CONCLUSION

The Srirangam temple has thrown to light a huge corpus of inscriptions that needs to be read and interpreted without getting into theorizations or generalizations. This is due to two reasons—firstly, the source should be presented to a reader without strings attached to it, and secondly, an interpreter’s subjectivity must not come into play while reading these inscriptions. An attempt was made in this work with this in mind, though one can not rule out deviations at times.

The purpose behind the general survey on various works on temple in the south Indian context (in the first chapter) was to establish the recent emphasis on temple studies to emphasize on the multidimensional role, relevance and re-construction of this institution to understand it in itself rather than to work on it as an appendage to religion or culture. It was seen as a text with a context that needed to be decoded to understand various dimensions of society—be it political, social, economic, religious etc. As mentioned earlier, the word for temple in Tamil is ‘Koyil’ which stands for both palace and the deity. Thus, understanding the temple could not be complete if one did not try to understand the unfolding of the institution of kingship in south India. As there was close link between the deity and the palace and deity and the broader society, any attempt to understand the kingship, in turn, would not have been possible if one did not try to understand the legitimating ideology of the times. The fact is that the inseparable bond between the temporal and the transcendental always provided the base for any understanding of the notions of power, patronage and legitimation.
The second chapter demonstrated the evolution of Srirangam temple in the pre-Vijayanagara period (up to circa A.D. 1371) on the basis of inscriptions on walls of the temple. As was clear, the power of the village assemblies increasingly got restricted as one moved from 9th to 11th century as compared to the power of the king or his ministers or the temple executives as the inscriptions suggested 1. These temple executives were the Srikaryam officers appointed by the king. This was evident from the period of Kulottunga I onwards on the basis of inscriptions at Srirangam temple. The temple executives (Srivaishnava variyam) worked in complete consonance with the temple authorities (Srikaryam officer) 2. The picture would not have been complete if the evolving power structure was not accepted at the level of people and the broader community. Thus, the chapter pointed out that there were at least seventeen inscriptions right from 9th century A.D. onwards that indicated various levels of patronage of the temple by the individuals and by extension, legitimacy to the contemporary power structure 3. It was very clear that legitimation was sought by each and every individual or group that was of some significance in the society. It was an interconnected process that aligned the royal establishment, the temple, the deity and the various groups and individuals in the society for the interests of all.

The royal presence seemed to be clear and ubiquitous right from 10th century onwards. The king and his men would increasingly intervene in the local affairs—though it was within his territorial jurisdiction in any case 4. There had been so many examples where the king, the queen and the ministers tried to patronize the temple and its functioning either directly or indirectly 5.
During the succeeding period of Pandyas, Hoysalas etc, there seemed to be more aggressive royal presence in local affairs. There were eleven inscriptions from the Srirangam temple in the Pandyan period suggesting royal power and consequent presence in the local affairs. There was not a single record that would attest to the power of local assemblies in this period. Patronage by the royalty and the royal representatives was present in large numbers but there was not a single record once again that would provide evidence of the patronage from the local assemblies. The king clearly made his presence felt and seemed to be using the gifts to the temple to induce the larger community or people to become part of the whole gamut of relationships woven around the temple. For example, in one of the inscriptions during the time period of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I, it was clearly mentioned that the king passed an order issued to Vanadaraya that the management of the temple which was hitherto vested with one group (kottu) of officials should then be extended to members of other groups and that the Ariyar and Ullurar be appointed to guard the treasury (porkaval) of the temple. Many times the king and his staff would insure that remittances were offered to the community or individuals in order to offer worship to the deity but defaulters would be seriously punished if proved guilty of non-compliance. The residents of the village had to furnish an undertaking in this regard. The queens were also eager to share the blessings from God, thus providing for Him in no small measure as well.

As was clear from an interesting inscription during Pandyas, though the name of the ruler was unclear, an order was purported to have been issued by the deity. It
was an order issued by God Ranganatha directing a council of 23 members of whom ten were to be selected from out of the kottu of the temple, four from the sanyasins and desantris, five representing the 18 mandalas and four representing the Chera, Chola, Pandya kings and the Kshatriyas of the north, to appoint a sanyasin versed in the Vaisnava lore and with the interest of the temple at heart and belonging to either Pangayachchelviyur alias Vellarai or Parantakachaturvedimangalam alias Salagramam or the Nalayiravar-Brahmadeyam in Pandi-mandalam, to look after the properties of the temples situated in several places, with provision made for his maintenance mentions the appointment of armed Velaikkaras to help the sanyasin in discharging his duties.

The Hoysala period seemed to be no exception. In one of the instances during the ruler Ramanatha of Hoysala dynasty, there was an order purported to be made by the deity where there were clear specifications with respect to the temple management. In terms of patronage also, there seemed to be an overbearing presence of king, queen and his ministers at the temple. As the political unrest had led to confusion all around, the patronage and legitimation from the individuals was reduced to minimum in this period.

The third chapter has clearly demonstrated the evolution of Srirangam temple in the Vijayanagara period from 14th century to 18th century. Vijayanagara was one of the medieval south Indian kingdoms whose inscriptions and sovereign claims far extended any such claims made previously. These Vijayanagara kings issued royal inscriptions claiming universal authority throughout the peninsula south of
the Krishna river. It has been established in this chapter that the role of temples during the Vijayanagara period was more complex than as simple imperial symbols. More than architectural constructions and sites of worship, south Indian temples had been sites of political and ideological contestation among imperial, local, and religious elites during the Vijayanagara period. Evidently, the Vijayanagara kings and their subordinate officers were more inclined towards Vaisnavism. The gifts or donations, the feeding of Srivaishnavas, the festivals associated with the temple and its deities, the building activities, the founding of new religious institutions inside the temple complex, the endowments for various services were clear evidences of the interest shown in the temple by the royal masters and their highly placed subordinates.

This chapter further established the fact that 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. By late fifteenth to seventeenth century 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. The Nayakas themselves competed with each other to patronize the God and the temple as much as possible. As was evident from the inscriptions, right from the 14th to 16th century, there were several inscriptions that suggested growing power of the king and his representatives,
both at the temple and outside of it. Besides, the powers and the privileges of the sthanikas i.e. local representative of the king, was restored with a lot of pomp and show. 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 was most probably due to the fact that the material progress of the temple could not be attended to by the religious heads. To make it clear, Uttama Nambi was evidently the name of the family as two persons father and son, were both called Uttama Nambi. Thus the new family of Uttama Nambi appeared to have sprung up during Devaraya I’s reign and the title was held hereditarily. There was a distinct assertion by royalty, even at the local level, to create a network of bonds that did not ignore his authority. There seemed to be some disturbance in the worship at the temple that was restored in a late 16th century inscription after routing the kuruvanniyar.

Further, it was demonstrated that there was a sudden increase in patronage to the temple by the temple authorities and executives from 16th century onwards which could be to directly or indirectly induce the local community/communities to be part of the temple rituals and worship. As a result, there were a huge number of individual endowments or patronage in this period, though the inscriptions suggested that it began in right earnest only from 15th century onwards. Undoubtedly, this was a period when the authority of Vijayanagara kings was clearly established in this part of the empire and they were also widely seen as the restorers of the worship at Srirangam temple. Therefore, it was shown through
epigraphic evidence that Individuals sought legitimacy in large numbers by not only providing large endowments to the temple, but also through expressing their consent for being a part of a festival, or a ritual or investing in tanks and tunnels to be used for the temple, gifting a pearl or a garment to the lord, by feeding the Srivaishnavas, gifting gold or lands etc 22. There have been 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 23.

As mentioned earlier, there was increasing presence of Nayakas from late 15th century onwards as far as patronage to the Srirangam temple was concerned24. But it did not, by any means, imply that the overall bearing of the king on local matters was on the slide 25. There were still various services in the temple that were instituted in the name of the king or the queen etc. It has been demonstrated that there were so many instances when the individuals provided endowments to the temple and prayed for the merit of the king or queen or his success 26.

The fourth chapter has simply demonstrated the evolving patterns in art at Srirangam that could not be separated from the emerging dimensions of power, patronage and legitimation that prevailed at any given moment or context in the history of this temple. As a matter of fact, the temple and its images were just as much indexical signs of power as they were its iconic embodiments. There was definitely evolution of a ‘language’ of art which also evolved with the changing
times and carried more or less different meanings and value in a changed historical context. The process of iconographic as well as sculptural representation was continuous and went through various additions, deletions etc. in course of its history. With the coming of every successive dynasty in power, there were more decorations, more additions in terms of structures, more images added, more and more expressive sculptural styles etc to conform to the ideals set forth by a particular dynasty. As it became evident in this chapter, the expanding form of the temple was not only an index of the power of the site, but also of the king who formerly functioned as the God's agent.

As far as the Srirangam temple was concerned, the Pandyan and the Madurai styles predominated here. One of the inscriptions during an early Chola kings, Parantaka I, referred to the platform (tinnai) raised for the flag (tirukkodi). Beyond this, there was not much to refer to in terms of patronage during the Chola period. But the principles of carving and decoration evolved from this time on and major contributions came only during the Pandyas as far as this temple was concerned. The tall pillars with slender rectangular pilasters decorated with scrolls and carrying the single heavy upward sloping lotus-stalk corbel often in combination with the double lotus-stalk and bodigai corbel were a common feature in the Srirangam temple and appeared in many of the mandapas in the two or three prakaras immediately surrounding the central shrine structure. It may be understood that this was predominantly a local style belonging to the period of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I and his successors.
This chapter also brought to light the fact that the main emphasis seemed to be on the decoration rather than elaboration in this period. This could be concluded from the fact that this was a time period when there was so much political chaos all around as various powers fought for supremacy.

On the contrary, it is important to point out the fact that in the Vijayanagara and the Nayaka periods, the tendency in temple building was towards expansion rather than ornamentation. There is no doubt that there was increase in power and position of the patrons from the Vijayanagara period onwards and the effect of it was witnessed by the temple at Srirangam as well. This was achieved by the addition of prakaras with gopuras and mandapas e.g. the Kalyana mandapas and the Hundred and Thousand Pillared mandapas. Taller and taller gateway gopuras were erected in the outer prakaras. As it came out, a late medieval south Indian temple impressed one and all by its size rather than its beauty, and architecture served in new directions. In sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Tamilnadu, the growth of temple complexes with large numbers of shrines, halls, gateways, and corridors led to the use of major sculpture throughout the temple, especially on the composite columns in the corridors and open detached columned halls (mandapas) that were such a distinctive feature of the period. Srirangam temple was no exception. This chapter also brought to light a purely sixteenth-century development with no clear precedent which was the rearing horse with a rider armed with a sword or spear, and with a number of other figures beneath. These included more soldiers, musicians, elephants, or lions; often these men were fighting or killing a lion. This composite column
type, well known from the late sixteenth-century, was available at the north end of the Sesagiriraya Mandapa on the east side of the Ranganatha temple at Srirangam's fourth prakara. As it became evident, these representations were also an expression of their (patrons) worldly power and its assertion at the God's abode for people at large to acknowledge its legitimacy. In this case, the Srirangam temple complex became the medium for such an assertion. One noticed a distinct shift in the representation as the temple evolved through the different periods of various dynasties. Deity sculptures in deep set niches in the walls of shrines became rare. They were found mostly on pillars. Almost all the manifestations of Vishnu had been represented on the pillars of the various mandapas.

As it became evident from the fourth chapter, there was multiplication of shrines and sub shrines in the temples of the Vijayanagara period which provided a great scope for making several images meant for actual worship while the outer walls were put merely to a decorative use. More and more people sought divine grace as the empire went on expanding, both vertical and horizontal. While interest in deities was transferred to the icons, non-iconic figure sculptures and carvings received particular attention in the Vijayanagara period. To this class belonged the powerful and impressive horse brackets of the Sesagiriya mandapa and the near-life size Nayaka figure sculptures of the Garuda mandapa. Thus, the ‘Power of art’ clearly comes out on the basis of inscriptions on the walls of Srirangam temple as it went through different periods in south India.
The fifth chapter has been able to establish the close relationship between the evolution of Srirangam temple and the evolution of society around it that provided the basis of evolution of power, patronage and legitimation in the period between 10\textsuperscript{th} to 18\textsuperscript{th} century. The Srirangam temple stood witness to diverse social groups, relations, community assertions, individual rankings etc that evolved through its history \textsuperscript{30}. It represented, or to have constituted, as a single entity the diverse peoples whose worship it attracted. As a matter of fact, what emerged from this description was the clear cut function of the temple as an institution, i.e. integration: economically through the redistribution of accumulated resources; socially, through the incorporation of diverse social groups into one community of worship, and politically, through the conferment of ritual prestige to sovereigns and local elites. The process of horizontal incorporation fostered the social integration of people from various geographical areas. One got many interesting details from the temple records at Srirangam about the prevailing social relations and the role of the temple or its management in dealing with various communities. The inscriptions at the Srirangam temple showed no evidence of granting more privileges to one group or denying it. But right from the Chola period onwards, there had been instances when the defaulters or violators were subjected to punishment. There was clear assertion of authority in and around the temple over the individuals and groups by the patrons. Brahmanas in general and Srivaishnavas in particular enjoyed a lot of respect \textsuperscript{31}.

The queens seemed to have enjoyed a lot of freedom and privileges right from the Chola period onwards. It seemed to have become a general practice that queens
shared a respectful space with the kings and the other members of the royal household.

A very important inscription from the time of Sundara Pandya I told us very clearly about how some unrest had crept into the affairs of the temple leading to some unsavory relations between some social groups. It necessitated strong administrative action and that was what the Pandyan ruler had taken through the appropriate administrative bodies. An interesting inscription on the walls of the Srirangam temple of the Pandyan ruler Manavarman Kulasekhara II’s reign took note of a tough action taken by authorities against two very powerful social groups notably Ariyars and the Kaikkolas. As it has been demonstrated, in the centuries between 10th-13th, the terms vaisya and sudra were conspicuously absent. In contrast, the Vijayanagara inscriptions from 14th century onwards clearly recognized the caste and ritual status of the different groups in temple service—as donors, functionaries or suppliers of ritual items.

By examining the groups involved in donations to the temple and the claims donors made about themselves in the inscriptions, one could identify various levels and categories of social affiliation and social action operative throughout the imperial period. Vijayanagara local affiliations were defined along several cultural dimensions, including geography (from village/town to region), occupation, caste and social status, and language. Both places of residence and occupation of individuals or collectives were frequently noted in inscriptions documenting temple donations or other transactions. Patronage from the merchant
class as well was quite forthcoming. It also indicated that this group was upwardly mobile with the increasing pace of urbanization in society and claimed a space in the ritual set-up through donations to the Srirangam temple.

Thus, the inscriptions on the walls of Srirangam temple stood testimony to a long period of history in south India that witnessed the evolution of the temple along with the three-dimensional processes of power, patronage and legitimation that connected its evolution with the evolution of not only the political structure but also with the wider society at any given point of time or historical context.
Endnotes

1 Appendix-1.

2 Ibid, no.3 /3.

3 Appendix-2.

4 Appendix-1, no.2/9.

5 Appendix-2.

6 Appendix-4.

7 Appendix-5.

8 Appendix-4, no.1/5.

9 Ibid., no.1/11.

10 Ibid., no.5/1.

11 Ibid., no.6/1.

12 Appendix-7, no.1 /1.

13 Appendix-9.

14 Appendix-11, no.1 /4, no.1 /5.

15 Ibid., no. 6 /1, no.6 /2.

16 Appendix-10.

17 Ibid, no.1 /3; no.4 /1.

18 Appendix-11, no.1/5.

19 Appendix-10, no. 1/4.

20 Ibid., no. 1/8; no.1 /9.
21 See Appendix-11, no. 4.

22 Ibid., no.5.

23 Appendix-12, no.1/2, no.1/3, no.1/4.

24 Appendix-11, no.6.

25 Ibid., no.6/15; no.6/16, no.6/18.

26 Appendix-12, no. 1/8; no. 1/8-A; no. 1/10; no.1/15.


28 Appendix-13, no.1.

29 See Chapter-IV…’Architecture and Sculpture…’.

30 See Chapter-V…’Temple and Society…’.

31 Appendix-2, no.1/10. Also Appendix-3, no.3/9.

32 Appendix-2, no.6/1, no.6/2. Also Appendix-8, no.2/1.

33 Appendix-4, no.4/1.

34 Ibid, no.1/10.

35 Appendix-12 to 14.