CHAPTER-3

THE EVOLUTION OF SRIRANGAM TEMPLE IN
THE VIJAYANAGARA AND NAYAKA PERIODS
(CIRCA 1372-1800 A.D.)

The Vijayanagara kings ruled a substantial part of the southern peninsula of India for over three hundred years, beginning about the middle of fourteenth century, and during this period the region was transformed from its medieval past to modern colonial era. The kings or ‘Rayas’ were peninsular overlords and their capital, Hampi was the symbol of vast power and wealth, and slowly but surely, lordships of all sorts became more powerful than what it was earlier. This was a result of materialization of its politics, and the transfiguring of older economic and social institutions by the forces of urbanization, commercialization and monetization. These changes were gradual and only dimly perceived during the time of its first dynasts, who were content to be conquerors and whose *digvijaya*, or righteous conquests, in Tamil country left the ancient royal houses of the Cholas and Pandyas in their sovereign places, except that they were reduced by their homage to the Karnataka kings of Vijayanagara. There were several distinct lineages or dynasties of Vijayanagara kings. The first of these were Sangamas. One of the kings of this line was Bukka I (A.D.1344-77) whose reign witnessed the great expansion of the city and the realm. He is said to have taken the title of Hindu-raya-suratruna or “Sultan among Hindu kings”. In this circa 1352 A.D. inscription, Bukka is described as “the prosperous great tributary, punisher of enemy kings, Sultan among Hindu kings, vanquisher of kings who
break their word, lord of the eastern and western oceans, the auspicious hero’

Wagoner has viewed this title as evidence both for Vijayanagara’s awareness of the political realities of India at that time and as evidence of a conscious effort to “expand the rhetoric of south Indian kingship by glossing it in terms of the Islamicate lingua franca that dominated the world of the Indian ocean”.

By the late fifteenth century A.D., a second ruling line was set up by Saluva Narsimha. In circa 1505 A.D., a third line came into being called Tuluva who, in all probability, would have come from the coastal part of Karnataka called Tulu. During the four decades of Tuluva rule, the power and prestige of the Vijayanagara rulers definitely reached their highest point. The last Vijayanagara dynasty called Aravidu came into being somewhere around circa 1542 A.D., founded by Aravidu Bukka. It is believed that the members of this line held reduced imperial authority until late seventeenth century A.D. It was around this time that continuous invasion from the north by the sultanate army and civil war within led to complete disintegration and fragmentation of authority that further led to emergence of smaller, independent regional authorities. There is no doubt whatsoever that a rule of almost three centuries over a vast area in southern part of the Indian peninsula makes study of Vijayanagara a very coveted one. For a long time now, the history of Vijayanagara is considered to be the last glorious chapter in the history of independent Hindu south India. There is no doubt that Vijayanagara was one of the medieval south Indian kingdoms whose inscriptions and sovereign claims far extended any such claims made previously. Some sixty
Vijayanagara kings issued royal inscriptions claiming universal authority throughout the peninsula south of the Krishna river. The reason why the date line of circa 1371-72 A.D. has been chosen for understanding of the inscriptive sources from Srirangam during Vijayanagara period is the fact that it was in circa 1371 A.D. that the image of God Ranganatha had been restored to its original place by Bukka I’s son Kumara Kampana. The most notable event of Bukka I’s reign was the overthrow of the Madura sultanate by his son, Kumara Kampana had ruled the southern part of the empire as viceroy from the beginning of his father’s reign, and was ably assisted in this work by such famous generals as Gopana and Saluva Mangu. Kampana first made his power felt by the Sambuvarayas of north and south Arcot, and when he had reduced them to subjugation, he succeeded in enlisting their cooperation in his enterprise against the sultanate of Madura. This campaign is said to have taken place between the years circa 1365-1370 A.D. The image of Lord Ranganatha, which had been carried away from Srirangam for safety during the time of the Turkish inroads, was restored to its original place in circa 1371 A.D.

In retrospect, the role of temples during the Vijayanagara period was more complex than as mere imperial symbols. In fact, more than architectural constructions and places of worship, the temples had been sites of political and ideological contestation among imperial, local, and religious elites during the Vijayanagara period. Donations of land, goods, and currency were recorded on copper plates and temple walls, and were a medium of competitive display,
wealth generation, and legitimation among these various participants. The construction of large temple complexes during the Vijayanagara period was typically sponsored by royal donations and/or donations by local rulers appointed or acknowledged by the emperor though they did not always reciprocate this acknowledgment. In addition, numerous other individuals and social groups—including agriculturalists, artisans, temple women, among many others—also made donations to temples. In such an environment, the symbolic meaning attributed to temples and temple construction was not necessarily either simple or univalent. In fact, Vijayanagara imperial investment in major temple centres was clearly high, particularly during the early 16th century Tuluva period, a time of overall imperial success and wealth.

However, the extent to which these temple centers effectively communicated specifically Vijayanagara authority to non-elites versus a more amorphous message of power and political/sacred authority is difficult to ascertain. Indeed, for people in many areas of the empire, local elites (whether imposed by the state or traditional regional elites) were far more important to their daily lives than distant emperors. It was these local rulers who were responsible for setting tax rates, adjudicating disputes, and raising military forces. Some degree of knowledge of the imperial centre certainly was widespread throughout south India and Vijayanagara rulers were occasionally called upon in particularly contentious situations.

Royal ideologies or Vijayanagara imperial ideologies, as expressed in inscriptions and texts, provide vivid evidence that the empire’s rulers in some contexts defined
themselves in reference to the other contemporary major powers of south Asia. One refers to a group of inscriptions and literary works that recognized a tripartite division of south Asia among three great kings and their domains. It is, however, important to acknowledge that these are not the only interpretations of Vijayanagara authority that appear in literary sources of the period; certainly other views of Vijayanagara prevailed at certain times and places, and existed in contestation with the model of the three kings. The three kings were known as the Lord of Elephants, the Lord of Horses, and the Lord of Men. The Lords of Elephants were the Gajapati kings of Orissa; the Delhi sultanate and later the Mughal empire (and in some contexts various Deccani Bahmani sultanates) were ruled by the Lord of Horses (Ashvapati; further recognition of the importance of horses to these polities) and Vijayanagara kings were the Lords of Men (Narapati).

As Talbot has discussed, this threefold division is more than a simple acknowledgment of a geopolitical reality; it also bestows a sense of legitimacy on the states among which the world was divided.

As a matter of fact, the Vijayanagara period witnessed vigorous political and religious activities and temple at Srirangam stood evidence to it. With the restoration of worship of the main deity at Srirangam, this famous religious centre began to flourish and make rapid progress in its strides. Evidently, the Vijayanagara kings and their subordinate officers were more inclined towards Vaisnavism. The gifts or donations, the feeding of Srivaishnavas, the festivals, the building activities, the founding of new religious institutions inside the
temple, the endowments for various services afford clear proofs of the interest
evined in the temple by the royal masters and their highly placed subordinates.

Let us now turn to inscriptions of this period. Right at the outset, an inscription
records that Goppana took the image of Ranganatha from Tirupati to Chenji, his
capital and after defeating the Muslims restored the image to Srirangam and had it
installed there with Lakshmi and Bhudevi, the consorts of the Lord 12. Kampana,
son of Bukka I, also issued some grants at this time for the maintenance and
betterment of the temple which was very desperately required at this time 13.
During king Virupaksha (grandson of Bukka I and son of Harihara), the temple
executives had started reorganizing the temple affairs. At one place, the temple
executives gave gift of house sites by Annappa Chavundappar, the Sthanika of the
temple and the son of Vitthappangal of Jaula in Veluvala (Belvola) desa, in
recognition of his services in the administration of the temple. The gift is said to
have been sanctioned by the God. Chavundappa is said to have consecrated the
deity Vittalantha and provided for regular offering therein. He further made for the
God an aureola (Tiruvasigai), repaired the 1,000-pillared mandapa and also gilded
the koyilalvar i.e., vimana of the temple 14. This could not have been possible
without a generous patronage by the king at all times by all means, ministers were
also not behind 15.

In some cases, the temple executives took the lead in providing patronage i.e. in
one of the inscriptions during Virupaksha, the temple executives gave gift of
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The king Devaraya I’s reign (He is also referred to as Vira Bhupati in certain inscriptions) (circa1406-1422 A.D.) witnessed increased interest in the temple affairs which is evidenced by the fact that one of the inscriptions during him registers a royal order (nirupa) to Chaudappa, the executive officer of Tiruchirappalli, to restore to Uttama Nambi, the Sthanika of Srirangam, on a representation made by the latter, certain concessions granted to the Sthanikas of the place during the time of Hiriya-Sriuparasa, and in addition, to grant him the village of Nochchagarichi (Nochchikurichchi) along with some additional lands in another village as Sarvamanya to be enjoyed by him in the same manner as it was being enjoyed in the days of Hiriya-Devaraya Maharaya and Vijayaraya-Maharaya. The order further enjoins the Parupatya to execute all the directions pertaining to the temple made by Uttama Nambi. The present gift of lands were to be added on to an earlier royal gift of villages yielding 300 honnu (pon) made on the occasion of presenting (to the God) golden horses and chariot. In recognition of his long service, Uttama Nambi is said to have been honoured (by the king) with bracelet, gold and necklace and golden pinnacles (kalasa) to his house.\footnote{17} The patronage extended by the king had increased by this time and it included not only honouring the officials of the temple, but also showing keen interest in the affairs
of the temple as well as construction activities in the temple complex 18. For example, one of the inscriptions refers to Sriranga-Narayana-Jiyyar, Uttam Nambi, and the Sthanikas of the temple that on the representation made to the king by Uttama Nambi, a royal gift of land in the four villages Sundakkayi, Govattakkudi, Todaiyur and Karungulam, was made to Uttama Nambi and his brother Chakraraya for a service instituted in the temple in the name of Devaraya Maharaya I and the brothers were made the agents (karttas) of the temple, exempted from the payment of the jodi on the granted lands and remunerated in cash and in kind, in addition to an eighth share in the contributions to the temple from these villages 19.

In one of the instances, endowment of 80 pon was made for conducting certain festivals to the God in the name of the king on the day of his natal star Punar pusam in the month of Tai, having been found inadequate, the king increased the endowment by an addition of 55 pon. It was stipulated that there should be no official participation in the management of these festivals, the conduct of which was entrusted to Uttama Nambi. The Uttama Nambi was honored by the king with gifts of golden parasol, necklace, bracelets, etc., in appreciation of his services for the temple 20. This paved the way for the growing influence of Uttama Nambi on the affairs of the temple, to such an extent that we do not hear much in the inscriptions about the time-honored institution of the hereditary acharyas. This is most probably due to the fact that the material progress of the temple could not be attended to by the religious heads. Uttama Nambi was evidently the name of the family as two persons father and son, are
both called Uttama Nambi. Thus the new family of Uttama Nambi appears to have sprung up during Devaraya I’s reign and the title was held hereditarily. In one of the instances, the royal order clearly established the supremacy of the Uttama Nambi. For example, a royal order was issued to Sriranga-Narayana-Jiyyar, Uttama Nambi, and the Sthanikas of the temple that on the representation made to the king by Uttama Nambi, a royal gift of land in the four villages Sundakkayi, Govattakkudi, Todaiyur and Karungulam, was made to Uttama Nambi and his brother Chakraraya for a service instituted in the temple in the name of Devaraya Maharaya I and the brother were made the agents (karttas) of the temple, exempted from the payment of the jodi on the granted lands and remunerated in cash and in kind, in addition to an eighth share in the contributions to the temple from these villages.

It must be noted that the patronage extended to the temple by both Uttama Nambi and his brother Chakraraya was tremendous and both tried their best to embellish the Srirangam temple as much further as possible. For example, one of the inscriptions on the walls of the temple clearly records the structural improvements made by Chakraraya to the Annadi-Emberuman and the Maruti shrines and to the kitchen in the Ranganatha temple, and the colonization of the precincts of the temple of (Kattu) Alagiyasingar at Srirangam. It further says that Chakraraya (brother of Uttama Nambi) constructed a passage with nine pillars to the south of the Perumaltolan-tirumandapam and the tirukkavanappatti in the mandapa constructed by Uttamaraya, consecrated Maruti in the mandapa constructed by
him in front of the shrine of Annadi-Emberuman and also consecrated Lakshmi in the porch near the entrance into the kitchen of the temple 23.

During Devaraya II, patronage from Chakraraya increased manifold 24. His successor’s reign also witnessed ministers taking a lot of interest in extending patronage to the temple—at least this is what the inscriptions in the temple suggest 25. One of the inscriptions during this period records an endowment of lands in the villages Chittamur, Marakkamangalam, etc yielding an annual income of 436 pon, by the minister Siruparasara Vitthana for food offerings to the God on several specified occasions 26. For the first time during the Vijayanagara period, we come across Nayakas extending patronage to the Srirangam temple during Devaraya II or Praudha Devaraya 27.

Such patronages had increased greatly in number during Mallikarjuna (circa 1447-65 A.D.) 28. The power and influence of the Nayakas had increased so much by this time that one inscription clearly records the order of Saluva Tirumalaideva Maharaja, son of Saluva Gopa, that the produce from all the lands exclusive of Tiruvaidaiyattam lands, in excess of taxes assessed, may be allowed to accumulate in the treasury of the temple at Srirangam 29. One of the inscriptions corresponding to the year circa 1690 A.D. records the restoration to Kumara Venkata Varadacharya, son of Varadacharya and grandson of Achchi Sriranganarayanacharya of the Gargya-gotra, Asvalayana-sutra and Rik-sakha, by Rangakrishna-Muddu-Virappa-Nayaka of the Visvanatha Nayaka family, of the tirtham and other privileges which had been in the enjoyment of the family from
the time of Udaiyavar (Ramanuja) but which had lapsed when his ancestor Achchi Sriranganarayancharya had gone to north where his disciples were in considerable number and stayed there for a long time. Another inscription during this time registers the gift of two villages Chattuvantangal and Arapperunchelvi on the southern bank of the Palaru in Padaivittu-usavadi in tondaimandalam, by Kadadai Ayodhya Ramanuja-ayyangar, asattada-parama-ekangi of Tiruvarangam-Tiruppati to God Ranganatha for offerings during Ramanujayan-avasaram and to feed Srivaishnavas with the donor’s share of the offerings in the Ramanuja-kutam situated to the west of Palavarayar-matha. The villages granted by the Rayar are stated to have been acquired by the donor from their Brahmana owners. (The Koyil Olugu, ed. by Krishnamachariyar in circa 1888 A.D., p-69 describes in detail the association of this Ramanujayyangar with this temple).

During the next period of Konerideva Maharaja, an important inscription testifies to the fact that the tradition started by Kandadai Ramanujayyangar was followed further by his disciples. It states that Kandadai Madhavayyangar, a disciple of Kandadai Ramanujayyangar, the dharmakarta of the Ramanujakutam at Tiruvarangam-Tirupati, constructed a temple to the north of the Nanmugangopuram and constructed therein the images of Vithalesvara and Madhuakavi-Alvar and arranged for their worship and also constructed a kitchen. Another inscription of great significance during this time refers to God Dhanvantari, who is considered God of medicine in the Indian mythology. It records a gift of 2 veli of land for worship and offerings to God Dhanvantari newly installed by the donor.
and for supply of medicinal decoction (kudinir) to the God by Srinivasa, son of Alagiyamanavala Mangaladaraya who was one of the bhattal-kottu of the temple in the time of Uttamanambi-Pillai. The donor is stated to have revived the hospital (arogya-salai) which had been in the charge of his ancestor Garudavahana-Bhatta and which had been destroyed by fire 33.

King Krishnadevaraya’s reign (c.1509-1529 A.D.) saw apogee of fame, wealth and greatness of Vijayanagara empire. At the same time, it also witnessed increased interference in the temple affairs by the royal house and their men for the simple reason that the temple too had acquired bigger status, not seen till then, in terms of money, fame, religious networks as well as a medium to extend royal control over the deeper parts of the empire. Right in the beginning of his reign, an inscription clearly establishes his intentions. The record purports to the king’s order to dandnayaka Viraya not to collect the various taxes from the tiruvidaiyattam lands of an annual tax-yield of 630 honnu (pon) formerly granted to the temple as sarvamanya by Hiriyasvami (the elder Lord) and now re-endowed by him (the king), stipulating that these lands should not be trespassed for purposes of tax-collection in his (the chief’s) territory 34.

In a proof of increasing legitimation of the temple by the individuals, there are several inscriptions that testify to the huge endowments to the temple by individuals in this period 35. An inscription registers a gift of 100 pon, the interest of which was to be spent towards offerings (and distribution) to God Krishnaraya on the occasion of Sri-Jayanti-Uriyadittirunal, to God Ranganatha on the occasion
of the birth of new year and to Sriranga-Nachchiyar on the occasion of the Mahanavami celebrations by Kandadai Madhavayyangar, a disciple of Kandadai Ramanujayyangar. A share of the last mentioned special offering was to go to the Ramanujakuta 36.

Another inscription registers the grant of a village Ninnaaiyur in Kilangu-nadu as Tiruvidaiyallam and the recovery of Neruvur and the Vangal from Kilangunattar after paying off dues on the same, by Rayasam Kondamarasayya towards five dishes of food offerings to God Ranganatha. Shares are also allotted out of these to the Ramanuja-kutam to feed Srivaishnavas, to Remidichcherula Appayyan in exchange for a garden, taken for him and to Pachchuva Varadayan for gardening and offerings of food and garlands 37. Some of the individual endowments clearly indicate the legitimation for both God and the king. For example, an inscription registers a gift by Kandadal Madhavayyangar of 80 pon of gold, the interest on which is to be spent towards special offerings to God Ranganatha on the second day of the brahmotsava while he halts at Madhvayyangar Tiruttoppu-mandapa and on the 5th day of the masi festival instituted in the name of Krishnadeva-Maharaya when the God halts at the garden adjoining Pradhani Timmarasar-toppu 38. Some of the endowments also show ecological concerns of the individual donors. For example, an inscription records a gift of 10,500 chakra-panam by Ramanujadesa alias Lakshmipati-Setti and his brother Antappa, sons of Tippu-Setti of the Sahasra-gotra who was a disciple of Kandadai Nayinar-Ayyangar, for the midnight offerings to the God. This money was required to be invested in tanks and channels and the resultant revenue was to be spent for the purpose 39.
Soon after, another inscription narrates the course of Krishnadevaraya’s expeditions against Addanki, Nagarjunakonda, Vinukonda and Kondavidu etc and gives a list of his various charities at many places culminating in a grand gift of the five villages made personally to God Ranganatha to be enjoyed as Sarvamanya on the date of his visit to the temple. A share of the offerings is allotted to the lines of disciples at the Sathagopaji-matham. As a matter of fact, there are many inscriptions on the walls of the Srirangam temple that bear testimony to the conquests of Krishnadevaraya in various directions and also his numerous benefactions to the temple.

The king Achyutadeva Maharaja’s reign (c.1529-1542 A.D.) saw tremendous increase in endowments to the temple. In the beginning of his reign only, an inscription records that Chennaya-Balayadeva-Maharaja bearing the epithets such as Uraiyur-puravaradhisvara, Cholakulatilaka and Kaveri-vallabha set up the utsava image of the Uraiyur-Valli-Nachchiyar and provided for worship and offerings by creating the following endowments:

1. **812 pon** yielding an interest of **146 pon** per year at 18% i.e. 1-1/2 **panam** per 100 **panam** per month, for offering two dishes daily to Nachchiyar and two dishes daily after the rayar-avasaram to Perumal;

2. **60 pon** for raising a garden for the Goddess to halt on the occasion of the 8th day of the festival in the month of Masi arranged by Krishnaraya and

3. **60 pon** the interest on which was to be utilized for the food offerings to Perumal on all occasions of his visit to the garden mentioned above. The
flowers and the vegetables grown in the garden were required to be made over to the temple treasury. Also stipulates that the donor’s share i.e. one fourth of the daily offerings viz, one taligai (consisting of eight nails) should be distributed in two equal shares to Alagiya-Manavala-Jiyyar and to Kovil Vattamani Embar Ayyangar in perpetuity through the disciples in the case of the former and through the descendants in the case of latter. The donor’s share of the offerings at the garden was assigned to the former. Another inscription not only mentions the king’s visit to the temple with his queens and the prince, but also mentions his interference in the dispute between temples of Srirangam and Jambukesvaram. It records that a gift of 1200 pon and three villages in Kilaimuri and Melaimuri of Vadagarai –Malanadu in Tiruchchirappalli-usavadi by the king on the occasion of his visit to the temple with his queens Oduva Tirumalai Amman and Varadachchi and Prince Chikka-Venkatadri, for conducting with the income thereon, services to the God in their respective names. It gives a full account of the king’s military achievements in the introductory portion, the date of his coronation and mentions Nallar-Ayyangar as the royal preceptor.

There is mention of an interesting fact that in the course of a dispute between the temples of Srirangam and Jambukesvaram, it was stipulated that while the Ambira-Tirtha in Chembiyanallur in Vadagarai-Malanadu belongs to God Ranganatha, the village also must go to the God. His reign also witnessed greater efforts for the comfort of the deity within the temple complex. The individual endowments in this period clearly legitimized not only the God but also those involved with the
worship. For example, an inscription registers a gift of land in Sundarsanapuram as *Poliyuttu* for offerings during the Tirupavitrattirunal and Sattumuraiittirunal when the God was taken to the Mudalalvar-tirumandapam. It records the assignment of the 4th share of the offerings to the Annan Ramanujayyan, the Pillai (Priest!) of the Mudalalvar shrine. One inscription even records the patronage in accordance with *Yajnavalkya smriti*. It registers an endowment of 40 *pon* of gold by Srirangarajan Somayaji Tirukkalikanridasan, son of Koyil Pillai Nalukavip-Perumal Jiyar-Briahspati sarvayajiyar Solaimalaip-Perumal, of the kasyapa-gotra, to provide for the interest therefrom, at the rate of 1/80th part of the principal in accordance with *Yajnavalkya smriti* ‘Asitibhago-vriddhisyat’ quoted in the record, daily offerings to God on specified occasions. It also mentions the donor’s disciple Nagadevar Kanakkappillai of Tirungappattanam and Ramanuja-matha, probably built by Tirumalai-raja. Besides, there were some women patrons in this period which only added to the prestige and legitimacy of the temple. For example, an inscription registers endowments of 15 and 45 *pon* respectively by Anantamman, wife of Salakkayadeva Maharaja and her daughter Akkachhiyamman for offerings to the God on the occasion of the *vidayarri* of the God in the *Akkachhiyamman-toppu* on the day of the Krishnarayar-tirunal in the month of Masi and again when the God is taken in procession in front of the Lakshminarayan temple. It also records in addition, another endowment for two lamps by Periya-Konamman, the wife of Periya-Tirumalaideva Maharaja and by Akkachhiyamman.

In one instance, there was a clear and dedicated persuasion from a temple servant that led to regaining of temple’s power. This inscription records that the village
Uttamasili which was formerly granted to the temple of Ranganatha at Srirangam as *Tiruvidaiyattam* for the God, having been included as non-tenure village in Tiruchchirapalli-usavadi at a later date was subsequently re-granted to the temple to provide for feeding the *Srivaishnavas* on the evidence of an old copper-plate grant produced by Singarachar, the agent of Kandadai Ramanuja- Ayyangar to Visvanatha-Nayaka (the officer-in-charge) of the Tiruchchirapalli-usavadi. 48.

The king Sadasivaraya (circa 1542-1576 A.D.) seems to have restored the worship at Srirangam temple after an impending threat from an adversary. 49. In one of the inscriptions, the priest himself came forward to extend the patronage to the Goddess. It registers an annual income of the gift of the village Cholaganallur as *poliyuttu* for expenses towards offering and friday services to the Goddess by Prasara Bhattan Sikkayangar of harita-gotra and Aapastamba sutra, the priest (purohita) of Sriranga (i.e. God Ranganatha). The gift village is stated to have formed the western hamlet (padagai) of Tiruvellarai in Vadavali-nadu, in Amur-nadu, a division in Pachchil-kurram in Malali-nadu in Rajaraja-valanadu. 50. This period also witnessed tremendous ecological concern regarding erosion of the river Kaveri and not without reason people registered their grievances in this regard at the Srirangam temple. An inscription registers the gift of the village Chintamani by Mahamadaleswara Ramaraja-Sadasivadeva-Maharaja to Srisilapurnacharya Tatacharya *alias* Avukku Tiruvenkadayangar who, in turn, made it over to God Ranganatha for offerings in the manner in which they were formerly conducted during the time of Nalantigal Narayana-Jiyar, for the merit of the raya and the King. It also refers to the erosion of the river Kaveri into Srirangam and to
its diversion near Chintamani during the Chola king, and to the compensation in land in the Kolakuttai village granted to the brahmana residents of Chintamani 51.

Many times, the legitimation came from individuals who were quite expressive not only about their caste and gotra but also about their place of origin. For example, an inscription in this period records a grant of 13/8 veli of land at Vikkiramangalam as tiruvidaiyattam and assessed to yield 18 pon per annum towards provisions for the deities halt at Ammaiyar-pandal in Tirumudikkurai en route to Guhapriyam and offerings to the God on the 3rd day festivities of the Adi-Brahma festival, by Koneti Obalaraja of the lunar race and Atreya-gotra, and hailing from the north (Uttaradesam) 52. In this process, there were many festivals in the temple that were named after individuals which also got legitimized through these huge endowments from the individuals 53. An interesting inscription from this period shows how devotees went to unimaginable lengths to legitimize their God. It records the perpetual obeisance of Tiruvengada Konamma, who is said to have attained union with the Lord (Sayujya) i.e. died, when the deity and the Goddess were getting down the western steps of the Ranga-mandapa and taking a turn to the north 54.

During King Venkata (circa 1586-1614 A.D.), an inscription not only shows tremendous endowments to the temple, but also great allegiance to Ramanuja and Vaisnavism. It registers an endowment of 120 pon from out of the interest on which certain offerings were to be made to the God during the recitation of Tiruvaymoli along with other sacred verses on the day of the asterism Tiruvadirai
of Emberumanar (Ramanuja) in the month of chittirai and the offerings distributed among the Srivaishnavas, pilgrims and the Ekangis. The gift was made by Jiyyar Ramanuja-Jiyyar alias Ramanujadasa in the name of his esteemed guru Yatindrapavana-prabha Pillai Lokacharya-Jiyyar, himself a disciple of Paravastu Nayinar-acharya of Tiruvengadam.

This record is a good example of the *manipravala* style which is a very important characteristic of Vaisnava literature. The record quotes the *Divya-srisukti* (i.e. *Nalayira-divyaprabandham*) of Periyalvar in giving the ingredients of the preparation called *Akkaravadisil* which is referred to in the work as *Tiruvonam*. In describing Ramanuja, extracts from *Ramanuja-Nurrantadi* are freely quoted. The record ends with invoking prosperity to Ramanuja’s teachings. By this time however, the Nayakas had become very dominant in the greater part of the Vijayanagara Empire—fighting amongst themselves incessantly--though the endowments to the temple by them had only increased. This was definitely an indication of increasing threat to their authority along with increasing quest for larger allegiance from the people. An interesting inscription from the reign of King Sriranga III (circa 1642-1672 A.D.) proves this point. It records the gift of the villages Vidivitankan and Pachchiyur situated in Tiruchirappalli-usavadi in Cholamandalam to sixty Srivaishnava Brahmanas of Tirumugatturai Adivarahapuram by Visvanathanayaka-Chokkanatha-nayaka on the occasion of a lunar eclipse, the former for colonizing the donees and the latter for the *Sirappukkattalai* service to the God. This is the only record in this temple which cites the reign of Srirangadeva-maharaja of Vijayanagara. This period witnessed
increasing number of individual endowments despite incessant fight for political authority among various powers.

The Nayakas themselves competed with each other to patronize the God and the temple as much as possible \(^57\). An important inscription during this period corresponding to the year circa 1717-1719 A.D. records grant of lands in Sengudi and Analai including house sites as *nityagnihotra-vritti* to Srirangaraja-Dikshitar out of the *tiruvilayattam* land of the shrine of Tirumangai-Alvar by Narayanasvamin, the agent in charge of the latter shrine in the Dasavatara temple. The Jiyar was entitled to certain honors in the temple after daily worship and on the five festival days, in honour of Tirumangai-Alvar \(^58\). Another inscription corresponding to the year circa 1761 A.D. records that certain epigraphs (relating to the endowments made) by Chokkanatha-Nayanivaru and Mangammagaru, having been destroyed by some miscreants, were re-engraved and kept on the east side of the *tiruvunaligai* (inner prakara) at the instance of the servants of the temple \(^59\). It clearly reflects some sort of disorder around the temple and extra efforts in managing it by the political authorities. Many individuals, including queens like Muddammagaru show tremendous enthusiasm in legitimizing the importance of the temple in their lives as well as very generously patronizing it \(^60\).

Many times, the temple administration itself chose to legitimize the power and authority of the temple by underlining its importance through selecting the right person themselves to manage the administration of the temple as is obvious from this inscription of late 17\(^{th}\) century. It records the conferment of the *Jiya* at the
Tirumangai-Alvar *Sannidhi* on Ramayyangar under the name Narayana-Jiyar, specifying his duties in the general administration and the periodical renovations of the temple. It also gives the line of the local pontiffs beginning with Alagiyanamavala-Jiyar who was initiated by Adivaraha Sathagopasvamin.

There are innumerable examples of the endowments of the individuals to the temple that legitimized the power and authority of not only the deity but also the whole gamut of products, processes and relationships that were woven around the temple and the deity. One of the inscriptions shows the grant of the village Uppar of Melaimuri in Vadagarai Malainadu by Polu-Chettiyar, son of Vengalu-Chettiyar of Kanchipuram towards offerings to God Ranganatha for the merit of the king. Shares are allotted to feed *Srivaishnavas* and his (donor’s) gardeners. It also mentions the grant of land in Tirumangalam of Kilaimuri for special offerings to God at his garden. Another inscription records that *Avasaram* Mallarasayyan, son of *Anatalai* Sankarasar, having found that some of the *Tiruvvidaiyattam* lands lying waste had now begun to yield more than the expected yield due to the broadening of the Peruvalavanaykhal, arranged for offerings of 67 dishes of food both to the God Ranganatha and the Goddess Nachchiyar in the name of the king, queen Varadachchi Amman and prince Venkatadriraya. The dishes are allotted to the night feeding at the choultry of Sankarasayyan, to some Brahmanas, Sudras and Pardesis and to the watersheds at northern and southern gates. There was so much of love and affection for the deity that one of the inscriptions records the perpetual obeisance of Tiruvengada Konamma, who is said to have attained union with the Lord (*Sayujya*) i.e. died, when the deity
the Goddess were getting down the western steps of the Rangamandapa and taking a turn to the north. The temple administration was also very keen and aware about the renovation and general maintenance of the temple in the wake of growing number of pilgrims and high dignitaries visiting the temple on a regular basis.

It thus clearly proves the fact that by the Vijayanagara period and thereafter, the important role played by the deity and the temple in the lives of the larger community had only increased in importance. There was a distinct increase in the local and trans-local ties and an extension of network of bonds at various levels as compared to the pre-Vijayanagara period in south India. More and more patronage from the top i.e. king to the bottom further enhanced the power and authority of the Srirangam temple. The ritual space in the temple complex became more shared and coveted than ever before in this period that led to more negotiations, more contestations among the powers—both political and non-political.
Endnotes


2 Ibid.


5 K.A. Nilkanta Sastri, *A History of South India , from Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1955, see Chapter XII.


9 Ibid.


11 Ibid., p. 710.

12 Appendix-10, no.1 /1.

13 Appendix-11, no.1/1.

14 Appendix-10, no.4/1.

15 Appendix-11, no. 3/2; no.3/3.

16 Appendix-10, no.4/1.

17 Ibid., no. 1/3.

18 Appendix-11, no. 1 /4; no.1/5.

19 Ibid., no.1/6.

20 Ibid., no. 1/5
Ibid., no.6/19.

Appendix-10, no.1/8.

Appendix-11, no.4/2.

Ibid., no.5/45.

Ibid., no. 5/57.

Ibid., no.5/59, no.5/68.

Appendix-12, no.1/19.

Appendix-11, no.5/74.

Ibid., no.6/33.

Ibid., no.6/1, no.6/2, no.6/5, no.6/35.

Ibid., no.4/6.

Ibid., no.4/7.

Ibid., no.2/2, no.2/3.

Appendix-12, no.2/1.

Ibid., no.1/2, no.1/3, no.1/4.

Ibid., no.1/8.

Ibid., no.1/10.

Ibid., no. 1/19.