

# OVERVIEW OF REFERENCES OF VĪRAṬṬĀNA STHALA TIRUKKADAVUR INTAMIL FILM MUSIC

K. DIVYA<sup>1</sup>, DR. A. BANUMATHI<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Kalai Kaviri College of Fine Arts

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor of Veena, Kalai Kaviri College of Fine Arts

## Abstract

*This article explores the cultural and musical significance of Vīraṭṭāna Sthala Tirukkadavur as represented in Tamil film music. Tirukkadavur, one of the eight Vīraṭṭāna Sthalams (sacred sites) associated with Lord Shiva, holds immense religious and historical importance in Tamil Nadu. Its spiritual aura and literary legacy have inspired composers and lyricists in the Tamil film industry to incorporate its essence into songs that blend devotion, folklore, and musical artistry. The paper examines how Tirukkadavur is referenced in Tamil cinema, analyzing the portrayal of the sacred space within the cinematic narrative. It highlights notable songs that evoke the ethos of this holy site, emphasizing the seamless integration of classical and film music traditions. By focusing on the interplay between the sacred and popular culture, this study sheds light on how Tamil cinema bridges ancient spiritual heritage with contemporary artistic expressions, preserving and promoting the cultural identity of sacred spaces like Tirukkadavur. The article concludes with an overview of the impact such musical references have on fostering spiritual awareness and cultural continuity among audiences.*

**Keywords:** Vīraṭṭāna Sthala, Tirukkadavur, Tamil film music, Devotional themes, film music, Lord Shiva.

## INTRODUCTION

Tamilnadu is renowned for its rich temple architecture, historical significance, and vibrant religious traditions that are being portrayed in various performing arts like dance, music and drama (films). Temples in Tamil Nadu are not only places of worship but also serve as cultural and historical landmarks that reflect the state's deep-rooted traditions and artistic heritage. The main impacts of the early cinema were the cultural influences of the country. The Tamil-language was the medium in which many plays and stories were written since the ages as early as the Cholas. They were highly stylised and nature of the spectacle was one which could attract the people. Along with this, music and dance were one of the main entertainment sources.

Tamil cinema has witnessed the emergence of timeless classics centered around mythological films. Old Tamil films delve into mythological stories which reflect the deep cultural and religious sentiments of the region, offering audiences both entertainment and spiritual enrichment. Films made on mythological themes have become classics in Tamil cinema. The Tamil film industry has produced several films based on the Ramayana, Mahabharata, mythological stories related to Shaivism, Vaishnavism, Kaumaram and Shaktism. Some of these films attempt to explore the lives of famous Tamil saints or historical figures who have a legendary status. This article is an overview of how one of the Aṣṭa vīraṭṭānam temples, Tirukkadavur temple situated in the district of Tamil Nadu, has reference or depicted in Tamil films. The main character of this temple is Lord Shiva. This temple serve as significant plot points, settings, or symbols of divine intervention and spiritual importance.

## STHALA TIRUKKADAVUR - SIGNIFICANCE AND REFERENCE IN TAMIL MOVIES

Among the numerous temples devoted to Lord Śiva located in Tamil Nadu, the Aṣṭa Veerattana Sthala-s are integral to Tamil Shaiva worship and offer a profound connection to Lord Shiva's divine acts and miracles. They are celebrated not only for their religious significance but also for their rich cultural and historical heritage. These eight temples are particularly note-worthy as they are associated with eight of the deity's valiant adventures where Lord Śiva took on the form of a destroyer with the intention of eliminating eight Asura-s Brahma, Andhakāśura, Tripurāntaka, Dakṣa, Jalandhara, Gajasura, Manmatha, and Yama.

Tirukkaḍavūr the eighth house among Aṣṭa Veerattāna houses, is a village on the east coast of Tamil Nadu. The history of the village is associated with the mythological figures or legends - Mārkaṇḍēya and Abirami Bhaṭṭar. The village is centered around the temple whose main deity is Lord Amṛtaghaṭēśvara (Lord Śiva) and

Goddess Abhirami (Goddess Parvati). The present masonry structure was built during the Chola dynasty in the 9th century, while later expansions are attributed to Tañjāvūr Nāyaks. Tirukkadaṁvūr derives its name from the pot, called Ghaṭam in Tamiz and is associated with the story of the churning of ocean (Samudra Manthana).

### **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND THE LEGEND OF THE TEMPLE**

It is the third of Lord Gaṇēśa's six abodes (Ārupaḍai sthalā-s). This is the place where Lord Brahma received wisdom. There are three tales about this temple that are discussed in the following.

One of the tales is that it is believed that Lord Mahāviṣṇu, Indra, and the other Dēva-s needed an outstanding place to consume the Amṛta that had been churned during the Samudra Manthan and, therefore, brought the Amṛta (nectar/elixir) pot here. Before consuming it, they forgot to worship Gaṇēśa, who has to be worshipped before any great undertaking. Gaṇēśa, hurt and offended at the unintentional slight by them, stole the pot of Amṛta and hid it at Tirukkadaiyur. Gaṇēśa created a Śiva Liṅga dedicated to his father and mother, and poured some of the Amṛta over it. Hence, the Śiva Liṅga at this temple is known as 'Amṛta Ghaṭa īśvara,' translated from Saṁskṛta literally means "Lord who leads to immortality" ('Immortality' (Amṛta) 'Step' (Ghaṭa) 'Lord' īśvara). It is also believed that Abhirāmi was incarnated here by the power of Vishnu.

Another tale is the legend of Mārkaṇḍēya that is associated with this shrine where the Lord is the destroyer of Yama who later also revives and blesses him. As per the popular legend, near the temple of Tirukkadaiyur, there lived a sage named Mṛkaṇḍu and his wife Marudmati. They were both devotees of Lord Śiva and worshipped him day and night for many years, asking to be graced with a child. After many years of penance, Śiva appeared before them. He told them that he heard their prayers and would give them a choice: they could either have a gifted son who would live only up to sixteen years, or a son of low intelligence who would live a longer life. They chose the former, and had Mārkaṇḍēya, an exemplary son, destined to die at the age of sixteen.

As Mārkaṇḍēya grew, so did his devotion to Śiva. As advised by his father, Mārkaṇḍēya worshipped the Śiva Liṅga at Tirukkadaiyur, even bringing water from the Ganges to the temple via an underground passage. On the day he was destined to die, Yama, the deity of death, appeared with his noose in his hand to tie around the soul of Mārkaṇḍēya and take it away with him. Mārkaṇḍēya sought refuge in the temple and embraced the Śiva Liṅga. Śiva appeared and warned Yama not to touch Mārkaṇḍēya, as he was under his protection. Yama refused to listen and threw the noose, binding around both Mārkaṇḍēya and the Liṅga together. Angered by Yama's extraordinary arrogance, Śiva kicked and held him under his foot, thereby making him inactive. Since it is believed that Lord Śiva subdued Yama in Tirukkadaṁvūr, the Lord is called Mrityuñjaya ("Conqueror of Death" in Saṁskṛta or "Victorious over Death") also known as Kālasaṁhāramūrti. Lord Śiva here is manifested as Kālantaka and his wife Parvati as Abhirāmi.

Mārkaṇḍēya was blessed by Śiva to remain sixteen years old eternally. Meanwhile, with Yama being rendered inactive, there were no deaths on earth, but people were still being born. Burdened by the weight of so many people and unable to sustain their hunger, the earth-goddess, Bhūmi Devi, appealed to Śiva for help. Śiva, feeling compassionate for the earth-goddess, released Yama, allowing deaths to occur again. However, in order to remind Yama never to try again to kill anyone who is worshiping Śiva, the icon of Śiva in this temple is depicted with his forefinger raised in warning about it. The Shankhābhiśēkam (ritual bathing with a conch) is of great importance here, as it is said that Mārkaṇḍēya performed this.

Yet another tale includes the episode of Abhirami Bhattar a reputed scholar of no ordinary ability and a devotee of being rescued by Goddess Abhirami has immortalised himself by showing Moon Light on a New Monday by the grace of the Goddess and by singing Abirami Anthathi in honour of the Goddess. Thus he earned also the patronage of the then king of Tanjore.

Once upon a time, when the Tanjore king Saraboji 2 came to this town, he looked at this Abirami Pattar and asked what day is it today. Pattar who is in thought of his Goddess Abirami, misrepresents the new moon day as the full moon day. The temple priests had already told the king the misconceptions about Abirami Pattar. Hence the angry king claims that the Pattar will be punished if he does not see the full moon night. Pattar sang 100 songs of Abirami Anthathi on the Goddess Abirami and the full moon appeared on the new moon. During the 79th song (Vizhikey Arul Undu) song, the Goddess Abirami took off an ear ring and threw it into the sky, making it look like a full moon on a new moon night.

## REFERENCE OF TALES RELATED TO TIRUKKADAVUR IN TAMIL MOVIES

Three movies have been found where the tales related to Tirukkadavur are being referred.

- “Adi Parasakti” (transl. Primordial power) is a 1971 Indian Tamil-language Hindu mythological film directed by K. S. Gopalakrishnan and produced by Chitra Productions.
- “Bhakta Markandeya” is a classic Tamil devotional film that was released in 1958. The film is known for its portrayal of the life and devotion of Markandeya, a revered sage in Hindu mythology.
- “Markandeya” was a 1935 Tamil film directed by K. Ramnath and Murugadasa. The film is based on the mythological story of Markandeya.

### 1. Adi Parasakti-

- Title: Adi Parasakti
- Year: 1971
- Language: Tamil
- Director: K. S. Gopalakrishnan

### Plot Summary

The film narrates the story of Adi Parashakti, an embodiment of the supreme feminine energy and a central figure in Hindu cosmology. It depicts the goddess's divine powers, her role in creation, and her interactions with various mythological figures. The narrative explores themes of devotion, divine intervention, and the balance between good and evil.

It tells nearly seven tales of the Primordial Goddess Adi Parashakti in anthological format. One of the tales include Abhirami Bhattar being rescued by Goddess Abhirami from his predicament by using her earring as a full moon on a new moon day which happened in the Tirukkadavur temple.

### Significance

The film is remembered for its portrayal of the goddess Adi Parashakti and its contribution to the genre of mythological and devotional cinema in Tamil Nadu. The film showcases the enduring appeal of Primordial Goddess Adi Parashakti-centered narratives in anthological format in Tamil cinema and serves as a testament to the devotional and cultural aspects of Hinduism. It reflects the era's fascination with divine stories and the artistic representation of spiritual themes on screen.

### Cast of the characters related to the relevant tale

- Gemini Ganesan as Shiva
- Jayalalithaa as Shakti,
- S. Varalakshmi as Adi Parashakti, Durga,
- S. V. Subbaiah as Abhirami Pattar

### Soundtrack

The music was composed by K. V. Mahadevan. The song "Solladi Abirami" is set in Mayamalavagowla raga.

## 2. Bhakta Markandeya

- Title: Bhakta Markandeya
- Year: 1957
- Language: Tamil and Kannada languages
- Director: B. S. Ranga
- Genre: mythology

### Plot Summary

The film dramatizes the story of Markandeya, a devotee of Lord Shiva, who is known for his unwavering devotion and his miraculous escape from death. According to legend, Markandeya was blessed with immortality due to his intense devotion to Shiva. The film focuses on his devotion, the challenges he faces, and the divine miracles that occur as a result of his faith.

### Key Elements

- Mythological Narrative: The story is based on the Hindu mythological account of Markandeya's life. It highlights his devotion to Lord Shiva, his trials, and his ultimate reward of immortality.
- Devotional Themes: As a devotional film, "Bhakta Markandeya" emphasizes themes of faith, devotion, and divine grace. It portrays the power of unwavering belief in overcoming life's challenges.
- Visuals and Music: The film features traditional depictions of divine characters and rituals. The music and songs in the film are composed to enhance the devotional experience, often including bhajans (devotional songs) dedicated to Lord Shiva.

### Cast of the characters related to the relevant tale

- Master Anand as Markandeya
- V. Nagayya -
- Pushpavalli
- K. A. Thangavelu
- Babuji
- Padmini Priyadarshini
- Sairam
- Balasaraswathi
- Surya Kala
- Lakshmikantham
- R. Nagendra Rao
- Sundaram

### Soundtrack

Music: Composed by S. M. Subbaiah Naidu, who was known for his contributions to devotional and classical music in Tamil cinema.

### Significance

"Bhakta Markandeya" is significant for its portrayal of one of the most revered sages in Hindu mythology. It reflects the cultural and religious values associated with devotion to Lord Shiva and the impact of faith on overcoming adversity. The film also represents a period in Tamil cinema when devotional and mythological stories were particularly popular and influential.

### Legacy

The film is remembered for its devotional content and its role in depicting the legendary figure of Markandeya. It contributes to the broader tradition of Tamil cinema that explores religious and mythological themes, serving both as entertainment and spiritual enrichment for audiences.

### 3. 'Markandeya'

- Title: Markandeya
- Year: 1935
- Language: Tamil
- Director: K. Subramanyam
- Genre: Mythological

### Plot Summary

The rishi Mrikandu and his spouse Marudmati adored Shiva and asked for his blessing to have a son. He was therefore offered the option of having a brilliant son who would live a brief life on Earth or a child who would have a long life but be of poor intelligence. Choosing the former, Mrikandu rishi was fortunate to get Markandeya, a good son who would eventually pass away at the age of sixteen. Growing up, Markandeya became a devoted follower of Shiva, and on the day of his impending death, he continued to worship Shiva in Shivalingam, the iconic form of Shiva. His profound devotion to Shiva

### Key Elements

- Devotion and Faith: The film emphasizes Markandeya's devotion to Lord Shiva, showcasing various rituals and prayers that demonstrate his faith.
- Divine Intervention: A pivotal scene in the film is when Markandeya clings to the Shiva Lingam to escape death, leading to Shiva's intervention to save his devotee.
- Moral and Religious Themes: The story underscores the themes of devotion, faith, and the power of divine grace.

### Cast

- V. N. Sundaram (who later became a playback singer) played the title role of Markandeya Kuzhandaivelu
- Bhagavathar played the sage Mrikandu and
- Kanna Bai played Markandeya's mother.
- Stage actor Kannamani played the role of a gypsy girl.

## CONCLUSION

Though mythological films have slowly faded away, giving way to family and socially relevant dramas they played a prominent role in the early years of Tamil cinema. This is a humble attempt by the scholar to put forward the references of the Atta Veerattana sthala Tirukkadavur in Tamil films. Further study is in progress to delve into the other five temples and their references in Tamil films.

## REFERENCES

- Sri Abirami Anthathi, Sri Lakshmi Saraswathi Akoram Trust, Chennai-1994.  
S.S.Mathru Bhooteshwaran, Paranjothi Munivar Aruliya Thiruvilaiyadal Puraanam, Narmatha Pathipagam, Chennai,- 2015.