

CHAPTER VII

VIṢṆU CULT IN ANCIENT TAMIL LITERATURE

The ancient classics of Tamil Literature, the majority of which so far available, are assigned to the pre-Christian periods, throw much light on the prevalence of and acquaintance with the Vedic study and Vedic rites in ancient Tamil Nad.¹ The worship of Viṣṇu receives a significant treatment in these works though these were not mainly intended to deal with religious matters. They contain references not only to the concept of the deity concerned but also to the cult of the temple worship and the philosophical and religious settings which formed the background of such worship.² These works refer to the worship of *Tirumāl* (Viṣṇu),³ Kṛṣṇa⁴ and Baladeva.⁵ The verse in the *Pūranānūṣu* collection⁶ (1000 B.C. to 300 A.D.) includes Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva, along with Śiva and Subrahmaṇya, as the four controlling deities of the Universe. This irrefutable evidence that, among the gods commanding worship as Supreme Deities along with the Śaiva pair, is indeed of great significance. The theme *Pūvatnilai*, as it is called in *Purattṭṭai Iyal*, aims at the identification of a ruling monarch with one of the principal deities of the Hindu pantheon viz., Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.⁷ Loyalty to the patron had ever been an admirable trait of the

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1. PRN. 2, 15; cf. *Cankanūlkaḷum and Vaitṭkamārkkamum*, pp. 13, 22 to 23.
 2. *Cankanūlkaḷum Vaitṭkamārkkamum*, pp. 46 to 59.
 3. TMR. 1. 12; 1. 151; 11. 164-65; PRMP. 11. 29 to 31; 11. 402 to 404; MLP. 11. 3, 4; MTK. 1. 591, 592; KLT. 105, 119, 124, 127; PRP. 1, 2, 3, 4, 13 and 15.
 4. PRN. 56, 58, 174, 201, AKN. 59, 175; KLT. 134.
 5. *ibid.*, 56; KLT. 26, 36, 104, 105.
 6. *ibid.*, 56.
 7. TLK. 3. 2 : 5. 11. 9, 10.

Tamils from times immemorial and there are instances where the king is likened to God. Verily the king is a protector of the people in the same way as *Tirumāl* or *Māyon* is the protector of the Universe. The *Puranānūru* verse under reference is a fine illustration of the point. Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva are referred to in one more place, where a Coḷa and a Pāṇṭiya are together praised as looking like these gods.⁸ One verse in *Akanānūru* (prior to first century A.D.) refers to the story of Rāma⁹ and another verse of the same work *Kuravaikkūtu* (*rāsa* dance) of Kṛṣṇa.¹⁰ The verse in *Kalittokai* (300 A.D.) mentions the victory of Kṛṣṇa against the wrestlers and slaying of them.¹¹ Apart from these stray references, *Paripāṭal* (third century A.D.) contains six poems in description of Viṣṇu.¹² These are intended to describe the character of Viṣṇu as a deity, and have no more definite object of describing the *Bhāgavata* or any other cult as such. Even so, the description of Viṣṇu as given in two poems¹³ by one Kaṭuvan Ilaiyinaṅār follows closely rather the description of Viṣṇu as supreme in the *Pāñcarātra* texts and the *Nārāyaṇiya* of the *Mahābhārata* as well. Another poem of the same work by one Ilamperuvalutiyar¹⁴ makes a special mention of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva as the deities installed in Tirumāliruñcōlai. This fact could be confirmed beyond doubt by references in the ancient Tamil Grammar *Tolkāppiyam* (fourth century B.C.) where it is stated that the presiding deity at *Mullai* (pastoral) tract is *Māyon* (*Tirumāl*) and it is significant that He is mentioned first in the *sūtra*.¹⁵ It has already been pointed out that the king has been compared with *Tirumāl*. The ethical literary work *Tirukkural* (first century B.C.) contains two references of this deity.¹⁶

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8. PRN. 58
 9. AKN. 70.
 10. *ibid.*, 232.
 11. KLT. 134.
 12. PRP. 1, 2, 3, 4, 13 and 15.
 13. *ibid.*, 2 and 3.
 14. *ibid.*, 15.
 15. TLK. 3. 1: 5. cf. *ibid.*, 30.
 16. *Kural* 610, 1103. In the former the reference to the Lord of the three strides and in the latter the abode of Viṣṇu (*Paramapadam*).

In *Cilapatikāram*, an epic belonging to a slightly later period (second century A.D.) there are a number of references to the temples to Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva in the Coḷa capital Kāvīrippūmpaṭṭiṇam and the Pāṇṭiya capital Maturai alike.¹⁷ One of the early shrines in the far south is Tirumāliruñcolai¹⁸ which finds mention in *Cilappatikāram* along with Tiruvaraṅkam¹⁹ and Tiruppati²⁰ as places peculiarly holy to Viṣṇu. In times later than these there are not merely undoubted references, but elaborate descriptions of devotion to the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva. These references establish beyond doubt the prevalence of worship of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva all over the Tamil country.

To come to details. Viṣṇu is mentioned as the foremost among gods.²¹ He is often referred to as the pre-eminent deity spoken of in the *Vedas*,²² which reveal His greatness,²³ and make Him known.²⁴ He is beyond the faculties of apprehension even for sages whose intellect is perfected by constant meditation.²⁵ He is foremost not only among gods but also among the demons. He is thus neither the friend nor the foe of any one. His impartial attitude is thus revealed towards the living beings.²⁶

Garuḍa is His vehicle²⁷ and his emblem marks His banner.²⁸ The conch and the discus are His weapons adorning the left and right hands respectively. The former

17. CLP. 1: 5, ll. 169 to 173; *ibid.*, 2: 14, ll. 7 to 10.

18. *ibid.*, 2: 11, l. 91.

19. *ibid.*, 2: 11, ll. 35 to 40.

20. *ibid.*, 2: 11, ll. 41 to 51.

21. PRP. 13. ll. 1 to 13.

22. *ibid.*, 1. l. 13; 2. l. 57; ll. 12 to 27.

23. PRP. 1. l. 65.

24. NRR. Invocatory verse.

25. PRP. 3. ll. 46 to 52.

26. *ibid.*, 3. ll. 54 to 58.

27. CLP. 2. 17; 28; PRP. 3. l. 60.

28. PRP. 1. l. 11; 2. l. 60; 4. ll. 36 to 48; 13. ll. 38-39; PRN. 56.1. 6; 58.1. 14.

when blown by Him causes horror to all His foes.²⁹ He is ever wearing a garland of *tulaci*.³⁰ He reclines on a couch of *Ādiśeṣa*³¹ and is to be found generally in the milky ocean.³² Lakṣmī dwells in the chest of Him³³ who is Her husband.³⁴ The precious stone³⁵ *Kauṣṭubha* adorns His chest. His garment is golden in colour.³⁶ These are the marks distinctively belonging to Him and serve to distinguish Him from other deities. These also show that He has a divine and auspicious form which could not be described correctly,³⁷ but on that account, He is not left undescribed by people. They describe Him in expressions which are poor and inadequate and do not have actual relevance to Him.³⁸ For instance, though Kṛṣṇa, the Lord, is conceived of as having two arms, He is in reality having innumerable arms.³⁹ Here lies His unfathomable grandeur. The devotees request Him not to ignore their description and prayers, but to accept them and bless them, not minding their littleness.⁴⁰

He is Himself the sacrifice that is performed and is also Himself *dharma* (righteousness). He is the embodiment of *kṛpā*. He is the rectifier of those who are incapable of treading the right path. He is the pain of those who are opposed to His ways. He is the moon and the sun; He is Śiva, the god of destruction; He is Brahmā, the god of creation; in fact He is Himself the very destruction and creation. He is Himself the cloud, *akāśa*, earth and the Himālayas.⁴¹ It is because

29. *ibid.*, 2. ll. 36 to 40.

30. *ibid.*, 13. ll. 60.

31. *ibid.*, 1. ll. 1, 2.

32. *ibid.*, 13. ll. 26 to 29.

33. *ibid.*, 3. l. 31.

34. *ibid.*, 3. l. 90.

35. *ibid.*, 1. l. 9.

36. CLP. 2. 11. l. 50; PRP. 1 : ll. 10, 56; 3 : l. 88; 13 : 11. 1-2.

37. PRP. 13. ll. 46 to 49.

38. *ibid.*, 4. ll. 1 to 5.

39. *ibid.*, 3. ll. 35 to 45.

40. *ibid.*, 1. ll. 33 to 36.

41. *ibid.*, 1. ll. 37 to 48.

that He is everything that he becomes indescribable. There is nothing outside Him which could be brought in for purposes of drawing similarity or contrast to it from Him. Naturally He is equal to Himself.⁴²

All the worlds lose their stability and energy day by day and after aeons, become reduced to a stage when their existence could not be made out. The sun and the moon also become extinct by then.⁴³ Many aeons pass by. After a long time, matter emerges and from it are produced, in the order, *ākāśa*, air, fire and water the succeeding one emerging from the antecedent. Aeons roll by and after a long long period earth is evolved, from the water. The water is then so staggering that the earth is on the point of getting fully submerged there. Viṣṇu takes the form of the boar then and keeps the earth secure. This is one of the countless sports of Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is said to have married the earth known as Bhūdevī. It is humorously remarked here by the poet that His marriage cannot be reconciled since His consort Lakṣmī is ever present in His chest.⁴⁴

The five elements, the sun, the moon and the sacrificer, the five planets which are other than the sun and the moon, the the demons, the twelve Ādityas, the eight Vasus, the eleven Rudras, the twin Aśvins, Yama and his servants, and the twenty one worlds together with the beings inhabiting them arise from Viṣṇu and grow in Him. This is the truth which is revealed from the *Vedas*.⁴⁵ All these represent Him. Symbolically, the vast earth represents His feet, the sea His garment, the sky His body, the directions His arms and the sun and the moon His eyes.⁴⁶ The depiction of the sky as His body receives support from the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*.⁴⁷ This

42. *ibid* , 1. ll. 50 to 53.

43. *ibid.*, 2. ll. 1 to 4.

44. *ibid.*, 2. ll. 28 to 35.

45. *ibid.*, 3. ll. 4 to 14.

46. NRR. invocatory verse. This description is also given in more or less similar expressions by Śaṅkarācārya in a *śloka* contained in his *Bhāṣya* on the *Viṣṇu-sahasranāmam*.

47. *Tatt. Up.* 1. 6: 14.

must be the reason for taking the Lord to be blue in colour.⁴⁸ In a way, this description of the Lord may be treated as lending support to the relation of self and body as existing between Viṣṇu and the world of animate and inanimate beings. In fact, He forms the inner essence of every thing.⁴⁹

He is the father of Brahmā⁵⁰ whom He had created for looking after the subsequent creation. As He is the substance itself and its inner, He is not living in it nor is there a place beside Him for others to live in.⁵¹ He is the only Lord who safeguards the twenty one worlds in three parts under the umbrella of His grace, *dharma* being its handle.⁵² The twenty-five realities (*tattvas*) serve the purpose of realizing Him through them.⁵³ He is the protector of all; the discus adorns His right hand⁵⁴ in order that He could use it against those who violate His law. He measured the entire region to wrest it from the demon and saved it from deluge taking the form of a boar.⁵⁵ He took the form of the swan and saved the earth, with outstretched wings from the torrential rain of deluge.⁵⁶ His ability to vanquish the foes and His brilliance are found in the sun, His sympathy and splendour in the moon, His tenderness and liberality in the cloud, His powers of sustenance and patience in the earth, His fragrance and effulgence in flowers, His exterior appearance and vastness in the sea, His form and voice in the *ākāśa* and His divine descent and disappearance in the air. All these owe their origin to Him, and exist, as it were, away from Him, but really sustained by Him.⁵⁷

The substance of the teaching of the *Vedas* is that the Lord's complexion is akin to that of sapphire; His eyes

48. PRP. 1. ll. 6, 7.

49. *ibid.*, 3. ll. 63 to 68.

50. *ibid.*, 3. ll. 13, 14.

51. *ibid.*, 3. ll. 69, 70.

52. *ibid.*, 3. ll. 73 to 76.

53. *ibid.*, 3. ll. 77 to 80.

54. *ibid.*, 1. ll. 52, 53.

55. *ibid.*, 3. ll. 19 to 25.

56. *ibid.*, 3. ll. 25 and 26.

57. *ibid.*, 4. ll. 25 to 35.

resemble the lotuses; His words never fail in their import just as a particular day would not but come off; His patience is like that of the earth; His grace reaches one and all without any partiality as the cloud impregnated with water. The utterances of the Vedas, oblations, performance of the sacred rites and the sacred fires are God Himself.⁵⁸

The four *vyūhas* of the *Pāñcarātra* school were known to the poets of the ancient Tamil literature. Vāsudeva is held to be dark in complexion having red eyes, Saṅkaraṣaṇa to be white with black eyes, Pradyumna to be red and Aniruddha green.⁵⁹ The popularity of the *Pāñcarātra* cult during the centuries before the birth of Christ is attested by a reference to the temple of Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva already cited above.

Among the divine descents of Viṣṇu those of Kūrma,⁶⁰ Varāha,⁶¹ Narasiṃha,⁶¹ Vāmana, Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa are treated. While those of Kūrma, Narasiṃha and Rāma⁶² are dealt with in the brief references, those of Varāha⁶³ and Vāmana⁶⁴ get special attention, but Kṛṣṇa's descent has more and detailed treatment. Viṣṇu's greatness as the saviour of mankind received attention in the descents as Varāha and Vāmana. Balarāma is often associated with Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa is mentioned as the tender child of Yacōtai.⁶⁵ His playing on the flute was rapturous and fascinated the gopis.⁶⁶ He is said to play on *Vīṇā* also.⁶⁷ Some of the deeds of Kṛṣṇa are said to be mysterious and are stated to be incomprehensible. The Lord who could use the snake Vāsuki as the

58. *ibid.*, 2. 11. 52 to 68.

59. *ibid.*, 3. 11. 81, 82.

60. CLP. 2. 12. 1: 58.

61. PRP. 4. 11. 11 to 21.

62. AKN. 70; PRN. 378; MNM. 17. 11. 9 to 14; *ibid.*, 5. 1. 37.

63. PRP. 2. 1. 16; 3. 1. 24; 13. 1. 36.

64. CLP. 2. 17. 11. 34, 35; 1. 6. 1. 55.

65. *ibid.*, 2. 16. 11. 45, 46.

66. *ibid.*, 2. 7. 1. 2; *ibid.* 2. 17. 11. 18, 19.

67. PRP. 3. 1. 86.

rope for churning the milky ocean, became Himself fit to be bound by Yacōtai with a rope.⁶⁸ Viṣṇu was not hungry, but devoured the world. However, He ate the butter with avidity through severe hunger. He used His feet to measure the entire world, but had to use it in greater frequency when He went to the city of Kauravas as a messenger of the Pāṇḍvas.⁶⁹ These show that He being *māyon*⁷⁰ and *māyavan*⁷¹ could introduce mysterious activities in His own deeds. There are references to incidents like taking away the garments of the *gopis*,⁷² driving the chariot of Arjuna,⁷³ killing the demon Vatca⁷⁴ and hiding the sun with the discus.⁷⁵

Kṛṣṇa married Nilā, the daughter of Kumbha, the brother of Yacōtai⁷⁶. Tamil literature has introduced a new person Nappinnai by name⁷⁷ and made her play a prominent role in the life of Kṛṣṇa. She takes the place of Nilā in these classics. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma had many exploits in the Gokula during which they stood one on each side of Nappinnai and danced. They changed their positions and danced again. Nārada is said to have written the work *Nārada-stkṣā* treating the *tala* according to which they danced.⁷⁸ When Kṛṣṇa was sporting in the waters of Yamunā with the *gopis*, He took out the bracelet from one of them and made them feel discomfort.⁷⁹ Kṛṣṇa is stated to have danced whenever there was some activity in which He engaged Himself. His dance is known as *Alliyam* when He broke the tusk of the elephant

68. CLP. 2. 17.1 32.

69. - *ibid.*, 2. 17.11 32, 33, 34.

70. PRP. 15. 1. 33.

71. CLP. 2. 17.11 14, 15, 27, 28.

72. *ibid.*, 2. 17.1. 23.

73. *ibid.*, 2. 17.1 34.

74. CLP. 2. 17.1 19.

75. *ibid.*, 2. 17.1. 26.

76. cf. Gar. P. Uttarakhandu, ch. 19.

77. CLP. 2. 17.11 14, 15, 16, 24.

78. *ibid.*, 2. 17.11 25, 26.

79. *ibid.*, 2. 17.11 23, 24.

Kuvalayāpīḍa.⁸⁰ He played *Kuṭakkūttu* dance when He went to fight with Bāṇa.⁸¹

Balarāma is considered to be one of the *avatāras* of Viṣṇu and He is quite often treated as having the same status like that of Kṛṣṇa.⁸² He is described to have had the emblem of the elephant in his flag and a single ear-ornament.⁸³ The paradox in the case of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma is that Kṛṣṇa is held to be the younger brother of Balarāma. But He is very ancient and much older. Really He is in between the ancient and the modern. The only way of knowing Him is through the *Vedas*.⁸⁴ The paradox that arises here proves only that He is the essence of every thing⁸⁵ and so He could present Himself anywhere, at any time and in any form He chooses.

Among the *arcā* forms, the deities at Tirumalai, Tiruvarāṅkam, Tirumāliruñcolai and Tiruvanantapuram (Trivandrum) are referred to and treated. Tiruvarāṅkam (Śrī Raṅgam) is the holy place on the island created by the branching of the river Kāviri. The deity there is reclining on the serpent couch.⁸⁶ Tirumalai which marks the northern limit of the Tamil country is the hill of Viṣṇu,⁸⁷ abounding in many streams. The deity in the temple on the hills is Viṣṇu the ornaments on whose person are referred to as dazzling in appearance. The sun and the moon are described as the discus and conch of the Lord. The Lord appears like a blue cloud with sun and moon shining on each side, lightning playing the part of a new garment. He is in the standing posture.⁸⁸ Viṣṇu lies on the serpent couch in Tiruvananta-

80. *ibid.*, 1. 6. ll. 46 to 48.

81. *ibid.*, 1. 6. ll. 54, 55.

82. PRP. 1. ll. 3 to 5.

83. *ibid.*, 1. 1. 5.

84. *ibid.*, 2. ll. 20 to 27.

85. *ibid.*, 2. 1. 20. Vide Parimelaṅkar's commentary on this line.

86. CLP. 1. 10. ll. 156; 2. 11. 1, 6; *ibid.* ll. 35 to 40.

87. *ibid.*, 1. 6. 1. 30; 1. 8. ll. 1, 2; 2. 11. 1. 41.

88. *ibid.*, 2. 11. ll. 41 to 52.

puṭam,⁸⁹ which is also known Āṭakamāṭam. The Lord takes His abode anywhere. He chooses beneath the banyan or *kaṭampa* tree or in the island formed between the two branches of a river. He may choose the hill or the form of any other deity. He is present every where to carry out the wishes of His devotees and to keep them in carrying out their duties.⁹⁰

There are several hills which defy description for ordinary persons, but were studied and described by eminent poets in their works. Only some among them are useful to people who are provided by them with gold, gems, wood and others. Only a few among these have become the lucky abodes chosen by the deities themselves. One among them is Tirumāliruñcolai which has been chosen as the dwelling place by Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva.⁹¹ This place is beautified by the flow of the river Cilampāru.⁹² The groves there are ever green and cool. The references which are made to temples in other places point to the existence of shrines for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma for whom the flags had the emblems of Garuda and Plough respectively.⁹³ The latter is said to have had the palmyra emblem in the flag.⁹⁴ The *Paripāṭal* mentions a temple for Viṣṇu very near to Maturai.⁹⁵ The place which is also called Kulavāy has also a temple for Ādiśeṣa.⁹⁶ The place is also known as Irunṭaiyūr⁹⁷ which is identified by Prof. M. Raghava Ayyengar to be the temple of Kūṭalaṭakar in Maturai.⁹⁸

The temple of Lord Varadarāja at Kāñci is located in a part of the town known as Tiruvattiyūr. The Caṅkam period is known to have been mostly related to the places in and

89. *ibid.*, 3. 26. 1. 62; 3. 30. 1. 51.

90. PRP. 4. 11. 66 to 73.

91. *ibid.*, 15. 11. 1 to 14.

92. *ibid.*, 15. 11. 21 to 23.

93. CLP. 1. 5. 11. 171, 172; 2. 14. 11. 8, 9.

94. KLT. 104, 11. 7, 8; PRP. 2. 1. 22.

95. *Paripāṭal Tiratṭu*. 1. 11. 1 to 6.

96. *ibid.*, 1. 11. 60 to 64.

97. *ibid.*, 1. 1. 5.

98. *Ārāyccittokuti*, pp. 241 to 244.

around Maturai and so the temple in Alakarmalai gets great significance in treatment. Śrī Raṅgam and Tirumalai were too well known far and wide through the Tamil region. Tiruvananthapuram which is now in Kerala formed part of the Tamil country and hence found a place for reference in these works. Peruntevaṅṅār who composed *Mahābhāratam* in Tamil, mentions Tiruveṅkatam, Tirumāliruṅcolai, Tiruvaraṅkam and Tīruvattiyur as the four places whose names when uttered by the people would relieve them of their sufferings.⁹⁹ The non-mention of Kāñcī in the early Tamil classics may be due to the non-representation of the poets from Toṅṅai-maṅṅalam in the Caṅkam period or the loss of the poems containing references to Kāñcī. This is, of course, a negative evidence which could not be pressed too much in the context.

The worship of Viṣṅu is frequently recommended.¹⁰⁰ Final release from worldly bondage could not be got except by worshipping the Lord.¹⁰¹ Devotion to the Lord is to be preferred even to the correct knowledge that one can get about Viṣṅu and His nature.¹⁰² Worship shall be done only at His feet.¹⁰³ One shall wish for the enduring security which the feet of the Lord give.¹⁰⁴ The head of the devotee shall be bent before and near His feet. A devotee shall do this with his relatives also.¹⁰⁵ No one would refrain from worshipping Viṣṅu's feet which are the source of everything and which are capable of cutting the chain of birth and rebirth.¹⁰⁶

The Lord is ever present in the hearts of His devotees. He is ever cherished by them.¹⁰⁷ Yet, they do not know Him

99. *ibid.*, p. 274.

100. PRP. 2. ll. 5 to 19.

101. *ibid.*, 2. ll. 15 to 17.

102. *ibid.*, 1. ll. 33, 34.

103. *ibid.*, 1: ll. 62 to 65.

104. *ibid.*, 1. ll. 63 to 65.

105. *ibid.*, 2. ll. 66 to 77,

106. *ibid.*, 3. ll. 1, 2, 15, 16.

107. *ibid.*, 3. 1. 84.

correctly who is exquisitely described in the *Upaniṣads* as having the highest qualities and accomplishments.¹⁰⁸ The devotees of God shall seek Him for refuge. They could offer their worship to the place of God from a distance if they are unable to reach the place¹⁰⁹ and shall, if it is practicable live too near the temple.¹¹⁰ They shall offer their prayers to Him by addressing Him as Keśava¹¹¹ and Nārāyaṇa.¹¹² Even the gods praise Him as the ancient people did¹¹³. A devotee shall be free from self-conceit. Once Garuḍa felt proud that because of him Viṣṇu was able to conquer the demons. At this, he was hurled down by the Lord into the nether regions where he had to remain for long and pray for Lord's mercy which was at last granted enabling him to continue as the Lord's vehicle. This incident, which is touched in the *Sāma Veda*, shows that Viṣṇu is the greatest among the gods and that Garuḍa had to seek the grace only of Viṣṇu.¹¹⁴ The ardent devotee feels that he has become fortunate to share the love of God along with others mainly owing to the good deeds done by him in the previous births.¹¹⁵ The ideal yearning of a devotee of Viṣṇu is brought to light by describing that the devotee would not feel happy unless he gets the vision of the Lord and serve Him. The ears shall be taken to have served the purpose of their existence by listening to the reputed exploits of Viṣṇu who measured the entire universe in two steps and who went to the forest as Rāma along with His younger brother Lakṣmaṇa. The eyes fail to be lucky if they do not behold Him, His hands, feet and mouth. The eyes should keep cast on Him without even a wink. The only act for the tongue shall be to praise Him Who went to the Kauravas as the messenger of the Pāṇḍavas. Viṣṇu is here identified with Vāmana, Rāma, and Kṛṣṇa in these contexts.¹¹⁶

108. *ibid.*, 4. 11. 57 to 65.

109. *ibid.*, 15. 1. 35.

110. *ibid.*, 15, 11. 64 to 66.

111. *ibid.*, 3. 1. 31.

112. CPL. 2. 17. 1. 37.

113. PRP., 3. 11. 29, 30.

114. *ibid.*, 3. 11. 59 to 62.

115. *ibid.*, 13. 11. 61 to 64.

116. CLP. 2. 17. 11. 35, 36, 37.

The Tamil classics contain many anecdotes and descriptions of the stories of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata*, and *Bhāgavata* which could not be traced to the Sanskrit sources. There could have existed certain versions not properly recorded but for the first time finding room in the Tamil texts. Three of them which relate to the life of Kṛṣṇa deserve mention here, while others which are of minor interest could be explained while commenting on the relevant portions of the compositions of the Ālvārs. The three¹¹⁷ are the introduction of Nappinnai,¹¹⁸ the consort of Kṛṣṇa in Gokulam, Kṛṣṇa's breaking down of the *Kurunta* tree while taking away the robes of the *gopa* maidens who were taking their bath in the Yamunā,¹¹⁹ and His *Kuṭakkūttu*.¹²⁰

The cult of Viṣṇu, as found treated and referred to in the ancient classical Tamil literature could have come into being in the Tamil country as a result of the influence of the religious doctrines which are recorded in the Sanskrit works. Yet, the development and treatment of this cult have been indigenous and exerted profound influence on the unique growth of the cult which is marked by the erection of temples most of which are found only in regions where the Tamil language is spoken. It is not therefore a surprise if the principles of the cult of Viṣṇu as these are treated in these classics had given impetus to the rise of the religious poetry at the hands of the Ālvārs.

117. Vide. Appendix III.

118. CLP. 2. 17. ll. 16, 28.

119. *ibid.*, 2. 17. 1. 21; AKN. 59 and old commentary.

120. *ibid.*, 1. 6. ll. 54, 55.