

THE
TRICHINOPOLY ROCK
AND ITS
TEMPLES

BY
B. K. DEVASENHAMANI, B.A.

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TRICHINOPOLY:
ST. JOSEPH'S ENGRAVING SHOP, PONDICHERRY

(1929)

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and its
Temples

BY

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

This booklet under the title 'The Trichinopoly Rock and its Illumination' was first published at the request of the public-spirited and philanthropic citizen the late Dewan Bahadur S. Rm. M. Ct. Pethachi Chettiar in October 1921 during the visit to this city of their Excellencies Lord and Lady Willingdon. Two years later the book was thoroughly revised and a chapter on "Temple worship" was added in order to interest people other than Hindus. It was published in December 1923 under the name "The Trichinopoly Rock and its Temples" and a copy was presented to His Excellency the Viceroy Lord Reading at the hundred-pillared Mantapam when he most graciously performed the ceremony of switching on the electric installation in the temple premises, instituted through the kind efforts of the Temple Trustee Mr. Kasivisvanatha Chettiar. The book was much appreciated by the Hindu public as well and some of them requested me to write and annex a chapter on 'Tayumanavar, the poet—saint'—famous in South India both for his mellifluous songs and his deeply religious life. This I have done. I have also been able to revise the whole through the courtesy of that highly respected citizen Dewan Bahadur Sir T. Desikachariar Kt., whose knowledge of South Indian archeology and genius for numismatics are too well known to be dwelt upon in detail here. He very kindly placed his library at my disposal and in the preparation of this edition I consulted the books on Archeology and Epigraphy published by Government. I have very freely

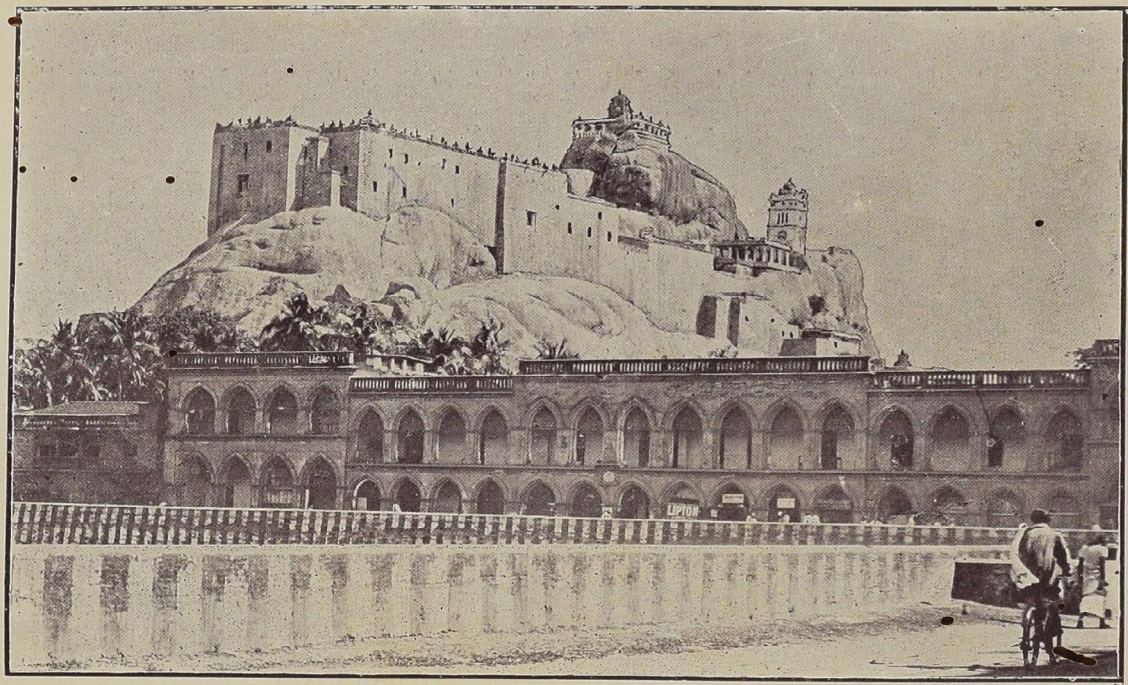
used them together with the books "The Tamil Saivite Saints", "The Alvars" and "Maratha Saints" published by the Y. M. C. A. in "The Heritage of India" series. Many small errors have now been corrected and a few more blocks have been added in order to make the book a reliable and attractive guide both for the tourists of the West and also the pilgrims of the East.

11th December 1929.

S. K. D.

CONTENTS

			PAGE.
Legends	...	...	5
The Temples	...	...	14
The Illumination	...	...	25
The Temple Worship	...	...	29
Tayumanasvami	...	...	35



The Trichinopoly Rock with its Temples

THE TRICHINOPOLY ROCK AND ITS TEMPLES

1. LEGENDS

A voice is in the wind, I do not know ;
A meaning on the face of the high hills
Whose utterance I cannot comprehend,
A something is behind them ; that is God.

—*George MacDonald.*

A few years ago, I met an English divine of some fame at a garden party in Trichinopoly. He was on a lecturing tour in South India. I enquired in what connection he had first heard of Trichinopoly. He said most promptly, "Of course, in connection with cheroots." My next question was, "what is it that has attracted you most since coming here?" "Surely, your rock" was his ready reply.

To the pious Hindu and the pleasure-bent globe-trotter, the rock is a source of great pride and attraction. Very rarely does a tourist fail to get to its crest and take a panoramic view of the country around. This rock which rises abruptly on a plain is a peculiarly rounded boss so common on the banks of the Cauvery and south of it that it has given rise to endless conjectures and fantastic stories.

The following legend which is as old as the town itself will prove most amusing:—

Once upon a time when the world was still young god Siva was in his seat in mount Kailasa. Brahma,

Vishnu and Indra with his deputy gods, the sun, the moon and other heavenly luminaries together with a host of minor deities and devotees were waiting at the towered entrance to the residence of the great god on the mount. Athisesha, the Indian Atlas in the form of a huge serpent was one of them. The gods both major and minor eulogised Athisesha for his extraordinary might and exceeding benevolence in bearing on his hood the seven worlds of the Universe. Vayu (the god of winds) one of the minor gods then present got incensed at this bestowal of praise on Athisesha and challenged him for a contest of strength. The serpent retorted that he could easily swallow up Vayu if he liked. The dispute got so hot that they determined to make an end of it. They agreed that one should cover up the whole mountain with his serpentine body and the "thousand-hooded" head, while the other should do his best to loosen the hold and let the wind in. Very well, one, two, three—off and the fight began. Not a spot on the sacred mountain was visible, so complete was the embrace of Athisesha. Vayu, the god of winds, raised the most powerful tornado to defeat his foe. Mountains of the world flew like sparks in a smithy. Large trees were uprooted and floated like the trees in heaven. Stars lost their lustre and oceans became dry. The sun went astray and the moon looked like a dull dark disc. Great was the havoc done to the world on account of this trial of strength, yet firm was the hold with which Athisesha clung to the mountain of Siva. God Vayu tried his utmost to make Athisesha let go the grip but failed. What did he do? He was not prepared to confess defeat; so in revenge he carried off all the life-breaths into the nether world.

Immediately the whole creation became lifeless 'like a painted ship in a painted ocean'. God Siva with his usual compassion for the suffering world came to the rescue and begged Athisesha to slacken his grasp a bit so that the crestfallen Vayu might be given a chance to display his power over the mountain. Thereupon the latter did display his might and as a result three of the snow-clad peaks were torn off the sacred mountain and fell in three different points in the south. The first splinter was the Thirukalhastri rock, the modern Kalhasti and the next to be blown down was the famous rock of Trichinopoly which forms the subject of this booklet, the third being Trincomalee rock in the island of Ceylon.

The above story is not without its significance. The earliest authors of Sthalapurāṇam in Samskrit were all Aryans, whose minds were obsessed with the old notion that the Tamils had been driven down to the south by the Aryans and the former possessed nothing great or sacred of their own except what they had got from the north. As the sacredness of the rock was borrowed from Sri Kailasa, so was that of the Cauvery from the Ganges in the north. Thanks to modern investigators, the old German theory has exploded and the correct idea is gaining ground that the Tamils *are* where their ancestors had lived since the world began. They had neither been driven nor conquered. They are in their own land, the *Tamilagam*. The god of the Tamils—Siva—is the god of India and the language of the Tamils is the first language spoken in India. If they had ever moved at all—I am sure they did—it was only towards the north invading and conquering the various kingdoms up to the banks of the Ganges. Modern researches show that

the great conqueror and organiser Rajaraja Chola (985-1018 A.D.) who built the first great stone temple of Southern India at Tanjore added to his empire the Chera, the Eastern Chalukya, part of the Western Chalukya territories, Kudagu (Coorg) and a part of Kalingam. He conquered Ceylon also. His son Rajendra Chola I (1011-1035 A.D.) overran Odalavishayam (Orissa), defeated Dharmapala of South Kosalam (Dandabhukti), Ranasura of South Lata (Gujarat) and subjugated Northern Lata and "the banks of the Ganges which sprinkles holy water on burning sands." He assumed the title of Gangaikondan, the conqueror of the Ganges, and founded the city of Gangai Kondacholapuram. After making it the headquarters of his fleet, he invaded Kidaram (Burma), captured Pegu and Matama (Martaban). He annexed Nakkavaram (Nicobars) and Andaman islands.

Apart from the above historic import, there is another significance attached to the story. That is, god Siva, though often spoken of as the god of destruction, is essentially the god of infinite mercy and compassion. He destroys evil in order to save the righteous and help the oppressed. He is the knight-errant among the gods. For instance, once upon a time Siva and his consort Parvati were playing a game of marbles. In the middle of the game, she enquired, "Who are the sun and the moon?" He replied, "They are my eyes." "What," she cries, "do you mean to tell me that if I close both your eyes the whole universe will be dark?" "I do, indeed," he answered. "May I try?" "Certainly." She lifted her hands and placed them over her husband's eyes. Instantly the whole universe became dark. In this appalling darkness all the people of the

earth stood still and cried to lord Siva for help. The cry touched his heart. Between the two hands of Parvati, there appeared a light, burning and glowing, the centre of Siva's forehead. The little red spot, *thilagam*, worn by Saivites all over India commemorates that merciful event.

There is another legend to show that god Siva is always merciful, he not only pardons sinners who truly repent and are heartily sorry for their misdeeds but gives them blessings which before they had not known. Ravana, the ten-headed Asura king of Lanka, was conquering kingdom after kingdom and when he came to the north India, he saw the beautiful mount Kailasa, shining like silver in the rays of the rising sun. Coveting its beauty he determined to uproot it and carry it off to his own island. So with his twenty arms and ten heads, he made a tremendous effort to lift it off the earth and the sacred Kailasa shook. All the celestials, even Parvati (Uma) were frightened by what seemed to them a terrible earthquake. But god Siva simply set his big toe upon the mountain and lo, Ravana was being crushed to death. Confessing his folly, Ravana prayed for mercy and Siva not only pardoned him but even gave him fresh boons.

The rock became in later times the residence of Trisiran, the three-headed brother of the ten-headed Ravana, King of Ceylon. It is said that Rama himself worshipped in the temple on the rock on his way back to Ayodhya after destroying Lanka and securing Sita. Was Rama, the incarnation of Vishnu, a Saivite in religion or was he a cosmopolitan in his religious views? Let students of religion tackle this problem.

The name Trichinopoly is a corruption of the Tamil Tiri-chira-palli which means "the town of the

three-headed," i.e., of Tiri-sira, who once held sway here. The legend tells us that he was a devout worshipper of Siva and one day when that god did not appear to him when called upon, he cut off in great fury, first one of his heads and then another. But before he could complete the decapitation, the god appeared unto him; and subsequently granted his prayer that the town and the local deity should bear his name. There are some scholars, however, who consider that it is really *Tiru-ssila-palli*, the holy rock town or *Tiru-chinna-palli*, i.e., holy little town. It is very likely that the rock which forms its most prominent feature has given the name to the town and it is said that *Tiru-ssila-palli* is the form in which the name of the town occurs in an inscription of the early part of the sixth century. Saint Sambandar in one of his *Thevarams* (garland of songs) which begins நன்மடையானத் தீயதிவ லானை நரைவெள்ளே associates god Siva (=auspicious) with the rock as follows:—

"All goodness hath he and no shadow of ill,
 Grey white is his bull, fair Uma shares his form,
 His wealth is past searching. Chirapalli's hill
 Is his, whom to praise keeps my heart ever warm."

The eastern part of the rock when viewed from the south looks like a bull couchant with his head lifted up as if to hold the small shrine dedicated to god Ganesh who is also known as Ganapathy or Vigneswaran in Samskrit. The whole rock is therefore known as *Virushapachalam* (Virushapa = bull; achalam = mountain). The common folk always speak of the rock as *Uchchi Pillaiar Malai*, i.e., the rock having on its summit a temple in honour of Pillaiar, another name for Ganesh. Pillaiar is the elder and the better beloved son of Siva and Parvati. He is depicted as having the head of an elephant and the body of a

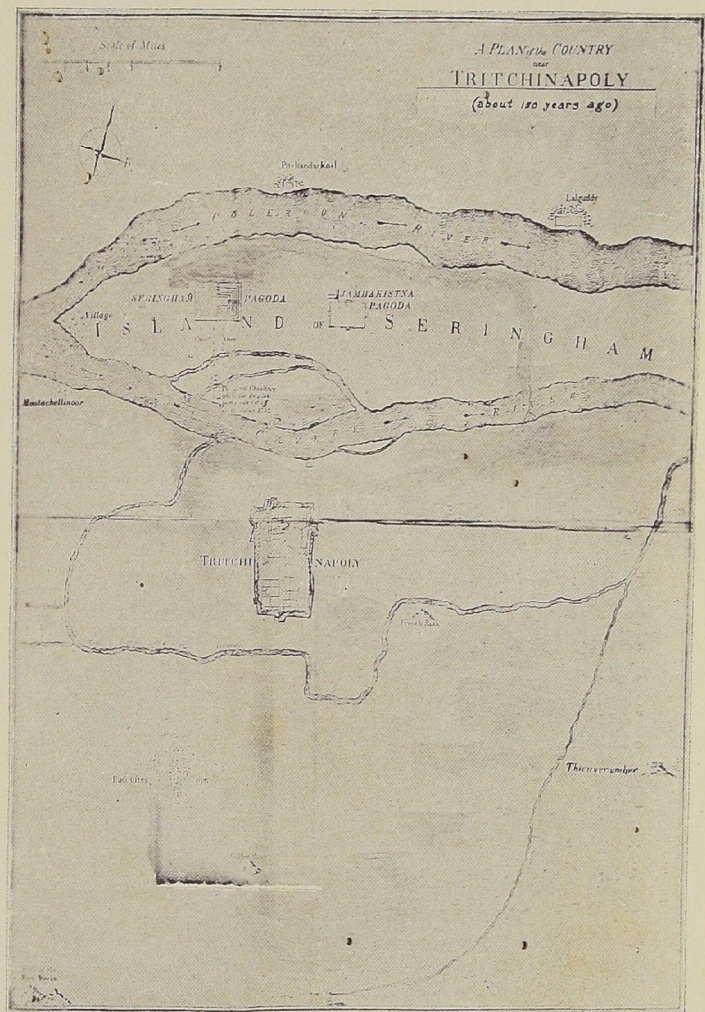
short, stout man. No undertaking great or small is begun by a pious Hindu without first invoking the blessing of Ganesh who is regarded as the overcomer of difficulties, the dispenser of wealth and the bestower of occult power. His image is invariably to be found near the entrance to temples and in important points of streets and on the banks of tanks and rivers.

How the temple came to be built thereon is explained in the local legendary lore as follows:—In the great war between Rama and Ravana, Vibhishana, the latter's brother, took sides with Rama and assisted him in the destruction of the capital. After the war, he accompanied Rama to Ayodhya as the latter's staunch adherent and was present at his coronation. Rama, in gratitude for service rendered, presented Vibhishana with an image of Vishnu to be taken to Ceylon with definite instructions never to let it touch the ground lest it should become fixed to the place on which it rested. While halting on his return journey in the island of Srirangam, he had given it to Pillaiar disguised as a young man, to hold for a moment. But that god betrayed the trust. Having placed it on the ground, he went to the crest of the rock to escape being caught. Vibhishana on returning from his morning ablutions found that idol immovable and in great rage and despair sought for the elephant-faced god. On finding him on the top he gave him a knock on the head—such a knock as to cause a depression which is even now shown to the visitors to the shrine. On the temple eight lights are burned every night—three on the north, three on the south and two on the east. Close to it on the western side of the temple there is a flagstaff where the British flag used to fly

always during the military occupation of the rock. The room for the flagstaff is at present under lock and key and the Union Jack flies on important state occasions such as the day on which Armistice is celebrated or when a Governor or a Viceroy visits the city.

On the west side of the rock below the flagstaff may be seen two footmarks and the figure of a fish. The Muhammadans say they were made by their saint Natharsah while the Hindus ascribe them to Vibhishana. The figure of the fish may be of Pandya origin, for a carp-fish was the emblem of Pandyas just as tiger was the emblem of the Cholas.

The summit of this famous rock which rises 273 feet above the street level affords a position of vantage for having an admirable view of the whole town and the surrounding parts of the country. During the sieges of the town by the French in 1751-1753, the English stationed a man there with a telescope to observe the movements of the enemy. You will be able to see from there the two large rivers—Cauvery and Coleroon—on the north of the rock with well-constructed bridges spanning them. It is indeed a glorious sight to see them in full flood. The Cauvery bridge which consists of 32 spans of 48 feet each is 1,876 feet long. It was completed in 1846 and from a tablet on the western parapet we learn that it was dedicated to the memory of Dalton, Kirkpatrick and a few other officers who fought so gallantly to save Trichinopoly from the French in the middle of the 18th century. During the floods of 1924 the arched bridge was damaged and on the old piers as they were a new girder bridge was built and opened for public use on the 24th January 1929 by the Right Honourable Viscount Goschen, Governor of Madras. The work of recons



Trichinopoly and its suburbs
(1753)

truction was begun on the 12th March 1928 and completed on the 20th January 1929. The Coleroon bridge with 38 spans of 60 feet each is 2,767 feet long. It was completed in 1852. But after a period of 72 years it was washed away in July 1924 and on a site a little to the west a new girder bridge on iron tubes was constructed by the contractors Messrs. Braithwaite & Co., of London. It was opened by the Hon'ble Mr. T. E. Moir, member of the Executive Council, Madras, on the 9th February 1928. Each river is now being spanned by a railway bridge as well.

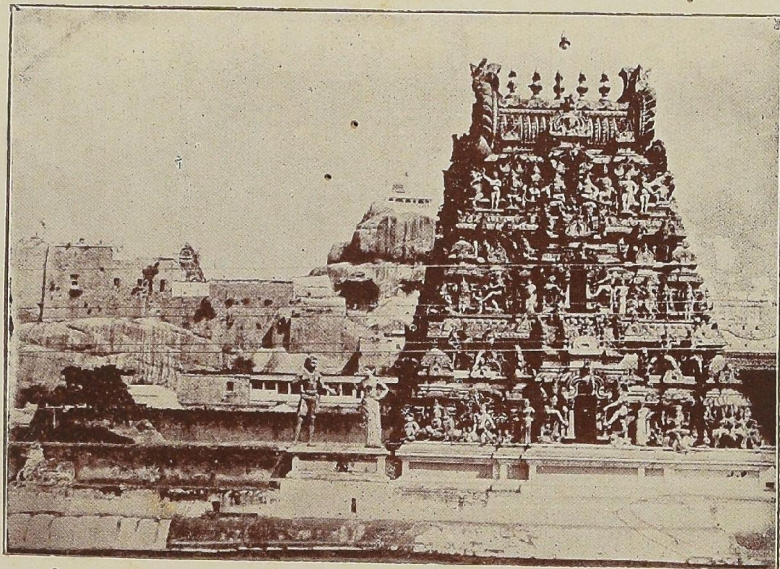
2. THE TEMPLES

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?

—*Saint Paul.*

The Siva Temple on the rock is of great antiquity and importance. It is regarded as the most singular among the rock temples of South India. First, it is the only temple which is reached by a fine covered staircase flanked on both sides by handsome mantapams. Secondly, it is the only temple which is composed of two floors, the ground floor containing a temple dedicated to Amman and the second floor the shrine of Siva. It is known by as many names as the god has. The most popular name is *Thayumanavarsvani koil* or the temple dedicated to the god that became a mother. The legend says that there was a young Chetty girl who was a devotee of Siva and whose accouchement was fast approaching but her mother was prevented from coming to her help by floods in the Cauvery. God Siva assumed the form of the mother of the girl and acted as her accoucher. There is a fine sculptural representation of the strange event on the southern face of one of the dark granite pillars in the Chitramantapam. The Samskrit form of the name is *Matrubuthasvami*.

The deity is also known as *Seventhinathar* from the fact of his having been worshipped with seventy flowers (chrysanthemums) by one sage Saramamuni in days gone by. There was a garden of seventy plants on a site west of the rock adjoining Naganathaswamikoil, opposite to Christ Church (built by Rev. C. F. Schwartz in 1766). There is a small tank called *Sivaganga* near



Rajagopuram at the entrance to the Rock

Opened 13th June 1927

the *kovil* for watering the garden which supplied flowers for the daily worship. Some of these flowers were stolen by a gardener in the service of Parantaka, the then Ohola King of Woriur. The thief was caught, and sent to the king for punishment but the latter let the fellow off with a warning whereupon the god became angry and turned his face from the east to the west towards the city of Woriur which was then destroyed with showers of dust and sand. Since then the deity has set his face towards the west determined perhaps to see that Woriur might not become a capital once more! In support of the above idea, it is said that the main *gopuram* which should necessarily be at the entrance is still on the eastern part of the temple and the most important mantapams such as the Chitramantapam are on the same side.

A few people are of opinion that what is now called Mahal Street or Seventhinathapuram was the site of the ancient garden mentioned, by Saramamuni but the absence of any tank close by for watering the garden puts a discount on such a theory.

The deity is further known as *Maleikoluntheesvarar* because the lingam is supposed to have been fashioned out of a minor summit of the rock itself. It must be so, for the lingam is a dark conical block ten feet high with a diameter of five feet at the base, supposed to have been worshipped by king Tirisira, a brother of Ravana. This is the emblem to which Rama himself paid homage.

Though the lingam is the expressive emblem of Siva, yet to his devotees he has a human form, usually with one but occasionally with five or six heads. He has three eyes and his reddish hair is matted in the ascetic way and on it is the crescent moon, the Ganges,

and one or more cobras, while wreathed about it is a garland of *Kondai* flowers (Cassia). He has four arms but one body and two legs. He is usually seated on a grey-coloured bull. In colour he is reddish but his body is smeared over with white sacred ash.

As a rule temples in India were not built on a definite plan nor were they due to the efforts of a single individual. They begin with a *linga* or image but as years roll on, accretions and additions of ordinary or ornamental nature proceed from time to time, contributed by devotees to mark their *bakthi* or to satisfy some fancy. There is not a temple in India that has not so many smaller shrines within its precincts dedicated to minor deities. A visit to this Siva temple will prove that it is no exception to the rule. As you ascend the stairs leading to the temple, to your right there is the shrine of Mattuvarkulal Ammai, i.e., deity fragrant with beautiful tresses of hair, signifying Parvati or Sakthi, the consort of Siva, the grace of God. The walls of this shrine are of exquisitely polished stone, dark in colour. When you reach the first floor, you have to cross the *Chitramantapam*, full of mural pictures illustrating puranic stories, before you reach the temple itself. Directly over the lingam, there is a dome covered with gold plate looking beautifully radiant in the sun. This was first done in 1820 and renovated in 1889.

The main approach to the temple is from the south of the rock. It is hard to explain why the main entrance is not in a straight line with the big bazaar street that runs from the north to the Prince of Wales' arch in the south. The whole staircase from the street to the top of the rock consists of 434 steps. As you ascend, after a few steps, almost adjoining the chief

entrance, there was a thousand-pillared mantapam which was used for some years as gun-powder magazine until in 1772 there was an explosion which destroyed a major portion of it leaving some fragmentary bits now used as shops or "stores." At the head of the first flight of steps which emerges into open air about half way up, a street runs completely round the rock, meeting two other approaches, one from the north and the other from the east. Over two thousand houses have been built on either side of this street. Starting again on your course you meet the temple elephant saluting you at the bidding of the mahout. This animal leads all temple processions on festive occasions.

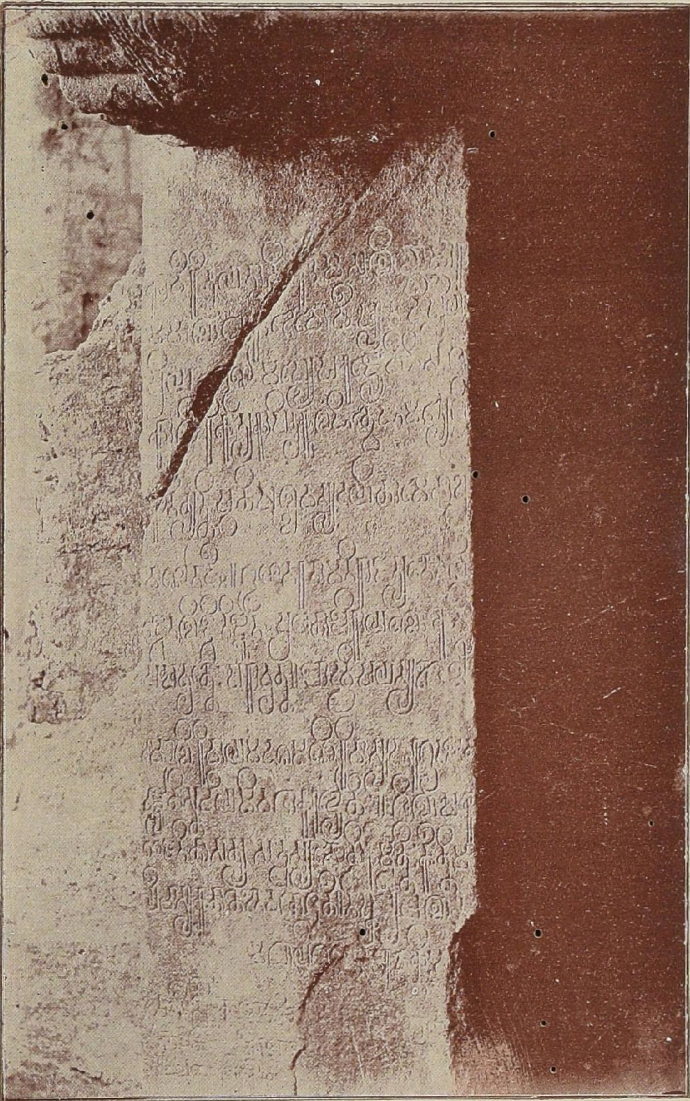
Sixteen steps more, you notice a door on the right which leads into *mouna mutt*, presided over by a local *thambiran*, once called Saramamuni atheenam, now under the control of the mutt in Dharmapuram. Going up still further, you reach the hundred-pillared mantapam on your left with a beautiful dais at the west end of the hall. It is in this mantapam that temple committee meetings are held and religious lectures are delivered. It is here that Governors and Viceroys are received and welcomed. At the head of the last flight of steps which is covered, there is a landing place with a collection box into which each visitor who wishes to reach the summit through a door on the right has to throw a quarter anna. On the left you see the flagstaff mantapam which forms the ante-room of the Siva temple already described and beyond which you cannot go if you are not a Hindu.

Paying the tax and passing through the right door from the shadows and closeness of the temple's precincts into the dazzling sunlight and fresh air, you go up a few more steps and are face to face with the

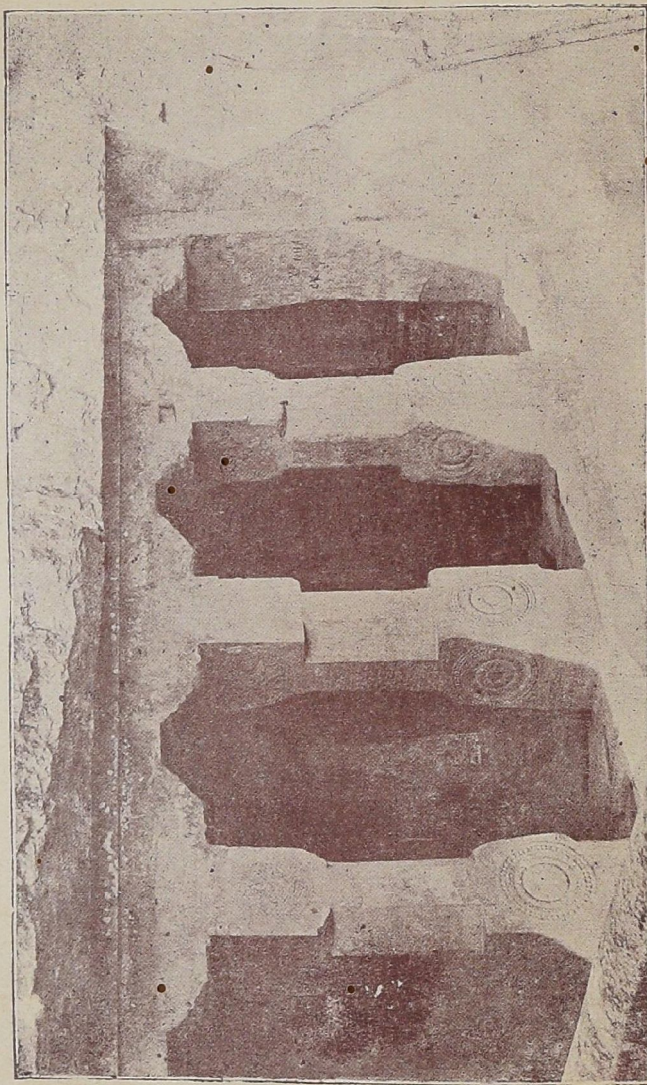
cave temple cut out of the rock itself. More will be said of it presently but mention should be made here of the fact that it was used as powder-magazine during the troublous times with the French and on account of an explosion the westernmost pillar containing Samskrit inscriptions cracked and the diagonal crack from right to left can be seen in the picture reproduced in the book. After this point higher up to the right there is a sixteen-pillared mantapam, known also as Vasantha mantapam, which commands a good panoramic view of the city below. This was built about 1630 by one Thalavai Mudaliar. Before you take a turn to the left for the Pillaiar Kovil on the top, you see on the right a building of the twentieth century—the belfry, with a bell made in Negapatam workshop. It is four feet in length and $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons in weight, having a diameter of four feet at the base. The structure came into being in 1919 just a few months before the Armistice day, out of public subscriptions raised through the untiring efforts of Ulaganatha Chettiar who himself bore a major portion of the expenditure. The stone-way between the rock and the belfry was made about fifty years ago by filling in a deep ravine which separated the main rock from its southern spur.

The remainder of the ascent is by means of steps cut in the rock itself guarded with iron rails on each side, put up so recently as in 1866. Somewhere this side in 1849 a serious accident happened during the festival of Pillaiar Chathurthi when a large number of people had been collected on the top of the rock. “For some unknown reason a panic started; the great crowd rushed down the rock; and in a few minutes the winding covered stair was piled up with those who had been knocked down in the crush and trampled to death.

The left half of the Sanskrit inscription in Pallava Grantha Character



UPPER CAVE TEMPLE



The Upper Cave Temple.

S.V. V. Press, Srirangam.

Order was restored with difficulty by the District Magistrate and the troops but the rock was not cleared till 3 A.M. It was found that 250 persons had been killed" (from the *Trichinopoly Gazetteer*.)

Below the bell-tower, to the east there is a modern work of great utility to the town. I mean the service reservoir for storing and distributing water, constructed by the Municipal Council and opened in November, 1910, at a cost of about Rs. 50,000. It consists of two covered chambers each 60 by 50 by 15½ feet and can store six lakhs of gallons of water which is pumped up by engines working at the pumping station, two miles to the north-west of the Rock.

A word or two about the interesting cave temples of the rock will not be out of place here. The upper one which faces the south was cut out of the rock during the reign of the first great king of the new Pallava line Mahendra Vikrama Varma who subjugated the whole of the Chola country and ruled from 600 to 625 A.D. It was Mahendra that introduced into the Tamil land stone temples for housing the gods worshipped by himself and his people. His workmen excavated the sides of hills, leaving portions standing as pillars and carving on the walls statues in bas relief or high relief or in the round, and the images intended for worship.*

The façade is supported by pillars of special shape which marks Mahendra's work. They are about seven feet high and two feet square. The upper and lower third of the pillars are cubical, while the middle third has its angles bevelled off so that it is octagonal in

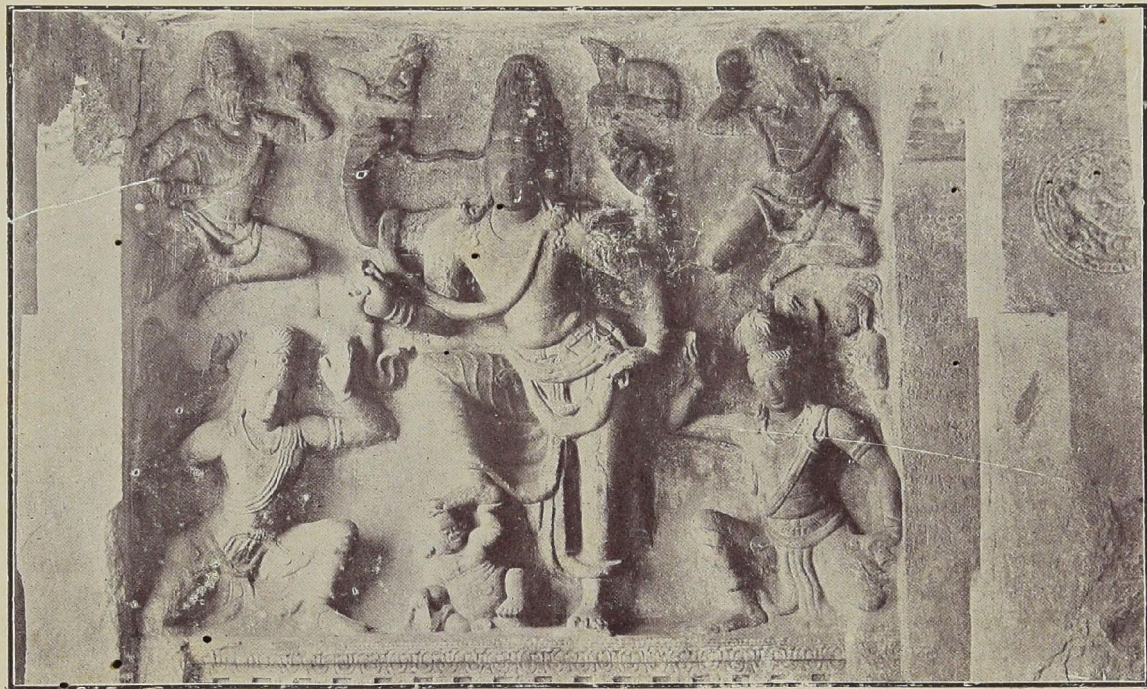
* For further details of the cave temple, I would refer the reader to the well-written brochure on "The Cave Temples" by M.R.Ry-P. T. Srinivasa Aiyengar Avl., M.A., L.T.

section. On the front side of the pillars are engraved the several titles assumed by Mahendra—the titles being in Samskrit, Tamil and old Telugu. The cubical portions of the pillars are covered with conventional lotus medallions. In line with the four front pillars there is a second row of pillars in the middle of the hall which measures 20 by 10 by 6 cubits.

The shrine is a square room at the east end of the hall where Mahendra placed a stone lingam but it is not there now. The hollow for it inside can be seen. In a niche at each side of the shrine entrance there is carved in bold relief a *dvarapala* or guardian of the doorway. He leans on a huge club and faces the spectator in an aggressive manner, delivering a message and conveying a warning.

On the west wall of the hall there is a fine piece of group-statuary (see figure). The central figure is Siva with four arms. The right upper arm holds the little figure of Ganga issuing from his hair; the left, a rosary. The right lower arm holds a serpent which goes over his left shoulder as his *yaagnopavitam* (soman cloth); while the left rests on his hips. His right foot is bent, being placed on the head and the left hand of a dwarf; his left foot stands straight. Four rishis kneel about him and there are, besides, two ghandharvas with hands raised. On the two sides of his crown are a deer and a little human figure. The whole panel forms a beautiful group, vigorously carved.

On both edges of the west wall is carved a Samskrit inscription in Pallava *grantha* characters and a photo of one-half of the inscription is given. It is the earliest specimen we have of South Indian writing and the subjoined inscriptions are engraved on two pillars, one on the left and another on the right. They are



The Group-statuary in the upper Cave Temple

both somewhat worn. On each of the two pillars are four Samskrit verses. Besides, the lower part of the left pillar bears a few unintelligible Samskrit words and a much defaced inscription in old Tamil characters. The two inscriptions record that a King Gunabhara, who bore the titles Purushottama, Satrumalla and Satya-samdha constructed a temple of Siva on the top of the mountain and placed in it a *linga* and a statue of himself. Each of the two pillars mentions the river Kaviri and refers to the Chola country. On the left pillar the Kaviri is called "the beloved of Pallava"; this means in prose that a Pallava King ruled over the country along the banks of the Kaviri river.

1. On the pillar to the left.

TEXT.

कावीरीनयनाभिरामसलिलामाराममालाधराम् देवो वीक्ष्य नदीप्रियः
प्रिय [यु] णामप्येष^१ रज्येदिति । साशंका गिरिकन्यका पितृकुलं हित्वेह
मन्ये गि [रौ] नित्यन्तिष्ठति पल्लवस्य दयितामेतां ब्रुवाणा नदीम् ॥ १ ॥
गुणभरनामानि राजन्यनेन लिङ्गेन लिङ्गिनि ज्ञानम् । प्रथताञ्छिराय लोके
विपक्षवृत्तेः परावृत्तम् ॥ २ ॥ चोळविषयस्य शैलो मौलिरिवायं सहामणि-
रिवास्य । हरगृहमेतज्ज्योतिस्तदीयमिव शाङ्करं ज्योतिः ॥ ३ ॥ शिला
[ख] रेण जनिता सत्यसन्धस्य भौतिकी । मूर्तिः कीर्तिमयी चास्य कृता
तेनैव शाश्वती ॥ ४ ॥ निष्कृ [ष्य] चला [स] मयापि [गुणभरे] भक्तिः *

TRANSLATION.

(Verse 1.) Being afraid, that the god who is fond of rivers (Siva), having perceived the Kāviri, whose waters please the eye, who wears a garland of gardens, and who possesses lovely qualities, might fall in love (with her), the daughter of the mountain (Parvati) has, I think, left her father's family, and resides per-

manently on this mountain, calling this river the beloved of the Pallava (*king*).

(2) While the king called Gunabhara is a worshipper of the *linga*, let the knowledge, which has turned back from hostile (*vipaksha*) conduct, be spread for a long time in the world by this *linga*!

(3) This mountain resembles the diadem of the Chola province, this temple of Hara (*Siva*) its chief jewel, and the splendour of Samkara (*Siva*) its splendour.

(4) By the stone-chisel a material body of Satya-samdha was executed, and by the same an eternal body of his fame was produced.

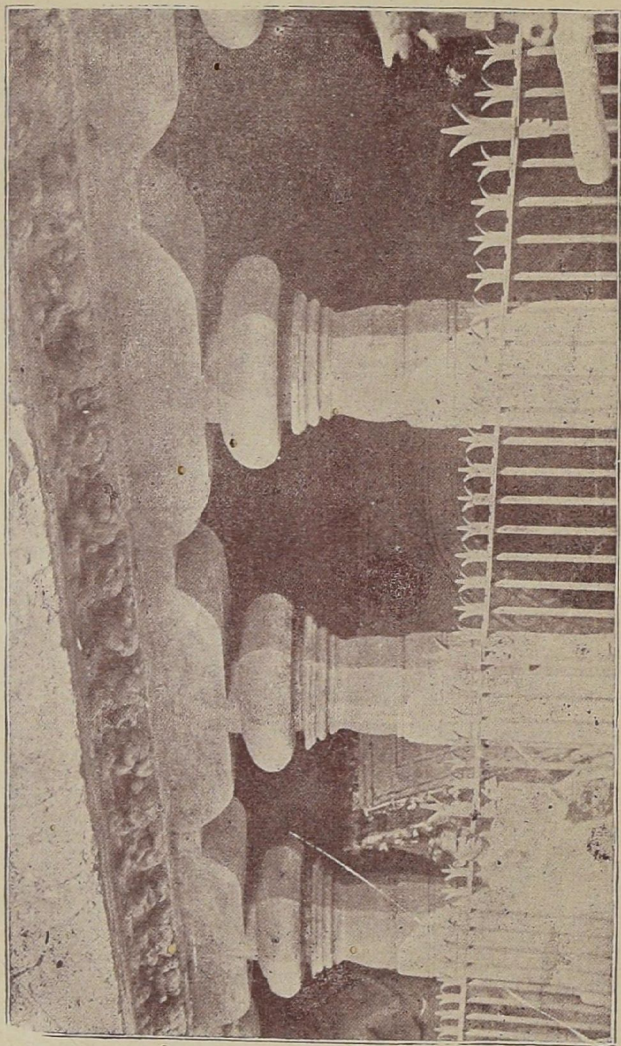
२. On the pillar to the right.

TEXT.

शैलेन्द्रमूर्धनि शिलाभवने विचित्रे शैलीन्तनुं गुणभरो नृपतिनिधाय ।
स्थाणुं व्यध [त्त] वि [धि] रेप यथार्थसंज्ञं स्थाणुः स्वयञ्च सह तेन जगत्सु
जातः ॥ १ ॥ गृहमकृत शत्रुमल्लो गिरिन्द्र^१कन्यापतेर्गिरावस्मिन् । गिरिशस्य
गिरिशसंज्ञामन्वर्थी^२कर्तुमर्थपतिः ॥ २ ॥ विभूतिश्चोळानां कथमहमवेक्ष्य
विपुलां नदीं वा कावीरीमवनिभवनावस्थित इति । हरेणोक्तः प्रीत्या विभु-
रदिशदभ्रंलिहमिदमनुग्र [ह्यो राज्ये] गरिभवन^३मस्मै गुणभरः ॥ ३ ॥
निर्मापिता [मिति मुदा] पुरुषोत्तमेन शैलीं हरस्य तनुमप्रतिमामनेन ।
कृत्वा शिवं शिरसि [धा] रयतात्मसंस्थमुच्चैःशिरस्त्वमच [लस्य] कृतं
कृतार्थम् ॥ ४०॥

TRANSLATION.

(*Verse 1.*) When king Gunabhara placed a stone-figure in the wonderful stone-temple on the top of the best of mountains, he made in this way Sthânu (*Siva*)



The Lower Cave Temple.

S. V. V. Press, Srirangam.

stationary and became himself stationary (i.e., *immortal*) in the worlds together with him.

(2) King Satrumalla built on this mountain a temple of Girisa (*Siva*), the husband of the daughter of the king of mountains, in order to make the name Girisa (i.e., *the mountain-dweller*) true to its meaning.

(3) After Hara (*Siva*) had graciously asked him: "How could I, standing in a temple on earth, view the great power of the Cholas or the river Kāvīrī?"—king Gunabhara, who resembled Manu in his manner of ruling, assigned to him this mountain-temple, which touches the clouds.

(4) Thus having joyfully placed on the top (*of the mountain*) a matchless stone-figure of Hara (*Siva*), which he caused to be executed, that Puzhottama, who bore Siva fixed in his mind, made the loftiness of the mountain fruitful.

There is another cave temple just below the Siva temple on the south-western corner of the rock. There is a hall with two side chapels—one on the east with an image of Vishnu and the other on the west without any—perhaps the *lingam* had been removed—the hall is supported by eight pillars of the same form as in the other cave temple already described. There is also a group statuary on the north wall, having the carved figures of Siva, Brahma, Indra, Surya and Ganesha.

This booklet may swell into a book if I go on boswellising on even the smallest details of the rock. Each figure engraved and each picture drawn has a story to tell, to him that has eyes to see and faculty to observe. Men may come and men may go but the rock stands for ever, "brooding over an ancient fame"

while witnessing what is now being enacted all round
under its very shadow.

O strengthen me, that while I stand
Firm in the Rock, and strong in Thee,
I may stretch out a loving hand
To wrestlers with the troubled sea.

3. THE ILLUMINATION

Thou, Lord of life!—Thou, of space!
From Whom all light doth flow;
Thou who hast deigned from wondrous grace
Salvation's path to show.

—Sir John Malcolm.

In almost all religions, light is the emblem of divine presence and grace. God himself is called the Supreme Light in *Thiruvarutpayan*. The Saivite saints in their *Thevaram* address god as the Great Light that illuminates everything and causes souls to perform *karma*. Saint Manikkavasagar sings in his *Thiruvasagam*, “ஜோதியே, சுடரே, சூழொளி விளக்கே.” The Lord Jesus whom one of his *dasas* addressed as “the light to lighten the gentiles” declared Himself to be “the Light of the World.” Sir Edwin Arnold calls Gautama Buddha, the Light of Asia.

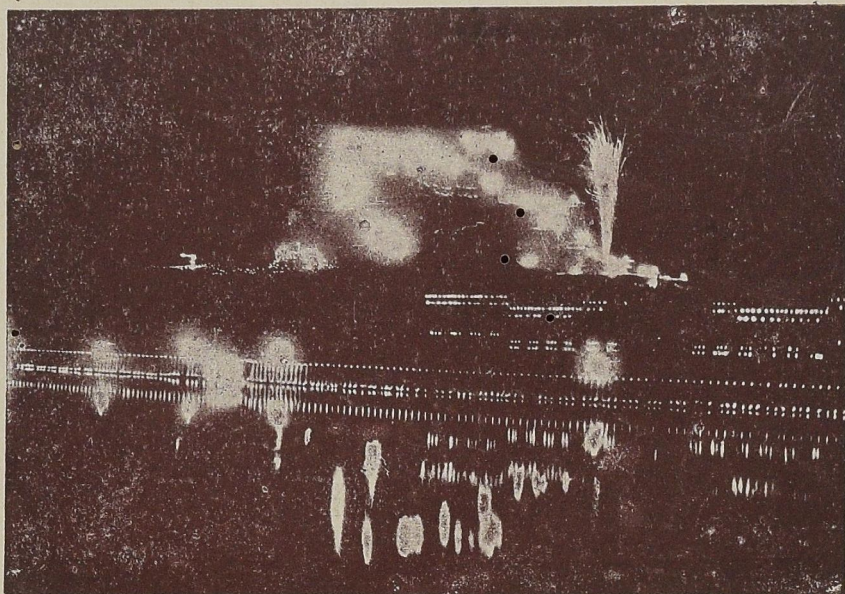
In all Hindu temples lamps burn perpetually in the innermost shrine, the *sanctum sanctorum*, “casting a dim religious light.” There is hardly a Christian catholic church without its sanctuary light to indicate the presence of the Eternal God. To illuminate a temple on festivals has been in vogue for centuries past and it is believed to bring in special merit (*punyam*) for the devotees. A story is told of a rat being born a great king in its next birth, because it had trimmed with its nose the light in Siva's shrine in mount Kailas and made it burn brighter. The merit thus obtained is called “*Vilakkupunyam*.” Now and then a *baktha* puts up a hundred thousand lights (*lakshatheepam*) all round the temple (as the Maharajah does in

Trivandrum once in six years) to signify the glorious effulgence of god and the punyam of such a devotee is very great indeed.

Turning to the temple on our rock, we find that at every Karthikai (November) there is an illumination on a small scale though there is no record whatever to show that within recent times there was any *lakshatheepam* display. The idea of illuminating the rock in honour of kings, princes and governors does not seem to have existed in ancient times. It must have been conceived after the advent of the British. The English annexed Trichinopoly by proclamation and became its rulers in August, 1790, and the first Collector in the person of Mr. J. Wallace was appointed in August, 1801. The municipal franchise was conferred upon the city in November, 1866, and the first council was formed with two *ex-officio* and nine nominated members. The first Governor of Madras to visit Trichinopoly was Lord Napier (Ettrick).*

This event took place in December, 1868, when His Excellency was welcomed in right oriental style with almost divine honours and the rock with its temple was illuminated in honour of man for the *first time* in the annals of Trichinopoly. A pavilion was put up for the distinguished guest over the mainguard gate, otherwise known as the western Boulevard gate, and the Teppakulam on the west of the rock, the construction of which is ascribed to Visvanathan Naik (1559-63) was lighted with innumerable oil lamps converting the whole tank into a veritable fairy land.

* For this information I am indebted to the late Mr. Sambasivam Pillai, a Retired Sub-Magistrate, who was at that time a clerk in the Local Taluk Office.



The Illumination of the Rock & a pyrotechnic display.

S. V. V. Press, ~~S. V. V.~~ **Madras**

The next great occasion on which the rock was illuminated was on the 11th December, 1875, when his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII) most graciously visited the town.

Since then the illumination of the rock has always formed part of the programme—save on two occasions—during the visit of distinguished persons to Trichinopoly. It may be within the memory of all how in December, 1909, we were sadly disappointed by Lord Minto, the then Viceroy, cancelling at the last moment his visit under medical advice even though illuminations and fireworks had been arranged on a lavish scale. But the Governor, Sir Arthur Lawley, came to us with the Viceroy's message of regret and received in part the honours prepared for the Viceroy.

1911 was the year of the Delhi Durbar and the 12th December was the Durbar Day on which the rock was illuminated. On the 22nd November, 1913, the rock was again ablaze with oil lamps and rendered lustrous with a pyrotechnic display in honour of Lord Hardinge, the then Viceroy. When Lord Pentland visited the town in November, 1915, the Great War was in progress and money was required for maintaining the Hospitalship, *Madras*. Great economy was practised in welcoming the noble baron who was, at a garden party given in his honour, presented with a purse of nearly seventeen thousand rupees. Thus the rock escaped illumination. The other Governor who did not want such an honour was Sir Gibson Carmichael, who afterwards became the first Governor of Bengal as Lord Carmichael.

After an interval of eight years, the citizens of Trichinopoly were privileged in October, 1921, to entertain Lord and Lady Willingdon with electric

illumination of the rock and a pyrotechnic display on a grand scale. The occasion was singular, in a way because electricity had been for the first time summoned in the work of illumination. The idea of employing electricity proceeded from our princely and philanthropic citizen the late Diwan Bahadur S. Rm. M. Ct. Pethachi Chettiar, Zemindar of Andipatti, and the spectacular scene that night in October was entirely due to his generosity and munificence.

Arrangements were made later on to institute an electric installation to light the rock and the temple permanently with three hundred electric lights, and on the 7th December, 1923, during the time of the visit of His Excellency Lord Reading forty electric lights were inaugurated under the auspices of the Viceroy through the earnest endeavours of the present Trustee of the temple M. R. Ry. Kasivisvanatha Chettiar Avl., in the presence of Mr. Percy Macqueen, the then Collector, and of the Principals of the three Colleges in Trichinopoly. In January 1929 when the Governor of Madras Lord Goschen visited this town, the rock was again illuminated with electric bulbs on a grand scale, bringing out the contour of the different parts of the rock in bold relief. The tower of the Church of St. Joseph's College on the west was also illuminated most aesthetically in honour of the occasion.

4. THE TEMPLE WORSHIP

"God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."—*The Lord Jesus.*

"I will worship Him with folded hands, and with tears.

I will worship Him placing at His feet the treasure of my heart."

—*Rabindranath Tagore.*

Hinduism has its own systems of philosophy and code of rituals. It enjoins a belief in reincarnation and aspirations after non-existence. The Hindu is deeply religious and his ideals and actions in daily life are intimately bound up with his religion. He practises religion even in such matters as eating, drinking and washing himself. To the ordinary Hindu, rituals and ceremonials appear much more important than what Sri Sankara or Sri Ramanuja or Sri Madhva has said concerning Brahman and Atman. Doctrines of monism and dualism or monodualism do not worry him much. He might be a Vedantist or a Siddhantist but he must say his prayers and perform his monthly or annual ceremonies. He visits the temple at stated times and on important occasions. With him it is ritualism that teaches more than sermons on morality or discourses on gods and their attributes. For to him each symbol has its own meaning and each ritual has its own significance. It is true there are a few mystics or materialists who are not only not satisfied with ceremonialism but find elaborate rituals a weariness to the flesh without a commensurate gain to the soul. The Saivite singers of old have tried by means of their Thevaram and Tiruvasagam to draw men away from externalities to

a worship inward and spiritual. Saint Thirunavukarasu sings in his *thevaram* “கங்கையாடி லென் காவிரியாடி லென்.”

Why bathe in Ganga's stream or Cauvery ?

Why go to Comorin in Kongu's land ?

Why seek the waters of the sounding sea ?

Release is theirs, theirs alone, who call

In every place upon the Lord of all.

Yet who has not seen the ceaseless streams of pilgrims journeying to the Ganges or the Cauvery, to Rameswaram or Cape Comorin or a hundred other holy places ?

As a rule each Indian villago has a temple or koil of its own. It is said that there are more temples than there are villages in India. Daily *pūja* is performed in every temple, though in a few it is neglected. “Do not ‘live in a village that has no shrine’” is a proverb of the country.

The Siva temple on the rock has already been described and a simple description of the daily worship therein may not be out of place in a book mainly intended for visitors from Europe and America. *Pūja* or religious service is performed in the temple *four* times a day at hours noted below : A 8-9 A.M. ; B 11-12 noon ; C 5-6 P.M. ; D 9-10 P.M. A and D are styled *Sircar pūja* because the expenses connected therewith are met from the annual Government grant which amounts to about Rs. 8,000. The other two B and C are performed under the supervision of a representative of the Dharmapuram *atheenam* in the district of Tanjore, who is known as *thambiran* and lives in the *mouna mutt* already referred to. The present head of the above *atheenam*—Subramanya Thesiga Gnana Sambanda Pandara Sannathigal—was once the *thambiran* of this mutt in charge of the two *pūjas*, B and C.

Let us see what is actually being done at every puja. First the idol is awakened from his sleep, bathed in turn with oil, milk, curd, honey and water; then dressed in fresh clothes. Next a tray of offerings of delectable things is brought in to the accompaniment of music and placed in front of the god. This is what is called *Nayvathiam* ceremony which is followed by *theeparathanai* i.e., burning of lights and camphor. This is done amidst the singing of *thevaram* of Saivite songs and blowing of conch shells. While this is done, the soul of the devotee is in raptures and the devotee himself stands in a posture of breathless adoration and deep humility. The whole puja is concluded with a distribution of sacred ashes and the dismissal of worshippers. The first service lasts for over an hour and the same is repeated three times again in the course of the day. The cost of such rituals is enormous and the priests and other servants have a hard work to do.

The daily worship costs the temple authorities a little over Rs. 15,000 for a year which is met by *Mohini* or Government grant supplemented by income from *nanjah* lands presented to the temple by wealthy devotees and from rents on houses and shops.

In order to perform such elaborate rituals a body of servants is quite necessary and they may be brought under four heads:—

- (1) *Officials*, including peishkar, shroff, accountant and clerks.
- (2) *Gurukkals* and *othuvars* (thevaram singers).
- (3) *Paricharakars* and their assistants—cooks and confectioners.
- (4) Pipers, drummers, lamp-lighters, water-carriers and sweepers.

These number over fifty and are paid monthly except priests who enjoy *maniya* lands.

During the rule of the Chola kings, the management of the temple formed part of the general administration. When the Naiks came, the control passed on to the Dharmapuram *atheenam* who carried on temple worship with the income derived from lands in the name of the god and from lands in the name of the *thambiran*. With the advent of the British matters took a different turn and accounts were scrutinised and examined. The *thambiran* thereupon handed over to the British the lands in god's name reserving to himself the other lands and also the exclusive right to conduct two daily pujas in the temple. The British were therefore in duty bound to arrange for the other two pujas and appointed about 1842 the first trustee in the person of D. Balasubramanya Mudaliar, the richest sowcar of that time, to manage the affairs of the temple. It is said that this gentleman was in sole charge of also the other two temples at Srirangam and Jambukesvaram. His descendants enjoyed the unique privilege of being respected trustees of the three famous temples in South India for nearly four generations. One Periyaswami Mudaliar, the trustee, during the visit of the Prince of Wales in 1875, had the unique honour of welcoming His Highness to the temple, garlanding him with a garland of artificial jasmine in gold.

Large temples in this circle are twenty-seven in number and they are under the general management of a Devasthanam Committee consisting of ten members appointed by the Religious Endowment Board. This committee has the power to appoint trustee or trustees for each of the temples under its control. The



M.R.Ry. A. R. S. V. Kasivisvanatha Chettiar
Trustee, Rock Temple

present trustee of the rock-fort temple Mr. A. R. S. V. Kasivisvanatha Chettiar was first appointed to this office in 1920 and was reappointed from February 1928 under section 51 (4) of the Religious Endowments Act. Since his appointment, he has introduced several reforms in the performance of daily worship and in the celebration of the annual festivals of the temple. He worked hard to put up a typical Hindu Gopuram (tower) over the main entrance to the rock at a cost of nearly ten thousand rupees. It is well known that members of the Nattukottai community spend large sums of money in renovating and restoring temples all over South India. Mr. Kasivisvanatha Chettiar with the usual keenness and earnestness of his community was working for four years for a *Kumbabishekam*, the like of which took place forty-two years ago. It must be borne in mind that temples are not plain rectangular buildings as may appear to an outsider; there are cells and cellars, dark recesses and secret chambers, unseen by ordinary men, and unvisited by the rays of the sun. There are precincts to be cleansed, carvings to be put right, drawings to be retouched, and pillars to be painted or colour-washed. All this would cost much and could be done only at long intervals. The work of such renovation and repair is crowned with a grand and expensive ceremony known as *Kumbabishekam*. Mr. Chettiar in addition to his carrying out such purifications and cleaning functions had erected a Rajagopuram over the entrance to the Rock temple and performed the Kumbabishekam ceremony on the 13th June 1927. It was only in 1923 that the Teppakulam which is fed by a channel from the Uyyakolam and not from the Cauvery as is commonly supposed was left to dry up and the bed-silt removed, and an electric

installation of three hundred bulbs for lighting the storied corridors and the dark corners instituted. In order to assist Mr. Chettiar in his very heavy duties as a Trustee of this famous temple which is being daily visited by hundreds of devotees from far and near Mr. T. V. Arumugam Pillai was appointed an additional Trustee in August 1928. The latter, though young has had considerable experience as a member of the Trichinopoly Taluk Board and of the District Educational Council and is exerting himself much to see that the business part of the temple worship is done regularly and systematically on the principle of economy and efficiency.

Dewan Bahadur Sir T. Desikachari Kt. has been since 1927 the President of the Trichinopoly Circle Devasathanam Committee appointed under the Act to supervise and regulate worship in about 165 temples both large and small and much of the efficiency and success is due in a large measure to his abundant tact and enlightened sympathy.

The rock is as old as the world but is taking in these modern improvements without any grumbling or murmur. Though ancient, yet modern, though orthodox, yet progressive, though fixed and conservative, yet moving with the times, with a hoary past, yet possessing marks of the rushing present, the rock is a thing of majestic grandeur and so "a joy for ever," of which the people of South India may rightly be proud. It is earnestly hoped that the rock with the belfry, the service reservoir and the electric installation on the one hand and with temples of ancient fame, elaborate rituals and organised worship on the other will lead the people onward and upward towards the Supreme Being and inspire them with a longing desire to seek and discover the Way, the Truth and the Life.



M.R.Ry. T. V. ARUMUGHAM PILLAI
Executive Trustee, Rock Temple

5. TAYUMANASVAMI

Saint, Singer and Sage.

Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave.

—Wordsworth.

In the earliest stages of Hinduism, the Hindu pantheon could boast of a number of Nature-deities but in the period of Puranas a change came about and the great triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva was established. The process of reduction in the number of major deities went on still further until Brahma fell into the background leaving Siva and Vishnu as supreme beings for the worship of the people of India. Probably about 500 B. C. when Hinduism penetrated southwards into the Tamil Country, there were two forms of worship—the worship of Siva and that of Vishnu. The cult of Vaishnavism known as Vedantism has three main schools of thought with their distinctive systems of philosophy. They are Advaita, Visishtadvaita and Dvaita. The exponent of the Advaita system of Philosophy was the great teacher Sankaracharyar according to whom the way of deliverance is the way of knowledge. Through ignorance comes rebirth, and man and God alike are bound by Karma; all action works itself out with impersonal justice, and there is no room for anything else. Thus *Bhakti*, in any really valuable sense is impossible, both because the Supreme Being is without attributes and because of this reign of impersonal retributive law. According to Visishtadvaita philosophy expounded by Rāmanuja, man's relationship with God by means of *Bekthi* or loving devotion, is the way of escape from the ills

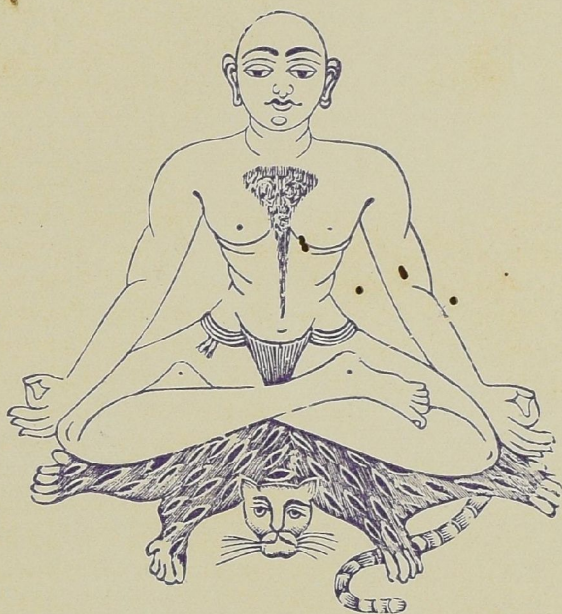
of life and is open to all. It maintains the personal existence of the Supreme Being and emphasises his love and pity for the sinful beings who adore Him. He is able to grant them an abode of eternal bliss in conscious communion with Himself; while God alone exists and all else is manifestation, that manifestation (because God is immanent in it) is real and permanent, though subject throughout to the control of the one Brahman.

The first system is merely intellectual, without any emotional sympathy and its logical conclusion for man to come to will be practical atheism, for Sankaracharyar taught with relentless emphasis an *Absolute* without attributes and the unreality of all manifestation. Naturally there came a reaction against the attributeless Absolute and the feeling of reaction received much support from the strong influence of the Buddhist and Jain movements which, we may say, prepared the way for the latter day Bhakti movement. From Ramanuja, the many subsequent bhakti movements branch out again, some with more of emotion, some with less; but all alike in accepting as substantially true his theory of the relation between God and man and the Universe. Ramanuja, in whom bhakti shines in the full splendour of a great philosophical exposition may be called the "morning star" of the bhakti movement and the Alwars or the great Bhaktas who sang in the vernaculars and thus made a direct and successful appeal to the masses maintain *bhakti* as the great way of salvation. The collection of their hymns is known as the *Nalayira Prabandham*—the collection of Four Thousand. The period during which Alwars appear to have flourished was that in which South India made its chief contri-

butions to the religious life of the country. From the seventh to the ninth centuries of the Christian era (600-800), not only the Alvars but also the curiously parallel Saivite Singers, Appar, Sundarar, Sambandar and Manickavasagar emphasised bhakti with extraordinary results. The two bhakti movements by the Vaishnavite and Saivite Saints, though directed towards rival gods were most potent allies, both making a popular religious appeal through the use of the vernaculars, both insisting on an exclusive devotion to one God and emphasising His grace, on the one hand and the privilege of man's loving devotion, on the other. The hymns of Appar, Sundarar and Sambandar are known as *thevaram* and they were put together in one collection of 797 pathigams by Nambi Andar Nambi about 1000 A. D. The Thiruvāsagam¹ or sacred utterance by Manikkavasagar (utterer of jewels) stands as high as, or even higher than the Thevaram in the affections of the Tamil people. There is a common Tamil saying that 'nothing can melt the hearts of the man who cannot be melted by the sacred utterance.' These hymns are being daily sung in Temples and homes throughout the Tamil Country where more than eighteen millions of people cherish Tamil as their mother tongue. To the pious Saivite these hymns have the same authority as the Samskrit Vedas and the mere learning of them by heart is held to be a virtue. The Hinduism which was dangerously shaken in the early centuries of the Christian era by the spread of Buddhism and Jainism was saved by the vernacular songs of the Alvars and the hymns of the Saivite Saints and firmly established by the doctrine of Bhakti and the faith in a gracious and knowable God.

For the next nine hundred years except Arunagiriar and Pattinathupillaiar we hear of no great Tamil Saints or Singers after the great Manickavasagar unless we could refer to the great religious revival in the Maharashtra which covers a period of nearly five hundred years from 1200 to 1700 A.D. and during this period some fifty saints and prophets like Namdev, Ekanath and Tukaram flourished. Then appeared a great bhakta in Chirapalli whose name is a household word in the Tamil Districts and whose sweet and supremely fascinating hymns will be sung as long as the sun lasts.

In the reign of Vijiaranga Chokanatha Naik who ruled in Trichinopoly from 1704 to 1731 A.D. there was an able minister—Kediliappa Pillai (one who never did harm to anybody). He belonged to Vedaranyam in Tanjore District and while there as Manager of the Siva temple, had obtained a fame for honesty of purpose and uprightness of conduct. The king, having heard of his deep devotion and high character invited him to go to Trichinopoly and to take up the office of Minister of State. He agreed in obedience to his master's wish. He married one Gejavalli by whom he had a son named Sivachidambaram. His elder brother had no issue. To make him happy, he permitted him to adopt his only son Sivachidambaram. As a minister he was a great success but he was not quite happy because he had no son. It was impossible for him to ask his brother to give back his son once given away. He therefore sent up his prayers and supplications to Tayumanesvarar, the god of the Rock, for the boon of a son. His prayers were answered and in due course, a son was born. He was called Tayumanavar after the god who mercifully granted the request of



TAYUMANAVAR SVAMI •

Saiva Siddhantist of 18th Century

the minister. The child grew up in Thirumaraikadu, Tamil name for Vedaranyam, under the kind care of his mother in the home of his grandparents. When time came for schooling, he was taught Tamil and Samskrit and in due course became proficient in the literatures of both the languages including Gnana Sastras and the Sciences of Wisdom of the great masters. How to do loving service to lord Siva occupied his mind and engaged his attention. But when the lad was sixteen years old, his father Kediliappa departed this life to the deep regret of the King, and young Tayumanavar was asked to succeed his father as chief minister of the state.

He bowed himself

With all obedience to the King, and wrought

All kinds of service with a noble ease,

That graced the lowliest act in the doing of it.

Neither his high position in life nor the great wealth which he inherited from his father turned his head and made him haughty. On the other hand he led a very simple life, his one object being to serve his lord Siva with his heart and soul without any regard for his dress or food or honour or luxuries of life. His enquiring mind was always busy trying to solve problems of religion and philosophy. He was a real searcher after truth and he was longing to find one who can teach him the way of Truth and eternal Bliss. As he was on his way to the temple one day to worship, he met at the entrance a sage in deep meditation, full of grace and charm. Knowing him to be a great teacher he fell at his feet in great obeisance and deep adoration, for the Sage was no other than the speechless Master known as Mounaguru who gave no answer to the young man's question, "Swami, what is the book in

thy hand" but walked on in silence. The lad followed him wherever he went until both came to a lonely place at midnight and Tayumanavar besought him with tears to speak a word in reply. The master said that the book was "Sivagnana siddhi"—a guide to attain spiritual bliss and instructed him to pass the stage of married life and then "to be resigned and alone-become"—(சும்மா யிருத்தல்) before he could attain Gnana-nishtha. The disciple parted from his master but continued his spiritual exercises in the midst of his state-duties. The King died and the government now devolved on the queen Meenakshiammai. She sent for Tayumanavar with a view to insist on his continuing to be a minister. But, when she saw him, she was struck by the princely beauty and lovely form of the young man and offered him both herself and her kingdom. The minister was shocked at the unexpected behaviour of the queen and in order to avoid all temptation left the palace and went beyond the confines of her kingdom to Devanagar. Sivachidambaram, his elder brother, hearing of the incident called on him there and entreated him to return to Vedaranyam and settle in household life. To oblige his brother and to fulfil the commands of his master—Mounaguru—he married a handsome maid Mattuvarkulal-ammai and lived with her in Vedaranyam. His married life was however very short, for his wife died immediately after she gave birth to a son who was named Kanakasabapathi. A few years passed by and the great speechless Guru appeared on the scene once more and bade Tayumanavar take to ascetic life and the call came ringing to renounce all at the feet of the Lord.

The master bids thee lose thy petty self
 In service; and thy help to brothers give;
 And thou shalt truly find thyself again,
 'T will be thy gain, and others too shall live.

In implicit obedience to his Guru, he wandered as a homeless ascetic and austere devotee, with a rag round his loins, visiting the famous shrines and holy-waters, and singing hymns of lyric beauty and tender grace, in rhythmic measure, now in exuberance of joy, now in plaintive lamentations but all full of elements which have endeared themselves to bhaktas in every age and in every religion. He lived for others and his life-aim was to lead his fellow human beings to a knowledge of God by helping them to give up sin and sinful ways. He passed the last years of his life in Ramnad, holding sweet communion with his Lord until he was called in 1742 to the holy feet of the Supreme Being in the 'presence' of his disciples and followers.

Now a word or two about his songs and teaching will not be out of place. He was a great saint indeed and his life was holy and blameless. His songs are soul-stirring and heart-melting, calculated to arouse in men feelings of bhakthi towards God. He is to Hinduism as the Psalmist David to the early Judaism; he may be called the Psalmist of Saivism. Both David and Tayumanavar may be said to have been chosen by God for the establishment of His righteousness and the upliftment of His people. The spirits of both lay open to the spirit of God which brooded over their young life, teaching, quickening, and ennobling them and opening their eyes to the transcendental beauty and majesty of God and His revelation. Both of them confess their sins and ask God for grace and pardon.

Tayumanavar was a modern saint who lived in advance of the times. By his consistent and blameless life, he taught the men of his times that it is quite

possible to be in the world and yet to be out of it; whether as a student or a householder, as a father or husband, as a master or servant, one can in the midst of one's duties incidental to the particular status, fix one's attention to the true object of life. He also emphasised and exemplified that it is not *knowledge* that counts but the *life* that brings peace and happiness. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Purity of heart was his great strength in life and we know how firmly he rejected the overtures of a queen of beauty and power. He knew that by allowing carnal desires or *maya* to come between himself and God he was endangering the soul from attaining salvation. Tayumanavar is one of the great teachers who combined abstruse philosophy with practical religion and in him his philosophy became his life. He was far above religious bigotries and sectarian prejudices. His mission in life was to redeem religion from the crude Sidhantists of dualism and the erring Vedantists of monism. He taught that Truth was found everywhere and the ideal should be to search for Truth. Breathes there a man who has not had his heart touched and his soul stirred whenever he listened to the singing of the well-known lines of Tayumanavar அங்கிங் கெனாதபடி யெங்கும் ப்ரகாசமாயானந்த பூர்த்தியாகி யருளொடு நிறைந்ததெது? His spirit was the spirit of tolerance and he preached the golden mean vedanta-sidhanta. He believed with Tennyson who sang

"Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be,
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they"

According to him "The soul is not the part of God or a spark from Him apparently or really, but an entity dependent on Him for its Existence and Bliss."

The grace of God is always there, ever flowing from Him absorbing the illumined soul into its very Being. The doctrine of Grace finds a definite place in all his songs and man cannot know God unless through His grace.

Tayumanavar was a Jeevan-mukta, that is, one who found living salvation and eternal Bliss.

அன்பர்பணிசெய்ய என்னை ஆளாக்கிவிட்டுவிட்டால்,
இன்பநிலைதானே வந்தெய்தும் பராபரமே.

He was able to find in this Rock the great speechless teacher—the Mouna Guru who taught him the solution to the great question ‘what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul and what shall a man give in exchange for the soul’? It is the music of words like these that echoes unceasingly in the heart of every Indian devotee that visits this Rock in a regular stream from dawn till sunset. May they, like Tayumanavar of whom the Tamils of South India should be proud, be enabled to find the Great Teacher of whom it was said, ‘never man spake like this man,’ who was full of Grace and Truth and who came unto his own and his own received him not but to as many as received him he gave them power to become the sons of God.

“GOD SAVE THE KING.”

