Some Remarks on Tirumal/Visnu Cult in Early Tamil Religion and Literature: With Special Reference to the Tirumal Odes of the Paripatal
Some Remarks on Tirumāl/Viṣṇu Cult in Early Tamil Religion and Literature

—With Special Reference to the Tirumāl Odes of the Paripāṭal—

Hiroshi YAMASHITA

The aim of this paper is to throw light on the religious phenomena centring round Māyōn-Tirumāl, a god of great antiquity and popularity in Tamil Nadu, South India, by the use of the literary materials in ancient Tamil. In order to have a clue to the problems concerning this deity and his cult in the religious history of the southernmost part of the subcontinent, we will analyse how the cult of Māyōn-Tirumāl as seen in the classical texts coincides with, or differs from, that of Viṣṇu-Nārāyana-Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa of the Northern religious tradition, and examine the significance of the worship of this god in Dravidian India.

I. A Brief Note on the References to God Tirumāl Prior to the Paripāṭal

References to Tirumāl, one of the important gods in the Southern Hindu pantheon traditionally identified with Viṣṇu, abound in the Caṅkham or early Tamil literature of the pre-devotional period, although such references are much limited in number than, for instance, those to Lord Murukan, the God par excellence of the Tamils\(^\text{(1)}\). Tirumāl’s eminence contrasts strikingly with the inconspicuous role played by Lord Śiva, another important god of the Southern devotional tradition, in the Caṅkham corpus\(^\text{(2)}\).

In the Tolkāppiyam (porulatihāram 5.1), the earliest extant Tamil grammar treatise, four deities are named as the guardians of four different tracts (tiṇai-s). They are Māyōn, Cēyōn Vēntan and Varuṇan,
who preside over mullai (forest or pasture), kuriṇci (mountain), marutam (countryside) and neytal (seashore) respectively. These gods are traditionally identified with Viṣṇu, Murukan, Indra and Varuṇa in the orthodox Hindu or Brāhmanical pantheon in the Tamil land\(^3\). Other lists of four guardian deities are found elsewhere in Tamil literary sources. While Tirumāl/Viṣṇu as well as Murukan/Subrahmanya appears in all those lists, the two other gods found in the famous list of the Tolkāppiyam, viz. Vēṇṭaṇ and Varuṇaṇ, are replaced by Śiva and Rāma in later works. Apart from this set of deities, temples dedicated to five major gods find mention in the Cilappattikāram also. Here, the five gods are Viṣṇu, Murukan, Śiva, Rāma and Indra\(^4\). From the above literary evidences, it is inferred that Tirumāl as well as Murukan has been predominating since the early ages of Tamil literature.

Aṅkurunūru and Kuruntokai, two old anthologies of the akam genre of the Caṅkam corpus, are both silent about Tirumāl, while they often refer to Murukan under such names as Cēy, Murukū, Netuvēḷ and Vēḷ\(^5\). Only Tirumurukārruppatāi, Perumpāṇārruppatāi, Mullaiṉāṭṭu, Maturaikkāṇi, Netunalvaṭṭai and Paṭṭinappalai of the Pattuppāṭṭu ("Ten Idylls") collection make mention of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu or his consort Śri-Lakṣmī and give some information about them. Among these works, the Perumpāṇārruppatāi touches on them in several passages. In the verses 28-30 of this idyll, Toṇṭaimān Ḭаnantiraiyān, the ruler of Kaṇcipuram, is said to trace his descent from God Tirumāl. The Tamil text runs as follows: ‘Niyirum irunilam kaṭanta tirumaru māripin unnirvanṇaṅ piruṅkaṭai’ ("You trace your descent from one who has the sea-hued skin"). It is obvious that Viṣṇu’s aspect as Trivikrama and the sacred tuft of hair called śrīvatsa on his chest are alluded to in this passage\(^6\). Both are the characteristics of anthropomorphised Viṣṇu in the Northern-Sanskritic mythology of this god. The verse 272 of the same idyll refers to the god lying on a serpent bed (‘pāmpu ḍaṇippalḷi amarntōn’). From the context, it is evident that this god is none other than Tirumāl/Viṣṇu

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in his Nāraṇaṇa form otherwise known as Śeṣaśāyin. The serpent is presumably a well-known Nāga variously called Śeṣa, Ādiśeṣa or Ananta in Sanskrit myths. According to the commentators⁷, this passage hints at Tīruehkā⁸ in Kānci, one of the 108 holy sites (tiruppattai) of Lord Tirumāl in those days. The verse 402 calls this god by the name of Neṭiyon (=the Tall One), a common epithet ascribed to Tirumāl⁹. The verses 402-404 of the Perumpāṇārruppattai state that he is a dark-skinned one and has a lotus- navel from which Brahmā, the Four-faced God, emerges¹⁰. The celebrated legend of the Churning of the Ocean (samudramathan) by Viśṇu is implied in the verse 487 (‘pāl kaṭal vaḷaikaṇṭaṇa vāl uḷiap puravi’). The last verse (v.500) of the Perumpāṇārruppattai mentions a mountain which is, according to a commentator¹¹, nothing but Vēṅkaṭamalai, the famous hill sacred to Lord Tirumāl / Viṣṇu geographically identified with today’s Venkata Hills of Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh.

The verses 1-3 of the Mullaippattu, another idyll of the Pattuppattu, liken the thundering clouds gathering and moving swiftly to gigantic Māl (=Tirumāl/Viṣṇu). In those lines, he is depicted as having a disc (nēmi parallel to Skt. cakra) and a right-whorled chank (valampuri) in his both hands and bearing Goddess Śri-Lakṣmī (mā) on his chest. According to Naccinārkkiṇiyar, a reputed commentator of the fourteenth (?) century, Māal (=Mal) is mentioned at the beginning of the Mullaippattu because he is the god peculiar to mullai or the sylvan tract (‘itiṇāṃe mullaikkuriya teyvaṅkurinār’).¹² The verses 590-591 of the Maturaikkāṇci, one of the Pattuppattu idylls, speak of the festival celebrating Māyōn’s birth who gained victory over the cruel demons (avunān-s, perhaps congnate with Skt. asura)¹³.

The Puranaṇūr,¹⁴ a representative puram anthology, provides some information on Tirumāl/Viṣṇu. Puranaṇūr 56 (5,6,9) of the pūvainilai genre, for example, portrays Tirumāl/Viṣṇu endowed with the banner (of Garuḍa) and the complexion resembling the colour of saphire as the
Protector of the entire universe\(^{(35)}\). *Puranāṇūr* 57 (2-3), on the other hand, mentions Māyōn, to whom Naṃmāran, a Pandya king, is compared\(^{(36)}\). ‘Viṇṭu’, the noun which appears in *Puranāṇūr* 391.2, may perhaps mean Tirumāl\(^{(17)}\).

*Akanāṇūru* and *Narrinai*, two of the *akam* anthologies of the *Eṭṭuttokai* ("Eight Anthologies"), also make mention of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu and his incarnated forms. In *Akanāṇūru* 175 (13-17), a rainbow is figuratively identified with the garland on the chest of God Tirumāl having a discus-weapon (*nēmi*)\(^{(38)}\). *Narrinai* 32 (1-2) likens a black mountain and a shiny waterfall to Māyōn and Valiyōn (=Baladeva) respectively\(^{(39)}\). G. L. Hart notices an allusion to the well-known story of Krṣṇa and the Gopi-s in *Akanāṇūru* 59 (5-6)\(^{(40)}\).

With regard to Śri-Lakṣmī, reference is made in the *Malaipaṭukaṭām*, *Pattinappalai*, *Mullaippaṭṭu* and *Tirumurukarruppatai* of the *Ten Idylls*. *Mullaippaṭṭu* 3 touches upon the Śrīdhara aspect of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu embracing Śri-Lakṣmī. In the *Malaipaṭukaṭām* 355-356, it is said that Tiru (=Śri-Lakṣmī)\(^{(21)}\) is seated on the chest of a king (‘paṉmāṅ cerumikkup pukalum tiru ār mārpan’)\(^{(22)}\). *Pattinappalai* 291 admires the town walls of flourishing Uraitai in which Tiru remains (‘tiru nilaiya perumammein’). A similar account is given in *Tirumurukarruppatai* 70, which makes mention of the faultless streets where Goddess Tiru dwells (‘tiru vīṛirunta titutir niyamattu’). It is noteworthy that, in these verses, Goddess Śri-Lakṣmī is found inseparable from the ideas of prosperity and auspiciousness, the concepts closely associated with this goddess in the Northern tradition. Besides *Pattuppāṭṭu*, the *Akanāṇūru* (316.13) in the *Eṭṭuttokai* collection, for example, refers to Śri-Lakṣmī under the epithet of Čeyyōl ("the Red Woman")\(^{(33)}\). *Puranāṇūr* 358, too, adverts Tiru.

The *Tirumurukarruppatai*, a long poem with religious flavour dedicated exclusively to Lord Murukan, contains several passages which refer to Tirumāl/Viṣṇu and Śri-Lakṣmī. The verses 148-151, for instance, speak of a god holding a banner of Garuḍa, the celebrated snake-killer in
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Hindu mythology. This god proves to be none other than Tīrūmāl/Viṣṇu\(^{(24)}\). In the verses 164-165 of the same idyll, just as in Perumpāṇrruppatai 402-404, the emergence of God Brahmā from the lotus-nerve of Tīrūmāl is alluded to, although the proper noun denoting Viṣṇu (for example, Māl or Tīrūmāl) appears nowhere\(^{(25)}\). The verse 159 may be understood as an allusion to Śrī-Lakṣmi (Tirumakal)\(^{(26)}\). Tīrūmurukārruppatai 160 hints at Four Deities. Naccinārkkiniyar regards them as the group of Īntirāṅ (=Skt.Indra), Yaṁāṅ (=Yama), Varuṇāṅ (=Varuṇa) and Cōman (=Kubera)\(^{(27)}\), whereas Po. Vē. Cōmacuntaranār (1909~1972), a reputed contemporary commentator, considers them as Piramaṅ (=Brahmā), Tīrūmāl or Aṛi (=Viṣṇu), Uruttirāṅ or Cīvan (=Rudra-Śiva), and Īntirāṅ (=Indra). In Tīrūmurukārruppatai 162 too, Three Gods are referred to. They are identifiable with Ayan (=Aja, namely Brahmā), Aṛi (=Hari, namely Viṣṇu) and Arāṅ (=Hara, namely Śiva), according to Naccinārkkiniyar; while Tīrūmāl (=Viṣṇu), Uruttirāṅ (=Rudra-Śiva) and Īntirāṅ (=Indra)\(^{(28)}\) constitute the triad, according to Cōmacuntaranār. Though the identity of these groups of deities has not been convincingly established, Tīrūmāl/Viṣṇu should be included here as it is almost beyond doubt that some idea of trimūrti is implied in those lists\(^{(29)}\).

II. Tīrūmāl in the Paripātal

The Paripātal, one of the Etṭuttokai anthologies, is the collection of odes in praise of various things, such as Tīrūmāl, Cevvēl, Korravai, Vaiyai and Maturai. According to legends, the original Paripātal consists of seventy long poems. But all of them are not available now. Of those available, some remain only in fragments (tiraṭṭu)\(^{(30)}\).

The extant Paripātal contains six odes (I, II, III, IV, XIII, XV) dedicated to Lord Tīrūmāl by different poets. Besides these six integral odes, there is a fragmental hymn of unknown authorship which is composed of eighty-two lines.
A. Mythological Elements in the Tirumāl Odes

It is true that the Tirumāl hymns of the Paripāṭal are relatively abundant in mythological information on Tirumāl. The descriptions themselves, however, are rather fragmentary and, in most cases, are found only in allusion. Any systematic account of this deity and his worship cannot be expected in those odes. An attempt has been made here to reconstruct the ancient cycle of Tamil Tirumāl myths by making full use of the available materials of the fragmental descriptions given in the Paripāṭal.

1. Antagonism between Tirumāl and the Antigods

Investigating the struggles between Tirumāl and the antigods known as avuṇan-s in the Paripāṭal, a traditional theme as early as the Rg-Vedic times, would be the better way to start discussions, since such a conflict forms the backdrop for various myths around this god and his exploits. The Paripāṭal, too, knows the heroic stories of the extermination of demons attributed to the Descents (avatāra-s) — the mythical episodes recurring in Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas (cf. Viṣṇu’s aspect as ‘Śatrughna’, “Destroyer of Enemies”). The conquests of Tirumāl over the demons is referred to or, at least, implied in not a few stanzas of this anthology. All the references as well as allusions to this tale in the Tirumal odes are illustrated in Table I.

As illustrated in this table, it is expressly narrated in Pari. I 20-27 that Tirumāl won a victory, wielding arrows, and “without touching a plough” (‘alantoṭā’). This description is likely to afford a negative proof of the participation of Balarāma armed with a plough in this battle, although Tirumāl is clearly mentioned along with his Balarāma aspects in the preceeding passage (viz. Pari. I 3, 4, 5)\(^{(30)}\). Tirumāl’s victory gained by his powerful arrows is touched upon in the verse XV 60 also.
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#### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Outline</th>
<th>Weapon mentioned</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I 22-27</td>
<td>Tirumāl wins a victory over <em>Asuras</em> by the use of arrows which fly swifly like a whirlwind.</td>
<td>arrow (<em>kaṇṭai</em>) (not plough)</td>
<td>Cf. XV 60, for the victorious arrows of Viṣṇu (Viṣṇu’s aspect as Balarama?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I 39-40</td>
<td>Tirumāl the source of extraordinary brave, is the source of fear as well for those who are opposed to him.</td>
<td>discus</td>
<td>‘Discus’ is given only in allusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II 36-49</td>
<td>Cut off by Tirumāl with his discus-weapon, the heads of <em>Asuras</em> fall off as if coconuts are dropped from palm trees.</td>
<td>discus</td>
<td>Viṣṇu’s aspect as Kṛṣṇa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III 31-32</td>
<td>Tirumāl subdues <em>Asura Kūntal</em> (Skt.Keśin) in the form of a maned horse.</td>
<td>discus</td>
<td>Viṣṇu’s aspect of Vāmana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III 54-56</td>
<td>When Tirumāl measures the earth (in three steps), <em>Asuras</em> tremble with fear and escape into the sea.</td>
<td>discus (<em>nēmī</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV 9</td>
<td>Tirumāl has a discus-weapon with which he brings the lives of his enemies under control.</td>
<td>discus (<em>nēmī</em>)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV 47</td>
<td>“O the One (=Tirumāl) who unnerved the opposing powers!”</td>
<td>discus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse</td>
<td>Outline</td>
<td>Weapon mentioned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII 15</td>
<td>“O King of Battle (=Tirumāl) who massacres!”</td>
<td>plough (nāncil)</td>
<td>Viṣṇu’s aspect as Balarāma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII 30-33</td>
<td>Tirumāl has a plough with the curved blade with which he ploughs the chest of his enemies just as one ploughs the soil with a spade.</td>
<td>discus (tikiri)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XIII 58</td>
<td>Tirumāl is the chief (celvan) who scores a triumph with his discus-weapon in battles.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XV 44-45</td>
<td>Iruṅkunru has the colour of (Māl) who subdued and killed those who fought against him.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The verb ‘kaṭa’ in Pari. I 26 may imply his grand victory without using artifice over the avuṇan-s, the opponents of gods, who were entirely dependent on tricks(32).

The word ‘Kūntal’ as the name of an avuṇan cited in Pari. III 31-32 is the literary Tamil translation of a Sanskrit noun keśin(33). Therefore, Avuṇan Kuntal parallels Keśin, a horse-shaped demon who is slain by Kṛṣṇa in Northern mythology. It is evident that there lies the Kṛṣṇa cycle of Sanskrit myths at the background of this Tamil legend on Tirumāl’s battle against Kūntal(34).

The account given in III 54-56 is no doubt an allusion to Viṣṇu’s Three Strides (trivikrama), a well-known theme as early as the Rg-Vedic period. As in the Rg-Veda(35), however, such names as ‘Vamana’ (Dwarf) and ‘Mahābali’ (alias ‘Bali’, a demon chief) never appear in this passage. The dwarfish form of the Lord is nowhere mentioned in
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this paragraph.

The verses XIII 30-33 describe Balarāma’s aspect of Lord Tirumāl in
his fight with the demons. Here he is found to be armed with a plough
(nāṅciḷ), as known in the Epic-Purānic literature in Sanskrit tradition(36).

The verses II 36-49, IV 9 and XIII 58 appreciate the power of the
discus-weapon (tikiri or neṭi parallel to Skt.cakra) used by Tirumāl in
his battle with the avuṇan-s. Similarly, the verse III 87 pays tribute to
the chank (kōṭu synonymous with Skt.śaṅkha) as one of the five
weapons (pañcāyudha) of God Tirumāl.

Apart from these, the verses III 87, 89-90, IV 47, XIII 15 and XV
44-45 lay stress on Tirumāl’s aspect as a brave warrior in antagonism
against the avuṇan-s, although detailed descriptions of weapons are
conspicuous by their absence. It is noteworthy that, in those passages
which portray him as a divine fighter, Tirumāl is known under the
appellations otherwise applied to kings and warriors(37).

With reference to Garuḍa’s arrogance as seen in Pari. III 59-61,
Parimelalakar, a mediaeval commentator, cites the mythological plots
of the conflict between Viṣṇu and avuṇan-s and the subsequent victory
of the former over the latter. It is not quite natural, however, to detect
the implication of that effect in the original Tamil text.

2. Birth of God Brahmā

The emergence of God Brahmā from the lotus springing up from
Viṣṇu’s navel is known to the Paripāṭal. For example, Pari. III 13
describes Brahmā as the One who was born from the lotus-flower (‘tāmarai
pūvinūl piṟantōn’). Other two passages (Pari. IV 60-61; XV 49) refer to
the lotus-navel (pūvattāmarai) of Lord Tirumāl/Viṣṇu(38). One of the
Cevvel odes in the Paripāṭal (VIII 3) mentions “God on a (lotus-)
flower” (malarmicai mutalvān), who is none other than Lord Brahmā.
‘Pūvan’, an appellation of Brahmā cited in I 46 of the same anthology,
reflects the myths of his birth from Viṣṇu’s lotus-navel. In this verse,
the subsequent evolution of the universe from God Brahmā is compared to the diffusion of the fragrance (narram) of the (lotus-)flower\(^{(39)}\). The verses of \textit{Pari}. III 91-94 introduce Tirumāl/Viṣṇu in his Nārāyaṇa aspect sleeping on the cosmic ocean between the periods of dissolution and creation, as well as his bloomed lotus-Navēl in which Lord Brahmā (called ‘Vāymoli-makan’) is contained\(^{(40)}\).

3. Churning of the Milk-ocean

The spectacular story of \textit{samudramathana} (“the churning of the milky ocean”), one of the most famous tales in the Viṣṇu cycle of mythology, is suggestively related in the verses II 69-72, where a mass of gods (amarar, apparently from Skt.amara) and their ambrosia (amirtam, amirtu or amīltu, all derived from Skt.amṛta) are mentioned\(^{(41)}\). References to amarar and amṛta are also given in \textit{Pari}. III 15 and 33. Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa lying on the cosmic serpent Ādiṣeṣa in the midst of the milk-ocean (pārkaṭal) is expressly referred to in \textit{Pari}. XIII 26-29. The most exhaustive description of this episode is to be found in Fragment I 64-71. That paragraph pictures Lord Tirumāl as one who carries a mountain (equivalent to Mt. Madana) on his head, fixes it on his back in the milk-ocean (in the disguise of a turtle), then transforms himself into a huge serpent, and rotates the mountain as the churn-stuff with the serpent-rope for the period of one tōla, so as to brew the nectar for the sake of gods (deva-s) and antigods (asura-s). In this myth, unlike the Sanskrit version given in the \textit{Viṣṇu-purāṇa}, etc.\(^{(42)}\), Tirumāl performs a triple role of a turtle (known as Kūrma in Sanskrit Purāṇas), a cosmic serpent (named Vāsuki) and the person who draws the serpent-rope\(^{(43)}\). It is highly probable that a jewel (maṇi) cited in \textit{Pari}. I 8-9 as one of Tirumāl’s iconographical attributes indicates kaustubha (kauttuvam in Tamil), the celebrated gem obtained from the bottom of the ocean\(^{(44)}\). The expression ‘kaṭal tāru maṇi’ (“the jewel given by the sea”) in \textit{Pari}. I 15, too, most likely points to the kaustubha
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produced from the milk-ocean when it was churned. It may presumably be true of tirumāṇi in Pari. I 52 and IV 6. Mōhinī, the female form assumed by Viṣṇu in order to get back the nectar from the avuṇaṇ-s by seducing them, is suggestively introduced to in verses III 33-34(46).

4. The Descents (Avatāra-s) of Tirumāl

The Tirumāl hymns of the Paripātāl recount several Descents or divine Incarnations (avatāra-s) of Lord Tirumāl/Viṣṇu. In Sanskrit literary tradition, only very lately, viz. in the twelfth century A.D.(46), the familiar list of the Ten Incarnations (daśāvatāra-s)(47) of this god was systematically established. Before that, the identity of the members and the number of the avatāra-s vary according to different lists. In the central part of the Mahābhārata, for example, only four or six incarnated forms of Viṣṇu are enumerated(48). The Great Epic does not offer any systematic account of the avatāra-s.

In the South, the Nalāyiratīvūvīyappirappantam is known to attribute ten Incarnations to Tirumāl(49). The Paripātāl also seems to be aware of Incarnation, since a verse (IV 32) probably hints at the concept. The text runs as follows: ‘Niṇ, varutalam oṭukkamum maruttin ula’ ("Your arrival and retreat consist in wind"). Parimēḷaḷakar annotates this ‘varutal’ ("arrival") as ‘avatarittal’ ("to incarnate"). The extant Paripātāl introduces seven divine Incarnations in all, some of which coinside with those which are given in the common list of the daśāvatāra-s of the Northern tradition. But neither the number of the avatāra-s nor the proper name of each one is found anywhere in the original text. The identities of the different Incarnations are given only in allusion. (For example, instead of varākam, apparently derived from Skt. varāha, a word kēlal or kilāru meaning "boar" is employed to denote the Var-āhāvatāra.) The extant text of the Paripātāl contains no references to Viṣṇu's divine Incarnations such as Matsya, Paraśurāma, Rama, Buddha and Kalkin. Nor is the explanation of each avatāra presented in a
systematic manner. The descriptions are scattered in all the six odes and one fragment dedicated to Tirumāl. The entire list of the references and the allusions to Tirumāl’s *avatāra-s* in the extant *Paripāṭal* are given in Table II.

It is appropriate now to embark upon a detailed examination of the references of respective *avatāra-s*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Avatāra</th>
<th>Verse</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kūrma (Tortoise)</td>
<td>Fragment I 64-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varāha (Boar)</td>
<td>II 16-17, 32-35</td>
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<td></td>
<td>III 21-24</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IV 22-24</td>
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<td></td>
<td>XIII 34-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nṛṣimha or Narasimha (Man-lion)</td>
<td>IV 10-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vāmana (Dwarf)</td>
<td>III 18-20, 54-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kṛṣṇa</td>
<td>III 31-32, 83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>XV 10-14, 27-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haṃsa (Swan)</td>
<td>III 25-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balarāma or Baladeva</td>
<td>I 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II 20, 22</td>
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<td>III 83</td>
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<td>IV 38-40</td>
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<td>XIII 30-33</td>
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<td>XV 13, 19, 28, 55, 57-58</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

a. Kūrma-vatāra

*Kūrma-vatāra* is hinted at in a paragraph which gives an account of the famous mythological episode of the churning of the milk-ocean
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(parkatāl). Here, in order to churn the milk-ocean, Lord Viṣṇu fixes Mt. Mandara as a churn-stuff on his back in the ocean in which makara-s, the mythical fish, swim around\(^{(50)}\). It would not be difficult to detect the implication of the Kūrmāvatāra in this passage, though the word “tortoise” or any other name corresponding to Skt. kūrma does not appear in the text\(^{(51)}\). No other passages in the Paripātal make mention of, or an alusion to, this Incarnation.

b. Varāhāvatāra

As for Varāha (Boar or Swine), the third Incarnation of Viṣṇu, reference is made in five places in the Paripātal.

The first reference appears in the verses II 16-17. In this passage, instead of narrating the adventures of Varāhāvatāra, the period called ‘Varāha’ is introduced in the cosmological explanation of the Creation of the universe (‘kēlal tikaḷvarakkōlamoṭu peyariya ūli’, which is rendered as “the period named after the shining figure of the Boar”). In Sanskrit Purānic tradition, the Varāha-kalpa is understood as the period of the Boar Incarnation during which Viṣṇu assumed the divine form of a boar. Therefore, there is no room for doubt that the verses II 16-17 are suggestive of the legend of Varāhāvatāra of Lord Viṣṇu\(^{(52)}\).

The second reference to this avatāra is given in II 32-35, where the marriage between the earth and the Boar (Kalīru) endowed with the shiny sharp tusks washed by waves is narrated. The paragraph itself would be hardly comprehensible without the help of the commentaries. According to Parimēlaḷakar, this passage is a covert allusion to the theme of Varāhāvatāra saving the earth from the Deluge. The mediaeval commentator compares this mythical theme to the marriage of the earth with the Boar Incarnation (ātivarakam)\(^{(53)}\).

The third reference is seen in III 21-24. In this passage, Tīrūmāl in the form of a beautiful boar (kēḻal) draws up the earth from the ocean at the beginning of the Creation which comes after the Catastrophe of
the previous age (ūli). This story resembles the Vedic motif of the boar which restores the earth from the underground\(^{(54)}\).

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned theme of the marriage between the earth and Varāha (II 32-35), Parimēlaḻakar interprets ‘irunilam’ ("the wide earth") as 'nilamakal' ("Goddess of Earth")\(^{(55)}\). With the background of such an allusion, there may perhaps be the Purāṇic image of Viṣṇu as Bhūdhara\(^{(56)}\). It might be possible to trace the association of this subject with Viṣṇu and his consort named Bhūdēvi or Bhūmidevi\(^{(57)}\).

The fourth reference to Varāhāvatāra is to be pointed out in XIII 34-36. In these verses, Varāha is cited as one of the three metamorphoses of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu, the other two being Nārāyaṇa and Balarāma. He is depicted as a boar (kaliru) having the decorated tusks supporting the earth.

The point to observe is that, in the Paripāṭal odes, the story of Varāhāvatāra is narrated only in the cosmological context of the Creation. The theme of Hiranyākṣa who throws the earth into the ocean, the well-known tale in Sanskrit Purāṇas which lays an underplot to the Varāhāvatāra myth, is nowhere to be mentioned\(^{(58)}\). From this, it does not automatically follow, however, that the author/authors of the Paripāṭal did not know Hiranyākṣa, for Demon Hiranyakaśipu, Hiranyākṣa’s younger brother, is alluded to in the reference to Nṛṣimhāvatāra in IV 10-21.

It is to be noted in this connection that the Boar Incarnation seemingly enjoyed considerable popularity in Southern India as revealed by Chalukyas and Vijayanagar rulers who are said to have had a boar as the emblem of their banners, being the devout worshippers of this particular avatāra\(^{(59)}\).

c. Nṛsimhāvatāra

As regards this Incarnation, a single reference is to be pointed out in the extant Paripāṭal odes, namely Pari. IV 10-21. The description is
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comparatively more concrete and exhaustive than those of the other avatāra-s. The plot of the verses in question is as follows:

Demon Irāṇyaṇ (<Skt.Hiranyaśaśipu) showed a strong hatred toward the ardent devotion of his son Piruṅkalātan (<Skt. Prahlāda) toward Lord Tirumal. Irāṇyaṇ, with the sandal paste on his chest drying with burning anger, tied up his son and tormented him violently. On becoming aware of the harsh persecution given to his devout worshipper, Tirumal swiftly manifested himself from a nearby pillar along with the thundering beat of drums and defeated Irāṇyaṇ, the persecutor, by tearing up his mountain-like chest with the sharp claws.

Although such name as ‘Naracinman’, the Tamil equivalent for Skt. Narasiṃha, and the detailed account of the antagonism between Lord Viṣṇu and Hiranyaśaśipu are virtually absent in this paragraph, we can say with fair certainty that this passage is underpinned by the Narasiṃha legend of Viṣṇu which appears recurrently with some variation in Sanskrit Purāṇic literature

d. Vāmanāvatāra

Vāmanāvatāra is alluded to in two places in the third ode of the extant Paripāṭal. The first reference appears in the passage which pays tribute to Tirumal’s divine feet (III 18-20). The text runs as follows: ‘Niṅ cēvaṭi tolārum ularō avarru kīle ēl ulakamum urra aṭiyinai.’ These original verses, which are not easily understandable, are probably an allusion to Vāmanāvatāra of Viṣṇu in view of Parimēlalakar’s commentary and so on.

As the reference to Vamana Incarnation in Pari. III 54-56 was already taken up in this monograph, it is not to be detailed here. No Tamil term derived, for example, from Skt. trivikrama appears in this
e. Kṛṣṇāvatāra

Four references or allusions to Kṛṣṇāvatāra are to be seen in the \textit{Paripāṭal}. The verses III 31-32, the first reference to this \textit{avatāra}, are allusive to Kṛṣṇa’s victory over \textit{Asura} Keśin. The verse III 83, which goes ‘iṭāvala kuṭāvala kovala kāvala’, deserves our attention. The description of this verse is too ambiguous to interpret explicitly, but it might be duly translated as “Left and right, pot and plough, O cowherd, O protector!” According to Parimēlaḷakar’s commentary, this is a brief allusion to Tirumal who performs the \textit{kuravai} dance in company with the shepherdesses attending him on both sides\(^{(60)}\). Modern scholars like F. Gros and F. Hardy agree with this identification\(^{(63)}\). Kṛṣṇa’s dance with the milkmaids (\textit{gopī-s}) forms one of the typical themes of his mythology. In this simplest verse, it would not be possible to detect an allusion to Kṛṣṇa’s beloved Pinna or Nappinna\(^{(66)}\). It would be quite natural that the vocative word ‘kōvala’ in this passage should remind us of ‘Gopāla’, the pastoral aspect of Kṛṣṇa in Sanskrit myths. There is no doubt that Tamil \textit{kōvalan} is derivative from Skt. \textit{gopāla}\(^{(65)}\). It is noteworthy that the young Kṛṣṇa’s erotic exploits well-known in Sanskrit myths, which are interpreted as symbolic of the love of God for the human soul in the devotional context, are totally absent in the \textit{Paripāṭal} odes. However, this does not flatly exclude the possibility that the poets of this Tamil work were familiar with Kṛṣṇa’s erotic myths in his cycle of Sanskrit mythology.

Two more passages, XV 10-14 and 27-28, are suggestive of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The former (XV 10-14) refers to a pair who performs one and the same duty and, at the same time, are differentiated from each other in essence just as a word and its inherent meaning. The latter verses (XV 27-28) speak of a black-coloured person wearing a golden dress called \textit{pitāmbara} and accompanying his elder brother. These two references
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are obviously to two brothers, Kṛṣṇa and Balarama (alias Baladeva), both of whom are believed to abide in Iruṅkunram, the hillock sacred to Lord Tirumāl.

f. Haṃsāvatāra

Besides the above-mentioned avatāra-s, the Paripāṭal refers to Haṃsāvatāra, a less popular Incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu. One ode of this anthology (III 25-26) narrates that Tirumāl, in the disguise of a boar, lifted the earth sunk into the sea at the Catastrophe and then, in the form of a swan (Skt. haṃsa, Tamil ammac-cēval), dried the earth by fluttering its wings\(^{66}\).

Haṃsāvatāra is known in Sanskrit Purāṇic lore too. As Gros points out\(^{67}\), however, Haṃsa in Sanskrit mythology appears for the revelation of the Vedas to the human race, while in the Paripāṭal its appearance is associated exclusively with its heroic exploits. In this, one may well recognise the originality of Tamil version of Haṃsāvatāra.

g. Balarāma (alias Baladeva)

Balarāma is an incarnated aspect of Lord Viṣṇu who is most frequently mentioned in the Paripāṭal. The reference to this avatāra is to be found in six odes of this anthology. This may bespeak the popularity gained by this Incarnation in those days.

In the Paripāṭal, as in the Sanskritic tradition, Balarāma is known as an elder brother of Kṛṣṇa. Balarāma is, above all, “the one armed with a ploughshare” (Pari. XV 19) (cf. Skt. epithet ‘Harayudha’). His attribute, plough, repeatedly appears in the Paripāṭal (I 5; III 83; XIII 30-33; XV 57). The verses XIII 30-33, in particular, stress the matchless power of his plough (nāncil) with which he digs the chests of his enemies to slay them. In Pari. XV 58, he is endowed with a club (tanțu) as his attribute, which is in conformity with the Sanskrit tradition\(^{68}\).

The Paripāṭal ascribes the banner of palm to Balarāma as his attribute,
as in Sanskrit Purāṇas (cf. Skt. Tuladhvaja). This is the reason why Balarāma is sometimes called ‘Panaikkoṭiyōn’, “the one who has the palm-banner”. Apart from this, in the same anthology, he is also depicted as possessing three kinds of banners: a banner of plough, a banner of elephant, and a banner of Garuḍa (Pari. I 4; IV 38-42).

In the Parīpatāl, Balarāma is said to wear ear-jewels (Skt. kuṇḍala, Tamil kulai) in only one ear (Pari. I 5; XV 55). This is an attribute originally ascribed to Sanskritic Balarāma.

As in the Northern Purānic tradition, Balarāma, in contrast with his younger brother Kṛṣṇa, is believed to have whitish hue, and, in view of that in Tamil he is called ‘Vāliyōn’ or ‘Veḷḷaiyōn’, either of which signifies “the White One”. In the Parīpatāl, Balarāma’s white complexion is likened to the colour of white shells (valai).

With reference to Balarama’s complexion, the topic of the colouring of his clothes is sometimes brought up. While their colour is traditionally prescribed as red, blue, etc. in Northern iconography, Parīpatāl II 22 describes his clothes as “garments of darkness” (iruḷuṭukkai), which suggests a darkish colour. (Incidentally, Kṛṣṇa is dressed in yellow or golden clothes known as pitāmbara in Sanskrit. Cf. Pari. XV 28.)

It is historically proved that the worship of Balarāma was in vogue in so-called Caṅkam period. Here, it is worth noting that he is referred to in the company of some other gods, particularly Kṛṣṇa.

(1) Balarāma and Śeṣa (alias Ananta)

As in the Sanskrit Purānic literature, in the Parīpatāl too, Balarāma, who is otherwise known by the name of Baladeva, is closely associated with Śeṣa or Ananta, the Cosmic Serpent. Parīpatāl XV 19 narrates that Kṛṣṇa’s brother, namely Balarāma, has a shiny (or leaning?) soft head (‘aravaṇar kayantalait tammuṇ’). It is almost obvious that the image of Śeṣa is overlapped with that of Balarāma in this passage. The same may be true of the verses I 1-5, where Balarāma is portrayed
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as having thousand heads which are awesome as well as fear-inspiring\(^{(75)}\).

(2) Balarāma and Krṣṇa

The closest association between Balarāma and Krṣṇa observed in Sanskrit literary tradition\(^{(76)}\) is firmly maintained in the odes of the Paripāṭal. In the verses XV 10-13, the close companionship of the two brothers is compared to the inseparable relationship between the seashore washed by waves and the forest along the beach, and to the combination of a word with its inherent meaning. The passage of Pari. XV 23 might be properly understood in the same context. In an above-quoted verse, Pari. III 83, which is allusive to the kuravai dance, the image of Krṣṇa is to be found overlapped with that of Balarāma because a plough, the weapon peculiar to Balarāma, is here attributed to Krṣṇa.

(3) Balarāma and Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva

The vague distinction between Balarāma and Viṣṇu is observed at the very beginning of the Paripāṭal. In the first stanza of this anthology, namely in the verses I 1-5, all such things as thousand flat heads, the chest inhabited by Śrī-Lakṣmī (mā), the complexion as white as a sea-shell, a banner of elephant, a plough and one of a pair of ear-rings are found to be the attributes of one and the same god. Among these things, Goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī on his chest and thousand heads\(^{(77)}\) are commonly ascribed to Lord Viṣṇu, while the others are well-known attributes of Balarāma.

Likewise, the verses XV 55-61 enumerate various things ascribed to one and the same god. They are brilliance, one of a pair of ear-rings (oru kulai), a banner whose emblem is Garuḍa, a plough (nānci), a club (taṇṭu), a conch-shell (valampuri), a discus (nēmi), a bow (cilai), an arrow (ampu), a boomerang(?) (vaṭṭam)\(^{(78)}\) and a sword (vaḷ). This enumeration may exhibit a confusion of attributes between Viṣṇu-Vā-
sudeva and Balarāma, though the expression “two separate gods”, who are most probably identical with Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva and Balarāma from the context, occurs in the following passage (XV 66)

5. The Emanations (Vyūha-s) of Tirumāl

Not only the doctrine of Incarnations (avatāra-s) but also that of Emanations (vyūha-s) is found established in the well-organised Sanskritic Vaiṣṇavism. The doctrine of vyūha-s, which first appeared in the Nārāyaṇīya chapter of the Great Epic Mahābhārata, came to form the basis of the Pāṇcarātra philosophy.

The Paripāṭal, though there is no direct reference to vyūha-s, may perhaps touch upon this idea in metaphysical passages in the third ode (vv. 81-82). The text runs as follows: ‘Ceṅkaṭ kāri karaṅkaṇ veḷḷai/ ponkaṭ paccai paṅkaṇ māal/’ (“O Black One with red eyes! O White One with black eyes! O Green One with golden eyes! O Māl with green eyes!”). Following the usual order of the enumeration, we might be able to identify these four with Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha respectively. Parimēlalakar also considers this passage to be the reference to four vyūha-s (nālvakai viyūkam).

In spite of a probable allusion to vyūha-s, it is questionable whether the Paripāṭal was acquainted with the Pāṇcarātra doctrines. This will be discussed later in this paper.

We also come across a description of the three aspects of Lord Tirumāl in Pari. XIII 26-27. According to this account, Tirumāl is the Single One (oruvanai…, XIII 37) who is devided into three forms, viz. Ėśaśayin (= Nārāyaṇa) adorned with the tulasi garland and sleeping on the serpent between Creations (XIII 26-29), Balarāma armed with the plough with which he slays his enemies and pierces their chest (XIII 30-33), and Boar endowed with the decorated shining tusks (XIII 34-36). It is not at all certain, however, whether this description itself is allusive to the well-systematised notion of avatāra-s and vyūha-s.
6. Ādiśeṣa, the Cosmic Serpent

In connection with Tirumāl myths, Ādiśeṣa, the Cosmic Serpent otherwise known under the name of Śeṣa or Ananta, is frequently taken up in the Paripāṭal odes. But the Tamil names equivalent to Ādiśeṣa, Śeṣa, etc. as such do not occur anywhere in the original text.

The myth of Ādiśeṣa’s exploits appears in Fragment I 72-78. The verses 72-73 accord high praise to Ādiśeṣa who surrounds Mt. Meru with its hood to protect the mountain from the severe attack of Vāyu, the God of Wind. In the verses 74-75, Śeṣa, as in the Sanskrit legend, is said to support the earth as if it wore the earth as its crown. Further, in the verses 75-78, Śeṣa is said to have been the string of Śiva’s bow at the time of his tripurāsanḍhāra, the destruction of three cities. The celebrated thousand heads of Ādiśeṣa are referred to in a few passages, viz. I 1-2, III 59-60, and Fragment I 79. Ādiśeṣa as the couch of Viṣṇu-Narāyaṇa (‘Śeṣaśāyin’) appears in XIII 26-29.

It is interesting to note that, in the Paripāṭal, Ādiśeṣa is found to be an independent object of devotional worship. The existence of the temples of his own is proved in the Paripāṭal. One passage of Fragment I 79-82 creates a devotional atmosphere, by singing the praise of Ādiśeṣa. As regards the worship of the temples (nakar) dedicated to Ādiśeṣa, the reference is made in the verses I 30-49, where his temple constantly crowded with the devotees (I 30-45) is likened to the paradise (turakkam) (I 47). This passage is found to be well permeated with the emotion of bhakti. A temple of Ādiśeṣa is also mentioned elsewhere, e.g. in Fragment I 58-59. The verses of Fragment I 63-64 speak of an Ādiśeṣa temple located in a place called Kuḷavāy. It might perhaps be possible to interpret these temples as those dedicated to Tirumāl/Viṣṇu identified with Ādiśeṣa, rather than as the temples solely dedicated to the serpent god.

Apart from Ādiśeṣa, Vāsuki, another mythological serpent, is alluded to in a passage (Fragment I 64-71) which refers to the rope and the rod
with which Tirumāl churns the milky ocean.

7. Garuḍa

In the Purānic lore, Garuḍa, the king of birds, is often depicted as Viśṇu’s vehicle (Skt. vāhana, Tamil ārti). This aspect of Garuḍa is widely known to the Paripāṭal (III 16, 59-60). Garuḍa serves Lord Viśṇu not merely as his vāhana, but also as the emblem of his banner. (That is why Viśṇu is otherwise called ‘Garuḍa-dhvaja’ in Sanskrit myths.) This aspect of Garuḍa too is known to the Paripāṭal (I 11,57; II 60; III 17-18; IV 36-37,42; VIII 2; XIII 4,38-39,41; XV 56). Garuḍa, the implacable enemy of serpents, is portrayed as being fully ornamented with snakes and pecking at them to prey in the verses IV 43-48.

Garuḍa’s mythological aspects independent of Tirumāl/Viśṇu may be presented in III 15-16. The passage runs as follows: ‘Eer vayaṅku puṇ amararai vaḷaviya amilīṭiṟ/ payantō] iṭukkan kaiḷainta pulḷinai/’ (“You [=Tirumāl/Viśṇu] have [as your vehicle] the bird [=Garuḍa] which brought its mother’s suffering to an end by plundering the gods decorated with brilliant ornaments of ambrosia”). It would not be quite difficult to comprehend in the allusive expression of this passage such well-known themes of Sanskrit mythology as the antagonism between Kaśyapa’s two wives, Vinatā and Kadrū, the subordination of the former (=Vinatā) to the latter (=Kadrū) as the result of a bet on the colour of the tail of Indra’s horse (known by the name of Iccaiḥśravas), and Garuḍa’s freeing his mother Vinatā from thraldom by taking amṛta, the heavenly beverage (from Indra)(38).

Parinelalaḵar reads a mythical implication about Garuḍa and Viśṇu in an indistinct paragraph of Pari. III 59-61. The text runs as follows: ‘Aiyiravanar talai aravu vāyk koṭṭa/ ceval ūrtiyuṅ ceṅkaṅ māal/ ōvenak kilakkuṅ kāla mutarvanai/’ (“O red-eyed Māl having a vehicle of the bird [i.e. Garuḍa] keeping a snake [i.e. Ādiṇeṣa] of thousand raised heads in his mouth! You are the chief of time crying ‘O’”).
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Parimēlalakar annotates this portion as follows:

When Lord Viṣṇu gained the victory over asura-s, Garuḍa, the sacred bird as Viṣṇu’s attendant, was so arrogant that he ascribed his master’s triumph to his participation. In order to admonish him for his arrogance, Viṣṇu put one of his fingers on Garuḍa, saying, “What you said may be true if you can bear the weight of my finger”. Then, under the heavy load of the finger, Garuḍa descended into hell, where he praised Viṣṇu for long, becoming conscious of his fault.

This may be exclusive to Tamil myths since the parallel theme is found nowhere in the Sanskrit counterparts.

The name Karuṭaṇ, the tadbhava of Skt.garuḍa, as such does not occur in any reference or allusion to this mythical bird in the Paripāṭal odes. He is only called either Čeval “the Cock” (I 11?; III 18, 60; IV 36, 37; XIII 41), Puḷ “the Bird” (I 57; III 16, 17; VIII 2; XIII 4; XV 56), or Uvaṇṇam “the Kite” (II 60; IV 42). In Pari. XIII 38, he is called under the epithet Pāppup-pakah “the Enemy of snakes”.

8. Śrī-Lakṣmī

The Paripāṭal is lacking in detailed accounts of Śrī or Lakṣmī, Tirumāl/Viṣṇu’s divine consort. Except for one passage (Fragment I 17) in which she is referred to as independent of her spouse, this goddess is always found to remain subordinate to Lord Tīrūmāl. In many verses (viz. I 3, 8, 36; II 31; III 90; IV 59; XIII 12), she is said to reside on Tīrūmāl’s chest. (Needless to say, Viṣṇu in this aspect is called ‘Śrī-dhara’ in Sanskrit and ‘Citaran’ in Tamil.) Among these references, Pari. I 36 and IV 59 may be allusive not to Śrī-Lakṣmī, but to the śrīvatsa symbolic of the goddess, an auspicious mark or curl of hair on the chest of Tīrūmāl/Viṣṇu. Goddess Lakṣmī as well as the mark of śrīvatsa on
Tirumāl’s chest is coincident with the iconographical findings. Moreover, ‘tiru varai akalan toḻuvor’ in verse XIII 12, which has a twofold meaning, can possibly be interpreted to denote either “those who worship the chest (of Tirumāl resembling) a sacred mountain” or “those who worship the chest (of Tirumāl) on which Tiru (i.e. Śrī) abides”.

In the verses III 90, Tirumāl is called “the Husband of Śrī” (tiruvin kaṉavaṉ). The expression “the field fit to be preferred by Śrī” (tiru nayattakkavayal) appears in Fragment I 17. Here, as in Paṭṭinappalai 291 and Tirumurukarruppaṭai 70 quoted above, Śrī-Lakṣmī is found to be accompanied with the clear concept of prosperity or auspiciousness. In the Paripātal, as in other classical Tamil works, Śrī-Lakṣmī does not form an independent mythology of her own. Śrī-Lakṣmī, who is often called ‘Tiru’(95) (I 8, 36; III 90; XII 12; Fragment I 7) in the Tirumāl odes of the Paripātal, is addressed as ‘Mā’(93) in I 3 of the same anthology, as in Mullaippaṭṭu 3. The verses II 30-31 liken Śrī-Lakṣmī in Tirumāl’s arms to the macula of the moon (matimani). Here she is called ‘Ceyyol’ (“the White Lady”) (90). In IV 59, Goddess Śrī-Lakṣmī or the śrīvatsa mark is alluded to by the word “blemish” (maṉu).

9. Tirumāl’s Kinship

The Paripātal is not rich in the systematic accounts of Tirumāl’s kinship. First of all, Māl is defined as “father of the two” (iruvvar tātai) in I 28. Parimēlalakar does not gloss this verse. Cōmacuntaranār, a modern commentator, takes these “two” for Kāmaṇ (son of Rukmiṇī) and Cāmaṇ (son of Jāmbavatī), the two brothers born of different mothers(98). Here, Mal should be understood as Kṛṣṇa rather than Viṣṇu from the mythological point of view. Gros suggests the possibility to consider the “two” as the pair of Brahmā and Kama(96). Tirumāl as the father of Lord Brahma is proved in the verse III 13, which runs: ‘tā- marai pūvinaṭ pirantuṭum tātaiyum’ (“the One who was born from the
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lotus-flower [i.e. God Brahmā] and also is his father [i.e. Tirumāl]”). In this case, Viṣṇu in his Nārāyaṇa aspect may be referred to. As already introduced above, Tirumāl in III 90 is called “Husband of Tiru”. The Paripāṭal is aware of the two brothers, Balarāma (same as Baladeva) and Kṛṣṇa (XV 10-14, 19, 27-28). In spite of their striking contrast in their complexion and attributes, these two brothers somehow lose their own identities and mingle with each other to such an extent that they sometimes look as if they were one and the same god(92). This may be because of the close companionship, or rather the inseparability of the two deities(93).

In a Cēvēḷ ode of the Paripāṭal (XIX 57), Murukan is called Mālmarukan (or Māṅmarukan). If Tamil ‘marukan’, a word with a double meaning, here indicates “nephew”, Goddess Pārvatī who is the mother of Murukan and the sister of Viṣṇu may be implied. Otherwise, the existence of Devasena, Viṣṇu’s daughter, might be brought to the fore, since the other sense of ‘marukan’ is “son-in-law.”

From the above discussion, it is evident that the genealogy of Tirumāl shown in the Paripāṭal is found to mostly follow that of the Sanskrit Purānic lore and to contain no specific element of indigenous origin whatsoever.

B. Iconographical Descriptions of Tirumāl in the Tirumāl Odes

The Paripāṭal is comparatively abundant in the data regarding the iconographical attributes of Tirumāl, even though they are not fully detailed. Viṣṇu’s well-known attributes common in the Northern Epic-Purānic legends, viz. the Garuḍa banner, the Garuḍa vehicle, discus-weapon, conch-shell, the tulasi(90) garland and Śrī-Lakṣmī (or the śrīvatsa mark) on his chest are found in the Paripāṭal as well(100).

It seems likely that this anthology was well aware of the idea of pañcāyudha, the five kinds of weapon typical of Lord Viṣṇu(101), since discus, chank, bow, arrow, club and sword are collectively enumerated as

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Vişṇu’s weapons in the verses XV 59-61.

In III 33-43, Tirumāl is exalted as having various numbers of arms. It is noteworthy, however, that there is only a bare mention of Tirumāl with four arms, the most familiar image in his iconographical representations in Sanskrit tradition.

The ornament on his chest mentioned in I 8-9, 14-15, II 52 and IV 6 may possibly indicate the famous kaustubha which, according to the Purāṇic lore, originated from the ghee in the sea of milk. Gros finds two expressions, “a brilliant ornament” (I 28: ‘ilaṅku puṇ’) and “the ornament of pearl” (II 29-30: ‘nittila matāni’), as allusions to vajjayanti, Viṣṇu’s celebrated necklace. According to Parimēlalakar, the garland mentioned in III 87 is none other than the vanamālā peculiar to this god.

Tirumāl’s complexion is likened to various things: the colour of pūvai-flower, a gem (maṇi; most probably nilamaṇi, sapphire), rain clouds, darkness and the ocean. The verse XIII 26 adds that Tirumāl’s hue contrasts well with the colour of the Milky Ocean (‘tān uru urālam pārkaṭal’). All these comparisons are found to probably point to one and the same colour, namely dark blue, in consideration of such passages as “You have a brilliant, beautiful body whose colour is similar to that of these five things: a cloud, pūvai-flower, the ocean, darkness and sapphire” and “You have a body resembling a rain cloud, darkness and a dazzling jewel.” Elsewhere, Lord Tirumāl is said to “have a black body” (IV 7, 8: ‘māmey’) and to “resemble a black mountain” (XV 54: ‘karuṅkunuṟṟu anaiyavai’). Obviously, blackish colour may also be ascribed to him. By the aforesaid examination, it can safely be inferred that, as in the Sanskrit Purāṇic tradition, in the Tamil literary convention too Tirumāl is characterised as having either blackish or deep blue complexion.

Though it is rare, Tirumāl is compared to a lotus. In XIII 50-51, he is portrayed as having a reddish face (like a lotus-flower) and a dark (or greenish?) body (like a lotus leaf). It is interesting to note that,
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with all his usual complexion of dark colour, his feet are defined to be reddish (cevaṭī: III 2, 18-19; XIII 50-51?), as in the case of Murukan. Tirumāl’s divine, red feet is found to be accompanied with some idea of bhakti or devotional sentimentalism wherever they are mentioned\(^{112}\).

Tirumāl is said to have either red eyes (ceṅkaṇṭ; I 6 in allusion; IV 10; XIII 57) or lotus-like eyes (II 53; IV 60-61; XIII 50-51; XV 49)\(^{113}\). As far as the expression “lotus-like eyes” is concerned, a parallel simile is known in Sanskrit literary tradition as well, where Viṣṇu is called Puṇḍarīkākṣa, Kamalākṣa and the like, which mean “the one who has lotus-like eyes”\(^{114}\).

Tirumāl is believed to be clad in golden colour. A golden robe (ponpumai, ponpumaiyutukai, pon okkum uṭai, polampuriyāṭai) (I 10, 56; III 88; IV 8 in allusion; XIII 27; XV 28) seems to indicate famous pītāṃbara, the cloth peculiar to Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa\(^{115}\).

As already pointed out, in the odes of the Paripaṭal Tirumāl is sometimes portrayed without clear distinction among his avatāra-s, particularly from Balarama/Baladeva. This fact is reflected on his iconographical representations. For example, the shell-like white colour, which is occasionally ascribed to Tirumāl in Paripaṭal (I 3; II 20; III 88), is originally a marked characteristic of Balarāma too\(^{116}\). Likewise, a plough (I 5; III 83; XIII 33; XV 58) is commonly known to be a celebrated weapon of Balarāma. A club mentioned in a single passage (IV 30-40) suggests that the Paripaṭal was aware of the idea of Balarāma with his three flags. An ear-ring (kuḷai equivalent to Skt. kuṇḍala) in only one ear (I 5; XV 55) is quite symbolic of Balarāma\(^{117}\). “The veil of darkness” (iruḷuṭukkai) mentioned along with the palm-tree-flag in verse II 22 is also a distinguishing mark of this deity\(^{118}\).
C. Cosmological and Philosophical Ideas as Revealed in the Tirumāl Odes

1. Time and Space

Tirumāl hymns of the Paripāṭal exhibit their cosmology, in most cases, in connection with the accounts of avatāra-s. The cosmology shown in those odes makes no great difference from the Sanskrit Purāṇic accounts and does not represent anything unique. According to the Paripāṭal view of the universe, the world is subject to the periodical change of the Creation (Skt. srṣṭi; Tamil pataippu), the Preservation (sthitī; alippu) and the Destruction (pralaya; alippu) (I 43-46; III 71). The verses III 1-19 elucidate the Ages (ūlī) which thus undergo changes. The varāha-kalpa, the oldest Age according to Purāṇas, is mentioned in II 16-17(133). It is no doubt that the Paripāṭal is well aware of the Four Yugas (nālavaiūlī), viz. Kṛta, Treta, Dvāpara and Kali, quite common in Sanskrit Purāṇas, though it does not enumerate them all (III 80). In the verses III 21-26, in the context of the heroic deeds of Varāhāvatāra and Haṃsāvatāra, the Paripāṭal narrates the catastrophe brought by the destructive heat caused by the incorporation of the suns and the deluge, and the succeeding period of the Creation which begins with the recovery of the earth from the cosmic ocean (by Varāha) and the drying of the ground (by Haṃsa). The verses III 91-93 relate the earth which remains under the water before the Creation, a lotus and the birth of Brahmā (probably from Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa). In the Paripāṭal, the cosmological account of the Creation from Tirumāl/Viṣṇu, whose active agent is God Brahmā, harmoniously coexists with the Sāṃkhya explanation of the world to be discussed later(134).

As regards space, the outlook on the universe shown in the Tirumāl odes is found quite similar to that of the Sanskrit Purāṇic tradition. According to the odes, the universe contains twenty-one worlds (mūvel-ulakam)(III 9, 75; XIII 23), which are further divided into three groups(135).
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It is obvious that the expression "seven lower worlds" (kīlėlulakam) seen in III 20 is associated with the above cosmological ideas. The verses XV 1-14, which chant the eulogy of Tirumāliruṅgōlaimalai, make mention of "Imperishable Circle" (tolailānēmi) presumably comparable to the Sanskrit idea of cakravāla (Tamil cakkharavālam), the mythical range of mountains supposed to coincide the orb of the earth\(^{(\text{320})}\). In XV 10 appears the name kulavarai which apparently corresponds to the Purāṇic idea of kulagiri or kulācala, the chief mountain-range, any one of the seven principal ranges which are believed to tower in each division of the continent.

### Table III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verse</th>
<th>text</th>
<th>Parimēlalakar’s commentary</th>
<th>note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III 77</td>
<td>pāḷ (emptiness)</td>
<td>puruṣan (puruṣa)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kāḷ (wind)</td>
<td>ākayamutar pūtaṅkaḷaintum (pañcabhūtas such as ākāṣa, etc.)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pāku (part)</td>
<td>kaṅmentiriyaṅkaḷ aintum (pañcakarmendriyas)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>onru (one)</td>
<td>ọcāi (sound)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III 78</td>
<td>iraṅṭu (two)</td>
<td>ụru (touch)</td>
<td>pañcatalnapātras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mūnru (three)</td>
<td>urupu (form)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nāṅku (four)</td>
<td>cuvai (taste)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>aintu (five)</td>
<td>nāṟram (smell)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III 79</td>
<td>āru (six)</td>
<td>nānentiriyaṅkaḷ aintum</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>manamum (pañcājānendriyas plus manas)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>elu (seven)</td>
<td>aṅkārām (ahaṅkāra)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eṭṭu (eight)</td>
<td>man (buddhi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tōṭu (nine)</td>
<td>mūlappakuti (mūlapraṇkṛti)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
From the above examples, it can safely be said that, though the accounts are fragmentary and not detailed enough, the Paripaṭal was familiar with the mythological ideas of the world which had been established in the Mahābhārata and had become general knowledge in the Sanskrit Purānic literature.  

Interestingly, the Saṃkhya ideology is alluded to here and there in the Tirumāl odes in connection with the cosmological explanation of the world. In III 77-80, for instance, not a few principles are symbolically enumerated. Following Parimēlalakar’s interpretation, we may understand these principles from the Saṃkhya point of view. In his commentary, Parimēlalakar offers the above list of correspondence of the principles given in Paripaṭal III 77-80 to the twenty-five tattva-s of the Saṃkhya doctrine.

Similarly, Parimēlalakar takes ‘mūlam’ mentioned in III 24 along with ‘vicumpu’ (ether), ‘kāryu’ (air) and ‘kaṇal’ (fire) for ‘mūlappakuti’, namely mūlaprakṛti in Sanskrit terminology, in which three components (sāttvika, rājasa and tāmasa) maintain equilibrium. He further takes ‘vali’ in III 49 for ahaṅkāra in Saṃkhya philosophy.

2. Other Philosophical and Religious References

Besides the references cited above, such philosophical disciplines as five elements (pañcamahābhūta: III 4, 66; bhūta: XIII 18-22), five cognitive sense organs (pañcabuddhiṇḍriya or pañcajñāṇendriya: VI 1; XIII 16, 25) and five objects of senses (pañcaviṣaya: XIII 14) are mentioned in various contexts in the Tirumāl hymns. There is no doubt that these concepts have infiltrated well into Tirumāl odes of the Paripaṭal.

The idea of rebirth or transmigration is also commonly found in the Tirumāl hymns. The devotees worship the chest of Tirumāl and pray it to liberate them from the bondage of rebirth. According to the Paripaṭal, devotion to Lord in this life is nothing but the product of penance.
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tavappayam) performed in the previous life (XIII 63-64). Penance (tavam, apparently derived from Skt. tapas) is also referred to elsewhere in the same work (XIII 63; Fragment I 18).

In practical life, aram or aran (the performance of duties), a virtue comparable to Sanskritic dharma, is extolled in several passages (I 38; XIII 24; Fragment I 18, 21). A verse (IV 1) makes an allusion to the four practical virtues which help one in purifying his mind. Parimalalakar identifies these four with maittiri (Skt. maitri, “friendship”), karunai (karuṇā, “compassion”), mutitai (mudita, “pleasure”) and ikalcci (upekṣā, “neglect”).

What the devotees expect as the fruit of their devotion, penance and virtues is, needless to say, the state of mind free from the darkness of ignorance (marul, irul) (I 30; IV 1), in other words, the removal of illusion (mayar) (XV 37) and the extinction of displeasures (XV 52). This state of mind is made possible solely by the Grace (arul, alī) of Tirumāl, the Lord who indwells Iruṅkulram.

The notion of Paradise is also dealt with in the Tirumāl hymns. Though the commentators associate the paradise with Vaikuṇṭha, the Heaven identified with Viṣṇu’s abode, the original text cites it only as ‘turakkam’ (XIII 13; XV 16-17; Fragment I 47). ‘Tuṭakkam’ in those hymns is, above all, the abode of Lord Viṣṇu (XIII 13), and, at the same time, it is open only to those devotees who enjoy Grace of the Lord as the result of their virtuous deeds (XV 15-16; Fragment I 46). The Paradise, which would be otherwise difficult to attain (XV 17), is sometimes likened to the mountain sacred to Viṣṇu called Tirumāl-iruṅcūlaimagalai (XV 17-18) and to an Ādiśeṣa temple on a hill (Fragment I 47-48).
C. Vaiśṇavism in the Tirumāl Odes

1. Metaphysical Aspects of God Tirumāl

It may be concluded from the above discussion that the accounts of
the iconographical representations and various manifestations of Viṣṇu
given in the Tirumāl odes of the Paripāṭal do not differ much from what
is presented in the other Caṅkam works. It is evident that the Paripāṭal
rightly distinguishes itself from others by its clear awareness of, and
the emphasis on, the metaphysical phases of God.

The verses III 46-47, which follow the enumeration of the incompati-
bile, great features of Lord Tirumāl, are given below:

Nimnaip purai ninaippunī allatu uṇartiyo/
munmai marapin mutumoḷi mutalva/

“Even if we want to extol you, (we are at a loss how to do,)
wondering who else, except you, may know (your greatness).
O the foremost one in the old saying (=Vedas)
of ancient nature!”

The purport of this passage may be that nobody else can truly know
Tirumāl because he is far beyond the realm of our intelligence.

The above-cited passage is followed by another metaphysical
paragraph (III 48-50):

Ninaivu virintu akara kēlvi anaittinum/
valiyinum maṇattinum uṇarvinum ellām/
vaṇappu varampu ariyā marapinoyē/

“You have the nature, whose excellence and limit
cannot be known by any of the widespread Vedas,
by power, by mind, by sense organs or by anything!"

God, who thus transcends our knowledge, has nothing to be compared to and stands unparalleled. Tirumāl is really beyond comparison. After being identified with various great things in the preceding paragraph (I 37-48), he is praised as follows (I 49-55):

Atanāl/ innōr anāiyai inaiyai yalena/
anār yām ivān kānāmaiyin/ ... /
ninnōranaiyai niṅ pukaloṭum pōintē/
niṅ oikkum pukal nilalavai/

"Therefore, because we do not see here those (who are comparable with you) in order to say that (you) are like these or those ..., (we can only say that) you glow with your own glory and you are like those who resemble you. You have the brilliance of fame which resembles you".

What is meant in the above passage is that Tirumāl is such a transcendental one that he could be compared only to himself.

In this transcendental aspect, Tirumāl is identified with God who presides over the Destruction and the Creation, or even with the Destruction and the Creation themselves. It is in this sense that he is the source of the whole universe (III 1-10).

Lord Tirumāl is thus transcendental and is regarded as the source of everything in the world, but on the other hand he is also conceived of as being omnipresent and immanent in each and every object. In I 37-48, he is identified with various things—abstract principles such as moral (āraṇ) and grace (ādī), celestial bodies such as the moon and the sun, major deities such as Śiva and Brahma, the Destruction and the Creation attributed to these gods, and the Nature such as the earth, the
atmosphere, the Himalayas, etc. It may implicitly mean that all things existing in the universe are none other than Tirumāl himself.

The theme of Tirumāl’s ubiquity is crystallised into the most beautiful expression in the verses IV 66-70:

\[\text{Alalpurai kulaikolu nilararum palacinai/}
\text{alamun kapatumpum nalyargu nautuvum/}
\text{kálvalakku arunilaik kuŋramum piravum/}
\text{avvaavvai méya vēruvēru perarōy/}
\text{ev vayinōyum niye \ldots /}
\]

“O the one who has different names
suitable to different places (you pervade)
— an \textit{alam}-tree with flame-like young sprouts
as well as many branches giving abundant shade,
a \textit{kapatumpu}-tree, a sandbank of a good river,
a mountain whose towering obstructs the wind in the course,
and others.
O you who abide in everything!”

Tirumāl, who thus pervades all the things\(^{(130)}\), is said to have such innumerable bodies that one cannot express him as, so to say, “this many” (\textit{inaittu}) even with such a big numerical unit as \textit{ämpal} (III 44-45).

Tirumāl dwells in everything as its essence or nucleus. The theme of his immanence, which can be found in IV 66-70 quoted above, is beautifully versified in III 63-70:

\[\text{Tīyinul terul ni pūvinul nāṟram ni/}
\text{kallinul maniyum ni collinul vāymai ni/}
\text{arattinul anpu ni mārattinul maintu ni/}
\]
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vetattu maṟai nī pūtattu mutalum nī/
veṅcutar olīyum nī tiṅkaḷuḷ aliyum nī/
aṅaittum nī aṅaittin utpurūḷum nī āṭalin/
uraivum uṟaivatum ilaiyē uṟmaiyum/
maṟaviyil cirappiṅ māyamā anaiyai/

“Heat in fire are you; fragrance in a flower are you.
Brilliance in a gem are you; truth in a word are you.
Love in a good conduct are you; strength in bravery are you.
Secret principle in the Vedas are you;
the first one of the elements (i.e. ākāśa) are you.
The beam of the scorching sun too are you;
the coolness of the moon too are you.
Everything are you; what is inside everything are you; therefore,
(To you) there is neither abode nor (the act of) abiding;
(your) existence alone is.
An illusion which has unforgettable eminence,
you are like that” (137).

Another famous passage of IV 25-35 also ultimately offers the same notion. In particular, three verses IV 33-35 are remarkable:

Aṭanāl, ivvum uvvum avvum piravum/
ēmam arnta nīr pirintu/
mēval cāṅraṇa ellām/

“Therefore, (all things such as) this, it, that and others are eminent (because they are internally) united with you (even) when they are (externally) separate from you who abide (within) as their protector”.

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According to Parimēlalakar, the above passage purports that the origination, the maintenance and the retreat of the world and the living things (or, the living things of the world) all occur within yourself (=Tirumāl). In spite of his interpretation, this may possibly be understood otherwise as below:

Even after all things in the universe, which had been created by Tirumāl, became to have different names and forms, they are all united into one by Tirumāl who is immanent in them as their protector, i.e. inner controller.

Parimēlalakar notices the philosophical idea of *antaryāmin* (Tamil *antariyāmi*) in the verses II 24-25, which runs as follows: ‘Uyarntör āynta keţuvil kēlviyul naţu ākutal’ (“You are the core of the faultless Vedas which the noble studied”) (339). A more explicit statement which may probably express the concept of the “inner controller” is found in a phrase ‘Evvayinōyum niye’ (“O you who rest in everything!”) in II 59. Parimēlalakar paraphrases this into ‘Epporuţin akattāyum ni’ (“You who are the inside of everything”). Moreover, we may refer to Čomacuntaranar’s commentary on the same phrase, which goes: ‘Enaip poruţkaḻṭattum utporulāy uraipavanum niye ākinray’ (“You are the one existing as the hidden meaning in the other things”). Viewed in this light, it can be inferred that, though we have not come across the word *antaryāmin* as such or its Tamil cognates in the original texts, the *Paripāṭal* is likely to be well aware of the philosophical concept of the “inner controller”.

From the above examples it is known that the important thesis of transcendence and immanence of the Supreme, the principle which is detectable even in the Vedas and is later systematised in Vaiṣṇava theology in particular, is presented somewhat fragmentarily but expressly enough in the *Paripāṭal* hymns. Gros thinks that, in the
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Paripāṭal, this Vedāntic proposition of transcendence and immanence of the Absolute, which is seemingly self-contradictory in essence, is somehow overcome (or rather sidetracked?) in the direction of the bhakta’s devotional confidence in Tirumāl as the Savior\(^{346}\). The phrases of the earnest worship of Tirumāl seen in the Paripāṭal hymns are to be discussed in some detail in the following section.

The foregoing examination points to two different aspects of Tirumāl: (i) a concrete, anthropomorphic aspect easily accessible to anyone through mythological accounts, iconographical representations, etc., and (ii) an absolute, metaphysical aspect approachable only by way of divine inspiration or philosophical speculation\(^{347}\). With regards to the descriptions on the various attributes of Tirumāl, Hardy remarks, “Such descriptions are clearly inspired by iconography and the concrete vigraha in the temple”\(^{142}\). Hardy further argues that the icon or divine image in the temple is the symbolic representation of the transcendental, unapproachable, incomprehensible Absolute, the idea of which was basically foreign to the Tamil land\(^{143}\). It is indeed hardly deniable that there existed temples and hence icons or images in the age of the Paripāṭal. However, is it proper, as Hardy does, to unconditionally assume all the descriptions on Tirumāl’s attributes to be inspired by the temple vigraha-s? It would seem safer to me to hold that the iconographical accounts on Tirumāl in the Paripāṭal, which are mostly found to be ideomatic, formulaic, stereotyped or given, so to say, in a cut and dry manner, simply followed without vital modifications the conventional accounts in Sanskrit Epic-Puṇaṇīc literary traditions, and therefore did not necessarily require presupposed concrete objects like temple vigraha-s. In other words, we need not postulate an idol or anything iconic with well-defined anthropomorphic features at the background of the Paripāṭal accounts on Tirumāl’s attributes, since those explanations are mostly accompanied by mythological details and hence should be understood differently from the rituals of the actual
vigraha-s in temples.

The same is true of the recurring descriptions on the devotional adoration of Tirumāl’s feet. Here also Hardy emphasises the temple statues in the backdrop of this kind of descriptions\textsuperscript{(144)} . However, there would seem to be no need to preconceive such actual statues or images installed in a temple, in order to interpret the formulary expressions as the utterance of the natural devotional sentiments of the bhakta-s\textsuperscript{(145)} . Moreover, the origination of temple vigraha-s in Tamil Nadu should be understood not only as the result of the harmonious syncretism of the Northern idea of the transcendental Absolute and the Southern notion of the divine within the confines of a concrete reality as is interpreted by Hardy, but also in a wider context of the Southern religious tradition in which the sacred, the potentially dangerous force immanent in an object, is not necessarily given anthropomorphised representations so that it is occasionally symbolised merely by an enclosure or an object expressive of the divine presence at the particular spot.

2. The “Tirumāl-bhakti”, or the Devotional Worship of Tirumāl in the Paripāṭal

The Paripāṭal is distinguished from the other anthologies not merely by its metaphysical awareness, but also by its devotional lineaments. The Tirumāl hymns of the Paripāṭal, whose period of compilation is considered by scholars to be anterior to the dawn of Southern bhakti literature, the age of Ālvār-s and Nāyanār-s, already overflow with religious sentiments clearly marked with ardent devotional feelings. This is also true of the Cevvēl hymns of the same anthology and the Nakkar-r’s Tirumurukarruppaṭai of the Pattuppaṭṭu collection\textsuperscript{(146)} .

All the Paripāṭal odes dedicated to Lord Tirumāl are without exception imbued with indisputable sentiments of bhakti. Because of the dominating devotional nature of the hymns, it is no wonder that Tirumāl is often portrayed as the Protector (III 74-76, 84-85; IV 28, 34; XIII 49) or the
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Saviour (XV 37, 52) who shows the right path of faith to the devotees (IV 1-2), bestows Grace (arul, ali) on them and liberates them from the bondage of transmigration, than as the Creator or the Presider of the universe. He is believed to utter the words of Grace (arul) (XIII 45) and to be filled with Love (anpu) (XV 53), and sometimes even identified with divine Grace or Love itself (I 38; III 65). The devotees entreat him for his Grace and Love. Comparing it to the clouds charged with rains (IV 27), the devotees chant the eulogy of Tirumāl’s generosity in bestowing a favour. His Grace is likened to a parasol he holds up for the protection of the twenty-one worlds (III 74-76) and to the cool, refreshing full moon (XIII 5-6).

Tirumāl’s both feet, which are sometimes called ‘cevaṭi’ (“red feet”), are symbolic of his Grace. They are believed to bring liberation to the devotees (III 2) and are the object of their worship as well as admiration (I 65; II 72-73; III 18-20; IV 62; XIII 47, 61-62; Fragment I 5-6, 81). The devotees aspire to attain his feet, at which they will reside together with their kinsfolk (I 62-64; Fragment I 45). In a similar way, they worship Tirumāl’s chest, another symbol of his divine generosity (XIII 12). It would not be impossible to recognise in those passages devotees’ clear consciousness of their helpless inferiority and incapability, the awareness peculiar to, and characteristic of, the devotional tradition of the South (I 34; IV 3-5).

A long reference to the episode of Hiranyakasipu and Prahlāda in connection with Narasiṁhāvatāra found in IV 10-21—the passage which is exceptionally elaborate and detailed in comparison with the references to the other Incarnations—may casually bespeak the sympathetic feeling of the poet Kaṭuvaṇ Iļaveyīnanār toward Prahlāda, the God-fearing, devout bhakta of Lord Viṣṇu.

As is evident from the above-mentioned, the Paripāṭal makes note of the paradise (tirakkam) as the abode of Tirumāl (XIII 13; XV 16-17; Fragment I 47). By help of Tirumāl’s Grace, the devotees can finally go
to this heaven which would be otherwise impossible to attain (XV 15-16)\(^{(106)}\). It is quite interesting to note that Tirumāḷiruṅkunram otherwise styled Tirumāḷiruṅcōlaimalai, a celebrated mountain sacred to Lord Tirumāḷ, is occasionally drawn into comparison with heavens. The verses XV 15-18 thus proclaim, “By Tirumāḷiruṅkunram, Lord Tirumāḷ helps people secure the celestial world which would be hardly attainable by their own efforts”. In this aspect, Tirumāḷiruṅkunram may be paralleled by Tirupparaṅkunram, Paradise on Earth (\textit{tarai-vicumpu}) for the worshippers of Lord Murukan\(^{(107)}\). Along with the fact that Tirumāḷiruṅkunram, the Vaiṣṇava counterpart of Tirupparaṅkunram and an Ādīśeṣa temple are likened to the holy body (\textit{tirumēṇi}) of Tirumāḷ (XV 19-23, 33, 48) and the celestial world (Fragment I 46-49)\(^{(108)}\) respectively in different contexts in the \textit{Paripāṭal}, the above-cited comparisons turn out to be quite noteworthy in view of the Tamil notion of the sacred that the divine, when visualised, manifests itself in a particular concrete reality\(^{(109)}\).

Apart from the passages cited above, Tirumāḷ hymns of the \textit{Paripāṭal} contain many verses in which devout sentiments of \textit{bhakti} toward Tirumāḷ are effused (I 33; II 19, 74-75; III 46; IV 49, 52, 70-73; XIII 48; XV 66; Fragment I 82, etc.). We would be right to say that the Tirumāḷ odes of the \textit{Paripāṭal} on the whole exhibit more devotional lineaments than, for example, the odes dedicated to Čeṣvēḻ-Murukan which also produce an indubitable mood of devotion\(^{(106)}\).

As we have already seen above, it is evidenced by ample references in the \textit{Paripāṭal} hymns that Tirumāḷ was already established as an object of the monotheistic, devotional worship in the Tamil land prior to the so-called \textit{bhakti} period\(^{(101)}\), accompanied by the concepts of \textit{avatāra-s} and \textit{vyūha-s}. It is to be noted here, however, that the erotic and emotional elements, the elements of great import distinctively pertaining to the Tirumāḷ-Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa devotion in general, are totally absent in the \textit{Paripāṭal} odes\(^{(102)}\). The emotionalism of worship, which Hardy takes note
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of as an “undercurrent”, as well as the erotic aspects attached to the Sanskritic Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa cycle of myths, has not yet come up to the surface so far as the Tirumāl hymns of the Paripāṭal are concerned. This does not necessarily mean that the poets of this anthology were totally unaware of the life of Lord Kṛṣṇa as a cowherd, for, as we have already discussed, the verse III 83 may be allusive of the kuravai dance performed by Kṛṣṇa and milkmaids. Parimēlaḷakar also speaks in favour of this interpretation. From this, it may follow that the poets of the Paripāṭal preferred to ignore, or rather, sweep off the erotic and emotional elements of Kṛṣṇa myths rather than simply adopt them as they were in their own anthology. Such an attitude of the Paripāṭal poets proves to parallel that of the Tamil poets of pre-Paripāṭal works who showed a considerable interest in depicting the mythological as well as iconographical features of the Lord on the one hand, but kept virtual silence about his transcendental and metaphysical aspects on the other.

Thus it does not seem to be an exaggeration to state that the ancient Tamils introduced the whole image of Sanskritic Viṣṇu into their own idea not all at once but only step by step, and not blindly but in a prudent, selective manner. The introduction of transcendence of God Tirumāl followed by that of erotic and emotional elements of the worship is located near the end of this process. At the time of the Paripāṭal, the erotic and emotional themes of Tirumāl bhakti were not yet brought in, despite the introduction of the idea of transcendental Tirumāl. It is not until the period of the Prabandha (Tamil Pirapantam) that the devotion to Tirumāl-Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa with erotic aspects came to the fore. We should keep in mind here that, for the above reason, Tirumāl bhakti in the Paripāṭal remained incomplete. Even though it may have been “full-fledged” as Zvelebil dares to call it, yet it can hardly be said to have attained its “full-blown” stage. To seal the arguments, Gros correctly posits: “Nous sommes enclins à conclure que le mouvement de bhakti vishnouite n’a pas encore atteint dans les poèmes
de *Pa.* [=Paripātal] son plein développement puisqu’il y manque le thème qui sera dans toutes les littérature ultérieurs de ce type le thème essentiel” (106).

As we are clear that Tirumāl odes do not set forth any original view in cosmology or metaphysics, we can also hardly expect the systematic descriptions of philosophical speculation. Notwithstanding these, the speciality of those odes lies in their rich literary imagery as well as their first religious awareness of Vaiṣṇava devotion, which eventually leads to the *bhakti* of the *Nālayirappirappantam*. It is in this context that Gros designates the Tirumāl hymns as “le premier document de l’hindouisme à caractère purement religieux qui soit rédigé non pas en sanskrit mais en tamoul” (107).

3. Are Tirumāl Hymns Sectarian?

As for the philosophical accounts in the Tirumāl hymns, one can at least say that, as seen in the Hindu cosmology in general (108), the Śaṅkhyā view of the world infiltrates into the cosmological concepts of those hymns. Some scholars beat around the philosophical accounts of the Tirumāl odes just to detect references or at least allusions to the Pāṇcarātra doctrines (109). But it is doubtful whether such efforts will produce any result. It is true that Śaṅkhyā principles cast their shadow on the Pāṇcarātra cosmology. From this, however, it does not immediately follow that the suspected allusions to Śaṅkhyā principles found in Tirumāl hymns (e.g. III 49, 77-79) are directly inspired by the Pāṇcarātra doctrines, for all those allusions in the Tirumāl odes appear independently of the ideas of, for example, the *vyūha*-s in which the Pāṇcarātra philosophy is closely linked with the Śaṅkhyā explanation of cosmology.

Moreover, while in the Pāṇcarātra philosophy Lakṣmī, the female principle otherwise called Śakti, takes part in the Creation of the universe (110), Lakṣmī (or Tiru) mentioned in the Tirumāl hymns remains subordinate, being portrayed only as the divine consort of Tirumāl as in
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the precedent Caṅkham texts, and is not expected to play any crucial role in a cosmological or a metaphysical context. In this respect, too, the Tīrūmāl odes do not produce testimony to their being penetrated with the Pāñcarātra ideas.

As for the doctrine concerning vyūha-s also, the Tīrūmāl hymns do not bear convincing evidences since one passage (III 81-82) alone may be suspected to be, if anything, allusive to the doctrine.

As is well-known, the Pāñcarātra sets forth five aspects of Lord Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva, viz. paravāsudeva or paratva (transcendental form), vyūha (emanation), vibhava or avatāra (incarnation), antaryāmin (inner controller) and arca (idol). Sarangapani opines that all these five forms of the Supreme Lord are implicitly referred to in Tīrūmāl hymns. Gros, on the other hand, is negative in acknowledging the references to the distinct ideas of vyūha and arca in the Tīrūmāl odes in spite of his recognition of the other three: paravāsudeva, vibhava (or avatāra) and antaryāmin, as the essential components of the philosophical accounts of the hymns. As regards the vyūha-s, he harbours suspicion about the reference to the notion of vyūha-s and its derivation from the Pāñcarātra philosophy for the following reasons:

a) The notion of vyūha-s is alluded to in the Parimēlaḷakar’s commentary, rather than the original text itself.

b) The concept of vyūha-s itself is familiar to Purāṇas and Āḻvār-s (rather than to the Pāñcarātra).

c) The idea seen in III 81-82 that Māl assumes four different colours according to the Four Yuga-s, the idea found to parallel that in the Bhāgavata-purāṇa, can hardly be regarded as borrowed from the Pāñcarātra.

As for arca, Gros argues, even though the ode XV of the Paripāṭal may be dedicated to the Tīrūmāl idol of Tīrūmāliruṇcōlai, the same ode can be far more properly understood in the context of the aṟṟuppatai (‘guide poems’) genre of classical Tamil poetry than in the connection
with the Pañcaratra doctrines. From the above, Gros concludes, "La référence au Pañcaratra ne nous apparaît donc pas évident".

To begin with, it is a point in question if the Tirumāl hymns refer to any particular sect or school whether it might be the Pañcarātra, the Vaikhānasa or the Bhāgavata. In fact, the Ālvār-s, early ones in particular, who were preceded by the Paripaṭal poets, were destitute of any sectarian colouring and did not stand up for any Vaiṣṇavite school of thought\(^{(170)}\).

It still remains uncertain as to the historical details of the Pañcarātra, in particular the dates of its origination and the introduction into the South. According to Hardy, although the history of the Pañcarātra as well as the Vaikhānasa in the South before the ninth century A.D. remains obscure, it is almost undeniable that both the schools were present there for the last few centuries of the first millenium A.D.\(^{(170)}\) Furthermore, by reference to precedent studies by different scholars, Hardy estimates that the flourishing period of the Pañcarātra was c. A.D. 600-800 in Northern India and it had penetrated the South by about the eighth century\(^{(175)}\). Here we do not enter into a detailed chronological discussion of Vaiṣṇava schools or sects, but, if Hardy’s argument is trustworthy enough, it is rather difficult to assume that the Paripaṭal, which was compiled most probably between A.D. 400 and 500 or a little later, was familiar with the Pañcarātra doctrine. As stated above, Gros assumes a critical attitude to those scholars who try to lay stress on the developed features of the Tirumāl cult observed in the Paripaṭal by intentionally identifying various accounts in the texts with the references to the established Pañcarātra ideas\(^{(176)}\). The notion offered by Gros is found appropriate enough from the chronological point of view mentioned above. It seems plausible that Tirumāl cult as found in the Paripaṭal was primarily linked with the rise of Viṣṇu worship in the Tamil country anterior to the distinct sectarianisation of the Vaiṣṇavas\(^{(177)}\).

In connection with the sectarianisation, it seems necessary to point
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out another tide in South Indian Hinduism: the polarisation into the Śaivas and the Vaiṣṇavas. In Paripāṭal collection, as already introduced at the beginning of this monograph, there are in all seven odes dedicated to Tīrūmāl including one fragmental hymn (tiratṭu). It is known from the colophones at the end of each ode that the ode III among them was composed by a poet named Kaṭuvan Ilaveyinār, who can be identified with the poet of the ode V, a Cevvēl ode. Among Cevvēl odes of the same anthology, two poets given a Vaiṣṇava name are to be known: Keçavaṅar (cf. Skt. keśava) of the ode XIV and Nallacutanār (cf. Skt. acyuta) of the ode XXI. These textual evidences would probably suggest that the decisive polarisation into the Śaivas and the Vaiṣṇavas in the South was not yet achieved in those days. In fact, not only the names of the poets but the contents of the Paripāṭal themselves represent the same situation. For instance, five-headed Mal in I 43-44 may be identifiable with Śiva in his Sadāśiva aspect by reference to Parimēlalakar’s commentary. The destruction of Tripura (tripura-saṁhāra), which is commonly recognised as an exploit of Śiva in the Epic-Purāṇic context, is ascribed to Tīrūmāl in the Paripāṭal (Fragment I 76). The same may be evidenced by the Tirumurukārruppatāi as well as the Cevvēl hymns of the Paripāṭal. The Tirumurukārruppatāi, which is indisputably a Śaiva text today, deal with Śiva and Viṣṇu quite indiscriminately, except that the former is clearly designated in the text as the father of God Murukan (cf. v.256) to whom the work is dedicated. Similarly, in the Cevvēl hymns of the Paripāṭal, Śiva does not enjoy a position distinctly superior to that of Viṣṇu with the only exception of the ode V narrating the birth of Cevvēl-Murukan whose father is, needless to say, Lord Śiva. The name ‘Mān marukan’, an appellation of Cevvēl-Murukan seen in XIX 57, may be understood in this context.

Thus, Sarangapani’s notion that Tīrūmāl and Śiva do not coexist in the Paripāṭal turns out to be improper. According to Hardy, the polarisation into the Śaiva and the Vaiṣṇava become thoroughgoing
from the sixth or seventh century onwards\(^{183}\). N. Subrahmanian’s view that the Śaivites and the Vaiṣṇavites were in sharp antagonism against each other from the seventh century onwards may be supposed to point the same\(^{182}\). In this context, we should keep in mind that the so-called *Caṅkam* works, which are presumably pre-Pallava, show no clear evidence of the serious antagonism between the two sects\(^{183}\).

From all those, we have enough reason to assign the date of the compilation of the *Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai* as well as the *Paripāṭal* to a period anterior to the full-scale polarisation of the Śaivas and the Vaiṣṇavas\(^{184}\). Incidentally, Hardy is of the opinion that, though the Pāṇṭiyas introduced Mayōn-Tirumāl cult from the Northern India as their royal symbol and propagated it all over their land, this implies neither that they were Vaiṣṇavite proper nor that their national religion was Vaiṣṇavism\(^{185}\). His argument is well attested by the probable date of the polarisation of the two major Hindu sects in the South. Zvelebil, in his *Tiru Murugan*, shows his interpretation of the marriage of Murukan with daughters of Viṣṇu, Devasenā and Vaḷḷi, as the integration of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism\(^{186}\). This might perhaps be true of the devotional Tamil literature of later periods, like the *Kanta-purāṇam*. As far as the earlier phases of the Tamil literary history are concerned, however, his interpretation does not remain persuasive or valid since Murukan’s double marriage with them is narrated in those texts which were compiled prior to the above-mentioned polarisation.

III. The Cult of Tirumāl in Early Tamil Nadu and Its Northern Features

All the above discussions in the present work do not distinctly mark the unique features of the early worship of Tirumāl in the Tamil country; rather the reverse is the case. It would seem to me that all these speak in favour of the Northern origin of the Tirumāl cult in
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South India. Now we must further pursue our argument by focusing on a few particular themes so that we may attest this hypothesis and place the Tirumāl cult properly in the early history of Southern Hinduism.

A. Worship of Rāma and Balarāma in the Early Tamil Land

As stated in the section of avatāra-s, Balarāma (alias Baladeva) is known to have been an object of ‘joint worship’, being associated with various Vaiṣṇava gods, in particular Kṛṣṇa. It is rather doubtful whether there existed the independent cult of Balarāma in early Tamil Nadu. This may be related to an established fact in Sanskrit mythology that the two brothers, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, are intimately coupled together in various episodes. Thus, the Southern origin of Balarāma as suggested by P. T. Srinivas Iyengar may require reconsideration. It would seem proper to assume that the worship of Balarāma was introduced from the North into the South along with that of Kṛṣṇa. The joint worship of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma as revealed in the Paripāṭal odes, actually reflect the ancient situation. As Kṛṣṇa gained popularity in later ages, the importance of Balarāma waned accordingly. In the period of Ālvār-s, the latter had already lost his importance. Such a development of the advance and the retreat of Balarāma cult of South India is observed to exhibit close correspondence to that of the North. This strongly suggests that the cult of Balarāma in the South was moulded and developed under the incessant influence of the Northern religious trends.

This fact, along with the discussion on Rāma to be given below, seems to be suggestive of the probable Northern pedigree of the idea of avatāra itself.

As in the other Caṅkam classics, so in the Paripāṭal there is no reference to deified Rāmacandra. This does not necessarily indicate, however, that Rāma was totally unknown in the Caṅkam corpus. Scholars cite Puranānūru 378 and Akanānūru 70 as the references to this heroic
figure. Both poems, which contain allusions to some episodes of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, hint that the Tamils in those days were aware of the story of that epic. Here it should be noted that in those poems Rāma is neither deified as an object of worship nor portrayed as an *avatāra* of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu. According to Ilart, the absence of the deification of Rāma is in agreement with the older middle books of the *Vālmīki-ramayāṇa*\(^{385}\). It is a well-known fact that, in Sanskrit literary tradition, the deification of Rāma begins in the opening and concluding chapters of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and in the newer portion of the *Mahābhārata*\(^{386}\). In the North, his cult became really popular only after the Muslim invasion\(^{386}\). The absence of deification of Rāma in the *Caṅkam* literature cannot be irrelevant to such trends of the North.

Dimmitt and van Buitenen remark that, among famous members of the *daśāvatāra*-s, Matsya, Kūrma, Varaha, Vāmana, Narasiṁha and Kṛṣṇa are repeatedly referred to in the great Purāṇas sometimes even at great length, whereas Paraśurāma and Rāma are occasionally recalled but only rarely described, and, as for Buddha and Kalkin, they occur once or twice in the lists of Viṣṇu’s *avatāra*-s but have no significant tales of their own at all\(^{396}\). As we have examined, in the *Paripāṭal* there is no reference to Matsya, Paraśurāma, Rāma, Buddha and Kalkin. This blends well with the trends of Sanskrit Purāṇic literature stated above.

The above facts convince us that the idea of *avatāra*-s of the *Paripāṭal* hymns is not of its own but mostly borrowed from the Sanskrit Purāṇic tradition. Concerning the absence of deification of Rāma in the early Tamil literary sources, Maraimalaiyadigal says that the story of Rāma was not in vogue in Tamil Nadu in the age of the *Paripāṭal*\(^{397}\). Here, it is to be kept in mind that “the story of Rama was not in vogue in Tamil Nadu” not because people were ignorant of it, but probably because the concept of incarnation itself, which was originally foreign to the Tamils, was not yet firmly rooted into the Southern soil and was still subject to the Northern religious tendency. It
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is in this very context that Maraimalaiyadigal is correct when he remarks that the incarnations of Tirumāl were the creations of Northern Indians⁹⁸.

Thus, we come to know that the worship of Rāma and Balarāma, the two gods closely related to Tirumāl/Viṣṇu in mythology, in early Tamil Nadu cannot be properly understood without referring to the Northern situation of their worship, since the Southern worship of the two gods is found to be reflective of its Northern counterpart. From this, one can conjecture that the worship of the both deities, whose stronghold was unmistakably in the North, was originally extraneous to the Tamils and brought from Northern India. This further brings us to the assumption that the bulk of Tirumāl cult as found in early Tamil Nadu along with its accompanying elements basicaly stemmed from the North.

B. Appellations Applied to God Tirumāl

We shall seek to find another clue to the problems of Tirumāl worship in Southern India by examining various Tamil names applied to this god. Here we will follow up what is implied by ‘Māl’ and ‘Māyōn’, the two old and significant names of Lord Tirumāl. To begin with, the accounts found in Tamil Lexicon, DED-DEDR, and Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index on the two words, māl and māyōn, and their common nominal root mā are given in the Table IV⁹⁹.

1. Mā:

Mā forms the radical of both māl and māyōn, and its meanings are broadly divided into two categories in Tamil Lexicon and DED-DEDR: [a] black(-ness) (DED 3923; DEDR 4781), and [b] great(-ness) or strong (strength) (DED 3923; DEDR 4786). DED and DEDR place two names of Viṣṇu, māl and māyōn, in the [a] category, whereas Tamil Lexicon makes out the [a] category of meanings to be understood in the...
association with Skt. *maya* and seeks the derivation of the [b] category from Skt. *maha*. *DED* and *DEDR*, on the other hand, pay no attention to the etymological explanations the *Lexicon* seeks to convey.

Here, it appears necessary to bear in mind a semantic association of the conception of "black" with that of "great" or "strength" found in the Tamil or Dravidian vocabulary\(^{30}\). In this context, it would seem better to conceive the root *mā* as well as its derivatives to have a dual

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<tr>
<th>Tamil Lexicon</th>
<th>DED-DEDR</th>
<th>Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>mā</em> (^{4})</td>
<td><em>mā</em> (3923;4786)</td>
<td><em>mā</em> (3923;4786)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) greatness</td>
<td>great</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) strength</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>mā</em> (^{5})</td>
<td><em>mā</em> (3918;4781)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) beauty</td>
<td></td>
<td>(7) dark colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) blackness</td>
<td>black</td>
<td>(8) Tirumāl</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) colour</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>(4) paleness caused by love-sickness</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>māyōn</em></td>
<td><em>māyōn</em> (3918;4781)</td>
<td><em>māyōn</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) dark coloured person</td>
<td>dark-coloured, person, Viṣṇu</td>
<td>Kaṇṭhaan</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Viṣṇu</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>māl</em> (^{2})</td>
<td><em>māl</em> (3918;4781)</td>
<td><em>māl</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) illusion, delusion</td>
<td>blackness, black, cloud, Viṣṇu</td>
<td>(1) Tirumāl</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) desire</td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Aniruttan</td>
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<tr>
<td>(3) love, lust</td>
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<td>(3) black colour</td>
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<td>(4) blackness</td>
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<td><em>māl</em> (^{3})</td>
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<td>(1) greatness</td>
<td>great man</td>
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<td>(2) great man</td>
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<td>(3) Viṣṇu</td>
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sense of “black” and “great” (or “strong”) instead of dividing one and the same term into two different roots. In other words, it would seem appropriate to grasp a word as it is, as a whole with the association of plural meanings and connotations.

2. Mayon:

So far as the name ‘Mayon’ stemmed from mā is concerned, there is no difference of opinion between Tamil Lexicon and DED-DEDR, either of which takes māyōn for “a person of blackish complexion”. N. Subrahmanian, a noted cultural-historian and the author of Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index, agrees with this interpretation in his Śangam Polity\(^{(20)}\). Zvelebil, too, interprets ‘Māyōn’ as “The Dark (Black, Dark-blue) One”\(^{(20)}\).

In the case of māyōn too, the word may be conceived of as having the sense of “great one” or “strong one” as well, though there is some evidence to show that the word predominantly signifies “black-complexioned one”. Hardy points out that the word māyōl, the feminine form of māyōn, exclusively denotes “dark-complexioned woman” (‘māmai niramūtaiyāl’) in the akam genre of classical poetry, as in Kuruntokai 9, 132, 199 and 259\(^{(20)}\). Therefore, according to Hardy, māyōn is none other than “black-complexioned man”\(^{(20)}\). Indeed, apart from the passages cited by him, we can confirm the usage of māyōl as “girl of black complexion” in some other places in Caṅkam texts, i.e. Aiṅkurenūru 145, Nārīṇai 135 (5), 146 (10), 180 (5), 371 (1) and Porunarrupaṭṭai 14. In all these passages, māyōl indicates the heroine (talaivī) without exception. These examples may be evidential of the word māyōn applied to Tirmul with the dominant implication of “man of black complexion”. There seems to be no room for doubt that the Northern image of Lord Kṛṣṇa is well reflected in the Tamil name ‘Māyōn’. The Tolkāppiyam (porul. 5.5), in which Māyōn is designated for mullaṭṭinaĪ, the sylvan or pastoral tract, supports God Māyōn as the Southern counterpart of Kṛṣṇa.

Is it true that māyōn meant “black one” alone as Hardy insists? In
order to reinforce his argument, he further cites Puranānūru 229 (27) and 291 (2) in which the noun māyōn is employed in its 'general meaning' as "person of dark complexion"[(32)]. At least so far as māyōn in Puranānūru 229 is concerned, it is somewhat doubtful whether it solely implies "Black One". The twenty-seventh verse, namely the last verse, of this long poem runs as follows: 'maṇivarai yānā māa yōne'. U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar glosses this verse as 'Nilamalaipōlum māyōn' ("O Māyōn who resembles a blue [or black] mountain"). Nilam (derived from Skt. nila) can be translated either as "(dark-)blue" or as "black". Maṇi in the original verse might be interpreted in various ways. Suppose we take "black" among some possible meanings of this word, the passage may be translated as "O Māyōn who resembles a black mountain!" Here, Māyōn indeed has an image of "Black One" beyond doubt. It may be also true, however, that he is likened to a mountain at the same time in this passage. In this connection, it is to be remembered that Lord Tirumāl (or Balarāma) is occasionally compared to a mountain as in Paripāṭal XIII 3-4, 10-12 and XV 19-23, and more explicitly in XV 33. Hence it would be plausible that in this poem God Māyōn has the double image of "Black One" and "Great, Lofty One". The same might be true of Nāriṇāi 32 (1) which runs: 'Māyōn anna mālvarai'. This phrase is to be translated as "a black mountain resembling Māyōn", suppose 'māl' here is tentatively rendered as "black". Here also Māyōn is known to have the twofold image of "Black One" and "Great, Lofty One", since he is compared to a mountain[(38)]. From these textual examples, it would seem probable to me that the name 'Māyōn', which may predominantly imply "man of dark complexion", has the sense of "Great, Lofty Being" as well even in a lesser degree.

3. Māl:

Regarding 'Māl'[(39)], another important name of the Lord, the description offered in Tamil Lexicon is at variance with that in DED-
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*DEDR*. The former ascribes ‘Māl’ to the word māl which only means “great(-ness)”, while the latter derives it from the word māl denoting “black(-ness)”. On this point, *Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index* by N. Subrahmanian is silent. However, the same author says in *Śangam Polity*: “Māl means ‘Great’ and Tirumāl was the ‘sacred, great one’”(209). Pillay also notes, “‘Māl’ means great and ‘Tirumāl’ denoted the sacred great God”(209). It is evident that Zvelebil understands ‘Māl’ as “Dark One” or “Black One”, when he translates ‘Tirumāl’ as “the Blessed Dark One”(210). Hart also interprets ‘Māl’ as “the black one”(211). These examples suffice to show how scholars differ in opinion on the basic meaning of the name ‘Māl’. It would seem to me that, generally speaking, native scholars are willing to support “Great One” for the name ‘Māl’, whereas the others prefer to the word as “Black One”.

Gros points out that the explanation of Tamil ‘Tiru-Māl’ from its Sanskrit parallel ‘Śrī-Kṛṣṇa’ is rejected by many Vaiṣṇavites nowadays(212). They prefer to make a clear-cut distinction between the root mā “black” and the root mal “great”. Gros, however, criticises such a notion, saying, “En fait, māl- signifie, comme iru-, l’un et l’autre et la philologie ne permet pas de trancher”(213). His observation is presumably to the point. It would be likely that, not only in māl but also in mā and māyōn, two meanings, “black(-ness)” and “great(-ness)”, are closely united together to such an extent that one cannot separate one from the other.

Hardy, who made comprehensive researches in Kṛṣṇaism in South India, totally rejects “great(-ness)” as a meaning of mā and māl, identifying ‘Māyōn’ and ‘Māl’ exclusively as “person of dark complexion”. He remarks, “It is quite clear that Māyōn, etc. [viz. Māyōn, Māl, Māyavan and Māyān] are different Tamil renderings of the Skt. name Kṛṣṇa ‘the Black One’”(214). It can hardly be said, however, that he gives enough philological reasons and evidences to exclude “great(-ness)” from the senses of ma and mal. His argument to identify Tirumāl with Kṛṣṇa, a particular incarnation of Lord Viṣṇu, by allotting the meaning
“black (-ness)” to the words mā and māl does not seem to hold well philologically and in the historical context of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu worship developed in the South to be discussed later.

Here it is necessary to cite a few usages of the word māl. First, we will further examine a verse of Narrinai 32 (1) mentioned above which runs: ‘Māyōn aṇṇa mālvarai’. In our foregoing discussion, we have translated this phrase as “a black mountain resembling Mayōn”, taking this ‘māl’ for “black” tentatively. However, it is found equally possible to take this ‘māl’ for “big”, “tall”, “lofty” or “great”. In fact, A. Nārāyaṇacāmī Aiyar’s commentary considers the ‘māl’ as ‘periya’ (big) and paraphrases the passage as ‘Māyōnaip pōṇra periya malai’ (“a big mountain resembling Māyōn”). It would be safer to admit that the word ‘māl’ has the double meaning, “black” and “big” (or “tall”).

In the verses 1-5 of the Mullaippattu, the rain-laden clouds gathering and moving swiftly are likened to tall Māl (‘nimirnta māal’). (As we will see in this article, Tirumāl is sometimes compared to a dark cloud big with rain.) From this example, we come to know that Māl is imagined both as “Tall, lofty One” and as “Dark, Black One”.

The verses of Tirumurukārruppatai 256-257 are also suggestive in this context. The long compound of this phrase, ‘māl-varai-malai-makāṇ-makāṇe’, may be translated as “O the son [-Murukan] of the Hill Goddess who is a big mountain”, though the meaning of ‘varai’ is here far from clear. Naccińārkkipiṇiyar annotates this phrase as ‘Perumaipaiyutaiya malaiyakiya malaiyaraiyan makuṭaiya makanē’ (Italics are mine). This interpretation is followed by Cōmacuntaraṇār. It is clear that ‘māl’ in this passage is better understood as “big”, “tall” or “lofty” than as “black”.

Furthermore, Cirupañṇarruppatai 205 mentions ‘kaṭavul mālvarai’, which may refer to Mt. Meru. Naccińārkkipiṇiyar (p.170) glosses this phrase as ‘teyvaṅkaḷ irukkinra perumaiyaiyutaiya mēru’ (“Mt. Meru with hugeness [or greatness] where deities abide”). Cōmacuntaraṇār’s
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modern commentary is almost identical (‘teyvaṅkaḷ uraikinra perumaiyu-ṭaiya mērumalai’). Here, since Mt. Meru, the huge cosmic mountain, is taken up, the ‘māl’ in this phrase is unmistakably “huge” or “great”.

From the above examples, we notice that ‘māl’ commonly has the sense of “big”, “tall”, “lofty” or “great” in Caṅkam passages.

In this connection, netiyōn, one of the epithets applied to Lord Tirumāl, may demand our careful consideration. What is denoted by netiyōn is not distinctly known, although this name itself frequently appears in the Caṅkam corpus. Some seek to find in this epithet the Vedic-Purānic idea of the Three Strides (trivikrama). This is indeed plausible, since there is linguistically no doubt that netiyōn indicates “Tall One” (DED 3099; DEDR 3738). But in view of the fact that the same epithet may be applied to Murukan and Paraśurāma as well in the Caṅkam texts, it might be more appropriate to take it for “Great, Exalted One” rather than “Tall One”. The recurrence of the name netiyōn suggests that Tirumāl/Viṣṇu was commonly understood by the early Tamils not merely as the god of dark colour but also as Great, Exalted One. It is highly probable that people in those days imagined Tirumāl/Viṣṇu not as Kṛṣṇa but as a whole, or rather as a complex of many aspects including those of Kṛṣṇa and other avatāra-s.

One can cite another textual example in this connection when one comes across the following verses in Paripaṭal III 1-3: ‘Māayōyē māayōyē/marupirappu arukkum mācu il cēvaṭi/ maṇīṭikal urupin māayōyē/’ (“O Māyō! O Māyō! O Māyō endowed with the blemishless red feet which cut [the chain of] rebirth and the body shining [like] sapphire!”). ‘Māyō’ in this paragraph does not necessarily imply “black-complexioned person”, as Parimēlālakar properly notes, ‘Māyōnenpatu, kariyōnnum poruḷ kuriyātu peyar māttiraiyā ninratu’ (‘Maṇīṭikal urupu’ (the body with the splendour of sapphire”) is rather associated with bluish complexion. It may be said that the word ‘Māyō’ in this context, free from its implication of “Black One” or any other, functions as a
mere proper noun indicating not a particular Incarnation like Kṛṣṇa but the whole entity of God Tirumāl.

4. Significance of Different Names of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu

The above examination provides a positive proof that both ‘Māyōṛ’ and ‘Māḷ’ (and hence ‘Tirumāl’ also) have a double meaning instead of an exclusive implication of Kṛṣṇa as “Black One”. This probably indicates that, in Tamil society in those days where the theological doctrines of Vaiṣṇavism, as of Pāṇcarātra of later days, was not yet introduced, Tirumāl/Viṣṇu was worshipped, so to say, as the composite whole of multifarious aspects including vyūha-s and avatāra-s, any of which had not yet established its own independent entity in worship. Various epithets and names\(^{(220)}\) applied to one and the same god, may be understood in this context. The description of Balarama (not Viṣṇu) who has Lakṣmī on his chest (Paripāṭal I 3-5) as well as that of Churning of Milk-ocean in which Lord Tirumāl plays a triple role as Kūrma, Vāsuki and the puller of the serpent-rope (Paripāṭal Fragment I 64-71) may be interpreted as revealing the fact that Tirumāl was worshipped as a whole without distinction between his transcendental form and his descents at least at the stage of the Paripāṭal. This, too, turns out to be parallel with the situation of the Northern Vaiṣṇavism.

Here, it is necessary to refer to Hardy’s view. Quoting the passage of Paripāṭal XIII 26-37 in which three manifestations of Māḷ viz. Nārāyaṇa, Balarama and Varāha are narrated, he remarks, “Thus it appears that ‘Kṛṣṇa’ is used here indiscriminately for both the transcendental Viṣṇu and the ‘incarnate’ Kṛṣṇa, and moreover also for the Avatāras. This situation is not altogether surprising, when we look carefully at the Northern traditions. Even there ‘Kṛṣṇa’ includes only at a later stage the ‘cowherd of Vṛndavana’, particularly as the lover of the gopīs ... In the earlier [Northern/Sanskrit] sources, there was no need for such a precise distinction between the Transcendental god and his human

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"incarnations"\(^{(22)}\). Though we are not fully convinced of his notion that ‘Māl’ is no more than a mere rendering of Skt.Kṛṣṇa, his above-cited argument speaks in favour of the Southern worship of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu keeping step with the Northern trends of the Vaiṣṇava religion.

To sum up, it may be noted that both names, ‘Māyōn’ and ‘Māl’, applied to Lord Tirumāl is, in all probability, endowed with a double meaning, “Black One” and “Great, Tall One”. The former sense may correspond to Skt.‘Kṛṣṇa’ and suggest an ‘incarnate’ aspect of Viṣṇu\(^{(23)}\), while the latter may perhaps represent a ‘transcendental’ aspect of the Lord or, as the epithet ‘Neṭiyōn’ hints, a ‘mythological’ aspect as celebrated Trivikrama. (As far as ‘Mayōn’ is concerned, “Black One” or “Dark One” may be somewhat dominantly implied.) Thus Tirumāl, whose appellations themselves make us presume his close association with the Northern-Sanskritic world, stands out in sharp contrast to Murukan, the god *par excellence* of the Tamils, whose older names predominantly suggest his indigenous features.

Tirumāl’s names and epithets, many of which have multiple meaning, are likely to show that he was understood as a god into which diverse elements were so harmoniously united that no one might dare to worship any single aspect in an independent manner. This proves to be in complete accord with the Northern situation of Viṣṇu cult. All these unmistakably show that the Southern worship of Tirumāl was moulded basically on its precedent Northern model of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa cult.

The probable Northern origin of Tirumāl cult may be attested by some other textual evidences also. They are enumerated below:

a) Lord Tirumāl is designated as ‘Celvān’ (“wealty man”, “lord”), a Tamil title generally applied to the gods of Northern provenance\(^{(24)}\).

b) Tirumal is not directly connected with the phenomenon of “possession”, “frenzy” or “trance” characteristic of the sacred indigenous to Tamil India\(^{(25)}\).

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c) With the only exception of Tirumalirukunram otherwise known under the name of Tirumalirucolaimalai, the cult of Tirumal does not show the significant association with “mountain” which was commonly believed by the ancient Tamils to be one of the most important seats of the divine²⁹⁰.

The scarcity of references to Mayon-Tirumal in the earlier texts and his rise in popularity in post-Caṅkam periods may also evidence that this god was originally foreign to the Tamils.

C. Brähmanical References in the Paripātal Hymns

The Northern features of Tirumal and his cult seem to be in accord with the recurrence of Vedic or Brähmanical references in the Tirumal hymns of the Paripātal. The references to the Vedas and the Brahmin cultures, which are all presented in a good light by the poets, are found here and there in all the seven odes (520 lines). The following is the table of the references:

References to the Vedic Scriptures

* arumarai (“Rare Secret”, i.e. Vedas) … I 13; II 57; III 17; IV 65 (=Upaniṣads? Cf. Parimēlakar).
* vāymoli (“Word of the Mouth”, “True Saying”, i.e. Vedas) … I 65; III 11, 12, 93; XIII 44; IV 63.
* mutumoli (“Old Saying”, i.e. Vedas) ……… III 47; XIII 40.
* pulam (“Knowledge”, i.e. Vedas?) ……… I 46.
* marai (“Secret”, i.e. Vedas) ………….. II 63.
* vētam (“Vedas”) …………………………… Fragment I 18.
* vētattu marai (“Secret of the Vedas”) … III 66.
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References to Brahmins
* antaṇar ("Gracious One", i.e. Brahmin)\(^{(227)}\) ... I 13, 37; II 57; III 17; IV 65; Fragment I 20.

References to the Vedic Sacrifice
* aran ("Virtue" ... an allusion to the chief of sacrifice, vēlvi-mutalvaṇ, according to Parimēḷaḷkar) ...... III 5.
* vēlvi ("Sacrifice", i.e. Vedic yajña) ... XIII 56.

* In addition to the above references, the verses II 61-62 may indicate the idea of Vedic sacrifice.

The poets consistently pay tribute to the authority of the Vedas as well as that of Brahmins. It is remarkable that in III 47 Māḷ is explicitly called ‘Mutumoli-mutalvaṇ’ ("the chief of Old Saying", namely "the Chief of the Vedas")\(^{(230)}\). Such an expression obviously shows that the cult of Tirumāḷ had its root in Vedic India, not in the indigenous South, or at least had the Vedic authority behind it.

As for the Cevvēḷ hymns of the same anthology, we notice that the Vedic-Brahmaṇical references are apparently fewer in number as revealed in the following table\(^{(239)}\).

Vedic-Brahmaṇical References in the Cevvēḷ Odes of the Paripāṭal
* vētam ........................ V 23.
* mutumoli ........................ VIII 9.
* nāṇmarai ("Four Secrets", i.e. Four Vedas) ... IX 12.
* vāyomoli ........................ IX 13.
* curuti ("Śruti") ................... XVIII 52.

* vēlvi ................. V 26, 31; XIX 43, 88\(^{(300)}\).
* vēḷ (a verb denoting "to perform sacrifice") ...... V 41.
* parppār ("Seers", i.e. Brahmins) …… VIII 52, 68\(^{(231)}\).
* antaṇar ……………… XIV 28.

Here we find only thirteen Vedic-Brāhmaṇical references in 612 lines, whereas in the Tirumāl odes of the same anthology thirty references in all are to be pointed out in 520 lines. The odes XVII and XXI in particular contain no clear references to the cultural elements presumably of Vedic-Brāhmaṇical provenance.

The same is true of the case of the Tirumurukarruppatāi, an idyll exclusively dedicated to Lord Murukan. Here also the references are found in nine places among 317 lines as follows.

**Vedic-Brāhmaṇical References in the Tirumurukarruppatāi**

* arumaraikēlvī ………………… verse 186.

* antaṇar …………………… verses 96, 263.
* aiyar (Brahmins) …………… verse 107.
* irupīrappālar ("the Twice-born", cf. Skt.dvija) … verse 182.

* vēlvi ……………………. verses 96, 156.
* mutti (Three Fires) ………… verse 181.
* ūn ("String", i.e. Sacred Thread) …………… verse 183.

What is significant as regards the Tirumurukārruppatāi and the Cevvēḻ hymns of the Paripaṭal is that the atmosphere produced there is far from Vedic or Brāhmaṇical. The themes of Tamil literature, particularly those of akam genre of poetry, adopted to a great extent in those works form the keynote of the verses, so that Vedic-Brāhmaṇical references appear somewhat foreign and extraneous to the whole context of the work. This may indicate that the worship of Cevvēḻ-Murukan is
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more indigenous to, and more deeply rooted in, the Tamil soil than that of God Tirumāl. This appears quite significant in the light of the accepted notion that “Vaiṣṇavism has generally been more closely connected with Brāhmaṇism and Sanskritisation than Śaivism” \(^{(232)}\).

Epilogue

From the foregoing, we may draw a conclusion as in the following: Except for a few episodes which have no exact parallel in Northern myths\(^{(233)}\), dominant Northern influences can be observed in the mythological accounts of Lord Tirumāl in the Paripāṭal and other Caṅkam texts. The same can be said of iconography. Metaphysical or cosmological accounts about Lord Tirumāl are seldom found in the Caṅkam corpus with a single exception of the Paripāṭal, a late Caṅkam work with pre-devotional lineaments. Philosophical and cosmological descriptions given in the Tirumāl hymns of the Paripāṭal are indicative of the reflection of Sanskritic ideas derived from Northern India. It is worthy of note that the significant theme of transcendence and immanence of Tirumāl is narrated in this anthology. It is doubtful whether the notion of transcendence of the Absolute in particular was originally known to the Tamils. All these strongly suggest that the idea of the sacred as conceived in the Tirumāl odes of the Paripāṭal is substantially of Northern provenance, and hence that the bulk of Tamil Vaiṣṇavism is, in principle, a derivative of the Northern tradition\(^{(334)}\).

The foregoing discussions in this study pose a question concerning the “Southern origin” of a popular god variously called Māyōṅ, Māl or Tirumāl and his cult claimed by some scholars\(^{(290)}\). If Māyōṅ-Tirumāl had been a god peculiar to Dravidians and only later identified with Aryan Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, he might have left in literature some non-Aryan traits as the mark of his indigenous-autochthonous origin as in the case of Cēvēl-Murukan. In reality, however, we have come across no textual evidences
to convince us of the Southern or Dravidian pedigree of this god himself as well as his worship. In this respect, the situation is found to be quite different from that of Cevvēl-Murukan who firmly maintained Southern values as one of the basic traits of his cult[296].

We might at least say this: The Tamils were not simply receptive of anything under foreign influence. They accepted, or rather, adopted the multifarious Viṣṇu-Nārāyana-Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa cult of the North in a selective manner and by steps and stages: first the visible and hence approachable aspects of Lord Viṣṇu, namely mythology and iconography (as seen in pre-Paripāṭal Caṅkam texts), subsequently his metaphysical and hence inaccessible aspects such as transcendance and immanence (as in Paripāṭal hymns), and later the erotic aspects of Lord Kṛṣṇa as shown in his cycle of myths. It is in this manner of adopting foreign elements to enrich their own culture that we may find the uniqueness or speciality of the ancient Tamils[237].

Notes:

* This article develops in much greater detail some of the themes already sketched in the third chapter of my doctoral thesis submitted to Radhakrishnan Institute for Advanced Study in Philosophy, the University of Madras, in December, 1987.

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the seminar led by Prof. Shingo Einoo, held at the Institute of Oriental Culture, the University of Tokyo, on December 12, 1992. My special thanks are due to Prof. Einoo and the participants for their valuable suggestions and comments.

1 According to F. Hardy (Viraha-bhakti: the Early History of Kṛṣṇa Devotion in South India, Delhi, 1983, p.134f., footnotes), the Caṅkam corpus contains at least seventy references to Murukan, while Māyōṇ-Tirumāl is mentioned only about ten times in the early sources.
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2 With regards to the eminent position of Tirmul in ancient Tamil Nadu, a parallel may be found in the Sinhalese pantheon. Though there may be some doubt as to the identification of God Upulvan with Visnu in the old Sinhalese pantheon. Lord Tirmul/Visnu has established himself as a major deity throughout the ages. Cf. II. Bachert, “The Cult of Skandakumara in the Religious History of South India and Ceylon”, in *Comte-rendu de la troisième conférence internationale*, Pondichery, 1973, pp.202, 204; K.K. Pillay, *South India and Sri Lanka*, Madras, 1975, p.153.

3 For the identification of Mayan mentioned in the Tolkappiyam with Visnu, see Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.159, n.137.

4 Bechert, *op.cit.*, p.204.


6 It may also be possible that what Visnu has on his chest is not the srivatsa-mark but Sridevi, Visnu’s divine consort. Cf. F. Gros, *Le Paripatal: texte tamoul*, Pondichery, 1968, p.170, n.36; Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.607, n.8.

7 For example, see Po. Vē. Cōmacuntaraṇar’s Tamil commentary (*Pattuppattu Uraiuytan, 2 vols.*, Cemai, 1976 [vol.1], 1980 [vol.2]), p.100f.

8 See Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.154: “The temple …, Vehka (according to the commentators), would seem to have been the only one known during this early period as specifically ‘Vaisnavite’”.

Strides (trivikrama). According to Hardy, 'Netiyōn' does not allude to any mythological aspect of this god, but simply means "exalted one" (Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.607f. and Appendix VI). The epithet 'Netiyōn' is most commonly used to denote Tirmal/Viṣṇu in the Caṅkham texts (Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.219). But it is notable that this name is, though rarely, applied to Murukan (Akanānūru 149(16)) and Paraśurāma, an incarnation of Viṣṇu (Akanānūru 220(5)) also (see Pillay, *op.cit.*, p.489, n.76). This will be explicable, if 'Netiyōn' simply indicates "the exalted one" and does not exclusively imply the Vāmanāvatāra of Lord Viṣṇu.

10 Tamil text: 'Nilanira uruvin netiyōn koppul/ nāṉ muka oruvvar payanta pal italt/- tāmarai pokuṭṭin kāṉvarat tōnri/'

11 Comacuntaranār's commentary, p.130.

12 Naccinarkkiniyar's commentary: 'itanānē mullaikkuriyya teyvaṅkūrinār' (U. Vē. Cāminātaiyar's edition: *Pattuppāṭṭu Mūlamum Naccinārkkiniyar Uraiyum*, Tancavūr, 1986, p.273). Further, according to this medieval commentator, a myth about Mahābali (māpali) and Viṣṇu is alluded to in this passage. This is not clear, however, from the original text.


As for the Tamil word *avunān*, its derivation from Skt.hūṇa is sometimes proposed.

14 As to the references to Tirmal in the Puranānūru, Akanānūru and Narriṇai given in this paragraph and the next, I refer to Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.157f. and the Appendix V.

15 Tamil text: 'viṅnuyar puṭkoti viral veyyōnum, manimayil uyariya māṟa veṇri, ... nālam kākkum kāla mumpin'.

16 Tamil text: 'puṅkaltalurrōrkkku māyōn anna, urai cāḷ cirappin pukal cāḷ māṟa'.
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17 See Pillay, _op.cit._, p.489, n.77; N. Subrahmanian, _Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index_ (second edition), Madras, 1990, s.v.

18 Tamil text: ‘mā īru vicumpil kaṭitu ḫ_RDWR su, nēr kātir niraįttā nēmiyañ celvañ, pōr aṭāṅku akalam poruntiya tārpo, tīrūvil tēēttuk kulaīi īru keļu, māṇpaṉaṃ pūppa ...’

19 Tamil text: ‘māyōn ana mālvarāik kavañ an, vāliyōn ana vayaṅku vēl arovi’.


21 Hardy seems to throw a doubt on the derivation of Tamil _tiru_ from Skt. śrī (_op.cit._, p.607, n.7), which appears untenable to me. Neither _DED_ nor _DEDR_ supports the Tamil origin of the word _tiru_.

22 Here a king assumes an aspect of Lord Tirumāl. This is interesting in view of the significant association of the image of king with that of god in ancient Tamil culture. See also the note 37 of this article.

23 ‘Ceyyōl’ as an epithet of Goddess Lakṣmī appears in _Paripāṭal_ II 31. For this epithet, see Gros, _op.cit._, p.174.

24 Tamil text: ‘kaṭuvuṭu oṭuṇkiya tūmpuṭai vāl eyirru/ ālah en uyirkkum aṇcuvaru kaṭuntirra/ pāmpu paṭappuṭaiikkum palvarik koṇciraiṇ/ pul añi niḷkoṭic celvañum ... /

25 Tamil text: ‘tāmarai payanta tāvīl ūḷji/ nāṭmuka voruvaṟ cuṭṭik ...’

26 See Naccimarkkiñiyar’s commentary, p.56.

27 Ėminatāiyar’s edition, p.57.


29 For the different identifications of these groups of deities, see Filliozat, _op.cit._, p.86.

30 Sarangapani, _op.cit._, p.1f.


32 Cf. _ibid._, p.170, n.26. This usage of ‘kaṭa’ is also found in XV 45.

For Kṛṣṇa’s combat myths including his fight with Asura Keśin, see B. Preciado-Solis, *The Kṛṣṇa Cycle in the Purāṇas: Themes and Motifs in a Heroic Saga*, Delhi, 1984, pp.93-100.

The Ṛg-Vedic myth of Viṣṇu’s Three Strides does not make mention of his form of a dwarf (see, for example, Ṛg-Veda L.154, VII.100). It is in the Brāhmaṇa literature that Viṣṇu in the guise of a dwarf is clearly mentioned as to his trivikrama episode. Cf. A. A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, Delhi, 1981 (first published 1898), pp.39, 41.

Cf. Sanskrit epithets of Balarāma such as Haladhara, Halabhṛt, Halāyudha and Lāṅgalin, all of which signify “Bearer of a Plough”.

E.g. anāṇa (“king”: I 27, XIII 15), kurucil (“king”: II 49), mallan (“boxer”, “wrestler”: III 89) and mallaṅ (“warrior”: III 90). As for the identification of Tirumāl with a king or vice versa, see E. Ekāmparanātāṇ, *Kōyilum Iraivalipātum*, Cennai, 1986, p.26. See also the note 22 of this article.

Compare ‘Padmanābha’, a well-known epithet of Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa in Sanskrit literature.


Parimēlaṇakar’s commentary: ‘Nirainta veḷḷattu naṭuva tônriya mānilam tônṛata mutarkāḷattup piramaṇaik koṇṭu unṭikkamnālarnta pokuṭṭu tāmaraiyaiyutaiyā niṅ nēmiyā ulakirku nilalāvatu’.

Parimēlaṇakar’s commentary: ‘amararkkuṇaṅākiya amirittaik kaṭ-aintukoṭuppatāka nīṃmanattinaṅ ninaint avavilē …’


Gros points out a similar idea found in the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* and so on (Gros, *op.cit.*, p.300, nn.64-71).

See *ibid.*, p.168, n.9. A modern commentator, Cōmacuntaraṅkar, also identifies this jewel with kaustubha (‘Niṅakkē uriyateṇa ariyappatṭa kauttuvamaṇiyakiya tikaḷum aṇiyai uṭaiyai’).

Cf. Parimēlaṇakar’s commentary: ‘Mokiniyākiya niṅvaṭivinaiṅ kaṇṭu mākiḷnta makiḷcicyē avuṅarkku accaṃṣy muṭiya amararkku nallamirtil-
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46 Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §1035. For instance, the Gitagovinda (12th cent. A.D. ?) has the list of the familiar daśāvatāra-s: ‘Matsyaḥ kūrmo varāhaḥ ca narasiṃho’tha vāmanah/ rāmo rāmaḥ ca krṣṇaḥ ca buddhaḥ kalki ca te daśa/’ The Matsya-puraṇa also offers the same list. Cf. Danielou, op.cit., pp. 165, 431.

47 The currently famous list of the ten avatāra-s consists of Matsya (Fish), Kūrma (Tortoise), Varāha (Boar), Nṛsiṃha or Narasiṃha (Man-lion), Vāmana (Dwarf), Paraśurāma (Rāma with an axe), Rāma, Krṣṇa, Buddha and Kalkin. See, for example, Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §§1036-1052. Apart from the above list of daśāvatāra-s, different lists of the Incarnations which contain 11, 12, 15, 22, 24 or even 39 avatara-s are known in Sanskrit Purāṇas. Cf. Dimmitt and van Buiten, op.cit., pp.67-69; Vettam Mani, Purānic Encyclopaedia: A Comprehensive Dictionary with Special Reference to the Epic and Purānic Literature, Delhi, 1975, p.83; Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §1035. For the twenty-four Incarnations given in the Bhagavata-puraṇa, see R. K. Siddhantashastree, Vaiṣṇavism through the Ages, New Delhi, 1985, pp.85-106.

48 See Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §1035.

49 Sarangapani, op.cit., p.109. According to Sarangapani, the ten avatāra-s in the Nālāyirappirappantam are Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasiṃha, Vāmana, Balarāma, Rāma, Parasurāma, Krṣṇa and Kalkin.

50 Frag. I. 64-66: ‘Tikal olı munıır kaṭainta akkāl verput/ tikalpu ela vānki tan cır cirattu ērrı/ makara marikatal vaittu niruttup/’

51 There is no old commentary available on the Fragment I of the Paripātal. Hence, we can refer only to the commentaries by modern pandit-s. Among them, Comacunțaraṇṇ, for example, says, ‘makaram-īnaiyūtaiya alai puraṅkira appaṟkaṭalıkaṇṭ āmaı urukkoṇṭa taṇantu al-aṇkıya mutukil ērrivaittu nilaiperac ceytu….’ (Italics are mine.)

52 See Gros, op.cit., p.173, n.16.

53 Parimelalakar’s commentary: ‘vaḷartiraippuaṇ mukkīyētuttatil anatanā maṇīppaṭṭa kilar pukarītiyatākīya maruppirkoṇṭu āṭivaraṅkam maṇan-
ayartalār pulīyalavākiya nilaŋum vellatable varuntirillai yenru vē-
tapporuľai utoŋturaippōr uraiyoŋenak kūṭtuka’.
54 Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §1038.
55 Parimēlalakar’s commentary: ‘Ivai kūtu műlı muṭivinuł őlum onrākiya
alikkən aluntukirā nilamakaləi alakiya varākamāki maruppər
peyarṭeṭtöyenavum’.
57 For the theme of marriage between Varāha-Viṣṇu and the Earth in
Purānic literature, see Vettam Mani, op.cit., p.827. Varāha-Viṣṇu
carrying Devī is a frequent theme of iconography. Cf. T. A. Gopinatha
Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, vol. I, part I, Delhi, 1985 (first
58 For the episode about Hiranāyakṣa, see, for example, Vettam Mani,
op.cit., pp.314, 826.
59 Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §1038. Further, see S. Jaiswal, The Origin
and Development of Vaiṣṇavism, New Delhi, 1981 (second rev. and enl.
60 The account of Narasimhāvatāra given in the Paripātal is found more
similar to that in the Padma-purāṇa, see Gopinatha Rao, op.cit.,
p.148f. For the detailed discussion of this avatāra as well as Vāmanāvat-
āra in the Sanskrit Purānic tradition, see D. A. Soifer, The Myths of
61 Parimēlalakar’s commentary: ‘alakkirakālattu mërcolliya mūvēl-
ulakinuł kilavākiya őlulakattaiyum eicēmalurra țiyyinaayıytaiyai’.
62 Parimēlalakar’s commentary: ‘aycciyaroți kuravai köttalāl avarkku
iṭamum valamum ěyiyoy!’.
63 Gros, op.cit., pp.I.I, 183, n.83; Hardy, op.cit., p.205; Sarangapani,
op.cit., p.111.
64 See Gros, op.cit., p.LI; Hardy, op.cit., p.221.
65 S. Vaidyanathan, Indo-Aryan Loanwords in Old Tamil, Madras, 1971,
p.126.
66 Paripātal III 25-26: ‘mā vicumpu olukupunai varaḷa vammaccēvalaye ciri-
akarp pularttiyoy’.

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67 Gros, op.cit., p.III.
68 Balarāma’s club is well-known in the Harivamṣa. See Gros, op.cit., p.266, nn.55-57. For Balarāma with two arms having a club (gadā) and a plough (hala), see Gopinatha Rao, op.cit., p.201. Gopinatha Rao points out that the Agni-purāṇa mentions Balarāma who has a club (musala), discus (cakra), a plough (hala) and a conch (saṅkha) in his four hands (ibid., p.201). Taking this into due consideration, we may attribute the conch and the discus-weapon mentioned in XV 59 to Balarāma.
69 Gopinatha Rao, op.cit., p.201.
70 For the mythological accounts of the origin of the striking contrast in colour between these two brothers, see Vettam Mani, op.cit., p.99f.
71 There is a reference to Valiyōn in II 20. According to Tamil Lexicon, ‘vāḷ’ (youth, whiteness, goodness, etc.), the root of the name ‘Valiyōn’, is derived from Sanskrit bāla, which appears irrelevant to me. Cf. DEDR 5364.
73 See, for example, Gopinatha Rao, op.cit., p.201; Danielou, op.cit., p.180.
75 J. Gonda interprets Balarāma’s association with Śeṣa as an expression of the idea of a close relation between the cosmic serpent and the High God (Aspects of Early Viṣṇuism, Delhi, 1969, p.152).
76 Renou compares the relation between Kṛṣṇa and Balarama with that between Śiva and Subrahmaṇya (Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §1048).
77 Thousand heads, which are commonly understood as the attributes of
the cosmic serpent known as Ādiśeṣa or Ananta, are sometimes
ascribed to God Viṣṇu himself. In this aspect, Viṣṇu is called ‘Bahūś-
79 Cf. Parimēlalakar’s commentary: ‘Ilaṅgāltukkaḷuḷ, oḷiloḷiyavai, oruk-
ulaiyavai, valaṇi vaḷaiṇāncilavai, calampuri tanṭēntinavai eṇa vantaṇa
palatēvaṇa; eṇaiya vācutevaṇ’. In Sanskrit tradition, discus, conch, bow,
arrow and sword are known as the paṅcāyudha of Lord Viṣṇu.

In spite of the probable confusion between Viṣṇu-Vāsudeva and Balarā-
ma seen in the verses XV 55-61, the Paripāṭal knows the rigid distinc-
tion between the two as well. In the verses II 20-25, for instance, it
is said that Viṣṇu, as Kṛṣṇa, is younger than Balarāma but, as Vāsudeva,
he is older than Balarāma. This is an example of the clear distinction
Parimēlalakar’s commentary on II 20-27.
80 Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §§ 792, 1028, 1320, 1321.
81 Parimēlalakar apportions the four colours, black, white, red and
green, to four Yugas when he identifies the four gods. But there is no
traditionally strict identity between the colours and the four gods. Cf.
Gros, op.cit., p.182f., nn.81-82.
82 Parimēlalakar’s commentary on III 82 (p.26).
83 Cōmacuntaraṇār takes “three forms” (mūvuru) in XIII 37 for Brahma,
Rudra and Tirumāḷ (p.230). However, it seems to me far-fetched from
the context of the original text.
84 According to Gros, this theme of the battle between Vāyu and Śeṣa is
reflected in the sthala-purāṇa-s in South India (Gros, op.cit., pp.LII-
LIII).
85 Text: ‘Aṃāṅkuṭai aruntalai āyiram viritta/ kaṇaṅkoḷ currattu aṃnalai
vaṅaṅki/ nallaṭi ētti niṇ paravutum/ ellēm piriyaṛku em curramoṭu
oruṅkē’/
Translation: “We adore three, the Chief (=Ādiśeṣa) who spreads out
his owe-inspiring thousand heads and has the gathered flowers. We
praise and admire thy good feet. May we be together with our kinsmen
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without separating (from thee)!


87 Kuḷavāy is said to have been located near present Madurai. Cf. Sarangapani, op.cit., p.115.

88 See Gros, op.cit., p.229, n.49: “Tirumāl semble être adoré ici sons les traits d’Ādiśeṣa”.

89 See Parimēḷalakar’s commentary on the verse 6. Moreover, see Gros, op.cit., p.179, nn.15-16.

90 Neither Index des mots de la littérature tamoule ancienne (3 vols., Pondichéry, 1967, 1968, 1970) nor Pre-Pallavan Tamil Index makes entry of the word ‘karuṭan’. This suggests that the word is absent from the whole Caṅkam corpus. By the age of Parimēḷalakar (the end of 13th cent.?), the word ‘karuṭan’ had acquired citizenship in the Tamil vocabulary, since the reputed comentator mentions this word on his commentary on III 61 and XIII 38.

91 Tamil uvaṇam may be a derivative from Skt. suparna (“well-winged”, an epithet of Garuḍa). See Tamil Lexicon, p.162; Gros, op.cit., p.176, n.60.

92 Cf. the note 21 of this monograph.

93 The original meaning of ‘mā’ is “beauty”. Cf. DED 3886; DEDR 4746.

94 The epithet ‘Ceyyōl’ also appears in Akaṇāṇūru 316 (13), as mentioned above.

95 Cōmacuntarān: ‘Kāmaṇum cāmaṇumākiya iruvarukkum tantaiyave!’ (P.7); ‘Iruvar-kāmaṇum cāmaṇum enka’(p.8).

96 Gros, op.cit., p.170, n.28.

97 See, for instance, III 83.

98 Cf. XV 10-13.

99 Tulasī is a holy plant in Hinduism in general (Danielou, op.cit., pp.370, 376). It is sacred especially to Lord Viṣṇu. According to Prof. S. Einoo and others, this plant became sacred to Viṣṇu very late in Sanskrit literary tradition. Our present amount of knowledge does not suffice to explain why tulasī, as the plant sacred to this god, is
mentioned in the Paripatāl which was presumably compiled before the dawn of the bhakti literature in the South. Cf. the notes 100 and 106.

100 References: Garuḍa banner (I 11, 57; II 60; III 17-18; IV 36, 37, 42; XIII 4, 38-39, 41; XV 56), Garuḍa vāhana (III 16, 59-60), battle-discus (Skt. cakra; Tamil nēmī, ali, parut, tikiri) (I 52, 58; II 19, 49 (allusion); III 89, IV 9; XIII 6, 9, 58; XV 59), tulasi-garland (Tamil tulāy, tulavu) (III 87; XIII 59-60; XV 15, 54), Lakṣmī or śrivatsa (I 3, 7-8, 36; II 30-31; IV 59).

101 In the Sanskrit Purānic tradition, these weapons are given proper nouns: for example, the discus as Sudarśana, the conch as Pāñcajanya, the bow as Śārīga, the mace as Kaumodakī (See Danielou, op.cit., pp.155-157). The Paripatāl, however, does not mention these names as such.

102 III 36: ‘Nārkaivyāṇa’ (O great man with four arms!).

103 Skt. caturbhuja (“the four-armed one”) itself is an epithet of Lord Viṣṇu.

104 In I 21, an ornamental jewel on Viṣṇu’s chest is referred to. It is not sure whether this jewel indicates his famous kaustubha or not.

105 Gros, op.cit., p.170, n.28, and p.174, nn.28-31. Viṣṇu’s necklace (āram) is mentioned in XIII 11. This also may allude to Vaijayanti.


107 The garland made of tulasi mentioned in XIII 59-60, XV 15, 54 may perhaps indicate vanamālā. Apart from these references, a garland on Viṣṇu’s chest is mentioned in XIII 3-4. It is not certain whether this garland is identical with vanamālā.

108 Since the hue similar to the flower of pūvai (alias kāyā) is attributed to Tirumāl/Viṣṇu, he is sometimes called pūvaiyaṁṇan or kāyāmpūm-eṇiyan in Tamil.

109 References: pūvai-flower (I 6-7; III 73; XIII 42), a gem (sapphire) (I 59; III 3; IV 57; XIII 42; XV 50), a rain cloud (XIII 42; XV 50), darkness (XIII 42; XV 50), and the ocean (XIII 42).

109 XIII 42-43: ‘Kār malarp pūvai kaṭalai irul mani/ avai aintum uralum
anikiyar meniyai’.
110 XV 50: ‘Vauval kør irul mayankumañi meniyan’.
111 The same kind of simile is found in other Tamil works. See Gros, op.cit., p.259, n.50.
112 See, for example, III 2: ‘Marupirappu arukkm mācil cēvaṭī’ (“the spotless red feet which cut off rebirth”), and III 18-19: ‘Nīn cēvaṭī tolārum ularō’ (“Are there those who don’t worship your red feet?” —a rhetorical question).
113 In the allusion to vyūha-s (III 81-82), red eyes as well as black body are attributable to Vāsudeva.
114 In Tamil also, he is called Patumakkhaññan, Kamalakkhaññan, etc. It is noteworthy that in both traditions, Sanskrit and Tamil, eyes are likened to flowers. Cf. Hart, op.cit., pp.258-260.
115 Declined in the masculine, the Skt. word pītambara itself may signify God Viṣṇu.
116 This is the reason why Balarāma is called Vāliyōn or Veḷḷaiyōn, the White God, in Tamil. See Srinivas Iyengar, op.cit., p.202.
117 Gopinatha Rao, op.cit., p.201.
120 According to Dimmitt and van Buitenen (op.cit., p.126f.), there are three kinds of creation motifs in the Purānic literature: 1) the creation from Viṣṇu-Narāyaṇa who has God Brahmā as his active agent, 2) the creation from a cosmic egg, and 3) the creation by the cooperation of two eternal elements, Puruṣa and Prakṛti. Among these three, the theme of the creation from a cosmic egg is absent in the Tirumāl hymns of the Paripāṭal.

As the fourth motif, Dimmitt and van Buitenen point out 4) a complex synthesis of the notions of Brahmā as active creative agent along with Puruṣa and Prakṛti as cooperative creators, and cite a passage of the Markaṇḍeya-purāṇa (op.cit., pp.17ff., 36-38). In Tirumāl hymns of the Paripāṭal, however, the first and the third motifs do not form such an organic synthesis.
121 See Gros, op.cit., p.178f., n.9. The three groups of the worlds are, according to Gros, Sverga (or seven nidhva-loka-s), Martya (or seven duṣpa-s), and Pātāla (or seven adhola-loka-s).

122 See Parimēlalakar’s commentary.

123 Apart from these, some conventional ideas apparently derived from the Sanskrit Purāṇic cosmology, such as Mt.Meru and the ocean surrounding the continent, are frequently mentioned in the Caiṅkam corpus of classical Tamil literature.

124 If the philosophical sysytem suggested by numbers in Paripāṭal III 77-80 is none other than Śāmkhya, it is quite interesting in view of the probable etymology of ‘Śāmkhya’ which may originally have meant “relating to number”, “culculating”, etc. (see, for example, Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §1421).

125 But this interpretation may be controvertible. Cf. Gros, op.cit., p.180f., n.49.

126 Pūtaṅkaḷaintum (Skt.pañcabhūta) are vicumpu (ether), vali (air), ti (fire), nir (water), and nilan (earth).

127 Ānēntiriyaṅkaḷaintum (correspondent to Skt.pañcajñānendriya) are not named one by one in the Paripāṭal text. But it is apparent that, as Parimēlalakar enumerates in his commentary on III 79, they are cevi (ear), tōl (skin), kaṇ (eye), nā (tongue), and mukku (nose).

128 In XIII 14, cuvaimai (taste), icaimai (sound), tōrram (form), nārram (smell), and ṛru (touch) are enumerated. In orthodox (Sanskritic) epistemology, they are collectively termed pañcaviśaya-s or, in the Śāmkhya sysytem, pañcatanmatra-s. Parimēlalakar mentions these only as “senses” (puḷaṅkaḷ).

129 See Gros, op.cit., p.259, nn.63-64.

130 These virtues are correspondent to the four brahmavihara-s (“four pious conducts”), which are common to Buddhists and Yogins. Cf. Gros, op.cit., p.186, n.1. In Buddhism, these are traditionally called catur-paraṇāṇa, “the Four Boundless”.

131 It is to be noted that “penance” is almost equivalent to “devotion” in certain situations in Southern Hinduism. Cf. D. D. Shulman, Tamil
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Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in the South Indian Śaiva Tradition, Princeton, 1980, p.357, n.7. Here in the Paripātal too, the distinction between “penance” and “devotion” is not always clear.

132 I refer to Parimēlalakar’s commentary for my translation. Gros renders the same passage as “Pour penser ta grandeur, qui peux-Tu concevoir, sinon Toi, Le premier de vieux mots d’antique nature?” (op.cit., p.14). Here we do not take Gros’ interpretation.

133 Parimēlalakar’s paraphrase of this valī (strength) as ahaṅkāra, a principle of Sāmkhya, seems unsuccessful and far-fetched. Cf. Gros, op.cit., p.180f., n.49.

134 “The universe”, according to the text, consists of five elements, the sun, the moon, Arāṇ (=the sacrificial priest), five planets, the sons of Diti (=Asura-s), the sons of Vidhi (=twelve Aditya-s), eight Vasu-s, eleven Rudra-s, Aśvin-s, Dharma (=Yama), the attendant of Yama, twenty-one worlds and living creatures.

Among them, five elements, the sun, the moon and the sacrificial priest are known as aṣṭa-mūrti in Sanskrit tradition. Twelve Aditya-s, eight Vasu-s, eleven Rudra-s and two Aśvin-s form so-called “thirty-three gods”, Cf. Gros, op.cit., p.178, nn.4, 5, 7.

Parimēlalakar traces the antiquity for the organisation of the universe from Tirumāl/Viṣṇu to the Vedas. See his commentary on III 10-11.

135 Thus, even Śiva and Brahmā are no more than the aspects of Lord Viṣṇu. He is indeed portrayed as Supreme God who unites the three deities (trimūrti) within himself. Cf. Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §1027.

136 The idea of pervasion and inherence of Tirumāl seems to correspond to the emphasis on Viṣṇu as the “Pervader” in Sanskrit Purānic tradition, rather than the notion of immanence of the sacred inidgenous to ancient Tamil Nadu. The name Viṣṇu is usually understood as to mean “pervader”. This interpretation was preferred particularly by the authors of Sanskrit Purāṇas. They conceived of Viṣṇu to be “God that pervades and motivates the entire universe”. Cf. Dimmitt and van Buitenen, op.cit., p.60; Gonda, op.cit., p.4, n.31. The latter cites Bhāgavata-purāṇa 2.3.120 which runs, ‘yasmad viṣṭam idaṁ sarvaṁ vā-
maneha jāyatā/ tasmāt sa vai smṛto viṣṇur viṣer dhātoḥ praveṣanāt/’

Verses with somewhat similar purport are to be found in the Bhagavadgītā VII 6-12.

Tamil text: ‘Ulakuyirkaḷaṁ tōramum nilaiperum ǒṭukkamum niṅkaṅvaṇevaṟaarām’.

Cf. Parimēlalakar’s commentary on II 20-27.

Gros, op.cit., p.LX: “La contradiction est douloureusement perçue entre la transcendance infinie, imperturbable, et l’immanence du Dieu sensible au cœur (IV 53-56), mais est résolue, semble-t-il, dans le mouvement de confiance qui achève le poème (IV 7-73), espoir repris par le poème XIII où Tirumāḷ apparaît comme le Dieu de la délivrance (V 7-13)”.

See Gros, op.cit., p.LIII.


Ibid., pp.202, 206, 213, 229-233.

Ibid., p.211: “Thus to ‘live at the feet’, ‘to worship feet’ of Māl is ideomatic for ‘to perform worship of the temple statue’”. In spite of Hardy’s view, ‘worshipping of feet’ is known to be a figurative expression of ‘worshiping’, by reference, for example, to a phrase ‘cūliṇ aṭītoṭu kuṟṟu’ (Paripāṭal VIII 70) (“the mountain whose foot you touched when you swore”), which is annotated by Parimēlalakar as ‘kūruvaṟṟayiṇ ē (cānroraṇē) vaṇaṅkappaṭaṁ tīṟrpparaṅkunṟram’.

Gros disagrees with S. R. Balasubramaniam who remarks the “establishment of the iconographical aspect of this deity” in Paripāṭal II 61-63, and criticises his view as misconstruing the purport of Parimēlalakar’s commentary (Gros, op.cit., p.LV, n.1, p.176, nn.61-68). Gros seems to assume a critical attitude toward the effort to gather proofs of the basic ideas of the Pāṅcarātras including arcca in the Tirumāḷ odes (ibid., pp.LIV-LV).

As the passages filled with devotional sentiments in the Cevēḷ odes of the Paripāṭal, we can point out, in particular, V 16-21, 71-81; VIII 65-66, 79-82, 96-108, 126; XI 83-85; XIV 29-32; XVII 6-8, 60-63; XVIII 54-56; XXI 68-70. As for the Tirumurukarruppaṭai, see verses 4, 93-94, 250-252, 279
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and 284-286.

148 I 36: ‘Ni arulal vengum’ (“We request you to bestow grace”).
149 IV 27: ‘Nīn curattalum vaṁmāiyum māri ulā/’
150 Tamil text: ‘Aruḷ kuṭai āka aṟam kōl aka/ aru nilal paṭamai mūvēl ulakamum/ oru nilal ăkkīya ēmattai māṭo/’
151 Tamil text: ‘viṇāḷi koṇṭa viyal mati anī koḷ at/ taṅ alī koṇtā aṇaṅkuṭai nēmi māḷ/ Cf. Paramēlalakar’s commentary: ‘Viṁśīkaṁniru aḻittarrolloilaikkoṇṭa niṟaimatiyatu kuḷircciyai yakkak kuḷirnta aḻittarrolloilaik koṇṭa māḷ/’
152 III 2: ‘Maṟupiṟappu aṟukkum mācu il cēvaṭi’. Cf. Gros, op.cit., p.178, n.2, p.191, n.62. Incidentally, the term ‘cēvaṭi’ is also applied to Murukan. See, for instance, the invocatory poem of the Kuruntokai.

153 A similar sentiment is also found among the devotees of Cevvēl-Murukan. They, too, eagerly desire to live at Murukan’s divine feet. See such verses of the Cevvēl hymns as IX 84, XVIII 54-56 and XXI 68-69.

As we have already touched, Hardy prefers to set forth temple rituals to the divine statues as the premise of these modes of descriptions on Tirumāl’s feet (Hardy, op.cit., p.211). However, it would seem irrelevant to me. Such paragraphs may be better understood in the context of the conventional mode of expression of the religious sentiment of humility, or rather, self-abasement universally observed among the bhakta-s in Southern Hinduism throughout.

154 XIII 12: ‘Tiru varai akalam tolvörku/’ ‘Tiru varai akalam’, which has a double meaning, can be also interpreted as “the chest where Tiru, i.e. Goddess Lakṣāmī, abides”. Cf. Gros, op.cit., p.256, n.10.


156 XV 15-16: ‘Nāru inart tulāvōn nalkin allatai/ ērulē elītō viṟu peru
turakkam/’ Cf. Cōmacuntaranār’s commentary on the same verses:
‘Vēroṇi kīlātā cirappinaiyūṭaiya mēnilaiyulakattinkan, maṇṇaṅkamał-
āminarā pūṅkottukalaiyūṭaiya tulaci mālaiyinai aninta namperumān
tiruvarul ceytaviṭṭatu ērutanāṅri aruḷ ceyyaviṭṭatu, uyirkaḷ tam muyar-
ciyāme ērutan iyalvantānam’.

157 Cf. the verse XXI 15 in the Cēvēl hymns. Tirupparaṇkuṇram claims
the superiority even to the abode of gods (XVII 6-8). For the parallel-
ism between the two sacred mountains, see Hardy, op.cit., p.207.

158 In the Tamil bhakti religion in later periods, a temple which is no
less than the terrestrial embodiment of Heaven, comes to assume a
cosmological image of a South Indian (Śaiva) temple is excellently
analysed by Shulman in his remarkable work, Tamil Temple Myths.
The fact that a temple is figuratively identified with the celestial world
in the Parīpaṭal may be worthy of note as paving the way for the above
idea of a temple with the cosmological significance in later devotional
Hinduism of the South.

159 For the Tamil concept of the sacred, see, in particular, H.
Yamashita, “Deivamu to Kadavuru: Kodai Tamiru Sekai no Kami”
(=Teyvam and Kaṭavul: Concepts of ‘god’ in Early Tamilnadu),

160 This reminds us of Renou’s view that bhakti is more intrinsic and
essential to Vaiṣṇavism than to Śaivism (Renou et Filliozat, op.cit.,
§§1304, 1345, 1355). It would appear that in Tamil Nadu also, at least
at the beginning, the idea of bhakti was more familiar to Vaiṣṇavas
than to Śaivas. Moreover, it seems plausible that the bhakti movement
of Tamil Śaivas was inspired and enhanced under the initiative and
influence of Vaiṣṇavas. But it should be borne in mind here that, as we
will see below, there was no polarisation of Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavas as
such in the strict sense of the word at the age of the Parīpaṭal.
Therefore, we should draw a clear line between the poets of the Parīpaṭal
and Vaiṣṇava Āḻvār-s. In this sense, the Parīpaṭal poets may have seen,
so to say, the “forerunners of Āḻvār-s”, but can hardly be designated
“the Āḻvār-s of Parīpaṭal” as in Sarangapani’s study (Sarangapani,
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op.cit., p.119).
161 Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §910.
162 Cf. Hardy, op.cit., p.207.
163 Parimēlalakar’s commentary: ‘Itsava–äycciyaroṭu kuravai köttalāl avarkku ītamum valamum äyiṇoy! kuṭa ala–kūṭtāṭutarku ēṭutta kuṭtattin-
aiyum pakaivaraik kollutarku ēṭutta alappaṭaiyinaiyumutaiya’. Cf.
164 See Hardy, op.cit., p.287.
166 Gros, op.cit., pp.LI-LII.
167 Gros, op.cit., p.LIV. Further, see ibid., p.LIII: “Ce qui est
remarquable, c’est qu’elles apparaissent, pour la premièr fois dans
l’histoire de l’Inde, dans une autre langue que le sanskrit, et cela avec
une admirable prefection formelle”.
168 Cf. Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §1123.
169 See ibid., 1317.
170 See ibid., 1319.
171 Sarangapani, op.cit., p.116f.
172 Gros, op.cit., pp.LIV-LV.
173 Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §1304; Hardy, op.cit., p.301.
174 Hardy, loc.cit.
175 Ibid., p.35.
176 Gros, op.cit., pp.LIV-LV. Sarangapani may be one of those scholars.
He remarks, “It may be held that in the age of Paripāṭal the Tamils
were familiar with the whole theory of pāṇcarātra Āgama, Viṣṇu-
Vāsudeva and His four Vyūkas” (Sarangapani, op.cit., p.117). His
argument proves to be historically untenable when he insists that the
Paripāṭal was written in the second century A.D. (ibid., p.19).
177 In his discussion on the Paripāṭal, Hardy assumes an association of
Māyōn as a religious figure with the Pāṇṭiya royal symbolism. (But, as
he emphasises, this does not imply that the early Pāṇṭiyas are ‘Vaiṣṇ-
avas’ or that Vaiṣṇavism was the ‘state religion’.) According to this
scholar, the introduction of Tirumāl cult to the Tamil land had not
only a religious but also a political significance (Hardy, *op.cit.*, pp.155-157, 168f., 201, 225f.).

178 I 43-44: ‘Aintalai uyariya aňaňkuťai aruntiral/ maintuťai oruvanum…’


180 Sarangapani, *op.cit.*, His view might hold true only on the supposition that the Paripātal was compiled after the polarisation into the both Hindu sects, which is hardly acceptable. He actually considers this work to be completed in the second century A.D. (*op.cit.*, p.19). See also the note 174 of this article.

181 Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.203.


184 Hardy, in his *Viraha-bhakti* (p.125), estimates the compilation of the Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai to be dated to 7-9th centuries. This dating turns out to be controversial in view of the above discussion.

185 Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.155f.


187 See Vettam Mani, *op.cit.*, pp.99, n.: “Since the life of Balabhadra (=Balārama) is so mixed with that of Krṣṇa a complete lifestory of Balarama could be had only if it is read along with that of Krṣṇa”.


189 Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.204.


193 Hart, *op.cit.*, p.62. Among the seven books of the Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa, the first and the last are unmistakably later additions. See Renou et Filliozat, *op.cit.*, §1042; Basham, *op.cit.*, p.414. See also F. Whaling,
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194 Renou et Filliozat, _op.cit._, §1043.
195 Basham, _op.cit._, p.306.
196 Dimmitt and van Buitenen, _op.cit._, p.63.
198 Ibid., p.447 (vol.II).
200 E.g. All of Tamil _iru, irumai, karu, karumai_ and _kāl_ have the double meaning of “black(-ness)” and “great(-ness)”.
201 Subrahmanian, _op.cit._, p.370f.
202 Zvelebil, _op.cit._, p.9.
203 Hardy, _op.cit._, pp.153, 218. Such correspondence between ‘Māyōn’ and ‘Māyōl’ reminds us of that between ‘Ceyyōn’ and ‘Ceyyōl’.
204 Basham also understands ‘Māyōn’ as “Black One” (Basham, _op.cit._, p.307f.).
206 It is hardly deniable that ‘Māyōn’ here has a dominant meaning as “Black One”, because the next verse says of a shining white waterfall and compares it to Vāliyōn (=Baladeva) (‘Vāliyōn ana vayaiku vel aruvī’). Nevertheless, this does not totally deny the dual meaning of the word _Mayōn_ as well as the double image of this god.
207 _Tamil Lexicon_ suggests some relation of his name with Skt._māla._

With the notice of “derivation doubtful”, Sanskrit dictionaries define _māla_ as a name of Viṣṇu (cf. M. Monier-Williams, _A Sanskrit English Dictionary_, Delhi, 1963 (first published Oxford, 1899), s.v.; V. S. Apte, _The Practical Sanskrit-English Dictionary_, revised and enlarged ed., Kyoto, 1978 (first published Poona, 1957), s.v.). Granting that Tamil _māl_ and Skt._māla_ are related with each other in etymology, the derivation of the former from the latter would not appear plausible. It seems rather proper to assume the derivation of Skt._māla_ from Tamil _māl_, since, as we will see in this section, the Tamil word _māl_ semantically
matches the entity of Lord Viṣṇu.

208 Subrahmanian, op.cit., p.370.
209 Pillay, op.cit., p.489.
211 Hart, op.cit., p.57.
212 Gros, op.cit., p.XLVIII.
213 Ibid., pp.XLVIII-XLIX.
214 Hardy, op.cit., pp.153, 217f.
215 Cāminātaiyar introduces an interpretation shown in another commentary (*vērurai*) which runs as follows: ‘Mālpōlum varaiyinaiyaiyalai-
malaiyairaiyai tirumakalār makeṇ’. ‘Māl’ in this commentary most
probably denotes God Tirumāl. If so, Tirumāl is here likened to a
mountain.
216 See, for instance, *Kuruntokai* 111 and *Akanāmāru* 22. It is interesting
to note that *Akanāmāru* 149 (16) calls him ‘Neṭiyōn’, ("the Tall One"),
a common epithet of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu (‘oṭiyā vilavin neṭiyōn kuṇrattu’).
Cf. Pillay, op.cit., p.484.

It is open to question, however, ‘Neṭuvēl’ only signifies “the Tall
one”, Hardy takes ‘Neṭiyōn’, a common epithet of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu, to
mean “exalted one” (Hardy, op.cit., p.607f. and the Appendix VI).

Since ‘neṭi’ and ‘neṭu’ apparently originate from the same root (cf.
*DED* 3099; *DEDR* 3738), ‘Neṭuvēl’, too, may possibly mean “the
Exalted One”.

217 Hardy goes so far as to say that ‘Neṭiyōn’ does not allude any
mythological aspect of this god, but simply means ‘exalted one’ (op.cit.,
p.607f., p.610). However, as we have examined, the awareness of the
celebrated tale of Three Strides of Lord Viṣṇu, a mythical episode as
old as the Vedas, is proved in the *Paripātal*. It seems hardly possible
to wipe out the mythological connotation of Viṣṇu’s Three Strides from
the epithet Neṭiyōn. Compare *DED* 3099 and *DEDR* 3738 which define
‘Neṭiyōn’ as “tall person, great person, Viṣṇu.”

218 Cf. Pillay, op.cit., p.486, n.26, and the note 8 of this article.
219 See Gros, op.cit., p.178, n.1.
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220 Cf. Parimēlaṇakar’s commentary: ‘Maṇītiṣkulupu-nilamāṇi (pi-m, nilaniram) pōla viḷaṅkāṇīṇa nīram.’ Further, see Gros, op.cit., p.178, n.3.

221 See, for example, Hardy, op.cit., p.219.

222 Hardy, op.cit., p.220f.

223 Here we may be reminded of the name ‘Rāma’ which denotes “Black One” as well as “Delighted, Lovely One”.

224 According to Hart (op.cit., p.63), ‘celvan’ is a kind of title exclusively applied to the gods of Northern origin, who are characterised by benevolence and auspiciousness. We find this title applied not only to Tirumāl/Viṣṇu (cf. Tirumurukāṟṟuppaṭai 151; Akanāṉūru 175 (14); Paripāṭal IV 10, VIII 58) but also to Śiva (Akanāṉūru 181 (16); Puranāṉūru 6 (18)). From this, Hardy’s definition of ‘celvan’ as a mere epithet or a name of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu (Hardy, op.cit., p.219) turns out to be doubtful. ‘Celvan’ should be regarded not as an epithet or a name of a particular deity but as a title or a designation of a certain category of gods.

225 A dance peculiar to Māyōn-Tirumāl is known in literature. It is not evidenced, however, that the dance was accompanied with ecstatic rituals and intoxication as in the case of Murukan’s vēṟiyāṭal. Although Tirumāl’s association with the sacred force ‘aṇaṅku’ which often causes divine possession is detected in the Caṅkam corpus, he is not found connected with the concept of “possession”. For “possession” in the ancient Tamil religious cult, see Hart, “The Theory of Reincarnation among the Tamils”, W. D. O’Flaherty ed., Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions, Delhi, 1983, pp.116-133.

226 In contrast with the case of indigenous Murukan, temples of Viṣṇu are rarely located on hills or hillocks (Pillay, op.cit., p.488, n.). It is indeed true that two hills Vēṅkaṭamalai (Tirumala) of Tirupati and Alakarmalai (Tirumāḷiruṅcōlai) near Madurai, for example, are known as sacred to Tirumāl/Viṣṇu. As for the former, however, it is doubtful whether Tirumāl/Viṣṇu was originally enshrined there or not. Subrahmanian is of the opinion that the mountain, which had been
initially sacred to Murukan, came to be conceived of as a holy place of Tirumāl/Viṣṇu by impassioned devotees of this god in later periods (Subrahmanian, op.cit., p.369). Further, see Renou et Filliozat, op.cit., §1032; G. A. Deleury, The Cult of Viṭhoba, Poona, 1960, p.185; Shulman, op.cit., p.413, n.72.

As for Alakarmalai also, Subrahmanian expresses the similar notion (loc.cit.). Tirumālirūncōlai (or Alakarmalai) is, in all probability, identical with Palamūtirūncōlai, a divine hill of Lord Murukan. Cf. Pillay, op.cit., p.487ff.; Gros, op.cit., pp.LVI-LVII. Viṣṇu as a mountain dweller is not unknown in the Vedas (Macdonell, op.cit., p.39; Gonda, op.cit., p.23ff.). But that aspect is far from his dominant feature.

227 The folk etymology of this word is "those who are lovely [=ām] and cool [=tan]" (see Hart, op.cit., p.51).

Tamil Lexicon suggests two suspected derivations of antanar: one from a Tamil root and the other from Sanskrit anta (=vedanta). The latter seems farfetched to me. DED 126 and DEDR 148 define this word as "brahman" and do not ascribe it to any Sanskrit pedigree, which might appear more appropriate.

228 See Parimēlalakar’s commentary: ‘Anātiyay varukina marapiṇāiyaiya vēttattirku mutarva!’

229 Without producing any concrete evidence, Hardy writes, “It would appear that Tirumāl hymns contains much higher portion of such ‘brahmin references’ than do the songs about Murukan” (op.cit., p.208). Our investigation will subsequently prove that his assumption is correct.

230 It is doubtful whether all these four refer to Vedic sacrifice. According to Parimēlalakar, ‘velvi’ in XIX 43 and 48 means not Vedic sacrifice (yajña) but offering (pūjā).

231 See Hart, op.cit., p.51.

232 Zvelebil, Tamil Literature, Handbuch der Orientalistik, Leiden/Köln, 1975, p.152, n.147. In this context, see also Hart, op.cit., p.71ff.

233 For example, three episodes may be cited here (cf. Gros, op.cit., p.112):
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1. Exploits of Haṃsāvatāra (III 25-26).
2. Recovery of the sun from the Asura-s
3. Battle between Śeṣa and Vāyu (Fragment I 72-73)

This never means that the Southern features of Tirumāl worship are insignificant and even negligible. We should not forget that some typical Southern traits of Tirumāl worship bestowed the originality and speciality to the devotional Vaiṣṇavism in the Southern soil. This topic is discussed at full length in Hardy's Viraha-bhakti.

For instance, Srinivas Iyengar states, “when many millennia after this remote age the Aryan cults migrated to South India, the regional gods of South India were identified with the Aryan gods similar to them in function, the red god with Subrahmanya, the black god with Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa, the sea-god with Varuṇa, the sky-god with Indra and the desert-goddess with Durgā” (Srinivas Iyengar, op.cit., p.84).

L'Inde classique §1048 also seems to regard Māyōn, which becomes identified with Kṛṣṇa in later periods, as a god of Dravidian origin. Zvelebil, too, believes that Māyōn-Tirumāl is indigenous to Dravidian India (Tiru Murugan, pp.12, 24). According to S. K. Chatterji, Kṛṣṇa was originally a youthful god of Dravidians and only later identified with Viṣṇu (Tamil Culture and Civilization, ed. by Thani Nayagam, p.31). G. D. Sontheimer is also of the similar view (Pastoral Deities in Western India, Delhi, 1993, p.17).

The Dravidian origin of Northern Kṛṣṇa is also a matter of controvertial opinion (cf. Gonda, op.cit., pp.3-11). The scope of the present study, however, does not allow us to go deep into this subject.

This may bespeak the delicate shades of character between the two adolescent gods, Māyōn/Kṛṣṇa and Murukan/Subrahmanya. For the comparison between these two, see Gros, op.cit., p.LV-.

For the selective way of their adopting Northern culture, see Tamil Culture and Civilization, p.8.