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Peerless Manifestations of Devī

SUMMARY: In Hinduism, the *śāstras* list many iconographical forms of Devī. Nevertheless, for a number of them, there is no existing material rendition. The present article examines the cases of a few such iconographical forms, those of Śaḍaṅgadevī, Catuṣṣaṣṭikalādevī, Śītalādevī, Daśamudrā and Trikaṅṭhakīdevī. *Śilpaśāstras* enumerate the *pratimālakṣaṇas* of these goddesses elaborately. It is an enigma why material evidence that is expected to portray the canonized form is missing. However, recently a few models have become available that get closer to the Śāstraic notions. These redesigned entries add a new dimension to the iconography of the goddess. The present article deals with some rarities in the realm of Śakti iconography based on the *Śrītattvanidhi* in its Tañcāvūr Sarasvatī Mahal Library edition.

KEYWORDS: Devī, *śāstra*, Śaḍaṅgadevī, Catuṣṣaṣṭikalādevī, Śītalādevī, Daśamudrā, Trikaṅṭhakīdevī.

Peerless manifestations of Devī are canonized in *śāstras*, however, for some of them no iconographical illustrations are to be found in

visual arts. The *pratimālakṣaṇas* of several such forms are given in the *Śrītattvanidhi* (STN) of Śrī Kṛṣṇarāja Uḍaiyar.¹ A few of these *recherché* forms (cf. *nirupamā* LSN-389, Rajarajan 2020b: 43) enumerated in the *śāstras* are Ṣaḍaṅgadevī (STN 1.33), Catuṣṣaṣṭikādevī (STN 1.91), Śītalādevī (STN 1.106), Sarvasamkṣobhiṇyādi-*Daśamudrā* (STN 1.8), and Trikaṅṭhakīdevī (STN 1.120). Several other Devīs are also described and these are Bheruṅḍā (STN 1.20), Tvaritā (STN 1.24), Kulasundarī (STN 1.25), Mi[ci]trā (STN 1.31), Śatruvidvaṃsinī-*trivaktra* (STN 1.73), Svathāveśinī-*trivaktra* (STN 1.74), Kāmakaleśvarī (STN 1.87), Surādevī (STN 1.90), Dvādaśārdhadevī-*pañcavaktra* (STN 1.93), Tiraskariṇī (STN 1.94), and a long list of 103 *akṣara-devatās* (STN: 137–239).

The present article will consider five forms from the text that includes a total of 239 forms of the goddess (summarized in Kalidos 1995). It will describe the individual goddesses, their attributes and their functions, and seek material examples where these previously unidentified goddesses can be discovered. Parallel references from the *Devīmāhātmyam* (DM, 5th century CE, cf. Doniger 1994: 18, 550 CE), part of the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (250 CE), and *Lalitāsahasranāma*

¹ He was the son of *mahārāja* Sāmarāja Uḍaiyar of the Mysore Princely Family and lived from 1794 to 1868 (cf. Del Bontà 2000: 99). The Tañcāvūr Sarasvatī Mahal Library published the book in three volumes, including the Tamil translation of K. S. Subrahmaṇya Śāstri (1964). Kalidos 1995 (cf. Santhana-Lakshmi-Parthiban 2014) attempted a summary of Śakti iconography (assisted by the Tamil University Sanskrit *vidvān* S. Visvanathan), which was reviewed by Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat. Filliozat refers to a Pune edition of STN in *nāgarī* which I could not consult. When I contacted the Oriental Institute, Mysore, there was no response. One can supply data also from <https://etexts.muktobodha.org>. This source may be of use in my future research. Muktabodha and the Tañcāvūr edition will have to be compared deeply, which needs more time and space. One can notice how different the *dhyānas* in the Muktabodha transcription are. Filliozat is also worth citing here (vide, the letter dated 30 November 1994), "... This is a very interesting text, which deserves really a good study. It covers a large amount of tantric and purāṇic literature which in several cases is not accessible otherwise. And, of course, we have to search if there exist images in sculpture or painting, corresponding to these textual descriptions...".

(LSN)² of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* (359–950 CE?) are cited in appropriate contexts.

Several gods and goddesses and the prescribed *lakṣaṇas* (cf. Kalidos 2017) are missing in visual arts (cf. Dallapiccola 1989; Kalidos 2012: 33–68, figs. 2, 8–9, 10–11, 18–19, 22). Some of the Śāstraic forms remain merely at the theory level. These forms do not seem to command any *purāṇāṃśa*.³ Such manifestations are likely to command an overt symbolism. Even if hidden, the idea concerning the contextual meaning of the form in question may be retrieved from external sources (cf. Kalidos 2012: 33–34). For example, Ṣaḍaṅgadevī is likely to denote the six *aṅgas* of Puruṣikā (*Saundaryalaharī* v. 7, DSN-910, cf. Puruṣa of the *Puruṣasūktam*). It is a metaphor for the Drāviḍian temple, called *ṣaḍaṅga-vimāna*. Catuṣṣaṣṭikalādevī is the Mistress of the Sixty-Four arts. Śītalādevī causes pestilences like smallpox and removes the same.⁴ Daśamudrā stands for the ten hand postures symbolically shown in Indian images of gods or enacted in ritual performances, and black-magic orgies. Aṭṭapuyakkarattāṇ (Aṣṭabhujaśvāmi) is the name of Viṣṇu in a *divyadeśa* of Kāñcīpuram (Rajarajan et al. 2017: 224); there are eight hands but not all of them display *mudrās*. Daśamudrā literally means ‘ten hand-postures’ that may denote the goddess showing different *mudrās*. Trikaṇṭhakīdevī is graced with a triple neck (*tri-kaṇṭhaḥ*)

² For the text and commentaries, see Murthy 1975; Tapasyānanda n.d.; Raina 2000; *Devīmāhātmyam* 1953. For dates see Zvelebil 1974; Doniger 1994. Doniger’s chronology of Sanskrit texts vis-à-vis Tamil is disputable; e.g. *Cilappatikāram* 450 CE (Zvelebil 1974: 132) and *Devīmāhātmyam* 550 CE (Doniger 1994: 18).

³ Myths support most iconographical forms described in *purāṇas*. For example, Devī slaughtering the buffalo-demon is Mahiṣāsūramardini. The *purāṇāṃśa* of the Devī is elaborated on in the DM, crisply dramatized in the Tamil epic *Cilappatikāram*, in *Vēṭṭuvavari*, ‘the Hunter’s song’ (Cf. Joshi 1977: 13).

⁴ Just as Gaṇapati is the one who removes hurdles, Vignahartā, and at the same time causes hurdles, Vignakartā. In Hindu orthodox tradition, any auspicious work is commenced with an invocation to Vigneśvara, otherwise, such an undertaking may end in fiasco. Cf. The *Mudgala Purāṇa* cited in STN 1.3.70–101; 78 Vigna [Vigneśa]-Gaṇapati and 101 Saṃkaṣṭahara-Gaṇapati (Bühnemann 1989: 12–19; Krishan 1994: 293–314; Rajarajan 2001: 379).

that could also be Tridehamūrti (infra), cf. the Yoginīs Trideśeśvarī and Saptamukhī (Dehejia 1986: 196, 215). The *pratimālakṣaṇas* of such forms are canonized in the *Śrītattvanidhi*. Now, after undertaking research in this area, I understand the critique of Pierre Filliozat (cf. the letter cited in note 1). They seem to fail to appear in visual arts. There is a need to re-examine whether such images could be discerned in ancient or medieval Indian visual art or in recently emerging contemporary temples. The following iconographic descriptions are based on STN (no. 1, 8, 33, 91, 106, 120) in the *grantha*-Tamil book published by the Tañcāvūr Sarasvatī Mahal Library.

Ṣaḍaṅgadevī

The Śākta cult considers Śakti or Devī the archetypal goddess of femininity. She is Bhagamālīnī (LSN-277) delineating the six excellences of loveliness, righteousness, glory, beauty, omniscience, and detachment. She absorbs the powers of Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā; cf. epithets in LSN: Parāparā (the Absolute 790), Trimūrti (628), Aṣṭamūrti (662), Brahman (822), Vīrā-[bhadrā] (899, Dehejia 1986: 210), Viṣṇumāyā (339), and Pañcakṛtyaparāyaṇā (274). Ṣaḍaṅgadevī (STN 1.33 citing *Jñānārṇavam-Candrajñānavidyā*) is “the Lady of Six Parts”; cf. Ṣaḍaṅgadevatāyuktā (LSN-386). The six *aṅgas* “parts” are *hṛdaya* (heart), *śiras* (head), *śikha* (topknot), *varma* (*varman* “an armour” or “a coat of mail”), *dr̥ṣṭi* (view, eye-sight falling on others, good or bad; *dr̥ś* “to see”), and *astra* (missile), all suffixed with Devī. It is not clear whether the six are separate entities or merge in a single form.⁵ The colour of the Devī-[s] is *raktavarṇa* (blood red). Devī radiates brilliance and moves round the *bindupīṭha*. *Bindupīṭha* is likely to be the Brahma-*sthāna* (cosmic core) of the *vāstupuruṣamaṇḍala*

⁵ Cf. Pañcadehamūrti (Mūrti of five bodies) in Cōla inscriptions (SII, II, i–ii, no. 30, p. 138). It is likely to be to Sadāśiva|ā. Normally this Mūrti is five-faced fitted with a single human body (Sharma 1976: pls. XX–XXI, Jeyapriya 2014: 41–52, figs. 2–7).

(Kramrisch 1980: 86–88, Gail 2016: fig. 2), the centroid in the holy of the holies. It could as well be the centre of the Cosmic ‘Śrīcakra’. Śaḍaṅgadevī is supposed to move around the cosmic core to promote creation. It is exactly in this place that the Liṅga is established (Lorenzetti 2008: fig. 1). The Liṅga/Sthāṇu (Tamil Tāṇu, Kantu or Taṇi) is the Pillar of Creation⁶.

The literal meaning of Śaḍaṅgadevī is “Mistress of six parts” (cf. *ṣaṭ/saḍ* Monier Williams 2005: 1108–1109, Apte 1990: 1074–1075), of which three are parts of human body; cf. ‘Puruṣa’ in the *Puruṣasūktam* of the *Ṛgveda* is viewed as anthropomorphic with thousands of faces, eyes, hands and legs (cf. Kalidos 2012: fig. 19).⁷ The other three are not human *aṅgas*. We may note the Hindu temple of the Drāviḍian type is *ṣaḍaṅga-vimāna*, Vā[a]stu Puruṣa (*vāstu* “site” and *vastu* “building” [Monier-Williams 2005: 931–933, 948]) of Six Parts. Puruṣa may denote a “male” or “female” person, while *napuṃsaka* means neither male nor female. Vastu Puruṣa lies flat (*śayana*) in the *pretāsana* mode (Kramrisch 1980: 66, Mitter 2001: fig. 22a) or stands (*sthānaka* posture).⁸ If standing, Vastu Puruṣa is *samaḥpāda*; e.g. Puruṣottama in Devaprayāgaḥ on top of the Himālayas. Scholars believe that the six vital parts of a Hindu temple represent the human *aṅgas* as shown below. Therefore, it is [Drāviḍa]-*ṣaḍaṅga-vimāna* (Fig. 1), i.e. the *garbhagrha*.⁹

⁶ *Tamil Lexicon* II, 719 and Lorenzetti 2008: 185–212. According to *śilpaśāstras*, the Liṅga in its vertical order consists of three parts; base Brahmāṃśam—square, middle Viṣṇvaṃśam—octagonal and top Śivāṃśam—circular (*Kaśyapaśilpaśāstra* 49.85, *Śilparatna* 2.66). It is fitted with *yoni* (Tam. *āvuṭai*) that represents the female (Kalidos 1997: 318–322, 2001: 171–179).

⁷ *sahasraśīrṣā puruṣaḥ sahasrākṣaḥ sahasrapād* (*Puruṣasūktam* 1.1). Cf. the epithets, LSN, *Sahasraśīrṣavadanā*-282, *Sahasrākṣī*-283 and *Sahasrapād*-284.

⁸ See Gananada 1992: 28, 89; Mitter 2001: fig. 22; Kalidos 2006. The plans of temples illustrated in Kalidos 2006 are linked with the laid up Vāstu Puruṣa described by R. K. Parthiban.

⁹ Devī is Garbhādhārā and Garbhāśāyanivāsini (DSN-446, 449).

<i>uparīṭha-</i>	feet
<i>adhiṣṭhāna-</i>	leg
<i>pāda</i> or <i>bhīṭi-</i>	“torso”, cf. Hṛdayadevī (Hṛdayasthā LSN-595)
<i>prastara-</i>	shoulder
<i>grīva-</i>	neck ¹⁰
<i>śikhara-</i>	head or face Śirodevī
<i>stūpi-kalaśa</i>	top-knot Śikhadevī ¹¹

Varma- (“hands”?), Dṛṣṭi- (maybe a metaphor for “eyes”) and Astra- (missile in hands),¹² are -Devīs that could not be fitted within the format of Vastu Puruṣa.

The concept of *śaḍaṅga-vimāna* and its parallelism with Vāstu/Vastu Puruṣa is theoretical. Scientific material evidence is scanty. Vāstu/Vastu Puruṣa in the temple form is symbolic (cf. Gananada cited in note 8). The Himalayan temples of Nepal and Southeast Asia show the faces on the structural *śikhara* (cf. Fergusson 1972: fig. 447, 468; Meister 1979, Bussagli 1985: pl. 348–352; Kramrisch 1980). It is more an ideogram than idealism. Puruṣa is mobile, and Vastu Puruṣa is stationary; cf. temple cars (*tēr*, “car-temple” or *ratha*) are of two types, *iyaltēr* (mobile temple car, e.g. Tiruvārūr wooden *tēr*; Kalidos 1989: pls. 15, 16–22) and *iyāṅkā-nilaittēr* (“immovable stationary chariot”, Kalidos 1989: 27, e.g. the Mēlaikkaṭampūr temple; Lorenzetti 2008: fig. 3).

¹⁰ The interlaying zone in the *vimāna* between the *prastara* and *grīva* is fitted with several *taḷas* (layers, e.g. *ekataḷa* and *dvitaḷa*) the maximum reaching in the Rājarājeśvaram of Tañcāvūr (1010 CE). See Hardy 2013: fig. 19.9.

¹¹ The Lord of the Vijayanagara-Nāyaka temple near Putukkōṭṭai is Śikhāgiriśvara, Śikhāgiri = Kuṭumiyāmalai (see note 23 for Tiṅṅukkal). It is due to the reason that the steep granite hill on the site is of the shape of *kuṭumi/śikha*. It accommodates an early medieval rock-cut temple at its base and earlier Jain rock-cut beds on cliffs (Kalidos 1989: 268; 2006: IV, Part I, 60, pl. VI-1), for new Indian *vimāna* types see Hardy 2013: 101–125, figs. 1–21, also Rajarajan 2020e: 1–11, figs. 1–5.

¹² Cf. Viṣṇu’s *pañcāyudhas*, i.e., *cakra*, *śaṅkha*, *dhanus*, *gadā* and *khaḍga*. (Rajarajan 2017a: 1068).

The present author has reported a model-temple built in the 1970s that brings out the correlation between *vāstu* and Vastu Puruṣa. It is clear evidence to justify the concept of Vastu Devī, the ‘Puruṣikā’, and Ṣaḍaṅgadevī (Rajarajan 2014: figs. 117–118). This sculpture is from the Kalaikkūṭam (Art Gallery) of Pūmpukār, the ancient port-metropolis of the Cōlas. The entire *Cilappatikāram*¹³ is portrayed in sculptural art. The story of the *Cilappatikāram* ends with Kēraḷaputra Ceṅkuṭṭuvan erecting a temple, Pattiṇik-*kōṭṭam* for Pattiṇi, the Goddess of Chastity (Rajarajan 2016: 52–53, Rajarajan 2020c). The image was carved on a stone brought from the Himalayas. The author of the epic, Iḷaṅkō (which means *yuvarāja*), supposed to be the younger brother of Ceṅkuṭṭuvan, says that experts in *vastu-vidya* built the temple. The image was duly consecrated according to the regulations of *prathiṣṭhā* (*Cilappatikāram*, 28. 228–230):

*kaivinaimurriyateyvappaṭimattu
vittakariyarriyaviḷaṅkiyakōlattu*

Image of the Goddess was created by experts.
Those were skilled in the nuances of sculptural work.

We do not come across any sculptural narrative based on the *Cilappatikāram* through the ages. The architectural evidence of the *Cilappatikāram* is the modern ‘Pūmpukār Kalaikkūṭam’.¹⁴ Significantly, the temple built by Ceṅkuṭṭuvan was a model of the *ṣaḍaṅgavimāna*. The temple from *upapīṭha* to *kalaśa* is subjoined with an image of Viśvarūpa-Pattiṇi (Fig. 2). This Goddess can be treated as a personification of Ṣaḍaṅgadevī.

¹³ For translation, see Pillai 1989 and transliteration Rajarajan 2016: 263–398.

¹⁴ Lakshmi Hölmstrom (Hölmstrom 1996) has demonstrated a few episodes of the *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*. These drawings are in tune with brāhmanical day-to-day life of the early 20th century (e.g. fig. facing p. 132). Interestingly, the *paṛaiyas* are in the *pañcakaccam-dhoti* meant for the *dvija* (fig. facing p. 36), which is daring from the societal notions of perhaps either the fifth century CE or even early twentieth century.

Catuṣṣṭikalādevī

Devī-Lalitā is the Cosmic Mistress (Śrīmahārājyā LSN-2). She is the Mistress of Sixty-four Arts (STN 1.91); cf. Kalāvati (LSN-327) and Kalānidhi (LSN-797). She is credited with five faces, *pañca-vaktra* and ten arms, *daśabhujā*. Each face is graced with three eyes, *trinetra*. The *daśabhujas* are expected to carry *padma*, *rathāṅga* (*cakra*), *guṇa* (*pāśa*), *hariṇa* (*mṛga*), *puṣṭaka*, *varṇamālā* (*akṣamālā*), *ṭaṅka*, *śubhram-kapāla* (white skull), *varam* (*varadahasta*), and *amṛtalasadhema-kumbha* (golden pitcher containing ambrosia). The five faces are of the hue of *muktā* (Tamil *muttu*; “pearl” white), *vidhyatpayoda* (lightening dispelled by thin clouds), *megha* (black), *sphaṭika* (crystal-white), and the blossom *japākusuma* (blood-red). The full breasts are so heavy that the body is slanting; cf. LSN-36 ‘*stanabhāra-dalanmadhya-paṭṭabandha-valitrayā*’. She shines like *candra* “moon”. The hue is *śuklavarna* “white”. She is named Śāradādevī; the manifestation of Mahā-Sarasvatī (DM, Invocation ‘Uttamacarītram’; STN 1.5) and also Vedic Vākdevī (Liebert 1986: 315, 326; Tamil Nāmakal in *Cilappatikāram* 22, ‘Veṇṇā’), Vāgīśvarī (STN 1.131), Vāṇī (*ga-kāra-devatā*, STN 1.207), and Śuddha-Vidyā (LSN-25).

Sarasvatī, otherwise Śāradā is the Mistress of the Sixty-four Arts. The “sixty-four” mentioned in the STN (4.77)¹⁵ are four *Vedas*, six *vedāṅgas*, *itihāsa*, *āgama*, *nyāyaśāstra*, *kāvya*, *alaṅkāraśāstra*, *nāṭaka*, *kavita*, *kāmaśāstra* (which lists its own “sixty-four”, Upadhyaya 1970: 76–78), proficiency in languages, expertise in scripts, *svaraśāstra* (musical notes), *agnistambhanam*¹⁶ (magic by fire), *uccāṭana*

¹⁵ The *Kāmasūtra* (Part I, chap. III in Upadhyaya 1961/1970: 76–80, Burton 1994: chaps. IV–V, VII) talks of the sixty-four arts. Devī is Kāmakalārūpa (LSN-322). *Lalitā* means “playing”, “sportive”, “amorous”, “charming” (cf. Vilāsinīyā LSN-340, Tapasyānanda n.d. 157, Raina 2000: 88).

¹⁶ *stambhana* means “stiffening”, “paralyzing”, “arresting”, “a kind of magic” and so on. *Vide*, Monier-Williams 2005: 1258. Few such arts are mentioned in the Nala-Damayanti story. *Vide*, Goswami 2006: Colour pl. 19, Monochrome pl. 38 (Nala disappearing and appearing).

(causing a person to quit his occupation by magical incantations—Monier-Williams 2005: 173), horticulture, *rati-sauśilya* (excellence in the skills of Rati-[*rahasya*], cf. Comfort 1997), hunting, sculptural art, *ośadhisiddhi* (expertise in aphrodisiacs), *svaravañcana* (goldsmiths' tricks¹⁷), *dṛṣṭivañcanam* (delude by look), floating in water (*prakāmyam* under *aṣṭamahāsiddhis*), *vāksiddhi* (eloquence), *indrajāla* (divine magic) and so on. *Śrītattvanidhi* of Kṛṣṇarāja adds that the sixty-four arts are described in different ways in the *Śrī Viṣṇubhāgavata* (10th *skanda*, *pūrvabhāga*, 45th *adhyāya*), *Śrīdharīya* (36th *śloka*) and *Śukranīti* (4th *adhyāya*).

Catuṣaṣṭikālādevī is provided with ten arms that carry emblems typical of Kālī or Durgā (*pāśa*, *cakra* and *śveta-kapāla*), Lakṣmī (*padma*), and Sarasvatī (*pustaka* and *aḥṣamālā*). It suggests that Śāradādevī is an *aṃśa* of Devī-Trimūrti (supra LSN-628). All the worldly arts of good and bad emanate from the mixed-Devī. She is good to bestow benedictions on the righteous (normally believed to be gods or godmen, *dharmātma*) and bad to destroy evil-mongers (*asuras* and satanic creatures).¹⁸ The edition transcribed at Muktabodha (<https://etexts.muktabodha.org>) has notified an 18-armed image. Eighteen hands are prescribed for Mahālakṣmī (DM, *Madhyamacaritam*, Invocation; STN 1.4), there is also *soḍaśabhuja*-Durgā (STN 1.61) and so on.

¹⁷ The arch-villain in the *Cilappatikāram* is a goldsmith. It was due to his betrayal that the hero, Kōvalaṅ, is killed and his wife, Kaṇṇaki (supra), burns down Maturai. She is the Goddess-morphed Pattinī (Zvelebil 1974: 128–131, Hölmstrom 1996, Rajarajan 2016: chap. II, 2016a).

¹⁸ For example, see how Viṣṇu-Mohinī beguiled demons on two occasions: 1) Bhaṣmāsura forced to burn down himself, and 2) The snakes Rāhu and Ketu punished by interchanging their heads; Rāhu with a human body and snake-hood, and Ketu with a snake coil and human head (Kalidos 1989: fig. 79, Santhana-Lakshmi-Parthiban 2014: figs. 3–4. 6).

Śītalādevī

The Devī (STN 1.106 citing *Śītalākālpa* of the *Rudrayāmala*) is *digambarī* (nude) and seated on a donkey (*rāsabha*). She is pan-Indian because the text cited is the *Rudrayāmala*. She is *kṛṣṇa-varṇa* (black). Two hands carry *marjanī* (broomstick) and *kalaśa* (full-pitcher, Fig. 3), emblems of a mixture of opposites suggesting wrath and grace. She carries a winnowing basket on the head; that is why she is described as *Śūrṣpālamkṛta-mastakā*. Śītalā—“She who makes cold” (Wilkins 2000: fig. on p. 473)—is a goddess presiding over smallpox, causes pestilences, and eradicates epidemics if duly propitiated (Wilkins 2000: 473–474, Kinsley 1998: 204). The Devī is Vyādhināśinī—annihilating ailments (DM, ‘Argalāstoram’ 12), and Śiva is Vaidhyanātha (Rajarajan 2020b: 212, citing *Śivasahasranāma*-956, Rajarajan 2020c). The broomstick and winnowing basket are pointers of cleanliness. If the house is clean, no epidemic/endemic storms.

Wilkins (Wilkins 1882) says the goddess is golden-complexioned and sits on a lovely lotus¹⁹ or an ugly donkey. She puts on red garments. Śītalā is famous in Bengal. In Tamil tradition, the goddess inflicting smallpox is Muttālamman or Mutyālammmā²⁰ and Māriyamman. Mutyālammmā is the tutelary folk goddess in Tāṭikkompu, the venue of a Nāyaka temple for Saundararāja (see note 21), Mutyālu is a masculine name for the Telugus. These are regional variations because Śītalā verbatim is not popular with the Tamil folk. Festivals celebrating the Goddess Śītalā in the hot month of May are popular today; e.g. in Tiṅṅtukkal, Vīrapāṅṅi, Virutunakar and Periyakuḷam. People propitiate

¹⁹ Interestingly, the goddess, illustrated in Wilkins (Wilkins 2000: 473) sits on a donkey, carries the broomstick in the left hand and a pot in the right. A winnow appears on her head. She is decked in a north Indian veiled sari, and her habitation is a deserted field.

²⁰ In Telugu *mutyālu* means “pearl”, Tamil *muttu* and Sanskrit *mukta*. Smallpox erupted on the face and all over the human body was of the size and hue of a pearl. It was a common endemic during the high summer in pre-1970 India.

the Goddess carrying sacred fire-pots (Fig. 4) called *agnicaṭṭi*. of which the Kōṭṭai-Māriyamman temple in Tiṇṭukkal²¹ is famous.

Writing on the village deities, Henry Whitehead (Whitehead 1921) presents a list of goddesses.²² The goddesses presiding over smallpox and cholera are popular in Āndhradeśa, Karnāṭaka and Tamilnāḍu. Śītalādevī rarely finds a place in this group (Whitehead 1988: 23–34). Among a host of others are Muṭyāḷammā (*ammā* “mother”), Gaṅgamā (in East Coast Āndhra), Śītalammā (cf. Śītalādevī), Aṅkammā (cf. Aṅkāla-Paramēcuvāri in Evelin Meyer 1986), Piṭāri (noted in Cōḷa inscriptions, SII, II/i–ii, no. 4, p. 48, literally a “shrew”, ♀ *kuṛatti*, ♂ *piṭāraṅ* “snake-charmer” TL V, 2652) and so on.²³ Worship

²¹ *Kōṭṭai* is “a fort”, *durga* in Sanskrit. The place derives the name from *tiṇṭu* “pillow”, the pillow-like granite hill in the city. The fort on the rock belonged to the local *zamīndārs*, and this was where Ūmaiturai hid. He was the brother of Vīrapāṇṭiya-Kaṭṭabommaṅ (hanged in 1789) that rose against British imperialism (Kalidos 1976: 272–276, Rajarajan 2019: 43–45). The ruins of a Nāyaka period temple (cf. Parthiban 2013, Kalidos 2019) destroyed by Tipu Sūltān remain on the summit of the hill that has two inscriptions on its walls (*Annual Reports on Epigraphy*, 1894, no. 2; 1961–1962, no. 320). Tāṭikkompu is close to Tiṇṭukkal (Gopalakrishnan 1996: 415–431).

²² Whitehead (Whitehead 1988: 121–122 pls. X, XIII, XVI) quotes examples of gods/goddesses with a face only, and adds that when Tipu Sūltān c. 1799 CE sacked the Kōṇiyammaṅ temple of Kōyamputtūr (cf. note 27), the people collected the broken parts of the cult image and started worshipping the head (cf. Figs. 6, 8). The head or face is the hallmark of *ṣāḍaṅga*, *eṅcāṅ-uṭampukku-ciracē-piratāṅm*.

²³ Henry Whitehead’s work is “Village Gods”, but the deities listed are mostly feminine. The deities are ferocious toward wrongdoers and serve the righteous (Whitehead 1988: 30–31). They may appear hideous but are angelic in action. Whitehead brings the goddesses under various categories: Ūrammā (village goddess), Cinnitammā (*kuladevatā*/Kuleśvarī LSN-439; cf. *Illurai-teyvam* “domestic goddess” in *Cilappatikāram* 9.1–4), Gaṅgamā (river goddesses STN 4.129–137), Annammā (Annapūrṇā of Kāśī, cf. STN 1.103–104), Mārammā/Māriyamman (*māraḱaḱ* means “epidemic” or “plague”), Kāḷammā/Kāḷiyammaṅ and so on. The gods are Vīrabhadra, Karuppaṅacāmi, Maturaiṅviraṅ (Hero of Maturai), Aiyaṅar (Śāsta, Tamil Cāṭṭaṅ in *Cilappatikāram* 9.15, 23), Muṅṅīśvaraṅ, and Kūttāṅṭavar (Whitehead 1988: 27–28, cf. Dumont 1971). Most *grāmadevatās* have merged with divinities of the Higher Tradition, e.g. Tillai-Kāḷi and Śivakāmi.

of the village goddesses was the privilege of caste lineage, the high and the oppressed, and the manner of sacrifices was adapted to suit societal hierarchy and vocational needs.

The *mādigā* and *paraiya* job was to remove the dead cows and bulls, which they chopped for dinner and buried or threw away the carcasses. The buffalo sacrifices were/are mostly offered by the low-castes (Whitehead 1921: pls. VII, VIII, XVIII) that eat the flesh.

Sarvasaṃkṣobhiṇyādi et alii Daśamudrā

The Devī (STN 1.8) is supposed to be the embodiment of *daśamudrās*;²⁴ the ritualized and stylized *mudrās* (symbolic hand postures).²⁵ Citing the *Lalitopākhyāna* of the *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa*, the ten-Devīs are named (STN 1. 8): Sarvasaṃkṣobhinī, Sarvavidrāviṇī, Sarvākārṣiṇī, Sarvavaśāṅkarī, Sarvonmādiṇī, Sarvamahāṅkuṣā, Sarvakhecārī (‘Kheśari’, one among the ‘*aṣṭa-Vīrabhrā*’; Jeyapriya 2019: 62), Sarvabījā, Sarvayonī and Sarvatrikaṅṭhikā. All the goddesses are uniformly blood-red, *dāḍimipuṣpa-varṇa*, i.e. in the colour of pomegranate flower. They have four hands that resemble *kamalakāntibhir hastaiḥ* (lotus-like). The rear hands carry the *kṛpāṇa* “knife” and *carma* (cf. Gajasamhāramūrti, Kalidos 2006: II, pl. XXII), and the other ones are two-*mudrās*. The eyes are red-hued due to the consumption of alcoholic drink, *madaraktavilolākṣyaḥ* (cf. DM, *adhyāya* 3, v. 34). The eyes can also be red due to fury. When the divine female is irritated, the hue of her eyes is *raktavarṇa* (blood red).²⁶

²⁴ For *mudrās* see Rao 2005: 14–17; Sastri 1916: 271 illustrations; Sthapati 1978: 34–42; Liebert 1986: 181–182; Bunce 1997: 190–191.

²⁵ See LSN-977 ‘Daśamudrāsamarādhyā’. *Mudrā* is supposed to confer bliss (Murthy 1975: 197–198). The hand-gestures are representative of the nature of Ultimate Reality; i.e. the *pañcakṛtyas* (five cosmic functions) and the *pañcabhūtas* (five cosmic elements). The *mudrās* facilitate the union of *jīvātma* with *paramātma*. Few listed in LSN under Devī’s are Jñānamudrā-979, Yonimudrā-982 and Trikaṅḍa-983 (Murthy 1975: 199).

²⁶ In case of love passion, the face becomes red due to shyness (Tam. *mukam civakka*).

The goddesses are named, but the ten *mudrās* are not specified. The given names of the goddesses do not signify the *daśamudrā*.²⁷ Tantric Buddhist sources talk of five-faced and ten-armed Daśabhuja-Maṛīci carrying different weapons (e.g. *trisūla* [as on Fig. 9], *kapāla*, *śiraḥ*), wearing *muṇḍamālā* and dancing in sexual union with her mate (Bunce 1997: fig. 198). The LSN-530 finds Devī equipped with all weapons, *sarvāyudhadhara*.²⁸ The “ten goddesses”²⁹ armed with weapons are probably related to Śaḍaṅgadevī (supra), maybe on the philosophical plane. Perhaps, if well researched all over South and Southeast Asia, material evidence may be found.

Trikhaṅṭhakīdevī

Citing the *Śāradātīlaka*, the *pratimālakṣaṇa* of Trikhaṅṭhaki (STN 1.120, cf. Trikhaṅṭheśī in LSN-983) with *trikaṅṭhas* (three necks,

²⁷ The *Devīśahasranāma* (in Ayyar 1990) talks of Āyudhapuruṣikās; e.g. Cakraḥastā-250, Bhusuṅḍo-parighāyudhā-251, Cāpiṇī-252, Pāśahastā-253, Trisūla-varadārīnī-254, Subāṇā-255, and Śaktihastā-256. Ganapati Sthapati (Sthapati 1978) presents a list of *mudrās* from various sources; brought under three categories; functional twenty-eight, united four and ornamental four, totally thirty-six: *abhaya*, *vara-da*, *siṃhakarṇa*, *vyākhyāṇa* and so on. Bunce (Bunce 1997: 190–191) brings to light 200+ *mudrās*.

²⁸ Devī in her war with the demons such as Mahiṣāsura is armed with *śaṅkha*, *cakra*, *gadā*, *hala*, *musala*, *khetaka*, *tomara*, *paraśu*, *pāśa*, *kuntāyudha*, and so on (DM, ‘Devīkavacam’, 15–16). Other emblems are *aṣṭamālā*, *kuliśa*, *daṇḍa*, *asi*, *ghaṅṭa*, *surābhājanam* (for Mahālakṣmī), *śiraḥ*, *cāpa*, *parigha* (for Mahākālī), *kamaṇḍalu* (Brāhmī), *trisūla* (Māheśvarī), *śakti* (Kaumārī), *sāṅga* (Vaiṣṇavī), *vajra* (Aindrī) and so on (DM *passim*).

²⁹ Muktabodha 1.8 lists Brāhmī, Maheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaiṣṇavī, Vārāhī (Rajarajan 2020d), Mahem[n]drī, Cāmuṇḍā (the Sapta Mātṛkās), Mahālakṣmī and “she of the form of Brahmā (Brāhamaṇī?), which is the “contemplation of the goddess with the 10 *mudrās*”. In this transcription, the Devīs are nine, not ten. It is 1.7 in the Tañcāvūr edition listed under ‘*aṣṭa-mātṛ* and *mahā-lakṣmī*’. The Mātṛkās are seven, Sapta (‘Seven Mothers’ listed in STN 143–149 [Santhana-Lakshmi-Parthiban 2014: 75], Rajarajan 2020a: figs. 2–3), based on the archaic notation of Ēlukāṇṇimār ([Fig. 10] ‘Seven Virgins’ Rajarajan 2020c: fig. 4, 2020a: fig. 4).

cf. Nīlakaṅṭha or Nīlakaṅṭhī, the blue-throated Śiva and Devī³⁰) is enumerated. If the necks are three, naturally the heads are three. Could this be *trideha*-Mūrti (cf. the Cōla inscription cited in note 5)? Interestingly among the Daśamudrā-*devatās* (supra), one is Sarvatrikaṅṭhikā. That means this Devī is *trikaṅṭha* or *trideha* besides being a *mudrā-devatā*. I may also note Gaṅgā-*triveṇī* or *tripathagā* (cf. STN 4.130, Kalidos 2006: II, pl. LI.3).

The Goddess is *citravarṇa*; blue below the navel (Śaktikuṭa LSN-87), red from navel to neck (Madhyakuṭa or Kāmarājakuṭa LSN-86) and white-faced (Vāgbhavaṅṭha LSN-85—Kalidos 1990: fig. 10); *nīlā nābher adhasṭād aruṇarucidharā ākaṅṭhadeśāt sitā sā*. The faces are terrific, teeth protruding and elongated up to the stomach, *vaktrair damṣṭrākarālair udaraparigataiḥ*. She holds two lamps, *dīpau*, in two forearms. The other hands hold the *śaṅkha* and *cakra*. These emblems would suggest she is a replica of Dīpa-Lakṣmī and Vaiṣṇavī or Durgā-Mahiṣamardīnī in addition to several other manifestations of Devī, e.g. Vijayā (STN 1.20) and Aparājītā (STN 1.72). The eyes are three. She is crested with the crescent; *dhārayantī-jaṭanta-sphūrjaśitāmṣu-khaṅṭhā*. Such a goddess is one who eradicates phobias, *bhayaharā*.

Concluding remarks

Sculptures traced from existing South Asian temples do not seemingly comply with the *lakṣaṇas* recommended in the *śāstras*; also, it seems that the text succumbs to variations (I keep in mind the Tañcāvūr edition of STN and the *dhyānas* seen transcribed at Muktabodha). I do not know whether the original manuscript of Kṛṣṇarāja is available. He must have followed *devanāgarī*, not *grantha*. In those times, the *śāstras*, *āgamas* and *tantra* were treated as *Brahmatattva* (Rajarajan

³⁰ Their neck is *nīla* “blue” (Nīlagrīva in DM, ‘Devīkavacam’ 29) because they consumed the *hālahāla*, the deadly poison that was emitted at the time of *kṣīrābhdhimanthana* “Churn the Ocean of Milk”; ‘*nañcuṅṭukaṛuttakaṅṭi*’ (*Cilappatikāram* [12.57]).

2020), confidential for professional experts.³¹ Scholars in Dallapiccola 1989 present contradicting views; i.e. some agree with the *śāstra*, and others do not. We find a new world in the STN (Donaldson 1991: 130). Material evidence does not corroborate the forms enumerated above. If properly surveyed some of the canonized imageries and those beyond the *śāstra* may be recaptured (Kalidos 1989 & 2012, Boner et al. 1994: Tafel 17 [Fig. 7, Kalidos 2017: fig. 1], Rajarajan 2006: figs., 61–62, 74, 101) in a later phase of South Indian art, particularly wood and stucco, including folk proto-types (Fig. 8). It is mainly due to the reason that the folk arts (Gottet 2016, Parthiban 2019), and those reflected in wood (cf. Kalidos 1988) and stucco (Jeyapriya 2014: figs. 5–7 reports poly-cephalous forms of Devī) remain much less explored. The many faces of Devī (Fig. 7) are hidden in archaic traditions and the canon.

A new dimension of the recent temple building tradition is that the temples for village gods and goddesses, *grāmadevatālayas*, including ‘kāṭṭunāyakan’ tribe (e.g. Kolakkāraṇpaṭṭi, near Tiṇṭukkal), are converted to the Āgamic style (Fig. 6, Jeyapriya 2018: figs. 2–5). Some antique temples of the folk type illustrated in Whitehead (Whitehead 1988: pls. I, II, IV, XVII) may be found in the interior regions of the South (Parthiban 2019: figs. 18–19, 22–24). Despite the revolution in diversifying the material and design from folk to Āgamic (Figs. 6–7), the rituals such as buffalo-sacrifice continue to persist only in isolated circles disregarding legal prohibition (Loshita 2012, 2014). Sometime in the 1980s goat-sacrifice was a day-to-day affair in the Kolkata-Kālī temple, now given up. *Grāmadevatās* are recast in the mould of goddesses of the elite-tradition. An art historian with foresight may say the surviving temples of the *grāmadevatās* of the ‘little tradition’ (better to say “forgotten” or “neglected” by the elite) may be brought

³¹ Brahma-sūtras could be read only by the *brāhmaṇa* or the initiate *dvija*, not the *avarṇa* or *pañcama*, note Śrī Rāmānujācārya’s philosophical encounter with his *guru*, Tirukkōṭṭiyūr Nampi on the utterance of the *praṇavamāntra*. The *guru* said, “You will go to *naraka* (hell) if *ācāryaniyamana* (teacher’s injunction) is violated”. Rāmānujācārya replied, “I revealed the truth for well-being of millions of souls, let me go to hell” (*Ārāyirappaṭi*-G pp. 194–195).

within the radius of the Śāstraic tradition. Such a withering culture needs attention as a matter of Intangible Heritage of the UNESCO. R. K. Parthiban, a specialist in World Heritage Studies from the BTU (Cottbus), emphasized this idea. The art in wood also needs imminent conservation because many of the temple cars reported in Kalidos 1988, e.g. Tiruviṭaimarutūr, Vētāraṇyam and Periyakuḷam, have disappeared, save some photos in personal collections (Kalidos 1989) and museums all over the world (Rajarajan 2020a).

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Abbreviations

DM	<i>Devīmāhātmya</i>
DSN	<i>Devīsahasranāma</i>
LSN	<i>Lalitāsahasranāma</i>
SII	<i>South Indian Inscriptions</i>
STN	<i>Śrītattvanidhi</i>

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1. 'Śaḍaṅga-vimāna' and 'Vastu Puruṣa', Mēṭṭuppaṭṭi, Tiṅṅukkal (Author's photo).

2. The Temple and Śaḍaṅgadevī, Pūmpukār (Rajarajan 2016: pl. 118).



3. The Pūraṇa-kalaśa ritual at home, before the Agnicatṭi procession (Author's photo).

4. Agnicatṭi, the Māriyamman Temple, Periyakuḷam (Author's photo).



5. Rūpa-Arūpa, Devī-Kaumārī utsavabera (cf. Fig. 8), Vīrapāṅṭi, the Tēṅi district (photo by J. K. Verabhathra).



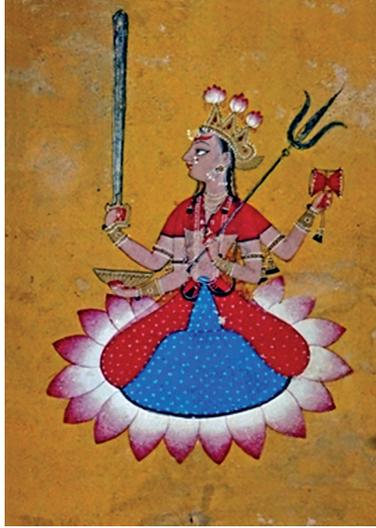
6. A folk temple in the Āgamic mode, the Periyakuḷam-Tēṅi Highway, close to Lakṣmīpuram (photo by J. K. Verabhathra).



7. The temple for Grāmadevatā in the Āgamic fitting, Nākamalai, Maturai
(Author's photo).



8. The head of Devī-Kaumāri (a wood-carved image in tēr), Vīrapāṅṅi, the Tēṅi district
(Author's photo).



9. Devī, Mankot (Alice Boner collection 1720/30, Kat. Nr. 271, Museum Rietberg Zürich (Boner, Fischer and Goswamy 1994: Tafel 17)).



10. ‘Ēḷukaṇṇimār’ (archaism in material and design), Caṅkiliyānpārai, the Tiṇṇukkal district (photo by R. K. Parthiban).