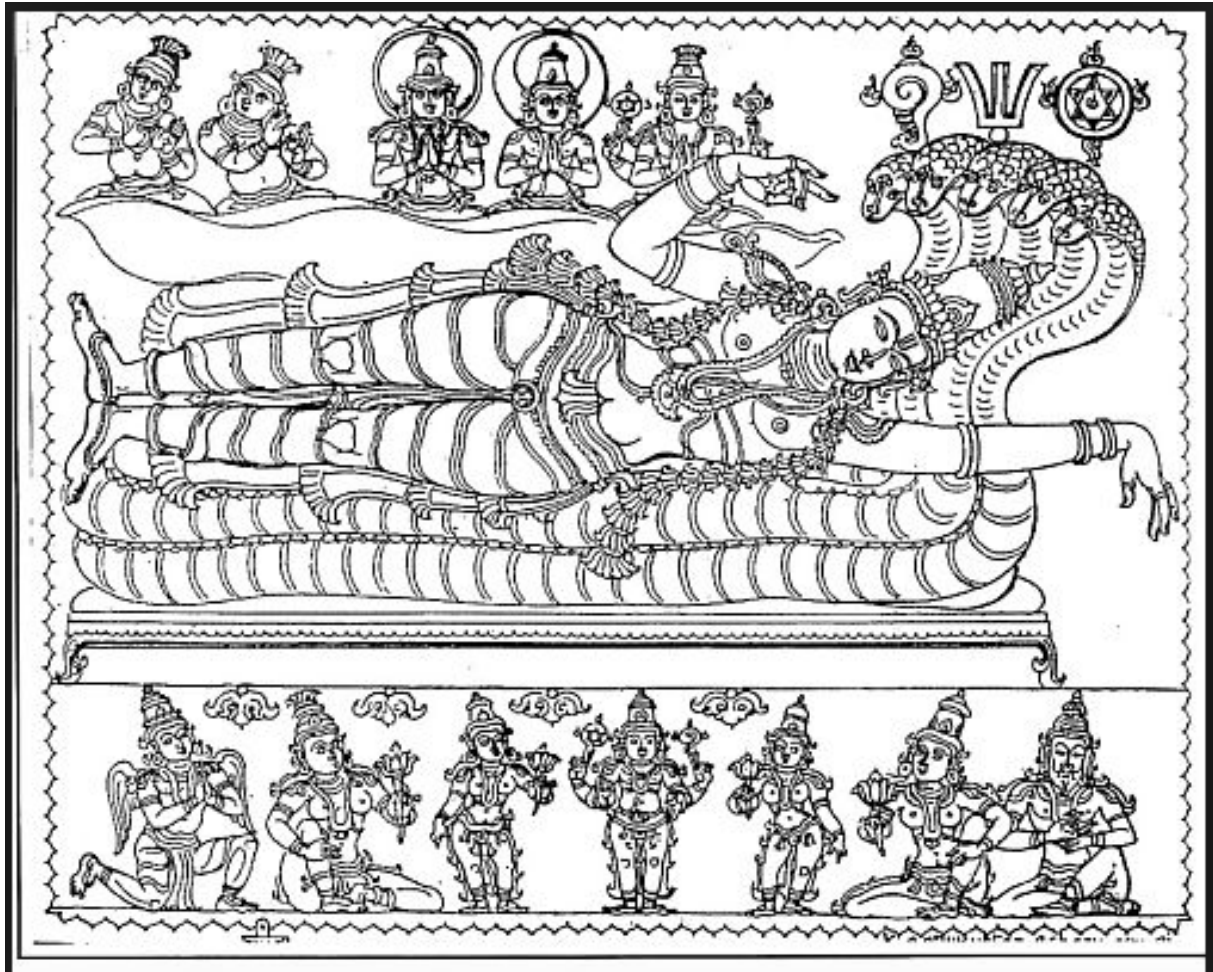


THE KOYIL OLUGU

(HISTORY OF THE SRIRANGAM TEMPLE)



CONDENSED ENGLISH VERSION BY

T. S. PARTHASARATHY Public Relations Officer

SOUTHERN RAILWAY MADRAS

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FOREWORD.

This book “Koyil Olugu” in English by Sri T. S. Parthasarathy, Public Relations Officer, Southern Railway, is a welcome publication. The original text is in the Manipravala dialect of Tamil freely mixed with Sanskrit. Though the book is intended for the ordinary reader, yet it is really a *Multum in Parvo*, presenting a good summary of all that is known about the history of the Srirangam Temple in the original text.

In Sri Vaishnavite parlance “Koyil” always refers to the sacred temple of Lord Sri Ranganatha Perumal (Swami) at Srirangam. According to the Tamil lexicon published under the authority of the University of Madras, “Olugu” is defined as the “Register of a temple giving an account of its properties and its history.” Hence the book “Koyil Olugu” is expected to give us the history of the Srirangam Temple, — its growth and its prosperity because of all kinds of wealth through the donations of its numerous devotees.

It is said that when the East India Company had taken over the rule of this country from the Muslims in the beginning of the 18th Century one Joseph Wallace then in charge of the administration on, finding that the affairs of the Srirangam Temple were not in order, set them in order as directed in the *Kovil Olugu*. Then many *Olugus* were in existence in the many temples in Srirangam. Wallace got them all together currently including, contemporary ones stored in the temple with the seals of the *Sthalatars*. The author has reviewed one such manuscript that was acquired for him by the kind help of Parthasarathy Ayyangar, a leading Vaishnavite scholar of Srirangam.

The author has taken great care to digest all facts contained in it and then to present them in a neat chronological and narrative way. Whenever he noticed the tradition of the book diametrically opposed to the results of critical research, he has not failed to add the necessary foot-note or to give his reasons for his difference and these are very valuable.

In the original, under the Chapter “Udayavar Vaibhavam” about one third portion of the book is found to cover in very great detail the various administrative arrangements that were established in the Srirangam Temple by the Great Preceptor and Reformer and how they are now followed. These details, I am sure, will be of great interest to any reader who is desirous of knowing the “Olugu” of the temple. Ramanuja lived for sixty long years at Srirangam efficiently managing the affairs of the temple. The organisation established by him was so perfect that even to this day the numerous departments of the temple function like clock-work and all Sri Vaishnavite temples are zealous to follow scrupulously the orders found in that temple. In this book the author has passingly touched the subject, giving broad outlines, in a couple of pages.

It is said by some Western scholars that our historic sense is very poor. But this book proves that it is not so. It contains a mine of information. The historians are only to co-ordinate the facts contained in it with those available from other sources.

V. M. NARASIMHAN, B.A., B.E., A.M.I.E., M.R. SAN. I. (LN.), Consulting, Architect & Archaeologist, MADRAS 15:7:1954 .

PREFACE

A series of ten articles on the “ Koyil Olugu ” originally contributed by me to the Tirumalai-Tirupati Devasthanams Monthly Bulletin, is now being, placed before the public in the form of this book, after being completely revised and enlarged by me.

When I first completed reading the Tamil original ten years ago, I was considerably surprised at the very little use that had been made of the wealth of information it contained. Among the many valuable records left to posterity by the historically-minded members of the Sri Vaishnavite community, the Koyil Olugu stands supreme for its arrangement of facts and the abundance of historical details'. It contains rare Tamil words, not found in other works, and these have now been included in the University Tamil lexicon. The book is, besides, a great source of inspiration to those who may peruse its pages as there is perhaps, no parallel in history to the devotion with which the Vaishnavites of Srirangam stood by the icon of Sri Ranganatha during periods of great travail and did all that lay in their power to protect it from desecration.

I am grateful to the Tirupati Devasthanam for giving a permanent shape to my humble effort by publishing, my articles in the present form of a booklet. To Sri C. Anna Rao, Executive Officer of the Devasthanams and Sri T. R. Narasimhan, Manager of the Devasthanam Press goes the credit of producing this little volume in its attractive garb. All the available printed editions of the Koyil Olugu are incomplete and come to an abrupt end while describing certain incidents that took place in the 16th century. This book would have also remained incomplete but for the timely assistance of Siromani Sthanikam S. Parthasarathi Iyengar, Editor, “ Devasthana Patrika ”, Srirangam who very kindly lent me a complete manuscript of the Olugu. Sri Iyengar is a veritable repository of information regarding Srirangam and he furnished me with many interesting details about the great Uttama-nambi family which I have incorporated in the work.

T. S. PARTHAS ARATHY

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THE KOYIL OLUGU

INTRODUCTION

“History is the one weak link in Indian Literature. It is, in fact, non-existent ” observes Dr. A. A. Macdonell. This rule, though it applies generally to Indian Literature, is not without its exceptions. The Vaishnavites of South India always had a keen eye for history and subject to the limitations they were labouring, under, have endeavoured their best to record historical details of the growth of their religion and biographical data of the Alvars and the Acaryas. The late Mr. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, one of the most brilliant research scholars of India, says “The members of this sect have left behind remarkable records embodying a fairly full and accurate history which is truly Boswellian in its tenderness and photographic in its fidelity and forms a refreshing contrast to the accounts left by the other sectarians. These records are abundant and the historian of the religions of India has only to co-ordinate the facts contained in them with those disclosed from epigraphical and other sources.” The different Guruparamparas, the Divya Suri Charitam, the Kaliyan Arulpadu and works like the Palanadai Vilakkam, the Idu and the Manipravala Vyakhyanas of commentators contain a vast treasure-house of biographical data regarding the Alvars and the later Acaryas. A unique work of this nature is, however, the Koyil Olugu written by an unknown author or authors. The first part of this book, collated from various manuscripts available at the time was first printed during the latter half of the last century and later by the Ananda Press, Madras in the year 1909. The second part does not appear to have been published at all and as far as I know, there has been no reprint of the first part either.

The book traces the history of the Srirangam temple, known as “Periya Koyil” or “The Koyil” to Sri Vaishnavites, from the time of Vibhishana to the end of the 16th Century A.D. As Srirangam was the capital of Sri Vaishnavism during the lifetime of several of the Alvars and Acaryas from Nathamuni downwards, the Koyil Olugu contains a mine of information not found in biographical accounts including the Guru-parampara Prabhava. A special feature of the book is that the unknown author has invariably furnished the dates of the various incidents detailed in the book in terms of the Kali Era at first and later the Salivahana Saka. Although the Kali Era years furnished by him appear to be wrong, the Saka years mentioned are more or less correct and supply us with a number of useful clues. The work also contains a number of intimate and touching anecdotes from the life of Ramanuja, not found in other biographies of the Acaryas.

The language in which the Koyil Olugu has been written closely follows the Manipravala style used in the Guruparampara and the Idu, although in many places the Tamil used is somewhat modern. The contents of the work, with particular reference to dates and biographical details of the Alvars and Acaryas, are examined briefly in the following pages.

CHAPTER I

EARLY HISTORY OF THE SRIRANGA VIMANA

(The street full of storied structures, the street of the prosperous Trivikrama, the street of the Akalanka¹, the street of Alinadan (Tirumangai Alvar), the street of Kulasekhara of Madura, the street of Raja mahendra of noble descent and the street of king Dharma-varma — these are the seven enclosures of the Lord of Srirangam).

At the commencement of the book, the origin of the Sri Ranga Vimana is traced, Brahma, the Creator, was the first to get it and was worshipping it in Satyaloka for a long, time. The Vimana was later obtained by Ikshvaku and was being worshipped as the family deity of that dynasty till the time of Sri Rama. After his conquest of Ravana, Sri Rama, out of great affection for Vibhishana, gave him the Vimana and while the latter was carrying it with him to Lanka, he placed it on the ground in between the two rivers at Srirangam and found to his utter grief that Lord Ranganatha had installed Himself at the spot which later came to be known as Bhuloka Vaikuntha.

The first devotee who had the privilege of constructing a regular temple around the Vimana was king Dharma Varma. This king is stated to have constructed a big temple at the spot with a Gopura, Pushkarini, Mantapas and other structures as laid down in the Agamas. It is difficult to place this king in history as the available details about him are scanty but he has been described in the book as one of the early Cholas. According to Vincent Smith, the mean date of the earliest known Chola King, Karikala, is A.D. 100.

There appears to have been a long interregnum after Dharma Varma's construction of the temple during which its history becomes totally obscure. The floods of the two rivers are stated to have covered the entire temple with sand and the overgrowth around it hid it completely from outside view. It was at this stage that a descendant of Dharma Varma, called Kili Chola, came to the spot and while resting under a tree heard a parrot above repeat the following, two slokas many times :

kāveri virajā seyam vaikunṭham raṅga-mandiram
sa vāsudevo rangeśaḥ pratyakṣam paramam padam ||
vimānam praṇavākāraṁ veda-śrīgam mahādbhutam
śrīraṅga-sāyī bhagavān praṇavārtha prakāśakaḥ ||

(The river Kaveri is verily the Viraja in Vaikuntha; the Srirangam Temple is Vaikuntha itself; Lord Ranga is none else but Vasudeva Himself and this is indeed God's eternal abode. The Vimana is in the form of the Pranava (OM); its four towers are marvellous like the four vedas and God Rangasayi eternally expounds the meaning of the Pranava).

His curiosity was roused and he ordered that the place should be excavated. The Vimana was found under the heap of sand and the Chola king, overjoyed at the discovery, entirely

¹ Akalanka is an epithet attached to Vikrama Chola.

² Pandit M. Raghava Aiyangar holds the view that the Alvar lived during the 7th Century. T.A. Gopinath Rao however fixes Tirumangai's age as the first half of the 9th Century, arguing that the Alvar was a contemporary of Dantivarman who lived from A.D. 779 to A.D. 830.

³ Here again, Raghava Aiyangar and Gopinatha Rao differ and respectively fix Periyalvar's age as the 8th and 9th century A. D.

⁴ There is obviously some confusion here in the Koyil Olugu. Another edition by Arangasami Mudaliar, printed

renovated the temple and restored it to its pristine glory. In the case of this king, also, we are unable to decide his date as he is referred to only as *Kili* (Parrot) Chola, based probably on the above anecdote.

The next king who made a number of important additions to the temple was Raja Mahendra Chola, after whom one of the streets around the temple is still named. The information available about this king is also scanty.

The next anecdote in the book describes how Lord Ranganatha came to be known as Ramya Jāmata (in Sanskrit) and Alagiya Manavala Perumal (in Tamil). A king of the Chola dynasty by name Nanda Chola, was reigning at Nichulapuri or Uraiyur near Trichinopoly and was childless for a long time. As a result of his devotion to Lord Ranganatha and through His grace, he found a female child in a lotus pond and brought her up under the name of Kamalavalli. When the girl came of age, she persisted in being wedded to Lord Ranganatha alone and Nanda Chola, knowing her heart, escorted her with the paraphernalia of a bride to Sri Rangan where she found eternal union with her Lord. After thus offering his adopted daughter to the Lord, the Chola king decided to spend all his wealth in making additions to the temple and had many gopuras, mantapas and flower gardens constructed.

Kulasekhara Perumal, the next king to do *kainkarya* to the temple, is stated to have reigned over the Chera, Chola and Pandya kingdoms with capitals at Uraiyur, Madura and Kolli. His reign is stated to have taken place in the 50th year of the Kali Era; but this is taken as the Salivahana Saka, the period corresponds to the second century of the Christian Era. This Kulasekhara is stated to have married his daughter Chera Kulavalli an *amsa* of Nila (one of the consorts of Vishnu), to Lord Ranganatha and donated his entire wealth to the temple. In a verse quoted in the book, he is referred to as 'Kudal Vazh' or a resident of Madura.

The book then takes us on to the 5th century A. D. during which a king of Bengal came to Srirangam with great wealth and offered it to Lord Ranganatha. It was however, not accepted and the disappointed king left the riches outside the temple gate so a number of guards and Brahmins in his country. The Brahmins so left pleased Lord Ranganatha with their Dn and got the offering accepted at last, at which this incident took place called 'Arya Bhatta gate'.

CHAPTER 2.

THE SERVICES OF TIRUMANGAI ALVAR

After thus tracing the early history of the Srirangam Temple the Koyil Olugu next describes the life of Tirumangai Alvar after he settled down at Srirangam and his services to the shrine and the Tamil Prabandha. It is well-known that this Alvar is considered to be the last of the Alvars chronologically and if the years furnished in the book are taken as of the Salivahana Saka, his year of birth would appear to be 476 A. D. and the year in which he took up residence at Srirangam 523 A.D. Some works mention the Alvar as a contemporary of the Pallava ruler Narasimha Varman I of Kanchi (A. D. 625—645)².

The book records that it was Tirumangai Alvar who pleaded with Lord Ranganatha and obtained, for the Tiruvaymozhi of Sri Sathakopa (Nammalvar), equal status with the Vedas. It was during the Kartigai festival one year that Tirumangai sang, divinely before the Lord his Tiru-nedundandagam and other prabandhas in the Deva Gana style of music and pleased Hina so much that his request that Saint Sathakopa's Tiruvaymozhi should be recited along with the Vedas during the Adhyayanotsava in the month of Margazhi was granted immediately. The episode has been described in great detail in the Kaliyan Arulpadu of Periyavaccan Pillai, a full length biography of Tirumangai Alvar. A very touching anecdote in this connection has been recorded in the Koyil Olugu. The Lord is stated to have been so pleased with the music of the Alvar that he ordered that the oil used for anointing Him, should be sent to the Alvar for being rubbed on his neck to relieve the strain. During the next Adhyayanotsava the Tiruvaymozhi of Saint Sathakopa was recited at the temple after the Veda Parayana and the name of 'Nammalvar' was conferred by the Lord on the foremost of the Alvars, whose icon was also installed on the same seat with Him for the occasion.

Tirumangai then had extensive walls, gopuras etc., constructed around the temple and when once the consecrated flower garden of Tondaradippodi Alvar came in the way, he ordered that the wall should be built around it and not across it. Both the Alvars were probably contemporaries although Tondaradippodi, whose year of birth is roughly 420 A.D., must have been far older than Tirumangai. The above episode is stated to have brought the two Alvars together and Tondaradippodi greatly appreciated the Kainkarya which the latter was doing, for his Lord. The Dasavatara temple was also built by Tirumangai and one of the streets in Srirangam is still called 'Ali Nadan Veeti.'

A number of kings who had additional structures built around the temple are then mentioned and the most important of them was Sundara Pandya, who is stated to have spent an enormous sum of ' money for the purpose. He also endowed the temple with costly jewels studded with gems and pearls and vessels made of gold and silver. The monarch who must have been one of the Pandya kings of Madura, appears to have ruled over the Chera and Chola kingdoms also. Another famous king who had many improvements effected to the temple was Kulottunga Chola.

² Pandit M. Raghava Aiyangar holds the view that the Alvar lived during the 7th Century. T.A. Gopinath Rao however fixes Tirumangai's age as the first half of the 9th Century, arguing that the Alvar was a contemporary of Dantivarman who lived from A.D. 779 to A.D. 830.

Although not in chronological sequence, the book describes at this stage the endowments made by King Vallabha Deva, disciple of Periyalvar. It records that when the Alvar was escorting Andal from Sri villiputtur to Srirangam with a view to enabling her to attain union with her Lord, Vallabha Deva sent his retinue along, with them and after Andal attained eternal union with Lord Ranganatha, had a temple constructed for her at Srirangam. This Vallabha Deva was a Pandyan king ruling at Madura and had the famous Chelva Nambi as his minister. The story of how the king, at the instance of his minister, called for a conference of Pandits to decide '*Para Tattva*' and how Periyalvar, solely by the grace of the Lord at Srivilliputtur, established that Narayana was the Supreme Lord, is known to every Vaishnavite. The period of the king as furnished in the Koyil Olugu corresponds to the second century A. D.³

The temple, after having thus passed through its balmy days from the time of Dharma Varma to the period of the Cholas, had troublesome days ahead. The Muslim king, who was ruling at Delhi invaded the South and after vanquishing King, Pratapa-rudra, raided Hindu temples, desecrated them and took away with him a large number of icons to his capital. When the armies of the Sultan surrounded the temple and tried to enter it through the northern gate, one, Panju Kondan gave them a brave battle, although he was soon outnumbered and overpowered. The marauders then entered the Sanctum Sanctorum and carried away the icons of Sri Alagiya Manavala and Chera Kula Valli. When they departed, a lady devotee of Sri Manavala, belonging to Karambanur, decided to accompany them under disguise with a view to ascertaining where the icons were being taken. She followed the Muslims to Tirunayanapuram (Melkote) where she witnessed their removing the icon of Sri Ramapriya from the shrine. On arrival at Delhi,⁴ she found that the daughter of the Sultan was keeping the icon of Sri Alagiya Manavala in her chamber and returning to Srirangam, she reported the matter to the temple authorities. Her services were greatly appreciated by the Lord and the title of ' Pin Todarnda Valli ' was conferred on her.

On hearing, her report, the devotees at Srirangam decided to proceed to Delhi and recover the icons from the Sultan. Accordingly, 60 Vaishnavites proceeded to Delhi guided by the lady devotee and on reaching there, succeeded in getting a promise from the Sultan that the icons would be returned. It was however no easy task for them to get the icon of Alagiya Manavala from the Sultani and finally they had to remove it from her chamber while she was asleep and journey throughout the night to cover a safe distance. The next morning the Sultani, unable to bear the pangs of separation from her Lord, started in pursuit after the Srirangam party. The Vaishnavites, who were about to be overtaken near the Tirumalai hills, decided to disperse and a family of three Kodavars was deputed to take the icon up the hills while the rest returned to Srirangam, The Mahomedan pursuers found, when they reached Srirangam, that the icon was not there and the daughter of the Sultan breathed her last when she learnt that the image was irrecoverable.

The troops set out again in search of the icon and reached the vicinity of the Tirumalai hills. The three Kodavars who were hiding there with the icon found their position insecure and decided to climb down the valley with the Vighraha. The eldest of them offered to make the

³ Here again, Raghava Aiyangar and Gopinatha Rao differ and respectively fix Periyalvar's age as the 8th and 9th century A. D.

⁴ There is obviously some confusion here in the Koyil Olugu. Another edition by Arangasami Mudaliar, printed at the Umapati Guruprakasa Press, Royapettah (1909) retains the Perumal at Candragiri till He is taken to Gingee by Goppana Udaiyar, who finally establishes the God at Srirangam in 1371 A. D.

supreme sacrifice in the cause of the Lord and tying, himself with the icon with creepers, rolled down the slope till he reached the bottom. When the other two reached the spot, they found the icon safe by the side of the mangled remains of the elder Kodavar. They cremated him according to rites and were guarding the icon when, by the passage of time, one of them died leaving the survivor to guard the icon on the northern slope of the hills. The Mahomedan troops returned to Delhi empty-handed.

After the Muslim invasion was over, the Chola king of the time ordered for a search to be made for the lost icons and the three missing Kodavars but there was no trace of them. The temple was reopened for worship with the available Vighrahas. After nearly sixty years two hunters on the Tirumalai hills came across a strange looking figure of eighty years of age worshipping a beautiful icon in the heart of the dense forest. The surviving Kodavar, fearing that his end might come soon, requested them to inform the Chandragiri king, of the existence of the icon there and in due course, he and Alagiya Manavala were taken to Srirangam. By this time, the older generation had passed away and none was able to identify either the Kodavar or the image. A touching incident is narrated here in which a ninety year old, blind temple washerman is stated to have identified the vighraha by the smell of the water in which the icon's holy vestures were washed. The icon was then re-installed with all ceremony and the temple renovated by Rajendra Chola. The devoted washerman was given the title of 'Irankolli'.

CHAPTER 3.

NATHAMUNI AND ALAVANDAR

We now get a few interesting details from the life of Sri Nathamuni, whom Yamunacharya reverently refers to as grandfather '*pitamaha*' in his Stotraratna. So far as Srivaishnavism is concerned, Sri Nathamuni was a '*pitamaha*' from more points of view than one. It was he who unearthed and collected the pasurams of all the Alvars and Andal, which had been practically forgotten and lost to the world at his time and set them to music, thereby rendering to the Divya Prabandha⁵ the service which Nambi Andar Nambi did for the Tevaram of the Saivite Saints. It was he who brought into force again the system of regular recitation of the sacred texts during festivals in the Srirangam temple as the procedure introduced by Tirumangai Alvar had by then fallen into desuetude. In addition, he was the founder of the school of philosophy, the doctrines of which were later developed by his grandson, Yamunacharya and were finally systematized and expounded by Ramanuja as the Visishtadvaita Siddhanta.

The Koyil Olugu records that, with the passage of time, the system introduced by Tirumangai Alvar, under which the icon of Sri Nammalvar was being brought to Srirangam every year for the Recitation Festival (*Adhyayana Utsava*) and a recitation of the Tiruvoymozhi was being made along with the chanting of the Vedas (Veda Parayana), came to be completely discontinued. It was at this stage that Sri Nathamuni was born at Mannargudi and it is noteworthy that his year of birth has been estimated as 823 A. D. which is a highly probable date. He was perhaps a descendant of the early Vaishnava immigrants from the banks of the Jumna who carried the Bhagavata or Pancharatra cult to the south and was an erudite scholar, devotee and mystic. During his pilgrimages, he once arrived at the holy town of Kumbakonam and there heard certain Brahmins from the west recite a decad of verses on the deity commencing with the word '*Aravamude*' and concluding with '*these ten out of a thousand composed by Sathakopa of Kuruhoor.*' (Some accounts such as the Guruparampara have it that this incident took place at Mannargudi itself). Nathamuni, who was thrilled by the verses, made anxious enquiries of them if they knew the rest of the verses and was sorely disappointed to learn that they knew only the ten they recited. He then proceeded to Alvar Tirunagari, the birthplace of Sri Nammalvar, and sought the advice of Parankusa Nambi who belonged to the school of Sri Madhurakavi Alvar. (Some works without any concern for chronology, state that Nathamuni contacted Madhurakavi himself or Parankusa Dasa, his disciple but the Koyil Olugu clearly mentions that this Parankusa Nambi belonged to the sishya parampara of Madhurakavi⁶. On his advice, Nathamuni repeated twelve thousand times the "*Kanni nun siruttambu*" of Madhurakavi Alvar and contacting Nammalvar in 'yoga meditation, obtained from him the Tiruvoymozhi. He must have later collected from other sources the rest of the pasurams of the Divya Prabandha. Settling down at Srirangam, he

⁵ A full length article on this subject by the present writer, published under the caption "The Music of the Divya Prabandha" in Vol. II — No. 19 of T. T. Devasthanams Bulletin will be found in Appendix A

⁶ Gopinatha Rao, however, maintains, in his Sri Subrahmanya Ayyar Lectures on the History of Sri Vaiṣṇavas that Nammalvar lived during the first half of the 9th century and wrote his memorable Tiruvoymozhi. In support of this he quotes Divyasuri carita of Garudavahana Pandita - the oldest extant work on the hierarchy of the Srivaishnavas, which distinctly states that Namamuni obtained the Prabandha directly from Sathakopa, through the influence of Madhurakavi

traced the history of the recitation of the Prabandha in the temple and was greatly overjoyed to hear of the services rendered in that direction by the great Tirumangai Mannan. Nathamuni immediately addressed himself to a revival of the Prabandha recitation in the temple and he and his disciples devoted their entire attention to the propagation of the holy *pasurams*. Nathamuni emphasized that a recital of the Prabandha was as important to a Vaishnavite *mumukshu* as a study of the Veda, Vedanta, Itihasa and Purana was for a devout Brahmin. Following the example set by the illustrious Alvar who used to sing, the verses in the Devagana style of music, Nathamuni decided to set the entire Prabandha to that style and completed the task with the assistance of his two nephews, Kizhai Ahattalvar and Melai Ahattalvar. After entrusting to them the responsibility of continuing his labour of love, the Acarya is stated to have returned to Mannargudi, his place of birth.

The two nephews of Sri Nathamuni were faithfully keeping up the tradition and in course of time the Lord was pleased to confer on them the titles of '*Manavalapperumal Arayar*' and '*Nada Vinoda Arayar*'. The book explains that the Lord conferred these titles in His capacity as "*Gayaka Sarva bhauma*", a surprisingly modern expression.

Uyyakkondar (Pundarikaksha) and Manakkal Nambi (Rama Misra) who were the disciples of Nathamuni and next to him in spiritual succession, were then carrying on the tradition of their Acarya both as regards the Darsana (Religion) and the recital of the Prabandha. During their time a king from Orissa invaded the South and the devotees at Srirangam, who did not want the earlier incidents to be repeated, removed Alagiya Manavala Perumal to Tirumalirunjolai (Alagar Koyil) and kept the icon there for a year. In this interval, a number of enemies of the temple managed to make some unwanted changes in the mode of worship and brought a large number of non-Vaishnavites to settle down at Srirangam. It was at this time that Manakkal Nambi succeeded in converting Yamunacharya (Alavandar), who was leading a life of luxury, into the correct path and making him a devotee of Sri Ranganatha. Alavandar renounced all his riches, settled down at Srirangam and commenced propagating the Siddhanta by writing his famous works like the Agama Pramanya. He also defeated in argument the protagonists of other religions and paved the way for the later Acaryas to establish Visishtadwaita on a secure footing.

Alvar Tiruvarangap-perumal Arayar was the next Acharya who made valuable contributions to the musical setting of the Prabandha (Some accounts mention him as the eldest of the four sons of Alavandar). He; was a great musician himself and is stated to have enacted the lilas of Alagiya Manavala in the shape of dramas, probably of the Yaksha Gana type. The Lord conferred on him the title of '*Koyil Udaya Perumal Arayar*.' The work records that the Arayar was an expert in synching the Prabandha with Abhinaya and it is well-known that later when he was deputed to proceed to Kanchipuram to bring, Ramanuja to Srirangam, he pleased Lord Varadaraja with his music and obtained His divine permission to do so.

CHAPTER 4.

THE ADVENT OF RAMANUJA

No work that deals with, the history of the Srirangam temple can claim to do justice to the theme unless it describes in detail the invaluable services rendered by Sri Ramanuja who spent veritably a lifetime in putting the affairs of the temple in order. Ramanuja's name is inseparable from that of Srirangam. As recorded by himself in his Saranagati Gadya, he was blessed by Lord Ranganatha Himself with the words "*atraiva śrīraṅge sukhamāsva*". It is perhaps not so well-known that he was not only the *nirvāhaka* of the new Darsana but also was for many, many years an active manager of the Srirangam temple. Most appropriately, therefore, nearly 70 pages of the Koyil Olugu, forming more than half its size, are devoted to a full-length description of the numerous improvements effected by Ramanuja in the daily conduct of the temple affairs and incidentally narrate a number of interesting incidents in his life.

The work first traces in an admirable manner the early life of Ramanuja in a few sentences. Towards the end of his life, Alavandar became anxious regarding, a suitable successor for himself not only for managing the temple but also for propagating, the Siddhanta, when he heard of the Visishtadvaita leanings of Ramanuja who was then studying under the Advaitin, Yadavaprakasa.

The venerable Acarya undertook a journey to Kanchipuram and personally satisfied himself about the suitability of Ramanuja to succeed him and, not wishing to disturb the young man's studies, returned to Srirangam after praying to Lord Varadaraja that Ramanuja should be spared to lead the new movement. When he later heard of the differences between Yadavaprakasa and Ramanuja in the interpretation of certain Upanishadic texts resulting in the termination of the latter's studies, he thought that it was the proper time for converting Ramanuja and commissioned his disciple Periya Nambi to proceed to Kanchipuram and achieve the task. According to the Koyil Olugu, Alavandar specially composed his Stotratna for the occasion in praise of Lord Varadaraja and sent it through Nambi. When Periya Nambi recited this masterpiece of a Stotra at the shrine at Kanchi, Ramanuja was so enchanted by its beauty that he immediately expressed a desire to accompany Nambi to Srirangam to pay his respects to its author. Unfortunately for Ramanuja, Alavandar had passed away just when he and Nambi reached the outskirts of Srirangam and he had to return to Kanchipuram after taking a vow that, with the grace of God, he would fulfill the three desires dearest to Alavandar's heart and which were not fulfilled in that Acharya's life-time. On the advice of Tirukkacci Nambi, one of the disciples of Alavandar, Ramanuja decided to have Periya Nambi as his Guru and again started for Srirangam. By a coincidence, he met the Nambi at Madurantakam and both returned to Kanchi where Ramanuja underwent the preliminary studies in Visishtadvaita under Nambi. After the return of Periya Nambi to Srirangam after a few months, Ramanuja entered the Sanyasa Ashrama and the Vaishnavites of Srirangam decided to make him the head of their community and deputed Tiruvarangapperumal Arayar to invite him to Srirangam. The Arayar proceeded to Kanchi and pleasing Lord Varadaraja with his music, got his permission to take Ramanuja with him. Ramanuja arrived at Srirangam on the Suddha Purnami day of the Vaikasi month, in the year Vikrama (Salivahana Saka) and was received with great *eclat* by the Vaishnavites. Led by Periya Nambi, Ramanuja had the seva of Sri Ranganatha for the first time and the Lord, whom the

Acarya was to serve for many years to come, blessed him with the title of 'Udayavar' and ordered that he should be put up in the Cheran Mutt.

Ramanuja lost no time in taking, over the management of the temple affairs and being, himself in charge of the important items, appointed Kuratalvan to assist him in spreading the Siddhanta and Mudali Andan (Dasarathi) to assist him in carrying on the temple work. He however found that it was no easy task to clear the Augean stable as, due to the passage of time, the affairs of the temple had got into a most unsatisfactory state. Ramanuja's endeavours to introduce some sort of an order in the temple gave a rude jolt to many of the vested interests who had got entrenched there and he had to face severe opposition from them. The temple servants decided to get rid of him and attempted to poison him. Ramanuja was compelled to leave Srirangam and live at Tiruvellarai for a period of two years.

He installed Alagiya Manavala there, had a lake constructed and was carrying on his life's mission from there. After two years, the penitent Vaishnavite community invited him back to Srirangam and this time Ramanuja got a few capable disciples who were of great assistance to him in managing the temple affairs. He renovated the shrine of Dhanvantari and also restored the Pancharatra system of worship by replacing the Vaikhanasa temple priests. He also effected a large number of improvements in the daily routine of the temple, many of which are followed even to this day.

Ramanuja's fame and influence were gradually increasing and the only important person in Srirangam who did not care to join his camp was Periya Koyil Nambi, otherwise known as Sri Rangamrita Kavi. He was a very learned and influential man, the court Pandit of several crowned heads and had the sole monopoly for performing religious ceremonies and reading the Puranas at the temple. Ramanuja wanted to get rid of him and was waiting for an opportunity when Lord Ranganatha appeared in his dream and told him that the Nambi was a bhakta of His and should be shown every consideration.

Somewhat piqued at this, Ramanuja decided to go back to Kanchi when his disciple Kurattalvan assured him that Sri Rangamrita would soon be prevailed upon to become his camp follower. Only a scholar and poet of the stamp of Alvan could have achieved the task of converting an equally eminent and erudite person like Rangamrita, who, in due course, accepted Ramanuja's leadership and became his disciple. Ramanuja was highly pleased with this and in admiration of his new disciple's poetic gifts, named him 'Amudan'. He was later known as Tiruvarangattu Amudanar. The faithful Alvan also managed in course of time to persuade Amudanar to part with his monopolies in the temple and this gave Ramanuja a free hand in introducing further reforms in the temple. The Koyil Olugu here enumerates in great detail a series of reforms introduced by Ramanuja and a perusal of these in the original will be found interesting by both Vaishnavites and others. The thoroughness, efficiency and zeal with which Ramanuja carried out the reforms cannot but evoke the admiration of even modern administrators. He made the fullest use of his talented disciples whose number was now increasing day by day. He had an occasion to review the recital of the Prabandha in the temple. One year, the icon of Sri Nammalvar could not be brought to Srirangam for the Adhyayana Utsava due to unexpected circumstances and Ramanuja had another icon made and installed in time for the occasion. The icons of the other Alvars and that of Nathamuni were also installed at the same time. Ramanuja completely revised the arrangements for the conduct of the Adhyayana Utsava and introduced an improved method for the recital of the Tamil Prabandha on the occasion.

CHAPTER 5.

RAMANUJA'S SERVICES TO VISISHTADVAITA

Ramanuja was the very incarnation of compassion and he was far from being happy about Kurattalvan depriving Amudanar of his hereditary rights of Paurohitya and the reading of the Puranas in the temple. Although Alvan was carrying on both the services in a most efficient and selfless manner, Ramanuja felt that the many-sided talents of Amudanar were going to waste, and could be harnessed with advantage in the cause of Vaishnavism. He, therefore, decided that Amudanar should take a leading part in the recitation of the Prabandha in the temple and borrowing the manuscript of the *Iyarpa* from Tiru varangap-perumal Arayar, he deputed Amudanar to be in sole charge of its recitation. The latter readily agreed and in course of time composed, out of spontaneous reverence and admiration for Ramanuja, his famous centum 'Ramanuja Nootrandadi' otherwise known as 'Prapanna Gayatri.'

Lord Ranganatha Himself was so pleased with Amudanar's composition that during the Saptavarana festival, He commanded that all musical instruments should be stopped and commanded that the Nootrandadi be recited in public in the presence of Ramanuja and the entire Srivaishnava community. Ramanuja, after convincing himself that it was not an exaggerated panegyric on himself, gave his consent for its inclusion as a part of the *Iyarpa*.

While he was thus managing efficiently all the affairs of the temple on the one hand, Ramanuja was also making, on the other hand progress in his other mission in life, the systematization and consolidation of his Visishtadvaita philosophy. With infinite patience, he underwent a course of study under each of the five prominent disciples of Alavandar such as Tirukkoshtiyur Nambi and Tirumalai Andan. After thus equipping himself for the task fully he wrote, with the erudite and devoted Kurattalvan as his scribe, commentaries on the Brahma Sutras and the Gita. He also wrote the Vedartha Sangraha and other works and decided that he should tour round India to obtain, for his works, the recognition they deserved from Scholars of the other parts of the vast subcontinent. He selected Alvan as his companion and entrusted the management of the temple to Mudali Andan (Dasarathi). He invoked the Lord's blessings for his venture and receiving His benediction in full Ramanuja set out on his Digvijaya.

The Koyil Olugu, being a work dealing with the history of the Srirangam furnishes at this stage a very elaborate description of the system of worship evolved by Ramanuja and entrusted to Mudali Andan for execution. The organisation was so meticulous that the various departments of the Temple functioned like clockwork with an efficiency that cannot but evoke the admiration of modern administrators. A perusal of the original text with the details of worship will no doubt be highly interesting to students of Srivaishnavism and temple worship and a summary of them is furnished below:

1. A sand glass⁷ was kept at a particular place in the temple to indicate the time and temple servants had instructions to the hour of the day from time to time to ensure that the various services were performed punctually.
2. A number of animals and birds such as elephants, horses, doves, deer, peacocks and parrots were being maintained in the temple and a special department looked after their maintenance.

⁷ It was probably a clepsydra, a clock worked by the flow of water.

3. There were separate departments for looking after repairs to the temple, for procuring the daily needs of flowers, vegetables, fruits and perfumes and for preserving the vestments, uniform, etc.
4. A gośāla for the temple cows was opened at Cholanganallur and five villages were converted into pasture lands for them. Ramanuja used to visit the gośāla frequently and stay there for several days and for his worship during such occasions, he had the icons of Krishna and Ranganatha installed there.
5. Among the scholars who recited the Vedas and the Prabandha during the temple service were luminaries like Garuda Vahana Pandita, Periya Nambi, Kurattalvan, Amudanar, Achan Pillai and Nadadur Ammal.
6. Among the texts recited were Sriranga Mahatmyam, the Sutras of Asvalayana, Apasthamba, and Bodhayana, Mimamsa and Vedanta Sutras, Vyakarana, the Stotra Ratna of Alavandar and the Bhashyas and the Gadya Traya of Ramanuja.
7. Many of the systems introduced at the time were being continued intact for two hundred years after Mudali Andan.

Ramanuja successfully conducted his Digvijaya, visiting most of the religious centres in the west, north and east, engaging religious opponents in argument and converting large numbers of them into Sri Vaishnavites. Several crowned heads became his disciples and he established a number of mutts in North India. His interpretation of Upanishadic texts was so much appreciated in Kashmir that the title of 'Bhāṣyakāra' was conferred on him by the famous Sarada Pitham. During his visit to Tirumāḷirunjolai in the South, he fulfilled a desire which, according to tradition, Sri Andal cherished regarding Lord Azhagar and this secured for him the appellation of 'Koyil Annan.' When he returned to Srirangam after his all-India tour, the entire Vaishnavite community gathered together and received him with great ovation. Lord Ranganātha indicated His divine approval and appreciation of the services rendered by Ramanuja in the cause of Vaiṣṇavism and commanded that he henceforth reside only at Srirangam. The Olugu records that Ramanuja had completed the Sri Bhashya prepared by him sent it to the Sarada Pitham through Nadadur Ammal.

We now have an account of how Ramanuja fulfilled the last of the three desires of Yāmunācārya which he undertook to fulfil, His disciple Alvan, who was once living in great luxury, had renounced everything and hoping to join his master and was living by begging (uñcāvṛtti). Due to heavy rain on a particular day Alvan could not go for his daily begging round and so had retired for the night without partaking of a meal. The night *arādhana* was going on in the temple and his wife Andal thought in her mind that it was very unkind on the part of Lord to allow a devotee like her husband to starve for want of food. Immediately, a Vaiṣṇava turned up at their house with prasādam from the temple and Alvan, not knowing the unbecoming thoughts of his wife, partook a little portion and shared it with her. By divine will, two sons were born to Andal some time after and Ramanuja, overjoyed at the news - visited Alvan's residence with Embar on the twelfth day and named one of the two boys as Parasara and the other child was named Sri Rama after the father of Alvan. It is known that as a result of this personal *kriṣa-kaṭākṣa* of Ramanuja, Parasara Bhatta became a child prodigy and a precocious lad and although not blessed with long life, still succeeded Ramanuja as the head of the Vaiṣṇava community and occupied that position with considerable distinction. Ramanuja lived in this manner for 60 years at Srirangam, which had by now become a veritable Rome for Sri Vaishnavas. The community consisted of seven hundred jiyars, twelve thousand ekangis, seventy four acarya purushas (*simhāsanādhipatis*) and innumerable

ordinary Vaishnavas, all drawing their inspiration from Rāmānuja and looking to him for guidance in their conduct, temporal and spiritual.



CHAPTER 6.

LATER LIFE OF RAMANUJA

Troublesome days were in store for Rāmānuja. The Chola king, at the time, who professed the Saiva faith, turned into a bigot and began persecuting the Vaishnavites in many ways even going to the extent of demolishing their temples. His son pointed out to him that it was futile attempting to destroy Vaishnavism by demolishing temple walls as the fault was broad-based on two indestructible walls viz. the Tiruvaymozhi and the Ramayana but his advice was not heeded by the King. (According to Vincent Smith, the Chola king who was hostile to Ramanuja was Adhirajendra. The celebrated historian opines that Adhirajendra was assassinated by Rājendra Kulottunga I who was not his son.) The Chola Kings was ill-advised by his minister, who was strangely enough a Vaishnava himself, that Rāmānuja should be made to accept the superiority of the Saivite religion and sent a party of soldiers to bring the sage before him. When this news reached Ramanuja, he requested Periya Nambi to protect the temple from any possible danger and at the pressure of his disciples, agreed to Kurattalvan impersonating, him and proceeding to Gangai Konda Cholapuram in the garb of a sanyasin. Periya Nambi also followed Alvan to the capital of the bigoted Chola.

Ramanuja was prevailed upon to put on white robes and escape in the direction of Mysore. He prayed to Lord Ranganatha that He should protect Himself with His own “śakti” (a sentiment faithfully echoed by Vedanta Desika in his “Abhīstava”) and proceeded westwards along with Mudali Andan and others. The king's troops pursued the party unsuccessfully for some distance but Ramanuja and his followers managed to reach the Mysore border safely. The territory was then being ruled by the Hoysala king Bittideva or Bittiga who was a zealous Jain by religion. Ramanuja, with the assistance of Mudali Andan, converted a large number of Jains into Vaishnavites and in the end, succeeded in converting the king himself, whom he renamed -as Vishnu vardhana. With royal support, he renovated the Yadavadri temples and renamed the place as “Tiru-nārāyaṇa-puram.” Learning, that the icon of Ramapriya had been carried away to Delhi during an earlier Muslim invasion, the saint proceeded thither, brought the icon back to Yadavadri and installed it in its original place. He then improved the system of worship at the temple and brought it on a par with Srirangam.

Kurattalvan and Periya Nambi, who were produced before the Chola king, tried their best to convince him that they had no enmity with any other religion and that their faith was as authoritative as Saivism; but the intransigent Chola forced Alvan to write the words “*śivāt parataram nāsti*” Alvan took the threat very lightly and after writing the words, as desired by the king, added “*dronam asti tataḥ param*” above them, treating the words Siva and Drona as measures. The incensed Chola ordered that the eyes of both the Vaishnavites should be gouged out. The cruel punishment was first inflicted on the venerable Periya Nambi who, unable to bear the ordeal, passed away soon after. Alvan blinded his own eyes by applying a kind of camphor to them, and with the help of a Sri vaishnavite from Madurantakam, cremated Nambi according to the śāstras and returned to Srirangam. There, to his utter horror, he found the temple closed to the followers of Ramanuja and unable to stay in that atmosphere even for a minute, he repaired to Tirumaliruñjola with his wife and infant sons and took up his abode there.

The Koyil Olugu states that when the sad fate that befell his guru Periya Nambi and his affectionate disciple Alvan was conveyed to Ramanuja, his mental anguish was so great that despite his saintly nature, he uttered a curse on the heartless Chola king. Soon after, the king developed a carbuncle on his neck and died a painful death. His successor Kulottunga II, deeply repenting the unjust deeds of Adhirajendra, visited the Srirangam temple and deciding to restore it back to Ramanuja, sent one Maruti Andan to Mysore to invite the Acarya to return to Srirangam. Ramanuja took leave of his important disciples at Tirunarayanapuram, whose number had gone up to fifty-two, visited Tirumalai on his way and installed Lord Govindaraja at the foot of the hill. He then proceeded straight to Tirumalirunjolai to console Alvan and take him also to Srirangam. On Ramanuja's return to Srirangam Kulottunga Chola personally welcomed him back and under instructions from Rāmānuja handed over the temple to Mudali Andan with due ceremony. Ramanuja had had his instructions engraved at the Arya Bhatta gate in the form of an inscription. All his disciples who had to leave Srirangam by the adverse circumstances, rejoined him and continued their usual service in the temple.

According to the Koyil Olugu, Ramanuja lived for well nigh over a hundred years of life, and then one day he reflected deeply and felt that his life's mission was fast coming to an end. He posed for a sculptor Rāmānujadāsan and, embracing the icon had it installed at his birth-place Sriperumputhur by Kandadai Andan. He appointed Parasara Bhattar as his successor and then shed his mortal coil, after having actively served humanity in general and Srivaishnavism in particular for nearly a century. An interesting description of the origin of the seven names of Rāmānuja is found in the work at the end of the saint's life.

1. Ilayazhvar — the name given by his uncle Tirumalai Nambi on the twelfth day after his birth.
2. Rāmānuja — the name conferred by Lord Varadaraja after he became a Sanyasin.
3. Udayavar — the name given by Lord Ranganatha when Ramanuja took up his residence at Srirangam.
4. Koyil Annan — a title which he obtained at Tirumalirunjolai for fulfilling a desire of Sri Andal regarding Lord Azhagar.
5. Emberumanar — the name conferred by Tirukkoshtiyur Nambi when he found that Ramanuja was the very embodiment of compassion.
6. Bhāṣyakāra — the appellation conferred by the Sarada Pitham at Kashmir for his Commentary on the Brahma Sutras.
7. Yatirāja — the title earned by himself by his unparalleled austerity as a Sanyasin for over ninety years.

CHAPTER 7.

THE SUCCESSORS OF RAMANUJA

Thus ended the glorious life of Rāmānuja and in accordance with his parting command, Parasara Bhatta, son of Kurattalvan succeeded him as the head of the Srivaishnava community. As already mentioned, this Acarya was one of the brightest stars in the firmament of Srivaishnavism and from a boy prodigy, had developed into a precocious genius. The first task he had to undertake after succeeding Ramanuja was to beat in argument the famous Vedantin from western India (probably Mysore) whom Rāmānuja himself was anxious to bring into the Vaishnavite fold. With the blessings of the Lord, Bhatta proceeded to the town which was the Vedantin's stronghold and vanquished him with effortless debate. The Vedantin renounced the world and became his disciple and following Bhattar to Srirangam and took up residence there under the name of Nanjiyar. The Koil Olugu states here that during this period the temple wall adjoining the Trivikraman Veethi, which was in bad repairs, collapsed and was rebuilt by Vira Sundara Brahma Raya.⁸ Bhatta composed his famous poems and wrote his commentaries on the Vishnu Sahasranama and the Kaisiki Purana. The latter work was publicly accepted by the Lord on a Kaisiki Dvadasi day in the month of Kartikai and Bhatta himself was called to heaven soon after the dedication of his work. After his passing, away, his brother Veda Vyasa Bhatta, also known as Sri Ramappillai, was managing the Paurohitya and the reading of the Puranas in the temple.

Nanjiyar was the next apostolic successor to Bhatta. During his time, one of the priests in the temple was afflicted with an incurable disease and became unfit for service within the holy precincts. Andal, the mother of Parasara Bhatta, took pity on the suffering priest and requested Kura Narayana Jeeyar to cure him with the aid of his unique powers. This old and venerable Jeeyar was the disciple of Kurattalvan when the latter was residing at Tirumalirunjolai and was an expert in Mantra Śāstra. He would not, however, make use of his powers except in the service of the Lord and at the bidding of Andal, he composed a centum of verses called the 'Sudarsana Satakam' and by its incantation, restored the ailing priest to health. (This stotra is a grand piece of literary effort with a magnificent sound effect and it is noteworthy that even the great Vedanta Desika was influenced by it when he composed his 'Garuda Panchasat').

A very moving anecdote is narrated here which proves that the Lord is ever anxious to grant redemption to His devotees who enter the path of evil and take them back into the fold. By a cruel stroke of fate, one of the Arayars in the temple was attracted to things sensual and in spite of the best endeavours of the community to prevent him from disgracing himself, went and lived in a cheri with an untouchable woman. Once when the Lord was resting in a mantapam near the cheri on His way to Kizhaiyur for a festival, the Arayar, who was ashamed to come out of his habitation, could not resist an urge to sing His praise and burst forth into song from the cheri. The Lord, out of compassion for the erring temple minstrel, commanded that he should be brought to His presence and despite unanimous protests from the

⁸ The Guruparampara provides further information regarding this incident. While building the wall, Vira Sundara, not following the example of Tirumangai Alvar, pulled down the house of Pillai Pillai Alvan. He also gave trouble to Bhattar, who, as a result, had to reside at Tirukkoshtiyur for some time.

Vaishnavite community, reformed him and got him restored to his former place. The Arayar was thenceforth known as *Varam Tarum Perumal Arayar*.⁹

Kura Narayana Jeeyar, the Mantrika, rendered many valuable services to the temple during this period. Prompted by a king then ruling at Srirangapatnam in Mysore, a sanyasi, who was an adept in black magic, made himself invisible through his art and entering the Srirangam temple with a view to removing the mula vigraha to Srirangapatnam, attempted to lift the icon from its pedestal by magical incantation. The public, in great consternation, sought the help of the Jeeyar who, by a clever trick, made the sanyasi visible but finding that he had supernatural powers, compromised with him by the offer of costly clothes and ornaments and got the icon installed in its original position. The Jeeyar, however, by another clever ruse got the sanyasi slain while he was on his way to Srirangapatnam and had the valuables restored to the temple.

On another occasion, when there was considerable opposition from the Saivites of Kizhairyur (Jambukesvaram), the Jeeyar vanquished them with the help of the Nrisimha Yantra. Once during the Boat Festival, the decorated boat on which the icon was being taken was about to be carried down-stream by a powerful current of the Kaveri when the Jeeyar again averted the accident by his extraordinary powers. He also carried out a number of improvements to the bank of the Kaveri to prevent the annual flooding of the temple when the river was in spate.

These services of the Jeeyar were greatly appreciated by the servants of the temple and others and they wanted to put him in charge of the entire temple management. Kandadai Tolappar, who was the hereditary trustee of the temple, did not agree to this. The temple servants, however, managed to get the Jeeyar appointed in the temple by influencing the sons of Tolappar, who were simple-hearted men. Later, due to a misunderstanding, with the king, Tolappar and his sons were forced to leave Srirangam and proceed to Kanchipuram and Tirumazhisai respectively and Kura Narayana Jeeyar got himself well established in the temple under the title 'Sri Ranga Narayana Jeeyar. This event marked the gradual elimination of the Kandadai family from the management of the temple affairs and the receiving of temple honours.

The Koyil Olugu now takes us to the 14th century A.D. and furnishes two very reliable dates. The first of these is 1327 A.D. which year it mentions as the one in which the Muhammadan invasion of the South took place. According to Vincent Smith, it was in this year that Dhora Samudra, the capital of the Hoysala kings of the Mysore country, was sacked by the Muslim invaders. The next date mentioned in the work is 1371 A. D., by which year Srirangam was completely cleared of its Muslim occupants and the icons were re-installed in their original shrines. In the North, the foundation of the Vijayanagar empire had been laid by Vidyanaya with Anegundi as the nucleus. Harihara II, who was the first independent sovereign of Vijayanagar, ascended the throne in 1379 and his dominion included Trichinopoly and Kanchipuram. In the Srirangam temple, one Sri Rangarayar was in charge as the fifth successor of Sri Ranga Narayana Jeeyar. Before describing the conditions then obtaining, we shall see how the Srirangam temple fared during Malik Kafur's invasion, as narrated in the Koyil Olugu.

⁹ Dr. V. Raghavan, Head of the Department of Sanskrit, "Madras University has composed a Sanskrit poem called *deva-vandi varadarāja* based on this anecdote as narrated to him by the late Srirangacharya, well-known Harikatha performer of Chidambaram. The temple minstrel's name, according to Dr. Raghavan, was Varadaraja. Dr. Raghavan says that the spell of the appeal which the Bhagavata's narration produced, never left him even after he had finished composing his poem on the salvation of the fallen Brahmin minstrel.

CHAPTER 8

THE SACK OF SRIRANGAM

It was after the year A.D. 1327 that news reached Srirangam that Muslim invaders under the leadership of Malik Kafur had advanced as far as Tondaimandalam (the districts near Madras). The local devotees cast lots to decide whether the icons should be kept at Srirangam or removed to safer places in the interior. The decision, unfortunately, was in favour of retaining the icons at Srirangam and even the annual festival was commenced and was being conducted in full swing. By this time, the Muslim hordes had passed Samayapuram and the Vaishnavites, realising their mistake too late, decided to adopt the best possible course under the circumstances. Under the leadership of Sri Rangaraya, they despatched southwards the icon of Alagiya Manavala, accompanied by Pillai Lokacharya and a few selected others and camouflaged the important shrines in the temple by closing their entrances with brick walls. Several icons were hidden inside the huge pillars of the temple. When the Muslim invaders entered the temple soon after, they found all the important icons missing, and enraged at this, they ordered a general massacre of all Vaishnavas. One account has it that no less than 12,003 Vaishnavites, including, Sudarsana Bhatta, the author of *Sruta Prakasika*, were put to death by the heartless marauders.¹⁰ When they were about to destroy the temple building, a devout devadasi, pretending to be intimate with their chieftain, diverted his iconoclastic zeal elsewhere and thereby saved the main temple. Another Vaishnavite called Singappiran, also managed to get into the commander's confidence and successfully dissuaded him from causing any major damage to the temple.

The party of devotees who proceeded southwards with the icon had a chequered career. They were first set upon by highwaymen and were relieved of all their valuables. They however managed to reach Jyotishkudi safely with the icons and here after a month's stay, the venerable Pillai Lokacharya passed away. The icon was then worshipped at Tirumalirunjolai for a year and was later taken to Kozhikode, to which refuge many icons from important shrines including that of Nammalvar, had been removed during that troublous period. After a year's stay at Kozhikode, the icons of Alagiya Manavala and Nammalvar were taken by the sea route to the Mysore coast and from there the latter icon alone was conveyed to Tirunarayana-puram and finally to Tirupati. The icon must have been kept and worshipped on the Tirumalai Hill for over 40 years for, Malik Kafur's invasion of the South took place roughly about 1327 A.D. and it was not until 1371 A.D. that Srirangam was completely freed from the Muslim occupation forces stationed there. By the latter year, Harihara and Bukka were firmly established at Anegundi and one of their vassals by name Goppanarya was ruling from the Gingee Fort. Goppana, who was a Brahmin, once went to Tirumalai to worship Lord Venkatesa and there saw the icons from Srirangam. After fully acquainting himself with the developments at Srirangam, he first removed the icons to Gingee, his headquarters, and then planned an attack on the Muslim forces at Srirangam. Aply assisted by the local Vaishnavites who provided the necessary espionage, Goppana recaptured Srirangam without much fighting, and in the month of Vaikasi of the year Paritapi (1371 A. D.) had the various icons re-installed in their original shrines. The Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Report narrates the incident as follows:

¹⁰ The incident is referred to in Tamil as "*pannirāyirum tirumuḍi tiruttiya kalāpam*."

In an article by Dr. E. Hultzsch on the "Ranganatha inscription of Saka 1293" published in Vol VI. of *Epigraphia Indica*, Goppana is reported to have taken the image of Alagiya-Manavala-Perumal back from Tirumala (Tirupati), where it was removed from Srirangam, when Trichinopoly was captured by the Muslims, and where it was safely preserved and worshipped for a long, time until it was transferred to Senji (Gingee) in the South Arcot District, and thence to Srirangam and there reconsecrated and re-installed in Saka 1293 by Goppana. Goppana is stated to have gone on a pilgrimage to Tirumala while he held charge of the Senji Province under Kampana II and there found " an additional bronze image " worshipped along with the image of Sri Venkatesvara. He enquired of the priests as to the cause of its existence and was informed that it was an image of Sri Ranganatha brought over from Srirangam for safe preservation during the Muslim invasion of the place. Being a devout adorer of Vishnu, he eagerly desired to restore the image to its original place: but seeing, that Srirangam was still in the hands of its Muslim conquerors, he proposed to take the image first to Senji, his capital town, and worship it there under his personal protection, until such time as when he could safely restore it to its own shrine in Srirangam on the expulsion of the aliens from the place. With the consent of the priests of the Tirumala temple, who looked after its worship so long, he transferred the image to Senji and, placing it in the Ranganatha shrine on the hill at Singavaram, a suburb of Senji, he had it duly adored until Saka 1293, when he finally carried it to Srirangam and reconsecrated it (Vide the late Mr. T. A. Gopinatha Rao's Introduction to " Madhura Vijayam" or " Vira Kamparaya Caritam " by Gangadevi, page 25).

It took 10 years for Kampana to defeat and drive the Mussalmans from Srirangam and the country round about Madura, after his conquest of Sambuvaraya and the occupation of Kanchi in Saka 1283. And therefore the resetting, up of the image in Srirangam by Goppana was only possible in Saka 1293 and until that date it must have been preserved at Senji for about two or three years after its removal from Tirumala. The Kilaka year corresponding to Saka 1290 being very near in time to the date of reinstallation at Srirangam in Saka 1293, it is almost certain that the Pregada's (Goppana's) presence at Tirumala was owing to this mission of transference of the image from Tirumala and that the Pregada was none other than Goppana, the Brahmana general of Kampana II and the Governor of Senji. It is a fanciful way of stating that Goppana first learnt of the preservation and worship at Tirumala of the bronze image of Alagiya Manavala-Perumal of Srirangam only on the occasion of his pilgrimage to Tirumala, while as a matter of fact, he, as a ruler, would have known it long before and predetermined its restoration in time. His pilgrimage itself would therefore have been primarily planned and undertaken with this avowed object of its transference from Tirumala to Senji. The tradition current in Tirupati respecting this Srirangam image agrees substantially with that noticed in article No. 33 of *Ep Ind Vol VI*, but adds a little touching detail regarding its preservation by a father and a son for nearly six months in a deep and narrow gorge near Chandragiri from its threatened desecration by the Muslims during its transference from Tirumala. The above record indicates the extent of sway that Kampana II held over the Dakkan from Tirumala or Venkatadri southwards."

Goppana had the happy incident inscribed on Dharma Varma's wall in the form of two Sanskrit verses which are seen even today in front of Sri Vishvaksena's shrine. The Slokas read as follows : —

svasti śrī bandhu priye śakābde (śakābde 1293)
 ānīyānīnīla śṛṅgadyutiracita jagad rañjanādañbanādreh
 ceñcyāmārādhyā kañcit samayam atha nihatyodvanuṣkān tuluṣkān |
 lakṣmī kṣmābhyām ubhābhyām saha nija nagare sthāpayan rañganātham

samyag varyām saparyām punarakṛta yahodarpaṇo gopañāryaḥ ||

viśveśam raṅgarājam vṛṣabhagiri taṭāt gopañakṣoṇī devo
nītvā vām rājadhānīm nija bala nihatotsikta tauluṣka sainyaḥ |
kṛtvā hrīraṅgabhūmim kṛta yuga sahitām te ca lakṣmī mahībhyām
samsthāpyāsyām sarojodbhava iva kurute sādhuçaryāsaparyām ||

After bringing Sri Ranganatha from Anjanadri (Tirumalai), which delights the world with its peaks covered with dark clouds, and worshipping Him for some time at Chenchi with Sri Devi and Bhu Devi, Goppanarya, who is like a mirror of fame, vanquished the Muslims, who were expert archers and re-installing the Lord at His own city of Srirangam, restored the traditional system of worship in the temple.

Goppanarya, the Brahmin, brought Sri Rangaraja, the Lord of the Universe, from the slope of the Vrishabhagiri (Tirumalai) to his capital and after destroying the Muslim army with his forces, reinstalled Him with Sri and Bhumi at Srirangam and thus introduced the Krita Yuga there again. In this deed, which is praised by all righteous men, he acted like the very Brahma, (the Lotus-Born).¹¹

After this incident, several of the leading Vaishnava acaryas at Srirangam like Uttama Nambi appear to have had close contacts with the kings of Vijayanagar such as Harihara Raya and his son Viruppana Udayar. These princes are stated to have weighed themselves in gold and offered it to Sri Ranganatha and this gold was utilised for making vessels for the temple and for inlaying, its roof. It is well-known that the kings of the Saluva dynasty were staunch Vaishnavas and they appear to have helped considerably the Vaishnavas of Srirangam in overcoming the opposition of the Saivites of Tiruvanaikkaval. Among the kings, vassals and commanders of the Vijayanagar empire mentioned in the Koyil Olugu in this context are Harihara Raya, Maha Raya, Goppana Udayar, Viruppana Udayar, Muthaya Dennayaka, Thammanna Udayar. Pradhani Somappa, Kadava Annar and Goppannar. One Timma Raut representative of Saluva Gopala Raja, is mentioned as having spent lavishly for beautifying the temple. Harihara Raya is stated to have consecrated to the deity a very costly cot made entirely of ivory.

The Interest taken by the chiefs of Vijavanagar in the temple affairs of Srirangam however, appears to have resulted in a scramble for royal favours among the local acharyas connected with the temple and the work records that after 1418 A.D., an agreement was arrived at between Uttama Nambi and Vedacharya Bhatta, the rivals. A sloka quoted in this context reads as follows:

śrīmacchakābde navalokabhāji vikārīni hyuttama nambināmnah |

¹¹ Several writers have traced the authorship of these two slokas to Sri Vedanta Desika who escaped from the Srirangam massacre with the two sons of Sudarsana Bhatta, after preserving the manuscript of “Sruta Prakasika” under the temple wall. But the generally quoted date of Desika's death, which is 1369, comes in the way of this theory being accepted. According to the chronogram “Bandhupriy ” the date of the inscription appears to be 1371 A.D. Gopinatha Rao quotes from the “Vedanta Desika Vaibhava-prakasika” of Doddacharya to prove that Desika was still alive when Goppana re-installed the icons at Srirangam.

jītvā tuluṣkān bhuvī gopañendra raṅgādhipam sthāpitavān svadeśe | ityevamākarnya kavindro hr̥ṣṭabhavadyas tam aham prapadye || Goppanarya's inscription has been edited in a masterly way by Dr. E. Hultzsch in Vol VI of Epigraphia India and the learned Doctor concludes that the slokas were written by Vedanta Desika, stating that the chronogram *bandhu-priya* must be a mistake and should read as *bahu-priya*.

vedārya bhaṭṭopari timmarājo vitīrya patraṁ samayam tad agrahīt ||

In Saka 1340- Vikarini, Vedarya Bhatta gave to Uttama-nambi, in the presence of Timmaraja, a document and thus obtained time (a further lease of office)

The king ruling at Vijayanagar after the year 1421 A.D. is mentioned in the work as Pratapa Deva Raya and this ruler is evidently Deva Raya II, otherwise known as Immadi, Pratapa or Praudha. In 1441 A.D Viruppanna Udayar, probably a vassal of Deva Raya, built a shrine for Sudarsana and also installed Yantra Narasimha at Srirangam.

We now get a few details from the life of the last of the great Acharyas, Manavala Mahamuni, who is referred to in the Koyil Olugu as Periya Jeeyar. The year in which this Acarya entered the sanyasa asrama and took up residence at the Pallavarayan Mutt in the Trivikraman Tiruveethi at Srirangam is shown as (*Parthiva*) 1465 A D. The new Jeeyar did not easily secure the allegiance of the leading Vaishnavites of the place and Uttama Nambi, son of Periya Uttama Nambi referred to supra, was one among, the hostile party. Prativadi Bhayankaram Annan, a leading disciple of Manavala Mahamuni, however, succeeded in converting the Nambi as a disciple of his Acarya, whose influence was now steadily on the increase. The book records that the Jeeyar was commanded by the Lord to do Kalakshepam in the temple for a period of one year at the end of which he was blessed with the sloka “śrīśaileśa dayā-pātram” From that date, this sloka continues to be the ‘Taniyan’ of the Tengalai community of Sri Vaishnavites who are followers of Sri Manavala Mahamuni.

CHAPTER 9.

THE GREAT UTTAMA-NAMBI FAMILY

It is necessary, at this stage, to deal at some length with the genealogical account of the great Uttama Nambi family, hereditary wardens and devoted custodians of the Srirangam temple for over ninety generations. The family appears to have been so closely connected with Sri Ranganatha that they treated His temple almost like a family concern, passed through its many vicissitudes of fortune and adversity and stood or fell together with that institution. Members of this ancient and distinguished family are still residing at Srirangam and although they no longer enjoy the privileges of their palmy days, they still possess a few enviable rights, especially during the Kartikai festival.

Although details and anecdotes about the family are found scattered in a number of works like the Guru Parampara Prabhavam, Divya Suri Charitam, the Trichinopoly District Gazetteer and the Uttamanambi Vamsa Prabhavam, and a full list of the family is furnished in the Mackenzie MSS preserved in the Madras Oriental Library, the Koyil Olugu is one of the main sources of information regarding the great services rendered by generations of this family to the Srirangam temple. (The Mackenzie manuscript gives a complete list of Uttama Nambis from Periyalvar downwards with their ages in terms of years, months and days). The family traces its origin from the grandson of Periyalvar, called Pillai Iyan Uttama Nambi His father Sri Ramandar (son of Periyalvar) migrated from Srivilliputtur to Srirangam when the Alvar escorted his foster daughter Andal with the paraphernalia of a bride to be united with her divine consort, Lord Ranganatha. Commencing from Pillai Iyan Uttama Nambi, seventy - three generations of the family managed the affairs of the temple, making various endowments and consecrating costly ornaments to the icon. The seventy-fourth descendant of the family is stated to be Garuda Vahana Pandita, otherwise known as Srinivasa Uttama-nambi, Srinivasa Mahakavi and Kavi Vaidya Purandara. He was a contemporary of Ramanuja and was his close associate and lieutenant from the time that Acarya took up residence at Srirangam. The Koyil Olugu records that one day when Mudali Andan committed an act of indiscretion by offering to the Lord rose apple fruits (Jambu phala), Ramanuja had suitable medicines prepared by Garuda Vahana Pandita and offered them as an antidote. He also had the icon of Dhanvantari installed in the temple with the help of the Pandita. The poet-physician is also stated to have composed the "Divya Suri Charitam" in Sanskrit, a Mahakavya of eighteen chapters dealing, with the lives of the ten Alvars, Andal and Madhurakavi.

The seventy-fifth Uttama-nambi was Sri Rangacarya who witnessed the passing away of Ramanuja and took a leading part in the conducting of his obsequies. The next prominent scion of the family was Krishnaraya, the 79th descendant, who in 1371 A. D. contacted Goppanarya at Gingee and had Srirangam freed from the hands of Muslims. He visited Vijayanagar a number of times and obtained from Bukka I and his son Harihara grants amounting to 17,000 gold mohurs with which money he bought 106 villages for the temple. In 1375, when there was a strong dispute between the Vaishnavas of Srirangam and the Saivites of Tiruvanaikkaval regarding the boundary between the two sacred towns, the king of Vijayanagar sent his Guru Vyasa Raya to arbitrate and it was finally left to Krishnaraya

Uttama-nambi to demarcate the boundary by running between the two villages blindfolded, chanting the Ashtakshara.¹²

Krishnaraya's son Srirangacarya was an equally distinguished servant of the Lord and secured 101 more villages as endowments for the temple. It was during, his time that Manavala Mahamuni came to reside at Srirangam and the story of how he first treated the Periya Jiyar with scant respect and was later converted as his disciple by Prativadi Bhayankaram Annan has been narrated before. As a token of gratitude, Srirangacarya relinquished a number of his rights in the temple in favour of Annan. He also had a wall built between Srirangam and Tiruvanaikkaval to prevent further boundary disputes between the Vaishnavas and the Saiivites. The agreement about temple honours mentioned in the last chapter was between this Uttama-nambi and Vedacarya Bhatta, probably a descendant of Veda Vyasa Bhatta.

After the year 1421 AD., Srirangacarya visited Vijayanagar and winning over Pratapa Deva Raya by his mastery over chess, got a jagir from him and the title of "Chakra Raya" for his brother. It is noteworthy that the Koyil Olugu refers to the Vijayanagar king as "Gaja vettai Pratapa Raya". This king is none else than Deva Raya II (1422 – 46) who is referred to as "Gaja vetakara" in the Telugu and as *gajamṛgayādhirāja* in the Sanskrit colophons of works ascribed to him. The Uttama-nambi returned to Srirangam a very prosperous and influential man and utilized his acquisitions for the service of the temple. The "Lakshmi Kavya" (which will be noticed later in these pages) describes him as "*mṛṣṭānna-dātā*" moving like a veritable moon surrounded by stars in the shape of erudite Brahmins."

Srirangacarya's brother Chakra Raya Uttama-nambi was a renowned scholar and polyhistor. He impressed king Deva Raya so much with his scholarship that the latter after consulting his ministers, conferred on him the title of "Bhu Chakra Raya" and gave him a separate *adhinam* at Srirangam. The Uttamanambi however, true to his family tradition spent most of the money on kankaryas to the temple.

He renovated the shrine of Nammalvar which was damaged during, the Muslim invasion, repaired many temple walls which had met with a similar fate and reinstalled the icon of Garuda in the Alagiya Manavalan Mantapam as the old bronze Garuda installed by a Chola king was badly smashed by the invaders. This incident is inscribed in the Dharma Varma Vithi in the following sloka:

manmatha varṣe jyeṣṭhe ravivāre ca revatītāre |
śrī cakra rāya vibhunā śrīmān garuḍaḥ pratiṣṭhito bhūtyai ||

He rebuilt the Rama temple originally built in the Chola's time and had the icon of Andal also installed there. Varaha Nayanar, formerly installed by Kura Narayana Jiyar was also reinstalled with due ceremony. Finally, he had Hanuman installed on a pillar near the Dhvajarohana Mantapa and reconstructed the Arya Bhatta Gate which was damaged by fire during the sack of Srirangam.

Srirangacarya's son was Krishnamacarya, otherwise known as Rajakkal Peruma Uttama-nambi. He is stated to have donate his entire property to the temple and even dismantled his stately mansion and built hundred-pillared mantapams with the materials obtained thereby. This Uttamanambi also known by the titles of "Perumal Samanta" and "Arangar Samanta".

Tiru-malainatha Uttama-nambi was the next prominent descendant of the family. He was the author of the work "Lakshmi Kavya" which furnishes a good deal of information about the

¹² According to the Madhva tradition, it was Vyasacarya who, holding his breath, ran the boundary.

Uttama-nambi family and contemporary life at Srirangam. Like his predecessors, he was maintaining close contact with the kings of Vijayanagar and managed to obtain from them complete remission of kist for 282 villages belonging to the temple, which were thereafter treated as “*sarva manya*.” In keeping with the traditions of his family, he also made his contributions to the renovation and improvement of the temple. He will perhaps be better remembered by posterity as the author of the *Lakshmi Kavya*, a Sanskrit work of eighteen sargas containing over a thousand slokas. The *kavya* describes the story of the consort of Sri Ranganatha known as the *Uraiyur Nachiyar* from her birth as the daughter of Karikal Chola till her union with the Lord in divine wedlock. The first three sargas contain a detailed description of the temple, the gods enshrined therein, an account of Alvars and Acaryas and the various *kainkaryas* and *utsavas* conducted. In the colophons he signs his name as Uttamaraya Tirumaladhisa and Uttamanambi Tirumaladhisa as will be seen from the slokas reproduced below:—

devo yasya bhujaṅgabhogāśayanaḥ śrīraṅga-rājo haris
tātaḥ kāśyapa cakra rāya vibudho lakṣmīr jananyuttamā |
tasmaivottama-rāya sattirumalādhīśa prabandhuḥ kṛtau
lakṣmī-kāvya udāra vaibhavānaghau sargo'yamādirgataḥ ||
tasyaivottama nambi sattirumalādhīśa prabandhuḥ kṛtau
lakṣmī-kāvya udāra vaibhava nidhau sargo gato'ṣṭādaśaḥ ||

The names of the Sri Vaishnava teachers who lived in Srirangam are given in the introductory portion of the work. The author's parents were Chakraraya and Lakshmi. He mentions that he was also patronized by Gajavettai Praudhadeva Raya (Deva Raya II) of Vijayanagar. He appears to have written a number of other *kavyas* also such as Ananda-lahari, Saundarya-lahari, Lavanya-lahari and Madhurya-lahari but only the former two are now-extant. Under the direction of Manavala Mahamuni, his disciple Prativadi Bhayankaram Annan wrote commentaries on the Ananda-lahari and Saundarya-lahari. The Koyil Olugu records that in 1458 A.D. Tirumalainatha came into conflict with Kampaya Raja a representative of Vijayanagar, and had to live outside Srirangam for 12 years. The dispute was settled only when Tirumala Raja became the ruler of the area in 1470 A. D.

Chinna Krishnaraya Uttama-nambi was the next person of renown in this family, in 1487 he obtained from Eramanchi Timmappa Nayak and other chiefs 20 villages for the temple and utilized the income for extensive improvements. In 1534, there was a famine and the Nayak king, ruling at Madura forced the Uttama-nambi to hand over all the grain stored at Srirangam for temple use. As all his efforts to dissuade the Nayak king from robbing the temple property were in vain, this Uttama-nambi disembowelled himself and sacrificed his life before the ruler. He is therefore known as “Kudal sara vara Nayanar.

Srinivasacarya was the eighty-sixth successor in the family. During his time, small Kingdoms came into existence as Madura, Trichinopoly, Tanjore etc., and the petty chiefs appropriated the temple lands lying within their domains with the result that only 96 villages in the area under Chokkanatha Nayak were left for the temple. In 1673, the Nayak, who was a devotee of Lord Ranganatha, handed over these 96 villages to Srinivasacarya Uttama-nambi and executed a bronze *śāsanam* in Telugu empowering the Acarya to manage the lands as *sarvamanya* and conduct all the festivals in the temple as in the past.

During the time of his successor Srirangacarya, Tiruchirappalli was conquered by the Marathas and was being ruled by Morari Rao. He took away a further 16 villages from the temple lands and divided the rest between the Srirangam temple, Jambukesvaram

(Tiruvanaikkaval) and the Tayumanasvami shrine but appointed Srirangacarya as the sole trustee. A few years later, Anwaruddin, Nawab of Karnataka, captured Tiruchirapalli which later fell into the hands of Nawab Shirajuddin Devulla Mahomed Ali Khan. This Nawab converted the temple lands into a *śrotriyam* in favour of the Uttamanambi family for purposes of maintaining the worship in the three temples referred to above. In later days, the status and influence of this ancient family of temple wardens declined considerably. Some of the descendants were childless and the direct line of succession was broken. A fire which broke out in their ancestral house destroyed many of the old documents and with them the family's title to many estates. The exclusive rights and privileges which are still being enjoyed in the temple by the surviving members of the family form the only vestiges of the glory of their ancestors and the enviable services rendered by them, generation after generation, to the temple of Sri Ranganatha.

CHAPTER 10.

LATER HISTORY OF THE SRIRANGAM TEMPLE ,

We now get an account of the benefactions of Kandadai Ramanuja Dasa¹³ to the Srirangam Temple. This ascetic who first came to Srirangam in 1491 A. D. was none else than Rama Raja, the elder brother of Vira Narasinga Raya, otherwise known as Narasinga Saluva, who, while ruling as the semi-independent governor of Chandragiri in 1486, deposed the weak nominal sovereign Praudha Deva Raya (not Deva Raya II) ruling at Vijayanagar and took over the reigns of administration himself. This event is known to historians as the 'first usurpation'. Rama Raja, who was well versed in all the Sastras, renounced the world and went to Ayodhya where he obtained a number of Sri Rama's gold coins known as *Rama madai*. Returning to Chandragiri, he gave one of these coins to his brother Vira Narasinga and obtained from him in return a royal charter that he should be honoured in all the 108 Vaishnava holy towns. He proceeded to Tirupati and offering a coin of Rama, brought all the temples in Tirumalai under his control. As mentioned before, he came to Srirangam in 1491 and became a devout disciple of Kandadai Annan, Donning the robes of an *ekangi*, he obtained the *dāsya nāma* of 'Kandadai Ramanuja Dasa'. He became the chief of the *ekangis* and introduced his Anjaneya Mudra as the most superior in the temple. He settled down at Srirangam permanently and supervised the work of the *ekangis* to ensure that they strictly followed the code of Ramanuja. When once the Kaveri, which was in spate, caused much damage to the temple, Ramanuja Dasa arranged for the ravages caused by the floods to be repaired promptly.

One Koneri Raja, who succeeded Tirumala Raja as the agent of Vijayanagar, joined hands with the Saivites of Tiruvanaikkaval and caused much harassment to the Vaishnavas of Srirangam. Ramanuja Dasa sought the help of Narasa Nayaka (who was the general of Immadi Narasinga, son of Narasinga Saluva, and had killed his king and usurped the throne in 1505) and the latter promptly marched on Koneri Raja with an army and killed him.

Narasa Nayaka and his son Nagama Nayaka then worshipped at Sri Ranganatha's shrine and taking advantage of this, Ramanuja Dasa obtained many a concession from the erstwhile ruler of Vijayanagar. The Nayak literally showered pearls and diamonds on the icon and made many permanent provisions for the conduct of the temple festivities. Later, Ramanuja Dasa constructed anew the gopuras on the wall built by Vira Sundara Brahma Raya. He renovated the thousand pillared mantapa, rebuilt the eastern gopura on the Akalankana wall and gave a gold coating to the sacred Vimana and the vahanas in the temple. He reconstructed the shrine of Vitthalesvara and in short, repaired all the damages caused to the temple during the Muslim invasion and brought it to its original state of resplendency. The Lord, pleased with his manifold services, conferred on him the title of 'Kulasekhara Perumal'.

The later history of the Srirangam temple is not a happy one to recount. The Muslim invasion, the violent political changes wrought by it and frequent interferences by the kings of

¹³ This Ramanuja Dasa is known in Tirupati inscriptions and records as 'Kandadai Ramanuja Ayyangar'. The Tirumajai Olugu describes him as a Sattada Srivaishnava – non-brahmin – and enumerates in detail his benefactions to the Tirumalai Temple. The fact that Ramanuja Dasa and Ramanuja Ayyangar were one and the same person can easily be realized as both the Koyil Olugu and the Tirumalai Olugu call him an adept in the art known as 'Sparsa vedi' and also record the services rendered by him to the temples at Srirangam and Tirumalai.

Vijayanagar in the affairs of the temple resulted in so many modifications in the temple routine that the Koyil Olugu ruefully records that the "Code introduced by Udaiyavar (Ramanuja.) had collapsed". Before the invasion, the Cera, Chula and Pandya kings refrained from interfering with the management of the temple lands except with the object of investigating into misdeeds and punishing the wrongdoers. When the Tamil country came under the control of the Vijayanagar kings, they started appointing their own men as temple superintendents and included the management of the temple as part of their royal administration. The Kandadai family, commencing from Mudali Andan, enjoyed the temple honours undisputedly for an unbroken period of 190 years from the time of Ramanuja. After the invasion, the honours were being equally divided between the Kandadai family, the successors of Sri Ranga Narayana Jiyar and Vadhula Desikar. Even this arrangement did not continue for long. The creation of Cakraraya by the Vijayanagar king and event of Kandadai Ramanuja Dasa caused further splits in the order of temple servants with the result that the code of management established by Ramanuja in accordance with Sastraic injunctions enunciated by the Lord Himself in the Pancaratra, broke down completely.

In 1498, Madura and Trichinopoly came under the control of Visvanatha Nayak. With his assistance, Narasimhacharya, son of Vadhula Desika, secured for the temple many jewels and gold and silver vessels. Thirty years later, Krishnappa Nayak made many additions to his predecessor's benefactions. In 1579, when Muttu Virappa Nayak was ruling at Madura, a conflict arose at Srirangam between Uttam-anambi and Bhattar Tirumalacharya over their respective rights in the temple. The Nayak supported Uttama-nambi and cancelled Bhattar's privileges in the temple. When later the Raja of Vijayanagar marched on Trichinopoly, Bhattar joined hands with him. Taking advantage of this, Uttama-nambi poisoned the mind of the Nayak against Bhattar and had the latter wrested and imprisoned in a fort. Bhattar's house was looted and his family had to take shelter in Turaiyur. His release was however, obtained by a Reddi of the place who paid a ransom of 20,000 gold mohurs for the purpose. The Nayak's son Tirumala Sauri restored Bhattar to his former position and Uttama-nambi, now rendered powerless, compromised with his old enemy. These incidents, however, resulted in the Nayak developing a strong prejudice against the Srirangam shrine and its acarya-purushas.

(The printed versions of Koyil Olugu end here and this account is continued from manuscript version.)

He threatened Uttama-nambi that unless he paid 50,000 gold mohurs to Bhattar, he would be handed over to his former enemy. Uttamanambi refused at first but when his house was surrounded by Bhattar's men and his son Periya Tiruvadi committed suicide, he made peace with the Nayak by agreeing to pay the ransom demanded. To do this, he sold all his property and the lands belonging to the temple thereby ruining the finances of the temple. Both Bhattar and Uttama-nambi passed away soon after but only after causing incalculable harm to the temple by their mutual hatred and uncom promising hostility.

During the reign of Cokkanatha Nayak after the year 1588, Srinivasa Desika, grandson of Pranatarihara Desika in the line of Andan, became famous for his learning and was invited to Srirangam by the local Vaishnavas to defeat in argument an Advaitin called Vajrangi. A debate lasting for 44 days took place between the two with the four brothers of the Nayak as observers. Although the Nayaks were partial to the Advaitin, Desika was victorious in the end and managed to convert all of them as his disciples. Proving his descent from Mudali Andan, he got back all the honours due to the Kandadai family and with the help of the king, rendered many *kainkaryas* to the shrine. He reorganized the distribution of Tirtha honours in the temple

thereby removing many inequities that existed at the time. The brothers of Cokkanatha Nayak also endowed the temple with many benefactions which included the construction of the mantapas surrounding the altar, the steps leading to the sanctum and the Nacciyar shrine. After 1678 A. D. Muttu Alakadri Nayak, the brother of Cokka Natha, ascended the throne and contributed to the shrine a gold surya-prabha, a golden umbrella, a so diamond angi (shirt) and other innumerable jewels and vessels. His acarya was Kumara Srinivasa Desika, son of Srinivasa Desika mentioned above.

Misled by one Tiruvenkatanatha Ayyan, an officer of the state, the Nayak came down to Srirangam, surrounded the house of his Acarya captured his sons and prepared to torture them. The aged Desika, unable to bear this unprovoked attack, showered filth on the Nayak and cursed him with a painful death within six months. Somewhat taken aback by this, the Nayak released his sons but seized all the Acarya's property. As a protest against this atrocity, Desika undertook a fast unto death and passed away after 40 days. Two of his sons fled to the Chola country while a third was killed by the Nayak. Even Mangammal, the mother of the Nayak, got disgusted with her son's actions and left the country on the pretext of undertaking a pilgrimage. The Nayak ultimately, developed ulcers all over his body and died a miserable death. His mother returned to the country and began to rule it herself as Rani Mangammal. She recalled the Acarya's sons and restored them to their former position. After the demise of Kumara Srinivasacarya, his son Sundararaja Vadhula Desika was in charge of the Sri Karyam. His uncle Srirangaraja Vadhula Desika usurped the position of his nephew and drove him away from Srirangam. As the acarya of Rani Mangammal, he became famous as Dorai Rangacarya. With the help of the Rani, he consecrated to the Lord a pearl necklace, a diamond medal and a diamond crown. The Rani also performed the *tulabhara* and offered a huge treasure to the God.

After 1707, during the reign of Vijayaranga Cokkanatha, Srinivasa Desika, son of Srirangacarya donated, with the help of the Nayak, a number of jewels and other temple paraphernalia and also had a mirror room constructed.

In 1720, Vedavyasa Bhattar Raghunathavaryar, in the name of a religious gathering, collected together a large crowd and defied royal authority by plundering the shops and closing the gates of the temple. Irulappa Nayak, after a futile siege of two months, captured Raghunathavarya by deceit and produced him and the other rebels before Vijayaranga who ordered them to be blinded. Raghunatha varya was however spared from the ordeal on the intervention of Kumara Srinivasacarya but was imprisoned for twelve years.

After 1728, the Carnatic kingdom collapsed and the Srirangam temple had to face many a difficulty. Considering the fact that Srirangam was successively invaded again not only by Muslims but also by the French, the following lines of Vedanta Desika from his immortal Abhitistava appear to be prophetic.

Kalipraṇidhilaṣṇaḥ kalitaḥākyalokāyataiḥ

The increasing menace to the Divya Desam and vigrahas in temples from representatives of a Kali Purusha, the Sakyas and the Muslims and the Yavanas

The Nawab came with an army and captured the Trichinopoly Fort. In the year Raktakshi and besieged Srirangam and demanded tributes from the residents. An agent of the Raya intervened and persuaded Parasara Bhatta, Vadhula Desrka and Uttama-nambi to pay a lakh of rupees to the Nawab by disposing of some temple jewels. Later the Nizam invaded the country with a large army but the Vaishnavas befriended his officers and saved the temple

from attack. Five or six years later, the French became powerful at Pondicherry, invaded Srirangam and began to harass its inhabitants. They are reported to have stayed for two years but did not cause any damage to the temple although they looted much property. In the year Plavanga after 1781 A.D., Haidar Ali invaded the Cholamandala with a lakh of soldiers and surrounded Srirangam. He however, spared the temple on the intervention of his chief accountant, who was a Srivaishnava. In 1790, his son Tippu Sultan repeated the attack but the local leaders such as Jiyar, Bhattar and Vadhula Desikar pacified him by reading out laudatory addresses and giving him costly presents. During the Mahomedan regime that followed, a corrupt Annangar of Srirangam, ably assisted by the ruling Nawab, harassed the local acaryas considerably with a view to appropriate their property. He kept them in confinement for over thirty months and plundered the temple. Later on the English took over and Wallace, with the characteristic enthusiasm of an European for old manuscripts deputed Velappa Mudali to have the ancient manuscripts gathered together and rewritten currently, including, contemporary events which took place during their time. All the available Olugus in Srirangam were accordingly brought up-to-date, copied and deposited in the temple (terku kallarai) with the seals of the five leading sthalattars privileged families).

APPENDIX A

The Music of the Divya Prabandha

(T. S. PARTHASARATHY)

In this ancient and hoary land, music was never being considered as an art or as a form of entertainment. It occupied an honoured place among the upavedas and was known as the Gandharva Veda. God was conceived as Nāda Brahman, having sound as His Body (*nāda tanuḥ*) and the way to attain salvation through music was called *Nadopāsana*. Hundreds of references can be gathered from our Srutis, Smritis, Itihāsas and Puranas reiterating these maxims. The truth that “one who knows the ” mysteries of Nada Vidya attains Moksha much more easily than through other paths ” is stressed by many seers from Yajnavalkya of yore to our own Tyagaraja who lived barely a century ago. Tyagaraja has composed more than twenty kritis on the theme that Nāadopāsana leads one to *svarga* and *apavarga*.

In accordance with this tradition, our saints and bhaktas, devotees and seers, Alvars and Nayanmars have always composed their devotional outpourings in a musical garb. This branch of music is known as the “Vaidika Gana” or Sacred Music in contrast to “Laukika Gana” or Secular Music. As the Sama-veda itself was a form of sacred music, the theory that our music originated from it is often stressed by musicologists. In the fourth sarga of the Balakanda, Valmiki himself says that he composed his Ramayana in seven suddha jatis and three kala pramanas in the “Margi style of Devagana. It is therefore clear that sacred music is infinitely older than secular music apart from exceeding the latter by far in quantity also.

In the Tamil country, the *Pasurams* of Alvars, the *Padikams* of Nayanmars and the *Tiruppugazh* of Arunagirinatha are representative specimens of sacred music. Although these are not musical forms in the pattern of kritis and the like, they occupy an important place in that branch of music called the “*kalpita sangeeta* ” composed as they are in a variety of ragas, talas and pannas. And there is sufficient evidence to show that they were originally composed with music by their respective authors, although their original tunes might have disappeared long ago. The Guru Parampara Prabhavam states that when Periyalvar, the author of the Tirumozhi which is after his name, was taken in procession at Madura by king Vallabha Deva he sang the Tiruppallandu using the bells on the elephant’s neck as cymbals. The saint Tiruppanalvar was a professional musician and was always singing the praises of Lord Ranganatha with a Vina in his hands. When Tirujñānasambandha, the boy prodigy-saint, was singing the praises of the Lord at Sirkali keeping time with his hands, the God presented him with a pair of golden cymbals. Saint Tiru Nilakantha used to accompany Tirujñānasambandha on his Yazh and on one occasion was about to break it into pieces as he was unable to follow a panna in a difficult raga which Sambandha was composing. All these show that many of the Alvars and Nayanmars were not only great devotees but competent musicians as well.

The four thousand verses known as the “Divya Prabahandha” occupy a foremost place among such compositions. They are found to have been allotted 50 ragas and 5 talas of the Carnatic music and 19 pannas and 4 talas of the Tamil music. How these verses, composed by 12 saints from different parts of South India at different times came to be collected together and arranged in their present order is a fascinating story which is briefly narrated below. Towards the end of the 9th century A. D. the famous Nathamuni was living at Kattumannar Koyil near Chidambaram. One day several Vaishnavites from Melnad who visited the shrine at the place recited a decad of Tamil verses commencing with the word “*Aravamude*” and ending with the

words “ these ten out of a thousand composed by Sathakopa of Kuruhoor”. Nathamuni, who was thrilled by the verses, made anxious enquiries from them if they knew the rest of the verses but they replied that the ten were all that they knew. Nathamuni was sorely disappointed and soon got into a state in which he could not rest till he unearthed the other Pasurams of Nammalvar. He proceeded forthwith to Kuruhoor, the birth place of the Alvar and met Parankusa Dasa, a *prasishya* of Madhurakavi Alvar. The latter confessed to Nathamuni that due to the indifference of the local Vaishnavites, the verses were practically lost to the world and the only method of getting them again was, according to his Guru, to meditate on Nammalvar by repeating the “Kanni Nun Siruttambu” twelve thousand times. Nathamuni was only too glad to follow the advice and in due course Saint Nammalvar appeared before him in a vision and on his prayer taught him the *Tiruvāymozhi*. Nathamuni returned to Mannarkoyil and with a view to perpetuate the Prabandham by setting it to music, took the assistance of his two nephews Melai Ahattalvan and Kizhai Ahattalvan and set the verses to the "Divya Gana" style of music on the model of the Udatta, Anudatta and Svarita prayogas of the Vedas. For this magnificent service rendered by Nathamuni not only to Vaishnavism but also to sacred music, Vedanta Desika aptly describes him as “*talam vazhangit-tamizh marai innisai tanda vallal*”.

This anecdote from the Guru Parampara Prabhava and other works shows that Nathamuni was an adept in the art of music. It also shows that there were two styles of music at his time known as the “Divya Gana” and “Manushya Gana” and Nathamuni set the Tiruvoymozhi to music in the former. There is another anecdote also in the life of Nathamuni to show the relative merits of the two systems. In the court of the Chola king, who was ruling, at Gangaikonda Cholapuram at the time, there was a dispute between two lady singers, one singing the Deva Gana style and the other the Manushya Gana style. The king, set up a committee of musicians to settle the dispute and as recommended by them, declared that the Manushya Gana style was the superior of the two and honoured the exponent of that system. This broke the heart of the Deva Gana exponent who from that date decided to dedicate her art to none other but God and travelled from place to place singing in shrines. No one appreciated her music till she came to Mannarkoyil where Nathamuni realised her worth and praised her style of music.

The Chola king who heard about this incident sent for Nathamuni and requested him to explain the greatness of the “Divya Gana” style which the latter did with suitable authority. And to prove that one should possess a sharp ear for subtle srutis to appreciate that style. Nathamuni had several pairs of cymbals of different weights sounded at the same time and accurately told their individual weight. This shows that the Deva Gana style contained more subtle srutis than the Manushya Gana.

Which was the Deva Gana style and which the Manushya Gana? It is merely a probability that the former refers to Karnataka Sangita and the latter to the ancient music of the Tamils but it will require deep study and research to prove this. Among the 4000 verses of the Prabandha, Tamil pannas and talas have been assigned only to 1102 verses of Nammalvar called the *Tiruvāymozhi* while the rest are sung in ragas and talas of the Carnatic music. For the verses of the *Tiruvāymozhi*, Carnatic ragas and talas have also been furnished, which were probably added by a later musician. How far the ragas and talas now found in editions of the Prabandha approximate to the original tunes assigned by Nathamuni is a matter, which perhaps it is now too late to discover. Among, the 50 Carnatic ragas assigned to the Pasurams, one finds common ones like Todi, Bhairavi, Kalyani and rare ragas like Dvijavanti, Saindhavi, Yamuna and Sokavarali. For a number of unknown ragas, the editors have overcome the difficulty by

calling them *Aparupam* (Aparva). Nineteen Tamil panns and 4 talas are found allotted to the verses of the *Tiruvāymoḻhi*. As far as possible, ragas suitable to the spirit of the Pasurams have been assigned. For instance the Tiruppallandu of Periyalvar is sung, in Nata, the Tiruppalli Ezhuchi of Tondaradippodi in Bhupalam and the Talattu of Kulasekhara in Nilambari. The fact whether the Tamil panns have also been similarly assigned can be ascertained only if their *lakshanas* are known. But there appears to be no co-ordination between the two raga systems. For instance, different verses in the pann Sikamaram have been set in Bhairavi, Mukhari and Nandanamakriya. The “Koyil Olugu” which is a record of the Srirangam temple for over two thousand years, also contains interesting information on how the *Tiruvāymoḻhi* was set to music by Nathamuni and how the Pasurams came to be sung after his time. It states that during Nathamuni’s time the title “Nada Vinoda Arayar” was conferred by Lord Ranganatha on an Arayar, a Vaishnava temple musician. God Himself is referred to here as “Gayaka Sarva bhauma”, a surprisingly modern expression. The Guru Parampara, Koyil Olugu and similar Vaishnava works contain a mine of information which will assist research regarding the “Music of The Divya Prabandha.”

