

# Glory of the Tiruvanantapuram Padmanābhasvāmi Temple as Described in the *Māhātmyas*

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## Introduction

Among the 108 beloved places of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Tradition (*divyadeśas*), thirteen temples belong to Malaināṭu or Kerala.<sup>1</sup> Among these, the Padmanābhasvāmi Temple, located in Tiruvanantapuram (Trivandrum), the capital city of Kerala, is well known among Vaiṣṇava devotees. In the year 2011, it became world-famous because of the unveiling of an invaluable collection of treasures stored in the secret chambers of the temple;<sup>2</sup> this discovery pointed to the glorious past of the temple. The glory of this abode of Lord Viṣṇu may be found referred to in several literary works and this temple might have already started being known in the ninth century CE, from the period of Nammālvār, one of the twelve Vaiṣṇavite saints of the Ālvār tradition, who composed a hymn (*Tiruvāymoḷi* 10.2) in praise of Lord Padmanābha of Tiruvanantapuram. Apart from this, several works other than the Purāṇas<sup>3</sup> speak about the glory of the Tiruvanantapuram temple: a *māhātmya* named *Anantaśayana-kṣetramāhātmya*, probably composed before the fourteenth century,<sup>4</sup> an early Malayalam work known under the title *Anantapuravarṇana*, and other texts such as the

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- 1 The 108 Vaiṣṇava temples are traditionally divided into various geographical regions (*nāṭu*): Malaināṭu or Cēranāṭu (Kerala) thirteen; Pāṇṭiyanāṭu (south of the Kaveri river) eighteen; Cōlanāṭu (Kaveri delta) fourty; Naṭunāṭu (the intermediary region in between Cōlanāṭu and Toṇṭaināṭu) two; Toṇṭaināṭu (northern Tamilnadu) twenty-two; Vaṭanāṭu (North India) eleven; others (Heaven) two.
  - 2 For a detailed discussion on the opening of these secret chambers see Gopalakrishnan (2012, 7–12), Narayanan (2011, 5–8) and Sasibhooshan & Raja (2011, 30–31, 211–213). The secret chambers were opened at the order of the Supreme Court of India in 2011 based on a case filed by T. P. Sundararaj, a retired Indian Police Service Officer. This Supreme Court order instructed the Government of Kerala to take over the administration of the temple and to account for and prepare an inventory of the wealth kept in the secret chambers of the temple. For a detailed report on this case, see Subramaniam 2012 and 2014.
  - 3 For the details of Purāṇas that refer to Tiruvanantapuram, see Bayi 1995, 350–356.
  - 4 The dating of this *māhātmya* is uncertain, since there is no internal evidence to confirm the date. The *Anantapuravarṇana* (1953, 15) is dated to the fourteenth century and the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* might be a source for the Malayalam text since we find several common ideas in the Sanskrit text and in the Malayalam text. If the Sanskrit text was the source for the Malayalam text, it could be dated to earlier than the fourteenth century CE.

*Syānandūrapurānasamuccaya*,<sup>5</sup> the *Padmanābhodaya* by Śaṅku, the *Padmanābhacarita* by Kṛṣṇaśarman (see Raja 1958, 169–170) and the *Padmanābhakīrtana* (see Raja 1958, 173) give light on the temple as well as on its glorification. Several works of Svāti-Tirunāl, a ruler of Travancore, especially his *Syānandūrapuravarṇanaprabandha*, which describes the different activities of the temple, including its festivals, need a special mention. There are also many minor works on the temple, such as the *Padmanābhapañcaka* (see Raja 1958, 257), the *Padmanābhastuti* (see Raja 1958, 242), the *Padmanābhavijaya* of Subramaṇya (see Raja 1958, 172), etc. We also find the *māhātmya* of the temple mentioned in many literary works, especially in *sandeśa-kāvya*s, such as the *Śukasandeśa* of Lakṣmīdāsa and the *Haṃsasandeśa*, and in Sanskrit dramas, such as the *Vasumatīkalyāṇa* and the *Pradyumnābhyudaya*, etc. We also find references to it in the hagiological works of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, namely, the *Guruparamparāprabhāva*, the *Divyasūrīcarita*, the *Prapannāmṛta*, etc. A *sthalapurāṇa* in Tamil, the *Tiruvaṇantai Talavilācam* (see Bayi 1995, 364) on the Tiruvanantapuram temple by Caṅkara Cuppiramaṇiya Kavirāyar also merits special attention. Though there exist several works on the Tiruvanantapuram temple, the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* seems to be an important work that has so far not received much scholarly attention.<sup>6</sup> Therefore this contribution will focus on this less-known *māhātmya*.

### *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*

Among the above works that spread the glory of the Tiruvanantapuram temple, the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, a fully-fledged work similar to other known *māhātmya*s, is taken up here for a detailed discussion. For this, a manuscript belonging to the Trivandrum Oriental Research Institute and Manuscript Library, bearing the number T. No. 1845, has been consulted.<sup>7</sup> There are eleven chapters in this *māhātmya* written in *anuṣṭubh* metre, and the text professes to be a part of the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa*.<sup>8</sup> The text is in the form of a dialogue between Sūta and the sages and, similarly to other *māhātmya*s, begins with a prologue. The sages perform a thousand sacrifices (*sahasra-satra*) and when the morning offerings are over, Śaunaka and other sages gathered there request Sūta to narrate the myth and to explain the origin and importance of Viṣṇu in Anantaśayana[kṣetra] (the Tiruvanantapuram temple).

5 For a detailed description of this text, see Bayi 1995, 366–372.

6 Bayi in her detailed study on the Tiruvanantapuram temple devotes a chapter on “Search of Sources” (1995, 349–401) and discusses the different works related to the temple but does not include the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* in it.

7 The *New Catalogus Catalogorum*, vol. I, 183 mentions a number of other manuscripts as well as a printed edition (in Grantha script, Madras 1906) of this *māhātmya*. However, I have not been able to trace this printed edition.

8 E.g. *iti śrī brahmāṇḍapurāṇe brahmāṇḍagolavistārākhyāne anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmye ekādaśodhyāyaḥ*.

In reply to the sages' question, Sūta narrates the myth of origin of the temple, explaining from where the god Viṣṇu appeared in the Tiruvanantapuram temple, his glory, the *tīrthas* (sacred waterbodies) around Tiruvanantapuram, the benefits one attains by having the vision of the deity in the Tiruvanantapuram temple, and also the fruits obtained by reading and listening to the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*.

In the first chapter of the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* (see Appendix I), after venerating Viṣṇu, Sūta explains the importance of the Tiruvanantapuram temple and begins to tell the sages the story of its origin and the story of a great devotee named Divākaramuni, who lived, along with other sages, in Dvāraka and worshipped Viṣṇu there. The second chapter of the *māhātmya* describes sage Agastya's arrival on the banks of the Tāmraparṇī<sup>9</sup> river to help the *devas* to restore the balance of the earth, which had become unbalanced by the great size of the crowd attending the marriage of Śiva and Pārvaṭī in the Himalāya mountains. Agastya, who feels that he might not be able to have the vision of Viṣṇu if he moved to the south, is told by Viṣṇu to perform penance on the banks of the Tāmraparṇī river; Viṣṇu assures him that he would appear before him while he is there. The third chapter of the *māhātmya* gives additional information about the origin of the temple, while the fourth chapter praises the glory of Padmanābha, the lord of the Tiruvanantapuram temple, incorporating words from different Vedic hymns such as the *Puruṣasūkta*, the *Uttaranārāyaṇa*, etc. In the fifth chapter, the penance of Agastya on the banks of the Tāmraparṇī river and Agastya's vision of Viṣṇu as Padmanābha are described; the sage praises the glory of Padmanābha and this is written in the form of a *stuti*. The sixth chapter of the *māhātmya* is also in the form of a *stuti* to Padmanābha by the mountains Malaya, Mahendra, etc., and also by the river Tāmraparṇī. In the seventh chapter, Padmanābha blesses the sage Agastya and asks him to remain on the Malayācala, one of the seven main chains of mountains mentioned in the scriptures in the southernmost part of the Western Ghats, and tells the Malayācala mountain range that Agastya will henceforth stay there on the mountain. In this chapter, the river Tāmraparṇī is praised, too, and the story of Agastya's stay in the surroundings of the river is told. In the eighth chapter, we see Divākaramuni requesting Viṣṇu to transform his Anantapadmanābha incarnation into a form in which he can be conveniently worshipped. Viṣṇu agrees to this request and the sage constructs a temple for Padmanābha, where he may venerate him daily. The ninth chapter of the *māhātmya* is devoted to describing the glory of Narasiṃha, who has a secondary shrine close to the main sanctum of Lord Padmanābha. The tenth chapter tells the story of the demon Keśi and his fight with Viṣṇu, while the eleventh describes seventy-two *tīrthas*<sup>10</sup>

9 Tāmraparṇī is a perennial river that originates from the Agastyakudam peak of the Pothigai hills in the Western Ghats, above Papanasam in the Ambasamudram taluk. It flows through the Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts of the Tamil Nadu state of southern India into the Gulf of Mannar. There is also a *māhātmya* on this river named *Tāmraparṇīmāhātmya*.

10 Though the text gives the number of *tīrthas* as seventy-two, I could trace only forty-one *tīrthas* from the text.

(*divisaptatīha tīrthāni puṇyadāni śarīriṇām*) around the Padmanābhasvāmi Temple and concludes with a *stuti* on Padmanābha.

### The Origin of the Tiruvanantapuram Temple as Explained in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*

Though there are different myths<sup>11</sup> on the origin of the Tiruvanantapuram temple, the story narrated in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* is quite descriptive and closely reflects some of the present-day practices of the temple, especially the appointment of the priests from the Tuḷu-speaking area of the North Kerala, as the *māhātmya*, too, suggests.

In the introductory verses of the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, the sages ask Sūta to tell them about the origin of the Tiruvanantapuram temple and Sūta explains it in detail. The *māhātmya* describes how several sages worshipped Kṛṣṇa in Dvāraka, Kṛṣṇa's abode. Among them is a sage named Divākara, a pious and strict devotee of Kṛṣṇa. Pleased by his devotion, Viṣṇu appears before him as a radiant young child. Attracted by the charm of the boy, the sage asks him about his home and parents. The boy replies that he has no father, no mother and no home and asks the sage to take care of him; the sage agrees. But the child has a condition: if ever he feels disrespected, he will not continue to stay with the sage. One day, in an extremely naughty mood, the little boy puts the sacred *śālagrāma* (the small idol used for daily worship) worshipped by sage Divākara into his mouth. Seeing this, the sage pushes away the little one with his left hand and the boy runs away from the sage. Leaving the rituals, the sage runs behind him lamenting, saying that he would not be able to live without the boy. While running, the sage also repeatedly asks the boy to stop and says that he would be free to play with and take away the *śālagrāmas* that were worshipped by him, but the boy does not stop. The sage follows him and, after running a long way, they reach a place near the southern sea. The boy, in full view of the sage, enters into a huge hollow tree. The sage reaches around near the tree, searching for the boy, but the huge tree falls and spreads over three *yojanas*. The frightened sage searches for the boy in the hollow and, not seeing him there, runs to the seashore, which the spread of the tree has reached. The sage weeps, saying that it would not be possible for him to live without the boy; he asks himself whether the boy was Kṛṣṇa or Lord Padmanābha. The sage repeatedly pleads with the boy to appear from the hollow where he had disappeared. He meditates there, visualising Viṣṇu in the form of Anantapadmanābha. Suddenly the huge tree is transformed into the form of Padmanābha lying on a serpent along with his attributes. His head is positioned near a *tīrtha* called Matsyatīrtha (Tiruvallam area, seven kilometres south of the Tiruvanantapuram temple), and his shoulders are close to the Cakratīrtha and

11 For different version of stories on the origin of the Tiruvanantapuram temple, see Bayi 1995, 18–22.

Śaṅkhatīrtha.<sup>12</sup> The middle part of his body is on the southern side of the Varāhatīrtha and west of the Padmatīrtha (the present location of the Tiruvanantapuram temple). Both feet are near the Dharmatīrtha and Adharmatīrtha<sup>13</sup> (present Tṛppādapuram, twelve kilometres to the north of the Tiruvanantapuram temple). At this point, the *māhātmya* describes the glory of this form of Padmanābha at great length and also the sage Divākara venerating and meditating on the Lord. The *māhātmya* moreover includes a long *stuti* on Padmanābha by sage Divākara and sage Agastya, and by the mountains of that region and the Tāmraparṇī river, all eagerly waiting to have the vision of Padmanābha. Pleased with the prayers of Agastya, the mountains and the Tāmraparṇī river, Lord Padmanābha blesses them all and gives them boons.

Gratified with the devotion of the sage Divākara, Lord Padmanābha addresses him as a native of *tuḷudeśa*<sup>14</sup> (*tauḷavosau yatīndrah*) and encourages him to ask for a boon. The sage Divākara praises the Vāmana incarnation of Viṣṇu, who briefly explains how, from the form of a small boy (Vāmana), he took an immense form and measured the whole universe in three steps. The sage then asks the Lord to transform his huge form into a more suitable one, which he and other devotees could see and worship. He prays that the Lord be pleased to limit his form to three times the length of his bamboo-stick (a *daṇḍa* that the sages carry with them) to accommodate his limited, mortal vision. Padmanābha agrees to transform his body and shrinks to the required dimensions. Thus a shrine with a beautiful tower (*vimāna*) having three doors comes into being. While the first door has the head position of the Lord, the second door has the middle portion (*nābhi*) of his body and the third one his feet. Here the *māhātmya* provides us with a beautiful description of the form in which the Lord manifested himself at the request of the sage. In the description, the *māhātmya* also mentions Śrīdevī and Bhūdevī, the consorts of Lord Padmanābha.

The Lord tells the sage that he will stay in Tiruvanantapuram with Narasiṃha<sup>15</sup> and that he will be pleased if the sage worships him twelve times daily according to the methods taught in the *Pauṣkara*[*saṃhitā*]. The sage is also asked to perform

12 At present there are two small tanks namely Cakrafīrtha and Śaṅkhatīrtha near the Trivandrum Shangumugham beach, Kerala. The holy bath during the festival of the Tiruvanantapuram temple takes place close to these two *tīrthas*.

13 It is believed that the head of the Lord touched present day Tiruvallam (seven kilometres from the Tiruvanantapuram temple on its southern side) and the feet extended up to Tṛppādapuram (twelve kilometres from the present temple on its northern side).

14 Tuḷudeśa refers to the area of the former South Canara district of the Madras Presidency of British India, which covered the areas of the present-day districts of Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and the Kasaragod District of Kerala. The district was one of the most heterogeneous of Madras Presidency with Tuḷu, Kannada, Konkani, Malayalam, Urdu and Beary being the principal languages spoken. It is possible that the Tuḷudeśa mentioned in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* more specifically refers to the present Kasaragod district of Kerala since the priests of Tiruvanantapuram temple are appointed from the Kasaragod area.

15 At present there is a sanctum of Narasiṃha close to the main shrine. For a discussion of the myth related to the Narasiṃha installed in the Tiruvanantapuram temple, see Bayi 1995, 206–207.

different rituals for prosperity (*śānti*) prescribed in the *Vaikhānasa* texts as well as fortnightly, monthly and yearly festivals. It is further decreed that the descendants of the sage, who are from the Tuḷu region, should continue to perform rituals for him since he is pleased only by the rituals performed by them.<sup>16</sup>

We can very easily connect some of the above statements made in the *māhātmya* with the present-day practices of the temple: the involvement of a *sannyāsin* (sage) in the ritual affairs of the Tiruvananthapuram temple and the fact that the priests of the temple are appointed from the Tuḷu region. According to the temple practices, a ritual will be performed every morning by a sage, who is designated as *puṣpāñjalīsvāmiyār*.<sup>17</sup> At present, the pontiffs of two *maṭhas* (monasteries), namely Naṭuvil Maṭham of Thrissur (Kerala) and Muñcira Maṭham of present Kanyakumari District (Tamil Nadu), are chosen for this position on a six-months rotation. Four chief priests (who are known as *nambi*), as well as twenty-four assistant priests, are appointed from two villages, namely Kokkada and Pulloor, situated on either side of the Candragiri river in Kasaragod District of Kerala. While the Kokkada village brahmins are mostly Malayala brahmins (Nampūtiris), the Pulloor village brahmins are Tuḷu brahmins. Thus the daily rituals by a sage, mostly not followed in other temples of Kerala, and the appointment of priests from the Tuḷu-speaking region confirm with the statements and descriptions found in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*.

## Other Myths of the Origin of the Temple<sup>18</sup>

There is another version of the origin of the temple, more widely known than the one discussed above, which relates to a Nampūtiri brahmin sage by name

16 Bayi (1995, 19) observes that “we see a strong Tulu Brahmin tradition existing in the Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple” and adds further that “Divākara is given a period dating to the month of Idavom, 225 ME corresponding to May/June of 1050 A.D.” However, Bayi does not give any reference for this dating.

17 For a detailed description of the roles of the *puṣpāñjalīsvāmiyār* concerning the temple rituals, see Bayi 1995, 279–282.

18 Bayi (1995, 20) narrates this story, different from the two myths described above, on the origin of the temple: “It is said that when a Pulaya woman was working in a field she heard the wail of an infant. To her surprise, she found a beautiful baby boy who seemed to be abandoned, close at hand. The aura surrounding the baby was so apparent that she feared to touch him. However moved by his continuous crying, she washed herself and cradling the baby in her arms fed him with her breast milk. The baby then fell silent. She placed him gently under the shelter of an Iluppa [*Madhuca longifolia*] tree. In a flash a five hooded cobra appeared and removed the infant to a hole in the tree, sheltering him with its hood like an umbrella. The pulayi and her husband, overcome by this divine occurrence, would daily go to the spot and offer husked rice as well as milk in a coconut shell. The King of this [Travancore] land on hearing of this wondrous happening, went there and immediately had a small temple built at that place, which later grew to its subsequent impressive proportions.”

Vilvamaṅgala.<sup>19</sup> This sage, who lived in North Malabar (Raja 1958, 41; Bayi 1995, 20), used to have visions of a god in the form of a boy during his daily rituals. One day, during the sage's daily worship, the boy took away the *śālagrāma*. The sage became angry and the boy vanished. The sage went looking for the boy and finally located him in a place known as *Anantankāṭu*<sup>20</sup> or “forest of Ananta” in the south of Kerala, which is today the city of Tiruvanantapuram (Trivandrum). The sage had a vision of Viṣṇu reclining on the serpent Ananta and, not having anything suitable to offer, he plucked a few unripe mangoes and placed them in a coconut shell lying there. We find a reflection of this story when today salted mango is offered in a coconut shell made of gold during the morning rituals of this temple. As was discussed earlier, the custom followed for the past several centuries of a Nampūtiri brahmin *sannyāsin* (designated as *puṣpāñjalisvāmiyār*) being present in the temple for the performance of the morning offerings further reflects this story.

## Link between Two Padmanābhasvāmi Temples in Kerala

The *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, while describing the origin of the Tiruvanantapuram temple, mentions that the sage Divākaramuni worshipped Viṣṇu in Dvāraka and later reached Tiruvanantapuram, where he had the vision of Lord Padmanābha and installed the present temple. But the same *māhātmya* also refers to Divākaramuni as a *Taulava*, one who belongs to the Tuḷu region (South Karnataka/North Kerala). In another legend, which we saw earlier, the sage Vilvamaṅgala worshipped Viṣṇu in the present Kasaragod area in North Kerala. In Kasaragod district (Kerala), there is a Viṣṇu temple, located in Anantapura, and this temple is named “Anantapadmanābhasvāmi Temple.”<sup>21</sup> While in the Kasaragod Anantapura temple Padmanābha is depicted as seated on the serpent, in the Tiruvanantapuram temple the Lord is also shown on the serpent, but in reclining position. The beautiful Anantapura temple in Kasaragod is surrounded by a rectangular lake and the temple sanctum is reached by a small bridge over the lake. It is also believed that it is in this place that the sage had

19 Referring to K. Rama Pisharoti, K. Kunjuni Raja (1958, 41) observes that “there were three Vilvamaṅgalas: the first was the author of the *Kṛṣṇakarṇāmṛta* and flourished in the ninth century A.D.; the second Vilvamaṅgala is identified with the grammarian who wrote the *Puruṣakāra* commentary on *Daiva*; and the third was a contemporary of Mānadeva, Zamorin of Calicut, who flourished in the seventeenth century.” Though the stories related to Tiruvanantapuram mention a *sannyāsin* named Vilvamaṅgala, we do not have written documents to relate this Vilvamaṅgala with the above mentioned three Vilvamaṅgalas.

20 It is also said (Bayi 1995, 19) that, though not found in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, when the little boy disappeared from the vision of sage Divākara, he proclaimed that if ever the Muni desired to see him, he would have to go to Anantankāṭu (forest of Ananta) and seek him out there. Thus the sage went on searching for the Anantankāṭu and finally got the vision of God in the Anantankāṭu, the area where we find the Tiruvanantapuram temple at present.

21 For a brief history and features of this temple, see <http://ananthapuratemple.com/history> (last accessed on November 18, 2020).

the vision of Padmanābha as a young boy, whom the sage later found in Tiruvanantapuram. It is also considered that the Anantapadmanābhasvāmi temple in Kasaragod is the *mūlasthāna* (original place) of the Tiruvanantapuram temple. As Bayi (1995, 21) says, “the Anantapuram temple in Kasargode is related to both Divakara Muni and Vilvamangalattu swamiyar. Kasargode, which is today a part of Kerala was once in Tulu country. As such a trend of thought strongly prevails that these two sages were in reality one individual.” The *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* clearly refers to the sage Divākara as a *Tauḷava* and we also see that priests of the Tiruvanantapuram temple are currently appointed from the Tuḷu speaking area of Kerala. Additionally, a daily ritual is performed by a sage who belongs to a *maṭha* of North Kerala. All this, in one way or another, links the Tiruvanantapuram temple with the Tuḷu speaking North Kerala region. Due to the lack of historical evidence, we cannot be sure of the historical development of the connection between the Kasaragod temple and the Tiruvanantapuram temple; however, there seems to be a strong belief among devotees in the connection between these two temples.

Other than the Anantapuram temple of North Kerala, two more temples may well be connected to the Tiruvanantapuram temple, namely the present Tiruvallam Paraśūrāma temple (five kilometres from the Tiruvanantapuram temple) and the Trppādapuram Kṛṣṇa temple (twelve kilometres from the Tiruvanantapuram temple). As was discussed earlier, when Viṣṇu gave the vision of Anantapadmanābha to the sage Divākara, the Lord had his head in Tiruvallam and his feet in Trppādapuram. In both these places, there are temples: while in Tiruvallam it is a Paraśūrāma temple with a separate sanctum for Viṣṇu, in Trppādapuram there are separate sanctums for Śiva and Viṣṇu. There is also a temple tank in Tiruvallam presently known as Baliṭīrtha (while the *māhātmya* refers to it as Matsyaṭīrtha), and two water tanks in Trppādapuram, as mentioned in the *māhātmya*, namely Aśrutīrtha and Pāpanāśinīṭīrtha (in the *māhātmya* these tanks are referred to as Dharmatīrtha and Adharmatīrtha).

### *Tīrthas* Mentioned in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*

A *māhātmya* usually describes the *tīrthas* (sacred waterbodies) in the surroundings of the centres that figure in that *māhātmya*. In the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, too, we find a list of *tīrthas* around the Tiruvanantapuram temple. Regarding the incarnation of Viṣṇu as Anantapadmanābha in Tiruvanantapuram, the *māhātmya* mentions certain *tīrthas* to specify his lying position that are said to correspond to particular parts of the lying of the god’s body. This includes the head with Matsyaṭīrtha, Śāṅkhatīrtha and Cakraṭīrtha with his arms, the stomach between Varāhatīrtha and Padmatīrtha and the two feet with Dharmatīrtha and Adharmatīrtha.<sup>22</sup>

22 The *tīrthas* mentioned here could be located at present with different names: Baliṭīrtha at Tiruvallam (head); Varāhatīrtha and Padmatīrtha (middle part); two *tīrthas* namely Kaṇṇunīr[āśru]ṭīrtha and Pāpanāśinīṭīrtha at Trppādapuram (feet).

The eleventh chapter of the *māhātmya* lists and describes the glory of several *tīrthas*. Though the *māhātmya* says that there are seventy-two *tīrthas*,<sup>23</sup> it seems to list only forty-one:

1. Matsyatīrtha, 2. Varāhatīrtha, 3. Pādatīrtha [Tīrthapāda as known now],
4. Padmanābhatīrtha [Padmatīrtha as known now], 5. Śaṅkhatīrtha, 6. Caktra-
- tīrtha, 7. Dharmatīrtha, 8. Adharmatīrtha, 9. Indratīrtha, 10. Agnitīrtha, 11. Ya-
- matīrtha, 12. Nairṛtatīrtha, 13. Varuṇatīrtha, 14. Vāyutīrtha, 15. Somatīrtha,
16. Īsanatīrtha, 17. Durgātīrtha, 18. Bhavatīrtha, 19. Agastyatīrtha, 20. Gadā-
- tīrtha, 21. Veṇutīrtha, 22. Kāśyapatīrtha, 23. Bhāradvājatīrtha, 24. Ātreyatīrtha,
25. Viśvāmitratīrtha, 26. Gautamatīrtha, 27. Jāmadagnitīrtha, 28. Vāsiṣṭhatīrtha,
29. Māricatīrtha, 30. Āṅgirasatīrtha, 31. Paulastyatīrtha, 32. Pulahatīrtha,
33. Kratutīrtha, 34. Bhṛgutīrtha, 35. Kūrmatīrtha, 36. Nārasimhatīrtha, 37–41.
- Pañcapāṇḍavatīrthas.

## Other Important Literary Works that Describe the Glory of the Tiruvanantapuram Temple

Among the other literary works that speak of the glory of the Tiruvanantapuram temple, the *Anantapuravarṇana*, a short poem of the fourteenth century CE (see *Anantapuravarṇana* 1953, 15), one of the early Maṇipravāla (Sanskrit mixed with Malayalam) texts from Kerala and consisting of less than two hundred verses in the *anuṣṭubh* metre, deserves special attention. This text describes the glory not only of the Tiruvanantapuram temple but also of the Tiruvanantapuram city of that period. The *Līlātilaka*,<sup>24</sup> a fourteenth-century Sanskrit treatise on Malayalam grammar and poetics, quotes the following verse from the *Anantapuravarṇana*, in which the *Anantapuravarṇana* mentions that a garland is made for the ritual of Viṣṇu (Puṇḍarīkākṣa) with flowers that are Tamil and Sanskrit, as an example of Maṇipravāla:

*tamiḥsaṃskṛtamenruḷla*  
*sumanassukaḷ koṇṭoru*  
*iṇḍamāla toṭukkiṇren*  
*puṇḍarīkākṣapūjayāy* (verse 8)<sup>25</sup>

23 *dvisaptatīrtha tīrthāni puṇyadāni śarīriṇām*, p. 73 of Ms. T. 1845.

24 As Wilden (2014, 347) observes, the *Līlātilaka* is a “foundational text of the Kerala grammatical tradition. This anonymous text is generally dated to the late fourteenth century. It is a treatise on grammar in the extended sense, that is, including poetics, and is written in Sanskrit *sūtras* with a Sanskrit commentary. It provides numerous examples that allow a glimpse of the variety of Kerala local dialect called Maṇipravālam. The first chapter (*śilpa*) discusses the properties of the Maṇipravālam language (*bhāṣā*).”

25 In this verse, the word “Tamil” (*tamiḥ*) refers to the Malayalam language. This shows that the word “Tamil” was used in the early Malayalam region to denote Malayalam (cf. *Anantapuravarṇana* 1953, 8). Though in this verse the word *iṇḍā* (garland) is used as a Malayalam word,

Though most of the text is written as a glory of Padmanābha, we also find interesting facts related to the day-to-day activities that take place in the city of Tiruvanantapuram.<sup>26</sup> Apart from describing the main shrine of Padmanābha and his glory (verses 147–161), the text also looks at some of the secondary shrines inside the Tiruvanantapuram temple complex, including Ayyappasvāmi, Kṛṣṇa, etc. Even minute descriptions of the temple seem to have been included in the poem. As an example, we see a description of a cradle (verse 142) in the temple, where young Kṛṣṇa sleeps. Even today we may see this cradle placed on the southern side of the main shrine. The Varāha temple and the Śrīkaṅtheśvara temple, two temples that are located not far from the Tiruvanantapuram temple, are also mentioned in this text. This poem also mentions certain *tīrthas* in Tiruvanantapuram, including Indratīrtha, Bhṛgutīrtha, Agnitīrtha, Varāhatīrtha and Dakṣiṇagaṅgā, Kaṇvatīrtha, Somatīrtha, Rāmatīrtha, Anantatīrtha and Īśānatīrtha (verses 15–19). It is noteworthy that this text mentions Kāntalūrśālā<sup>27</sup> (verse 107), a place near Tiruvanantapuram where an ancient Vedic school<sup>28</sup> was in operation. The poem concludes with the description of Viṣṇu's ten incarnations.

The unpublished *Padmanābhodaya*<sup>29</sup> is a short *kāvya* of Śāṅkukavi (eighteenth century CE), written at the instance of Ramavarma Yuvaraja, a nephew of King Martanda Varma of Travancore, on the Tiruvanantapuram temple. The work consists of one hundred and forty-two verses in four sections called *paddhatis*. It deals with the glory of the Tiruvanantapuram temple and gives a description of the magnificence of Lord Padmanābha and the blessings showered by the Lord on sage Divākara. In this text, too, as we see in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, we find in its first *paddhati*, the sage Divākara worshipping Viṣṇu in Dvāraka (Kuśasthalī I.17) and the Lord appearing before him as a boy; the description of the boy is written

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we see the usage of *inḍā* in Sanskrit Śaiva texts too:

*vastreṇḍām tu samuddhṛtya raktavastreṇa veṣṭayet*

*inḍādibhis sugandhaiś ca bhūṣaṇair gugguḷuṃ dahet* (*Sahasratantra*, IFP T. 33, 56:44; see also Goodall 2021).

26 For example the poem contains a description of a market (present-day Chalai Market in Trivandrum city).

27 *kāntiyuñcelvamuṃ mikka*

*kāntalūrccāla kāṇalām |*

*mūṅru koyilumenmunnil*

*toṅruṃ tatra maṭhaññaḷum ||* (*Anantapuravarṇana* 107).

28 A copper plate of 866 CE (*Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. I, 1–14) mentions this ancient Vedic school named Kāndalūrśālāi, a Vedic institution that all the kings from the time of Rājendra Coḷa I (985–1014 CE) claim to have regulated. Though we do not have much information on this *śālā*, it seems this Kāndalūrśālāi was located in the present Valiyacālai, not far from the Tiruvanantapuram temple.

29 Manuscript T. 1125 of the Oriental Research Institute and Manuscript Library is used for the study of this text. There is one more manuscript of this text in Baroda (Ms 6822A). A commentary by Kṛṣṇa of this text is known to exist at Mysore Oriental Manuscript Library.

in rather captivating verses (I.22–45). The second *paddhati* begins by describing how much the sage enjoyed the presence of the boy and the fondness of the sage for him (II.1–7). The story moves on as in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, but here the verses that describe the naughtiness of the boy are very ornate (see Appendix I). When he is pushed by the sage with his left hand while moving away from the sage, the boy tells the sage that he would see him again in the forest named Ananta (*kānane anantasamjñe*), but we do not find any reference to the Ananta forest in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*. At the beginning of the third *paddhati* we see that the sage, who has understood that the boy is none other than Viṣṇu, blames himself for his own foolishness in letting the boy get away from him. His lamenting is described vividly in this chapter. At the beginning of the fourth chapter, we see a description of the Ananta forest when sage Divākara reaches Tiruvanantapuram searching for the boy. The boy appears and the sage follows him; finally, they reach an immense tree. The boy enters the hollow, the tree falls and Lord Padmanābha appears before the sage. The veneration of the Lord by the sage is described in several verses (4.19–31) in this chapter. In this text we do not find the sage asking Lord Padmanābha to reduce his body. Instead, the Lord himself announces that he will remain there for the welfare of the *vañcīndrakula* (Cera dynasty) and asks the sage to remain there, too, to worship him daily. The text concludes with the veneration to Lord Padmanābha and also praises the Cera dynasty.

### Svāti-Tirunāl and His Works on Lord Padmanābha

Among the rulers of Travancore, Svāti-Tirunāl (1813–1846) and his works deserve a special mention. He was a great composer of music and author of literary as well as devotional works. This includes 311 songs (in Sanskrit, Malayalam, Telugu, Kannada and Hindi), including the *Bhaktimañjarī* in thousand verses describing the different incarnations of Viṣṇu, the *Padmanābhaśataka* praising Lord Padmanābha, the *Syānadūrapuravarṇana* in ten chapters describing the origin of the Tiruvanantapuram temple and details about the temple festivals, the *Utsavaprabandha* (see Sharma 1985, 113–114, 1057–1078) describing the procession of Lord Padmanābha during the bi-annual festivals, etc.

Among these works, the *Syānadūrapuravarṇanaprabandha*,<sup>30</sup> written in the *prabandha* (prose and verse) style, deserves special mention since the work is composed similarly to a *māhātmya* on the Tiruvanantapuram temple. The work is divided into ten *stabakas* (chapters). The first chapter, *Bālakrīda*, begins by extolling the glory of Lord Padmanābha and then moves on to the story of Divākaramuni as told in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*. But instead of Dvāraka (the capital city of Ānarta), this text mentions Ānarta itself as the place where sage Divākara stayed. While the appearance of the boy and his intentionally mischievous activities are

30 See Appendix I for selected verses from this text.

explained in the first chapter, the second chapter, *Pratyakṣadarśana*, gives an account of the sage moving towards the Ananta forest searching for the boy, and the third chapter, *Keśādīpādistuti*, depicts the sage's veneration of Padmanābha. The fourth chapter, *Kṣetravarṇana*, is named *Kṣetramāhātmya* and the glory of Lord Padmanābha is enumerated in detail. While we do not find many details of the subsidiary deities in the other *māhātmyas* that we have discussed, this text of Svāti-Tirunāl praises them, too, and this description matches well with the subsidiary deities that one may see today in the Tiruvanantapuram temple. The same chapter also highlights the glory of the Tiruvanantapuram or Syānandūrapura (*syānandūrapurāt paraṃ padam aho jānāmi naivāparam*) in several verses (4.1–17). The *tīrthas* are described in the fifth chapter, namely *Tīrthamāhātmya*. Eight *tīrthas* are mentioned as important and the merits one may attain by having a bath in these *tīrthas* are described in detail (5.1–8). These eight *tīrthas* are Padmatīrtha, Varāhatīrtha, Matsyatīrtha, Śāṅkhatīrtha, Cakraīrtha, Dharmatīrtha, Adharmatīrtha and Pādātīrtha. These *tīrthas* are the same that we discussed while describing the lying position of the god and these *tīrthas* corresponds to particular part of the lying of Padmanābha. This chapter also gives a detailed sketch of the temple and its components, such as the *balipīṭha* (pedestal for food offerings) (5.8), various *maṇḍapas* (pillared halls) (5.9–10), *vimānas* (towers on top of the sanctum) (5.10), the single stone *maṇḍapa* (5.11), the *dhvajastambha* (flag-post) (5.12–14), the *gopura* (towers at the entrances) (5.14–15), the *kulaśekharamaṇḍapa* (5.15), etc. The fifth chapter concludes with a brief introduction to the annual festival of the temple (5.16–21). In the sixth chapter, *Utsavapraśamsā*, there is a detailed account of the annual festival with all its aspects, which even includes the daily procession and the specifics of the *vāhanas* (vehicles) that are used to carry the deity: *siṃhavāhana* (first day), *ananta-vāhana* (second day), *kamalavāhana* (third day), *āndolikā* (fourth and seventh day), *indravāhana* (sixth day) and *garuḍavāhana* (eight, ninth and tenth day). The seventh chapter, *Mṛgayāvarṇana*,<sup>31</sup> gives the sequence of the royal hunt held on the ninth day of the annual festival. Its description is very close to the way it is celebrated today:

“[...] A mock forest is fabricated in the middle of the public road nearly a kilometre from the temple. A tender-coconut is placed in this mock forest. The deities<sup>32</sup> move out for the hunt when the conch is sounded at around 08.30 p.m. after the routine night procession inside the temple complex is concluded. The deities go out from the west gate and return through the north gate. On the way, they halt for the hunting ceremony.

The king, who is ceremoniously attired, carries the sword in his hand, while all the other members of his family are armed. [...].

31 For a detailed discussion on this topic, see Sarma 2014, 289–314.

32 Padmanābha, Narasiṃha and Kṛṣṇa are the three deities who participate in this hunting procession.

The temple elephant goes first, the occasional clanking of its chains being the only sound since, until the hunting begins, total silence is maintained. Then follow the temple staff carrying the temple flags of varying shapes. While all the others who accompany the procession walk on either side of the processional path, the king walks in the middle. Temple musicians follow soundlessly. The three vehicles carrying Lord Padmanābha in the centre and Lord Narasiṃha and Lord Kṛṣṇa on the right and left, respectively follow the king. The procession reaches the hunting area and, after performing a short ritual in the mock forest, the Tantri, or chief priest, gives a bow and arrow to the king. The king who is the executant of the Lord, prays to Him and shoots an arrow into the coconut. Until this point the procession moves in total silence since it is supposed to be on a hunt. The moment the arrow pierces the coconut, the conch is sounded and the sound of musical instruments erupts into the atmosphere in an explosion of joy. The procession then wends its way back to the Temple from the north gate” (Sarma 2016, 251–252).

Chapter eight and nine of the *Syānadūrapuravarṇana* are devoted to a detailed account of the procession held on the tenth day, which progresses towards the seashore for a holy dip, and the rituals related to the holy dip as we see today are explained: Similar to the Paḷliveṭṭa, in the evening, after the routine inner rounds, the procession moves out through the west gate. The male members of the royal family are arrayed with swords and shields, to accompany the procession. An elephant carrying the drum heads the procession and as in the Paḷliveṭṭa (hunting procession) others join in. As the vehicles carrying the Lords move out through the western fort walls, they are greeted with a twenty-one gun salute. Once the procession reaches the beach, known as *śaṅkumukham*, which is about five kilometres from the temple, the vehicles are brought to rest in the granite *maṇḍapam* near the beach. Then the idols are taken off the vehicles and carried towards the beach and specific rituals pertaining to the holy bath are performed. After the rituals the priests go under the waves for the holy dip, keeping the idol close to the chest. The king, too, participates in the rituals and the holy bath. After the ceremonial bath, the idols are placed on a specially made raised sandbank and turmeric powder is scattered on them. The king escorts the deities back to the *maṇḍapam* and moves to the nearby palace. The procession along with the king returns and enters the temple through its west gate.

The subject matter of the tenth chapter of the *Syānadūrapuravarṇana* is an account of the Lakṣadīpam festival of the temple that is celebrated once in six years. It was introduced in 1750 CE<sup>33</sup> and is still celebrated today. One lakh lamps are lit on the festival day, which is also the culmination of the *muraḷapam* or recitation of three Vedas for fifty-six days in seven sessions. Not only in the *Syānadūrapuravarṇana*, but in all the other works of Svāti-Tirunāl, a great devotee of Pamanābha, we see prominence given to the glory of the temple.

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33 For a detailed discussion on this festival see Bayi 1995, 112.

## Visit of Yāmunācārya to Tiruvanantapuram

Yāmunācārya (Āḷavantār) occupies a unique place among the Śrīvaiṣṇava teachers. In the hagiological works of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition such as the *Dīvyasūricarita* (16.92), *Guruparamparāprabhāva* (1975, 119–122), *Prapannāmṛta* (114.19–25), etc. we find a mention of the visit of Yāmunācārya to Tiruvanantapuram and also of the glory of Tiruvanantapuram.

In Srirangam, there is a festival known as *Adhyayanotsava* or “Festival of Recitations,” during which the *Nālāyiradivyaṅṅandham* is recited and explained with oral and performative commentaries over twenty-one days. Once, during this festival, Yāmuna was listening to Tiruvaraṅka Perumāḷ Ariyar sing and dance *pācurams* (hymns) from the *Tiruvāymoli* (10.2.1) on Tiruvanantapuram. One of the verses urges everyone to go to Tiruvanantapuram. The Araiyaṅ apparently sang the last line of this verse over and over again, looking at Yāmuna’s face. Moved, Yāmuna arose immediately and undertook the pilgrimage, forgetting everything else. The *Guruparamparāprabhāva* (1975, 119–122) narrates the episode of Yāmunācārya’s visit to Tiruvanantapuram and his *darśan* of the Lord in detail. It is noteworthy that in this narration the Karamana river, which is less than two kilometres away from the Tiruvanantapuram temple, is mentioned as the place where Yāmunācārya met Daiva-vāriyāṅṅān, to whom Yāmunācārya gave the responsibility of taking care of his *maṭha* during his absence.

## A Brief Sketch of the History of the Tiruvanantapuram Temple

Though we find no reference to the association of royal dynasties with the Tiruvanantapuram temple in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, we see that the *Padmanābhodaya* mentions the Travancore royal family as great devotees of Lord Pamanābha of Tiruvanantapuram. Historical evidence clearly shows that the temple was patronised by different kingdoms.<sup>34</sup> It was the Āy dynasty<sup>35</sup> who were the first to patronise the Tiruvanantapuram temple. They were followed by the second Cera dynasty. It is said (cf. Bayi 1995, 56) that Udaya Mārtāṅṅa Varma (who introduced the *kollam* era) arranged a meeting in this temple on the fifth day of the first year of the *kollam* era (825 CE) and framed certain rules and ordinances. The existence of the temple in the

34 For a detailed history of Tiruvanantapuram Temple see T.K. Velupillai (1940) and M. Rajaraja Varma Raja (1928).

35 According to Sreedhara Menon (1967, 105) the Āy kingdom flourished from “early Sangam age down to the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD. ... The Ays were the earliest ruling dynasty in South Kerala. They had established an extensive kingdom of their own long before the Venad kings set themselves up as a political power in and around Quilon. In fact, up to the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A. D. the Ays were the dominant power in South Kerala and Venad was only a small principality comprised of the territories lying between Trivandrum and Quilon with its capital at the latter place.”

early eighth century is further confirmed by Nammālvār's<sup>36</sup> composition of a hymn<sup>37</sup> in praise of Lord of Tiruvanantapuram.<sup>38</sup> Temple records dating to 1050 CE (Bayi 1995, 56), a copper plate dating to 1168 CE,<sup>39</sup> inscriptions dating to 1196 CE (Tiruvāmbādi),<sup>40</sup> 1209 CE (*orrakkalmaṇḍapa*)<sup>41</sup>, 1601 CE (*tulābhārakkal*),<sup>42</sup> 1728 CE (*orrakkalmaṇḍapa*), 1730 CE (*orrakkalmaṇḍapa*) and 1732 CE (*orrakkalmaṇḍapa*)<sup>43</sup> constitute further historical evidence on this temple.<sup>44</sup> The Veṇād and Travancore dynasties held the Tiruvanantapuram temple in great esteem and it received their official patronage. The Veṇād King Vīra Mārtāṇḍa Varma (1335–1384) gradually established complete authority over the management and administration of the temple. Among the Travancore rulers, Anīḷam Tirunāl (1729–1758) merits special mention since it was during his period that the reclining figure of Viṣṇu, made of wood, which had sustained damage in the great fire of 1686 CE,<sup>45</sup> was reconstructed with 12,000 *sālagrāma* stones with a special coating known as *kaṭu-śarkara-*

36 Hardy (1983, 266–267, 308) dates Nammālvār to the “seventh or early eighth century AD” while Zvelebil (1974, 107–108) dates Nammālvār to 880–930 AD.

37 *Tiruvāymoli* 10.2.

38 In the hymns of Nammālvār, the place name is repeatedly mentioned as “anantapura” (viz. *taṭamuṭai vayal aṇantapuranaḱar; alar polil aṇantapuranaḱar; taṇ ṇaṇantapuram; vayalaṇi yaṇantapuram; ceripolil aṇantapurattu; āticēra aṇantapurattu; vayalaṇiyaṇantapuram; eḷilaṇiyaṇantapuram; ceripolilaṇantapuram; poṇ matiḷṇnantapura naḱar; antamil pukalaṇantapura naḱar*). However, in the inscriptions the place name is given as “tiruvānantapura” (f. ex. Tiruvāmbādi inscription, Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. III, Part I, 46–52). For a detailed discussion on this topic, see Pudussery Ramachandran in his preface to Gopalakrishnan 2012, xi–xiv.

39 Bayi 1995, 58. Bayi does not give any reference to the copper plate that she mentions.

40 Cf. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 46–52. See also, Bayi 1995, 58. Apart from the 1196 CE inscription, there are two more inscriptions in the same shrine. For details of these inscriptions, see *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 44–46.

41 See *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. IV, Part I & II, 66–68. “The object of the inscription is apparently to register a gift of land to the temple at Tiruvānantapuram by a certain Pallavaraiyaṇ who was probably an officer of the king.”

42 See *Travancore Archaeological Series*, (Vol. II & III), Vol. II, Part I to III, 81–84.

43 See *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. I, 81–84.

44 There are also inscriptions found in the nearby Mitrānantapuram temple connected to Tiruvānantapuram temple, some of which pertain to matters related to the Pamanābhasvāmi temple. The inscriptions that are known to have been written here are: the one written on the back wall of the Brahmā shrine (cf. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 25–26.), on the south wall of the Brahmā shrine (cf. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 26–27), at the left entrance into the Viṣṇu shrine (1486 CE; cf. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 27), on the south outer face of *yāḷi*-stone at the entrance of the Viṣṇu shrine (cf. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 28–29 and *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. III, Part I, 30), etc. For a topographical list of inscriptions found in Trivandrum, see 274–282 of *Travancore Inscriptions: A topographical list* by R. Vasudeva Poduval (1941).

45 Bayi 1995, 104. Sasibhooshan and Raja (2011, 153–154) refer to a Matilakaṃ Rekhakal, leaf no. 222 dated Kollam 861 (= 1685 CE), which gives a detailed description of this fire.

*yoga*; this is recorded in an inscription dated 1733 CE.<sup>46</sup> He is also credited with having introduced the Lakṣadīpam<sup>47</sup> festival.

## Conclusion

Among the texts that give us details of the myth and origin of the Tiruvanantapuram temple as well as its glory, the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*, which is in the form of a dialogue between Sūta and some sages, seems to be the most prominent one. It was written similarly to other *māhātmyas* and includes the Purāṇic stories, a brief discussion on the creation of the universe, an enumeration of the *tīrthas* surrounding the temple, etc. Most of the other known texts that explain the myth and give an account of the merits of this temple do not include the above-mentioned characteristics of *māhātmyas*. The *Anantapuravarṇana*, an early work in Maṇipravāḷa, which we discussed briefly, rather describes the temple as well as Tiruvanantapuram and the different activities that one might see there.

Though scholars date the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* and the *Anantapuravarṇana* to the fourteenth century, we do not have much internal evidence to confirm this date. But it is possible that this *māhātmya* was composed before a great fire of 1686 CE that damaged the main icon of the reclining Viṣṇu made of wood, and before the 1733 reconstruction of the present main icon of the reclining Viṣṇu<sup>48</sup> with 12,000 *śālagrāma* stones coated with a special composition known as *kaṭu-śarkara-yoga*, since we do not find a reference to a figure made of *śālagrāma* in either the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* or the *Anantapuravarṇana*.

We do, however, find attestation of certain material and ritual features mentioned in the *Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya* in the Tiruvanantapuram temple, such as the structure of the sanctum as well as certain rules followed in the temple in appointing priests. The *māhātmya* mentions a three-door sanctum (having three openings at the locations of the god's head (*śiras*), navel (*nābhi*), and feet (*pāda*)) in the temple and though this is normally not seen in other temples, it can be seen in the Tiruvanantapuram temple. Moreover, in the *māhātmya*, the sage Divākara is addressed as a *Tauḷa* (one who belongs to Tuḷudeśa) by the Lord, who instructs the sage to perform

46 Travancore Archaeological Series, Vol. III, Part I, 46–52; Bayi 1995, 106.

47 For a description of this festival see Venkitasubramonia Iyer 1977, 26–27. See also the tenth chapter *Lakṣadīpotsavaślākhā* in *Syānadūrapuravarṇanaprabandham* of Svāti-Tirunāl (V.S. Sharma 1985, 982–992).

48 Cf. *Travancore Archaeological Series*, Vol. I, 42. Bayi (1995, 106) recalls the event thus: “The main reclining figure of Sree Padmanabha Swamy was reconstructed with twelve thousand or stones sacred to Viṣṇu and coated with a special composition known as Katu-Sarkara Yoga. These stones were brought from the Gandaki river in Nepal on an elephant's back. This took place on 3rd of Painkuni 908 ME/1733 A.D. The expert makes of idols Balaranya konideva and his disciples executed this wondrous image of God. [...] This figure replaced the former idol made of Iluppa wood (Indian Butter tree) which had sustained some damage in the great fire of 861 ME/1686 A.D.”

the daily rituals and also says that he will be especially pleased by the rituals performed by Taulas. As we discussed earlier, even today we see that a ritual is performed every morning by a sage, known as *puṣpāñjalisvāmiyār*. We also see that in this temple, priests are appointed from the Tuḷu speaking brahmin community. This further confirms the similarities between the narratives found in the *māhātmya* and practices that are still followed in the temple. At present the chief-priests (*tantri*)<sup>49</sup> of this temple are from the Taraṇanallūr family, who are Nampūtiri brahmins of Kerala. This custom of appointing a Nampūtiri brahmin as chief-priest might have been a later development in the practices of the temple.

We also see in the *māhātmya* that the Lord directs sage Divākara to perform the rituals in the Tiruvanantapuram temple based on *Pauṣkara*. This might be a reference to the *Pauṣkarasamhitā* of the Pāñcarātra system. But, according to the Taraṇanallūr family members, who include the present chief-priest (*tantri*) of this temple, they follow a text known as *Anuṣṭhāna-grantham*, which is different from the *Pauṣkarasamhitā* mentioned in the *māhātmya*. While a ritual manual of fourteenth century CE, named *Tantrasamuccaya*<sup>50</sup> is being used in most of the temples of Kerala, the *Anuṣṭhāna-grantham* is not known outside the Taraṇanallūr family. A ritual text of Kerala named *Anuṣṭhānapaddhati* is known to exist, but further study will be required to confirm whether this manual is the same as the *Anuṣṭhāna-grantha* known exclusively to the Taraṇanallūr family.

The visit of one of the Vaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, Yāmuna, to Tiruvanantapuram, which we discussed earlier, also highlights that the glory of the Tiruvanantapuram temple was already known during this period. Yāmuna, while listening to the hymns on Tiruvanantapuram in Srirangam, suddenly decided to move to Tiruvanantapuram to have the vision of the Lord and stayed there for several days.

Though the Tiruvanantapuram temple has long been known as one of the important shrines of Viṣṇu in South India, the opening of some of its secret vaults and the finding of the invaluable collection of treasures stored in them made the temple further known to the world. It is worth noting that some of the vaults are yet to be opened. This discovery not only demonstrated the wealth of this temple but, by extension, also its rich and glorious past. The following words of Tiruvanantapuram Bayi (1995, 25), a member of the Travancore Royal family of Tiruvanantapuram, could be added here as a further note attesting the glory of the temple:

“Many characteristics of greatness are associated with a Maha Kshetra (great temple). They read as antiquity, presence of records, historical importance, origin in a forest, nearness to an ocean, location at an elevation, royal connections, mention in ancient literature, magnificence of architecture and grandeur of festivals. Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple qualifies on all these counts including its actual construction which is at a modest elevation. The enormous special

49 For a detailed discussion on the Tantris of Tiruvanantapuram temple, see Bayi 1995, 282–283.

50 For more details on the *Tantrasamuccaya*, see Sarma 2009, 332–333.

sanctity derived from the presence of the twelve thousand Salagramas is unique in the world itself.”

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## Appendix I

*Anantaśayanakṣetramāhātmya*

अनन्तशयनक्षेत्रमाहात्म्यम्<sup>51</sup>

प्रथमोध्यायः

अनन्तभोगपर्यङ्के शयानं क्षीरसागरे ।

नौमि सुन्दरराजं तं श्रीवराहतनुं हरिम् ॥ १ ॥ (सुन्दरराजान्तं ms)

सुपुण्ये नैमिषारण्ये ऋषयः शौनकादयः ।

सत्रं समासत समाः सहस्रं हरितुष्टये ॥ २ ॥

प्रातस्सवनहोमान्ते कदाचित् शौनकादयः ।

सत्कृतं सूतमासीनं पप्रच्छुरिदमुत्सुकाः ॥ ३ ॥

ऋषयः—

व्यासशिष्य महाप्राज्ञ सर्वशास्त्रार्थकोविद ।

शुश्रूषतामुक्तकानामेतदाख्याहि नः शुभम् ॥ ४ ॥

अनन्तशयनं नाम दक्षिणाम्बुनिधेस्तटे । (दक्खिणांबुनिधेस्तटे ms)

यत्र शेते स्वयं विष्णुः दर्शनान्मुक्तिदो नृणाम् ॥ ५ ॥

अनन्तभोगपर्यङ्के श्रीभूनीलानिषेवितः । (अनन्तभोगपर्यङ्के ms)

इत्युक्तं तु त्वया पूर्वं ब्रह्माण्डाख्यानविस्तरे ॥ ६ ॥

पृच्छामहेऽद्य तत्प्रोतुम्महत् कौतूहलं हि नः ।

क्षीराब्धिशयनोऽनन्तः कुतोऽत्राविरभूद्धरिः ॥ ७ ॥

कस्य प्रसन्नो भगवान् कस्मादत्रागतः स्वयम् । (कस्मादत्रागतस्वयम् ms)

एतदन्यच्च नो ब्रूहि विस्तराद्रौमहर्षणे ॥ ८ ॥

इति पृष्टस्तदा सूतः स्मृतवानन्तासनं हरिम् ।

51 Text prepared based on Ms T. 1845 of the Oriental Research Institute and Manuscripts Library, University of Kerala.

पुलकांकितसर्वाङ्गः सन्तोषात् गद्गदाक्षरम् ॥

प्राहेदं भक्तिभरितो वैभवं शेषशायिनः ॥ ९ ॥

श्रीसुतः —

शृण्वन्तु मुनयस्सर्वे माहात्म्यं शार्ङ्गधन्वनः (शार्ङ्गधन्वः ms) ।

भोगिभोगशयोऽनन्तः सन्निधत्तेऽम्बुधेस्तटे ॥ १० ॥

अनन्तशयनं नाम क्षेत्रं तन्मुक्तिदायकम् । (अनन्तशयनन्नामक्षेत्रन्तन्मुक्तिदायकं ms)

तदेव नारसिंहाख्यं पुण्यक्षेत्रं कृते युगे ॥ ११ ॥

प्रागुदक्प्रवणे तस्मादादिकेशवसंज्ञितम् ।

क्षेत्रमाद्यं महापुण्यमाद्यनन्ताभिधं च तत् ॥ १२ ॥

एतत् क्षेत्रं महापुण्यं स्मरणान्मुक्तिदं नृणाम् ।

अनेकतीर्थसंयुक्तं जनस्थाने वसन् खरः ॥ १३ ॥

रणे रामेण निहतो मुनीनान्त्राणकारणात् ।

साक्षाद्भङ्गेव यत्रास्ते मालारूपेण केशवः ॥ १४ ॥

महेन्द्राद्रेश्च निलयादष्टयोजनदूरतः ।

रामक्षेत्रे महापुण्यं योजनद्वयसंयुतम् ॥ १५ ॥

अनन्तशयनं क्षेत्रं सर्वपापहरं परम् ।

यत्रागत्य हरिश्शेते शेषभोगेम्बुधेस्तटे ॥ १५ ॥

आनर्त्ते द्वारकाख्ये तु पुरे श्रीकृष्णनिर्मिते ।

सर्वे निवासन्तत्रैव च कुर्युस्ता स्तपोधनाः ॥ १६ ॥ (कुर्युक्ता ms)

पिण्डारकात् कुरुक्षेत्रात् श्रीशैलाद्वेकटाचलात् ।

सालग्रामाच्च गङ्गायाः गोदावर्याश्च यामुनात् ॥ १७ ॥

समागत्याश्रमेभ्योऽत्र निवसन्ति महर्षयः ।

श्रीकृष्णसेवानिरताः सर्वक्षेत्रोत्तमोत्तमे ॥ १८ ॥ (सर्वक्षेत्र ms)

तेषां मध्ये महातेजाः दिवाकरसमप्रभः ।

यतिर्द्विवाकराख्योऽभूत् सर्वकामेषु निस्पृहः ॥ १९ ॥

विरक्तस्तौलवो योगी हरिं क्षीराब्धिशायिनम् ।

द्रष्टुमभ्यर्चयद्विष्णुं मुक्तिकामो जितेन्द्रियः ॥ २० ॥

स एवमर्चितो नित्यं भक्त्या चोपशमेन च ।

सन्तुष्टो भगवान् विष्णुः तस्य प्रादुरभूत् पुरः ॥ २१ ॥

सर्वलक्षणसंपन्नः कोमलाङ्गोतिसुन्दरः ।  
 मधुरः कलभाषी च स्मितवक्रोब्जलोचनः ॥ २२ ॥  
 इन्दीवरश्यामलाङ्गः कुन्ददन्तः सुनासिकः ।  
 षडुन्नतः पञ्चरक्तः मधुराधरशोभितः ॥ २३ ॥  
 द्विवर्षबालसदृशो ददृशे पुरुषो यतेः ।  
 तन्दृष्ट्वा लौकिकं बालं लावण्यकरुणालयम् ॥ २४ ॥ (लावण्यवरुणालयम् ms)  
 सर्वसङ्गविरक्तोपि तत्संगतिसमुत्सुकः ।  
 आलिङ्गन्निव बाहुभ्यां चुम्बन्निव मुखांबुजम् ॥ २५ ॥  
 तं बालं सहसादाय स्वांकमारोपयन्निव ।  
 तातेति एहीत्याहैनं का ते माता च कः पिता ॥ २६ ॥ (तातेत ms)  
 कुतः समागतोसि त्वं वदैकं मधुराक्षरम् ।  
 तव वागमृतं पातुं बाल मे सत्वरं मनः ॥ २७ ॥  
 इत्युक्तः प्राह बालोपि दयया भावशोधकः ।  
 न जाने जननीं वापि जनकं वापि सुव्रत ॥ २८ ॥  
 त्वं मां लालय भद्रन्ते लालनीयं सुतं यथा ।  
 बाला हि बहुमत्तैव तुष्यन्ति निवसन्ति च ॥ २९ ॥  
 अवमत्याहि कुप्यन्ति प्रद्रवन्ति ततः परम् ।  
 वयन्तु बहुमानार्हाः नावमान्याः कदाचन ॥ ३० ॥  
 किं वा किं वा करोम्यत्र हठात् बालोतिचञ्चलः ।  
 साद्धसाद्धपि वा कृत्यं न स्यात् बहुमतिच्युतिः ॥ ३१ ॥  
 न चैवावमतिः कार्या त्वया लालयता च माम् । (कार्य ms)  
 यदा ममावमन्ता त्वं तदान्यत्र व्रजेद्भुवम् ॥ ३२ ॥  
 न चावमानं क्षमते बालः कुत्रापि वेत्सि तत् ।  
 तस्माल्लालय मां योगिन् इत्युत्त्वा विरराम सः ॥ ३३ ॥  
 ततो दिवाकरयतिः श्रुत्वा तत् बालभाषितम् ।  
 कलाक्षरं वागमृतं पिबन् श्रोत्रद्वयेन सः ।  
 निर्वृतिं परमां लेभे सुधा तृप्त इवामरः ॥ ३४ ॥  
 तं लालयामास यतिर्मुदैव सन्दर्शनस्पर्शनभाषणादिभिः ।  
 ध्यायन् सदा तं हृदयेर्चनेपि काले च योगे च तमेव दद्भ्यौ ॥ ३५ ॥ (तवेम दद्भ्यौ ms)

इति श्रीब्रह्माण्डपुराणे ब्रह्माण्डगोलविस्ताराख्यानै  
अनन्तशयनक्षेत्रमाहात्म्ये प्रथमोध्यायः

Selected verses from the *Padmanābhodaya*<sup>52</sup> of Śaṅkukavi

यत्पादपल्लवमपास्तसमस्तपापा  
ध्यायन्ति चित्तकुहरे भवमोचनाय ।  
साक्षात् स एव भगवान् धृतबालवेष-  
श्चिक्रीड सर्वकरणातिसुखं विचित्रम् ॥ २:१५ ॥  
पूजानमस्कृतिविधानकृते यतीन्द्रे  
नम्रेक्षणे स भगवानधिरुह्य पृष्टम् ।  
आलिङ्ग्य कण्ठमथ तस्य शिरःप्रदेशे  
लालाम्बुसेचनविधिं रचयाञ्चकार ॥ २:१६ ॥  
ध्यानान्निमीलितदृशि प्रवरे यतीना-  
मूरौ निजाङ्घ्रिकमलं कलयन् मुखेन ।  
कर्णेऽकरोद् घुरुघुरारवमग्रसंस्थे  
ध्यानं कुतो मयि तवेति वदन्निवायम् ॥ २:१७ ॥  
देवाभिषेकविधया खलु कुण्डिकायां  
रिक्ताम्भसीषदपि मूत्रजलेन पूर्णाम् ।  
एनां विधाय च हसन् रुचिरं ननर्त  
मन्मूत्रसारमशनं ब्रुवतेऽमराणाम् ॥ २:१८ ॥  
पुष्पाणि वा किसलयानि फलानि योगी (किसलययानि ms)  
यद्यच्चिनोति भगवत्परितोषणाय । (यद्याच्चिनोति ms)  
तत्तत् स एव हि जहार विहर्तुकाम-  
स्तत् स्वीकृतं न मनुते स्म परन्तु चित्रम् ॥ २:१९ ॥  
वस्त्राणि दण्डफलके च कमण्डलुं च  
याते क्वचिद् यतिवरे सति खेलनार्थम् ।  
नीत्वा परत्र पुनरागतवत्यमुष्मिन्

52 Text prepared based on the Ms T. 1125 of the Oriental Research Institute and Manuscripts Library, University of Kerala.

सर्वं पटच्चरहृतं स बभाण बालः ॥ २:२० ॥

...

एवं निस्सारितोऽपि प्रचुरतरकृपासागरः पद्मनाभः  
किञ्चित् कोपाच्चलोष्ठस्वरिततरगती रक्तविस्फारिताक्षः ।  
व्याहृत्यैनं यतीन्द्रं त्वमसि परमतः काननेऽनन्तसंज्ञे  
दृष्टा मां शेषमञ्चे शयितमतितरामित्यगच्छत् क्षणेन ॥ २:३३ ॥

...

देवः श्रीमान् पद्मनाभोऽपि नित्यं  
भक्तान् रक्षन् शेषशय्याशयानः ।  
जागर्तिश्रीभूमिनीडासमेतो  
वञ्चीन्द्राणां क्षेमकारी च भूयः ॥ ४:३७ ॥

*Syānadūrapuravarṇanaprabandham* of Svātitirunāl (*Kṣetramāhātmyam*) (ed. V.S. Sarma in Malayalam Script, Trivandrum, pp. 906–915)

लक्ष्मीदिव्यकटाक्षभृङ्गनिकरोद्यानायितं सन्ततं  
विश्वेषां वसतामसीमविमलानन्दौघसन्दायकम् ।  
दुग्धांभोनिधिमध्यतोऽपि कमलाभर्तुः प्रियंमुक्तिदं  
स्यानन्दूरपुरात्परं पदमहो जानामि नैवापरम् ॥ ४:१ ॥  
अस्मिन् भुवलये सशैलविपिने न कापि तुल्यो बत  
स्यानन्दूरपुरेण चेति विदितो लोकैः प्रदेशोपरः ।  
स्वर्गे यद्यथवा रसातलपदे त्वेतादृशः स्यात्पर-  
स्तावत्तत्र निवासनमिह कथं बाधः पुरे संभवेत् ॥ ४:३ ॥  
नाके लभ्यमथामृतं सुमनसां पूर्वं पयोवारिधेः  
सञ्जातं मथनेन तच्च महता यत्नेन नैवान्यथा ।  
स्यानन्दूरपुरेऽत्र लभ्यममृतं पापीयसामप्यहो  
लोकानां च विना श्रमेण वसतामानन्दसान्द्रं स्थिरम् ॥ ४:४ ॥  
किं वा हन्त बहूदितेन सदृशो लोकत्रयेष्वप्यहोः  
स्यानन्दूरपुरेण नैव रुचिरो जागर्ति देशः परः ।  
यत्तत्रस्थजनस्य मोदजलधेः सूक्ष्मः कणोऽप्यालये  
शक्रस्य त्रिदिवौकसामपि भवेल्लभ्यो न धन्यात्मनाम् ॥ ४:१७ ॥

*Syānadūrapuravarṇanaprabandham (Mṛgayāvarṇana)*

तदानीं निस्तुलभूतदयावारानिधिः स भगवानरविन्दनाभो वध्यमृगस्थाने कल्पितं नालिकेरफलं  
निजचरणभृत्येन बाणदलितं कारयन् परमानन्दमाविन्दते ॥ ७: गद्यं १२ ॥

ये ये वादित्रनादाः परमिह विरताः पूर्वमाखेटयात्रा  
प्रस्तावे सर्वलोकेष्वपि कलितमथो मौनमुद्रेष्वथैते ।  
आरब्धास्त्वेककाले त्रिभुवनगतलोकश्रवांसि प्रकामं  
कुर्वन्तो हन्त राजन्त्यमृतरसत्सरी संभृतानीह तावत् ॥ ७:५ ॥ (रसज्ञरी ed)

*Syānadūrapuravarṇanaprabandham (Abhiṣekayātrāvarṇana)*

बाले पश्य रमापतिं त्रिजगतां नाथं मुदामेयया  
चायान्तं विनतासु तस्य सुमहास्कन्धाधिरूढं हरिम् ।  
व्योमस्थायिसमस्तदेवनिकरैः संस्तूयमानं कर-  
स्रस्तस्वर्विटपिप्रसूननिकरैरग्निद्वयांभोजयोः ॥ ८:१७ ॥

*Syānadūrapuravarṇanaprabandham (Lakṣadīpavarṇanam)*

दीपानां प्रभया नभोविततया श्रीलक्षदीपोत्सवे  
तेजोरुद्धट्टशः सुरासुरगणा विद्याधराः किन्नराः ।  
यक्षाः किंपुरुषाश्च चारणगणा गन्धर्वमुख्यास्तदा  
निश्चेष्टाः खलु विस्मयेन तु भवन्त्येते नराः किं पुनः ॥ १०:६ ॥

