876/1972: plan facing p. 368, Brown 1976: pl. LXXV, Krishṇamācārya 2007: fig. p. 312)<sup>16</sup>. The visuals in stucco datable since the Vijayanagara-Nāyaka period are renovated from time to time (Kalidos 1997, Rajarajan 2014). It is recorded Śrīraṅgam underwent catastrophic decades and centuries following Islamic disasters in the 14<sup>th</sup> century (*Madhurāvijayam* of Gaṅgādevī; cf. Aiyangar 1921/n.d.: 112-16, Krishnaswami 1964: 41-48, Kalidos 1976: 214-15, Dodamani 2008: 19-20, 45) and the *Kōyil Oḷuku*. Under the British and the French it was a military camp where all kind of desecration went on unabated during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It seems the construction of the tall *Rāyagopura* (completed in the 1980s, cf. Parker 1992) was hampered due to the presence of the French army in the sacred *kōyil* premises. However, the British reorganized the administration of the temple looking into the hand-written manuscripts that was submitted by the *brāhmaṇa* priests. It came to be known as *Kōyil Oḷuku*. Raṅganātha and Jambukeśvara could be viewed in original form under the Vijayanagara-Nāyakas reviving the golden days of Śrīraṅgam and Gajāraṇya/Āṇaikkā (cf. the *Madhurāvijayam*); cf. inscriptional attestation in (Krishṇamācārya 2009: V, II).

<sup>16</sup> *Puram* is noted in PT 1.8; NT 10.8; MOLI 5.1.1, 6.9.8, 7.8.8, 8.1.6, 10.8.9; PTM 4.1.1; stands for the wilderness not occupied by human beings, *araṇya* (Tamil *āraṇiyam*), *pradeśa* (PVP PTM 4.9.10), *kārārpuravu* “gloomy hinterland” (PTM 8.8.3); outer force, other place (PT 5.8); behind, rear side (PVP PTM 10.8.1), *purattiṭṭu* “push behind”, gravitation; *Māyā* (*Īṭu*/Naiḍu 2012: V, 25); *puram-pōkku* (MOLI 10.10.5) is “no man’s land” (Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos 2017a, cf. Hart 1999).

## Daśāvatāra

Krishṇamācārya<sup>17</sup> (2007: I, 1, 153-54) has cited PTM (8.8.10) with reference to the Daśāvatāra-*caṇṇiti* (Chapel for Daśāvatāra) on *vaṭatiruk-Kāvirik-karai* (northern bank of the sacred Kāviri)<sup>18</sup>. By oral tradition Tirumaṅkai Ālvār is said to have built this shrine. The *prathiṣṭha* of the Mūrtis was conducted in 1439 C.E. during the time of Devarāya II (ARE 1937-38, no. 39; Krishṇmācārya 2009: V, II, 70). Two inscriptions of Nāyaka Cokkanātha (Regent Maṅgammāl 1689-1706) refer to the donations granted to the ‘Daśāvatāram Tirumaṅkai Ālvār *caṇṇiti*’, including the gold-coated images of *Matsya* and *Kūrma* (ARE 1936-37, no. 102). It is understood Tirumaṅkai Ālvār was accommodated in this shrine along with the Daśāvatāra-mūrtis (ARE 1936-37, no. 101). One of the inscriptions (ARE 136-37, no. 102) notes the *adbhuta-vimāna*, *ardhamanḍapa* and *mahāmanḍapa*. The administration of the shrine was invested with *brāhmaṇa* priests down to 1757 CE (ARE 1936-37, no. 100). Located close to a bathing ghat called *Pāṭiyavāṇan*<sup>19</sup>-*tuṛai* (ford of the lord hymnist, cf. *tīrttat-tuṛai* ARE 1938-39, no. 42); the cited hymn of Tirumaṅkai Ālvār notes the *avatāras* in the meant order: *Mīṇ/Matsya* “Fish”, *Āmai/Kūrma* “Tortoise”, *Kēḷal/Varāha* “Boar”, *Ari/Hari* “Nṛsiṃha”, *Kuṛaḷ/Vāmana* “Dwarf”, *muṇṇum*-*Irāmaṇāyt-Tāṇāy-piṇṇum*-*Irāmaṇ* “earlier Rāma (Paraśu), the Self/Puruṣottama (Dāśarathi-Rāma), again Rāma (Balabhadra)”, *Tāmōtaraṇ/Kṛṣṇa*<sup>20</sup> and

<sup>17</sup> During our visit to Śrīraṅgam, we had the privilege of an interview with this dignitary who is self-taught on subjects relating to Śrīraṅgam. By the way we may point out “Śrī-Vaiṣṇava-Śrī” appears in Nam Piḷḷai commenting on MOLI 5.6.11 (*Īṭu* V, 276-77).

<sup>18</sup> We have not visited this shrine. The present account is based on the reported material in Krishṇamācārya’s *KōyilOḷuku*.

<sup>19</sup> For *vāṇaṇ* see THH 80, 92; CAN 53, 70; NTV 56; TM 5.3.9; MOLI 2.4.2, 3.8.9, 3.10.4, 5.7.8; PTM 4.2.5, PTM 4.3.8, 4.4.7, 6.7.6, 9.7.2 9.10.9 (Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos 2017a: 1545). *Vāṇar* “Resident God” (CAN 93); *Nirvahaṇa* sustain, maintain (Bhide 1990: 616) “Cosmic Master” (*Īṭu* VI, 277), *nirvahaṇa* also means “leading to the end”, destruction and annihilation of terrorists (ibidem). *Vēṅkaṭa-vāṇaṇ* is “Lord of Vēṅkaṭam” (MOLI 6.6.11, 8.2.1), *Maṛai-vāṇaṇ* “Lord existing in the *Vedas*” (MOLI 4.6.10).

<sup>20</sup> See the list of *Dvādaśa* and *Caturviṃśati* in which *Dāmodara* and *Kṛṣṇa* are listed separately. *Tāmōtaraṇ/Dāmodara* is baby *Kṛṣṇa* tied to a mortar with a *dama* “rope”. Cf. Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos (2017a): *Tāmōtaraṇ* PT 6.2; TM 2.3.12, 2.5.8, 2.9.8, 3.2.9, 3.3.3, 3.5.7, 9, 3.8.3, 4.6.6, 5.4.1; Viru 49; PTA 32; PAV 5; NT 7.4;

Kaṛki/Kalki; *pattiṇāyatōṣṣam* (CAN 79) “appearances in ten” (cf. Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos 2017: Vol. IV).

The Daśāvatāras in the *caṇṇiti* are independently represented in two rows of five Mūrtis: *Matsya* and *Kūrma* in zoomorphic form devoid of the golden mask (supra); *Varaha* and *Nṛsiṃha* human mixed with animal (cf. *naraṇ-kalanta*-Ciṅkam TII 84); others anthropomorphic (Krishṇamācārya 2007: fig. p. 154). The literary mandate for the visuals could have been the PTM of Tirumaṅkai. R.K.K. Rajarajan (2006: 46, 66) has reported separate enclaves for the Daśāvatāras in the temple at Vaikuntam (one among the ‘Navatiruppati’ in Tāmiraparaṇi basin - Rajarajan 2011: 142, note 5), Māliṛuñcōlai (chronologically as early as Araṅkam, Vēṇkaṭam and Aṇantapuram - Kalidos 2015: 312-18), Tāṭikkompu (1629 CE, Maturai Nāyaka - Gopalakrishnan 1996: 416), and Maṇṇārkuṭi (Tañcāvūr Nāyaka). These chapels are additions of the Vijayanagara-Nāyaka time. Certain ideas gaining currency in literary sources of an early period enter the world of visual arts at a later point of time; a good example in the present context is Caturviṃśati.

Stucco images of Daśāvatāra and Dvādaśa in Śrīraṅgam appear on the first *taḷa* of the southern *gopura*<sup>21</sup> (Fig. 2) of the fifth *prākāra*, the Akalaṅkaṇ-tiruccuṟu known after Vikramacōḷa (1118-35 CE)<sup>22</sup>.

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MOLI 2.7.11-12, 4.7.3, 10.4.1. Āmōtaram-[āmō] (MOLI 2.7.13) “Is it possible to measure (the efficacy)?” (Naiḍu 2012: II 202).

<sup>21</sup> Tamil *kōpuram* (MOLI 10.8.3, 10.9.8; PTM 3.10.8; *Tēvāram* 4.9.9, *tirukkōpuram* in ARE 1936-37, no. 87, dated 1610 CE, see note 23), Sanskrit *gopura*[m] (Apte 2012: 193) is typically Drāviḍian (south of the Kṛṣṇā), the earliest *dvāraśobhā* (*Mayamata*, chap. 24; cf. Dagens 1985: 162) peeping in the Kailāsa-s of Kāñci and Ellora, Cave XVI (Harle 1963, Kalidos 2006: I, XIII.2, II, pl. II.2; for Cōḷa see Sitanarasimhan 2006: pls. 25-26). The New *Rāyagopura* of Śrīraṅgam completed in 1980s is seventy-seven meters high in thirteen *talas*. The idea spread to the Tamil Diaspora due to what Arnold J. Toynbee calls “mimesis”. It is not “global” if found in London or Atlanta. Śrī Laṅkā was a satellite of Buddhist-Hindu culture (cf. Rajarajan 2016: pl. 36a-b, d). Do not we find the “spire” and the Muḥammadan “*minar*” all over the world? The *minar* is a symbol of destruction of others religious properties (e.g. the Kutb zone in Delhi accommodating the Iron Pillar of Candragupta, cf. Habib 2011: fig. 2.8) to erect “tombs” employing the debris (Hegewald 2012: 77-100). For a copious study of Tamil *kōpurams* see Soundararajan 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Vikramacōḷa was the son of Kulottuṅga I (1070-1122). His donations to the temple are recorded in inscriptions (ARE 1936-37: 33, 1947-48: 127-128, 1948-49: 38-39, 1952-53: 339-340, 1954-55: 437). The donations pertain to offerings in the temple, maintenance of flower gardens, sheep for supply of ghee to *nontāvilakku* (perpetual lamp), feeding *śrīvaiṣṇava* pilgrims and mendicants (cf. Pakavar, Bhāgavata; TM

The Daśāvatāra stucco images are in the right to left pattern (i.e., *pradakṣiṇa*) on the right half as one stands facing the *gopura*. The ten are *Matsya*, *Kūrma*, *Varāha*, *Nṛsiṃha*, *Vāmana* (for Trivikrama see Parthiban and Rajarajan 2017), *Paraśurāma*, *Dāśarathi-Rāma*, *Balarāma*, dancing *Kṛṣṇa* and *Kalki* (Fig.3). Iconometrically, *Dāśarathi* is the tallest set within the *kīrtimukha* of *śālapañjara* aedicule. *Matsya* and *Kūrma* are anthropomorphic above hip. They are of their respective zoomorphic form below hip. *Varāha* and *Nṛsiṃha* are fitted with boar and lion masks, and manly below neck. *Vāmana* is iconometrically equal to *Nṛsiṃha* et alii. The Lord is holding an umbrella to cover his head, and *kuṇḍikā* in the right suspended hand. *Paraśurāma* carries the *paraśu* in right hand. *Dāśarathi* is endowed with the *Viṣṇu-dhanus* and the *Rāma-bāṇa*. *Balarāma* is posing *ūruhasta* and *tarjanimudrā*. *Kṛṣṇa* is baby-like lifting the right leg posing a dance. *Kalki* is endowed with horse-face, *hayagrīva*; *Varāhamūrti* is horse-faced in the *Tāṭikkompu* cluster of *daśāvatāra*, a popular cult image in the region. *Matsya*, *Kūrma*, *Varāha* and *Kalki* are *caturbhuja* gifted with the *cakra* and *śaṅkha* in *parahastās*.

## Dvādaśa

On the left side of the *gopura* (as one stands facing the monument) the *Dvādaśamūrtis* are set in a row<sup>23</sup> (Fig. 4). The twelve images are uniformly in *samapāda-sthanaka* mode (cf. Jeyapriya 2015: figs. 2-5). The colour combination is different from what is advocated in *śāstras* (ibidem100); may be due to renovations from time to time, thus altering the colour pattern. The *sthapatis* perhaps were not familiar

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4.9.6; MOLI 4.4.9, 5.2.8; ARE 1926: 575-78 notes *paktar*, ARE 1947-48: 126 notes *pakavar* fed with *bhikṣa* in the Śrīraṅgam temple, dated in 1095 CE, Kulottuṅga I) and so on. From high-priest to Bhāgavata, they served under various capacities; some donations are Śrīvaiṣṇava-*rakṣa* “protected by Śrīvaiṣṇava (armed servants?)” (e.g. ARE 139-39: 65, 1947-48: 110, 137).

<sup>23</sup> A fragmentary inscription treats the Aḷakiyaciṅkar (Handsome-Nṛsiṃha) whose chapel is found close to the *gopura* (northern 4<sup>th</sup> *prākāra*) opposite the Raṅga Nācciyār shrine as *Kōpurattu-nāyakar* “Hero of the Gateway” (ARE 1953-54: 365). Nāyakkar/Nāyaka appear in later Cōla inscriptions as guardians, masters, custodians of *dharma*, Deutsch *held* (ARE 1951-52: 158 of Rajarajaja III 1238 CE); Nāyakulu in Telugu records (ARE 1952-53, no. 346, Krishṇamācāyra 2009: 407). In Tamil tradition the first *añjali* is paid to the *gopura-nāyaka* before making an entry into the sacred zone of the temple (Rajarajan 2015-16: figs. 18-19).



with canons of architecture (cf. Rajarajan 2015-16). Sky-blue and purple or golden are administered alternatively; beginning with blue and ending with golden. The hands are four uniformly fitted with c-ś-p-g alternating in case of each image. The *gadā*<sup>24</sup> is tiny that could be lifted as the *padma*.

### Caturviṃśati

The twenty-four Mūrti forms are *eṭṭum eṭṭum eṭṭumāy* “(Lord are Thou) eight, eight and eight (that is twenty-four)” (CAN 77). Actually nineteen Mūrtis are visible; six seem to have merged with the wall of the *maṇḍapa* that was erected later (Figs. 5-6). Totally, the images should have been twenty-five. The isolated Mūrti is Para-Vāsudeva (Fig. 5). The images appear today on a wall of the western bank of the Candra-*puṣkariṇī*, third *prākāra* of the temple that is no entry for non-Hindus (Auboyer 1994: Plan 2, Fig. 1). The twenty-four (visible figures eighteen) are set in the same pattern as we have observed the Dvādaśa-Mūrti on the *gopura* (supra). Uniformly *samapāda-sthānaka*, the images are *caturbhūja* endowed with the four stereotyped emblems (i.e., c-ś-g-p). The individual images will have to be identified with reference to the sequential fixation, not the emblems.

Not less than thirty-one *sthānaka*-Viṣṇu images are reported from early medieval (c. 550-850 CE) South Indian art, especially the *pāḍavarga* of the Virūpākṣa temple at Paṭṭadakkaḷ, that could not be identified with Dvādaśa or Caturviṃśati (Kalidos 2006: I, 181-86, 301 Table IV) due to the dislocation of c-ś-p-g. Few of these images are eight-handed; e.g. the Aṣṭabhūjasvāmi tradition in the Aṭṭapuyakkaram of Kāñci (Rajarajan 2007: 30). In this medley, Nārttāmalai is unique for accommodating Dvādaśa (Jeyapriya 2015).

As far as our knowledge goes Śrīraṅgam is the solitary example of Caturviṃśati. I am of the view the same pattern of twenty-four or twelve Mūrtis could be identified in Hoysala art (Settar 1991, Foekema 1994) and the step-wells of Gujarāṭa. Kirit Mankodi (1991: figs. Vāmana-Rāma 71-72, Viṣṇu 81-83, 85/1-3, 86/1-3, 87/1-2, 91/1-5, Keśava-Trivikrama 84) has identified the images at random. Further investigation is warranted.

<sup>24</sup> The *gadā*-[devī] is feminine (Santhana-Lakshmi-Parthiban 2014: 81) usually a massive weapon (Rajarajan 2006: fig. 88).

## Conclusion

A relevant question from Vedic vis-à-vis *bhakti* point of view is why the multiplication of gods<sup>25</sup> in so many forms, names and clusters? A hymn from the *Tiruccantaviruttam* of Tirumaḷicai Āḷvār is worth citing (CAN 17, Rajarajan, Parthiban and Kalidos 1917: Vol. I):

Ēkamūrṭti mūṇṇumūrṭti nālumūrṭti naṇmaicēr

Pōkamūrṭti puṇṇiyattiṇ mūrṭti yeṇṇil mūrṭtiyāy

Nākamūrṭti cayanamāy nalaṇ kaṭar kiṭantu mēl

Ākamūrṭti yāya vaṇṇam eṇkol āti tēvaṇē

*Patavurai: Ēkamūrṭti* one icon (figure or form), *mūṇṇumūrṭti* three icons, *nālumūrṭti* four icons, *naṇmaicēr* His Excellency, *pōkamūrṭti* icon for enjoyment, *puṇṇiyattiṇ mūrṭti yeṇṇil* considered the icon of virtue (religious merit), *mūrṭtiyāy* the image of images, *nākamūrṭti* lord in the form of snake, *cayanamāy nalaṇ kaṭar kiṭantu mēl* reposing on the snake with good beholding, *ākamūrṭti* icons in multifarious forms, *yāya vaṇṇam eṇkol* how many are the forms that the Lord presents, *āti tēvaṇē* the Primeval God.

Summary based on PVP's commentary: "The Lord is one, Ādimūrṭi<sup>26</sup>. He is the three; Saṃkarṣaṇa, Pradhyumna and Aniruddha, He is the four; the *caturvyūhas* (*Pradhāna*, *Avyakta*, *Puruṣa* and *Kāla*). His Excellency is the icon for *bhogis*. In order to protect *dharma*, Thy

<sup>25</sup> Recently a problem arose regarding the name of our *kuladevatā*, Vīrabhadra. Agni- and Aghora- Vīrabhadra-s are folk written on tin-sheets in the Sundareśvara enclave of the Maturai temple, *kampattaṭi-maṇṭapam* of the Sundareśvara enclave. Basing on these posters (Rajarajan 2013: 64-66), some illiterate clan-members claimed the Lord is either Agni or Aghora. The *Śrītattvanidhi* (3.55, 119; 3.14 on Aghoramūrṭi) citing the *Kāraṇāgama* talks of the *lakṣaṇa* of Vīrabhadra, not Agni- or Aghora-. Our clan temple was rebuilt (2016-17) in the Boḍināyakkappaṭṭi village in Tiṇṭukkal after a lapse of 250 years by the descendants of Subbaiya-Nāyakkar, Poṇṇucāmi-Nāyakkar and Ayodhi Rāju Naiḍu (his sons and grandsons), Śrīdhar[a], Perumāḷ Naiḍu and Pavuṇayya Naiḍu contributing liberally (Jeyapariya 2009: 54-57, 60, 97-99). In those times, the *uṭukkai/ḍamaruka* was sounded inviting the oracle to question him: *ōmpēruennā* "what is your name?" Such time old rituals are vanishing slowly (interview with Muddammā, Narasammā and Sītamā; cf/ Jeyapriya 2009: 55-57). Unruly poster-politicians are dominating the scene leading to catastrophes'.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. 'Ātitēvaṇ' (CAN 48), 'Ātipakavaṇ' (*Tirukkuraḷ* 1, Kalidos 2017) and *Vaikunṭhamūrṭi* in Badāmī Cave I (Kalidos 2006: I, pl. XXXVIII.2). 'Ātipūtam' is the primeval savant, the Bhāgavata, metaphor for Ananta, the Eternal Śeṣa (PVP CAN 65).

*avatāras* are countless. Thou are reposing on the lord of snakes in the Ocean of Milk. Thou, the Primeval Lord how many are the reflections of Thy form?”

The *Śrītattvanidhi* (2.1-76) lists totally seventy-six forms of Viṣṇu (Rajajaran, Parthiban and Kalidos 2017b: 141-46). The *sapta-prākāras* of the Śrīraṅgam Temple are compared with the *sapta-sāgaras* accommodating not less than seventy Āvaraṇamūrtis (Fig. 7) that are not intelligible to scholars, and some (e.g. Māṇavaṇ, Viyatan; cf. Krishṇamācārya 2007: I, 1, 310-11, fig. p. 310) do not find place in dictionaries of iconography (Liebert 1986, Bunce 1997). Raṅganātha is housed within the holy space, the Brahmasthānathana is a metaphor for the Vaikuṇṭha<sup>27</sup>. *Śāstras* and *itihāsa-purāṇas* talk of *vyūha*, *vibhava* or *avatāra*, *aṃśāvatāra*, *sahasranāma* and so on. Heinrich von Stietencron (1977) raises the question when several priests invoke the presence of the God in different venues where will He be present? Stietencron says the God is present where dedicated and faultless invocation takes place; e.g. Bhīṣmācārya and his beloved Arjuna experiencing the Viśvarūpa-*darśana* in the battlefield at Kurukṣetra. In the *bhakti* mode Kṛṣṇa is present everywhere because his names and forms, *nāma* and *rūpa* are many<sup>28</sup>, *pērupalalavē* “names are many-many” (MOLI 2.5.6 cited in Kalidos 2006: I, xv). The Lord appears in a form desirable to the dedication of a devotee (*avaravar tām tām aṛintavār ētti* “whoever invokes the Lord in which ever form perceived by his faculty (the Lord appears in such a form” TI 14)<sup>29</sup>;

<sup>27</sup> The Lord is accommodated in the holy of holies, the *vimāna* of which is traditionally known as *praṇavākāra-vimāna* (of the form the *praṇavamānta*).

<sup>28</sup> God is *īrai[vaṇ]*, *tēvu*, *tēvaṇ*, *teyvam* in Tamil (Kalidos 2017), *deva*, *dio* or *dea* (Italiano), *Gott* (Deutsch), *dieu* (French), and the *Webster's New World Dictionary* (1995: 548) includes Providence, Jehovah, Yahweh, Numen, Lord, including Meister. The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (2010: 665) says God is not prefixed with “the” in Judaism, Christianity and Islam (cf. Scialpi 2012: 385). *Enka-cāmi* (*me devaḥ* or *mama devaḥ* “our/my, God”, e.g. Yahweh) is the idea behind *kuladevatās* in Indian tradition (see note 21). Tirumaṅkai Ālvār would say *eṅkaḷ-Māl-īraivaṇ* “our God, the Black” (PTM 5.9.2). See notes 8, 11.

<sup>29</sup> Tamarukantatevvuruvamavvuruvamtāṇē

Tamarukantateppērmarrappēr - tamarukantu

Evvaṇṇamcintittimaiyātirupparē

AvvaṇṇamĀliyāṇām

*Tamar ukanta tev vuruvam* in whichever form (the devotee) desires, *av vuruvam tāṇē* (the Lord) arrives in that form, *tamar ukanta tep pērmarrap pēr* whatever the name loved the Lord takes that name, *tamar ukantu evvaṇṇam* whatever shape is desired



*kūrrilonru* “several are the Mūrtis of which we visualize one” (Viru 92). In any case, a student of iconography is vividly rewarded because he finds the Daśāvatāra, the Dvādaśa and the Caturviṃśati (see note 27) within the River-Island Temple of Araṅkam. He is the *eṅkaḷavar*<sup>32</sup> (our God) for the *uḷḷūrār* (residents of Śrīraṅgam) who perhaps considered them *śrī-Vaiṣṇavas*<sup>33</sup> (sacred Viṣṇuvites; Vaiṭṭaṇavar/Vaiṭṭaṇavar TM 5.1.3; MOLI 5.5.11).

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### Abbreviations

AMA	<i>Amalaṅātipirāṇ</i> of Pāṇālvār
CAN	<i>Tiruccantaviruttam</i> of Maḷicai

<sup>32</sup> A section of the *brāhmaṇa* temple servants claim they are the *uḷḷūrār*. Caṭaiyavarmaṇ Sundara Pāṇṇya’s (1191 CE) notes the ‘Āriyar’ (Āriyabhaṭṭar) and ‘uḷḷūrār’, sons of the soil, the protectors of the temple endowments (ARE 1938-39: 202).

<sup>33</sup> Rājarāja II (1156 CE) created a body called Śrīvaiṣṇava-*vāriyam* to regulate the activities of the *uḷḷūrār* (ARE 1936-37: 68), cf. Tiruppāṇālvār (water carrier) to Toṇṭaraṭippoṭi (instrument player) in Rajarajan (2016a: 44-60). If the Father or Mother is present at the same time in the same venue, the Mother is the first to bless her children; east or west; this is the basic domestic and religious experience. Kulacēkara Ālvār views the presiding God of Vittuvakkōṭu (*divyadeśa* in Kēraḷa) the Mother-Father, Vittuvakkōṭṭammāṇ (PT 5.1-10). The independent Jesus, the Christ (Gallico 1999: 42) and Jesus with Mother Mary (Gallico 1999: 43, 35, 40, 20) in the Renaissance art may be theologically oriented; myth and art separated by 1600 years. I do not know Christian theology\*. William P. Harman (1992: 1-2) says the Roman Catholic nuns are “brides of Christ” in a study of *hierosgamos* or *heirogamy*.

\* I am an admirer of Martin Luther. When in Berlin I made it a point to visit Wittenberg and view the Church door on which 95-Theses were nailed. We question Śrīvaiṣṇavism on the same plane that Luther challenged the Pope on various aspects of liturgy such as transubstantiation, Mass preached in Latin, *hierosgamos*, selling sin and so on. Religion is “faith” (cf. the ‘Age of Faith’ in Will and Ariel Durant). It should not be “blind faith”. Is there any scientific reasoning to believe the Christian nuns are the consorts of Jesus, the Christ?

CTM	<i>CīriyaTirumaṭal</i> of Tirumaṅkai
INA	<i>Irāmāṇucanūrrantāti</i> of Tiruvaraṅkattamutaṇār
KUR	<i>Tirukkuṛuntāṇṭakam</i> of Tirumaṅkai
Mālai	<i>Tirumālai</i> of Toṇṭaraṭippoṭi
MOLI	<i>Tiruvāymoḷi</i> of Nammālvār
NT	<i>Nācciyār Tirumoḷi</i> of Āṇṭāl
NTV	<i>Nāṇmukaṇ Tiruvantāti</i> of Maḷicai
PAV	<i>Tiruppāvai</i> of Āṇṭāl
PL	<i>Tiruppaḷḷielucci</i> of Toṇṭaraṭippoṭi
PT	<i>Perumāl Tirumoḷi</i> of Kulacēkarar
PTA	<i>Periya Tiruvantāti</i> of Nammālvār
PTM	<i>Periya Tirumoḷi</i> of Tirumaṅkai
PTML	<i>PeriyaTirumaṭal</i> of Tirumaṅkai
PVP	PeriyavāccāṇPiḷḷai
TAN	<i>Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam</i> of Tirumaṅkai
TI, TII, TIII	<i>Tiruvantāti</i> I (Poykai), II (Pūtam)& III (Pēy)
TM	Periyālvār- <i>Tirumoḷi</i>
Viru	<i>Tiruviruttam</i> of Nammālvār

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## Figures

1. Plan of the Temple, Śrīraṅgam
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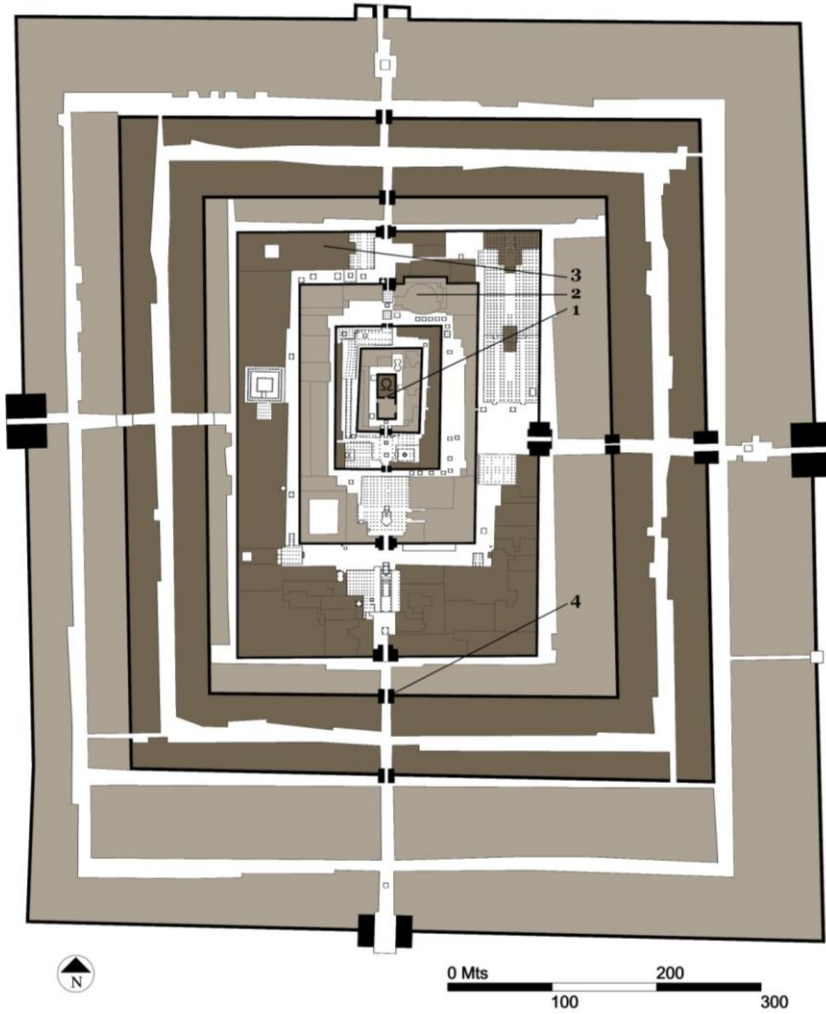


Figure 1. Plan of the Temple, Śrīraṅgam

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Raṅga-vimāna       | 2. Candra-puṣkariṇī                      |
| 3. Raṅganāyaki shrine | 4. Gopura of the 5 <sup>th</sup> prākāra |



Figure 2. Southern *Gopura*, Akalaṅkaṇ-tiruccuṟru, 5<sup>th</sup>*Prākāra*, Śrīraṅgam



Figure 3. Dasāvatāras, Southern *Gopura* (stucco), 5<sup>th</sup>*Prākāra*, Śrīraṅgam





Figure 4. Dvādaśamūrtis, Southern *Gopura* (stucco), 5<sup>th</sup> *Prākāra*, Śrīraṅgam



Figure 5. Caturviṃśati (outer view), Candra-puṣkariṇī, Śrīraṅgam



Figure 6. Caturviṃśati (view from inside the *maṇḍapa*), Candra-puṣkariṇī, Śrīraṅgam



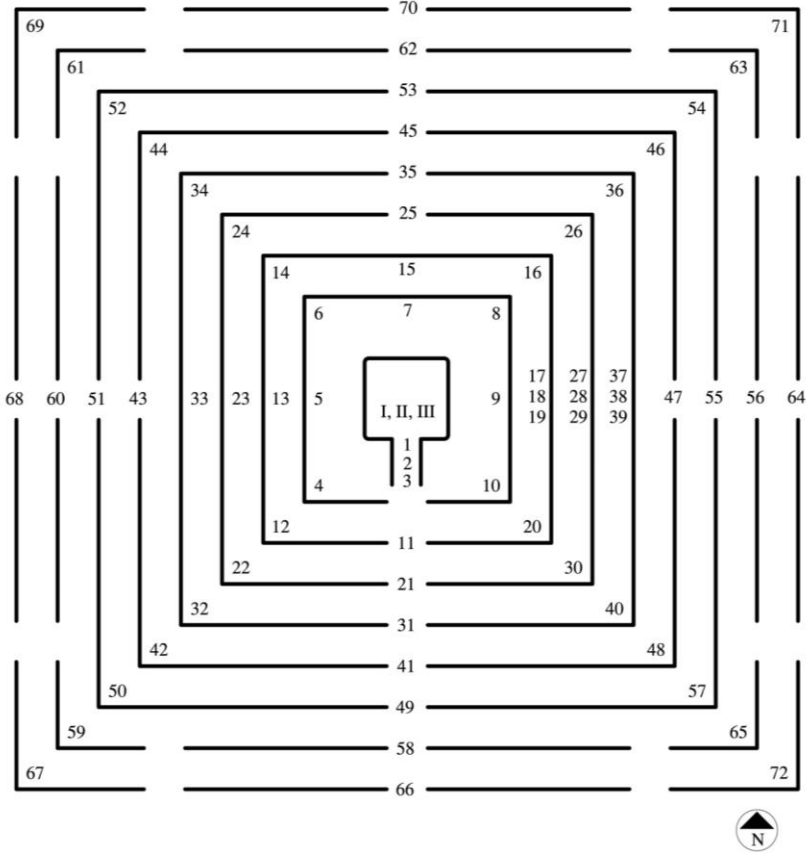


Figure 7. Āvaraṇamūrti set in the *sapta-prākāras*, Śrīraṅgam  
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Figure 8. *Sthūṇa*-Nṛsiṃha, Pillar motif, Śrīraṅgam