Chapter :3

Talapurāṇam/ Māhātmyam --Genesis

3. 1 Tamil Concept of Mūrtti, Talam, Tīrttam

Temple worship in Tamilnadu has developed into a multi dimensional phenomenon over the ages and the emphasis has been on three major components. Saint Tayumanavar has prescribed them as prerequisites for becoming fit to be initiated by a preceptor (Guru).¹ They are Mūrtti, Talam, Tīrttam.

“Mūrtti is deity, Talam is the holy place and Tīrttam is the sacred water available in that particular place. Saivism holds the view that Lord Siva himself remains as these three and showers Grace upon the devotees. A visit to such places, a dip in the waters there and prayer before the shrines will lead one in the spiritual path. The popular saying” Gopura darisanam papa vimocanam” (a mere look at the tower of a temple removes the sins) significantly explains this. Mūrtti is not just an idol in a temple, talam is not a mere place on earth to live in and tīrttam is not mere water. These are there to signify that God is all pervasive; He is in the elements also if one

¹ TAYUMANAVAR: Paraparakkanni: 156
seeks the truth. Siva assumes the form of the holy water to help the souls.”

Appar states.” Malam ketuttu matirttam attikkonta maraiyavan”

meaning thereby that having a dip in the holy waters signifies the contact of the soul with the Grace which removes the bond.

Though the literal meaning of Talam is the place, meaning thereby the village or town, the word Talam by usage denotes the temple housing the Murtti, Tirttam and Sthala vriksham and not the other things in that place. Therefore, the Talapuranam of any talam will limit its discussion to the temple concerned and not about any other thing including other temples. Arunacala Puranam( of Caiva Ellappa Navalar) will discuss about the Annamalaiyar temple only, even though there are many other temples in that town.

This applies equally to all other Talapuranams.

The importance of the three components, Murtti, Talam, Tirttam has developed over the ages. Tiru Murugarru p patai, a cankam literary work contains discussion of the three concepts, though with out naming so. In the section on Tiru c ciralaivay(Tiru c centur) it discusses the Murtti, giving graphic description and function of

2 SIDDALINGAIAH.Dr.T.B.Saiva Siddhanta in historical perspective:p150
3 APPAR:6.20.6
each of the six faces and each of the twelve hands. It describes the beauty and significance of the six Talams throughout the work. The last section on Palamutir colai contains elaborate description of the Tirttam, the river Nupura gangai.

Campantar, Appar and Cuntarar in the seven tirumurai works have eulogized the Murtti,Talam,Tirttam of the places visited by them in the patikam composed on the talam. Campantar composed “Tiru Kshettirak kovai,” Appar composed “Kshettirak kovai t tiruttantakam,” “Ataivut tiruttantakam,” and “ Palavakait tiruttantakam,” and Cuntarar composed “Tiru nattut tokai” and eulogized the Talams.⁴

In “Tiru Kshettirak kovai” Campantar lists out the talams and says that by reciting their names, thinking about them, and loving them, we can cross the ocean of birth and rebirth, get relieved of the impurities (malam) and remain at the feet of Sivan for ever without leaving it. In “Kshettirak kovai t tiruttantakam” Appar lists out the talams and says that in all these places you can see none other than the Lord of Kailas.In “Ataivut tiruttantakam” Appar says- By repeatedly telling the name of Parappalli the person will be taken care of well in Paraloka, the messengers of Yama move away from those who mention the name of the eight Veerattanam(the talams connected with the eight acts of valour of Siva) considering them as Siva’s own men, by repeatedly telling the name of the talams one’s woes disappear and never reappear and they are absolved of

⁴ CAMPANTAR:2.39, APPAR:6.70-71 and 93, CUNTARAR:7.12
their sins. In “Palavakait tiruttantakam” he says that by repeatedly chanting the name of the talams the devotees can rule over the heaven, get relieved of their karmas of yore, get closer to Lord Siva and be in the path of purity and bliss.

There is a tradition of naming people after the name of the talams. The most commonly used names of talams to name people are, Annamalai, Arunacalam, Citamparam, Maturai, Tiruppati, Tirumalai, Kasi, Kalathí, Palani, Viruttacalam, Centil etc. The intention behind naming children after the talams is to repeat the name of the talams every time the person is addressed and earn the Grace of God.

The Murtti of God in each talam is considered unique and therefore the presiding deities in the temples of Tamilnadu are not called by the universal name Siva or Parvati. They are called by unique names – Cokkanathar and Minatci in Maturai, Annamalaiyar and Unnamulai in Tiru Annamalai, Peruvutaiyar or Brahatiswara in Tancavur, Kumbheswarar and Mangalambikai in Kumbakonam, Tayumanavar in Tirucirapalli, Vanmikanatar or Purritankontar and Nilotpalambal in Tiruvarur and so on.

The importance given to Tirttam is underscored in the concluding ceremony of annual Brahmotsavam celebrated in all temples. It is the grand bathing ceremony or popularly known as Tirtavari. A mention of a similar ceremony is found in one of the chapters of
“Chidambara Mahatmyam written in 12th or the 13th Century. In addition to this, the float festival or Teppotsavam is also celebrated in major temples when the presiding deity goes round the Tirttam of the temple in a decorated float or Teppam. Temple traditions in Tamilnadu are inclusive of those eulogising the Tirttam of the Talam.

There are many temples where we find more than one tirttam and traditions relating to each one of the tirttams exist. For example in the Tyagaraja temple of Tiruvarur, the Main Tirttam is Deva Tirttam, popularly known as Kamalalayam. The other tirttams are Saraswathi Tirttam, Gaya Tirttam, Narayaniittai tirttam, Pushkarani trayam or Tri tirttam, Viswamitra Kundam, Sarwa Tirthasraya, Misra Kundam, and Agastya Tirttam.

One more aspect of the temple worship is the concept of the sacred tree of the Talam or “Sthala vriksham”. It is Tillai tree for Citamparam, Kadamba tree for Madurai, Jamun tree for Tiru Anaikka, Padiri tree for Tiruppatirippuliyur, Marudu tree for Tiruvitai marudur and so on. The Sthala vriksham is preserved, groomed and worshipped in the temples from time immemorial without break.

There are temples which have more than one sthala vriksham simultaneously whereas some temples like Vaithiswarankoil claim to have different sthala vriksham in different yugas. There are also

5 PAUL YOUNGER: The Home of Dancing Sivan:p176
instances of more than one temple having the same tree as sthala vriksham e.g. Patiri Tree (Arjuna tree in Sanskrit) is sthala Vriksham of Tiruvidai Marudur as well as Tirup pudai Marudur.

Some of the important temple festivals are associated with the Sthala vriksham of the temples concerned. Mavadi sevai of Kanci Ekambareswara temple and Makizhadi sevai of Tiruvottiyur temple are two such festivals.

Of the four concepts, Murtti, Talam, Tirttam and Sthala vriksham, Talam is the most important one as the other three attain their importance only due to their relationship with the Talam.

The Tamils attaching maximum importance to temple worship is underscored by the fact that out of the sixty three devotees mentioned by Cuntarar in Tiruttokai, Eighteen people attained that exalted position only on account of their steadfast adherence to some facet of temple maintenance/temple worship.

1) Erippattar: Slays an elephant that desecrates a garland being taken for Civa’s worship in Karur.

2) Kunkiliya k kalayar: Regularly burning incense in Civa’s temple.

3) Arivattayar: Regularly offering cooked cennel (a special type of rice) Cenkirai side dish, tender mango pickles to Civa in the temple.
4) **Murthi**: Daily offering sandal paste for applying on Cokkanathar of Madurai

5) **Tiru nalai p pover**: Nurturing and living for life time ambition to visit Nataraja temple in Citamparam.

6) **MuruKa Nāyanar**: Collecting flowers, making, and offering different types of garlands for Civa in Tiru p pukalur

7) **Nami nanti**: Regularly lighting lamps in the temple of Civa in Tiruvarur Araneri

8) **Dandiyatikal**: Eventough he was born blind, undertook the task of desilting the temple tank (Tirttam) in Tiruvarur

9) **Gana Nathar**: He was taking care of the personal requirements of temple servants in Cirkali and ensured that all the works of the temple were done regularly.

10) **Kaliyan**: Regularly lighting lamps in the temple of Civa in Tiruvotriyur

11) **Aiyatickal Katavar Kon**: He was a king of Pallava dynasty. He undertook pilgrimage, visited various Civa temples and composed songs in praise of Civa in Venpa metre which are contained in “Kshetra Venpa” forming part of Eleventh Tirumurai. Only 24 poems on 23 Kshetras are available now.

12) **Kanam Pullar**: Regularly lighting lamps in the temple of Civa in Irukku Velur and Citamparam

13) **Kāri**: Constructed temples for Civa

14) **Kalar Cinkar**: Cut the hand of his wife for picking up a flower in the temple, meant for offering to Civa in Tiruvarur.
15) **Pukal t Tunai**: Adi saiva temple priest performing regular worship of Civa in the temple

16) **Pucalar**: Undertook construction of temple for Civa, mentally.

17) **Muppotum Tirumeni Tintuvar**: All Civacaryas performing worship of Civa in temples.

18) **Koc cenkat Colan**: Constructed 70 temples for Civa.

### 3.2 The Temple as an institution

Initially, during and before the cankam age, the temple in Tamilnadu was a simple place of worship, like any other place in the country. But it became *a multi-faceted and multi-functional institution* in the course of time. The pace of this change was slow before the advent of Rajaraja I. During his time and his successors’ time the change became more marked and faster.

The temple used to be a brick and mortar structure before Pallava kings introduced the idea of constructing stone temples. The cave temples and rock-cut temples are their contribution to temple architecture of Tamilnadu. Pallava King Mahendra Varman (615-630 A.D.), who built cave temples for Siva in Siyamangalam, Pallavaram, Vallam, Talavanur, Tiruk kazhukkunram, and Tiruchirappalli, is the pioneer in constructing stone temples. His successors Rajasimhan (685-720 A.D.) and Parameswaran II (720-725) also constructed stone temples. Earlier, the Cola king Koc
cenkanan of fifth century A.D. constructed 70 temples 'Matak koyil' for Siva and one for Vishnu.\textsuperscript{6}

However, it was Rajaraja who converted the temple from a mere place of worship into the hub of social life and activities. Temple and religion became an integral part of the social life of Tamils from then on. In the long period of Cola rule the Hindu temple attained the zenith of its influence on the social life of the country. With its rise, there came up also a varied and complex routine in each temple sustained by the rich accumulations in land and gold, the result of pious gifts, offered with unparalleled generosity and administered with extreme care. Each generation husbanded with caution, what was handed down to it, and by means of fresh additions, managed to leave a richer heritage to its successor.\textsuperscript{7}

All sections of the society, from the common individual, through the rich merchant to the king patronized the temple commensurate with their ability.\textsuperscript{8}

Large village grants were also made to the temple, for celebrating festivals, meeting the establishment charges and for daily services.\textsuperscript{9}

Whenever repairs and reconstruction of any temple resulted in damage to an inscription of donative nature pertaining to the temple

\textsuperscript{6} RAJAMANIJKKANAR.Dr.MA.Periya Purana Araycci:p76-79
\textsuperscript{7} SASTRI.K.A.NILAKANTA:The Colas:p652
\textsuperscript{8} PONNUSSAMY.S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur::p47
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid p.52
or any other trust or endowment, extreme care was taken to re engrave the inscription in the new structure and mention the fact that it is a re engraved inscription. This shows that the noble object of the trust is carried out for a long time subsequently without any break.\(^{10}\)

The vast and growing wealth of the temples brought them into more and more intimate business relations with the neighbourhood.

The wonderful Great temple of Thanjavur was built by Rajaraja. The elaborate arrangements made for the management of the affairs of the Great temple and carefully recorded in the inscriptions on its walls, sum up the best practices of the time in this regard and set a model for the future. A deliberate desire to bring the temple into intimate touch with several aspects of the life of the people marks almost every one of these arrangements. Almost every temple however small in size and restricted in influence, was a miniature of the great temple and had its counterpart of every feature of the larger institution.\(^{11}\)

The great temple of Thanjavur was easily the richest temple of the time. The quantity of gold of which account has been preserved amounted to over 41,500 kalanjus.

(1 Kalanju= app 70 grains, 41500 Kalanju= 500lbs.troy) The value of jewels presented was about 10,200 Kasus. Of this he gave 50,650 Kalanjus of silver, over 600lbs. troy. He set apart lands

\(^{10}\) PONNU.SAMY.S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur:p47
\(^{11}\) SASTRI.K.ANILAKANTA: The Colas:pp652-653
yielding an annual income of 116,000 Kalams of paddy. 180 pangus (share) comprising of one house and one veli of land yielding a net revenue of 100 kalams of paddy a year was set apart for the maintenance of 212 men servants. 12

The temple gathered round itself all that was best in the arts of civilized existence and regulated them with humaneness born of the spirit of Dharma, which has few parallels in the annals of mankind. The importance of the temple as a place of worship and a symbol of popular religious faith apart, its development as the centre of village activity during medieval days is remarkable in its own way. Two reasons may be adduced for such growth: strong religious bias in the organization of the Hindu society which vested the temple with obligations of more than a religious nature and rural autonomy in which the temple played a larger part.

While the religious significance of temples was growing along with devotees’ zeal for material offerings, accumulation of properties must have automatically contributed to its importance as a social centre with the halo of divine association. So it is not surprising that the south Indian temple fostered under its divine shade,

12 Ibid:p 654
remarkable administrative machinery, which grew parallel to the local self-governing institutions.\textsuperscript{13}

The administrative procedures adopted by the temple were well organized and from large grants down to humble donations they were scrupulously followed.\textsuperscript{14}

The temple had its own managing committee though there are also instances of its being administered by the village assembly. Village assemblies, even where they were not directly connected with the administration of the temples, retained the duty of supervising the grants made to the latter.

The inscriptions by way of recording the administrative procedures regarding the execution of the pious activities of the donors reveal the wealth of the temple, structure of the temple administration, details regarding its establishment, its connections with the local village assembly and the management of its properties.\textsuperscript{15}.

The inscriptions reveal that the Cola government realized the increasing social importance of the role of the temple and felt that there was a need for the exercise of a steady and vigilant control on the business side of the affairs of the temple. Therefore it was organizing searching periodical inquests into the management and

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\textsuperscript{13} PONNUSAMY, S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur::p46
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid:p57
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid:pp53-54
\end{flushleft}
affairs of the temples, by the highest officers of the central government, sometimes by the king himself.\textsuperscript{16}

The prosperity of the temple depended much on the co-operation of the local bodies and inscriptions reveal that the Tiruvarur temple, in the medieval period seems to have received the whole-hearted support of not only the local governing body of Tiruvarur but also that of the village assemblies of the surrounding places. The same can be said of the other temples also.\textsuperscript{17}

During the medieval period, the South Indian temple was the hub of the socio-religious life of the people and served as the centre of the activities of the village community. It also played significant role in the economic activity of the people and in fostering administrative institutions.\textsuperscript{18}

3. 3 Role of temples in Tamil Society

From the time of Rajaraja the temple assumed the following roles:

1) The temple was the biggest Landholder. As a result of the pious gifts made generously, not only by the kings and rich land owners, but by the common people also, the temples became quite rich. Tax free endowments of agricultural

\textsuperscript{16} SASTRI.K.A.NILAKANTA: The Colas:p 654
\textsuperscript{17} PONNUSAMY.S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur::pp58-59
\textsuperscript{18} ibid:p1
lands made to the temples by cola kings and his subjects, resulted in the temples possessing vast tracts of agricultural lands and made them the biggest land holder in most of the villages. In that capacity, the temple evinced keen interest in farming in all the villages around. It also brought new areas into cultivation. It took steps to rehabilitate villages deserted by people. Rajaraja set apart lands to the Great Temple of Thanjavur, yielding an annual income of 116,000 Kalam of paddy.19

2) From a simple place of worship, the temple had grown into a complex over the long period of its history. The multifarious activities of the temple and the innumerable routine of the temples can not be carried out by any individual. It needs coordinated work by a team of people on a continuous basis. Thus the temple is an employer. While temples are basically a center for worship, at the same time is a centre for other cultural and economic life of people.

The new idea of the stone temple found room for the employment of much skill and taste in its planning and decoration. Construction of temples and their maintenance provided job opportunity to architects, construction workers, painters and craftsmen and helped them to compete with one another and exhibit their talents.

19 SASTRI K. A. NILAKANTA: The Colas : p 654
Sculptors had good opportunity to sculpt bronze images and stone sculptures.

The daily routine of a temple provided job opportunity on a continuous basis to singers, dancers, flower vendors, cooks and other workers. The temple festivals celebrated frequently had shandy, intellectual competitions, wrestling events and other programmes of mass-entertainment. Endowments created with land and cash made the temples financially comfortable. The farm labourers working in temple lands and other workers carrying out other temple related works got enough support for shining in other walks of life. Goldsmiths could also prove their excellence as many ornaments were being made for the temple idols especially the Utsava murthis. 20

A remarkable inscription of Kulottunga II in Sri Tyagaraja temple of Tiruvarur gives information regarding the servants of the temple and describes the work allotted to each of them: torch-bearers, cooks, garland- makers, servants mixing incense, servants gathering flowers, servants supplying fire wood to the temple kitchen, women cleaning rice, conch blowers, trumpeters and servants

20 SASTRI,K.A.NILAKANTA:Thamizhar Panpadum Varalarum:p 141
carrying the deity in procession during festivals, potters and barbers.\textsuperscript{21}

180 pangus\textit{(share)} comprising of one house and one veli of land yielding a net revenue of 100 kalam of paddy a year was set apart for the maintenance of 212 men servants comprising dancing masters, musicians, drummers, tailors, goldsmiths, accountants and so on. Among these were three persons to sing Ariyam and four others the Tamil. A choir of fifty persons was constituted for reciting the Tiruppadiyam to the accompaniment of musical instruments...\textsuperscript{22}

During the reign of Rajaraja I, the Great Temple of Tanjore employed nearly 609 people in different categories.\textsuperscript{23} It employed besides the priests and artisans, many servants, their qualifications, duties and wages being specifically fixed.

Large temples had scores of musicians and dancing girls in their service.

3) The routine functioning of the temple was made up of a myriad of activities. The daily worship, puja, needed the services of a priest performing the puja, a cook cooking

\textsuperscript{21} PONNUSAMY.S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur:p61.
\textsuperscript{22} SASTRI.K.A.NILAKANTA: The Colas:p 654
\textsuperscript{23} KAILASAPATHI.K: Pandai Thamizhar Vazhvum Vazhipadum: p88
delicacies for offering to the deity, an assistant to pick up flowers and make garlands out of it, grind sandal paste, light up a number of lamps and maintain them, an assistant to clean up the vast premises, a gardener to maintain the flower garden, Nandavanam, of the temple and a couple of security men to take care of the temple security. In addition to this an accountant was needed to maintain the finance of the temple, disburse remuneration for various services received by the temple, maintain land records, enter into lease agreements, collect lease money or the yield from the lands owned by the temple etc. In addition to this the temple also used to utilise the services of goldsmiths to make ornaments for the deities, carpenters for making chariots, Ratha, and Palanquins, craftsmen for making Panchaloha idols for utsavamurthis etc. These services were obtained from competent people and paid by the temples out of their own funds and at times out of funds made available by donors to the temple specifically for the purpose. Thus the temple remained the biggest consumer of goods and services. Temples were the biggest consumers of jewellery and art pieces like bronze images. Thus the temples became the biggest consumer of goods and activities.

4) With its rise, there came up also a varied and complex routine in each temple sustained by the rich accumulations in land and gold, the result of pious gifts, offered with a
generosity and administered with a care. Each generation husbanded with caution what was handed down to it, and by means of fresh additions, managed to leave a richer heritage to its successor. The vast and growing wealth of the temples brought them into more and more intimate business relations with the neighbourhood. Functioning as a local bank, the temple lent money to private individuals, establishments and local bodies with or without interest. Farmers borrowed money from temples, for their farming needs. Some people borrowed even for giving Dowry to their daughters. It advanced loans to individuals and merchant guilds for interest. Thus the temples were playing to the members of the local community the role played by the present day banks.

5) Temples were also playing the role of educational institutions. Temples have been running schools, with prescribed syllabi. The inscriptions also confirm establishment and maintenance of Veda Pathasala in several temples. Temples were also used to teach Tiru p padiyam and other forms of music.

6) Tamils believed that the best of worldly riches should be offered to deities in temples. Art in various forms depended solely on the temples and slowly evolved into temple arts.

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24 KAILASAPATHI.K: Pandai Thamizhar Vazhvum Vazhipadum: p89
The concept of secular art was unknown then. Donors gave the best of worldly possessions to the presiding deities of temples, jewellery, bronze images, silver-ware, etc. The temples in Tamilnadu house some of the best sculptures, paintings, bronzes and unique sculptural work. They preserve rare palm leaf manuscripts. The Eighty one Karanas of Lord Nataraja’s Tandava as He danced them adorn the inner upper first floor of the central Vimana of the temple of Thanjavur. In Chidambaram 108 karanas are sculptured in the Eastern Gopuram.

In those days when the concept of museums had not taken shape, the temples were performing the duties of modern day museum to the society.

7) An inscription found in Citamparam temple by Rajaraja III dated 1220 AD mentions about establishment of a library called Saraswati Bhandaram and the inscription found in the same temple by Sundara Pandiyan dated 1263 AD mentions about the expansion of the library.

It employed twenty scholars to copy and compare manuscripts in Tamil and Sanskrit.

Hospitals and dispensaries were also maintained by the temples. The temple gardens, Nandavanams, were used to raise medicinal herbs. The Pacuram of Campantar Maruntu

25 PILLAI.SOMASUNDARAM.J.M: The Great Temple at Tanjore:p.66
26 SETHURAMAN.KUDANTHAI.N.: Kudantai.N.Sethuraman Aayvu k katturaikal-II-1999:p228
27 PAUL.YOUNGER:The Home of Dancing Sivan:p 161
ventil ivai, mantirankal ivai on Tiruntu tevan kudi is interpreted to indicate maintenance of a Nandavanam of medicinal herbs in the temple premises under the auspices of the temple.\textsuperscript{28}

8) Temples had special mantapas which provided a place for the public to meet and conduct programmes of performing arts like dramas and dance dramas. These mantapams served as local theatre where the dance and musical programmes were conducted. Recitation and exposition of puranas including the sthala puranas were also taking place regularly in the temples.

9) The temples are also a repository of historical records. The temples in Tamilnadu contain a number of inscriptions on its stone walls. These inscriptions contain mine of information and are very valuable. They serve as the most authentic source for reconstructing the ancient history of the land.\textsuperscript{29} Almost all the temple inscriptions are donative, with only a few expections.\textsuperscript{30}

These inscriptions give us a total picture of life in Tamilnadu from 8\textsuperscript{th} century AD.

\textsuperscript{28} SETHURAMAN,KUDANTHAI.N.: Kudantai.N.Sethuraman Aayvu k katturaikal-II-1999: p 18
\textsuperscript{29} PONNUSAMY,S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur: p1
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid:p46
The inscriptions made during the reign of Cola kings reveal various facets of Cola administration such as, accurate survey and assessment of the country for purposes of land revenue, the perfection of the administrative organization of the country by the creation of a strong and centralized machinery corresponding to the staff of secretaries in modern administration and the posting of representative officers of the central Government in suitable localities, the promotion of a system of audit and control by which village assemblies and other quasi-public Corporations were held to account without their initiative or autonomy being curtailed; the creation of a powerful standing army, and a considerable navy which achieved great success under Rajendra. These factors mark out Rajaraja I as the greatest among the empire-builders of Southern India.  

There are two unique inscriptions in the Tiruvarur Tyagaraja temple. Inscriptions (of year 1123 A.D) found there narrate the story of Manu Niti Cola in the words of Lord Tyagaraja himself. The inscription is by Vikrama Colan. The inscription gives the name of Manu’s minister as Ubhayakulamalan of Palaiyur.  

31 PILLAI,SOMASUNDARAM J.M: The Great Temple at Tanjore: pp67-68  
32 SETHURAMAN,KUDANTHAI.N.: Kudantai,N.Sethuraman Aayvu k katturaikal-II-1999:p18
The other inscription dating back to 1202 A.D is by Kulottunga Colan III popularly known as Tribhuvana Vira Devan. This inscription also is in the words of Lord Tyagaraja himself. In this inscription the Lord refers to the king as Nam Thozhan Tribhuvana Viran.\(^{33}\) meaning “Our friend, Tribhuvana Viran”

Large provisions were made for conducting festivals in the temple and a remarkable inscription of Kulottunga II gives a resume of all the festivals, monthly and annual, conducted in the temple during a year. Fifty six festivals (Tirunal) are found listed in the inscription.\(^{34}\) Campantar has also recorded in his patikam on Kapaliswara temple in Mylapore, various festivals celebrated in the temple.

Inscriptions (of year 920 A.D) found in Uttiramerur throw much light on local self government.

“The village was divided into thirty wards or sections, each of which had a representative on the council, chosen annually by lot. The council was divided into five sub-committees, the first three of which were responsible for gardens and orchards, tanks and irrigation, and the settlement of disputes respectively, while the functions of the last two are uncertain. Members were unpaid, and could be removed from office for misconduct. The right to sit on

\(^{33}\) ibid:p28
\(^{34}\) PONNUSSAMY.S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur:p60
the council was limited by a property qualification of a house and a small plot of land. Membership was confined to men between the ages of thirty-five and seventy, and those who had served for a year were ineligible for re-appointment for another three years.35

The inscriptions found in Uthira Merur, throw light on:

- Procedure followed for elections for the local body
- Maintenance of the village irrigation lake.
- Maintenance of village roads.
- Appointment of Professors.
- Establishment and maintenance of Veda Patasala
- Singing sacred hymns (Tiru-p-pädiyan) in temples.
- Establishment and maintenance of Grammar schools (Vyakaraña Patasala)
- Treatment for Snake-bite/snake poison.
- Sale of manure.

The inscription in Sundara raja Perumal temple, of 8th Century A.D., has recorded the name of the architect who has built the temple as Parameswaran living in Padagam of Kanchipuram. It states “There are many experts in Agama living in this town. They are well experienced in applying their knowledge of Vastu. This temple has been constructed with their advice. This temple has been constructed with measurements being strictly as per the Vastu/Agama books.

35 BASHAM.A.L.: The Wonder that was India:p107
Therefore anyone who knows the measurement and the intricacies of the temple can master the science of architecture.”

Pallava King KampaVikrama’s inscription of 878 A.D. elaborately deals with maintenance of ‘Vaira megha Tadakam’ a major irrigation lake of Utharamerur. It talks of deepening the lake every year, maintaining properly the water outlet ‘Kalinku’, judicious apportioning of water among all the beneficiaries, constitution of Lake Board” eri variam”, election of its members, their role and responsibilities, strengthening lake-bunds, levying and collection of water tax, etc.

These inscriptions reveal some interesting information about people practicing town planning and the application of Vastu and Agama principles. Utharamerur was planned and built up in the 8th Century A.D. strictly following the town planning rules laid down in Agama Sastra, about location of temples, bazaar, building housing the Grama Sabha, Irrigation Lakes etc. The Agamas stipulate that the place where a town has to be brought up should be a big square with four sides being equal, the big square being further divided into a number of squares. This is called ‘Nun kayiridal” in ancient Tamil scriptures. Selection of place for temples and invoking Gods there is known as ‘Teyam Kanal’ and Teyvam Nokkal’ in Tamil literature. Uthiramerur was built up in this fashion only.
As per Agama, irrigation tank should be located on the western side and so is here ‘Vaira megha Tadakam’ The central square of the town is called ‘Bramha sthanam’ and the Grama Sabha hall should be housed there. The lower portion of the Grama Sabha hall built in the central square ‘Bramha sthanam’ in the 8th century is still intact there. It is no small wonder that the record of activities of the Grama Sabha of Utharamerur continuously for about 500 years has been inscribed there. This hall is called” Ivvur Sabha Mandapam”. All the temples of that town are in the stipulated direction of this mandapam. On the west of this hall ‘Sundara Varada Perumal Koil is built; To a little north of this temple is built is located the Murukan Temple.

A temple of Durga is situated on the northern side of the town; on the northeastern side Kailasanatha temple, temple of Siva, and the temple of Sapta Matas are situated; The southern side houses “Sasta Temple.

All these temples are situated in places stipulated in Agama Sastras.36

10)  After the decline of Čola and other dynasties artists were orphaned without any patrons. The temples had already taken over many non-administrative functions of kings. Similarly they also became a major patron of arts.

36 NAGASAMY.Dr.Ra: Utharamerur: p 5
The practice of reciting the sacred hymns in temples had come into vogue long before the time of Rajaraja, from the late Pallava period when the inscriptions begin to include the reciters (Padiyam paduvar) among the regular employees of the temple. The inference is clear that the hymns had gained the status of divine literature by that time. From the time of Parantaka Cola I (907-55) there is a regular series of endowments recorded in the epigraphs of the Colas and in the temples of Tondaimandalam(roughly Madras, Chingleput, S.Arcot, Tanjore and Trichinopoly Dists) for the recitation of these hymns in temples to the accompaniment of instrumental music. The mention of a Devaranayakam,-Superintendent of Devaram- in the reign of Rajendra I. implies a regular state Department regulating this work and securing its proper performance: the same department may have looked after the dance and music performances in temples which were also often separately endowed.\(^{37}\)

The Inscription of Vikrama Colan dated 1124 AD found in the temple at Tiruntu tevankudi mentions about a grant given for playing vina instrument in the temple\(^{38}\).

Similar inscriptions mentioning about grants given for playing vina instrument in the temple are found in the temples at Tindivanam (Inscription of Rajaraja dated995 AD) and at Tiru

\(^{37}\) SASTRLK.A.NILAKANTA: Development of Religion in South India: pp120-121
\(^{38}\) SETHURAMAN.KUDANTHALI.N.: Kudantail.N.Sethuraman Aayvu k katturaikal-II-1999:p113
k kadavur Mayanam in Nagappattinam Dist (Inscription of Kulottunga Colan III dated 1128 AD)\

The images of the Saiva Nayanmars had been installed during the early years of the 11th century A.D. and the order of Rajarajadeva himself, by which he assigned a daily allowance of paddy to each of the forty-eight persons (pidarar) whom he had appointed to recite the Tiruppadiyam in the temple and to two persons who had to accompany the others on drums (kottimattalam) are of significant interest.\

Dance and dramatic performances were held in the mantapas. Large temples had scores of musicians and dancing girls in their service.

Other fine arts like sculpture and painting owed much of their growth to the temple as is evident from the numerous monumental remains found in the land.

11) While constructing temples, provision was also made for using them for non-religious purposes. Construction of moats around the temple, huge walls encircling and fortifying the temple makes clear the intentions of the builders of the temples for putting them to use for defence purposes in times of war. The temple Brahadiswaram in

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39 Ibid:p114 p228  
40 PILLALI SOMASUNDARAM J.M: The Great Temple at Tanjore: p33
Thanjavur, temples in Srirangam or Tirumeyyam can be cited as examples.

The role played by Nataraja temple in Citamparam in Carnatic wars of the 18th Century is notable.” The temple was used as a fort first in 1760 and later in 1780. The French took Citamparam in 1753 and held it during the war till 1760. During these years, the French began a series of fortifications about the temple consisting of four batteries from the four corners of the outermost of the stonewalls which enclose the temple and another battery in the centre of each of the two longer (Eastern and western) sides of this wall.

During the invasion of the Carnatic by Haidar Ali of Mysore in 1780, some of his troops occupied Citamparam and the temple. In 1781 Coote was defeated in a night attack on the fortified pagoda then garrisoned by Haidar. The attacking party under Coote’s personal direction were repulsed with considerable loss after forcing their way through two of the three enclosures of the western gateway of the temple. It was during this disturbed period that Nataraja was removed from his shrine by the Dikshitars and taken over to Tiruvarur for safety.\(^\text{41}\)

\(^{41}\) AIYER, RAMAKRISHNA, V.G. The Economy of a South Indian Temple: pp104-106
The social functions of the temple were many-sided.

- It made provision for the recital of divine hymns and for the study of the Sastras in its hallowed cloisters and patronized philosophic discussions and discourses.
- Schools are also found to have been run by the temple, with prescribed syllabi.
- Dance and dramatic performances were held in the mantapas.
- Large temples had scores of musicians and dancing girls in their service.
- Other fine arts like sculpture and painting owed much of their growth to the temple as is evident from the numerous monumental remains found in the land.
- The temple bought and sold lands and kept strict accounts of its assets and liabilities, and had its own treasury and record office.
- It employed besides the priests and artisans, many servants, their qualifications, duties and wages being specifically fixed.
- It advanced loans to individuals and merchant guilds for interest.
- Hospitals and dispensaries are found to have been maintained by the temples.
- Provision was also made for feeding pilgrims and monks sumptuously at the temples.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{42} PONNUSAMY.S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur:pp4-5
• Provision was also made for Vedic recitals (adhyayana), in the temple daily once by eight persons.\textsuperscript{43}

Generally the village assembly had the local temple as the place for conducting its business. Rules and regulations relating to the formation and composition of village committees are found inscribed in the temple walls. Negotiations between assemblies of two villages were often held in the temple precincts.  

*As landholder, employer, and consumer of goods and services, as bank, school and museum, as hospital and theatre, in short as a nucleus which gathered round itself all that was best in the arts of civilized existence and regulated them with humaneness born of the spirit of Dharma, the mediaeval Indian temple has few parallels in the annals of mankind.*\textsuperscript{44}

\textbf{3. 4 Temples and Royalty}

The history and fate of royalty and religion have been interdependent in Tamilnadu from the beginning. The Tamil word for temple is "Kāyil"\textsuperscript{45} and the word stands for not only the house of God but the house of the king too. The Tamil kings were highly religious. They were modest and considered themselves

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid:p49
\textsuperscript{44} SASTRI K.A. NILAKANTA: The Colas:p 654
insignificant before God. That was the reason for their constructing temples in the centre of the town and villages in a grand manner with materials considered to be non-perishable, while building their abodes in a humble manner. This possibly explains why no palace of any of the Tamil kings has survived the ravages of time, while numerous temples have survived for more than 1000 years. We could see, admire and enjoy the beautiful Kailasanathar temple in Kanchipuram, the grand Great temple in Thanjavur, or the wonderful temple in Gangaikonda Colapuram which are standing testimonials of the excellence of Tamil art and architecture and also the religious fervor of the kings who built them. King Rajaraja who established the mighty Cola empire and built the Great Temple in Thanjavur as an offering to God referred himself as "Siva Pada Sekharan i.e the one whose head is adorned by the feet of Lord Siva"

The earliest reference to the piety of a king is contained in Paripādal , a caṅkam work.In the poem no 19, composed on "Cevvēl"(Murukan) the Pandiyar King goes round the hill of Tirupparankunram along with his attendants etc.,

Cilappatikaram talks of the Goddess of Madurai – Maturapati- as the family deity of Pandiya kings. Going by the description given by Poet Ilango,Prof.A.S.Gnana sambandam interprets that

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45 Paripadal: Poem 19:85-95
Maturapati- is none other than Goddess Minakshi, the presiding deity of Madurai.\textsuperscript{46}

Cola king Kōc ceṅkanan of fifth century A.D. constructed 70 temples for Siva and one for Vishnu.\textsuperscript{47}
Pallava King Simhavaranm III, known in Saiva world as Aiyatikal Katavar kon, undertook pilgrimage of Siva sthalas and composed poems in Venpa metre which are contained in “Kshetra Venpa” forming part of Eleventh Tirumurai. Only 24 poems on 23 Kshetras are available now.
Pallava King Mahendra Varman pioneered construction of temples in stone. He constructed cave temples for Siva in Siyamangalam, Pallavaram, vallam, Talavanur, Tirukkazhukkunram, and Tiruchirappalli and a mantapam in Kanci Ekambareswarar temple. Rajasimhan(685-720 A.D.) constructed Kailasanathar temple and Airavateswarar temple in Kancipuram and referred himself as “Siva Cutamani” Sri.Sankara Bhaktan”. Parameswaran II (720-725) converted the temple at Tiruvatikai as a stone temple. Inscriptions of Pallava Mallan (725-790), Nandi Varman (790-840) and Nandi Varman II (840-865) speak of the various endowments made by them to various temples in Tamil Nadu.\textsuperscript{48}

Cola Kings of the Vijayalaya lineage claimed Nataraja of Citamparam as their family deity and all the important

\textsuperscript{46} GNANASAMBANDAN.A.S.: Periya puranam-Or ayvu: p115
\textsuperscript{47} ibid: p129
\textsuperscript{48} RAJAMANI KKKANAR:DR.M.: Periya Purana Arayci: pp76-81
events/functions of their families, including their coronation were held in the Citamparam temple.

All the kings in this lineage constructed Siva temples. Parantaka I, is credited with covering the roof of Citsabai in Citamparam with gold.49

Rajaraja I built the Great Temple at Thanjavur between A.D 1003-1010.50 He donated enormous amount of gold, bronze images, irrigated lands etc. The temple was given liberal endowments from many members of Rajaraja’s family and his senior officials, chieftains etc., He appointed 400 Patiyilar, for performing, dance, drama and musical programmes in the temple and 50 oduvars for reciting Tiruppadiyam(Devaram) in the temple. In addition, he also constructed, Rajarajeswaram in Jaffna(Srilanka), Arincayeswaram in Tondaimandalam, Arulmozhideveswaram in Palaiyarai, Kshetrapalar temple in Tiruvalanculi, and a Siva temple in the place called Cempiyan madevi.

Rajendra I constructed the wonderful Siva temple in Gangai kondai colapuram .Ulaga Mahadevi, Royal consort of Rajaraja and King Rajadiraja I built two temples, Kulottunga I built five temples and Vikrama Cola constructed three temples. Cempiyan Madevi, the queen of Kandaraditya converted five temples as stone temples and made liberal endowments to more than 20 temples.51

49 RAJAMANICKANAR.Dr.M. Periyapurana Arayci::pp90-91
50 PILLALI SOMASUNDARAM.J.M: The Great Temple at Tanjore:p.17
51 RAJAMANICKANAR.Dr.M. Periyapurana Arayci::pp91-92
The temple inscriptions also reveal the fact that creating endowments in temples was not confined to the kings. The relatives of kings, their senior officials, courtiers and devout common folk and also created endowments.

All sections of the society, from the common individual, through the rich merchant to the king patronized the temple commensurate with their ability.\(^{52}\) Large village grants were also made to the temple, for celebrating festivals, meeting the establishment charges and for daily services.\(^{53}\)

The enormous wealth so accumulated was carefully administered by the concerned authority generation after generation in such a manner that each generation left to its successor, a richer heritage by means of fresh accumulation.\(^{54}\) This unparalleled achievement was the result of the conviction people had that stealing temple property is the worst sin inviting calamity on their families. It invited the most stringent punishment from the courts of law under Cola Governments.

The kings not only gave liberal endowments to the temples but ensured proper functioning of the temples by effective supervision and control over them.

\(^{52}\) PONNUAMY.S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur:p47
\(^{53}\) Ibid p.52
\(^{54}\) SASTRI.K.A.NILAKANTA: The Colas:pp 652-653
The examples of searching periodical inquests by the highest officers of the central government, sometimes by the king himself, into the management and affairs of the temples, that are recorded in the inscriptions, show that the Cola government realized the increasing social importance of the role of the temple and the need for the exercise of a steady and vigilant control on the business side of its affairs.\textsuperscript{55}

The inscriptions by way of recording the administrative procedures regarding the execution of the pious activities of the donors reveal the wealth of the temple, structure of the temple administration, details regarding its establishment, its connections with the local village assembly and the management of its properties.\textsuperscript{56}.

The administrative procedures adopted by the temple were well organized and from large grants down to humble donations they were scrupulously followed.\textsuperscript{57}

After the Cola kings we find the Nayak kings of the Vijayanagar dynasty making liberal donations and other forms of contribution to the temples of Tamilnadu. The stone paved, covered, outside prakaras with larger than-life size sculptures, towering Rajagopuras, 100 and 1000 pillared mandapams were added by them to the

\textsuperscript{55} ibid:p 654
\textsuperscript{56} \textsuperscript{56} PONNUSAMY.S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur pp53-54
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid:p57
existing structures in the temples. The Nayak kings and their representatives went on pilgrimage to popular temples also.

The fact that the fall of various ruling dynasties and emergence of new dynasties did not affect the importance or functions of temples in Tamilnadu proves that more than the kings, the people and the society took care of the maintenance of the temples. This is further confirmed by the fact that even the dark age of the history of Tamilnadu, namely the period of rule of Kalabhra kings did not very much affect the importance or the fortune of the temples.

3. 5 Talapurānam/ Māhātmyam confined to temples in Tamilnadu

Talapuranam and Mahatmyam are independent genre of literature in their respective language literatures. They can not be classified as Kavyas or Puranas as they do not conform to the definitions of these two genres of literature given by great grammarians of Sanskrit and Tamil. There were compelling reasons for emergence of these two genres, which we will see later. In Tamil, the Kappiya Kalam- Age of Kavyas- ends in the 11th-12th century with the creation of the great epics Periyapuranam and Kamba Ramayanam. The first Talapuranam of Tamil, Koyil Puranam was written by Umapati Sivam in the 14th Century. From then on the long period of 600 years, the major literary outpouring in Tamil has been only Talapuranas. This period can be termed as”Talapurānam Era” in Tamil literature. This resulted in the enrichment of the style,
literary value and contents of Talapuranas, which were written by poets one after another. Altogether we have got around 400 Talapuranas in Tamil. During this period Tamil teaching and learning was confined to Puranas and Talapuranas.

Public recitation and lectures, in Tamil by Tamil scholars, were only of Puranas and Talapuranas. These were conducted in temples. These two were encyclopedic in nature.

The temple in South India is perhaps the only ancient religious institution that has retained its importance and popularity down through the ages. Patronised by royalty and the public, it has preserved age-old traditions around it and fostered arts of different kinds in a remarkably noble way. Most temples contain valuable inscriptions that serve as the most authentic source for reconstructing the ancient history of the land. During the medieval period, the South Indian temple was the hub of the socio-religious life of the people and served as the centre of the activities of the village community. It also played a considerable role in the economic activity of the people and the fostering of administrative institutions. 58

The temple came to fill up the void created after the decline of powerful kingdoms. Almost every town and village had an ancient temple with a history of a number of centuries. We have already

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58 PONNU SAMY.S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur:p1
seen in chapter I⁵⁹ that there were more than 500 famous temples of Tamilnadu, Campantar has mentioned in his padigams and most of them continue to have their pujas performed even today. Ancient temples possess ancient local legends and the references are found in early literature. They have assumed fresh significance and value over the course of time. Numerous stories, symbolic of the divine merit were added from time to time. Local residents and the temple priests had knowledge about them. These legends and traditions connected with the place and the temple were initially oral, passed on from generation to generation.

The Bhakti movement connected with the temple forms part of a large movement that covered the whole of Tamilnadu was heralded by the advent of the authors of the Tevaram, the saints Campantar, Appar and Cuntarar. They were the timely products of an era, covered roughly by two centuries, which witnessed a silent but fervent revolution that elbowed out the heterodox systems like those of Buddhism and Jainism⁶⁰

The trio treaded new path by visiting and worshipping at different shrines. This enlarged its scope and turned into religious tour(tirtha yatra) or pilgrimage taken up by the people of other parts of the country also.

Pilgrimages to holy places is a tradition prevalent from ages much before the days of Itihasas and it became more common than ever

⁵⁹ Chapter I of this thesis: p 12
⁶⁰ PONNUAMY.S: Sri Thyagaraja Temple Thiruvarur: p 11
before during the Vijayanagar rule. They were also attended by much risk of the pilgrims being robbed on the way, even though they traveled in company. The Rayas themselves and their numerous feudatories set the example by their frequent pilgrimages and it was followed extensively by the lesser people who were by no means so well off. These royal visits lessened or completely wiped out highway robbery. The pilgrims traversed long distances and many did it on foot for greater merit. They were helped by the rest houses and prapas, places where water and diluted butter-milk with condiments were supplied free to refresh travelers; these places were located at relatively short intervals on the route and endowed by charitable persons.\(^{61}\)

Faced with the chaos of Muslim conquest many devout Hindus were making the pilgrimage to Citamparam and other places in the south. Inscriptions of the period describe donations of Bengal pilgrims for the upkeep of the Citamparam temple.

According to the most natural version of the story, the priests of Citamparam once made up a special priestly community living in Bengal called the ‘Muvayiravar’ or the ‘Three Thousand’ and they were invited by King Hiranya Varman to accompany him to Citamparam\(^ {62}\). There is another version of the story about the origin

\(^{61}\) SASTRI.K.A.NILAKANTA: Development of religion in South India:p132

\(^{62}\) PAUL.YOUNGER: The Home of Dancing Sivan:p.175
of the priests, stating that the priests are from Antarvedi region of north central India between the Ganges and Yamuna rivers.\(^6^3\)

There are evidences of Saivism of Tamilnadu having live contact with Saivism in the rest of India. It is believed that Rajendra I imported Saivas from the banks of the Ganges and established them in various places in the Cola country.\(^6^4\) The migration of Saivas of various sects such as Pasupatas, Kalamukhas, Kapalikas or Brahmins from North to Tamilnadu started much before Rajaraja's time, but became marked during the period of Cola kings and continued till late cola times as well. Campantar in one of his poems says that Brahmins of high caliber and popularity hailing from the land of Ganges reside in Cirkali

"Gangai Nadu uyar kirti maraiyavar Kazhi Nannagare"

..."\(^6^5\)

Thus we find that even during the period of Campantar, i.e. 630-650 A.D Brahmins who were experts in Siva worship had migrated to Tamilnadu from north.

One *Trilocana Sivacariyar* has written a book on Saiva temple worship. There he has stated that King Rajendra went to the banks

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\(^6^3\) ibid:p175.
\(^6^4\) SASTRI.K.A.NILAKANTA: The Colas:p643
\(^6^5\) CAMPANTAR:Tirumurai:2:96.5
of Ganges and brought sivacaryas from there and settled them in South.

_Aghora Sivacarya_, who lived during the time of Rajaraja II, in his book _Aghora Sivacarya Paddhati_ has mentioned that many sivacaryas had come from Arya desa, Gauda Desa and Lada Desa and settled in Tamilnadu. He also says that many of those who settled like that were Raja Gurus of many Cola kings. It is also observed that King Rajendra I, has ordered that only the Sivacaryas hailing from Arya Desa, Gauda Desa and Madhya Desa could be appointed as Civācārya of Tanjore Big temple.66

The monasteries (mathas), other than the Tamil Saiva Mathas, kept up wider external contacts and prided themselves on their connection with Aryadesam, Benares, or even, Kashmir and the Golaki matha, had also a considerable following in the South. Epigraphy and tradition alike point to a fairly large immigration of Bhattas from Northern India to important religious centres in the South, particularly to Srirangam; immigrants from Kasimiradesam are specially mentioned in Srirangam besides other places in Chingleput and Ramnad districts. Generally, the mathas which maintained these external contacts belonged to the various schools of Pasupatas, Kapalikas and so on.67 The Kalamukhas were widespread in South India in the Ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries.68

66 NAGASAMI.Dr.Ra: Colmalai:p173
67 SASTRI.K.A.NILAKANTA: The Colas:p651
68 SASTRI.K.A.NILAKANTA: The Colas:p648
This connection between the north and Tamilnadu for more than ten centuries caused a steady stream of pilgrims from north evincing keen interest in the temples in Tamilnadu and visiting them. They were eager to know the traditions connected with the temples they visit. Their quest for knowledge was satisfied by the temple priests and the local people who narrated the traditions of the temple to them to impress upon them the greatness of the Murtti, Talam, Tirttam and Sthala vriksham of the place.

After the compilation of various oral traditions into various puranas was completed it was found that the puranas had become extremely popular among people becoming an inseparable part of their socio religious life. Then the task of compiling popular local traditions into various Mahatmyams and Talapuranas was undertaken.

The Mahatmyams, which were composed in Sanskrit, were meant for people who had migrated from North and settled in South and also to serve as a guide to the pilgrims from North. This was done in Tamil, as Talapuranas for Tamil speaking pilgrims.

The Mahatmyams discuss in detail the greatness of not only the Talam, but also the Murtti and Tirttam of that Talam. The concept of Murtti, Talam and Tirttam is essentially of Tamil origin. Hence we have to conclude that the Mahatmyams on the different places in Tamilnadu have been obviously written in Tamilnadu.
It is also observed that the majority of Mahatmyams pertain to Tamilnadu and a few relate to North. The difference between the two is that the Mahatmyams relating to north are Tirtha Mahatmyams, whereas the Mahatmyams pertaining to Tamilnadu are Kshetra Mahatmyams.

We also find that almost all the Talapuranams pertain to Talams in Tamilnadu for the reasons
A) Tamilnadu alone had a number of Talams with rich traditions.

B) Temples in Tamilnadu enjoyed supreme position in the society as the hub of all socioeconomic and religious activities of the local population.

C) They were very rich possessing huge movable and immovable assets.

D) There were many people who depended very much on the temples for their livelihood.

E) After the decline of powerful kingdoms whose kings were patrons of poets and other learned persons, the poets looked up to the affluent local landlords for patronage. These people engaged the poets to compose Talapuranam/Mahatmyam on the temple in their village/town in return of the patronage received by them. This was done by them as one form of service to God, Sivadharmam.
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3.6 Tamil Traditions

Tamilnadu has got very rich and voluminous traditions. There are quite a few powerful traditions.

I. One tradition associates five sthalas with the five elements of nature calling them Panca bhūta kṣetrās. Kañcipuram is associated with Prithvi (Earth), Tiruvanaikka with Ap (Water), Tiruvannamalai with Tevyu (Fire), Tirukkalatti (Sri Kalahasti) with Vāyu (Air), and Chidambaram with Ākāśa (Space).

II. Another tradition lists out eight acts of valour performed by Siva and associates them with eight sthalas where they are stated as performed. These sthalas are commonly known as Virattānām or Virattam (Tamil idiom for Vīra sthanam) and collectively known as Atta virattam (eight Virattams).

They are
1. Tiruvatikai: Siva conducted Tripura Dahanam, (Destroying the three cities by burning them) in this place. He is known as Tripurantaka
2. Tiruk Katavur: For the sake of Markandeya, Siva killed Yama (Kala samharam), the Lord of death. He is known as Kala samhara murtti.
3. Tiruk Kantiyur: Siva demolished the pride of Brahma by removing his fifth head. He is known as Brahma sirak kantiswarar.
4. Tiruk kurukkai: Siva performed \textit{Kama Dahanam} in this place, by reducing \textit{Manmatha} to ashes. Siva is known as \textit{Kamari, kamantaka}, on account of this deed. There is a place near the temple called as \textit{Vibhuti k kuttai (pond of holy ashes)} where \textit{KamaDahanam} is reported to have taken place. The speciality of this pond is that the sand available here is like the holy ash Vibhuti.

5. Tiruk kovalur: Siva destroyed the demon Antaka in this place. He is known as \textit{Antakantan, Antakasura Samhara murtti.}

6. Tirup pariyalur: Siva performed \textit{Daksha Samharam} at the hands of \textit{Virabhadra} in this place. He is known as \textit{Daksha Samhara murtti.}

7. Valuvur: Siva performed \textit{Gaja Samhara}, (Killing the wild elephant, emanating from the \textit{Abhichara yaga} performed by Rishis of Daruka forest). He is known as Gajasamhara murtti.

8. Tiru virkuti: Siva performed \textit{Jalandhasura Samhara} in this place. He is known as \textit{Jalandhara vadhamurtti.}

This tradition is recorded in Tirumurai hymns.

III. There is a tradition connected with the tradition of Thyagaraja of Tiruvarur. It is called \textit{Saptavitan\kka} tradition. When king Mucukunda wanted to take the idol of Thyagaraja from Indra, Indra created six look alikes and asked the king to take the original one from among them. With the grace of Thyagaraja, king mucukunda located the original idol, took it and installed it in Tiruvarur. Indra
gave the other look alikes also to Mucukunda and the king installed them in six places. All the seven places are collectively known as Sapta vitanka ksetras. The idols in these temples are called Vitankar and each one is credited with a particular variety of dance. They are:

1. Tiruvārur: The name of the Vitankar is Vidivitankar. He performs Ajapa Natanam: Dancing like the chest(of Vishnu) moving up and down, and forward and backward.

2. Tirunallāru: The name of the Vitankar is Nahavitankar. He performs Unmatta Natanam: Dancing like a mad man.

3. Tiru Nagai kārōnam(Nagappattinam) : The name of the Vitankar is Sundaravitankar. He performs Paravara taranga Natanam: Dancing like the waves of the sea.

4. Tirukkarayil: The name of the Vitankar is Adivitankar. He performs Kukkuta Natanam: Dancing like a Cock.

5. Tirukkolili ( Tirukkuvalai) : The name of the Vitankar is Avani vitankar. He performs Bhrnga Natanam: Dancing like a bee, which circles in a flower.

6. Tiruvāymūr : The name of the Vitankar is Nilavitankar. He performs Kamala Natanam: Dancing like a lotus, which trembles in breeze.

7. Tirumaraikkadu(Vedaranyam) : The name of the Vitankar is Bhuvanivitankar. He performs Hamsapada Natanam: Dancing with the gait of a swan.

IV. There is a tradition of five Sabhas (Dancing Halls) of Nataraja. They are:

1. Kanaka Sabha (Golden Hall) in Chidambaram
2. Rajata Sabha (Silver Hall) in Madurai.
3. Tamra Sabha (Copper Hall) in Tirunelveli.
4. Chitra Sabha in Tirukkuram
5. Ratna Sabha in Tiruvalankatu

Tradition also states that there are five sabhas (Dancing halls) of Nataraja in Chidambaram temple itself. They are Cit Sabha, Kanaka Sabha, Deva Sabha, Nritta Sabha and Raja Sabha.

V. There is a tradition of Arupatai veetu or six military camps of Muruga. They have been mentioned in Tiru Murukarru p padai a literary work of Cankam period. It also is included in eleventh Tirumurai. They are, Tirupparan Kunram, Tiruc Ciralaivav (Tiruccentur) Tiruvavin Kudi (Palani), Tiruvendarakam (Swamimalai), Kunru Toratal (any temple of Muruga on a hillock) and Pal mutir colai.

VI. There are some very powerful traditions of later periods like, Navagraha Kshetras, Nava Tiruppati etc.

3.7 Reliability of Talapuranams:

Even those who believe Puranas as true, hesitate when it comes to Sthalapuranas. On the contrary, we find that the stories found in Sthalapuranas are corroborated by literary evidences. Kanchi p puranam narrates the story of Uma performing puja to a lingam made of sand with her own hand, Lord Siva causing a flash flood,
scared Uma embracing the lingam and Lord Siva appearing and blessing her. This is corroborated in Thevaram.  

Thiruvidaimarudur Talapuranam states that bathing on Tai p pusam day is very auspicious, which finds its corroboration in the poems of both Campantar and Appar.

The Talapuranam of Tiru Anai k ka narrates the story of spider and elephant performing puja to siva in that place and the spider being born as Ko c cenkat cholan in the next birth which finds its corroboration in Appar’s poem.

The stories in Talapuranas being corroborated by earlier literary evidences in the poems of Campantar, Appar and Cuntarar, whose credibility can not be doubted lend a high degree of authenticity to Talapuranas.

Appar in his decades on Tiru k kurukkai Virattam in Fourth Tirumurai narrates twelve stories relating to same number of places (Talam) which later on find a place in respective Talapuranas.

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69. Tevara Tiru p patikankal Ed.A.S.Gnanasambandan 1999: 7857,7848-7856
70. Ibid : 342,2074,5363
71. Ibid : 4637-
72. Ganapati, Ra. Deivathin Kural Part-II(Speeches of H H Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi:pp730-734
73. Tevara Tiru p patikankal Ed.A.S.Gnanasambandan 1999 : 4634-4645-
Campantar in the decad on Tiru p patiri p puliyur in the first stanza opens with "Munna ninra mu dakkam muyarkarul ceitu" recording the tradition of Sage Mankanar, on the curse of sage Tumappar, becoming a lame rabbit, wandering for centuries in many forests, reaching Patalivanam 'Patiri p puliyur, being hounded by a hound, being scared, entering the hole in the base of the Patiri tree, getting back his old form on account of the contact with the holy tree.\textsuperscript{74}

Appar’s Tiru t tandagam no 70 in Sixth tirumurai is titled Ksetra k Kovai Tiru t tandagam lists about hundred talams and its stanzas conclude that in all these talams we can see the Lord of Kailasa

"Kayilaya natanaiye Kanalame". "ஊல்லையை நீண்டாயிரே கனல்அமே"

The next Tiru t tandagam is titled "Ataivu t tiruttandagam and here also Appar lists a number of Talams and confirms that all these talams are equally beneficial to devotees worshiping there. The second stanza lists out the traditions of Siva’s eight acts of valour in eight Virattanam, places of valour.

Likewise some Talapuranas are interconnected as there is a logical follow up of incidents/stories in them.

Once Siva and Uma were playing dice game and during the course of play a misunderstanding cropped up between them. Siva in a fit of anger cursed Uma to be born as a cow and wander on earth.

\textsuperscript{74} CAMPANTAR:Tirumurai II : Decad:121:1
Uma descended on earth as cow and her brother Vishnu, accompanied her as cowherd.

The place where both came as a cow and cowherd is Terazhundur and the presiding deity in the temple is known as Gosakhan. The nearby villages where the cow grazed grass are named Pillur-Pil is the corrupted form of Pul meaning grass, Mekkirimangalam meaning “Grazing place” and Angur meaning Cow’s place. One day while the cow was grazing, its hoof hit a stone which turned out to be a lingam. That place is called Tiru k kulambiyanam-Kulambu means hoof. The cow got scared. Now Vishnu wanted this ordeal of his sister to come to an end and he prayed to Siva.

Siva also had cooled down by this time. He told Vishnu to bathe the cow in Cauvery telling that it will regain its original form to become Uma. After that he will marry her once again. Vishnu bathed the cow in Cauvery. The place is called Tiru Aa Aduturai — meaning The bathing ghat visited by Cow.

Uma now stayed in a nearby place Tiru t turutti and Siva came to marry her. Vishnu and a rishi-foster father of Uma in this birth received Siva. This place is Ethir kol Padi — Receiving place. Siva performed preliminary homa/Yaga before the marriage. This place is Velvi k kudi — Velvi is Yaga. Palikai was sown. This place is Kuru mulai p pali. and the marriage was celebrated. This place is called Tirumanan ceri- Tirumanam means marriage. The inter connectivity of the stories and the geographical corroboration through the names of relevant places confirm the authenticity of the Talapuranas of all these places.
There are similar interconnectivity in traditions recorded in Talapuranas of many temples in and around Kumbakonam and many more places\textsuperscript{75}

There is a tradition of legitimizing religious literature in Tamilnadu: not only religious, but all literature needed legitimization. In Cankam era, it was achieved by taking them to the court of the ruler or to the Cankam- an assembly of scholars. In the case of Tiruvacakam or Tirumurai, it came from their association with Citamparam.\textsuperscript{76}

In the case of Mahatmyams, legitimization was sought to be achieved by tracing their root to one or more of the Mahapuranas, the content being related to a conversation between Sanatkumara and some rishis in the forest of Naimisa, retold by Suta Lomaharsha, forming part of a conversation between Siva and Parvati etc.

In the case of Talapuranas, legitimization is sought to be achieved by declaring that to be Tamil re-creation of a Mahatmya originally written in Sanskrit.

\textsuperscript{75} Ganapati, Ra. Deivathin Kural Part-II(Speeches of H H Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi:pp735-752
\textsuperscript{76} PAUL YOUNGER: The Home of Dancing Sivan:p 160
3.8 Talapuranam/Mahatmyam — their social relevance

Talapuranas are highly useful to know many historical facts, local culture and local customs. If we take a number of Talapuranams together and analyse them, they may be more useful in understanding our history and culture than even the 18 Puranas and Upapuranas. The Talapuranas supplement one another and also fill up the gap in the narration found in Puranas and Upapuranas. In fact knowledge of customs and traditions help us in understanding history from proper perspective.

In offering elucidation on various aspects of Dharma also, Talapuranas do not lag behind Puranas and Upapuranas. In fact they contain more minute details of this in good number than Puranas and Upapuranas.\textsuperscript{77} Talapuranas record the faiths, beliefs, aspirations and value systems of people in those times. Talpuranam/Mahatmyam contain the songs in praise of deities which are being recited by devotees for a number of centuries.

Some of the Talapuranas contain the best of Tamil literary traditions and high standard of literary creative genius like Kanci puranam, Tanikai puranam, Tiruvilaiyadal Puranam etc.

It was the time when mighty kings had left the scene. “The morale of the people of Tamilnadu was at the lowest ebb after the decline of Cola Empire. The decline of Cola empire brought to an end the

\textsuperscript{77} Ganapati, Ra. Deivathin Kural Part-II(Speeches of H H Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi:pp728-756
era of peace, stability and prosperity They were deprived of their basic rights, wealth and livelihood. They felt hopeless and helpless in the absence of an understanding and protective king. The task ahead was to give them confidence and energise them, make them strong, vibrant and energetic human beings. This great and noble task was successfully carried out and the goal was achieved by Puranas and Talapuranams. These two convinced the depressed people that the land they live on is no ordinary barren land; It is punya bhumi; the tank in their neighbourhood is not an insignificant pool of water; It is where Devas had bathed; With some efforts they too can beget happiness and energy. By worshiping God, His grace will flow to them. Puranas and Talapuranas gave them the much needed confidence. Convinced of the greatness of the temples nearby, people built them bigger and the temple became the hub of all their activities. People forgot their miseries. Life was filled with happiness. The diseases and miseries vanished. People became highly motivated. This is no mean achievement."^{78}

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^{78} MEENAKSHISUNDARAN, D.R.T.P: Tiruvilaiyatal purana Munnurai:p24-25