

4 Rituals on Paṅkuṇi Uttiram

This chapter addresses the events and rituals which take place on the marriage day and into the night. Taken together, the rituals related to the marriage run for almost twenty-four hours. The rituals begin in the afternoon of the marriage day, which is the tenth day of the *mahotsava*. Late at night, between three and five o'clock, during the auspicious star constellation Paṅkuṇi Uttiram, the marriage rituals are performed. A procession then takes place, which runs until noon the next day. Only then, at about one o'clock in the afternoon, does the 'morning' procession start, which marks the beginning of the eleventh festival day. The following account of the events and rituals are based on my observation of the festival over three successive years, from 2009 to 2011. In addition, I gathered information during informal talks and interviews with priests, donors and participants, while utilizing a few textual sources.

In the preceding chapter, I showed how a core storyline runs through almost all versions of the 'marriage myth', which serves as reference for the re-enactment of the marriage on the tenth day of the Ekāmrānātha temple festival. The storyline is as follows: Pārvaṭī performs *tapas/pūjā*, Śiva tests her by sending a flood, she embraces him (in the form of a pillar or sand *liṅga*), he reveals himself, and, in some versions, finally re-marries her in Kanchipuram. Key scenes of the myth, such as the penance, the establishment and worship of the sand *liṅga*, Śiva's revelation, and the marriage, are commemorated and re-enacted. However, the embrace, which is a constituent element of the myth, is not re-enacted during the festival's rituals.

I describe the events in a chronological order, first presenting goddess Ēlavārkuḷali as the main actor in the narrative. I prioritize Ēlavārkuḷali over Ekāmrānātha because she has a more active role in the events of the wedding day, whereas Ekāmrānātha remains in the temple until night. The sequence of her actions, and accordingly the subchapters, are: Ēlavārkuḷali's trip to Okkapiranthan Kulam, the *tapas* and worship of the sand *liṅga*, and the marriage ceremony. Festival participants explained some of the events to me, and I include these oral narratives too. At the end of the chapter, I discuss the relation between the performed rituals, the written sources, and the oral tradition(s).

4.1 Okkapiranthan Kulam – the meeting of the goddesses

A calm atmosphere prevails over the Ekāmrānātha temple in the afternoon of the wedding day. Vendors doze in the shade of their handcarts, people rest on the stone floor in the shade of the *maṇḍapas*, and only a few children run around as if unaffected by the midday heat. The sleepy atmosphere is suddenly interrupted, however, when the temple's main door opens. Upon hearing the sounds of drum and flute, people raise their heads, and hurry to get up when a small procession comes near: it is the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali, accompanied by two of her priests, and a torch and parasol bearer. Her appearance on this day differs;

she wears a simple dress and lacks her usual array of splendid ornaments. Not a single flower garland is tied around her neck. Her hair is tied into a high knot, a hairstyle she wears only on this day—and, she is alone! This is the only time she will leave the temple without Ekāmranātha (fig. 4.1).



Figure 4.1 Ēlavārkuḷali leaving the Ekāmranātha temple

The goddess Ēlavārkuḷali leaves the Ekāmranātha temple to go south to a rural part of Kanchipuram, called Okkapiranthan Kulam. Okkapiranthan Kulam denotes the area around a pond (Tam. *kuḷam*) of the same name. The narrow, unfrequented roads and small houses with tiled roofs and tiny porches convey a village-like ambiance. Yet, the area has changed in recent years. Some years back only dirt roads led to the pond, whereas now they are paved. Also, increasing numbers of newly constructed, two-storied, concrete buildings stand side by side with the small houses. In 2011 the government pruned the vegetation of the pond, and built a bank reinforcement and promenade with light posts, which gives the formerly overgrown pond the look of a suburban recreational area.

At the beginning of Ēlavārkuḷali's journey only a few people stand at the roadside, but the numbers increase the closer the procession gets to Okkapiranthan Kulam (see fig. 4.2). Groups of people stand in front of their houses, often close to the wall to get some shade from the overhanging roofs. A woman pours water from a vessel on the street to cool the hot ground and to prevent dust flying up when the procession passes by. Other women skillfully draw *kōlams*¹ in front of their houses. When Ēlavārkuḷali approaches, a family

1 A decorative design drawn with rice powder in front of houses to create prosperity for the home.

member, often the lady of the house or a daughter, brings a plate with offerings of *tāmpūlam*², flowers, bananas, sometimes a coconut, coins, and a camphor cube. She hands the plate to the priest, who orders the torchbearer to light the camphor. The priest then shows the flame and offerings to the goddess. Meanwhile, some family members prostrate in front of the goddess and encourage their children to do the same. The priest takes the flowers from the plate and places them at the goddess's feet. In exchange he puts another piece of flower garland, which was lying at the goddess's feet, on the plate with some *kumkum*³, and hands the blessed offerings back. When the woman takes the plate back, she protects the flame with her hands and rushes into the houses, hoping that the flame is not extinguishing before it can be shown to the deities in the house shrine. This mode of welcome and worship is repeated in almost every household in Okkapiranthan Kulam, and the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali pauses generously for every single offering.⁴



Figure 4.2 Welcoming the goddess in Okkapiranthan Kulam

Okkapiranthan Kulam is only about one kilometer from the Ekāmrānātha temple, but the goddess processes at a slow pace through every street in the neighborhood, so that it takes nearly four hours before she reaches her final destination, a *maṇḍapa* near the banks of the pond at Okkapiranthan Kulam. The streets are bathed in the red-golden light of the setting sun when the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali enters the *maṇḍapa*. The priests, who have accompanied her during the procession, look tired. Their hands and bodies are red-stained from the

2 Rolled betel leaves with areca nuts inside.

3 Tam. *kuṅkumam*. A red powder made from dried turmeric mixed with lime. Usually applied on the forehead.

4 Whereas the bigger processions have specific stops, where devotees can bring their offerings.

never-ending distribution of *kumkum* powder. As of now, two other priests take over. They curtain off the public to change the goddess's dress; she gets an *abhiṣeka* with turmeric, scented powder, fruits, milk, curd, honey, tender coconut, sandal and rose water, after which the *alaṃkāra* takes place. The goddess Ēlavārkuḷali will be dressed in a bridal costume with a long golden braid and other ornaments appropriate for her wedding.

When the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali arrives at the *maṇḍapa*, two other goddesses, Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl, await in thatched huts, which have been temporarily constructed on the open space beside the *maṇḍapa* towards the pond's bank (see map, fig. 2.23). Each goddess leaves her respective temple in the morning between nine and ten o'clock and processes in a manner similar to Ēlavārkuḷali through the streets of Okkapirantan Kulam, pausing at every house to receive offerings, until they reach the thatched huts in the early afternoon. They too receive the *abhiṣeka* and *alaṃkāra* at Okkapiranthan Kulam. By the time the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali arrives at the place at sunset, the goddesses are already prepared for public *darśan*.

In the evening, the houses on the road leading to the gathering place of the goddesses are lit with chains of yellow, green and red lights. Vendors placed their goods on the side of the road, others sell fried tapioca chips and boiled peanuts from small handcarts. The streets and the open space in front of the *maṇḍapa* are packed with people, who flock to get the *darśan* of each of the three goddesses.



Figure 4.3 Procession of the three goddesses;
left: Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl, center: Ēlavārkuḷali, right: Kāmākṣī

At around ten o'clock, the three goddesses set out together on a grand procession to the Ekāmrānātha temple. At the beginning, in the small road at Okkapiranthan Kulam, the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali takes the lead, followed by Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl.

Afterwards, when the streets are wide enough, the three goddesses process almost next to each other, with Ēlavārkuḷali in the middle. On the way to the Ekāmranātha temple, the procession pauses at the Kacchapeśvara temple, where all three goddesses are placed in one line beside each other, and fireworks are released. Different musical bands and a dance group bearing Śaivite symbols, such as the trident, accompany the procession. Those who awaited the goddesses at the roadside join the crowd, following the procession up to the Ekāmranātha temple, with a brief pause at the Śaṅkara Maṭha. The goddesses process together up to the sixteen-pillared *maṇḍapa* in front of the Ekāmranātha temple, where all three are worshipped with light (*dīpārādhana*) (see fig. 4.3). Then, the goddess Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl return to their respective temples, while the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali enters the Ekāmranātha temple followed by many devotees.

Why Okkapiranthan Kulam?

In the course of the festival's processions, deities typically visit their surrounding properties and *maṇḍapas*, where they are ceremonially received (*maṇṭappaṭi*) and rest for some time. Often, the *maṇḍapas* are in the temple's possession, or individuals have received temple honors to play host to the deity at their *maṇḍapa* on a certain day of the festival. For example, at the Ekāmranātha temple festival, different *maṇḍapas* are visited on the third, fourth, fifth, ninth, tenth and eleventh days (see Chapter Two). The *maṇḍapa* at Okkapiranthan Kulam is owned by the Ekāmranātha temple. Unfortunately, the temple's office does not have documents showing whether the *maṇḍapa* was donated to the temple, or the time of its construction, or whether it was especially built for the goddess's visit on the afternoon of the marriage day.⁵

However, a reference to Okkapiranthan Kulam and the *maṇḍapa* is found in the *Kāñcipuram Ṭairekṭari* (*Kanchipuram Directory*). The book, published in 1935, describes various temples, *maṇḍapas*, and *tīrthas* in Kanchipuram. The account of Okkapiranthan Kulam states that the 'goddess Ēlavārkuḷali is taken to the Ekāmranātha temple in her marriage dress from the bank of this pond' (1935: 28). Of the *maṇḍapa* it is noted that: 'On the tenth day of the Ekāmranātha *mahotsava*, during the month of Paṅkuṇi, for Ēlavārkuḷali, Kāmākṣī and Karukkiṇīlamarntavaḷ *maṇṭappaṭi*⁶ and *alamkāra* takes place here' (1935: 98). Surprisingly, Karukkiṇīlamarntavaḷ is mentioned as one of the accompanying goddesses, and not Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl as is customary today. The worship of Karukkiṇīlamarntavaḷ, and her temple, have a long tradition.⁷ However, the hereditary priest of the temple did not know about a participation of Karukkiṇīlamarntavaḷ in the marriage festival in previous times, or of any other relation to the Ekāmranātha temple. Possibly, a name has been mistaken in the account from the *Kāñcipuram Ṭairekṭari*. However, the account indicates that it has been a tradition since at least the early

5 Today the *maṇḍapa* is used as storage for wood, which is removed a few days before the festival begins.

6 In modern texts, *maṇṭappaṭi* or *maṇṭakappaṭi* (responsibility for the ceremony of receiving the deity at a *maṇṭapam* during a festival). In spoken Tamil usually 'mandapadi'.

7 Two inscriptions (ARE 1975-76, No. 210, 211) from the temple of Karukkiṇīlamarntavaḷ in Kanchipuram are dated to the eleventh century.

twentieth century to go to the *maṇḍapa* in Okkapiranthan Kulam and meet two other goddesses there.

How is the goddess's visit at Okkapiranthan Kulam related to the 'marriage myth'? Is there a reference to the place in one of the Sthalapurāṇas of Kanchipuram? A leaflet from the Akāya Kaṅṅiammaṇ temple, situated on the banks of the pond, explains that the pond is named Okkapiranthan Kulam because 'two sages were born as twins at the same time at this natural spring' (Tam. *okka-p-iranṭu*, 'two that are similar'). The leaflet also mentions two other names for the pond: *aivar arampaiyar tīrttam* and *cakōtarar tīrttam*. A reference to the latter is made in the *Kāñcippurāṇam*. Chapter 24, comprising ten verses, deals with *cakōtaratīrttam* (Skt. *sahodaratīrtha*) and *vaṅṅicam* (Skt. *vahnīśa*), a *liṅga*, housed in a small shrine on the banks of the pond. *Kāñcippurāṇam* 24.6 connects the naming of the pond to a story about Agni, who was hiding in the pond and considered it as his brother. Hence, the pond is called *sahodara* ('born of the same womb'). Thus, it becomes clear that while the Tamil term *okkapiranthan* and the Sanskrit term *sahodara* have the same notion 'twin/brother', the background stories differ. However, the stories told in *Kāñcippurāṇam* 24 bear no relation to the 'marriage myth' or the goddess's visit to Okkapiranthan Kulam on the marriage day.

Oral narratives

Oral narratives circulate, explaining why the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali goes to Okkapiranthan Kulam and meets the other goddesses there. The majority of people I talked with take the view that the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali left the Ekāmranātha temple in anger. For example, during the procession to Okkapiranthan Kulam, the head of the bearers of the deity brought my attention to the goddess, saying: 'Look at her, you can see in her face how angry she is!' Others interpret the goddess's hairstyle, simple dress and lack of ornaments as a sign that she left the temple hastily and in anger. Yet, opinions about the reasons for her anger differ. A woman in the streets of Okkapiranthan Kulam explained to me the reason for the goddess's anger: 'Ēlavārkuḷali comes to her mother's place because she is angry about an affair of her husband.' Another woman was even more specific, saying: 'Ekāmranātha has one hidden wife, who is Kāmākṣī. Ēlavārkuḷali did not know about it. She is very angry.' The motif of Ēlavārkuḷali's jealousy about either an affair or Ekāmranātha's first wife is prominent in interviews I took at Okkapiranthan Kulam. Three interviewees also explicitly name Kāmākṣī as Ekāmranātha's first wife. Women more often than not expressed jealousy of another wife, whereas men attributed Ēlavārkuḷali's anger to 'general marital problems.' While speaking with a group of people waiting in the streets of Okkapiranthan Kulam for the goddess, a woman told me 'there is another wife,' and a man next to her interrupted her saying 'no, it is not like this.' Similarly, an old man interposed: 'This is the normal trouble between husband and wife, there is no other wife.' Most people regard Okkapiranthan Kulam as the goddess's home or mother's place, where she takes refuge after the quarrel with Ekāmranātha. The two goddesses Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kāḷikāmpāl take on the role of her friends or sisters who convince her to go back to Ekāmranātha and finally marry him. A male resident of Okkapiranthan Kulam expressed it as follows: 'Ēlavārkuḷali comes here fighting with Ekāmranātha. The other goddesses, Kāḷikāmpāl and Kāmākṣī, will console her saying that such fights are common in any household. Together they take her back to Ekāmranātha in the evening and then return back.'

The notion that Ēlavārkuḷali leaves the Ekāmranātha temple in anger is widespread, whether the ultimate reason is another woman or general marital disharmony. Priests of the Ekāmranātha temple also give an account in terms of the goddess's anger, although most of them concede that this is the belief of the people and that, actually, nobody knows the motivation of the deities. They rather depict the events at Okkapiranthan Kulam as a tradition of the girl taking her leave from home before the marriage.

Traditionally, in marriages the bride is dressed and ornamented for her marriage, then takes leave from her mother's place and is brought to the location where the marriage rituals take place. Likewise, the events at Okkapiranthan Kulam are understood as the bride's customary, pre-marriage practices. A priest of the Ekāmranātha temple explained to me: 'If you see, nowadays the girls are going to the beauty-parlor to get decorated for the *januvasam* (procession of the bride and bridegroom), like that our Mother (Ēlavārkuḷali) is going to Okkapiranthan Kulam for getting decorated.'⁸ During the preparations for the marriage the bride is in the company of female family members and friends (Tam. *tōli*), who offer emotional support and escort her in the bridal procession (Tam. *peṇ alaippu*) to the place of the wedding. Participants generally spoke about the two accompanying goddesses as *tōli*, the female friends of the bride, and referred to the nocturnal procession to the temple as *peṇ alaippu*. In this way, the rituals on the afternoon of the wedding day resemble the procedures for a human bride before her marriage.

Goddesses: Three, Four, Seven or Eight?

In the three years I participated in the festival, two other goddesses, Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl, accompanied the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali in the evening procession to the Ekāmranātha temple. These three goddesses together form the core group. Until 2008, the local goddess of Okkapiranthan Kulam, known as Akāya Kaṇṇiammaṇ, had joined the bridal procession as a fourth goddess. When I came there in 2009 the residents of Okkapiranthan Kulam had recently demolished her shrine, which stood on the bank of the pond near the Vahnīśvara shrine, to make room for a new, larger shrine for Akāya Kaṇṇiammaṇ. Akāya Kaṇṇiammaṇ does not join the procession until her new shrine is completed and inaugurated.⁹ However, it seems Akāya Kaṇṇiammaṇ does not have the same status as Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl. She joins the procession only as a courtesy to the residents of Okkapiranthan Kulam, as a priest from the Ekāmranātha temple emphasized to me: 'Since the goddess Kaṇṇiammaṇ is their village goddess, she also comes, but she should come at the back only.'¹⁰ The line up of goddesses in processions and other rituals is regulated and reflects a hierarchy. Thus, 'to come at the back' of a procession indicates a minor status. Akāya Kaṇṇiammaṇ did follow the procession of the other goddesses at the back, as video footage of the 2008 event shows.¹¹ By contrast, a

8 Interview with Kamesvara Gurukkal, Ekāmranātha temple, 18.04.2009.

9 During the renovation of a temple's sanctum the power of the deity is removed from the idol and 'stored' in materials such as *attimaram* wood. After renovation the deity's power is transferred to the idol, which then becomes its full efficacy again. The Tamil term for the deity's 'inoperative state' is *pālālayam*.

10 Interview with Nagaswamy Gurukkal, Ekāmranātha temple, 05.04.2010.

11 Ute Hüsken and Narayanan Subramanian have filmed the 2008 event.

resident of Okkapiranthan Kulam interpreted the processional line up in favor of the local goddess: ‘Kaṅṅi Ammaṅ is the eldest, so she will come back in the end.’

Yet, some people mentioned to me that in previous years, seven or eight goddesses joined the procession. Speaking of seven goddesses reminds me of the Saptakaṅṅis, the Seven Sisters, a prominent group of goddesses in Tamil Nadu.¹² People who mentioned eight goddesses related them to the eight direction goddesses, which protect Kanchipuram.¹³ However, the names of the safeguarding deities vary; some regard Akāya Kaṅṅiammaṅ as one of them, others Āti Kāmākṣī Kālīkāmpāl. A list of the eight direction goddesses from a priest of the Ekāmranātha temple, for example, did not include any of them, but instead Karukkiṅilamarntavaḷ, who was mentioned in the *Kāṅcipuram Tairekṭari* as one of the accompanying goddesses. The groupings of the goddesses as either seven sisters or eight safeguarding deities run parallel and do not exclude each other. When I asked why the other goddesses no longer join the procession, a priest of the Ekāmranātha temple explained that ‘some came from small temples, that can not cope any longer.’¹⁴ Small temples may lack local and therefore economic support, and often have no priest or caretaker.

Discussion

The procession to Okkapiranthan Kulam encompasses various themes and involves a number of aspects. The goddess Ēlavārkuḷali goes to the *maṅḍapa*, which belongs to the Ekāmranātha temple, to undergo the *abhiṣeka* and *alaṅkāra* for the marriage ceremonies. This practice mirrors human marriages. The term for the accompanying friends, *tōli*, is used to address the goddesses who accompany Ēlavārkuḷali in the evening procession, which mirrors the ceremony of bringing the bride to the place of the wedding (Tam. *peṅ aḷaiṅṅu*).

A reference to the bride’s procession is given in the second and later part of the ritual handbook *Mahotsavavidhi*:

At a pavilion near a holy bathing place, the Goddess is gratified with food and other offerings. Respectable married women (*suvāsinīs*) honor the Goddess, and she is raised onto a jeweled pedestal, accompanied by singing and auspicious sounds. She is taken to the temple, surrounded by a retinue of seven sword-bearing women, and proceeds to the wedding pavilion (*kalyāna-maṅḍapa*), where she is placed next to Śiva. (Davis 2010: 132–3, fn. 233)

This description parallels the events at Okkapiranthan Kulam: the *maṅḍapa* near the tank, the veneration of the goddess, and the festive procession back to the temple. One could even imagine a connection between the Saptakaṅṅis and the seven sword-bearing women as a kind of female protective force that escorts the goddess on her way to the marriage. It appears that the goddess’s trip to a *maṅḍapa* and the subsequent procession to the temple are fundamental parts of the marriage rituals, as it is described in the *Mahotsavavidhi*.¹⁵

12 The Saptakaṅṅis are related to the Saptamātrkāś, as the group is called in the north of India.

13 The three major temples in Kanchipuram (Ekāmranātha, Kāmākṣī and Varadarāja) have their own groups of safeguarding deities, though some of them overlap.

14 Interview with Suresh Gurukkal, Ekāmranātha temple, 02.04.2010.

15 The same is in practice at the Kacchapeśvara temple in Kanchipuram. Here, the deities’ marriage is

Oral narratives explain why the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali processes to Okkapiranthan Kulam. The popular version is that she is angry with her (soon-to-be) husband Ekāmranātha. Two symbols in the performance are interpreted as indicators of this. First, Ēlavārkuḷali lacks her usual splendid style and ornaments, which gives rise to the assumption that she left the temple in a hurry. Second, she leaves the temple alone. This is the only time throughout the year Ēlavārkuḷali can be seen outside the temple compound without Ekāmranātha in front of, or beside her.¹⁶ Usually, only unmarried goddesses leave the temple alone, whereas married goddesses either stay in the temple or leave it together with their husband. Ēlavārkuḷali's marital status is ambiguous. Thus, her unadorned appearance and the fact that she leaves alone are interpreted as evidence of a hasty, post-quarrel departure. Moreover, Okkapiranthan Kulam is regarded as her mother's home, the only place to seek refuge after a marital dispute. This interpretation is not shared by all, however. Ekāmranātha temple priests emphasize that for practical considerations the goddess is brought unadorned to the *maṇḍapa* at Okkapiranthan Kulam, where she receives an *abhiṣeka* and *alamkāra*, so that in the evening she can be taken, in bridal costume, to the Ekāmranātha temple.

In addition, the well-known theme of Pārvatī's jealousy is interlaced in the oral narrative of the goddess's anger with her husband. In its pan-Indian form it is often jealousy with Gaṅgā, who dwells in the hair of Śiva. However, only a priest of the Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple referred to Gaṅgā when he explained the events to me: 'The Lord is having Gaṅgā on his head and these two (Ēlavārkuḷali and Gaṅgā) get into problem. Okkapiranthan Kulam is like her (Ēlavārkuḷali) mother's place, so when she gets angry she goes to that place. Then Kāmākṣī, our Kālikāmpāl and all go there. They get her pacified and look that she is clad in her marriage dress. Then they bring her to the Ekāmranātha temple and go back to their respective shrines.'¹⁷ The majority of people I spoke with in Okkapiranthan Kulam referred to an affair or a first wife, without naming her, although three explicitly named Kāmākṣī as Ekāmranātha's first wife. This suggests that the pan-Indian motif of Pārvatī's jealousy is made manifest locally in Kanchipuram in the form of a jealousy between Ēlavārkuḷali and Kāmākṣī.

celebrated on the fifth day of the temple's *mahotsava*, which is held in the month of Cittirai (mid-April to mid-May). Sundara Ambikā, the consort of Kacchapeśvara, leaves the temple at five o'clock to go to Pillayar Palayam. She, too, wears only a simple dress and is worshipped at every house until she reaches the Thirmethalinathar temple in Pillayar Palayam, where she gets the *abhiṣeka* and *alamkāra*. She leaves from Pillayar Palayam at ten o'clock in the evening. A village goddess accompanies her up to the entrance of the Kacchapeśvara temple and returns, while Sundara Ambikā enters for the marriage ceremonies. The marriage ceremony at the Kacchapeśvara temple is similar to the Ekāmranātha temple, except that the goddess does not perform *tapas* and worship of the sand *liṅga*. The reason for the goddess's trip to Pillayar Palayam is explained by the fact that the Kacchapeśvara temple is the community temple of the Śaiva Vellalam Modalyars, who mainly live in Pillayar Palayam (interviews with Prabha Gurukkal, Ekāmranātha and Kacchapeśvara temple, 03.04.2010 and 29.03.2011).

16 Ēlavārkuḷali processes alone during the Navarātri festival, but only up to the Vāhana Maṇḍapa in the fifth *prākāra* of the temple and not outside the temple compound.

17 Interview with Dhandapani Gurukkal, Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl temple, 12.03.2011.

4.2 *Tapas* and the worship of the sand *liṅga*

After the farewell to Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpaḷ at the sixteen-pillared *maṇḍapa*, the goddess Ēlavārkuḷali enters the Ekāmranātha temple and goes straight to the Kampā Nadī tank next to the 1000-pillar Maṇḍapa. The Kampā Nadī tank is understood as the visible part of the subterranean Kampā River, on the banks of which, according to mythology, the goddess performed *tapas* and built the sand *liṅga*. The tank is only accessible from the open field on its north side, where a wide flight of stairs leads down to the water. Its other sides are flanked by low-ceilinged colonnades, which demand some skill from the carriers to bring the goddess unscathed to the south side of the tank, where she is placed on a small podium. Only Ēlavārkuḷali's priests and a few other people stay with her, while she is kept isolated for some hours on this side of the tank in a symbolic representation of the goddess's penance (fig. 4.4).¹⁸

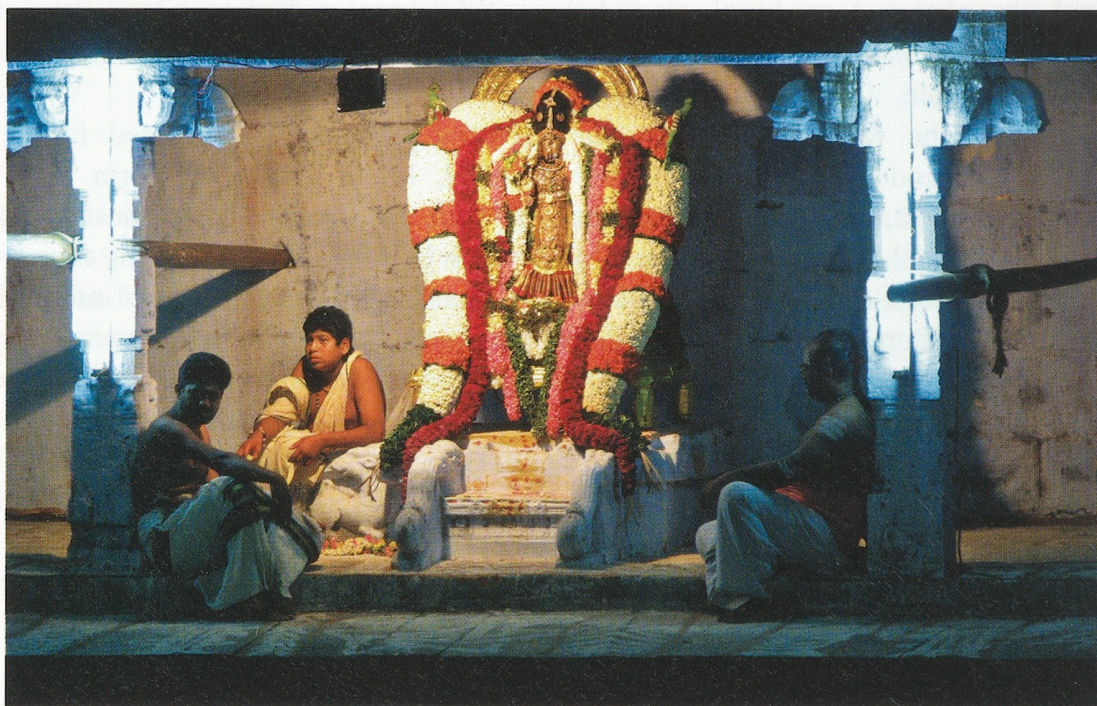


Figure 4.4 The goddess's *tapas* at the Kampā Nadī tank

The atmosphere at the tank is rather contemplative, while the background noise of the festival—loudspeakers broadcasting the cultural program, shrieks from children riding the

18 Apparently, the same is practiced at the festival in Chidambaram. Loud (2004: 144) observes that the goddess Śivakāmasundarī is taken to a tank, which “commemorates the time when the goddess performed *tapas* by standing on top of a needle.” However, at the Ekāmranātha temple it has also been customary to bring the goddess for one day to the Kaṅkaṅeśvara temple in Kanchipuram. This temple is mentioned in the *Kāñcippurāṇam* as the place where the goddess wore a *kappu* (Skt. *kaṅkaṇa*), or bracelet, as a protective cord before she commenced the rituals. Up to twenty-five years ago Ēlavārkuḷali was brought there on Aippaci *mūlam* and a golden bracelet was put around her wrist. This day marked the beginning of the time of her *tapas*. For want of donors this practice stopped. Today, the goddess's penance is only symbolized by the remoteness and separation from Ekāmranātha at the Kampā Nadī tank (interview with Anand Gurukkal, Ekāmranātha temple, 16.04.2009).

swing boat—is audible from the temple’s entrance area.¹⁹ However, after some time, the quietness is interrupted by a group of people, led by drummers and a man who wears a cloth around his mouth and head, and bears a wooden pole on his shoulders to which two brass vessels are tied (Tam. *kāvaṭi*) (see fig. 6.7). The group walks along the tank’s colonnades to the side where Ēlavārkuḷali is placed on the podium. A brown garland, made from a fragrant root called *kuruvi vel* (see fig. 4.5), is taken from one vessel as an offering to the goddess and adorned to her by one of her priests. Soon afterwards, two similar groups of people, led by a man bearing a *kāvaṭi*, approach the goddess to offer her garlands, one made of *tumpai* flower, the other of rose. The men belong to the Vaniya Chettiar community, whose association, the “Periya Kāñcipuram Vāṇiyar Tarma Paripālaṅ Caṅkam,” is the official donor for the Paṅkuṇi Uttiram marriage rituals (see Chapter Six). The three groups leave after the adornment of the different flower garlands, and the tank becomes quiet once again. People look tired from the long waiting time. Some have difficulty keeping their eyes open and doze off, while others talk with their neighbors in low voices.



Figure 4.5 *Kuruvi vel* garland

¹⁹ The contrasting ambiance is certainly reinforced by a guarded gate between the Kampā Nadī tank and the main temple area. While the goddess performs *tapas*, only people affiliated to the temple, such as priests’ families or donors, and reporters, have access to the tank and the open field in front of it.

At about three o'clock in the morning, god Ekāmranātha is brought from the Utsava Sannadhi through the Palli Gopura and 1000-pillar Maṇḍapa to the four-pillared *maṇḍapa*²⁰ on the north side of the Kampā Nadī tank (see fig. 1.5). He is seated on the bull *vāhana*, facing Ēlavārkuḷali on the other side of the tank. Actually, both can see each other across the tank, but Ēlavārkuḷali is already concealed behind a curtain, while another curtain is stretched in front of Ekāmranātha. The gate to the main temple area is opened and people fill the open space between the Kampā Nadī tank and 1000-pillar Maṇḍapa to watch the marriage ceremony. The goddess's side of the tank also becomes crowded, mostly with priests, donors, and others affiliated with the temple. The *pūjā* of the sand *liṅga* is taking place on the stone steps in front of the goddess. An assistant brings a plate with sand to the priests sitting there. One priest pours water over the sand and piles it up to form a *liṅga*, while another performs the *saṃkalpa*²¹ with the donors (fig. 4.6).



Figure 4.6 Piling up the sand for the worship of the sand *liṅga*

The main festival priest performs the *pūjā* for the sand *liṅga*. This is the same *pūjā* as performed for the *liṅga* in the sanctum called *pañcavarṇa pūjā*. After half an hour, when the *pūjā* of the sand *liṅga* is completed, the screens in front of Ēlavārkuḷali and Ekāmranātha are removed and both are worshipped simultaneously with the waving of lamps (*dīpārādhana*). This is a particularly significant moment, celebrating Ekāmranātha's appearance, and constitutes the 'first viewing' of bride and bridegroom as it is also enacted

20 The four-pillared *maṇḍapa* is located on the north side of the tank, where the flight of stairs leads down to the water. It is situated opposite the small podium on the south side of the tank, to which Ēlavārkuḷali is brought. Obviously, the *maṇḍapa* and the podium have been built for this performance.

21 The *saṃkalpa* is the ritual resolution, declaring the performance and purpose of the ritual. For its form and function, see Michaels (2005b: 45–63).

in many local versions of everyday marriages. Firecrackers are lit. People murmur some verses or *mantras*, often the *pañcākṣara mantra* ‘*namaḥ-śivāya*’, and fold their hands in reverence. Drums mark the climax, and the musicians then shift to a well-known marriage song called ‘*Mālai Cārrināḷ Rāmā*’. The assistant takes the plate containing the sand *liṅga*, walks down the stairs, and immerses it in the water of the *Kampā Nadī* tank, while people slowly move to the open field at the other side of the tank in front of the 1000-pillar *Maṇḍapa*, where the exchange of garlands will take place.

One may be surprised that the sand *liṅga* is immersed in the temple tank. Recalling the myth associated with the celebration and re-enactments, it was the goddess’s embrace that *protected* the *liṅga* from dissolving in the waters of the *Kampā* River. I asked the *Ekāmranātha* temple priests about this apparent contradiction. The 2009 festival priest’s brother explained that the sand *liṅga* is a temporary *liṅga* classified as *kṣaṇika liṅga*, which has to be immersed in water after the completion of *pūjā* according to Āgamic regulations. Therefore, one line in the *mantras* of the *pañcavarṇa pūjā* changes, praising the sand *liṅga* with the words ‘you remain here as long as the *pūjā* is done,’ instead of ‘you stay here as long as the moon and the sun exist,’ as it is done for the *liṅga* in the sanctum.²²

Another noticeable point regarding the relation of the ‘marriage myth’ and the ritual re-enactments is that the embrace of and marks on the *liṅga* are completely absent from the rituals. The embrace is a key element in the ‘marriage myth’ and the characteristic feature of *Ekāmranātha* in *Kanchipuram*. In most versions of the ‘marriage myth’ *Ekāmranātha* appears because he is touched by the goddess’s devoted embrace. Why is the embrace, so relevant to the myth, not re-enacted? A priest of the *Ekāmranātha* temple indicated that the goddess’s embrace is an embellishment of the mythological story, which bears little relation to the ritual performance, in which the focus lies on the Āgamic *pūjā* of the sand *liṅga*.²³

4.3 The divine marriage

After the completion of the *pūjā* of the sand *liṅga*, the goddess is carried through the low-ceilinged colonnade to *Ekāmranātha* on the north side of the tank. The open area is packed with people; policemen shout to get them seated in rows on the sandy soil. A path between the 1000-pillar *Maṇḍapa* and the four-pillared *maṇḍapa* is kept free for the performance of the ‘exchange of garlands’. *Ēlavārkuḷali* is brought near the 1000-pillar *Maṇḍapa*, while *Ekāmranātha* is taken from the silver bull *vāhana* and turned to face the goddess. Policemen and spectators flank the thirty-meter walking path between the deities. Musicians play the same joyful marriage tune as previously. A small procession consisting of three priests, flanked by two others fanning with fly whisks, some donors, and devotees with Śaivite banners, walk at a moderate pace under an umbrella towards *Ēlavārkuḷali*. The main festival priest walks in the middle; next to him on one side is a *stāṇikar* priest with a silver plate in his hands and on the other side a *stalattār* priest, murmuring *mantras* while

22 Conversation with Murti Gurukkal, *Ekāmranātha* temple, 01.04.2011.

23 Conversation with Nagaswamy Gurukkal, *Ekāmranātha* temple, 29.03.2011.

he holds his hand protectively over the silver plate.²⁴ On the silver plate are the flower garlands, which are used for the ‘exchange of garlands’ rite. But more significantly, and almost not noticeable under the flower garlands, are two *kūrca* sticks, which represent Ekāmranātha and Ēlavārkuḷali respectively. Each *kūrca* stick is made of a bundle of grass, wrapped with white jasmine flowers knotted to a cord. Throughout the rituals the deities are represented by these two *kūrca* sticks; in one hand the main festival priest holds the *kūrca* stick representing Ekāmranātha while he performs ritualistic tasks as bridegroom, and likewise the other stick as bride (see fig. 4.7). When the procession reaches Ēlavārkuḷali, the main festival priest takes the *kūrca* stick that represents Ekāmranātha in one hand and places the flower garland around the goddess’s neck (see fig. 4.8). This is done with some difficulties, because her statue is already overloaded with huge flower garlands. Then, the procession marches back to Ekāmranātha, and the main festival priest adorns him with the other flower garland, while holding the *kūrca* stick representing Ēlavārkuḷali. The procession paces back and forth between the two deities, who garland each other thrice in this manner. After the third exchange of garlands, the goddess follows the procession towards Ekāmranātha, circumambulates him, and stops on his left side. Firecrackers are lit and both deities are worshipped with the waving of lamps.



Figure 4.7 Main festival priest with *kūrca* stick

24 The *stalattār* priest is in charge of performing the anointments and *pūjās* to the *liṅga* in the sanctum, while the *stāṇikar* priest ‘assists’ him and is responsible for the adornment and jewelry of the festival statues. On the different priests at the Ekāmranātha temple, see Boulanger (1992: 108–13).

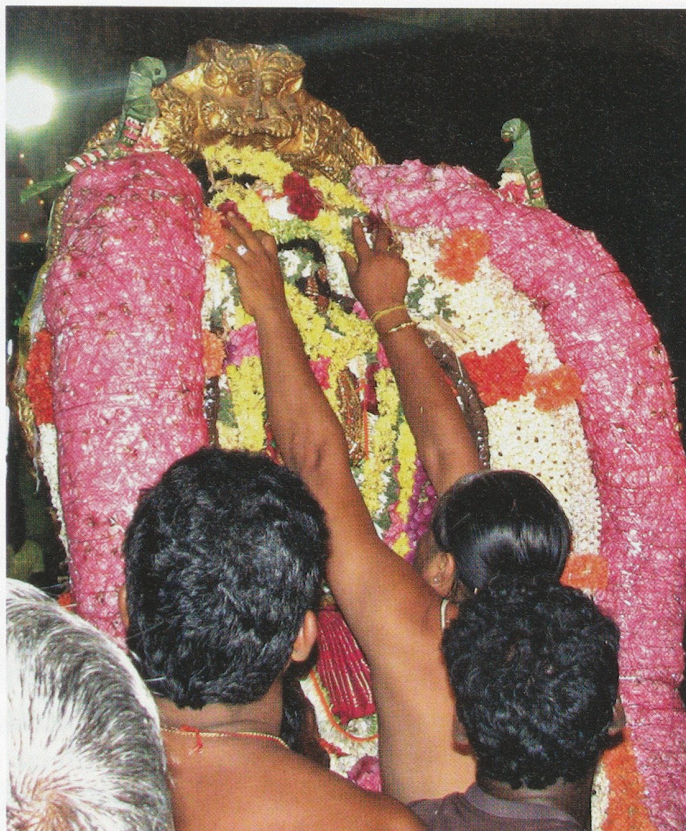


Figure 4.8 Exchange of garlands

After the performance of the ‘exchange of garlands’, Ekāmrānātha and Ēlavārkuḷali are brought to the marriage stage, which has been set up in front of the 1000-pillar Maṇḍapa. The stage is elevated, but most rituals, such as the fire oblations (*homa*), take place on the ground in front of the stage.²⁵ A great part of the rituals can only be observed by the small group of people sitting next to the priests performing them. These are the donors, people from the temple’s administration, and heads of monastic institutions. To the right side of the marriage stage is an area set aside for the priests’ family members, mostly women and children. The ‘ordinary’ spectators sit in rows on the open field to witness the divine marriage.

The deities’ marriage ritual is performed in accordance with the *Baudhāyana Gṛhyasūtra*, which is also used by the Ekāmrānātha temple priests for their own domestic rituals. A priest of the Ekāmrānātha temple described the significant steps in the following way: First, the performance and purpose of the ritual has to be declared (*saṃkalpa*). Then, the main festival priest asks Śiva for permission to perform the rituals. After that, a small Vināyaka idol is formed of turmeric paste and worshipped. Next, the *puṇyāhāvācana* rite (‘invocation of auspiciousness’) for the purification and sanctification of the site and ritual

25 Until about thirty years ago the marriage rituals were performed on a platform on the roof of the 1000-pillar Maṇḍapa, which made it easier to spectate, as people told me. The platform is still there, but the practice stopped due to the roof’s dilapidated condition. The temple’s administration is considering performing the marriage there again after the renovation of the 1000-pillar Maṇḍapa, for which they are collecting funds (<http://www.ekambaranathartemple.org/needs.php>, accessed 19.02.2018).

items is performed. Then, the main festival priest places *mantras* on his hands and limbs (*karanyāsa*, *aṅganyāsa*) and purifies his body and soul (*bhūtaśuddhi*, *ātmaśuddhi*) to make himself suitable for the subsequent rituals.²⁶ After these preliminaries, the primary marriage rituals begin with a *pūjā* for Pārvatīparameśvara. Then, Ekāmranātha is welcomed as bridegroom with the *madhuparka* rite. Water and a mixture of milk, curd, honey, banana and sugar (*pañcāmṛta*) is offered to him from five silver cups (see fig. 6.8). Then the *saṃkalpa* for giving the daughter into marriage (*kanyādāna*) and donation of a cow (*godāna*), symbolized by a coconut, is performed. Afterwards, garments are presented to the deities and the necklace signifying marital status (Tam. *māṅkalyam*, Skt. *maṅgalasūtra*) is tied around the goddess's neck. Then, for the rite of *pāṇigrahaṇa* ('seizing the bride's hand') the two *kūrca* sticks representing Ekāmranātha and Ēlavārkuḷali are placed on a silver plate. The silver plate with the two *kūrca* sticks is taken seven steps by the main festival priest for the subsequent rite of *saptapadī* ('walking seven steps'). A sacrificial fire has been established for the *lājahoma* and god Agni is invited. The priest, who is in charge of the *mūlasthāna* on this day, represents the god Brahma, and serves as a witness to the marriage.²⁷ The god Varuṇa is invited into a water vessel, standing opposite of the main festival priest; the latter performs the fire oblations (*homa*). One of Ēlavārkuḷali's priests takes on the role of her brother, and places parched rice grains (Skt. *lāja*, Tam. *pori*) in the hand of the main festival priest, who offers them into the sacrificial fire. Then, the main festival priest moves the silver plate with the two *kūrca* sticks around the fire, representing the bridal couple's walk around the sacrificial fire. The sequence of giving parched rice grains, strewing them in the sacrificial fire, and circumambulation is repeated three times. Then, a 'full offering' (*pūrṇāhuti*) is made in the fire as completion of the *homa* and the gods Brahma, Varuṇa and Agni are released to their respective places. The black *rakṣā* paste²⁸ is applied on the foreheads of Ekāmranātha and Ēlavārkuḷali. Then, the marriage contract is sealed with water. The main festival priest holds a two-rupee coin in one hand and pours water over it with the other hand. When he holds the coin he is the bridegroom, when he pours the water he represents the party of the bride. Then they are married.²⁹

Most parts of the marriage rituals are not really visible for the broad audience. Yet, the various tunes of the musicians, and beats of the drummers, indicate what is happening, at least to informed spectators who have an idea of what is going to happen. Moreover, some rituals are obviously staged to incorporate members of the audience as active participants. For example, the *māṅkalyam* is displayed before it is tied to the goddess (fig. 4.9), and *tumpai* flowers are distributed in the front rows, so that people shower them on the newlyweds, both after the tying of the *māṅkalyam* and upon the completion of the *lājahoma* (see fig. 4.10).³⁰

26 For a detailed description and pictures of these rites, see Davis (2008: 47–60).

27 The priests work in turns. At the Ekāmranātha temple each day it is the turn (Tam. *murai*) of a priest of another priestly family to perform *pūjā* for the *liṅga* in the sanctum (*mūlasthāna*). The assistant priests and priests for the surrounding shrines shift turns every three months.

28 A black paste prepared from the ashes of burnt *darbha* grass, which was lit at the sacrificial fire, and mixed with water or ghee.

29 Conversation with Murti Gurukkal, Ekāmranātha temple, 01.04.2011. A description and pictures of a Brahmanic wedding can be found in Tachikawa et al. (2001: 135–68).

30 This rite is performed with unhusked rice (*akṣata*) in human marriage rituals as a blessing for the



Figure 4.9 Priest shows the *māṅkalyam* to the participants



Figure 4.10 Showering of *tumpai* flowers on the newlywed deities

In addition, the distribution of temple honors is embedded in the rituals and takes up much time. While the divine couple is seated on the marriage stage, one of the most influential priests at the Ekāmranātha temple stands in front of them and directs the distribution of

newlyweds. However, one priest of the Kacchapeśvara temple was critical of this practice, because ‘humans can not give blessings to the gods.’

temple honors, clearly visible to the audience. Most temple honors are transferred in the form of garments that have been in touch with god Ekāmranātha. The garments are placed first at the deity's feet, then the priest takes them and wraps them like a shawl around the shoulders of the honored persons. The priest honors these persons in a well-defined order. Most of them are donors, people from the temple's administration, religious and political leaders, and others partaking in the temple's 'redistributive process' (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1976). At this occasion, head cloths (Tam. *parivaṭṭam*) are also tied to two donors who bring a specific set of marriage presents (Tam. *varicai*) (see Chapter Six, fig. 6.9). In addition, special marriage *tāmpūlam* packages are distributed, containing betel leaves, arcea nuts, auspicious symbols such as a blouse piece, bangles, a yellow thread, piece of turmeric, *kumkum*, *vibhūti*, and sweets.

After the marriage, both deities are brought to the Vāhana Maṇḍapa, where Ekāmranātha mounts the big golden bull *vāhana* and Ēlavārkuḷali a canopied vehicle (Tam. *capparam*). By now it is almost six o'clock and day is dawning. A huge crowd awaits the newlyweds in front of the temple and in the streets on their 'honeymoon ramble' through town.³¹ When the deities return to the Ekāmranātha temple at about ten o'clock, they are brought to the *maṇḍapa* attached to the Naṭarāja Sannadhi, which is on this special occasion temporarily used as bed chamber (Tam. *paḷḷiyarai*). The deities rest there for two hours, then the doors are opened and the *viśvarūpadarśana*³² ('the vision of the universal form') takes place, which marks the end of the tenth festival day.

Popular legend: a cat is crossing the marriage

A popular legend holds that a cat crosses the marriage rituals of Ekāmranātha and Ēlavārkuḷali, and this is considered to be a bad omen.³³ In this case, the divine marriage has to be stopped and postponed to the next year.

The idea that a cat crosses the marriage is widespread. Priests of the Varadarāja temple, too, knew about the cat, asking my research assistant: 'Did you see the cat coming in the middle of the marriage?' Diverse opinions exist about the nature of the cat. A woman from Cinna Kanchi, who comes every year to the marriage, told me: 'This is not a real cat, it is a silver cat, which is placed there by the priest.' Another person believed that Pārvatī, jealous of Ēlavārkuḷali, comes in the form of the cat: 'When Śiva comes near her (Ēlavārkuḷali), Pārvatī, who is Śiva's wife, becomes a cat and stops the marriage.' The cat story is so popular that during the wedding rituals spectators say to each other: 'Keep watching, the cat is going to come!' Others, such as a man from Okkapiranthan Kulam with whom I

31 Davis (2010: 132–3, fn. 233) described the procession after the wedding as 'honeymoon ramble', since the *Mahotsavavidhi* uses the term *bhrāmayati* (to wander, roam) instead of *pradakṣiṇayati* (to circumambulate), which suggests a more relaxed route for this particular procession.

32 The couple is thought to enjoy sexual relations and the first sight after their consummation is extraordinarily beneficial.

33 See for example Thurston (1912: 17): "In the list of bad omens come a donkey, broom, buffalo, untied bullock, barber, widow, patient, cat, washerman. The worst of all omens is to allow a cat to cross one's path."

spoke, locate this event in the past, saying: ‘Before they used to let a cat inside the marriage. It is inauspicious, but it is not happening today.’

The story of the cat that thwarts the completion of the divine marriage is also known to the priests of the Ekāmranātha temple, one of whom said: ‘Even these days, the village people are saying that Ampāl did not get married,’ and laughingly added, ‘They say that a cat comes in the middle!’³⁴ He then explained the circumstances: ‘They brought a big basket, in that was the silver bell. When they were taking the bell out, people used to say the cat is being taken from the basket. It took place in olden days.’ The silver bell might account for the notion of a silver cat. Another priest of the Ekāmranātha temple commented: ‘The story was told by somebody, it spread and became propaganda. That is why they are doing the marriage next year. How can you stop the marriage? This is the public opinion.’³⁵ Indeed, for many people the cat is deliberate tactic to ensure a repetition of the festival: ‘Someone sends a cat in between to stop the wedding so that we can conduct the festival next year again,’ for ‘if the marriage takes place, the festival will not take place the next year.’³⁶

Obviously, it is a conceptual problem, why Ekāmranātha and Ēlavārkuḷali are getting married year after year. One solution, maintained by the public, is the cat’s crossing and interruption of the marriage, which demands a repetition of the marriage in the next year. The Ekāmranātha temple priests dismiss this notion as a belief (Tam. *aitīkam*) of the people. At least when talking to me, they refer instead to the Kanchipuram Sthalapurāṇas, in which Śiva himself determined that the divine wedding shall take place every year in Kanchipuram.

A similar phenomenon of hindered marriage rituals has been noticed in the wedding of Sundareśvara and Mīnākṣī in Madurai. Elmore ([1913] 1995: 84) writes: “At this celebration the marriage ceremonies are again performed, but they are never completed. While the ceremonies are proceeding, every year without fail someone sneezes at the right moment, and as a sneeze at such a time is most inauspicious, the marriage is declared off for another year.” Shulman (1980: 166, fn. 86) refers to this source, too, adding that he has been informed that the sneeze is not reflected in present-day rituals. He relates the phenomenon of the postponed wedding to his analysis of Tamil marriage myths, which follow the structural principle that the goddess cannot be married fully, because she has to maintain her virginity in order to be a powerful goddess. In this respect, my data from the marriage rituals at the Ekāmranātha temple in Kanchipuram points in the same direction. The completion of the marriage has to be hindered. In Kanchipuram, this is achieved by the inauspicious crossing of a cat, and in Madurai by a sneeze. At both places the tradition is well known, though it is not present anymore in the contemporary performance of the rituals, if it ever was. Yet, in the people’s opinion the hindrance is necessary, so that the festival can take place again the following year, and not because the goddess needs to maintain her virginity. However, the maintenance of virginity may be an underlying motive, which formed the popular legend of the cat crossing the marriage.

34 See interview with Kamesvara Gurukkal, Ekāmranātha temple, 18.04.2009.

35 See interview with Nagaswamy Gurukkal, Ekāmranātha temple, 17.04.2009.

36 Conversation with people at the Ekāmranātha temple before the marriage rituals, 19.03.2011.

4.4 Concluding remarks

At present, the goddess's penance, the establishment and worship of the sand *liṅga*, Śiva's subsequent revelation, and the re-marriage, are re-enacted on the tenth day of the temple festival. However, the goddess's embrace, which is a constituent narrative theme in the 'marriage myth' and one reason for Śiva's appearance, is not a part of the contemporary re-enactments. At the same time, elements that do not occur in the written form of the 'marriage myth' are integrated in the re-enactments, such as the goddess's trip to Okkapiranthan Kulam and the bridal procession in the evening. These events mirror human marriage customs. In addition, they are framed by oral narratives about marital disharmony and/or jealousy.

The theme of marital disharmony is also displayed in a ritual performance called *ūṭal* ('love quarrel').³⁷ During the evening procession of the eleventh day of the *mahotsava* a quarrel between Ēlavārkuḷali and Ekāmranātha, and their reconciliation is re-enacted.³⁸ Here, too, many are of the opinion that the quarrel arises due to jealousy of another woman, in particular the goddess Gaṅgā.³⁹ Priests of the Ekāmranātha temple, however, tend to deemphasize the jealousy motif, and dismiss it as a 'misunderstanding and wrong interpretation of the people.' They instead highlight the role model function of the gods, showing that small misunderstandings between husband and wife are common, and are not a problem as long as one is reconciled again. One priest also stressed the educational function of displaying the quarrel and reconciliation: 'The *ūṭal* is to prove and teach the public that Svāmi and Ampāl are not different, that is Śiva and Śakti are not different. They are one. Only if such an incidence takes place it will be in the mind of the public.'⁴⁰

Another point worth considering is that for a re-union and re-marriage a separation is first necessary.⁴¹ In the Kanchipuram Sthalapurāṇas, the separation is initiated by Śiva, who sends the goddess to Kanchipuram for the expiation of a misdeed. In the re-enactments the spatial distance to Ekāmranātha through Ēlavārkuḷali's trip to Okkapiranthan Kulam displays the separation. In the oral narratives, the goddess, who is running away in anger due to a quarrel, causes the separation. Thus, it seems that a separation is necessary, but expressed differently in the textual, oral and performative traditions. Moreover, in the oral

37 In classical Tamil poetry *ūṭal* is a distinctive behavior pattern in love defined as "the lover's infidelity and reconciliation" (Zvelebil 1974: 37).

38 The second and later part of the *Mahotsavavidhi* mentions a 'love quarrel' (Skt. *praṇaya kalaha*), describing that Śiva and the goddess circumambulate the city and become angry at each other by the time they reach the northeast corner. When they return to the temple they are reconciled (Davis 2010: 134, fn. 237). At the Ekāmranātha temple festival the quarrel is re-enacted at the flower market, which is the northeast corner of the processional route.

39 However, Ēlavārkuḷali's priest suggested another motive. He told me that Ēlavārkuḷali is upset because Ekāmranātha takes the golden bull *vāhana* on the 'honeymoon' procession after the marriage, whereas she has to take the small cart. Therefore, they quarrel the day after. Ekāmranātha conciliates her by offering the golden bull *vāhana* to her, which she then takes on the evening procession of the twelfth day (interview with Anand Gurukkal, Ekāmranātha temple, 16.04.2009).

40 Interview with Nagaswamy Gurukkal, Ekāmranātha temple, 17.04.2009.

41 For example, Baudy (1998: 40) reports that the Greek goddess Hera was brought to Nauplia and bathed in a spring, which made her a virgin again, so that the sacred marriage could happen again every year during the festival.

narratives Ēlavārkuḷali has to be convinced by her female friends, the goddesses Kāmākṣī and Āti Kāmākṣī Kālikāmpāl, to go back to Ekāmranātha and marry him. This reflects Shulman's category 'reluctant bride' (1980: 144). He analyzed forms of divine marriage in Tamil temple myths and in some of them the local goddess is reluctant to take the step to marry or avoids the marriage altogether. The oral narratives focus on this theme, whereas in the Kanchipuram Sthalapurāṇas the goddess eagerly wishes to be united with Śiva again. It seems the written (Sanskrit) sources attempt to connect to the pan-Indian Sanskrit tradition, which does not prevail against the local traditions.

