Chapter :4

Mahatmyam

In the previous chapters we discussed the evolution of Puranas and Mahatmyams in Sanskrit and the Talapuranams in Tamil. We also interalia dwelt upon the evolution of temples as an institution and also temple worship which became the bedrock of Bhakti movement. We also discussed the features of Mahatmyams and Talapuranams, the process of their evolution and their social relevance. In this chapter, we will discuss in detail some of the Mahatmyams to have an objective appreciation of their structure, content and their special features.

4.1 Discussion on Chidambara Mahatmyam

At first, we will take up Chidambara Mahatmyam. Koyil Puranaam, authored by Umapati Civan in the 14th century is the first Talapuranam in Tamil and all the subsequent Talapuranams follow the pattern, structure and features of this work. Umapati declares that his work is based on the Chidambara Mahatmyam. Therefore, a study of Chidambara Mahatmyam is considered essential in order to understand the Mahatmyam literature better. Therefore, we are taking up the study of Chidambara Mahatmyam at first.
Structure

Chidambara Mahatmyam is considered to be the earliest work of the Mahatmyams.” It was originally found in palm leaves and written in grantha characters. The purport of this manuscript is noticed in the Mackenzie Collection as follows:-

“Legend of the celebrated temple of Chidambaresvara reputed site of the hermitage of Vyagrapada, an inspired grammarian, and of Patanjali, an incarnation of the serpent, Sesha and first teacher of the Yoga; in later times, it is celebrated as the final residence of Manika Vasagar and other characters of note in the traditions of the south; the legend is said to belong to the Skanda Puranas”

Like all Mahatmyams, the author’s name is not known. Its date can be fixed as 12th or 13th Century. It is composed in 26 chapters (Adhyaya).

Content

Adhyaya 1 discusses the greatness of the sages of Naimisha forest and on their request sage Suta narrating to them the greatness of Chidambaram.

1 AIYER V.G.RAMAKRISHNA: The Economy of a South Indian Temple; pp33-34
2 PAUL YOUNGER; The home of dancing Sivan; p 176
Adhyaya 2 contains the narration of the greatness of Chidambaram, originally narrated by Lord Siva to Nandideva and retold by Sage Suta to the sages of Naimisa forest.

Adhyaya 3 discusses the greatness of the Talam and Murtti of Chidambaram

Adhyaya 4 discusses the greatness of the Tirttam in Chidambaram.

Adhyaya 5 discusses the greatness of Tillai Muvayiravar/Tri-sahasra Munivar.

Adhyaya 6 narrates the birth of Madhyandini Maharishi and his reaching Chidambaram to practice Siva puja which is considered far superior to all forms of Tapas and Chidambaram is considered most suitable place to perform Siva puja for God realisation.

Adhyaya 7 narrates the story of Asura Valkali. Valkali, the Asura king challenges Indra and defeats him in a battle. Indra approaches Mahavishnu to find ways of recovering his lost kingdom. Vishnu tells Indra that Valkali has the blessings of Siva and hence to defeat him, Indra has to do penance to please Lord Siva in a holy place and the most appropriate place for that purpose is Chidambaram. Indra reaches and stays in Chidambaram performing penance to please Siva. As a result of this Indra regains his lost kingdom. This is the greatness of the Kshetram.
Adhyaya 8 narrates the story of Pulkasa, the sinner, who is relieved of the effects of his sins, by staying in Chidambaram and having Darsan of Chit Sabha.

Adhyaya 9 narrates the story of sage Madhyandini who prays to Lord Siva and gets the claws of a tiger to enable him to climb flowering trees to pick flowers for Siva Puja, and tiger’s powerful eyes that can spot flowers on trees at the dark of night so that they can be plucked before the bees could touch them. This earns him the name of Vyaghrapada or “the tiger footed”.

Adhyaya 10 narrates the birth of Vyaghrapada’s son Upamanyu. Upamanyu is brought up for a while by Sage Vasishta and Arundhati feeding the child with the milk of celestial cow Kamadhenu When the child is restored to Vyaghrapada and the child cries for milk, Vyaghrapada seeks Lord Siva’s help. Lord Siva orders placing the ocean of milk for the child to drink milk from.

Adhyaya 11 contains discussion between Adisesha and Mahavishnu on Ananda tandava Darsana of Siva by Mahavishnu.

Adhyaya 12 narrates Siva assuming the form of Bhikshatana and Mahavishnu assuming the form of Mohini, an enchanting damsel, both reaching Devadaru forest; the wives of rishis of Devadaru forest getting infatuated with Bhikshatana and going after Him.
Adhyaya 13 narrates the rishis of Devadaru forest losing themselves to the enchanting beauty of Mohini; after recovering from the infatuation getting enraged over Bhikshatana enchanting their wives, decide to punish Him; perform Abhicara sacrifice from which a fierce tiger, a dangerous snake and a powerful demon appear. Lord Siva tore the tiger and wore its skin on himself, wound the snake around his wrist as an ornament and stood on the demon and danced. The frustrated rishis collected the sacrificial fire and hurled it on Siva who received it and held it in his palm. At the height of frustration the rishis collectively chanted all the Mahamantras acquired by them and used them against the Lord, who received all the Mantras, made them into anklets wore them on his feet and performed the dance of bliss-Ananda tandava. While performing Ananda Tandava Siva invited Uma to join him and witness the Dance. He gave Darsan of Tandava to all rishis Devas and others. This story was narrated by Maha Vishnu to Adisesha.

Adhyaya 14 narrates the penance performed by Adisesha to have Tandava Darsan of Siva and Siva appearing before him very much pleased.

Adhyaya 15 contains Siva’s renaming Adisesha as Patanjali and advising him to visit Tillaivanam-Chidambaram, join Vyaghrapada and wait for the auspicious date and see Ananda Tandava there.
Adhyaya 16 narrates the story of Patanjali meeting Vyaghrapada and both of them staying there waiting to have darsan of Ananda Tandava.

Adhyaya 17 gives a vivid description of the Ananda Tandava of the lord which Patanjali and Vyaghrapada along with Trisahasra muni were blessed to witness.

Adhyaya 18 contains the prayer of Patanjali and Vyaghrapada to the Lord, His blessings and description of Chidambaram.

Adhyaya 19 narrates the story of Brahma performing a Yaga in Antarvedi, wherein he finds that Indra and other Devas were not coming to that Yaga to accept the offerings (havirbhaga) meant for them. Brahma searches for them and finds all of them in Chidambaram immersed in the bliss of Ananda Tandava of Lord Nataraja witnessed by them and that they were uninterested in Yaga and the offerings (havirbhaga). Vyaghrapada solves the problem and sends the devas to attend the yaga and accept havirbhaga. He also sends Trisahasra munis to complete the yaga.

Adhyaya 20 narrates the story of Simhavarman.

Adhyaya 21 narrates the story of Simhavarman reaching Tillai forest.

Adhyaya 22 narrates the story of Simhavarman getting the name of Hiranyavarman.
Adhyaya 23 narrates the story of Hiranyakarman living in Chidambaram along with Vyaghrapada.

Adhyaya 24 narrates the story of Vasishtha taking Hiranyakarman to Gowda Desa.

Adhyaya 25 narrates the story of Hiranyakarman’s coronation and consecration of a newly built temple by Vyaghrapada.

Adhyaya 26 recounts the details of festivals celebrated in Chidambaram as told by Vyaghrapada to Hiranyakarman.

Thus we find that the Mahatmyam contains three episodes i.e Episode of Vyaghrapada, Episode of Patanjali and Episode of Hiranyakarman.

**Special Features**

The fact that this Mahatmyam contains three separate chapters on the greatness of Talam, Murtti and Tirttam of Chidambaram proves that the place of origin of the Mahatmyam is not outside Tamilnadu and the author is a staunch follower of the Tamil tradition of Murtti, Talam, Tirttam.

One noteworthy feature of the Mahatmyam is that it does not claim to be part of any other Purana. The structure of the Mahatmyam is less complicated in comparison to later date mahatmyams. It contains
anecdotes of two sages who worshipped here, i.e Sage Vyaghrapada, and Sage Patanjali and of one king Hiranyavarman. The anecdote about the deity is only one that of performing ananda tandava. The simple structure is a proof of its antiquity. It however has all the components which have been identified as essential by authors of later day Mahatmyams. It talks of the murtti, talam and tirttam of the place, It narrates anecdotes of the presiding deity specially relating to the talam and not a general one.

The Adhyaya 19, wherein Brahma performs a sacrifice in Antarvedi, and his finding Indra and other Devas not appearing and accepting the offering (havirbhaga) meant for them may be interpreted as indicating Vedic religion losing its popular appeal and the path of devotion gaining in popularity in the post-vedic period.

The three traditions of Hinduism, namely devotion (Bhakti) Karma (Vaidika) and Asceticism (Tapas) are represented by the three episodes of Patanjali, Vyaghrapada and Deva daru forest.

The tradition relating to Vyaghrapada and Patanjali “belongs to the earliest period of South Indian tradition and they be taken to refer to the earliest period of the establishment of the brahmanical system in south India. The name Vyaghrapada is mentioned in the rig Veda and the story of Vyaghrapada is anterior to that of Patanjali.”

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3 AIYER V.G.RAMAKRISHNA: The Economy of a South Indian Temple; p 34
The story of the struggle between Siva and the Rishis may be taken to refer to some early conflict between the ritualists and the devout. The Rishis may be the adherents of the Purva Mimamsa school founded by Jaimini. It was to convince them of the limited power of their orthodox sacrifices Siva appeared as" Bhikshatana Murti " . The symbolism of the other parts of the story is sought to be explained in this way. Siva subdues and wraps round him the tiger-like fury of human passion. The malice of mankind in the form of a snake is worn by Siva as his necklace, and the black dwarf writhing under the tip of His toe is the monster of a human depravity."  

While Patanjali and Vyaghrapada episodes represent asceticism accepting the supremacy of devotion, Deva Daru Forest episode narrates the futility of the path of ritualism and the ritualists getting disenchanted and taking up the path of devotion. The message contained in this Mahatmyam is that Devotion alone will get us closer to God. The path of ritualism and asceticism devoid of devotion, lead us nowhere and total surrender and devotion is the only way of God realization.

The Festivals

This Mahatmyam is unique as it narrates the festivals celebrated in the temple. It describes the Mahotsavam celebrated for 27 days in the Tamil month of Ani, with the car festival (Rathotsavam) of Nataraja on the day with the star Puram, Float festival in the Tamil month of

\[ ^4 \text{ibid pp 34-35} \]
Adi, Pavitrotsavam in the Tamil month of Avani, Bhadrapadotsavam in the Tamil month of Purattaci, Kalyanotsavam in the Tamil month of Aippaci, Deepotsavam in the Tamil month of Karthikai, another Mahotsavam in the Tamil month of Markali and Mahanaivedyam in the Tamil month of Tai (Pushyam) on the day with the star Pucam, and Tirtta snana Mahotsavam on the ninth day of Mahotsavam in the Tamil month of Ani in the sea to the north east of Chidambaram.

It is observed that most of the festivals as listed out in the Mahatmyam are celebrated even today, which means uninterrupted observation of the temple traditions in Chidambaram, at least for the past 800 years, if not more.

**Triahasra Muni**

Another uniqueness of the Mahatmyam is that it discusses elaborately about the priests of the temple, Triahasra Muni, who are also known as Tillai Val Antanar, Tillai Muvayiravar, and more popularly as Dikshitars. No other Mahatmyam or Talapuranam discusses so elaborately about the priests of the temple, that too as a special class of persons as done here. One full chapter, Chapter 5, is exclusively devoted for discussing the greatness of Trisahasra Muni. This follows the chapter 3 discussing the greatness of the Talam and Murtti of Chidambaram and Chapter 4 discussing the greatness of the Tirttam in Chidambaram. It looks as if the author of the Mahatmyam believes that the greatness of the priests of Chidambaram is as significant as those of the Murtti, Talam, Tirttam of Chidambaram.
These priests are unique in the sense that they perform the rituals connected with the temple worship following the vedic traditions whereas in all other Siva temples in Tamilnadu, the priests follow the Agamic traditions.

Trisahasra Muni were specially brought from Antarvedi region of north India, as they were famous for their performance of vedic sacrifices.

The Mahatmya also stresses another uniqueness quoting the words of Nataraja that He is one among the Tri sahasra Muni. (three thousand 'Dikshitars' as they are commonly known). The Mahatmya also states that the present day Dikshitars are the descendents of the Trisahasra Muni witnessing the Ananda Tandava of Nataraja, along with Vyaghra pada, Patanjali, Vishnu, Parvati and other sages. They were taken to Antarvedi by Brahma for conducting Vedic sacrifices there.

The special treatment these priests have received in this Mahatmya and its Tamil version 'Koyil Puranam', has been necessitated by their being named first in the list of 63 devotees, popularly known as Nayanmar in Tiru tonta t tokai and Periya Puranam as Tillai Val Antanar.

When Cuntarar was ordered by Siva,(Lord Thyagaraja, the presiding deity of Tiruvarur) to compose a string of songs"Nirai Col Malai" on his devotees, he pleaded for His help and guidance. It is mentioned in Periya Puranam that the Lord Tyagaraja gave the opening phrase of
the composition as “Tillai Val Antanar” and ordered Cuntarar to compose hymns in continuation of the phrase given by Him.\(^5\)

Cuntarar followed the lead and composed *Tiru t tonta t tokai* with the opening line,

“*Tillai Val Antanar tam atiyarkkum atiyen*”

(தில்லை வள அனைத்து தோன்றியும் தோக்கி அதியும்)

The lord by giving the opening phrase reveals His mind that He gives Tillai Val Antanar, the first place among the comity of His devotees. Thus, the Tillai Val Antanar occupy the primary place among the devotees of Siva. The credentials of their knowledge of Vedas and vedangas and performance of Vedic sacrifice are well recorded in Periya Puranam.\(^6\) Therefore the elaborate treatment given in the Chidambara Mahatmyam to the Tillai Muvayiravar seems to be fully justified. We can, with reasonable confidence, infer that the reason for Tillai Val Antanar being given the primary place in the galaxy of 63 Caiva devotees, to be the powerful local oral tradition of Chidambaram, whereby they were owned by Lord Nataraja giving them a special place and his claiming to be one of them.

\(^5\) CEKKILAR:Periyapuranam:345
\(^6\) ibid:354
Indra leads the list of worshipers who have benefited by worshiping Nataraja. He worshiped Nataraja here and by His grace defeated Asura Valkali and recovered his lost kingdom Indraloka. The Mahatmya then details the story of Pulkasa an ordinary man who was committing all evil deeds including murder, banned by Dharma sastras. He is relieved of his sins by Darsan of Citsabha. Then King Simhavarma is relieved of his dreaded disease by bathing in Sivagang a Tirttam of Chidambaram. Thus, Devas, Kings and common men are equally benefited by devotion to the Lord of this Talam. Thus the above prototype of Mahatmyams given here becomes the standard structure for the other Mahatmyams written subsequently.

4. 2. Discussion on Sri Arunacala Mahatmyam

After the in-depth study of Cidambara Mahatmyam, which set the trend and gave the format for authors of Mahatmyams to adopt, we will be studying a few of the typical Mahatmyams to have a comprehensive understanding of this genre of literature. We have selected Arunacala Mahatmyam for two reasons, the first being the richness of traditions of this place, Tiruvannamalai, and the second being the availability of Mahatmyam as well as Talapuranam for this place.

Structure

Sri Arunacala Mahatmyam is claimed to have been extracted from five Puranas. The major portion is extracted from Skanda
Mahapuranam. This is arranged in two parts- Purva bhaga containing 13 Adhyayas (Chapters) and Uttara bhaga containing 24 Adhyayas(Chapters) all composed in 2060 slokas(Verses). The Madhya bhaga containing five Adhyayas (Chapters) composed in 292 slokas(verses) is extracted from Upamanyu Sivabhakta Vilasam. In addition to this seven chapters composed in 202 slokas is taken from Vidyaswara Samhita of Siva Mahapuranam, one chapter composed in 63 slokas is extracted from Kshetra khandam of Skandopa puranam and the concluding chapter composed in 42 slokas is extracted from Vidyasara samhita of Siva Mahapuranam. In all, this Mahatmyam contains 51 Adhyayas (Chapters) in 2659 slokas (Verses)

Content

The Purvabhaga contains the anecdotes of Lingodbhavam, Parvati performing penance in Kancipuram for getting relief from the sin of closing Siva’s eyes in play, Devi’s going from Kanchi to Arunacalam, slaying of the demon Mahishas, Devi uniting with Lord Siva (anecdote of Ardhanariswara,). This also contains the stotra made by Brahma and Vishnu to Lord Siva, the greatness of Arunacala, The greatness of Various Tirthas like Brahma Tirtha, Vayu Tirtha, Kubera Tirtha, Agastya Tirtha, Vasishta Tirtha, Ganga Tirtha, Saiva Tirtha, Agni Tirtha, Vaishnava Tirtha, Surya Tirtha, Aswini Tirtha, Vaiswadeva Tirtha, Indra Tirtha, Kumbha Tirtha, Yama Tirtha, Nairrutta Tirtha, Varuna Tirtha, Soma Tirtha, Isana Tirtha, the greatness of worshiping Arunachala, going round in pradakshina of the mountain Arunachala.
The Uttarabhaga contains the anecdotes of Lingodbhava, Mahishasura vadha, Vajragnadha and Kantisali and anecdote of Ardhanariswara. It also contains Karma vibhaga (the sufferings on account of various sins committed), Prayashchitta (what is to be done to be redeemed of the sins), Kamya karma (What is to be done to achieve our desires and wants) and a discussion on creation of the Prapanca by Lord Siva.

The Madhya bhaga contains the anecdotes of Lingodbhava, Parvati doing penance in Kanchipuram and from there coming to Arunachalam, Mahisha Vadham, anecdote of Ardhanariswara, and Campantar’s visit to Arunachala.

The excerpts from Sivamahapurana contains discussion on ways of salvation, worship of Linga and vigraha, Siva puja, and description of Siva’s Pancha Kritya of Srishti—creation, Stithy—Preservation, Samharam—destruction, tirobhavam—concealment and Anugraham—Grace.

The excerpt from Skandopapurana contains discussion on the greatness of the festival of lights in Arunachala.

The excerpt from Sivamahapurana in the concluding chapter contains discussion on the greatness of Anna dana in Arunachala Kshetra.
Special Features

The Purva bhaga is in the form of dialogue between Brahma and sage Sanaka. The Uttara bhaga is in the form of dialogue between Nandikeswara and Sage Markandeya.

Adhyaya 9 in Purvabhaga lists out 89 names of Lord Siva as related to Arunachalam.

The claim that the Mahatmyam contains excerpts from five puranas seems to be authentic and the anecdotes are more or less similar. All contain anecdotes of Lingodbhava, Ardha nariswara and Parvati’s penance. They are repetitive even though the presentation is different.

4.3. Discussion on Srivanchya Kshetra Mahatmyam

This Mahatmyam is yet another typical Mahatmyam following the usual pattern.

Structure

Srivanchya Kshetra Mahatmyam is composed in 61 Adhyayas (Chapters). Adhyayas 1 to 10 have been excerpted from Sanat kumara Samhita of Skanda Mahapurana.

11th Adhyaya is excerpted from Brahmanda purana.

Adhyayas 12 to 20 are excerpted from Brahmanda Upapurana.
Adhyayas 21 to 44 are excerpted from Samba Upapurana.
Adhyayas 45 & 46 are excerpted from Siva rahasyam
Adhyayas 47 is excerpted from Sahayadri Khandam of Skanda Mahapurana.
Adhyayas 48 to 53 are excerpted from Brahmanda purana.
Adhyayas 54 to 58 are excerpted from Agneyapurana.
Adhyayas 59 to 61 are excerpted from Siva rahasyam

Content

The Mahatmyam begins with an account of the greatness of River Kaveri and Srivanchya Kshetra. It is followed by the anecdote of Mahadhana getting the form of rakshas on account of some misdeed. He gets relieved of his curse by a visit to Srivanchya kshetram and bathing in the Parasara Tirtham there. The anecdote of Sage Sutikshna getting relieved of his curse in a similar way is also narrated.

The anecdote of Sage Atri begetting Dattatreya as his son in Srivanchya kshetra and Atri Tithra is narrated. The anecdote relating to the place getting its name, the quarrel between Sridevi and Bhudevi, Sridevi’s disappearance, Vishnu getting back Sridevi after worshipping Srivanchyesa, The place getting its name as Vishnu got SRI as a result of his strong desire VANCHYA.

Indra gets relieved of the curse of Sage Gautama after the Ahalya episode by doing penance in this place. The anecdote of Charumati,
wife of king Vikukshi, getting relieved of the curse of sage Gargya by bathing in Punya Pushkarani.

Then follows the episode of Durga slaying the demon Mahishasura.

The important episodes are of Āsina Bhairava and worship of Yama and relief from fear of Yama or death for residents of Srivanchhyakshetra.

This also details the other adjacent kshetras and the Mahatmyam of two kshetras adjacent to this place, namely Pragriha and Dabhralivanam

**Special Features**

Adhyaya 7 contains a stotra by Vikukshi and his wife to Srivanchyeswara, the deity of Srivanchyam.

Adhyaya 8 narrates the greatness of bathing in sacred Tirthas in the month of Magha, method of performing this, names of sacred tirthas of India.

Adhyaya 9 contains a stotra by devas to Devi Mahishasura mardini.

Adhyaya 10 contains description of the auspicious day of Gaurisankara yoga, and the auspicious days for taking bath in sacred tirthas.

This mahatmyam lays maximum emphasis on taking bath in the sacred Tirthas on various Punyakalas, like Magha month, the month
of Karhtika especially on the Sundays in the month of Karthika, Ayana punyakala, Makara sankramana, Ardhodayam, Mahodayam, eclipses-Solar and Lunar. It also details the importance of the various Tirthas in the Srivanchyakshetra, namely, Srichakra Tirtham, Sesha Tirtham, Lakshmi Tirtham, Rama Tirtham, Naga Tirtham, Deva Tirtham, Agni Tirtham, Yama Tirtham, Narada Tirtham, Sarva Tirtham, Gupta gangai, Punya pushkarini etc.

In this Mahatmyam one chapter, Chapter 19, gives full details of the Brahmotsavam being observed in this temple. Brahma makes all arrangements for the annual utsavam. This offers an acceptable explanation of the origin of the word ”Brahmotsavam” It starts with the “Ankurarpanam” and flag hoisting “Dhwajarohanam” on the Sukla Panchami of the month Magha. The daily procession of the deity on various carriers(Vahanas) like vrishabha (Bull) etc culminates in the “Rathotsava”(Chariot drive) It concludes with the “Tirthotsava” (Water festival) on the day with the Makha star of the month Magha. This reminds us of similar description of the utsavas celebrated occurring in Chidambara Mahatmyam. In this regard, Srivanchya Kshetra Mahatmyam follows the tradition of Chidambara Mahatmyam but in a smaller measure.

4.4. Discussion on Sri Dakshina Kutidvipakshetra Mahatmyam

We are now taking up the study of Sri Dakshina Kutidvipakshetra Mahatmyam as we consider this as a masterpiece among
Mahatmyams. The special features of this Mahatmyam are quite impressive and the literary value of this work is of highest order. The edition we have referred to is of highest order of editing ancient works. The edition is of 1938, with Pandit K. Balasubrahmanya Sastri and Sri T. S. Subrahmanya Sastri as editors. The eighteen annexures and the list of contents in the beginning are exhaustive and masterly.

**Structure:**

Sri Dakshina kutidvipakshetra Mahatmyam claims to be part of *Sahyaja khanda of Sanatkumara Samhita* forming part of *Skanda Mahapuranam*. It is composed in 2170 stanzas in 40 Chapters (Adhyaya).

**Content**

This Mahatmyam is claimed to be part of Skânda Mahâpuraṇânam, consisting of 40 Chapters (Adhyaya)

Adhyaya 1 named Swayambhutesa avirbhava discusses the creation of trinity and the Lord appearing as Swayam Buteswara.

Adhyaya 2 named Kesavara pradanam discusses the creation of the world, describes four yugas, Manvantaras, and different Kalpas.

Adhyaya 3 named Yamasapa narrates the story of Yama being cursed by his mother.
Adhyaya 4 named Yama Varapradanam narrates the story of Yama performing tapas for 12 years and getting relieved of the curse.

Adhyaya 5 named Vasishteswara visruti narrates the story of birth of Aswini Devas, Penance by Saturn, Vasishta, and the story of Ila. Adhyaya 6 named Manu stuti narrates the story of Ila’s getting back womanhood and the story of Kaveri Chola

Adhyaya 7 named Kaveri Sambhava narrates the story of Kaveri’s birth.

Adhyaya 8 named Pushtivinayaka Mahimanuvaprnanam narrates the story of Tarakasura, birth of Kumara, and Vinayaka.

Adhyaya 9 named Kumbhaja ghatath Kaveri bahirnirgama narrates the story of Kaveri flowing out of Agastyā’s pot.

Adhyaya 10 named Heranda munikruta Kaveraja pratyanayanam narrates various episodes connected with Vinayaka and Kaveri.

Adhyaya 11 named Sudhaganesa caritam narrates the anecdotes connected with various tributaries of Kaveri, Churning of Ocean of Milk for getting Amrutha, delay in the process, worshipping Sudha Ganesa for getting Amritha quickly.
Adhyaya 12 named Rudra Pasupata Makha narrates the story of Jaya Cola performing the Rudra Pasupata Sacrifice.

Adhyaya 13 named Kartavirya Prabhava narrates the story of Karttavirya’s penance, getting blessed with 1000 hands while fighting in a war, his victory over Ravana and other anecdotes.


Adhyaya 15 named Kartavirya atithyam narrates the story of Kartavirya’s going for hunting to Sahyadri mountain and visiting the hermitage of sage Jamadagni. The sage extending hospitality to Kartavirya and his entourage by feeding them with best dishes sumptuously.Kartavirya is surprised by the lavish hospitality of the hermit in a short time taking care of a large number of guests. The sage submits that it is the gift of Kamadhenu.

Adhyaya 16 named Kartavirya Kamalini Yuddham narrates the story of Kartavirya trying to take Kamadhenu by force, losing his warriors in the ensuing battle, killing sage Jamadagni in the battle and the defeated Kartavirya returning to his place carrying the sin of Brahmahatti (Killing of a brahmana- Jamadagni).
Adhyaya 17 named Brahmahatyapanodaka pasutirtha Mahima narrates the greatness of Pasu tirtha, its capability to relieve people of the sins associated with killing of Brahmans, women etc.; On the advice of Dattatreya, Kartavirya taking bath in Pasutirtha and worshiping swayambhuta Mahalinga and getting relieved of the sin of Brahma hatti.

Adhyaya 18 named Bhargava Parasu Prapti narrates the story of Sage Jamatagni’s son Rama taking revenge of his father’s death; his performing last rites of his father; getting advice of Dattatreya and his mother Renuka, worshiping Pasupatiswara at Dakshina kuti dvipa for twelve years, getting blessed with battle axe from Siva and Parasurama defeating and killing Kartavirya.

Adhyaya 19 named Nageswara Tapascharya narrates the tale of the serpent Sesha becoming arrogant on account of his adorning the head of Siva. He was dropped on the earth by Siva on account of which he became too weak to carry the earth on his head; he approaches Narada to know the ways to regain his strength; Narada gives him the ashtakshara mantra and advises him to repeat the mantra to get fulfillment of one’s desire.

Adhyaya 20 , named Aparadha Kshantyakhya Nagesa stuti contains Pasupatisa Stotram, popularly known as Aparadha kshamaparana stotra and Sesha’s penance.
Adhyaya 21, named Pratisurya sumali ratha prapti narrates the story of Demon Sumali, his penance in Dakshina kuti dvipa, obtaining a chariot equivalent to that of Sun, his moving in the sky after sunset; Sun killing him, Siva getting angry with Sun, Sun performing penance, Siva pleased with Sun’s penance making him head of all planets and Dakshina kuti dvipa getting the name Ratha puri after the incident.

Adhyaya 22 named Purushottama cakra tirtha Nirmiti narrates the story of the birth of demons Madhu and Kaitapa from the ears of Vishnu, atrocities committed by them, Vishnu fighting with them for 5000 years, yet unable to kill them, Vishnu seeking guidance of Siva to find a way to kill them.

Adhyaya 23 named Balavinayaka prasadan Madhukaitapa vadha narrates the story of Vishnu performing penance in Dakshina kuti dvipa reciting Panca dasakshari mantra, Balavinayaka advising Vishnu the way of killing Madhu and Kaitapa and Vishnu killing the demons with the Chakrayudha.

Adhyaya 24 named Madalasa vatsaraja Parinaya narrates the story of King Vatsa marrying Madalasa after slaying the demon Varahaketu.

Adhyaya 25 named Madalasa jwalana pravesa narrates the story of Madalasa committing suicide by entering fire and dying on hearing the false news of the death of her husband, Vatsaraja from Vrika ketu, brother of Varaha Ketu, Vatsaraja slaying Vrika ketu. Sankha pala,
the son of Vatsaraja and Madalasa trying to bring back Madalasa to life.

Adhyaya 26 named Sankhapala Tapassiddhi narrates the story of Sankha pala performing penance in the presence of LokaNayika in Dakshina kuti dvipa.

Adhyaya 27 named Madalasa samyoga narrates the story of Madalasa being brought back to life by Lokanayika and Madalasa and Vatsaraja uniting.

Adhyaya 28, named Pancakshara mantratmaka Parameswara Deha Varnanam contains description of 120 variations of Pancakshara each being related to 120 points in the body of Siva (Annexure-4).

Adhyaya 29 named Parameswara murtibhedatattadhyaana sloka nirupanam lists 26 forms of Siva and gives Dhyana sloka for each form (Annexure-6).

Adhyaya 30 named Panckshara Yantra bheda nirupanam contains description of 24 yantras of Panckshara, each yantra containing 5 variations of Pancakshara, Prayoga, Bijakshara and yantraswarupam-vruttam, Trikonam, Shatkonam etc are also elaborated. This also lists out the 26 forms of Siva once again stating what benefit the worship of each form gives (Annexure-5).
Adhyaya 31 named Alarkaraja sasarira sayujya prapti narrates the story of king Alarka performing penance in Dakshina kuti dvipa and obtaining Sayujya with the physical body.

Adhyaya 32 named Sugandhi kanyaka pati sanjivanam narrates the story of Sugandhi kanyaka of Dakshina kuti dvipa, her marriage to the dead body of Vira Pandya, her praying to Lokanayika and Devi bringing the dead Vira Pandya to life.

Adhyaya 33 named Vidhi garva bhngam narrates the story of removal of Brahma’s arrogance.

Adhyaya 34 named Vishnu cola Maharoga Prasamanam narrates the story of Vishnu Chola’s disease being cured.

Adhyaya 35 named Mangala soumangalya avapti narrates the story of Mangala, her being destined to widowhood at the age of 16 overcoming the Fate by her devotion to Goddess Lokeswari.

Adhyaya 36 named Skanda sapavimoka narrates the story of Skanda being cursed by Siva to become a snake, Skanda performing penance in Dakshina Kuti Dvipa and getting relieved of the Curse.

Adhyaya 37 named Bhairava brahmahatya pagama narrates the story of relief of the sin of Brahmahatya committed by Bhairava.
Adhyaya 38 named Sarva devamaya Tirtha mahatmya kathanam narrates the story of conversion of all the Devas and rishis into water due to curse of Savitri, their wives praying to Pasupatisa in Dakshina kuti dvipa and getting relief of the curse. Devas residing permanently in the Tirthas of dakshina kuti dvipa on the orders of Pasupatisa.

Adhyaya 39 named Sthala vruksha swarupa abhidanam narrates the story of birth of Lord Skanda, Surapadma Vadha, Devas being cursed by Parvati to become trees and creepers, their performing penance in Dakshina kuti dvipa and getting relieved of Parvati’s curse. On Siva’s advice a portion of (Amsa) of devas became various trees and creepers and got stationed in various sthalas as Sthala vrikshas.

Adhyaya 40 named Aadi saivadi panca vidha saiva lakshana varnam discusses the five classes of Saivas-Adi Saiva, Upa Saiva, Anu Saiva, Maha Saiva and Paara Saiva, It also gives the ruling that only Adi Saivas can perform Parartha puja in temples and Vaidika brahmanas can perform only swartha puja, Clarifies the right of entry of various classes of people into various parts of the temple—such as garbha griha, Maha Mandapa, Ardha Mandapa etc.

Special Features

The Mahatmyam contains full details of Seven Mantras, with Dhyana slokas, Rishi, Chandas etc, in various chapters.
It contains sixteen stotras, contains Chandra vamsa lineage and Surya vamsa lineage, lists out 28 Swayambhu Kshetras.

The Stotras contained in this Mahatmyam are:

:Swayambhuteswarashtakam, (by the Trinity),
Maheswara Pancakam by yama,
Adyashtakam by Manu,
Aparadha Kshamapana stotram,
Roga Samana Stotram by Vishnu Chola,
Vasishthesashtakam, by Alarka
Lokeswaryashtakam,
Pati Sanjivana stotram by Sugandhi Kanyaka,
Vaidhavya dosha nasaka Stotram by Mangala,
Gana natha Shatkm by Indra,
Balavighnesashtakam,
Sudhaganesa Stotram,
 stotra addressed to Brahmadeva by Kavera Chola,
stotra addressed to Kaveri by Chola Raja and
stotra addressed to Nidradevi,
Pasupatisa stuti by wives of devas.

Chapter 37 contains description of the eight forms of Rudra namely, Kalagni Rudra, Isāna Rudra, Sthānu Rudra alias Nīlala Lohita Rudra, Kāśyapa suta Rudra, Hātakēśa Rudra, Kuśmānda Rudra, Vīra bhadra Rudra and Sarabha Rudra.
It also contains description of the eight forms of Bhairavas namely Vatuka Bhairava, Kshetra pālaka Bhairava, Kāla Bhairava, Akāśa Bhairava, Svāṃkarshana Bhairava, Mārtanda Bhairava, Nagna Bhairava and Kānkāla Bhairava.

The following incidents are narrated:

1. By undertaking severe penance in this kshetra, Yama got relief from the curse of his mother, got lordship of South and the right to bestow the result of Punya and Papa deeds of human beings.

2. By undertaking severe penance in this kshetra, Sani(Saturn) obtained status of Lord of planet, slow planetary movement, and the right to bestow the result of Punya and Papa acts of human beings.

3. Sage Vasishta is granted supreme position among Brahma vid.

4. Manu’s penance results in Ila becoming male and retaining femininity for three days in a month.

5. King Jaya Cola performs Rudra Pasupata Yajna as a result achieves the position of Indra which one gets only on performing one hundred Aswamedha Yagas.

6. King Kartavirya by worship of the lord, is blessed with 1000 hands, strength of One lakh snakes,a chariot that carries him to all seven worlds and ability to assume any form at will.
7. Vishnu gets the power to kill Madhu and Kaitapa after worshiping Balavinayaka
8. Vishnu Cola gets cured of leprosy
9. Skanda after performing penance for one year, is restored to his original form from the form of a snake which he got on being cursed by Siva.
10. Bhairava is relieved of his brahma hatti dosha.
11. After severe penance, Brahma regains his capacity to create, which he lost on the loss of his fifth head.
12. Sankhapala’s daughter Madalasa, who is dead is revived and brought back to life.
13. Sugandhi kanyaka’s dead husband is brought back to life.
15. Devendra releases Kaveri from Agastya’s pot, as a result of worshiping Pushti Ganapathi.
16. Devas get Amrut with the blessings of Sudha Ganesa

17. The offsprings of Surabhi, a cow of Devaloka, Nandini and Kamalini, worship Siva and get their desires fulfilled and the place named Dhenupuri and the lord as Dhenupuriswarar.
4. 5. Discussion on Sri Vaidyanatha Kshetra Mahatmyam

This Mahatmyam is claimed to be part of Malayācala Kāndam of Koti rudra Samhita of Siva puranam, consisting of 12 Chapters(Adhyaya).

Tirtha-Siddhamritam, Ganga Kundam,

Sthala Vriksham - Neem tree.

Jatayu’s wings were burnt when he went near the sun while competing and flying along with his brother Sampati. He took bath in Amrita kunda of this place and worshipped Vaidyanatha. He regained his original form. He resided here and became an ardent devotee of the lord. This place came to be called Jatayupuram. When he fell fighting Ravana, who was going by air towards Lanka along with Sita, it was here that Rama found Jatayu who told him that Ravana took Sita to Lanka and died. Rama performed funeral rites to Jatayu here. There is a Jatayu Kunda here.

Angaraka was made a planet by Vaidyanatha, who was pleased by his devotion and sincere worship.

Devas were suffering from various diseases consequent to their being hurt by poisonous weapons of Asuras in their war with them. They were cured by Vaidyanatha and by bathing in Siddhmrita Tirtham.

Brahma obtained his power of creation by worshiping Vaidyanatha.
Vedas were imprisoned in Patala by Somaka and they prayed to Vaidyanatha. Under his orders Vishnu took the form of Kurma and freed Vedas.

A cow worshipped Vaidyanatha by pouring its milk and it was made Kamadhenu. Guha, Vinayaka, Sage Bharadwaja, Rama, Surya, Chandra, Arjuna, Vishnu, Hiranyakarma, Siddhas, and Rishis, worshipped here and got relief from their suffering.

4. VI. Discussion on Halasya Mahātmyam.

This Mahatmyam and its Tamil version 'Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam do not follow the pattern of other Talapuranams, eventhough they narrate legends pertaining to only one place and centering round one deity. We are studying this work for the purpose of comparison only.

Structure

This Mahatmyam is perhaps one of the bigger Mahatmyams consisting of 71 Chapters comprising 6120 stanzas (Slokas). The Mahatmyam claims to be part of Agastyam Samhita of Skanda Mahapurana.
Contents

This mahatmyam describes the 64 tiruvilaiyatal (leela) of Lord Somasundara alias Sundareswara alias Cokkanatha of Madurai. In all other mahatmyams we find discussion about the greatness of a particular Talam. For example Arunacala mahatmyam discusses the greatness of Arunacala or Tiruvannamalai, Chidambara Mahatmyam discusses the greatness of Chidambaram and so on. In this case, Halasya mahatmyam does not merely discuss the greatness of the Talam Madurai, but also narrates 64 anecdotes of the acts of grace, which we may term as miracles or wonders, done by the presiding deity of the Talam Madurai, also known as Halasyam; hence the work named Halasya Mahatmyam.

Any person going through these 64 acts will necessarily come to the conclusion that the Grace of God flows towards not only human beings but to all beings, without any kind of discrimination. His Grace does not wait for a formal request or prayer but only on the longing or desire and based on the need of the recipient. It is Grace without an excuse-avyaja karuna. These are unique stories of Godhead coming down to earth and living with the human beings as God and not as an avatar of God.

An interesting comment made in Adhyaya 3 of the Mahatmyam states that the Lord performed 16 leelas in Krta Yuga and another 16 in Treta Yuga. Like wise He performed 16 leelas each both in Dwapara and Kali Yuga.

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64. Vata pureasaya gnana dikshakaranam
65. Mayasva vikrayah
66. Nadi pravaha akarshanah
67. Pishtha mrud bharana boudhha hananam
68. Gubja pandyeswara samanam
69. Srganana sambandhena nagranam turusularopanam
70. Sambhu kupa sami vrukshapa nayanam
71. Catush shashti lila sravana phalakathanam.
Special Features

It has chapters on greatness of Talam tirtham and murtti, as found in Chidambara Mahatmyam.

It describes contents of the Mahatmya in Ch-3 as done in Patikam in Tiruvilaiyatal puranam, Tamil version of Mahatmya. This is a novel feature not to be found in any other mahatmya. This makes one suspect the mahatmya to be a translation of the Tamil Talapuranam into Sanskrit.

The composition of Patikam in the beginning of the work, giving contents of the work in brief, is the tradition followed by Tamil poets in their works. We find Patikam in both Cilappatikaram and Manimekalai.

The order in which the 64 Tiruvilaiyadal of Lord Somasundara is discussed in this Mahatmya and Paranjothi’s Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam is exactly the same.

The 32 Anga lakshanas of men (male) are discussed in the 15th Adhyaya titled Ugrajanam.

The anga lakshanas of women are discussed in the 16th Adhyaya titled Valayadyayudhatraya pradanam.

The Mahatmyam contains detailed instructions for observing Soma vara vratam and concluding it in two Adhyayas 19 and 20( In
Parancoti’s Tiruvilaiyatal Puranam also detailed instructions are given for observing Soma vara vratam exactly in the same place between 14th and 15th Tiurvilaiyatal)

Adhyaya 22 titled Vedarthopadesah describes the cosmic science of creation in relation to the Tatvas as detailed in Hindu philosophy, more specifically in saiva Siddhanta School. It includes a discussion on the structure and intent of the Vedas.

Adhyaya 23 titled Ratna vikrayah deals at length on the science of nine gems, their physical qualities, their astrological significance, their effect on the users, the traditions about these nine gems etc. The discussion is masterly, exhaustive and bears mark of expertise.

Adhyaya 39 titled Ashta siddhyupadesah contains elaborate discussion on the eight siddhis popularly known as Ashtama siddhi.

Adhyaya 65 titled Mayasva vikrayah contains exhaustive discussion on Aswa lakshanam giving an account of different categories of horses and discussing their special features. This is an expert’s work who is well versed in the subject.

The stotras contained in the Mahatmyam:

Adhyaya – 1 The stotra recited to Lord Viswanatha by the sages.
Adhyaya – 5 The stotra of Indra to Somasundara.
Adhyaya – 8 The stotra of Vidyavati to Meenakshi
Adhyaya – 10 The stotra by Patanjali to Lord Siva
Adhyaya – 12 The stotra by Kundodara to Somasundara.
Adhyaya – 14 Stotra by Tatataka to Somasundara
Adhyaya – 25 Stotra by Varuna to Somasundara.
Adhyaya – 27 Stotra by Abhisheka Pandya to Somasundara
Adhyaya – 28 Stotra by Vikrama Pandya to Somasundara
Adhyaya – 30 Stotra by Rajasekhara Pandya to Somasundara
Adhyaya – 59 Stotra by Sanghinah to Sundareswara.
Adhyaya – 62 Stotra by Kulasekhara Pandya to Sundareswara.