COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND SECTARIAN AFFILIATIONS: THE SRĪVAIṢṆAVAS OF SOUTH INDIA (FROM ELEVENTH TO THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY A.D.)

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "**Community Identity and Sectarian Affiliations: The Srivaisnavas of South India (From Eleventh to the Seventeenth Century A.D.)**" submitted by Ranjeeta Dutta for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) of this University has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University and is her own work. We recommend that the thesis be placed before the examiners for their consideration.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The standard Sanskrit transliteration has been used for the names, places and terms in pan-Indian mythology and culture, for example, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Kāśī, *divyadesam*, *brāhmaṇa*. Some of the place names and the personal names in common usage in present South India have been spelt as they are in the current times, for example, Tamil Nadu, T.V.Mahalingam. However, in most cases, the transliteration of the names of persons, castes, places and various terms in Tamil, Kannada and Telugu, are based on the sources namely, the inscriptions, and texts. Since majority of the sources are in Tamil, a guide to the Tamil pronunciations is given below:

Vowels

a	*u* in *but*	e	*e* in *pet*
ā	*a* in *father*	ē	*a* in *cake*
i	*i* in *bit*	ai	*i* in *kite*
ī	*ee* in *bee*	o	*o* in *potato*
u	*u* in *put*	ō	*o* in *open*
ū	*oo* in *shoot*	au	*ow* in *owl*

Consonants

k (guttural) like the English *k*; the nasal ṅ is used with k: example, *maṅgai*.

c (palatal) similar to the *ch* in *chalk* but unaspirated; the nasal ñ is used with c, for example, *Ceñcū*. The Sanskrit sounds that have come into Tamil have the standard Sanskrit transliteration.

ṭ a retroflex sound, pronounced with the tongue rolled back so that t it touches the roof of the mouth; ṇ is the retroflex nasal, for instance, *toṇṭai*

t (dental) similar to *ta*

p like English *pa*

y, r, l, and v are similar to their English counterparts; r is rolled

ṟ similar to *r* as in *first*

ḷ pronounced as a retroflex sound.

ṟ and ṉ are closer to alveolar sounds than r and other nasal sounds of Tamil; the combination ṟṟ is pronounced as *tr* in country.

At the beginning of the word and between vowels, c is pronounced like the English *s*.

Between vowels, k, ṭ, t and p are voiced, and pronounced as *g, ḍ, d* and *b*. Following a nasal, k, c, ṭ, t and p are voiced, and pronounced as *g, j, d, ḍ* and *b*.

Thus, *Caṅkam* as *Sangam*, *akam*, as *aham*, *Murukaṉ* as *Murugan*.

Double consonants are given full value and held longer. For example, *Tirukacci* is pronounced as *Tiru-kach-ch-i*.

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The above note on Tamil pronounciations is taken from Indira Viswanathan Peterson's *Poems to Siva. The Hymns of the Tamil Saints. Princeton University Press, Princeton,* (1989). However, for details, a table with corresponding *Devanagari* and Roman pronunciations is provided below:

ROMAN	DEVANAGARI	TAMIL
a (short)	अ	அ
a (long)	आ	ஆ
i short)	इ	இ
i (long)	ई	ஈ
u(short)	उ	உ
u(long)	ऊ	ஊ
e (short)	ए (short)	எ
e (long)	ए (long)	ஏ
ai	ऐ (short)	ஐ
o(short)	ओ (long)	ஒ
o (long)	ओ	ஓ
au	औ	ஔ
k, kh, g, gh	क, ख, ग, घ	க
n	ङ	ங
cha,chch, ca	च, छ, स	ச
ta, tha, da, dha	ट, ठ, ड, ध	ட
jña	ञ	ஞ
n	ण	ண
ta, tha, da, dha	त, थ, द, ध	த
n	न	ந
pa, ba, bha	प, ब, म	ப
ma	म	ம
ya	य	ய
ra	र	ர
la	ल	ல
va	व	வ
zh, ḻ	ष / क्ष	ழ
la	ळ	ள
tra	त्र / र	ற
na	न	ன

There are certain sounds from Sanskrit that are adapted to the Tamil alphabet and sound system that are known as the *grantha* script:

ś	श	ஶ
S	ष	ஷ
Ks	क्ष	க்ஷ
J	ज	ஜ
h	ह	ஹ
Srī	श्री	ஸ்ரீ

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INTRODUCTION

I

The Srivaisnavas are a distinct Vaisnava community in South India confined to Tamil Nadu and southern parts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.[1]The community considers Visnu and his consort Laksmī as their supreme godhead, Rāmānuja as their founder leader and regards the Sanskrit *Vedas* and the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* (corpus of the four thousand hymns of the Alvārs, the early Vaisnava saints) as its main scriptures.[2]There are three main concepts central to the Srīvaisnava exegesis. They are Srī, Visistadvaita and *prapatti.* Srī plays a vital role as the mediatarix and the link between the god and a devotee whose social status is of no consequence. Hence, her position as the sharer of all power and responsibilities with her consort, Nārayāna is emphasized by the word "Srī" in Srīvaisnavism or *Srīsampradāya.* Srī in Srīviasnavism has another implication. It is an honorary prefix that sets the community apart from other religious traditions. The concept of Visistadvaita, which is neither pure Dvaita nor pure Advaita is central to Srīvaisnava philosophy. The sentient souls (*jīvas*) and the non-sentient objects (*acetna*) are as real as Brahman (i.e. the supreme being), but both of them are only a *visesna* or an attribute of the *Brahman* and hence are not independent of the Brahman as the Dvaitins hold.[3]Brahman has innumerable divine qualities and attributes,

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[1]The other religious groups with Vaisnava followings in South India are Dvaitas founded by Madhava, Cult of Vithova and Krsna Cult of Vallabhacarya.

[2]*Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* means "Four Thousand Holy Compositions. Tamil *Nāl* 'four', *āyiram* 'thousand, *divya* 'holy' and *prabhandha* 'composition', literary work, then 'collection and compilation. It is divided into four parts. Book One is *Mutual-Āyiram*, 'first thousand' Book Two is *Periya-Tirumōli.* Book Three is *yarpa* (short metres) and Book Four is *Tiruvāymoḷi.* The first two books are of popular nature and concern the daily ceremonies. Book Three consists of short poem. Book Four has one thousand poems, divided into hundred sections of ten poems and is sung once a year.

[3]Dvaita Vedanta is opposed to monism of Sankara and qualified monism of Rāmānuja. Madhva, its founder made dual distinction between god and soul, god and matter, the individual soul and matter, to be eternal. According to the Dvaitins, the world is real and not illusory.

i.e., it is *saguna* and is therefore not *nirguna* or formless as the Advaitins hold.[4]*Prapatti* or salvation through complete self-surrender to god means that any individual, irrespective of his caste status can attain *moksa* (salvation), the only qualification being unflinching devotion to god. Therefore, these three concepts, not only have theological importance, but also have a universal character, attracting a large number of devotees who otherwise find it difficult to comprehend the abstract metaphysics of Sankara's Advaita and its concept of *nirguna* Brahman (formless god).

The present day Srivaisnavas are divided into two sects. They are the Vatakalais, and the Tenkalai. The Vatakalais represent the Sanskritic tradition. Kāñcīpuram in Tamil Nadu is their institutional centre and Vēdānta Dēśika (AD 1268-1369) their spiritual preceptor. They give preference to the Sanskrit *Vedas* over the *Drāvida Vedas*, that is the four thousand Tamil hymns of the Ālvārs. Therefore, they are considered brahmanical and conservative in their outlook .The Tenkalais, on the other hand, represent the Tamil tradition. Srīrangam in Tamil Nadu is their centre and Manavāla Māmuni (AD 1370-1442) their religious leader. Since the Tenkalais regard the *Drāvida Vedas* as their scriptures, they are considered to be more broad- based than the Vatakalais and have had a large non-*brāhmana* following. Today the entire Srīvaisnava tradition, its texts and institutional structure, *viz*, the temples and *mathas*, are aligned as Vatakalai or Tenkalai.[5]However, despite their distinct identities, both sects acknowledge their affiliation to the larger Srīvaisnava community.

This work attempts to understand the processes that influenced the development of the Srīvaisnava community from the eleventh to the seventeenth century AD. During this period, the crystallization of the community and its ossification into sects generated a particular kind of identity that defined the community *vis-a- vis* other religious tradition and restated it within its own structure. Therefore, despite the sectarian affiliations, the

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[4] According to Sankara, the founder of Advaitic philosophy, Brahman is *nirguna* or unqualified. God, individual souls and the world are mere appearances due to an indefinable principle of *māyā* that is real or unreal.

[5]There is no English counterpart for the word *matha*. It is different from the monastic organizations. Hence, it will be used as it is.

consciousness of being a Śrīvaiṣṇava was never marginalized. The sense of community cut across professions, political alliances, social status and geographical boundaries and developed a sense of shared values that was placed above the structure of caste. Notionally being a Śrīvaiṣṇava developed, that enjoined the followers to observe certain norms of behaviour. On occasions of pilgrimage, festivals and periodic celebrations, the community came together the subsequent congregation blurred the caste distinctions.

Further, this articulation of the identity was attempted through a construction of a normative, scriptural tradition that constructed a specific past, which bestowed legitimacy to the community The different genres of the Śrīvaiṣṇava texts that articulated this tradition accommodated various motifs and structures that was compatible with the contemporary needs of the community. In this context, the concept of *ubhayavedanta* was evolved. This meant the *Dual Vedas*. For the first time, the Tamil hymns of the Āḷvārs, *the Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* (NDP), were given the appellation of the *Drāviḍa Veda* and equated as sacred with the Sanskritic *Vedas*.

However, this tradition and ideology was differentially interpreted, which gave rise to different viewpoints that crystallized into various affiliations. These affiliations were not Vaṭakalai and Teṉkalai, as has been commonly understood; rather they were the institutions of *maṭhas*, that imparted a sectarian character to the community and was the basis of multiple identities. These institutions of *maṭhas* always remained the focus of the community identity right from the fourteenth century with their respective groups of followers and religious heads who very often became the ideologue of the community. Even today despite being classified as Vaṭakalai and Teṉkalai, each of them have remained distinct and retained their own sets of tradition and lineage. For example, the followers of Ahōbilam *maṭha* celebrate Janmāṣhṭhamī a day later than the followers of the Āṇḍavan *maṭha* do and both belong to the Vaṭakalai sect. Therefore, sect in the Śrīvaiṣṇava context cannot be understood as merely two distinct divisions of a community, but also as organizational structures, i.e. the *maṭhas*, that have their own ideology, command a large number of followers, and have a religious head. This study aims to understand the construction of the Śrīvaiṣṇava identity at three levels. *One* at the

level of the larger Śrīvaiṣṇava community. *Two*, at the level of the sectarian affiliations as reflected in the *maṭhas* and their organization. *Three,* at the level of the Vaṭakalai and Teṉkalai as supra-regional sects that ossified into sub-castes in the mid eighteenth century. These three levels corresponded with various stages of development of the community.

Like all religious community, Srivaisnavism drew its initial impetus from the religious experience of its saints. The hagiographies while documenting the biographies of these saints delineated four stages of the history of Srivaisnavism and its community. It began with the Ālvārs, the early mystics (fourth to the eighth century), followed by Yāmuṉa (ninth century), Nāthamuni (tenth- eleventh century) and Rāmānuja (eleventh – twelfth century). The latter three were the *ācāryas*, i.e. those who organized the community. Post Rāmānuja phase of community history was characterized by the religious activities of various disciples of Rāmānuja, who perpetuated a lineage that culminated into the personalities of Vēdanta Dēśika and Māṇavāla Māmauṉi, the acaryic heads of the Vaṭakalai and Teṉkalai sects respectively.

Enmeshed with this portrayal of history were the issues of caste, identity, gender and a glorified past all of which were products of the contemporary socio-political context. Consequently, there were notional disputes that crystallized into several *maṭhas*. These *maṭhas* themselves assumed the characteristics of a sect. Significantly, the idea of a single religious community was not abandoned and persisted in an all encompassing manner. Hence, today a Śrīvaiṣṇava first identifies himself at the large community level. Then comes the level of identifying with a *maṭha* and finally the Vaṭakalai and Teṉkalai affiliation Thus, this dissertation discusses the emergence of a uniform Śrīvaiṣṇava identity under a monolithic, codified and closed culture characterized by pluralistic traditions and alternative ideals that existed within a homogeneous paradigm. The present study focuses on those temple centers that are associated with the Śrīvaiṣṇava *maṭhas*. These temples are a part of the one hundred and eight pilgrimage network and are until day significant for the Śrīvaiṣṇava community. The following table gives a list of the temples, *maṭhas* that have been taken up for this study:

Table 1: Srīvaiṣṇava Temples and Mathas.

Name of the Temple	Name of the *Matha*	Place with District	State
Narasiṃhasvāmī Temple	Ādi Van Sathagopa Jīyar Matha	Ahōbilam, Kurnool	Andhra Pradesh
Vēṅkaṭeśvarasvāmī Temple	Pedda Jiyangāru and Cinna Jiyangā Matha	Tirumalā-Tirupati,Chittoor	Andhra Pradesh
Padmāvati Amman Kōil	_____	Tirupati, Chittoor	Andhra Pradesh
Govindarāja Perumāl Temple	_____	Tirupati, Chittoor	Andhra Pradesh
_____	Yatirāja Matha	Srīperumbudūr, Chingelput	Tamil Nadu
Raṅganāthasvāmī Temple	Srīraṅganārāyaṇa Adīna Jīyar Math	Srīraṅgam, Tiruchchirapalli	Tamil Nadu
_____	Āṇḍavana Āśrama	Srīraṅgam, Tiruchchirapalli	Tamil Nadu
Trivikramasvāmī Temple	Empērumānār Jīyar Matha	Tirokōvilūr, North Arcot	Tamil Nadu
_____	Uḍaiyavar Kōil Jīyar Matha	Ālvār Tirunagarī, Tirunelvelly	Tamil Nadu
_____	Srī Perulāḷa Yatirāj Rāmānuja Jīya Matha	Tirrukuṟuṅguḍi, Tirunelvelly	Tamil Nadu
Vānamamālai Temple	Vānamamalai Matha	Nāṅgunērī, Tirunelvelly	Tamil Nadu
Varadarājasvāmī Temple	_____	Kāñcīpuram, Chingelput	Tamil Nadu
Nārāyaṇasvamī Temple	Yadugiri Yatirāja Jīyar Matha	Mēlkōṭe, Mandya	Karnataka
	Brahmatantra Parakāla Matha	Mysore.	Karnataka

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A Note on the Primary Source

The primary sources that have been referred to in this dissertation are mentioned below:

1.INSCRIPTIONS: Since a large part of the study revolves around the analyses of the temples and *matha* organisations, epigraphy forms a very important source of information. Since Kāñcī, Srīrangam, Mēlkote, Tirupati and Ahōbilam are major Srīvaiṣnava centres, inscriptions of these temples have been examined .The copper plate and stone inscriptions provide useful information about the donors, the donee, the rituals, construction, repairs, installation of new images, and the Srivaiṣnava temple organization. Some of the inscriptions also indicate settlement of disputes and the power configuration in the society. The pilgrims, who could be kings, chiefs or merchants, or religious leaders, make the majority of the donations recorded. In some cases, pilgrims are known to have made donations in favour of the temples in absentia.[6]Donations made by *matha* leaders in either cash or land indicated their respective wealth and power.

2.Sthalapurāṇas and Mahātmyas : These comprise of legends and myths of individual temples and throw useful light on the local history the area, where the temple are situated. Most of these legends developed in the fourteenth century, when some of the shrines were already popular. In all the cases, the legends have a connection with the divinity, thus sanctifying the local. Hence, the *stalapurāṇas* and *mahātmyas* intended to enhance the centre's importance in the pilgrimage network attracted the pilgrims and drew resources to the temples through the gifts. For this study, this category of primary source will be of great importance, as it will throw some light on the popularity of the shrine.

3.Literary Sources: The dissertation will analyse the Srīvaiṣnava literature from the tenth century onwards. Yāmunācārya's *Āgamapramāṇya*(eleventh century) and Rāmānuja's *Gītābhāṣhya* and *Srībhāṣya,* provide useful information on the theological concepts of Srivaiṣnavism. The selected portions of various commentaries, especially on the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* have provided insights into the community exegesis. The philosophical works of the prominent Srīvaiṣnava *ācāryas* especially Vēdānta

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[6] *Epigraphia Indica* XXXI, pp. 100-101.

Desika, Pillai Lokācārya and Maṇavāl Māmuṇi have importance for the post-Rāmānuja history of the community.

The *Oḷugū* literature is a major source of information. *Oḷugū* literally means 'procedure'. However, as a genre of text it has wide ranging meanings and applications. The word has been used to also signify genealogies like the Annaṇ *Tirumaḷisai Oḷugū*, Of interest are the *Kōyil Oḷugū* and *Tirumalai Oḷugū*, the chronicles of the temples at Śrīrangam and Tirupati respectively. These *Oḷugūs* provide genealogical account oft the priesthood, temple rituals and other procedural and organizational details. While writing about the lives of the *ācāryas* of Srivaisnavism, they provide political details too. From the structure of the *Oḷugūs*, it appears that they were written and compiled over a period. The accounts are not chronologically arranged. Scholars usually are of the view that the *Oḷugūs* are later works, perhaps of the eighteenth century and are not very reliable as they use the eighteenth century categories of Vaṭakalais and Teṇkalais to present a history of Srivaisnavaism.

3.Another set of literature associated with medieval Srivaisnavism is the hagiographical literature, i.e. the *guruparamparā* that are panegyrics of the apostolic lines. The *Divyasūricaritam*, which is considered the earliest influenced the subsequent hagiographies, the *Ārāyirappaḍi Guruparamparāprabhāvam* (*Guruparamparā 6,000*) by Piṇpaḷagiya Perumāḷ Jīyar and the *Mūāyirappaḍi Guruparamparāprabhāvam* (*Guruparamparā 3000*) by one of the *jīyars* of Brahmantantrasvatantra Jīyar of Parkāla Matha . These two hagiographies belong to the Vaṭakalai and the Teṇkalai sects respectively. Further, the *guruparampāras* of the *mathas* have provided information on the apostolic succession and the *matha* organization and activities. One of the most important sets of *guruparamparā* that need to be examined are those dealing with the *matha* lineages for example, the *Śrīranganārāyaṇa Jīyar Guruparamparā* narrates the succession of Śrīrahganārayaṇa Jīyar Adinam at Śrīrangam and the *Uttamanambi Vaṁśāvali* gives a detailed succession list of the Uttamanambis and throws light on the institutions of the *ācāryapuruṣa*, that is the sectarian leaders.

II

Chapter One of the theses discusses the historical context in which the various religious identities were crystallizing and forming a stable reference point for a society that was undergoing flux, especially from the tenth –eleventh century onwards. **Chapter Two** will discuss that how in the post-twelfth century a conscious attempt was made to develop a tradition that was essential for the emerging community consciousness. This tradition was articulated in various genres of the Śrīvaiṣṇava texts, viz., the hagiographies (*guruparamparās*), commentaries (*vyākhyānas*), hymns (the four thousand hymns of the Alvars and the *stotras*) and temple texts (*sthalapurāṇas*, *sthalamahātmyas* and *oḷugus*). These texts became a part of the Śrivaiṣṇava canon. The chapter will also discuss the structure and language of the textual tradition, ideology and the specific nature of the individual genres of the texts. This chapter highlights the community's attempts to construct a past that was in congruence with its contemporary needs. **Chapter three** focuses on the institutional structures, the changes in their nature and the reasons for such changes which were associated with the polity and the economy. There will be a discussion on three kinds of affiliations *viz.* uniformity, multiplicity and duality. On what basis did the schism occur and what were its sociological implications will be discussed. Schism just does not imply the Vaṭakalai - Teṅkalai conflict, but also takes into account the regional influences in Śrīvaiṣṇavism particularly with the development of the vernacular. Since theology, religious canons and temples are integral to this process; it will be necessary to take texts and inscriptions into considerations. Emphasis will be on those texts that are very important for the Śrīvaiṣṇava community at large, for the *maṭhas* in particular. Temples of Kāñcipuram, Śrīrangam, Ahōbilam, Tirupati and Mēḷkōṭe will be analyzed for they are the focus of every Śrīvaiṣṇava devotee and arena of all the religious activities. *Ācārya* families who influenced the Śrīvaiṣṇava identity will be discussed. Of importance are the Tātācaryas, Kandāḍais and the Uttamanambis. **Chapter four** discusses how the concept of sacred geography developed in the text, and culminated into a strong institutional network with large structural shrines and consolidated the notion of pilgrimage binding the community together in a spatial sacred network of interaction. Hence, the institutional environment played an important role in shaping the community identity.

II

Srīvaiṣṇava historiography has not contributed significantly to the understanding of the community identities. Lack of translated works as well as the preoccupation with biographical writings of great Srivaisnava saints has inhibited an analysis of the evolution of community consciousness. However, these works though lacking critical insights, have provided useful information. The biographies of Ālvārs, Rāmānuja and Vēdānta Dēśika form a large part of the writing in the history of Srivaisnavism.[7] In fact, it is through the delineation of the profile of these saints that the history of the community is projected. The saints were the community and their activities defined the community. Such a study does not take into consideration the non-religious groups within Srivaisnavism and the role they played in the history of the community and its identities. In many ways, these works have not progressed beyond the hagiographies, which have been the sources for most of these studies. T. A. Goinath Rao's article reflected such a trend for the first time in writing about the Ālvārs.[8] A brief summary of the hagiographies is appended in the end of the article. The role of hagiographies as a source for history writing cannot be ignored. However, they should be located in the historical context in which they were composed. The works on the Ālvārs feel that the hagiographical details corresponded to the social reality, which was usually not the case. For, the details in these biographies were written with a particular religious world-view that also helped in consolidating it. Another issue that has preoccupied the writings on the Ālvārs is the fixing of their respective chronology. This has given rise to endless arguments and controversies that often reflected the sectarian bias of the authors themselves, most of whom have been the Srīvaiṣṇavas. The obsession with the astronomical dates and fixing the position of the Ālvārs in the list take up much space and do not yield any results.

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[7] For instance, on the Ālvārs, see, ,Alkondavilli Govindacharya, *The Holy Lives of the Azhvars or The Dravida Saints*, Bombay, 1982 (repint); on Ramanuja , see the bibliography for details; on Vedanta Desika, see *Satyavrata Singh, Vedanta Desika. A Study,* Varanasi, 1958.
[8] T. Gopinatha Rao, *The History of Srīvaiṣṇavas,* Madras, 1932.

Such sectarian biases are evident while discussing the biography of Vēdanta Deśika, who was the spiritual head of the Vaṭakalai sect of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community.[9]

What has attracted some of the scholars towards Srivaisnavism is the personality of Rāmānuja. The delineation of an egalitarian outlook had an intellectual as well as popular appeal These scholars influenced by the tradition agree to the credits attributed to Rāmānuja for bringing together all the scattered ideas under one organization and philosophy. The most valuable contribution supposed to have been made by Rāmānuja was the doctrine of *ubhay vedanta* which was the exaltation of the Tamil hymns of the Alvars to the Vedic status. Popularly known as 'Tamil Veda' or 'Drāviḍa Veda' it was to be sung, along with the Vedic hymns. This was of immense significance for the Srivaisnava community as it broadened the social base. The followers come from both the sections of the linguistic and cultural domains, i.e. Tamil as well as Sanskrit. Because of this, Rāmānuja is credited for a broad outlook and his so-called "catholicity". These ideas are reflected in N.Jagadeesan's *"History of Srivaisnavism in Tamil country (post-Rāmānuja).*[10]His work is factually very useful, but lacks a critical insight. According to Jagadeesan, Rāmānuja effected some "democratic reforms" of "provocative nature" which undermined the "prestige of caste".This was done, according to the author, very carefully without breaking away from the Hindu mainstream. Vedic texts were still the basis of the philosophy of the sect.

However, the question arises as to the portrayal of Rāmānuja's and his implementation of the so-called 'democratic reforms' has any historical basis. It is significant that Rāmānuja never wrote in Tamil but only in Sanskrit. Neither did he write a commentary on *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham.* Although, Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition maintains that the immediate disciple of Rāmānuja, Piḷḷān was commissioned by him to write a

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[9]V. Rangachari, "The Successors of Rāmānuja and the Growth of Sectarianism among the Śrī-Vaishnavas." *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24, 1914-1915, pp.102-136; idem."The Life and Times of Śrī Vēdanta Deśika" *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24: 277-312.

[10]N. Jagadeesan. 1977. *History of Srivaishnavism in the Tamil Country (Post Ramanuja).* Madurai: Koodal Publishers.

commentary on *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* there is no evidence to establish this. Hence, Srivaisnavism was not at all egalitarian in outlook. Over a period, the hierarchy in religious order intensified imparting a conservative and elitist character to the entire community. Even if one agrees with the tradition, it can be discerned that the reforms were not very egalitarian. It appears that Rāmānuja did not intend to negate the *varna* system. This is evident in the temple administration organised by him. The inclusion of the *Śāttāda mudalis*- non-brahmana groups in the temple services and the Prabandham was a protest against Vedic orthodoxy and the exclusiveness of the *brāhmanas* in their access to divine grace and salvation, and not against *varna* per se.

Despite several innovations, the Śrīvaisnava community never was egalitarian. They drew inspiration from the ancient traditions of the Vedas and always highlighted a Sanskritc past. Manipravāla that represented the *ubaya vedantic* ideology was replete with Sanskrit idioms. The representation of the Ālvārs from a diverse social background that included *brāhmanas*, non-*brahmanas* and a woman did not reflect their social ideology. The subsequent saints, i.e. the *ācāryas* were *brāhmans* and a *brahmana* always presided over the *matha,* unlike the Saiva *mathas,* whose pontifical heads were always non-*brahmanas.* Therefore, over a period, the hierarchy in the religious order intensified imparting a conservative and elitist character to the community. It did not emerge as a protest movement like the Vīraśaivas and progressively used Sanskrit as the language of its philosophical texts and remained exclusive.

The lack of research on the on post Rāmānuja history has further made the historical understanding of the community complex. The researches have primarily been occupied with the analysis o the schism of the community into the Vatakalai and Tenkalai sects. Patricia Mumme's work, *The Śrīvaisnava Theological Dispute: Manavālamā..ni and Vēdantadēśika* points to the lack of inspirational evidences regarding the formation of Vatakalai and Tenkalai sects in the post-Rāmānuja period.[11]The schism leading to this

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[11]Paricia Mumme, *The Śrīvaisnqvq Theological Dispute: Manavāla Māmuni and Vedāntadēśika,* Madras, 1984.

development was characteristic of eighteenth century, but undoubtedly had its roots in the past. According to Mumme in the thirteenth century, the Srīrangam *ācāryas* were propagating the Tamil hymns of the Ālvārs, through commentaries in the popular Maṇipravāla style, whereas the *ācāryas* at Kāñcī concentrated on popularising the *Viśiṣṭadvaita Vedanta* in formal Sanskrit.[12]There were many debates and different interpretations emerged. Hence, it was a theological dispute and not a sectarian one. Initially, the relationship between the both was complementary and in their own manner, each *ācārya* was trying to promote the integrity of the faith. 'The bitter struggle that broke out in the eighteenth century would have certainly dismayed both the *ācāryas* in whose name it was carried out'.[13]Mumme's work provides certain useful insights to understand the doctrinal differences between Vēdāntadēśika and Maṇavāla Māma ṇi. However, it does not take into account the question of the temple authority and its related problems that influenced and intensified the dispute.

Arjun Appadurai's book *Worship and Conflict Under Colonial Rule* utilizes Victor Turner's model of 'social dramas' as areas of conflict to understand the problem of a single South Indian temple in the British period. [14]In this book, the second chapter dealing with the development of Srivaisnavism in the Vijayanagar period is of relevance for this dissertation. According to Appadurai, in the fourteenth century, the scholastic dispute entered the 'political arenas of the temples and the royal courts', the explanation for which lies in the socio-political developments of the Vijayanagar period. With the establishment of the Vijayanagar rule, there was an influx of Telugu warriors. Simultaneously, within Srivaisnavism, Prabandhic school emerged giving preference to Tamil hymns over Sanskrit ones and emphasized the role of *guru* as the mediator between God and devotee. These popular Tamil ideas made the sect broader in outlook attracting the Telugu warriors who needed to establish their legitimacy. They donated to

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[12]Manipravala means Tamil words interspersed with Sanskrit words as ruby and coral (ruby –*mani*; *pravala* – coral) are strung alternatively in a necklace.

[13]Patricia Mumme, 1984, p.7

[14]Arjun Appadorai, *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule*, New Delhi, 1981.

the temple through these sectarian leaders whose important role in assisting the devotee to attain *prapatti* was another dimensions drawing these warriors and other devotees. Sectarian leaders of Sanskritic school though they were involved in the temple-related activities, emerged with a counter institutional base in 1500 A.D. By linking themselves to the Vijayanagar kings. Since the Prabandhic school was already established in setting up their institutional bases in Kannada and Telugu areas and in some temple centres in the northern-most part of Tamil country. According to Appadurai, the most significant feature of these two schools was the temple, which was ritually essential for the legitimacy of the authority of several new ruling classes. The powerful sectarian leaders more often were the intermediaries through whom the kings made gifts got back a share that signified 'honours' and 'authority'. These rulers to have a hold over the temple administration in turn bestowed *matha* leaders with power. This was the 'redistributive process' at the centre of which was the deity who was 'the paradigmatic sovereign'.[15] For Appadurai, this 'redistributive process' was the essence of the entire power structure in the temples.

The arguments given above are undoubtedly very cogent. However, Appadurai has overlooked some issues. Firstly, did all the Telugu warriors donate to the temples that had a Prabhandhic tradition. Secondly, who were the political groups in the Kannada and Telugu areas that favoured the Sanskritic School. Thirdly, he fails to take into consideration those grants that were made directly by Telugu warriors and Vijayanagar chieftains to the deity in the same temples, not through the *matha* leaders, but through a priest who did not belong to the *matha*. For always, the *matha* leader was not the priest. (These three issues are a part of the research and will be discussed in the thesis). Finally, although Appadurai had been cautious to avoid the terms Vatakalai and Tenkalai, but his use of the terms 'Prabandhic School' and 'Sanskritic School' is problematic. For, they are used as blanket terms without bringing out the distinctions of the sects. The *mathas* no doubt emphasized Tamil or the Sanskritic hymns but they did not consciously come together to form a 'school' based on common tradition.

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[15]Arjun Appadurai, 1981 Chapter II. P.56.

The identity of Śrīvaiṣṇavas as Vaṭakalais and Teṉkalais is the product of a long historical process. Understanding this process is one of the main concerns of this study. It has been commonly perceived by the scholars on Srivaisnavism that in the twelfth and thirteenth century, Vēdānta Dēśika and Maṇavāḷa Māmuṉi, two important Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas* developed strong doctrinal differences. The issues were mainly two. One, was the importance of Tamil hymns of the Āḻvārs *vis-à-vis* the Vedic Sanskrit ones. Vedāntadēśika emphasized on the importance of Sanskrit hymns, whereas Maṇavāḷa Māmuṉi emphasized on the Tamil ones. Two, was the nature of *prapatti*. Vēdānta Dēśika considered *prapatti* an effort on the part of the devotees. On the other hand, Maṇavāḷa Māma·ṉī emphasized the need of a *guru* (or a teacher) for helping the devotees to achieve *prapatti*. According to these scholars, this schism initially notional became institutionalized in the temples from fourteenth century onwards, when political and social changes were taking place with the establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire (1336 AD). Against this background emerged a cohesive Tenkalai sect with Maṇavāḷa Māma.ṉi as its spiritual *ācārya* and Śrīrangam in the south (of Tamil Nadu) as the religious centre. On the other hand, Vaṭakalai sect with Vēdāntadēśika as their spiritual head concentrated at Kāñcīpuram, (north of Tamil Nadu). Therefore, both Teṉkalais and Vaṭakalais represented the Tamil and the Sanskritic tradition within Srivaisnavism respectively.

While these issues have been the basis of the sectarianism in the community itself, the historiography on Srivaisnavism projects this sectarianism without taking into account the historical context. The inscriptional records as well as various hagiographical texts do not indicate or mention the formation of two distinct sects called Vaṭakalai or Teṉkalai in the fourteenth century in favour of a Vaṭakalai or a Teṉkalai. It is only in the British archival records of the eighteenth century that these two terms clearly occur, in the context of disputes over temple authority when the decision was taken in favour of Vaṭakalais or Teṉkalais as the case may be. It is true that the philosophical treatises of Vēdāntadēśika and Maṇavālama migal reflect the above said differences. Nevertheless, these differences were only notional and did not lead to the formation of two distinct sects

in the fourteenth century as has been projected by the historiographical works. It can be concluded based on the Srivaisnava religious literature and inscriptional data that during this period Srivaisnavism had probably developed a duality in its religious tradition. This duality was a result of the interaction between the Tamil and Sanskrit tradition in the theology and was also reflected in the practical sphere of caste and rituals. Nevertheless, this duality did not crystallize into a distinct Vatakalai or Tenkalai sect.

It was the institution of the *matha* that reflected sectarian characteristics and can be considered analogous to a sect. These *mathas* competed for power and economic interests and tried to ideologically assert themselves. They were of two kinds. One that emphasized the Sanskritic tradition and two, which emphasized the Tamil tradition. Each traced their lineage to Vēdantadēśika and Manavālamā ̣nigal respectively. In the early years of colonial rule, the British Government decided the temple disputes. Perhaps, then the need arose to establish distinct sectarian identities cutting across the regional frontiers based on common interests. Therefore, the *mathas* that were Sanskritic came to be identified as Vatakalai and the Tamil ones as Tenkalai. Thus, in order to understand the evolution of the community and the development of the community consciousness and the subsequent identities, it becomes essential to analyze the historical processes that interacted and influenced the community structure.

SITES VISITED
FOR THE STUDY

Ahobilam ▲■

Tirumala ▲ ▲ Tiruchchanur
Tirupati ▲■/
■

Sriperumbudur ⟶■ ▲
Kancipuram ⟶▶

Melkote ■ ▲
Mysore ■
■ ▲ Tirukkovalur

R. Kaveri
▲■
Srirangam

LEGENDS
▲ TEMPLE
■ MATHA

Srivilliputtur ▲

Tirukkurungudi ■▲
Nanguneri ■▲
Alvar Tirunagari ■▲
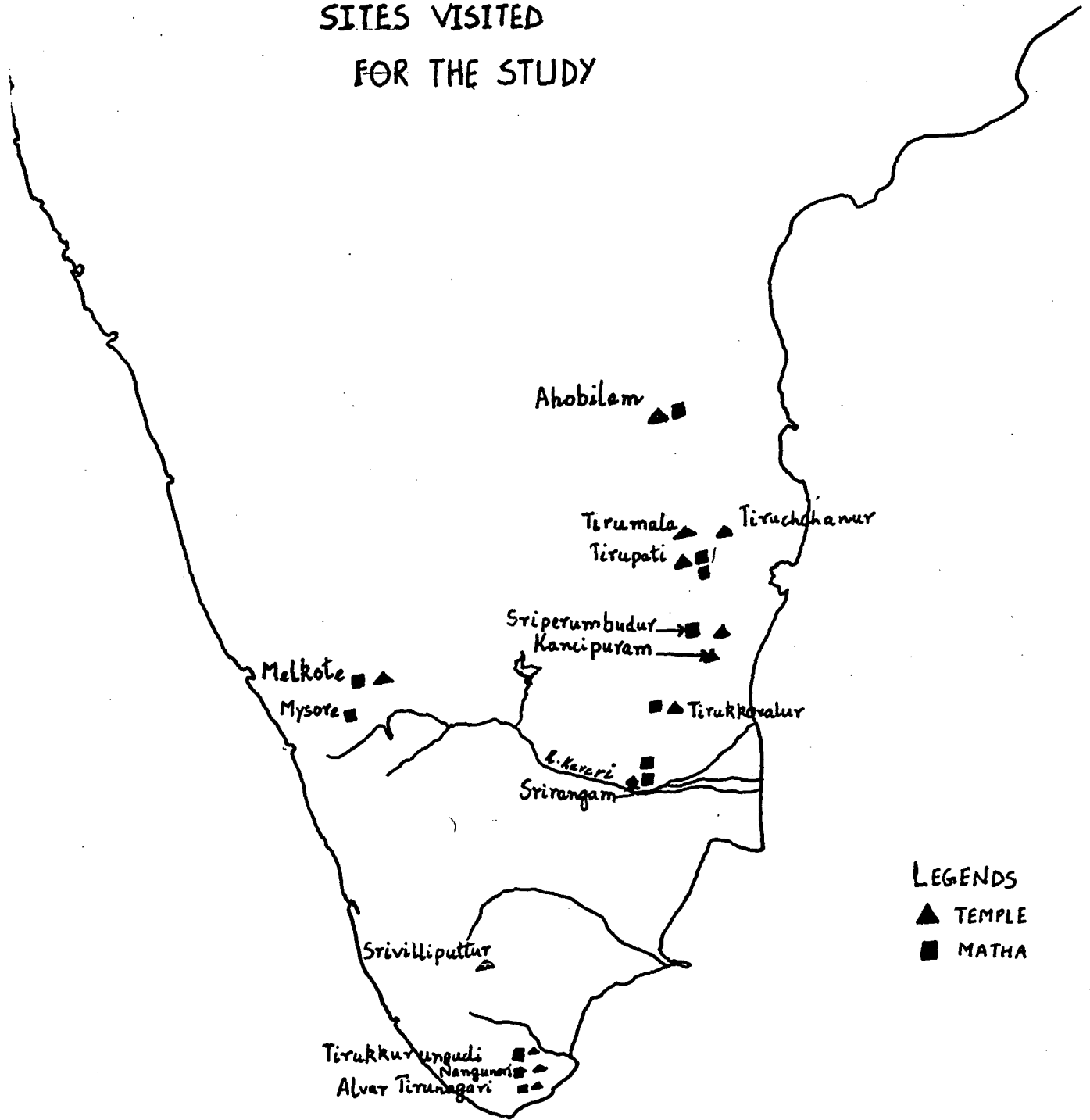
CHAPTER I

RELIGIOUS TRENDS IN SOUTH INDIA AND THE RISE OF COMMUNITY CONSCIOUSNESS: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Religious developments in medieval South India, especially from eleventh-twelfth century onwards were characterized by a strong degree of community consciousness. The articulation of this consciousness was discernible in two types of interaction: within the community itself where attempts were made to broaden the social base and adopt a universalistic and integrative approach; and when the community interacted with other religious traditions. The basis of this community consciousness was the religious ideology articulated in the respective textual traditions by the ideologues of the community who usually belonged to the upper castes. While on one hand, interpretations and commentaries of the religious exegesis in the written texts became the elitist channel for transmission; on the other hand, rituals, festivals and communal singing of the hymns in the temples represented the popular dissemination of the exegesis. The development and consolidation of the pilgrimage network further created a spatial and a sacred geography for the community to interact and identify with, thereby further strengthening the consciousness.

These religious trends were a culmination of various historical processes that began with the mutual interaction between the northern epic-puranic forms and the Tamil folk and elite elements.[1] Such an interface led to the absorption of the latter and the establishment of the puranic paradigm as the dominant mode of religious expression by the seventh century AD. Simultaneously, a significant theological development took place with the evolution of the concept of *bhakti*.[2] Derived from the root word, *bhaj* in Sanskrit,

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[1] MGS Narayanan and K. Veluthat,"The *Bhakti* Movement in South India." in *Indian Movements: Aspects of Dissent, Protest and Reforms*, ed. S.C Malik, Simla; Kesavan Veluthat, "Religious Symbols in Political Legitimation. The Case of Early Medieval South India," *Social Scientist* 21, 1-2,1993, pp. 23-33; R. Champakalakshmi, "From Devotion and Dissent to Dominance: The *Bhakti* of the Tamil Ālvārs and Nāyaṉārs," in *Tradition, Dissent and Ideology: Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar*, R. Champakalakshmi and S. Gopal, ed., New Delhi, 1996, pp. 135-138.

[2] *Bhakti* is used here in a generic sense, although there are variations in interpreting *bhakti* that forms the basis of several devotional communities. There are several case studies, some of them are: Karen Schomer and W.H. Mcleod, *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, Delhi, 1987; A.K Ramanujan, *Speaking of Siva*, Baltimore, 1973; idem, *Hymns for the Drowning: Poems for Viṣṇu by Nammālvār*, New Delhi, 1993. For a comparative perspective, see, K.A.N. Sastri, *Development of Religion in South India*, Delhi, 1963 and Krishna Sharma, *Bhakti and Bhakti Movement, A New Perspective, A Study in the History of Ideas*, New Delhi, 1987.
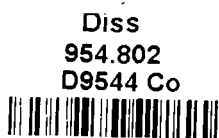
bhakti implied, "partaking (of god), participation, loving devotion to a personal god".[3] Situated in the changing material context, this theistic ideology crystallized for the first time into Tamil regional cults of worship of Śiva and Viṣṇu. The hymns of the *Nāyaṉārs* and *Āḷvārs*, the early Tamil Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava saints respectively, expressing the devotion in Tamil, provided for the first time a sacred status to a vernacular, i.e. Tamil that became an alternative to Sanskrit as the scriptural language.[4]Characterized by emotional devotionalism, the saints launched a diatribe against the caste hierarchy and used the temple motif to popularize the religious ideas. The hymns also reflected the beginnings of a sectarian philosophy that emphasized the superiority of Śiva and Viṣṇu and a negative consciousness of other religious traditions, particularly, the heterodox sects of Jainism and Buddhism. These hymnal attitudes became the precursor for the construction of the Saiva and Śrīvaiṣṇava communities from tenth century onwards, when both the sects developed their respective philosophies, scriptures and institutional organizations. Interaction with other religious traditions further sharpened this consciousness and made them exclusivistic. The hierarchies of caste and ritual status were mitigated and inclusivism forged new bonds of community solidarity. The godhead of Śiva and Viṣṇu inspired the devotional communities, viz., Vīraśaivism, Śaiva Siddhānta, Madhvaism, the cult of Viṭhoba and Vallabhācārya and so on, which emerged prominently in the fourteenth century.

These ideas will be analyzed in this chapter, which is divided into four sections. Section one will focus on the early evolution of the ideas of *bhakti* in the fifth and sixth centuries. Section two analyses the religious process from the sixth to the ninth century that culminated in the formation of the Puranic sects of Saivism and Vaisnavism. Section three will discuss the process of community construction and its ramifications for identity against the context of political patronage and marginalisation from the ninth to the beginning of the twelfth century. Section four will focus on the developments from the end of the twelfth century to the seventeenth century which was a period of consolidation of various cults into communities, for instance, the cult of Murukaṉ and Amman. This period

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[3]A.K. Ramanujan, 1993, fn.2, pp. 103-104; Indira V. Peterson, *Poems to Śiva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints*, Delhi, 1997,fn.4, p.4.

[4]For details see, A.K. Ramanujan, 1973, pp. 37-48; idem, 1993, pp.126-134; Indira V. Peterson, 1997,.fn.6, p.4.The relegation of Tamil to a scriptural status and an alternative to Sanskrit will be discussed in Chapter III.

coincided with the decline of Cōḷas, shifting of power relationship and finally establishment of Vijayanagar Empire in 1370 AD and integration of Kannada, Telugu and Tamil linguistic regions. The choice of such a long span becomes important as it provides a historical background to the themes discussed in the dissertation. A discussion on the political and socio-economic trends will provide the contextual framework within which these religious developments were situated. The Tamil region, which currently includes Tamil Nadu, southern parts Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and the Śrīvaiṣṇava community will be the focus of the study. It is recognized that a broader treatment of the religious development of the entire peninsular India is no doubt useful, but is beyond the scope of this work.[5]

I. The Beginning

The genesis of the religious processes that culminated into medieval community consciousness can be traced from the fourth to the sixth century AD.[6]Documented primarily in various texts that are generically called the Cankam, these processes reflected a transition of the contemporary social formation.[7]Characterized by kin based society and pre-state polity of descent groups organized into chiefdoms, plundering raids and predatory exactions emerged as the mechanism for acquiring and redistributing power and resources in this social formation.[8]These elements influenced the literary themes of the *akam* (love)

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[5]Such a study should not only include religious communities classified under the broad rubric of Hinduism today, but also those communities that belong to the religious system of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. K.A.N. Sastri has admirably attempted such a study. For reference, see, K.A.N.Sastri, 1967.

[6]The information in this section is based on the following works: K.A.N. Sastri, 1967; Kamil Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan: On the Tamil Literature of South India*, Leiden, 1973; idem, *A History of Tamil Literature*, Wiesbaden, 1974; idem, *Tamil Literature*, Leiden/ Cologne, 1975;A.K.Ramanujan, 1993; R.Chamapakalakshmi, *Vaisnava Iconography in the Tamil Country*, New Delhi, 1981; idem, 1996; idem, "State and Economy: South India. Circa A.D. 400-1300, in *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History*, ed. Romilla Thapar, New Delhi, 1995, 275-317; Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti. The Early History of Krsna Devotion in South India*. Delhi, 1983, Part Three; 1993. Rajan Gurukkal, "Towards the Voice of Dissent: Trajectory of Ideological Transformation in Early South India." *Social Scientist* 21,1-2:2-22, 1993; idem, "The Beginnings of the Historic Period: The Tamil South," in *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History*, Romila Thapar ed., New Delhi, 1995, 246-274; Herman Tieken, "Old Tamil Cankam literature and the so-called Cankam period." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 40,3,2003: 247-278.

[7]Some historians have interpreted this transition as a "dark age" or the Kali Age, with the decline of the three ruling lineages of Cōla, Cēra and the Pāṇḍiyas.For details, see, K.A.N.Sastri, 1967. For a contrary opinion, see, R.Champakalakshmi, 1995,p.277-279; Rajan Gurukkal, 1995,p. and Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, Delhi, 1979, pp.75-89.

[8] For further details, see, Rajan Gurukkal, 1995,pp.264-265.

and *puram* (war) in the early Cankam texts. These texts articulated a heroic ideology replete with eulogies of warfare and plunder personified in an ideal hero *(cāṉrōṉ)*, who was a perfect warrior and a perfect lover.[9]

However, systemic contradictions emerged in the predatory economy that generated the forces of transformation.[10]The narrow resource base due to limited agrarian developments and limited labour potential based upon kin networks could not meet the economic requirements. Further, systemic crisis accelerated with the distribution of the conquered *ūrs* (villages) amongst the warrior chieftains, thus creating an alien superior right over a descent group of agriculturists, transcending kinship relations that were the basis of 'co-operative farming and collective appropriation.'[11]The gift of *ūrs* to the *brāhmaṇas*, who were mostly bards and poets and few during this period, created a class of non-agriculturists, (i.e. the *brāhmaṇas)*, who got the land tilled by the cultivating peasants. The *brāhmaṇa* household i.e. *parapannac-ceri* in such *ūrs* became the centre of the Vedi-Sastraic discourse with the rudiments of caste system. Therefore, in both these settlements types, an asymmetrically structured society based on hierarchical landed rights emerged by the fifth century.[12]This transition to a new socio-economic milieu was reflected in a new genre of texts of this period, the *Kīḻkaṇakku.*[13]These texts articulated the ideas of pacifism and peaceful co-existence, which had already occurred in a marginal fashion in the early Cankam texts as a dissent to the dominant ideology of war and plunder.[14]Now within the fifth-sixth century context, such a dissent took the shape of a hegemonic ideology that complemented the developing agricultural society.

These processes of transition influenced the religious orientation. Although, the Cankam texts did not delineate any formal religious community before the fifth century, the notion of the sacred was articulated in terms like *kaṭavul* and *ananku*, both probably

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[9] Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, pp.129-134.
[10]Rajan Gurrukal, 1993,pp. 9-13.
[11]Ibid. p.13.
[12]Archaeological evidence comprises of two sets of Tamil Brahmi inscription s from Pulānkuricchī that refer to the land transactions for the settlement of *brāhmaṇa* villages with rights, privileges and obligations of land holders, lease holders and cultivators. For further details, see Rajan Gurukkal, 1993, p.13 and 1995, p.269
[13]Ibid, 1993,p.12 and fn.28 and ibid, 1995, p.268.
[14]Ibid, pp. 8-10. Before the fifth entury, the economy was dominated by pastoral agriculture that generated the system of plunder. However, other forms of subsistence existed. One of them was the plough agriculture, total anti-theses to the predatory economy. This form of production being marginal suffered in this milieu of constant warfare. Thus, the dissent referred here in the text was articulated by the agricultural mode of production.

implying the divine form to be worshipped, '...which can posses a person in emotional agitation....'[15]Further, *kantu* and *potiyil* (a pillared hall), probably prototypes of a temple implied a sacred space.[16]The term *kōyil* etymologically signified the house of a chief and not a temple. The textual descriptions of the sounds of prayers, fragrance of flowers and incense, light of the lamps and a perpetual festive ambience highlighted a sensuous and somewhat unstructured ways of worship. However, by fourth century the literary standardization of the divine took place with the association of religion with the *tiṇai* tradition in the famous grammatical treatise, the *Tolkāppiyam*:

> The region where the forests grow which is liked by Māyōṇ, the region of the mountains with clouds, liked by Murukaṇ, the region of the fresh-waters which Vēntaṇ (= Indra) likes, the region of the vast sands (of the beaches) which Varuṇaṇ likes: these are called in the order mentioned here, *mullai, kuriñci, marutam, and neytal.*[17]

The concept of *tinai* comprised of five eco-zones, each with a distinct populace, subsistence pattern and a divine form. *Mullai*, the classified name for the pastoral tracts, inhabited by the *maṛavars* (warriors) and the *iṭaiyar* (pastoralists) was the divine locale for Māyōṇ. *Kuriñci*, a generic term for the hilly eco-zone comprising of *vetar* and *kuravar* (the hunters) with shifting cultivation as the main occupation worshipped Murukan as the god. Ventāṇ was the god of *marutam*, the wetland between the river valleys, and a focus of agrarian activities by the *ulavar* (agriculturists). Varuṇaṇ was the god of the *neytal*, the littoral area populated by the *paratavar* (the fishing community). Lastly, *pālai* representing dry arid zones with the hunting-gathering tribes worshipped the female divine form, Korṛavai. Of all the *tinai* deities, Murukaṇ followed by Māyōṇ have maximum textual references. The conception of Murukaṇ, compared to Māyōṇ registered a greater influence of the heroic ideology. Literally meaning one who symbolizes youth and beauty, Murukaṇ was worshipped in threshing grounds, forests, market places, trees (especially the *kaḍambu* tree), battle grounds and so on, indicating a strong degree of localization.[18]Compared to Murukaṇ, the divine form of Māyōṇ registered elitist tendencies. By third century, Māyōṇ

[15]Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, p.131-134.

[16] .... the public hall with the pillar, where the wayfarers [used to] rest, and where captive girls, after plunging into the fresh water tank, would kindle the 'perpetual' lamp at twilight, and where many [people] would cross over the ground prepared with cow dung, and beautified with flowers would worship.
Pattuppāṭṭu 246-9. Quoted from Friedhelm Hardy, 1983,p. 137.

[17]*Tolkāppiyam*, Sūtra 951,III, 1,5. Quoted from Friedhelm Hardy, 1983,pp.158-159.

[18]K.A.N Sastri, 1967 pp.12-34; Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, pp.135-137.

was associated with northern Krsnaism/Vaisnavism, though adapted to the southern milieu. For instance, the texts equated Māyōṇ with Kṛṣṇa and river Yamunā, one of the important locales of Kṛṣṇa episodes with Toḻunai.[19]Māyōṇ was also the royal symbol of the two ruling lineages in this period, viz., the Pāṇḍiyas of Madurai in the southern part and Tondaiman of Kāñcī on the northern part of Tamiḻakam. It should be noted that the Pandiya region, i.e. Pāṇḍianāḍu was the centre and Kāñcī in the Toṇḍaināḍu region was the fringe of the Cankam culture.[20]Significantly, Māyōṇ was not associated with the other two ruling lineages, viz., the Cōḻas of Uraiyūr and Ceras of Vañcī.[21]Further, the Cankam texts referred to a sophisticated place of worship of Māyōṇ, which was the temple at Vehkā in Kāñcī.[22]Both Murukaṇ and Māyōṇ were associated with a specific form of worship, veriyāṭu and kuravai respectively, which were emotionally charged ritual dances involving the participation of all the men and women. However, compared to the kuravai, veriyatu was more ecstatic and spontaneous.

Therefore, the conception of the divine within the confines of the earthly reality represented the eco-zones, demographic composition and the god as a part of the same complex. Such a representation highlighted the sensuous, Tamil and the folk elements and influenced the religious world-view of the fifth and the sixth century. There was shift from the anthropocentric forms of worship of the previous centuries to the notion of a divine as a transcendental god. The new religiosity delineated in the late Cankam (or post Cankam) texts, viz., the Cilappadikāram, Kalittokai, Paripāṭal and Tirumurukārṛuppaṭai produced certain ideas for the first time, which were subsequently carried forward through a network of transmission. The northern epic-Puranic ideas influenced the tinai perception of the divine and transformed the localized deities into universal transcendental

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[19]Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, p.119 and pp.217-221.According to Hardy, the bards, travelers, troupes of actors and Vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇas were the carriers of Kṛṣṇa myths delineated in the northern texts like the Bālacarita and Harivaṁśa.
[20]Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, pp.153-156.
[21]The Cankam texts refer to three ruling lineages, whose political domains coincided with the eco-zones. Cōḻas, with Cōlanāḍu as their sphere of influence and capital Uraiyūr dominated the Kāverī basin, i.e. maruṭam. Pāṇḍiyanāḍu corresponded to the mullai and pālai tiṇai, which comprised of the south central zones, including the seacoast. Cēranāḍu, the political realm of the Ceras was the kuṟiñci tiṇai that corresponded to the area from the Western Ghats to the Arabian Sea. For details, see, Rajan Guruukal, 1995,p.64.
[22]Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, p.154 and p.230.

The northern epic-Puranic ideas influenced the *tinai* perception of the divine and transformed the localized deities into universal transcendental godheads.[23]Murukan was fused with Skanda, the Aryan god of war. Māl/Māyōn was identified with Viṣṇu. Veṇṭān and Varuṇa of the *marutam* and *neytal tiṇais* were gradually marginalized and in the subsequent period do not find any mention. Korravai, the goddess of *pālai* was important but the process of her absorption in the Śaiva pantheon as Durga, the consort of Śiva already begins. Interestingly, Śiva though mentioned does not find a prominent place, as he was never a *tinai* deity.[24]The interaction between the autochthonous and Puranic elements introduced the motif of Puranic myths. The various heroic deeds of Skanda now identified with Murukan with his iconographic features of six faces and six arms occurred in the late Cankam texts.[25]The combination of northern and southern motifs manifested in the various incarnation (*avatāra*) myths of Māyōn/Kṛṣna, the Vāmana and the Varāha being the most popular one. By the sixth century, Māyōn with his incarnation myths was the god, cowherd hero and the lover of *gopīs* and once again emerged as the as the royal symbol of the Pāṇḍya and the Pallavas. However, the northern Puranic influence did not dilute the erotic and earthy character of the two divinities. The Upaniṣadic normative ideology had not yet influenced the *akam* and the *puram* themes of an ideal hero.

The *Paripāṭal* and the *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* articulated for the first time a new devotional milieu.[26]The notion of a personal devotion, i.e. *bhakti* to the transcendental god appeared in the poems dedicated to Murukan and Māyōn in these texts. The poetical expressions were in the vernacular, i.e. Tamil, and thus providing for the first time an alternative to Sanskrit as the religious language. However, this idea of devotion was not yet a personalized experience that characterized the later *bhakti*. The references in the texts

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[23]The evidences for the folk and brahmanical interaction is seen in the colophons added to the classical poems,when they were systematically collected and compiled in the eighth and ninth centuries. For details, see, R.Champakalakshmi, 1996,pp.136-138; idem, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization: South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, New Delhi, 1996, p.60. S

[24] Ibid, pp.140-141; Indira V. Peterson, 1991,pp. 24,34-36.

[25] Radhika Rajamani, Society in Early Tamilakam, Ph. D Dissertation submitted to the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 1993,pp.336-350. For a comprehensive study of the Vaisnava iconography, see, R.Champakalakshmi, "Vaiṣṇava Concepts in Early Tamil Nadu." *Journal of Indian History:* 723-754,1975; idem, 1981.

[26] The *Paripāṭal* is one of the eight Cankam anthologies, the *ettuttokai*. The *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*, a guide poem to Murukan is a part of the latest classical anthology of ten songs, the *Pattuppāṭṭu*. In addition, was included in the Śaiva canon, the *Tirumuṛai*. For further details on these texts, see, A.K.Ramanujan, 1993,pp.109-117; R.Champakalaksmi, 1981,pp.2-35; idem, 1996,p.136; Friedhelm Hardy, 1983,202-207.

were objective and impersonal, where 'the god and the possession are described, framed, as "objects' seen from an onlooker's point of view; it is happening 'out there' to a shaman.'[27]

Bhakti became the ideational basis for introducing the temple milieu for the first time. The deity in the temple symbolized the immanence of the transcendental god. The immanence was mainly understood, as the divine will to reside amongst the people and remove their sorrows. However, the temple had not emerged as the institution of formal worship. Despite the normative influence, the sensual nature of worship, i.e., music, dance, fragrance of flowers and incense was retained and further highlighted. Hence, was the beginning of the ideas on the temple, which became central to the devotional culture from seventh century onwards. The *Paripāṭal* and the *Tirumurakārruppaṭai* conceptualized the temple with political overtones and now the temple was also referred to as the *kōyil*. This semantic similarity between the palace and the temple visualized the deity as the model Cankam king and the metaphors of power acquired now a religious character. In this case, the dynastic association of Māyōṇ facilitated the symbolic transference from the palace to the temple.

The temple milieu also delineated a sacred geography that became a spatial network for future religious interaction. The *Cilappadikāram* and the *Paripāṭal* referred to temples of Māyōṇ worship at Veḫkā (Kāñcī), Tirumāliruñcōlai (near Madurai), Āṭakamāṭam (the Golden Hall in the Cēra region), Puhār (Manivannan), Turutti (future Srīrangam) and Veṅgadam (future Tirupati). However, a notion of Vaiṣṇava geography did not emerge in these texts. The *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*, on the other hand, presented a sacred geography of the Murukaṇ temples at Parankunṛam (Madurai), Tiruvāvinankūṭi (Palaṇī), Tiruvērakam (Swāmīmalai),Palamutircōlai (Tiruchchēndūr), Cenkōṭu and Erakam. In this text, a sense of pilgrimage was visible in the description of these places by a Murukaṇ devotee, who directed others to go to the god's shrines and obtain his grace.[28]

Similarly, the sense of a community worshipping one god emerged only in association with Murukaṇ. Despite being visualized in the temple environ, his *tinai* association was not abandoned, highlighting his local popularity. The *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* clearly referred to

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[27]A.K.Ramanujan, 1993, p 119.
[28]Radhika Rajamani, 1993, p.336-338.

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a group of men and women intoxicated with liquor dancing in mad frenzy, indicating some form of popular cultic worship.[29] Beginnings of sectarianism can be discerned from the text that stated the superiority of Murukan over other gods. Unlike Murukan, Māyōn was still not integrated completely into the Tamil culture and his tiṇai association was often ignored in the texts.

Therefore, this new religiosity of the fifth-sixth centuries adapted and integrated the Sanskritic culture to the Tamil one. Although the Cankam texts refer to other religious traditions, viz., Jainism and Buddhism flourishing in the urban centers with the mercantile community as the main adherents, the Puranic-Tamil paradigm provided the basic structural frameworks for the development of a community. Religious thought, i.e., *bhakti*, a religious space defined in the notion of a temple, sacred geography promoting the idea of the pilgrimage and finally the collective mode of worship, evolved during this period, were elaborated, modified and adapted in the subsequent centuries by the different religious communities

II. The Hymnal Phase

From the seventh to ninth century, a personalized religious attitude emerged that focused on intense devotion to a single god, Śiva or Visnu.[30]This theistic belief popularly known as *bhakti* was expressed in the hymns of the early Śaiva and Vaisnava saints, the Nāyanāras and Alvārs respectively. Collectively known as the *Tēvāram* and the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*, these hymnal corpuses inspired the community exegesis of medieval Śaiva and Vaisnava religious traditions and registered the interaction and systematic synthesis of different pre-existing religious ideas.[31]These were:

(a) The Tamil folk religiosity characterized by sensuousness and emotional intensity.

(b) The anthropocentric idea of divinity conceived within the confines of the empirical world, i.e., the *tiṇai* concept.

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[29]A.K.Ramanujan, 1993, pp.115-117; Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, pp.131-178.

[30]For references, see note 1 and 2.

[31]Several meanings attributed to the *Tēvāram.*It has been generally accepted that *tev* is from *devagṛha*, i.e., house of the god and *vāram* is a song addressed to a deity, hence *tevārām*. It also implies 'private ritual worship' and has significance for the hymns, which were associated primarily with the temple worship.R.Champakalakshmi, 1996,p.141. The *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* literally means 'a corpus of four thousand hymns'. For details, see, chapter III.

© The structured literary conventions of the *akam* (love/interior) and *puram* (war/exterior) themes.

(d) The pan-Indian myths and the brahmanical concept of a transcendental absolute.

(e) The inchoate *bhakti* and its temple environ as articulated in the *Paripāṭal* and the *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*.

Thus, within the framework of their kind of *bhakti*, the Nāyanārs and Āḷvārs reworked these themes and projected their interpretations of the universal godhead. Characterized by intense emotional devotion and strong desire of mystical union with the god, the hymns emerged as the first concrete expression of religious sectarianism in Tamil. Although the Nāyanārs and Āḷvārs were contemporaries, sharing the same 'sacred universe of poetics', there were variations in their conceptualization of the sacred.[32]This imparted a distinct identity to both that culminated in the respective religious polarization by the eighth- ninth centuries.

A systematic development of Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* characterized by emotionalism and eroticism can be delineated in the Prabandhic corpus. Beginning from the simple devotion of the Mudal Āḷvārs, (the first three), viz., Poygai, Bhudatt and Pēy (fifth-sixth centuries), to the intense emotionalism of Nammāḷvār(seventh-eighth century), the *bhakti* finally culminated into Tirumangaiāḷvār's hymns(eighth-ninth century).[33]Comparatively, the *Tēvāram* hymns of the Nāyanārs (sixth to the eight century), viz., Tirujñānacampantar (Campantar), Tirunāvukkaracar (Appar), and Cuntaramurtī (Cuntarar) did not represent such a systematic development of *bhakti*.[34]Unlike Māyōṇ/Viṣṇu, Śiva was not a *tiṇai* deity. Therefore, the *puram* or the public poetry with its ideal of a hero personified in the Cankam king provided the material for the Śaiva *bhakti*. The Nāyanārs conceptualized Śiva as the warrior god, fighting battles and warding away evils. The local roots of Śiva were highlighted by associating his achievements with specific sites, in this case primarily the Kāvēri valley, whose explicit descriptions formed an important part of the hymnal content. Further motifs of localization that glossed over the lack of a Cankam lineage were, Śiva in various shrines situated amongst human settlements, Śiva as a part of the origin

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[32]Indira Peterson, 1991, p.6
[33]Fried helm Hardy, 1983,pp.281-446; R.Champakalakshmi, 1996, pp.138-140. An analysis of the Āḷvār's *bhakti* is presented in Chapter III.
[34]Indira Peterson, 1991, pp. 33-41; R. Champakalakshmi, 1996, pp.141-142.

myths of these places and frequent reference to him being a part of a particular locale (for instance, Lord of Annāmalai).[35]Finally, by the seventh-eighth centuries, in the hymns of Tirujñānacampantar, the local identity of Śiva merged with the cosmic transcendental one and institutionalized in the temple landscape and idea of a pilgrimage. Simultaneously, the context of Saivism developed with the inclusion of Murukan as the son and Korravai (Durga) as the consort of Śiva, continuing with the late Cankam tradition of identifying the tiṇai deities with the Puranic ones.

The emotional mysticism of the hymns elucidated certain ideas articulated for the first time that became the basis for the future construction of a cohesive religious identity. As Peterson rightly points out:

> The hymns of the Nāyanārs and the Ālvārs, the early Tamil Śaiva and Vaisnava saints may be credited with many "firsts": they are the first literary expression of emotional *bhakti*; the first sizable corpus of full fledged "religious" poems in Tamil; and the first Hindu sectarian scriptures in a vernacular language.[36]

Despite a highly personalized religious attitude that focused on an individual's relationship with the god, the hymns projected a strong community sense. It is obvious that the Nāyanārs and Ālvārs were addressing primarily a group of devotees and attempting to impress upon them through symbols and metaphors of devotion. For instance, the Śaiva hymns based on the *puram* poetry were 'public poems calling the community to witness, giving a public dimension to the ways in which participation in this experience is made possible for all.'[37]

The image of a community was associated with the attitude of the hymnists towards the caste hierarchy. The hymns of the early saints reflected hostility towards the ritual dominance of the Vedic *brāhmaṇas*, i.e., the Caturvedins, their religious attitude, and exclusive access to the divine grace and represented an avenue for an equal access to the divine, whereby the caste and the economic status was reduced to a secondary position. For instance, in the poetics of Appar, a forthright diatribe against caste is evident:

> O rouges who quote the Law Books:
> Of what use are your *gotra* and *kula* (clan)
> Just bow to Mārpēru's lord as your sole refuge.[38]

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[35]Ibid, 1991, pp.34.
[36]Ibid, 1991, p.4
[37]R. Champakalakshmi, 1996, p.151
[38]*Tirumārpēru*, v, 2.3. Quoted from R. Champakalakshmi, 1996,p.145.

The non-brahmanical background of the hymnists generated such a dissent against the notion of authority in the *varṇāśramadharma*. For instance, Nammālvar was a *Vēḷāḷa* and hence a *śudra*, Tiruppāṇālvār a low caste minstrel, Tirumaṅgai was the chieftain of the Kālvar (robber) clan and Kulasekhara was a Cera king. Amongst the *Tēvāram* trio, Appar was a *Vēḷāḷa*.Further, the dissent of the *brāhmaṇa* hymnists, viz.; Periyālvār, Āṇtāḷ, Toṇtaraṭippoṭi, Madhurakavi, Campantar, Cuntarār and Māṇikkavāccakar reflected the presence of a hierarchy amongst the *brāhmaṇas* themselves. The conversion of the local cult centers into Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava faith was accompanied by the acculturation and assimilation of the cultic priests. Since these priests derived their status from the agamic forms of worship that was considered inferior to the Vedic forms, a low ritual rank was assigned to them within the *brāhmaṇa varṇa*.[39]Thus, the Caturvedins (Vedic *brāhmaṇas*) and the Smārtas and Vaḍamas (those who performed Vedic sacrifices) were superior to the Ādi Śaivas and the temple priests, the social categories to which the *brāhmaṇa* hymnists belonged.

However, it was not an outright rejection of the *varṇa* system. Rather an alternative was provided in the concept of a community of *bhaktas* in which the caste status was marginalized in favour of the status of a devotee.[40]The hymns reiterated that the devotion to Śiva and Viṣṇu was much superior to the Vedic recitations and a Caturvedin was inferior to a low caste devotee of Śiva or Viṣṇu. Madhurakavi expressed his disregard for the Caturvedins and reverence for Nammālvār, whose hymns he considered as the Tamil rendering of the four Vedas.[41]The Nāyanārs referred to a devotee as *aṭiyar*, a servant, literally meaning, 'one who is at the feet.'[42]Service to Śiva, i.e. *aṭimai tōṇtu* 'overrides all

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[39]R.Campakalakshmi, 1996,p.145; C.J.Fuller, *Servants of the Goddess: The Priests of a South Indian Temple*, London, 1984, ChapterIII.

[40] For a discussion on this theme, see, Kesavan Veluthat, 1993,pp.23-33; A.K.Ramanujan, 1993: Friedhelm Hardy, 1983,R.Champakalakshmi, 1996,

[41] (The Ālvār) who has adored the love of God
    Proclaimed with joy the meaning of the well-known Vedas.
    You have seen the love of that lover of God who has sung on Him

Thousand essenceful hymns in Tamil.
In this world, they are beyond comparison.
    Kaṇṇinuṃ Ciṛuttāmbu, 8.
[42]Indira Peterson, 1991,p.42.

other affiliations and markers of identity and is the supreme criterion for respect, friendship, and communal consciousness among the Tamil Saivas.'[43]

Further the Nāyanārs and Ālvārs stressed on "communion in the community." Service to the devotee, whatever his caste status may be, was considered to have more salvific benefits than direct service to god. Madhurakavi regarded Nammālvār, a *Sudra* as his teacher/lord.[44]Toṇṭaraṭippoṭi whose name literally meant 'dust of the feet of the devotees' emphasized on the idea of service. Kulasēkhara in his *Perumal Tirumōli* expressed a strong desire to be in the company of and serve the *bhaktas* at Srīrangam, whom he regarded as exemplars of devotion.[45] In the *Tēvāram*, the notion of the community of *bhaktas* was expressed in the term, *nām* (we) for the fellow devotees.[46] The *aṭiyar kuṭṭam* (the community of devotees) included not only the Tamil Saivas, but also the adherents of other Saiva sects like the Kāpālikas and Viratīs who were otherwise abhorred.[47]Appar clearly stated the importance of service to the community of the *bhaktas*:

> Were they to offer me both treasures
> Of Kubera's world,
> And give me earth and heaven itself to rule,
> The wealth of decaying mortals
> Would be as nothing to me,
> When those who gave
> Were single-minded devotees
> Of our great Lord.
> But the leper with rotting limbs,

The outcaste, even the foul *pulaiyan*

> Who skins and eats cows,
> Even these men, if they are servants
> Of him who shelters the Ganges in his long hair,
> I worship them,
> They are gods to me.[48]

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[43]Ibid.

[44]He having sung the esoteric teaching of the Vedas
   Of the eminent Brāhmaṇs fixed them well in my mind
   Absolute loving service of him alone is the adequate
   Offering to my master Sathagopa (Nammalvar).

[45]My lord of Arangam gulped curds, butter, and milk; Yasōdā who bound him by his hands caught him. His devotees in ecstasy call, 'Nārāayaṇa!" till their tongues swell and fall at his feet again and again with folded hands, till their bodies swell. My heart shall always worship and praise the holy feet of these devotees. *Perumāl Tirumōli*, 2.4.

[46]Indira Peterson, 1991, p.42.

[47]Ibid.

[48]Appar VI.309.10 (Poem 211). Quoted from Indira Peterson, 1991,p.45.

The notion of pilgrimage further contributed to the sense of belonging to a community. The emergence of the local cult centers in the hymns charted out a sacred geography for the community and marked the beginning of the concept of pilgrimage, where each site was visited and sung into prominence. The hymns of the Nāyanārs referred to two hundred and seventy four Śaiva sites and that of Tirumangai's *Periya Tirumaṭal* mapped more than ninety odd places.[49]

The discourse against caste and the messianic notion of the community that included devotees from diverse background has led many scholars to conclude that the *bhakti* movement was a radical protest against the conservative social norms. Undoubtedly, the elements of protest were present, but they should not be over-stressed. Infact, the religion of the hymnists influenced by the contemporary socio-political environment evolved a conservative attitude that became synonymous with the dominant ideology of the subsequent period, which is from the ninth to the twelfth century.

From the sixth century onwards, the expansion and integration of various peasant settlements in the river valleys and the transformation of the tribal population into settled peasant communities, provided a base for the emergence of new state systems. Beginning with the Pallavas of Kāñcī in the northern part, Pāṇḍyas of Madurai in the south and Ceras in the southwest, the political processes culminated with the Cōḷas in the Kāverī valley by the ninth century AD. The consolidation of these states depended on the integration of various local and supra-local institutions, mainly the *nāḍus, brahmadeyas* and the temples.[50]

As a 'peasant micro-region' and an eco-type, the *nāḍu* had already emerged before the seventh century. From seventh century onwards, these *nāḍus* increased in number, representing a process of agrarian expansion based on the irrigation projects sponsored by

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[49]For a discussion on the sacred geography in the Prabandham and pilgrimage tradition of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas, see, Chapter V.

[50]For a general discussion on these institutions, see, Rajan Gurukkal, 1993, p2-22; idem, 1993, pp.246-274; R.Champakalaksmi, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization: South India 300 BC to AD 1300*,1996, New Delhi; idem, " The Study of Settlement Patterns in the Cola Period: Some Perspectives." *Man and Environment* 14,1, 1989,pp.91-101; idem, "State and Economy: South India. Circa A.D. 400-1300," in *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History*, Romila Thapar ed., New Delhi, 1993, pp.275-317; Karashima, *South India History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions. A.D. 850-1800*, New Delhi, 1984; Burton Stein, Peasant *State and Society in Medieval South India*, Delhi, 1979; Kesavan Veluthat, Political *Structure of Early Medieval South India*, Delhi, 1993; idem, 1993,pp.23-33.

the Pāṇḍyas and Pallavas in the wet and dry areas. Often such an expansion took place at the expense of the erstwhile tribal population, who eventually were sedentized as peasants. Palar-Cheyyar valley in the north and Vaigai-Tāmbraparaṇī in the south exhibited such agrarian developments. Incidentally, the Nāyanārs and Āḻvars were located in these regions.

These river valleys also witnessed a proliferation of the *brahmadeyas* and the temples at the royal initiative that recognized the potential of these two institutions for restructuring and integrating the economy and society. Since they were the repositories of better irrigation technology and farming methods, the land granted to them became a mechanism for the extension of agriculture into unsettled areas and extraction of the surplus from various peasant groups. The significance of the *brahmadeyas* and the temples stemmed from their Vedic-Puranic-Sastraic discourse that provided the social rationale for integrating diverse peasant and tribal groups through the institution of caste.

For instance, the temples controlled by the *brahmanas* and situated in the *brahmadeyas* and the *vellan-vagai* (non-brahmana villages) provided a space for ritual integration to the new entrants within the *varna-jāti* paradigmn. The tribal divinities were mythified within the Agamic mould and incorporated within the *itihāsa*-Puranic tradition. Hence, a universalistic pantheon emerged. The hierarchical structure of the *varṇāśramadharma* was relevant in these villages, where the distribution and circulation of resources took place within the authority structure of landed rights. Besides peasants, various categories of chiefs, artisans and craftsmen were incorporated through ritual ranking within the temples. Thus, commanding an allegiance of various local groups, this institution generated economic activities of diverse nature that eventually became the basis of urbanization.

Therefore linking peasants, local chiefs and other groups to the royalty, both *brahmadeya* and the temple were also utilized as the institutional channels of transmission and dissemination of the royal ideology. The epic-Puranic myths also influenced the ideals of kingship, which projected the king as the idyllic *kṣatriya*. The *brāhmaṇas* provided a genealogy that comprised of various mythical lineages, high-sounding titles and often a

brahma-kṣatra status *(brāhmaṇa-kṣatriya).*[51]Further, this royal ideology represented a "cosmological world-view" through the divine origins of the ruler and his identification with the Puranic personalities. Through his incarnations, (especially the Trivikrama *avatāra),* Viṣṇu symbolized the universal king and projected an 'incorporative kingship' and 'shared sovereignty between the king and the local chieftain.'[52] In this connection, Sanskrit became the official language as it gave 'dignity and resonance to an upstart king.'[53]

Such a political ideology became crucial for reordering of polity in the sixth-seventh century context of hectic warfare, shifting boundaries and political fluctuations. Naturally, then the location of the royal centers coincided with the location of the temple and *brahmadeya* centers. Kāñcīpuram and Madurai, the capitals of Pallavas and Pāṇdyas respectively, with their temple complexes signified various integrative processes.[54]The semantics of *kōyil* acquired a new dimension with the royal patronage to the temples. Earlier used for palace, it now implied the temple as well. Hence, temple and palace became interchangeable with both representing the temporal and the sacred sphere, where obedience to the authority, i.e. the king and the god was mandatory.

The popular social base and the royal patronage to the temple was not missed by the Nāyanārs and Āḷvārs.The hymnists applied the temple motif in several ways to popularize their religion. The sense of *communitas* further developed with emphasis on the participatory mode of worship through singing and dancing in praise of the transcendental god, represented in the image in the temple and seeking union with him. While, on one hand, the hymnists underscored the spontaneous emotional *bhakti,* on the other, they accentuated the structured ceremonial act of ritual worship as an essential means of expressing love for the god. The temple service also became an ideal way of life for a true *bhakta* and acquired complexities with the adoption of certain features from the royal ritual

[51]Nicholas Dirks, "Political Authority and Structural Changes in Early South Indian History," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 13,2, 1976,pp.125-157; Kesavan Veluthat, 1993, p.27-28; R. Champakalakshmi, 1995, pp.306-307.

[52]Kesavan Veluthat, 1993,23-33; R.Champakalakshmi, 1996,p.156.
[53]A.K.Ramanujan, 1993,p.106.
[54]For a detailed study of the urban complex of Kāñcīpuram, see, R.Champakalakshmi, New Delhi, 1996,pp.371-424.

paraphernalia. The divinity was referred to as the *uḍaiyar* and *perumāḷ*, both the terms symbolizing power and status.[55] Undoubtedly, the temple motif in the hymns registered an Agamic influence, but the influence of the epic-Puranic paradigm was overwhelming. The iconographic descriptions of the divine forms in the poems were full of political metaphors of chivalry and power, which highlighted the superiority of one god and subordinated the other.[56]

For the Nāyanārs and Āḷvārs, the institution of temple had a special theological importance. The temple and its deity was the symbol of the immanence (*saulabhya*) of the transcendental (*paratva*) god on the earth, not in one place but in several places. The poet-saints with their fellow devotees travelled from one site to another, singing praises and worshipping the *arca* whose local identity fused with the transcendental Śiva or Viṣṇu. The multiple presence of the god was understood as his *līlā /māyā*, i.e. his desire to be close to the devotees. The concept of *māyā* reconciled the paradoxes of transcendence and immanence and evoked a series of myths that explained the earthly manifestation of the divine as a miracle that was beyond the comprehension of an ordinary mortal.[57]Therefore, the temple and the Puranic religion became the main channel for the transmission for the *bhakti* of the early saints.

The sacred geography in the hymns corresponded with the shifting political frontiers. The early saints sang about the temples situated in the Toṇḍaināḍu, the Pallava region. The later saints focused on the Pāṇḍyanāḍu and Cēranāḍu as their sacred centers with the maximum temples situated in the Kāvēri deltaic region. As has been mentioned

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[55]Kesavan Veluthat, 1993, p.26. The notion of temple service and the use of these terms is understood as the replication of the feudal relationship between god and the devotee which further legitimized the landlord-tenant, king-subject and lord-servant relationships. For such a view, see, Kesavan Veluthat, 1993, p.26-27 and M.G.S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, 'Bhakti Movement in South India', in D.N.Jha, ed., Feudal Social Formation in Early India, New Delhi, 1987,pp.347-375.According to R. Champakalakshmi, such a view ignores, 'the complex processes through which resource mobilization and redistribution were achieved in early medieval Tamilakam, in which the temple enabled royal and chiefly families to establish their political presence and social dominance by intruding into the peasant regions known as the *nāḍus'*.R. Champakalakshmi,1996, p.155.

[56]The medium of myths was widely used to highlight the cosmic superiority of the divine. The story of Viṣṇu and Brahma trying to grasp the beginning and the end of the *liṅga* projects the superiority of Siva over these gods. The application of mythic structures to understand the nature of devotion of the Nayanars and Āḷvārs is beyond the scope of this work. For details, see, Glenn Yocum, "Sign and Paradigm: Myth in Tamil Saiva and Vaiṣṇava *Bhakti* Poetry," in *Structural Approaches to South Indian Studies,* M.M. Buck and G.E. Yocum, eds, Chambersburg, 1974,pp.184-206.

[57]For details on the concept of *māyā* and its implications for devotion, see, Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, Part Four, pp.241-480.

before, this sacred geography followed the trajectory of agrarian and political developments.[58]Thus, *bhakti* popularized the temple, its religion, its social hierarchy, and its forms of worship. By incorporating the temple theme, the hymnists belied the desire for royal patronage. No temples of the Pallava period existed in the centers sung by the hymnists with the exception of the Paramesvara Viṇṇagaram at Kāñcī and a couple of Saiva temples.[59]Yet, the tradition existed associating temples in Kanci such as Uragam, Eragam and Padagam with the early Vaiṣṇava saints. Clearly then, the temples had not emerged as the centers of sectarian control. Rather, they remained royal institutions with the *brāhmaṇas* exercising control over them.

Thus, the rhetoric against caste often exaggerated, as an outright rejection of it should be seen in connection with exclusive royal patronage to the *brahmanas* that further buttressed their spiritual domination. *Brahmadeyas* did not figure at all in the hymnal literature. As has been mentioned before, the protest was against the brahmanical exclusivism in the performance of the temple rituals. Further, the hymnists themselves applied brahmanical motifs to their *bhakti*. For instance, Campantar described himself as the 'Kavuṇiyan' (a Tamil *brāhmaṇa* of the Kaundiya *gotra*); Tirujñānasambandar referred to himself as 'well versed in four Vedas' and praised the *brāhmaṇas (antanar)* of Tillai, i.e. Cidāmbaram as 'men who have conquered the sacred fire.'[60]Nammālvār referred to Viṣṇu as 'lord of the Vedas', 'is the lord spoken of in the Vedas', 'is praised by the Vedas,' and so on.[61]Although Tamil received importance as a religious language, it was an alternative to the Sanskrit *Vedas*.[62]The importance of the Vedas was never ignored; rather a Vedic status was attributed to the Tamil hymns. Siva and Viṣṇu were supposed to be

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[58]The Nāyanārs refer to274 temple centers. They visited 269 shrines in South India in the course of their pilgrimage.190 shrines are referred to in the hymns, in the region of Cōlanāḍu, 14 in Pāṇḍiyanāḍu, 32 in Toṇṭaināḍu, 22in Naṭunāḍu, 7 in Konguṇāḍu, 1 in Cēranāḍu and 2in the northern part of Sri Lanka (Iḷam), and 1 in Tirukkōkarṇam in the Tulu country. Remaining centers are in the Himalayan region of North India. Such a network of pilgrimage transcends the southern boundaries, imparting a pan-Indian character to the Saiva community. For details, see, Indira Peterson, 1991, p13; George.W. Spencer," Religious Networks and Royal Influences in Eleventh Century South India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 13,1, 1969, pp. 42-56; idem, "The Sacred Geography of the Tamil Saivite Hymns," *Numen* 17, 1970, pp.232-44; A.K.Ramanujan, 1993, fn.6, p.107.Similar regional configurations for the 108 sites mentioned by the Alvars is analysed in Chapter V of the dissertation.

[59]R. Champakalakshmi, 1996, p. 156-158.
[60]Indira Peterson, 1991,p.44; Kesavan Veluthat, 1993, p.27.
[61]Nammālvār, *Tiruvāymoḷi*, 1.3.5,1.6.2, and 1.8.10.
[62]On the concept of the Tamil Veda, see, K.K.A.Venkatachari, *The Maṇipravāḷa Literature of the Srīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas*, Bombay, 1978, Chapter I and II.

instrumental in revealing the Vedas to the whole world. Thus, the stress was on the accessibility of Vedas that cut across all caste barriers rather than limiting it to the *brāhmaṇas* solely.

Thus, the *bhakti* movement in early medieval South India representing the temple- based religion of the Agamic-Puranic Hinduism legitimized the social structure based on the brahmanical principles and became the channel for transmission of the royal authority. According to Hardy,

> ...it is only towards the end of the Āḻvār period that their 'movement' penetrated into such strata of folk culture, and then on somewhat different premises; in spite of the popular romantic mythos that the Alvārs were the representatives of the 'masses', fighting in protest against an 'ever growing feudal oppression of the masses', most of them were 'elitists'.[63]

The expectation of the royal patronage influenced the sectarian diatribe against the rival religious communities, Jainism and Buddhism, which were popular in the Tamil region since the early centuries of the Christian era. Jainism enjoyed considerable royal patronage especially under the Pallava ruler, Mahendravarman I, a Jaina himself.[64] Further tensions arose due to the theological incompatibility between the hymnal and the heterodox religious beliefs, where the former had a sensuous orientation focused on the temple worship and the latter had an austere orientation based on the principles of self-denial.[65] It is also likely that the aversion of the *bhakti* saints was regional as the Jaina and the Buddhist monks had recently arrived from the Kannada and Telugu region to the Tamil country. Hence, it was not social protest but the strident criticism against Jainism and Buddhism that emphasized upon 'communal solidarity' through exclusivism that clearly defined the community boundaries.[66]

Therefore, the hymnal tradition for the first time evolved various motifs of the community structure, viz., the philosophy, and notion of a community, sacred geography and pilgrimage that became theologically significant in the later period. The constant endeavours to assert a distinct identity vis-à-vis the brahmanical religion and heterodox sects were evident in the protest in the hymnal literature. In this manner, the devotional

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[63] Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, p.227.
[64] The story of Mahendravarman converting to Saivism at the behest of Appar and many such narratives reflect tensions over royal patronage, which the heterodox sects enjoyed.
[65] For details, see, R. Champakalakshmi, 1996, pp.148-150; Indira Peterson, 1991, pp.292-293.
[66] Indira Peterson, 1991, pp.9-11.

cults stood at a 'liminal' stage in the community development, where they separated themselves from the social mainstream and evolved a community of *bhaktas*. However, their conformism to the political structure marked the process of 'reaggregation' through which the communities were consolidated in the Cōḷa period. Despite the growth of a community, neither of the religious traditions of the Nāyanārs and Āḷvārs could evolve a systematic theology and normative textual tradition-a feature visible from the eleventh century onwards.

III. The Period of Community Construction and Consolidation (ninth to thirteenth century AD)

With the consolidation of the Cōḷas in the tenth century, the centre of political activities shifted from Tondainādu (with Kāñcīpuram as the capital) to Cōḷanādu with the capital at Tāñjāvūr. The Pāṇḍyas continued to rule from Madurai and provided a formidable opposition to the Cōḷas. Continuing with the Pallava system of utilizing the *nāḍus*, *brahmadeyas*, and temples for political integration, both the Cōḷas and the Pāṇḍyas further enhanced their institutional potential and created new ones, viz., the *valanāḍu* and *nagaram*.

The process of agrarian expansion that provided the crucial resource base to the Cōḷas and Pāṇḍyas brought forth the wet zone areas of the Tamil sub-regions, particularly in the Kāverī and Tāmraparaṇī valleys. The villages of these wet zone areas became the centre of king's and chiefs' authority and financial claim.[67]By thirteenth century, five hundred and fifty *nāḍus* had come into existence indicating large number of agricultural settlements, majority being in the Kāverī valley of Cōḷamaṇḍalam.[68]The proliferation of *brahmadeyas* and temples located in the *nāḍus* of these river valleys were also instrumental in extending agriculture. They implemented the royal irrigation projects and this gave them the crucial right to organize and manage the production and water resources, often with the *vēḷāḷa* community, i.e. the powerful non-brahmana landowners

[67]See footnote 51 for references on this theme.
[68]R. Champakalakshmi, 1995, p.286.

RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL SITES
8TH-12TH CENTURIES

INDIA

SRI LANKA

LEGEND

Places prominentaly associated with:

- ● Buddhism
- ▲ Jainism
- ● Virasaiva/Lingayat sect
- ▼ Sakta (Mother Goddess) worship
- ▲ Saivism
- ■ Vaisnavism
- ▲ Surya (Sun) worship
- ◆ Other Hindu sects

of the *nāḍus,* who also partook in the administration of the temples along with the *brāhⱼmaṇas.*[69]Therefore, created at the royal initiatives, the *brahmadeyas,* and temples were often strategically situated in the non-brahmana villages to ensure their loyalty and provided the much-needed manpower for the vast irrigation projects.

One of the direct consequences of the agrarian expansion was the escalation of commercial activities in the ninth century that led to the growth of market centers, *nagarams* and a network between them that linked towns and villages, to the *mānagaram,* usually a royal centre and a port. Due to commercial activities of overland and inland trade, new trade routes and urban centres came up linking the remote, and newly conquered regions with the nuclear areas and the coast.[70]The spread of guild activities and trading associations, namely the Ayyāyoḷe 5000, Tamil Tisai Ayirattu Ainnurruvar, foreign merchant organization, Añjuvaṇṇam brought forth the mercantile community with its diverse groups of traders, merchants, artisans, craftsmen, and itinerant traders. One such prominent trading community that became prominent in the ninth century was the nagarattār, whose members applied the *ceṭṭi* suffix. Often the mercantile communities invested in agriculture, gifted to the temples, further strengthening the ties of integration, and inter dependence. One such weaver community, the *kaikkōḷas* had significant links with the temples and became an important social group that the religious traditions attempted to incorporate in order to project a liberal outlook.[71]By ninth century, clusters of *brahmadeyas* and temples had developed into centers of urban growth, thus connecting villages, urban centers and royal capital, diverse population and religion within the same complex.[72]

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[69]The conversion of the *brahmadeyas* into *tan-kurus* or *taniyurs* from the tenth century AD by the Colas led to the emergence of independent revenue units (separated from the *nāḍus*) that had significant economic and political ramifications. *Taniyūrs* acquired several villages (*piḍagais* and *purams*) and craft centers. A new type of *nāḍu* called the *perimalai nāḍu* evolved around *taniyūrs,* comprising of *veḷāḷas* and cultivators. For details on *taniyūrs,* see, Burton Stein, 1979, pp.141-172; R.Champakalakshmi, 1995,pp.286-305; idem, 1996, 24-93; idem, *Re-Appraisal of a Brahmanical Institution:The Brahmadeya and its Ramifications in Early Medieval South India,* Unpublished Paper, 1997.

[70]R. Champakalakshmi, 1995,pp.279-299.

[71]Vijaya Ramasvamy, *Textiles and Weavers in Medieval South India,* New Delhi, 1985, pp.35-62.
[72]The multi -temple complex of Kāñcīpuram and Tañjāvūr emerged as important politico-urban centers. The economic outreach of the temple at Tañjāvūr covered the whole of Cōla kingdom and even northern part of Sri Lanka.For details, see, R. Champakalakshmi, 1995, 9.291; idem, 1996, Chapters 6,7 and 8.

Thus, the *nāḍus*, *brahmadeyas*, temples and *nagarams* with their respective assemblies, viz., *ūr*, *sabhā* and *nagarams* controlled the local distribution process and facilitated the collection of revenue from different areas, particularly the peripheral ones, 'acting as interdependent agents of the Cōḷa state synthesis' and bringing the villages 'close together in a system of unified political organization and economic change...'[73]In such a case, the *brahmadeyas* and temples due to their overarching ideological framework of the *varṇa-jāti* paradigm (already discussed in the previous section) became crucial for legitimizing the political authority of the kings and the chiefs in the local society, thereby rationalizing 'royal power with minimum use of force by the state'.[74]Therefore, the overarching structures of these institutions linked the villages, various peasant communities and locality chiefs to the political network of the Cōḷas and Pāṇḍyas that made governance possible over vast regions.[75]

By the end of the twelfth century, the clusters of agrarian settlements both in the wet and dry zones comprised of various agricultural and artisanal castes. *Brāhmaṇas* and *Velāḷas* emerged as dominant, followed by the Pallās, Pariahs and Vān iyārs and several others. Though hierarchically arranged within the caste structure, these groups were linked to each other with ties of economic interdependence.[76]Since uncertainties were intrinsic in such an economy due to constant warfare and resource appropriation that most of these peasant

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[73]R. Champakalakshmi, 1995,p.290.

[74]Hermann Kulke, 'Fragmentation and Segmentation versus Integration? Reflections on the Concepts of Indian Feudalism and the Segmentary State in Indian History,' *Studies in History* 4,2, 1982, pp. 237-63.

[74]The nature of Cōḷa state has been a subject of historiographical debate. Burton Stein's theory of segmentary state has been subjected to criticism. According to Stein, *nāḍu* was the smallest segment, an ethnic unit with an autonomous, unchanging character. The Cōḷa state was a weak state with the control over the core region, the Cōḷanāḍu only. The rest of the kingdom was governed through *brahmadeyas* and temples. The Cōḷas exercised ritual sovereignty, without any centralized system of taxation and an organized army. The war booty was the source of income and the military strength depended on the caste and guild armies. However, this view does not take into consideration the internal dynamics of the Cola polity, society and economy. See, Burton Stein, 1979 and for criticism, see, R.Champakalakhmi, 'Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India: A Review Article, *'Indian Economic and Social History Review* 18,3 and 4, 1981, pp.411-426; Vijaya Ramasvamy, 'Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India. A Review Article,' *Studies in History* 4,2, 1982: pp. 307-319; Kesavan Veluthat, 1993.

[76]For instance, in the Paṇḍya kingdom, the hilly regions with their tribal population were linked to the core area dominated by the *Veḷāḷa* peasant groups, due to their forest products and constant flowing streams. For details, see, David Ludden, *Peasant History in South India,* 1989, Delhi, pp.15-41.

groups were armed and had such military alliances with the tribes. In several places, the kaikkolas formed their own-armed bands and emerged as the 'merchant- warriors'.[77]

Amidst such a diverse socio-political fabric, the temples formed the most crucial as well as stable links between the royalty and society and various levels within the society. The 'superordinate' character of the temple was evident in its complex role in strengthening the territorial sovereignty at the local level through negotiations and transactions that culminated into a network of alliances between the royalty and the various locality chiefs. Such alliances were significant in the contemporary situation where warfare, unsteady boundaries and shifting frontiers were common. This shared power structure manifested in the institution of gift giving to the deities in the temples. This ritual gifting generated a redistributive system that facilitated the disbursement of resources and political power. The kings gifted to the temples that in turn were recirculated in the society in the form of ritual goods, for instance the *prāsādam* (food offering), stimulating economic transactions. The local chiefs also made gifts to the king or donated to the temples in the name of the king and received titles and honours that enabled them to become the members of the royal alliance network. Sometimes, these chiefs made grants to the temples situated outside their local domains and built their individual power network, thus replicating the royal redistributive system. Though the notion of religious merit was an important aspect of ritual gift giving, the kings and the chiefs negotiated with each other for political support through this mechanism. However, by 1300 AD, the Cōla rule had reorganized the *nadus* into large artificial revenue and political unit, the *valanādus*, which brought several chieftaincies in its scheme and directly placed them under the Cōla authority.

Apart from its political ramifications, the temple further provided the 'ideological apparatus' for the medieval south Indian states, bringing together the religion of various social groups. Already in the hymns of the Nāyanārs and Ālvārs, a context for a dialogue was created between the autochthonous cults and Puranic religion, whereby the former was universalized within the brahmanical structural paradigm of the temple. The political dynasties realized that *bhakti* was the 'best religion...to hold. ...society and its state

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[77]Mattison Mines, *The Warrior Merchants: Textiles, Trade and Territory in South India,* Cambridge, 1984.

together.'[78]The inclusion of the hymnal metaphors of power and strength as personified in the various forms of Śiva and Viṣṇu and popularized by the saints expanded the political ideology that was based on the epic-Puranic pattern. Consequently, the hymns became the source of inspiration for the construction of several canonical temples with elaborate iconography that was political in nature. The various cosmic and heroic representations of the Puranic deities in the temple iconography were analogous to the image of a monarch and his absolute power.The deities acquired royal characteristics and the 'daily performance of the rituals and the great annual festivals of the "royal deities"- with all their royal paraphernalia and exuberant wealth- became the best and most visible legitimation of royal power and wealth of the 'divine kings" on earth.' For the first time, political geography coincided with the sacred geography, as the core of Cōḷanāḍu, the Kāvēri region experienced hectic temple construction. Śrīraṅgam and Cidāmbaram developed as major political as well as sacred cult centers, for Vaisnavism and Saivism respectively. Thus, the conservative orientation of the hymnal corpuses legitimized the dominant ideology and became representative of it.

Conversely, the Cōḷa ideal of kingship attempted to 'divinise' the king. The Cōḷas began consecrating images of their rulers and members of the royal family.[79] Construction of monumental temples became a part of the royal project. Several such imperial temples were named after the Cōḷa rulers who sponsored them. The Bṛhadēśvara temple at Tañjore constructed by Rājarāja the Great (985-1014 AD) in 1003 AD illustrates this trend.[80] Symbolizing the new royal power of Rājarāja, the 'political architecture' and iconography of the main deity Siva was identified with the Cōḷa king and was called Rājarājēśvara.[81] Thus, the sacred and the temporal realm were present in the temple. Huge temple complexes with elaborate architecture, a pantheon with multiple divinities represented a continuous process of integration of different sections of the society in a hierarchical

[78]D.D.Kosambi, Myth and Reality, Bombay, 1962, p.32. Quoted in Hermann Kulke, Kings and Cults: State Formation and Legitimation in India and Southeast Asia. New Delhi, 1993,p.11

[79]Ibid.

[80]George W.Spencer,'Religious Networks and Royal Influences in Eleventh Century South India,' *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 13,1,1969, pp. 42-56; idem, 'Royal Initiative under Rajaraja I', *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 7,4,1970, pp.431-32.

manner with levels of domination, and subordination, through temple's rituals and activities.[82]

In this context of integration, legitimation, social, agrarian and commercial developments, the religious communities attempted to create a niche for themselves, consolidate the social base and multiply the network of religious influence. In the absence of any challenge from the heterodox sects, the religious communities focused on the expansion of their resource base by competing for patronage from the royalty and the local chieftains. The ācāryas or the ideologues and theologians now took up the role of the Nāyanārs and Ālvārs and through the influence in the temples and mathas, gave an institutional shape to the Agamic-Puranic bhakti paradigm.

In this context, Saivism was successful due to its tactful presentation of an integrative paradigm comprising of the Tamil bhakti, brahmanical forms and autochthonous cults. The evolution of the Śaiva Āgamas which laid down new forms of worship become the theological basis of converting and finally integrating the local cult centres into Śaiva shrines. The sacred geography as delineated by the nāyanmārs provided the guide for the identification of these sites, with maximum concentration in the Kāvēri region. Consequently, the local priests were initiated into Saivism giving rise to a new class of temple priests called Śiva brāhmanas who were assigned ritually a lower rank to the Smārta (Vadama) brāhmanas hence creating a hierarchy in the brahmana caste. Thus, the temple emerged as the focus of the entire Śaiva community, where various local sects, converged. The creation of a Śaiva pantheon with the incorporation of Murukan and Durga, representing a divine family and the folk analogy of the linga worship appealed to a larger section of the society and broadened the social basis of Saivism. The presence of aniconic linga in the canonical temples, thus, provided

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[81]Kesavan Veluthat, 1993, p.30.

[82]This hierarchical stratification represented the following: 'At the apex of this society stood the royal family, as the authors and patrons of the temple, who were invariably associated with the main structures like the shrines (vimānas) and gateways (gopuras). Royalty followed by the ritually pure brāhmana priests performing, worship, an administrative elite, dominant agrarian and mercantile groups involved in temple administration and the hierarchy ended up, with the lower categories of agricultural worker, craftsmen and menials in the temple service.' R. Champakalakshmi, 1995, p.309.

'a constantly widening orbit for bringing in divergent socio-economic and ethnic groups into Śaiva worship.'[83]

Therefore, for these reasons, Saivism was adopted as the royal cult, which further enabled the consolidation of the Śaiva community. In addition, the iconographic forms of Śiva as Yogi (popularly called Dakṣiṇāmūrti), Naṭarāja, Bhikṣāṭana and Rāvanānugraha (humbling of Rāvaṇa)- all symbolizing the notion of a successful Puranic hero appealed the Cōḷa ideology for establishing power over the Tamil region. From the middle of the tenth to the twelfth century A.D., Saivism emerged as a 'state' cult under Rājarāja I (985-1045 A.D.), Rājēndra I and Kulōttunga II (1133-50 A.D.). The large-scale construction of the canonical temples, especially in the royal capital of Gangaicoṇḍacoḷapuram and Tāñjāvūr projected the Cōḷa policy of promoting Śaiva *bhakti* as an effective ideology for the integration of the society and economy through the expansion of the agrarian order and establishing the royal control. The collection of the Śaiva hymns and the composition of the hagiographies were a part of the royal project that contributed to the evolution of a Śaiva scripture (*maṟai*). Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi, the compiler of the Tirumuṟai (scripture) and Cēkkiḷar, the composer of the Saiva hagiography the *Periya Purāṇam*, were associated with the court of Rājarāja I and Kulōttunga II respectively. In fact, the narratives from the hagiographies inspired some of the iconographic themes in the Cōḷa temples.[84]The royal patronage to the Śaiva temples expanded the liturgy by introducing the hymns of the four Nāyanārs, viz., Appar, Cuntarar, Campantar and Māṇikkavāccakar as a part of the ritual singing in the temples. Their apotheosis took place in the temples around the same time, that is the tenth century under the royal initiatives mainly of Rājarāja I (985-1014) and Kulōttunga II (1133-50).[85]

The heavy royal patronage to Saivism marginalized the development of Vaisnavism. Very often, the Śrīvaiṣṇavas became the target of royal persecution. Compared to the Saiva temples, the construction of the Vaiṣṇava temples was not on such a large scale. None of the Āḷvars, with the exception of Tirumaṅgai were apotheosized in the Cōḷa temples. Unlike the Saivas, the Vaiṣṇavas were not a well-developed

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[83] R. Champakalakshmi, 1996, p.151.

[84]Iibid, p.161.

[85]Ibid, p, 147.

organized community with a comprehensive textual/scriptural tradition. Attempts were made in the late ninth and early tenth centuries to evolve a text, the *Bhāgavata Purāna*. For the first time the exposition of Ālvār *bhakti* formed the context of a text written in Sanskrit. This 'Sanskritization of the Krsna tradition' adopted the popular Puranic style and drew heavily from the vernacular myths.[86]The heavy Sanskritic base of the text coupled with its advaitic position (to reconcile *bhakti* with brahmanical orthodoxy) failed to make an impact on the local population, the Srīvaisnava philosophical system and the Cōla sovereignty.

However, until the middle of the tenth century A.D., Vaisnavism along with Saivism received royal patronage under Parāntaka-I (907-955 A.D.). Visnu temples like the one at Srīrangam were elaborated upon. State support was further evident from the presence of the Krsna and Rāma temples. For example, the famous Rāma temple situated in Madurāntakacaturvedīmangalam belonged to Parāntaka-I's period.[87]Some attempts were consciously made to evolve a structure for the Vaisnava community when a part of the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* i.e. the Tiruvāymoli of Nammālvār were collected and put to music in the Rangarāthasvāmī temple at Srīrangam and Uttaramērūr during the period of Rājēndra I in the eleventh century.[88]Probably, the inclusion of the entire hymnal corpus to develop a full-fledged institution of ritual singing was not possible due to the lack of resources. Under these circumstances, the conscious choice of the *Tiruvāymoli* was a deliberate attempt to attract the non-brahmana devotees, especially of the important *Vēlāla* caste to which Nammālvār belonged. Hence, a channel for the dissemination of the Vaisnava ideas of *bhakti* to the people did not develop in the same manner as that of the Saivas. Probably like Saivism Vaisnavism did not have the integrative capacity that could be the basis of the political ideology and social philosophy of egalitarianism. As a result, the social base of Srīvaisnavas could not develop. Poor networks of interaction and a weak institutional structure could not evolve a community. Consequently, the 'Srīvaisnavas' remained a discrete, scattered lot in South India. Although, the temple inscriptions refer to 'Srīvaisnavas', but it was an honorary prefix of the Vaisnava *brāhmanas* and did not imply a community.

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[86] Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, p.441; R. Champakalakshmi, 1996, p.140-141.
[87]Prof. R. Champakalakshmi gave this information to me in the course of discussions on the theses.
[88] K.A.Nilkantha Sastri,*The Cōlas, Vol.II*, Madras, 1975,pp.479-480.

Another major philosophical system that evolved around the ninth century, influenced, and reoriented the medieval Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava community exegesis was the *Advaita* or non-dualism of Śaṅkarācārya. Based on the Vedanta and Upaniṣadic ideas, this system represented an intellectual, brahmanical response to the heterodox religious traditions. In contrast to the popular aspect of Śiva and Viṣṇu as reflected in the hymns of the Nāyaṉārs and Ālvārs, Śaṅkara considered Śiva and Viṣṇu worship as an integral part of the Sanskritic/normative system. Representing a formless concept of the divine, i.e. *nirguṇa bhakti*, *Advaita* clearly addressed the intellectual elite. It is for this reason that temple worship was marginalized and establishing Smārta *maṭhas* or monastic organizations and Sanskrit scriptures were emphasized as apart of the *Advaita* institutional developments.[89]

By the end of the eleventh century, the religious communities, particularly, the Śrīvaiṣṇavas reoriented their community base and structure against the context of social and political changes. The gradual marginalization of the *brahmadeyas*, the exhaustion of their institutional capacity to integrate and consequently, the rising importance of the temples had institutional ramifications for these communities. The Pāṇḍya and the Cōḷa records of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries cite several instances of the *brahmadeyas* converted into *vellan-vagai* villages and donated as *devadānam* to the temples. Either the *brāhmaṇas* migrated from the Tamil country to the northern regions or converged increasingly towards the temples, further highlighting the latter's significance. This coincided with continuing decline of the Cōḷa administration, and the re-emergence of the local chiefs. In addition, with the occupation of the Kāvēri delta by the Hoysaḷas, the migration from the Karnataka region was accelerated. Hence, an altered base of power and power structure emerged. The expansion of agriculture led to an increase in landed transactions, private and temple holdings, particularly in the non-brahmana villages. This created a hierarchical structure of the landed rights with the increasing prominence of the *Vēḷāḷas* as the dominnat agricultural community *vis-à-vis* the lower agricultural groups, escalating the tensions within the agrarian community. The growth of urban centers and intensification of mercantile activities led to the rising importance of the *nagarams*, merchants, craftsmen and weavers, especially the kaikkōḷas that altered their relationship

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[89]R. Champakalakshmi, 1996, pp.153-154.

with the *nāḍus*. Hence, the rising social importance of the various non-brahmana groups led to a movement towards a higher caste status, especially the claims of the artisans to a twice-born caste status with a respectable ritual space in the temples. This bid for social mobility in the twelfth century culminated into a "societal crisis".[90]The existing social structure weakened and led to the crystallization of the non-*brahmana* communities into a dual vertical division of the *Valangai* (Right hand castes) and *Iḍangai* (Left hand castes), within the traditional structure of the caste society. However, the *Veḷāḷas* and the *brāhmaṇas* remained outside this dual division.[91]

In this altered social environment, undoubtedly temples forged links amongst chiefs, kings, merchants and the newly emergent groups. The popular religion of the Śaivas and Vaiṣṇava community responded to this social change by providing a broad social base with ideological sanction, which would accommodate the diverse ethnic groups, within a single community paradigm. Thus, the twelfth century A.D. was a crucial period for the community construction and the consolidation of the textual traditions. A stiff competition for acquiring the devotees set in. The theological orientation of the communities aimed at incorporating the non-brahmanical elements thereby broadening the social base of their respective community organization.

In this context, Srivaisnavism took several significant steps despite its heavy Sanskritic base. Already under Kulōttunga I (1070-1118 A.D.), there was revival of royal patronage in some of the major Vaiṣṇava centers, which started developing a considerable following. The efforts of Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas*, Nāthamuni and Yāmunācārya at creating a strong temple base by introducing ritual singing and elaborate forms of worship strengthened the community institutions. However, it was under Kulōttunga II, i.e. the second quarter of the twelfth century A.D. that the Viśiṣṭadvaita philosophy of Rāmānuja evolved. It was the first school of thought to challenge Saṅkara's monistic (i.e. non-dualism) philosophy of Advaita and the concept of *Nirguṇa Brahmana* and presented an alternative model for the perception of divinity. Rāmānuja's philosophy was based on

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[90]The conflicts that escalated this social crisis were usually between the artisans and agriculturists, sub-castes of the artisan like the *kaikkōḷas* and *śāliyas*, hill and forest people and the different merchant groups. For details, see, R.Champakalakshmi, 1995, p.296.

[91]Ibid, pp.295-297; Arjun Appadurai, 'Right and Left Hand Castes in South India', *Indian Economic Social History Review* 11,2-3, 1974, pp. 216-59; Vijaya Ramaswamy, 1984, 58-59.

'qualified monism (i.e. Viśiṣṭadviata) where the divine had attributes, that was comprehensible to the less intellectual devotees. Therefore, this religious philosophy on one hand imparted the much-needed theological orientation to the community and on the other hand, it aimed at bringing the Tamil (local/folk) with Sanskritic, where caste was secondary, thereby broadening the base of community.[92]

The concept of *Saguṇa Brahman*, i.e. the perception of divinity in concrete aesthetic terms made the god more accessible. The Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition credits Rāmānuja with the introduction of the non-brahmanical classes, especially the *kaikkōlas*, in the temple services and institutionalizing their presence through numerous duties allotted to them.[93]Although epigraphical evidence does not mention Rāmānuja's contribution, the claims made by the powerful *kaikkōla* weaver community around the same period, for a higher ritual status was 'met by the expanding temple rituals and even participation in the gift-giving and administrative functions of the temple. *Kaikkōla Mudalis* were important temple officials. Therefore, by the end of the twelfth century, the emergence of Śrīvaiṣṇavas as an organized group is evident from their overarching control in the temple organizations. Several Śrīvaiṣṇavas become the *Śrīkāryam* officer of the temples replacing the *brāhmaṇa* assemblies, the *sabhās*.[94]The temples dedicated to the Ālvārs, especially the Āṇḍāḷ temple at Śrīvilliputtūr (Tirunelveli district) acquired local importance as the patron goddess of that region and was the focus of Pāṇḍyan patronage that sponsored the daily activities and the annual festivities of that temple.[95]

In the post Rāmānuja period, the development and consolidation of the textual tradition contributed significantly towards the evolution of the community identity. First, the philosophy of *ubhaya- vedānta* i.e. dual *Vedas*, introduced for the first time the notion of a scripture in Tamil. The introduction of *Maṇipravāḷam*, i.e. a mixture of Tamil and

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[92]See Chapter III, Section 2 for the contribution of Rāmānuja and Chapter IV, Section 1 for the hagiographic delineation of Rāmānuja as a charismatic personality.
[93]The inscriptions of the Raṅganāthasvāmī temple at Śrīraṅgam and Veṅkaṭeśvarasvānī temple at Tirupati refer several times to the *kaikkōlas* and their administrative duties. The *Kōil Oḷugu*, the chronicle of the temple at Śrīraṅgam also devotes considerable attention to the *kaikkōlas* and the role of Rāmānuja in incorporating them in the temple services. For details, see, *South Indian Inscriptions, Vol.XXIV*, New Delhi; *Tirumalai- Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Series*, S. Subrahmanya Sastri, ed. and trans. (1933-1934) and V. Viraraghavacharya (1935-1938), Vol.I- Vol. VI, Tirupati; *The Kōil Oḷugu, The Chronicle of the Śrīrangam Temple with Historical notes*, V.N.Hari Rao, ed. and trans, Madras, 1961.
[94]Ibid for such details.
[95]David Ludden, 1989, pp.31-32.

Sanskrit should be seen in this context. The entire corpus of the four thousand acquired scriptural importance. *Second,* with the evolution of the scripture was the commentatioral tradition. The *Prabandham* and the works of Rāmānuja became the subject of several commentaries. This led to the development of several interpretations, which gradually developed, into distinct philosophies themselves. *Third,* was the hagiographic tradition that delineated a cult of saints projecting a distinction between the Ālvārs and *ācārya,* and the hymnal and theological tradition represented by them. The hagiographic narratives also emphasized on the itinerary of the saints thus projecting a pilgrimage network.

The efforts for the consolidation of the community and its identity with a well developed textual, institutional and pilgrimage tradition, threatened the Śaiva community. The Śaivas also did not miss the crucial emergence of new social groups. The Śaiva canon, *Tirumurai,* the Śaiva hagiographies, the *Tiruttontar Tiruvantāti* and the *Periya Purānam* fixed the number of saints to sixty three belonging to a wide social spectrum, from *brāhmanas* to *paraiya.* However, apart from Appar, Campantar, Cuntarar and Mānikkavāccakar, whose devotional works comprised the scripture, the rest are of doubtful historicity. Therefore, the low caste background of the Nāyanārs was a deliberate projection of a popular movement. Interestingly, the compilers of the canon and composers of the hagiographies Nambi Āndār Nambi and Cēkkilar belonged to the upper castes- the *brāhmanas* and the *Velāla* ruling family respectively.[96]

Further, other popular Śaiva traditions were incorporated, representing an integrative paradigm. For instance, the incorporation of Tamil Siddha tradition through the profile of the Siddha saint, Tirumūlar who emphasized on Śiva and Murukan worship, reflected an attempt in this direction.[97]This inclusion of 'anti-brahmanical and unorthodox elements into the traditional Śaiva order'and Tirumantiram, the work of Tirumūlar inspired the Saiva Siddhānta movement of the fourteenth century that was based on the Agamic tradition.[98]Significantly, the *Tēvāram* acquired a sacred status in the Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy, despite not having a single commentary written upon it.

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[96]R. Champakalakhsmi, 1996,pp.135-163.
[97]Ibid, pp148 and159-160.
[98]Ibid.

Such an incorporative tendency accommodated the non-brahmanas, especially the artisan and the weaver groups who had become economically powerful in the twelfth century and were demanding greater ritual and administrative participation in the temples. The Śaiva temple rituals and pantheon included a series of popular folk elements, whose non-brahmanical adherents continued with their allegiance to the local deities, despite belonging to the Śaiva community. Thus, Saivism provided an independent space for the folk cults and their expression. However, the construction of a broad-based community in the twelfth century was a conscious attempt with the help of the royal patronage that reflected the dominant/elite ideological characteristics of the Śaivas.The legend of recovering the *Tevāram* from the dusty storeroom of the temple in Cidāmbaram at the royal instance further attests the elitist attitude.

The establishment of Śaiva institutional organization specially the *mathas* with their non-brahmanical leadership further widened the catchment area of the Śaiva devotees. These leaders known as the Mudalyārs Santāna mostly belonged to the *Vēlāla* lineage of the twelfth-thirteenth century.[99]Further, the instances of the Nāyanārs establishing the *mathas* further highlighted their importance. For example, Tiruñāvukkarasu himself founded a *matha* in Tiruppundurutti in Tañjāvūr district.[100]The Śaiva monastic organization was replicated in the case of the Smārtas and Śrīvaisnavas. Although brahmanical in orientation the Smārta *mathas* emerged as major power groups centre for resource control for the royalty especially in the Vijayanagar period. The Śrīvaisnava community also developed its institutional infrastructure in the *matha* organizations in the post twelfth century and represented independent Śrīvaisnava acaryic identity. The *mathas* gained control over the temples and its landed property after the twelfth century A.D, with the decline of the *brahmadeyas* and marginalization of the *brāhmanas*. They also invested and participated in the long distance trade, and were mostly located in the trading and weaving centers, where they attracted the royal and mercantile patronage. Thus, as the custodian of the religious canon, the *mathas*, with an enhanced resource base emerged as influential religious groups with a large following.

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[99]Ibid. p.162
[100]Ibid, p.153-163.

The rise of the non-brahmanas also provided an impetus to the Vīraśaiva movement in Karnataka, which developed a strong anti-caste, anti-brahmanical rhetoric and subsequently emerged as a cohesive community in the later periods.[101]Therefore, the twelfth century represented a crucial phase in the evolution and construction of the religious communities and their respective consciouness. The Śaiva and the Vaisnava traditions drew legitimacy from their respective hymnal tradition and projected a broad base, while the religious traditions of the Vīraśaivas was influenced by the Śaiva example. Saivism also influenced the cult of Murukan, the most venerated god in South India. Projected as the son of Śiva, Murukan on one hand, represented the association of local, regional deities with the brahmanical religion and on the other, it bridged the gap between the tribal and agrarian settlements of the temple and royal court centers. Amidst such an intense religious development, sectarian rivalries became common, especially in the context of competitive control over the patronage of the diverse economically and politically powerful social groups. This was further reflected in the subsequent period, with the migration and the establishment of the Vijayanagara Empire in the fourteenth century.

IV The Changing Social Base: Thirteenth to Seventeenth Century

The socio-economic and religious processes of the twelfth century continued in the thirteenth century. The gradual decline of the Cōla power and the emergence of numerous dynasties intensified the uncertain character of the polity. The Kākatiyas of Warangal in the interior Telugu country, the Hoysalas of Dvārsamudra in the Karnataka region and the Pāndyas of Madurai in the Tamil country were the most formidable powers to reckon with. Amidst shifting political boundaries and fluctuating alliances, the core riverine areas of Kāvēri, Pennar, Tamraparani and Krsna-Godāvari with numerous agricultural settlements and important trading centres became the focus for competitive resource appropriation during this period. The control over these areas was crucial for both the Hoysala and Kākatiya kingdoms as they were located in the rocky areas of low rainfall and therefore

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[101]A.K. Ramanujan, *Speaking of Śiva*, Baltimore, 1973; K.Ishwaran *Religion and Society among the Lingāyats of South India.* New Delhi, 1982.

possessed a slender resource base that was unable to generate agrarian surplus and trade.[102]Subsequently, the Kākatiyas took over the area from Telangana to the rich agricultural land and ports of the Kṛṣṇa-Godāvari delta and the Hoyasḷas occupied the western coast from the Konkan to Goa and Malabar.The Hoysaḷas also shifted their capital from Dvārasamudra to Kaṇṇanūr near the Kāvēri delta in the Tamil region, where the Pāṇḍyas were already making inroads. The tension between the two powers manifested in their competitive patronage extended to the Vaiṣṇava temple of Rangaṇāthasvāmī and the Saiva temple of Jambukēśvaram, situated on either side of the Kāvēri at Srīrangam.[103]

The invasions of the Delhi Sultanate under Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughlaq in the fourteenth century disturbed the political configurations in South India, especially of the Hoysaḷas, Kākatiyas and Pāṇḍyas and culminated in the establishment of the Sultanate at Madurai. In this context of transitional political environment, the establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire in the fourteenth century with its capital Hampi in Karnataka emerged as a consolidated ruling power. This initiated a chain of political processes that integrated the peninsular region south of river Kṛṣṇa by bringing together the three cultural zones of Tamil Nadu, Andhra and Karnataka. Finally, the defeat of the Madurai Sultan in the hands of Kumara Kampana of Vijayanagar pushed the frontiers to the southernmost point. The various political groups, especially the Telugu warriors, who represented the Vijayanagar Empire in various regions of the Peninsula and the Vijayanagar rulers themselves, legitimized their power and sovereignty by projecting themselves as the saviours of mankind. Such an image identified them as the destroyers of the Tulukkas i.e. the Turkish invaders, restorers of the dharmic order and temple worship that was supposed to have been disrupted due to the northern plunder, and the founders of the new stable political order.[104]The theme of invasions used often in the inscriptions and

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[102]Burton Stein, *Vijayanagara*. The New Cambridge History of India, Cambridge, 1989; Cynthia Talbot, *Precolonial India in Practice: Society, Region, and Identity in Medieval Andhra.* New Delhi, 2001.

[103]The *Kōil Ọlugū. The Chronicle of the Srīrangam Temple with Historical notes* V.N. Hair Rao ed. and trans, Chennai, 1961,pp.35-68.

[104]See on similar theme, B.D.Chattopadhyaya, *Representing The Other? Sanskrit Sources and the Muslims (Eighth To Fourteenth Century)*, Delhi, 1998; Romila Thapar, 'The image of the barbarian in early India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.13, 1971, pp.408-36; Romila Thapar, 'Imagined religious communities: Ancient history and the modern search for a Hindu Identity', in *idem, Interpreting Early India*, Delhi, 1992, pp.60-88; Cynthia Talbot, 'Inscribing the other, inscribing the self: Hindu-Muslim identities in precolonial India', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol.37: 4 ,1995, pp.692-722

the numerous political biographies composed in this period influenced the modern historiographical thinking in the sixties, which projected the establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire as a Hindu response to the Muslim incursions.[105]However, the contextual analyses of these sources tell a different story. In a situation of rapid transitional political context, such a representation of the upholder of the religious order gave the political leaders an access to the temples and the monastic organizations and the vast resources they commanded. Conversely, the religious communities controlling the temples received the protection and patronage required for their further consolidation.

Thus, from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, temple and polity were inextricably linked with each other and emerged as the basis of a new social formation. The most important factor underlying these processes was the phenomenon of migration.[106]From the end of the twelfth century, Kannada and Telugu peasant groups migrated from areas of marginal resource base to the wet riverine regions, 'receiving new traditions and religious symbols from the valley culture and leaving their own marks on the society of rice-belt.'[107]Changing political boundaries, ever mounting military requirements of the kingdoms, especially of the Vijayanagar Empire and the expansion of the agricultural frontier contributed to the increasing migration of the Telugu warrior class to the river valleys and peripheral areas of potential development. Referred to as the *nāyakas*, they impinged upon the pre-existing local power groups and their respective spheres of control and emerged as the major benefactors of the temples and *mathas*, thereby promoting religion, especially Srivaisnavism at the local and supra-local level. Migration also brought into prominence a new class of itinerant merchants and traders, several of whom gradually settled down and emerged as powerful landowners. The inscriptional references to the Kaikkōla, Vaniya, Śikku Vaniya Vyāpārī, Māyilātti, Kanmala, and Komātti traders, Pattanūlkār (silk weavers) from Saurashtra point to the development of a brisk trade and increased craft production which found a thriving market in the

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[105]For example,, K.A. N. Sastri, A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar, Madras, 1958.

[106]David Ludden, 1989, pp.15-100; Burton Stein, 1989, pp.14-25; Carol Breckenridge, 'Social Storage and Extension of Agriculture in South India.1350 to 1750', in Anna Dalla Picola, ed., *Vijayanagar-City and Empire: New Currents of Research*, Weisbaden, 1985, pp.41-68; Susan Bayly, *Saints Goddesses and Kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900*, Cambridge, 1992, pp.12-65.

[107]Susan Bayly, 1992, p.23.

Vijayanagar and post –Vijayanagar kingdoms. Migrants settled in many stages. For instance, the Paṭṭaṉūlkārs supposedly migrated from Saurashtra, briefly settled in the city of Vijayanagara from where they again moved out, and finally settled in the pilgrimage centers of Kāñcīpuram, Madurai amd Rāmeśvaram.[108]The emergent mercantile communities were the followers of different religious traditions-Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava and Islam.[109]However, primarily Vaisnavism was the faith of the migrant merchants and traders. Their lavish sponsorship of Śrīvaiṣṇava temples helped to spread Srivaisnavism. The Vēnkaṭeśvara temple at Tirupati, the Nārāyaṇasvāmī temple at Mēlkōṭe and the Vijayarāghava Perumāḷ temple at Vandiyūr emerged as significant institutions due to the patronage of the *nāyakas* and merchants. Thus, some migrants moved en masse, some as whole communities and some as the entire family.[110]

Apart from the groups mentioned above, peasant communities and agricultural specialists like Shānārs (tank-diggers) formed one of the significant migratory groups that modified the pre-existing regional population. New irrigation technology and forms of production were introduced that 'established new domains for competition over territorial control.'[111]Consequently, the migratory processes integrated the dry upland areas and the river valleys of Kāvēri and Tamraparaṇi. By fifteenth century, agrarian expansion not only took place in the wet areas, but also in the dry zones through artificial irrigation technology, especially the tank and well irrigation. The corporate and individual efforts of the migrants and investment in labour and capital facilitated the implementation of the new technology particularly in the black soil region. In these dry upland zones, the agriculturists came into conflict with the hunters and pastoralists that often led to the incorporation of the latter into the agricultural community. These changes provided the context for the emergence of a warrior peasant class, both economically and politically powerful and primarily non-brah .mana and Telugu in composition. The settlement of the migratory Telugu or the Vaduga groups in the central Deccan and the Tamil wet regions often displaced the older Tamil peasants and landholders, especially *brāhmaṇas* already settled there and created a new class of landed magnates with new groups of artisans and

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[108]Carol Breckenridge, 1985, p.44.
[109]Susan Bayly, 1992, pp.42-55.

[110]David Ludden, 1989, p. 51;Carol Breckenridge, 1985, p.45.
[111]Ibid 1989, p.46

merchants. Further, some of the locally entrenched *Vēḷāḷa* landed communities emerged as big landowners with titles like *naḍuḍaiyan* or *naḍalvān*. Largely, the local and the migrant landed community paid regular tribute to the Telugu commanders of the Vijayanagar army and allied themselves to the local chieftains. In this context, the Reḍḍis, Vēḷāḷas, Gavuṇḍas, and Manradis further enhanced their position as the dominant peasantry and acquired armed power. Further, new network of relations were forged between the dry upland zones and the wetland agricultural community. Thus, the whole of peninsular India witnessed a concerted warrior-peasant effort that culminated into a new regional order, with the coercive power of the new warrior kings.[112]

Each agricultural zone, dry, mixed and wet had a distinct social and material milieu. Kinship networks organized into specific caste groups were important for striking alliances and exchange networks, over the control of agricultural production.[113] The Cola period *nāṭṭavars*, mainly the *Vēḷāḷas* tied to each other by kinship transformed themselves in the Vijayanagar period, due to changes in the land holding system and influx of the migrants. Thus, a multi community composition of the agriculturists emerged who related the local society to the political authorities. There were diverse agricultural communities and building of sub regional agrarian domains around important towns in developing agricultural zones. The medieval configurations of the *nāḍus* vanished, replaced by a set of sub regions defined as hinterlands of towns along routes of transport and communication.

By fourteenth century, new changes in military technology took place with the influence of the *nāyakas* as a military class. The old elites confined to the wet zones depended for their protection on these *nāyakas*. Over a period, these *nāyakas* became influential, as they were 'protectors, patrons, and arbiters, whose power rested first on military might, and more essential in the long run-on their resourcefulness in their transactions with the existing dominant elites in temples and local assemblies.'[114] The restructuring of the state administration further increased the power of the *nāyakas* who had developed a strong local base by then. The *nāyakas* were more successful in bringing together the wet rice areas and the unsettled migrants together. They also encouraged commercial activities and often employed merchants and moneylenders in

[112]Ibid, pp.43-44
[113]Ibid, p.65.
[114]Ibid, p.45

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administration.[115]Subsequently, by seventeenth century, independent *nāyaka* states emerged in Tiruchchirapalli, Madurai and Tañjāvūr.

Amidst such politico-economic and social uncertainties, religion emerged as a major stabilizing influence. The religious canvas during this period was not just dominated by the religion of the *Vēḷāḷas* and *brāhmaṇas*. Against this backdrop of migration of various social groups and the growing power of the martial communities in both wet and dry areas, the worship of the warrior goddesses became popular. This period registered a dramatic increase in the Amman shrines, which had become new cult centers for the *nāyakas* and the poligars.[116]These cult centers were associated with the particular lineage god and then with the brahmanical temples. The mechanism through which such integration was affected was the concept of divine marriage that linked the two lineages-brahmanical and non-brahmanical primarily. A kinship network emerged in which the woman, in this case, the goddess was the 'lynchpin' who enforced the affinity between lineages. As per the marriage norms of the Dravidian kinship, reciprocal exchange of gifts and resources took place for several generations.[117]Hence, a large pantheon was created comprising of the local warrior gods, goddesses and the brahmanical divinity of Śiva and Viṣṇu.[118]This represented a vast cross section of the society that was linked through temple rituals in a hierarchical manner. Further, the non-brahmanical *Vēḷāḷa* village priest also participated in the ritual activities of the large temples along with the *brāhmaṇa* priests. In this way, the brahmanical temples were linked through a priestly network with the village deities. The religious scenario became more complex as the some of the migratory groups carried their own gods and goddesses from outside the Tamil region into the new regions, and 'constructed a new temple, thereby creating a

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[115]For details on nayakas, see,Noboru Karashima, Towards a New Formation. South Indian Society under Vijayanagar Rule. New Delhi, 1994; idem, A Concordance of Nayakas. The Vijayanagar Inscriptions In South India. New Delhi, 2002.

[116]Burton Stein, ' Temples in Tamil Country, 1300-1750 A.D.', in Burton Stein, ed., South Indian Temples. An Analytical Consideration, 1978, pp.11-45; Susan Bayly, 1992, pp.27-30.

[117] Dennis Hudson, 'Śiva, Mināksī, Viṣṇu: Reflections on a Popular Myth in Madurai,' in Burton Stein ed., *South Indian Temples An Analytical Reconsideration, 1978*, pp.106-118 T.R. Trautmann, *Dravidian Kinship,* Cambridge, 1981; Susan Bayly, 39-40; Patricia Uberoi, ed., *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India,* Delhi, 1993; Karen Kapadia, *Siva and Her Sisters: Gender, Caste, and Class in Rural South India,* Colorado, 1995, pp.2-67.

[118]Susan Bayly, 1992, pp.31-33.

cross- section of worshippers beyond the locality and developing a network of inert-regional devotion and pilgrimage.'[119]

Such a scenario provided many opportunities to the religious communities to consolidate their social base. Integration of the diversities within the overarching community paradigm through a textual tradition that evolved a philosophy cutting across caste lines was a major agenda of the community-building programme. Myths and legends in the hagiographies and temple texts and ritual practices attempted to maintain a delicate balance between the different groups of believers. The community construction and consolidation of the identities of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas should be seen within this context. In such a situation, the role of the temple assumed importance. The political as well as the economic aspects converged in the temples, which became the mechanism for generating agricultural developments and a network of linkages with the help of the powerful sectarian leaders based in these institutions. The numerous endowments made by the diverse social groups generated resources that were managed and invested by the temples for tank irrigation. Hence, areas of limited agricultural opportunities transformed into that of high yielding mixed agriculture of food and cash crops with a flourishing trade. Various temple centers linked the wetland zones with the dry upland areas. The emergence of Mēlkōte, Tirupati, Śrīrangam, Tañjāvūr and so on as major centers was due to these linkages that provided the sectarian leaders the opportunity to consolidate their base in these sites.

The relation between the gifts made by the Vijayanagar rulers and chiefs and the sectarian leaders requires a brief discussion. On one hand, a two-way relationship developed between the sectarian leaders and the Vijayanagar rulers (where both needed each other)., on the other, sectarian rulers used temple as their base for power control and made endowments too. Arjun Appadorai points out an asymmetrical relationship between the rulers and the sectarian groups.[120] While the rulers conferred honour as well as resources in the form of gifts to the latter, the latter only rendered honour and not material resources. Despite such an asymmetrical relation, the state preferred to gift to the temples for two reasons. First, the state was not interested in investing directly in the

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[119]Ibid, p.39.
[120]Arjun Appadorai, Worship *and Conflict under Colonial Rule*, Cambridge, 1981, pp.63-104.

irrigation activities, for that required additional responsibility of labour and financial management. The sectarian leaders with their social influence could harness the labour potential and control them. Two, gifting to the temple and its functionaries was an act of merit that was inevitably recorded in the inscriptions. However, the underlying motive was to gain access to the temple and be a part of the ritual set-up that included other social groups, over which the *rayas* and the chiefs wanted to assert their control. Therefore, the temple, and its functionaries were instrumental in legitimizing the political authority, which otherwise would have been difficult. Festivals and pilgrimage became the occasion when such a ritual association was enacted. The donees received as honour a part of the foodstuff that was donated, and sold them, the proceeds of which were again reinvested in the irrigation activities.

The generation of resources at such a large level created tensions between the various sectarian groups. The control over temple store- houses became one of the major issues of competitive control and contestation. The leaders through the control of the temple base accumulated power and resources. The sectarian leaders imitated the royal paraphernalia and behaved as little kings themselves. Thus, the temple, the king and the religious leader were linked together through the deity as the paradigmatic sovereign. In such a case, Srivaisnavism provided a distinctive symbolic umbrella, which gave donors a wider potential collectivity with which they could identify with.[121] The integrative paradigm of the community is the focus of this study.

CONCLUSION

This chapter explored the various historical processe that influenced the construction of a community and its consciousness. The changing social base and the religious philosophy were mutually interactive, each shaping the other. Such a philosophy emerged in the textual tradition with different genres of text that assumed a scriptural status. Over a period, these normative texts became the reference points for the developing multiple identities, which further interpreted these scriptures within their own sectarian ideologies. The moment of tensions and disjuncture emerged when the social reality did not

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[121]Carol Breckenridge, 1985, p.55-56.

correspond with the textual representations and the attempts to reconcile had significant ramifications for the community identity. Divergence were not uncommon and depending on the extent and the nature of divergence, they were included or excluded from the community structure. These ideas will be discussed in the chapters two and three of this dissertation. Further, changing social base, the rising influence of the sectarian leaders that coincided with the increasing importance of the temples as institutional organizations created a network of pilgrimage that further fostered the community consciousness. The growth of the temples and the religious structures were largely sponsored by the numerous endowments made during the festivals and other ritual occasions. Therefore, pilgrimage, which is the theme of chapter four, represented an interaction between different social groups and their respective traditions integrating them within a single community and sectarian paradigms. The temple texts delineated such a process through a realm of myths and legends.

CHAPTER II

THE TEXTUAL TRDITIONS OF THE ŚRĪVAIṢṆAVAS

Tradition is a concept central to the evolution of a community. It provides a sense of history and cultural continuity bequeathing from an antiquated past, ideas and beliefs, conventions and practices which impart legitimacy and permanence to the community and becomes representative of the community ideology. Therefore, the construction of such a tradition becomes crucial in bringing a religious community together and develop its identity *vis-a-vis* the "other".[1]

In building up and establishing a tradition, the major concerns of the ideologues of the community is its transmission and dissemination to the believers and the reception and acceptability by them. Further concerns focus on how the tradition should motivate the believers to transcend their narrow individual spheres of interaction and collaborate at a larger level with the community in general. Often this dissemination is initially oral. However, there are critical junctures in the history of the religious community when the need for redaction and writing of a tradition becomes necessary for the articulation of its identity. At such junctures, contemporary socio-religious contexts inevitably influence the constructions of a past (as discussed in Chapter I.). Such a written tradition stabilizes and freezes the boundaries of the community and "structures at least some parts of social life...as unchanging and invariant within the changing context."[2]Kroeber rightly remarks that when oral tradition is codified into written tradition, then "history is transformed into legends and myths and illuminates the twilight zone of transition between the handed down memories and patterned imagination"[3]

The emergence of a written textual tradition in the case of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of South India can be dated to the thirteenth century, when the evolving community consciousness was acting upon and restructuring the Śrīvaiṣṇava identity. The

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[1]Here "other" implies other religious communities and sects.

[2]Eric Hobsbawm, 'Introduction: Inventing Traditions,' in *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger ed., Cambridge, 1983, p.12.

[3]Alfred Kroeber, 'Introduction', in *Traditional India: Structure and Change*, Milton Singer ed., Jaipur, 1975, p.xii.

construction of a past by the Śrīvaiṣnava ideologues was subjected to the contemporary concerns, that were influenced by the amalgamation of the Tamil (oral) and the Sanskrit (written) elements within a single structure. This was a significant development for it broadened the scope of the community ideology and tradition, making it relevant for a larger section of the society. The notion of being a 'Śrīvaiṣnava' developed, which determined the normative behavioural pattern of the community. This underscored the importance of transforming the oral tradition into a written one, codifying pre-existing ideas along with interpretations and comments of the codifier, modified, and added to the structure of that tradition. As long as oral tradition circulated, the community bonds were fluid and subject to shifting frontiers. Codification of the oral tradition provided a fixed point of reference for the scriptures to develop. Thus, the edition and compilation of the oral hymns of the Āḻvārs into a single text, the Nālāyira Divya Prabandham had ramifications for developing a scriptural canon for the community. However, the relevance of the orality continued as the only means of dissemination to those denied access to scriptures because of their low caste status. For instance, oral exposition of the philosophy through the ritual singing in the temples continued to be one of the important means of communication in Srivaisnavism.[4]

In the Śrīvaiṣnava textual tradition, certain literary conventions evolved, generating a large body of religious texts that provided the basic scriptural norms for the community. They were the commentaries, i.e. vyākhyānas and bhāṣyas, hagiographies, i.e. the guruparamparas, ācāryavaibhavams, liturgical texts, i.e., the āgamas, sthalapurāṇas, sthalamahātmyas, and the oḻugūs. These genres of texts apart from articulating the textual tradition themselves became a part of it, thereby acquiring a scriptural status. However, the Nālāyira Divya Prabandham remained independent and was the most sacred of all the scriptures.

The authors of the textual tradition were the ācāryas or the spiritual heads who carefully and cogently presented the ideas within a stable and "legitimate" framework. In this process, several historical situations emerged as aberrations that were justified through various myths and legends. There was a conscious attempt in constructing a past

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[4]This was also the case with Tamil Saivism. For details on the ritual singing of the Saiva community, see, R.Champakalakshmi, 'Paṭikama Paṭuvar: Ritual Singing as a Means of Communication in Early Medieval South India', *Studies in Indian History* 10,2, 1994,pp. 199-215.

that would provide antiquity and through it prestige to the community. This was crucial, for Saivism had already developed a canonical tradition by the end of the thirteenth century. The *acaryas* themselves derived their positions of authority from the very tradition they built up, which emphasized the importance of the *guru/ācārya* who emerged as a major element in the institutional organization of the community.

Thus, the Srīvaiṣṇava textual tradition is complex and is more than an agglomeration of certain thematic texts that are extremely difficult to classify. This is because there is a considerable amount of overlap, repetition and inter-linkages between various themes and ideas. However, one can roughly classify them into seven components, viz., the hymnal tradition; the *sampradāya*—the theological and philosophical tradition; the commentatorial tradition; the hagiographical tradition; the liturgical tradition and finally the pilgrimage (textual) tradition as represented in the genre of texts called the *sthalapurāṇas*. Of these, the *sthalapurāṇas* do not necessarily form the part of the canonical tradition.

The textual tradition in Srivaisnavism in a literal sense may be said to have begun around the ninth-tenth century A.D., when it is believed that the four thousand hymns of the Alvars, which were scattered, were collected and set to music by Nāthamuni to be sung in the temple at Srīrangam. This may be considered as the first attempt at creating a text, albeit oral for developing a community consciousness. However, collection and compilation of the hymns were not enough. It had to be placed in a context to make it relevant to the community. In South India, the context of the transmission of the text was the temple. The temple provided a physical and a ritual space, for the recitation of the hymns as the ritual performance of the hymns involved the reciters as well as the listeners, i.e. the entire community of devotees irrespective of their caste status.

The textual tradition entered the second phase from the eleventh century A.D. onwards, when the religious leaders composed texts on Srīvaiṣṇava philosophy. These texts focussed mainly on theological issues, which formed the basis of the *Visiṣṭadvaita* philosophy of Rāmānuja (i.e. twelfth century) that came to be identified with the community and its ideology. The crystallization of philosophical ideas led to soteriological and hermeneutical developments, which later on generated further works on philosophy and commentaries. However, in these two stages the textual tradition while

creating an awareness of fraternity among the Śrīvaiṣṇava devotees remained exclusive in the sense that the Sanskritic and Tamil texts continued to be parallel to each other and not incorporative. The Tamil hymns, it should be pointed out were still being orally transmitted through temples and the rituals performed in these temples.

However, the fusion between the Sanskrit and Tamil elements was never complete. According to R. Champakalakshmi, there has been in South India a certain duality in the construction of religious traditions, due to constant interaction between the mainstream Sanskrit tradition and regional/local or vernacular forms with shifting emphases between the Sanskrit and the vernacular at different points of historical time.[5]This is nowhere better exemplified than in the Śrīvaiṣṇava community, where different sub-traditions emerged and became the basis of various sectarian identities. These sub-traditions and identities were Sanskrit or Tamil. Despite their differences, they reiterated their association with the larger community and its unified textual tradition. By the end of the seventeenth century, the notional duality between Sanskrit and Tamil led to a schism into the Vaṭakalai(northern) and Teṇkalai(southern)sects. These sects subsequently ossified into distinct sub-castes that retained their affiliation to the parent Śrīvaiṣṇava community.[6]

Thus, the Srivaisnava tradition may be understood as a "process as well as a product", creating a continuing context for modification, innovation and elaboration. Such reconstructions of the tradition frequently took place because of the following circumstances:

(1)   When the Viśiṣṭadvaitic philosophy evolved under the aegis of Ramanuja, the philosopher - reformer, in a highly Sanskritized scriptural tradition.

(2)   When deviation from Sanskritic norms brought the Tamil hymnal literature to the fore with the compilation of the four thousand hymns, the Nālāyira Divya Prabandham.The Prabandham was appellated as the Drāviḍa Veda, whereby the Vedic status provided sanctity to the vernacular as a scriptural language.

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[5]R. Champakalakshmi in her yet unpublished research on Religion and Society, particularly on religious communities in South India has put forth this idea of "duality" based on her findings relating to the Sanskritic and Vernacular aspect of the religious traditions. This was made available to me for my work on Srivaisnavism.

[6]The schism is discussed in Chapter IV.

(3)   When the various sectarian affiliations emerged that finally split the community's coherent organization into the Vaṭakalai and Teṇkalai resulting in a dual textual tradition.

I. The Hymnal Tradition

Tradition attributes to Nāthamuni (tenth century A.D) the first of the three *ācāryas*[7], the oral compilation of the Āḷvār hymns and setting it to music alongside the Vedic hymns, at the Raṅgaṅathasvāmī temple at Śrīrangam.[8]This institutionalization of hymnal singing in the temples represented the first conscious attempt to develop a canon; and provided for the merging of Sanskrit and Tamil tradition, to draw upon the support of both the linguistic sections of the society. Consequently, by the twelfth century A.D., the oral hymns were transformed into the scriptural text, i.e. the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* when the attempts were made to broaden the community base. The reference to Nāthamuni as the first *ācārya* was a conscious construction of a past, for he is stated to have immediately followed the Āḷvārs, thereby attributing a continuity which otherwise is historically unattested.

The pre-Nathamuni stage of the hymnal tradition was marked by individual and diffused notions of *bhakti* and community in the spontaneously composed hymns of the different Āḷvārs. Situated in the changing milieu of Tamil religiosity, the early *bhakti* of the *Mudal* Āḷvārs (viz., Pēy, Poygai and Bhūdatt) of the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. represented the oldest stage of Vaiṣṇava devotion. Dominated by the *Bhagvad Gītā* philosophy of intellectual *bhakti –yoga*, i.e, withdrawing of senses and meditating in total surrender to god, the religion of the early Āḷvārs also evinced a typical southern milieu within which the mythical depiction of Viṣṇu (for instances the various avatars like Kṛṣṇa, Vāmana and Varāha) highlighted him as an absolute. Further, the rituals of *pūjā,* i.e., worshipping with flowers and incense and singing and dancing to the temple *vigraha* (image) were include. However, the sensuous and the sectarian ideas had not yet evolved in these *antātis..* The predominant northern influence was due to the regional contexts in

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[7]The other two being Yamunacarya and Ramanuja. See the list of *ācāryas* in the Appendix I.

[8]Here the tradition implies the hagiographical literature, which developed simultaneously with the exegetics, and commentaries thereby providing a background to the latter's development.

which the Ālvārs were situated. Tirumallai, Tirukkōvalur and Vēngaḍam, the birthplaces of the saints were a part of the Pallava kingdom in the northern portion of the Tamil region, where the Sanskritic influence was greater.

Situated within the Pāṇdyan environment, the *bhakti* of Nammālvār marked a greater influence of the Cankam religion. The hymns expressed an intense emotional *bhakti* that superseded 'all religious attitudes and methods'.[9]Such intensity comprised of the passion to unite with the transcendental god and the ensuing agony due to the inability to do so:

> Give up everything
>
> Surrender your soul
>
> To the maker
>
> And accept his protection. (1)
>
> Fleetier than lightning
>
> Is the life of the body.
>
> Ponder a while
>
> On this matter yourself.(2)
>
> Uproot all thoughts
>
> Of you and yours.
>
> Merge with the lord,
>
> There is no greater fulfillment.(3)
>
> Unite with the feet
>
> Of the glorious Nārāyaṇa
>
> Lord of countless virtues
>
> Lord of incomparable good. (10)[10]

This emotion was typified in the notion of *viraha* or separation that was resolved through the composition of poetry dedicated to god.[11]The *viraha-bhakti*, involved a mysticism of total trust and surrender that became the basis of *prapatti-* an important theological idea for the future Srīvaiṣṇava exegesis.

A complex notion of *bhakti* was represented in the works of Tirumangaiālvār. Ranging from the folk songs (particularly in relation to Kṛṣṇa's childhood), to the Puranic myths, to a sacred landscape of temples that emphasized the notion of pilgrimage and

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[9]R. Champakalakshmi, 1996,p.139.

[10]*Tiruvāymoḷi*, I.2.1-I.2.11.

[11]See for details, Friedhelm Hardy, 1983.

finally the idea of serving the *bhaktas* as an object of *bhakti,* Tirumangai attempted to resolve the frustration emanating from his inability to grasp the transcendental absolute. The strong erotic tenor of the poems have led Hardy to conclude that for the first time, southern *bhakti* had ebtered into direct discussion with the northern textual ideas in which *kama* (eroticism) as a concept was already well developed.[12]

The *bhakti* entered a new stage with Periyalvar, Antal and Kulasekhara. The world of myths became an important medium through which devotion was expressed. Structured exclusively within the folk genre, both Periyalvar and Kulasekhara highlighted for the first time kinship patterns of social relevance. Mother-child relationship, where Yasoda was an ideal mother and baby Krsna was an ideal child was the thematic focus in the hymns. Similarly, father-son relationship epitomized in the Ramayana stories of Dasratha and Rama became the focus of Kulasekhara's compositions. The parental anxities and joys were analogous to the emotions of a devotee towards the divine, in this case Krsna and Rama. The hymns of Antal added a feminine dimension, where the Alvar addressed Krsna of Mathura and Vrndavana's her husband. The *Tiruppavai* with a new intense eroticism expressed her desire to win Krsna, whereas the *Nacciyar Tirumoli* described her marriage with Visnu as Ranganatha. Though Antal was painfully aware that the mythic and real world were dichotomous and the society whose norms she had shunned could only help her to unite with Krsna at Vrndavana. Thus in the hymns of the three Alvars, the social metaphors associated with day-to- day life had a broader social appeal, and became a part of the future Srivaisnava liturgical tradition. Periyalvar's hymns of lullaby popularly called *ta-le-lo* and Antal's hymns as popular marriage songs are such instances. Finally the Vaisnava *bhakti* culminated in the hymns of Tiruppanlvar, Tontartippoti and Madhurakavi.

From Antal's poetics to that of Madhurakavi the Ranganatha temple at Srirangam in the lower Kaveri valley acquired a spiritual prominence and emerged as the ideal environ for the Vaisnava *bhakti.* As mentioned before the *Nacciyar Tirumoli* was dedicated to Ranganatha. Kulasekhara belonging to the Cera region expressed a longing to see the god at the temple of Srirangam, serve the devotees ther, who were *bhaktas par excellence* and if possible be reborn close to Srirangam and Vengadam. *Bhakti* as an

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[12] Ibid, pp.371-402.

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institutionalized ideal was magnified further in the compositions of the last three Āḻvārs. The reclining posture of Raṅganātha became the centre of Āḻvār's devotion. The *Tirupalliyelucci* of Toṇṭaraṭippoṭi was clearly structured as a wake-up song, sung every morning to the divine image in the temple. Thus, temple iconography and rituals became a source of inspiration for the later Āḻvār *bhakti* and represented the institutional development of Vaisnavism-different from the mystical aspect in Nammāḻvār's poetry.

Apart from their philosophy of *bhakti*, the Āḻvars raised certain issues that emerged as significant for the later development of the community. *Prapatti* as a concept, though received full-fledged treatment in the works of the later *acaryas*, it was to some extent stylized and systematically represented in the hymns of the later Āḻvārs viz., Toṇṭaraṭippoṭi, Madhurakavi and Tirumaṅgai. The significance of *prapatti* lay in its universal appeal, for the idea of achieving salvation through unconditional devotion made caste status very meaningless. In this context, Nammāḻvār's rhetoric against caste assumed special significance. The hymns were not only a protest against the exclusive socio-religious sphere of the *brāhmaṇas*, but also suggested an alternative to this order by emphasizing the merit of reciting the *Tiruvāymoḻi:*

> This decad of the thousand songs of Kurugūr Sathakopan
> Praised by musicians, devotees and poets, alike
> Fondly addresses the lord of wonders, full of grace.
> Those who sing it will never suffer on earth.[13]

Therefore, by providing a channel for community participation, through hymnal recitation of the *Tiruvāymoḻi* Nammāḻvār placed the community of *bhaktas* above caste. The hymns of the *brāhmaṇa* Āḻvars like Toṇṭaraṭippoṭi also reflected the caste tensions. The hymns reflected struggle between the Vaiṣṇava *bhaktas* and the Caturvedin *brāhmaṇas:*

> Though they may be *brāhmaṇas (antanar)* by caste-who are the foremost among those belonging to you- and may be reciting the whole of the four Vedas and the six *angas*, if they desires those who belong to you, in amoment they become like outcastes![14]

Instead of caste the Āḻvārs emphasized on a Vaiṣṇava community identity with Viṣṇu emerging as the supreme godhead. The notion of *kainkarya*, i.e. the service to the Lord

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[13] *Tiruvāymoḻi*, I.5.11.

with true devotion became a constant refrain in their hymns. The idea of service to a Viṣṇu *bhakta* became equivalent to serving god.[15]The emphasis on community over caste can be traced to the social background of the Āḷvārs themselves. Nammalvar being a *Veḷāḷa* and Tirumaṅgai being a non-brahmana *kaḷva* chief expressed strong sentiments against caste hierarchy.[16]

Alongside the anti-caste rhetoric, the Āḷvars also attempted to repudiate Sanskrit as the traditionally accepted language of religion. Instead, they focussed on Tamil and encouraged the Srīvaiṣṇava devotees to express their devotion in this language. For the first time, a regional language was placed *at par* with Sanskrit as a language of scriptures. The importance of Tamil was further sought to be enhanced by emphasizing the hymns of the Āḷvārs as encapsulating the essence of the otherwise, inaccessible Vedas.[17]This was clearly stated in the hymns of Nammāḷvār and Tirumagai.

The presence of the above ideas in almost all the hymns indicate that the Āḷvārs were influencing each other and creating a community consciousness. This is further illustrated by the *guru-śiṣya* relationship in Madhurakavi's *Kaṇṇinuṇ̃ciruttampu*. This hymn documented the handing down of knowledge by his *guru* Nammāḷvār who also instructed him to sing the hymns. The idea of Nammāḷvār's songs as Tamil rendering of the Vedas appear in this hymn for the first time:

> For those who worship grace alone,
>
> By grace he sang the thousand songs.
>
> A bigger grace you cannot show,
>
> For he did grace the Vedas-four. (8)
>
> The deep sense of Vedic thought,
>
> He sang in song and taught my heart.

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[14]*Tirumal*, 42. Quoted from Friedhelm Hardy,1983,p.437.

[15]'Thou, Lord of Srīraṅgam, of high walls hast instructed thus: Oye, who follows the traditional knowledge of the four vedas faultlessly even though my devotees of the Feet (*aḍiyars*) are born of the lowliest caste, tell them the highest truths and learn from them [for] they are my equals.' Cited in the Toṇṭaraṭippoṭiāḷvār, *Tirumalai*, stanza 42.

[16]This is best illustrated in Madhurakavi's words: "Thou art the Lord of the worlds, O remember me as the servant's servant's servant's servant of thy servant's servant's servant". Cited in the *Mukundamāla* stanza 27 p. 22.

[17]The *phalaśrutis* of Tvm indicate an awareness of the efficacy of Tamil. 'This decade of the garland of thousand choicest Tamil songs/By fertile Valuḍi (Pāṇḍya) kingdom Kurugūr's Satakopan/Addresses the lord who is consort of Srī, Bhū, Nīlā/hose who can sing it will serve his devotees with great wealth.' Cited in the *Tiruvāymoḷi* V: 6:11.

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Sathakopan my lord is Love

—Alone the use of serving him. (9)

The notion of "communitas" reached its culmination in Tirumangai's works, which introduced the concept of pilgrimage and a sacred geography of Viṣṇu temples in the southern region. This concept of pilgrimage was not itinerant in nature, rather it created a network among several sacred centres identified with Viṣṇu, unifying people of the same belief, who otherwise existed as discrete, disparate groups. All these hymns along with their ideas became the basis of Śrīvaiṣṇava theology in the post twelfth century A.D.

Hence, the devotional hymns of the Ālvārs were not certainly restricted to emotional *bhakti*. Each *ālvār* appeared to have been aware of a Vaiṣṇava ideology and expressed it in his/her own individual style. The world-view of the hymnists regarding community and religion did not assume such complex proportions and integrative function as in the later periods. Nor did they achieve a broad popular base despite, their dissent against orthodoxy. However, the blueprint of the community structure already evolved with a distinct philosophy of *bhakti*, struggles between the *bhakta* community with its *Tamil Veda* and its own interpretations of caste and the orthodox Caturvedin *brāhmaṇas* and Śrīrangam as the spiritual milieu.

Around the twelfth-thirteenth century A.D. the collection of oral hymns was transformed into the scriptural text, the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* which was given the appellation of the *Drāviḍa Veda*. This provided a status of the Vedas to the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* and established the sacredness of Tamil as a scriptural language. However, the Sanskrit Vedas were not ignored and were incorporated in the scriptural framework. The co-existence of both the Sanskrit Vedas and Tamil hymns (i.e. *Drāviḍa Veda*) became the central idea in the philosophy of *ubhaya-vedānta* (i.e., dual Vedas). This philosophy constructed a dual tradition where the Sanskrit Vedas as well as the equally sacred *Drāviḍa Veda* co-existed. This dualism also provided the ideological context for the construction/invention of *Maṇipravāḷam* as a scriptural language, which was an admixture of Sanskrit and Tamil, a feature unique to Srivaisnavism. Therefore, *Maṇipravāḷam* emerged as the language of articulation of the textual tradition.

The entire hymnal tradition, became important during the post-Rāmānuja period when the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* in general and the *Tiruvāymoḷi* in particular

emerged as scriptures. The hymnal tradition not only inspired the theology of Srivaisnavism, it also established cohesive Srīvaiṣnava community, by linking the Āḷvārs and ācāryas. The recovery of the hymns by Nāthamuni from Nammāḷvār presented a continuity which otherwise is historically unattested. Through the hymnal tradition, the role of the Āḷvārs and ācāryas was clearly defined, thereby stating to the community the importance of each. That is, the Āḷvārs were mystics whose spontaneous abstract outpourings of devotion needed a systematic interpretation by the ācāryas who disseminated the ideas to the devotees. For example, issues of caste and Sanskrit versus Tamil - the major hymnal themes were systematized in the later texts in the concept of Drāviḍa Veda, philosophy of ubhaya vedānta and Maṇipravāḷa language. Therefore, the canonisation of the hymns provided the context for the ideologues to develop the exegesis, which became the ideological basis of the community and its identity. Hence, the hymnal tradition marked the beginning of identity construction of the Srīvaiṣnavas that culminated in the theology of the community.

II. Sampradāya —the Theological and Philosophical Tradition of Srivaisnavism

It was in the theological aspect of the textual tradition that a concept of sampradāya emerged as one thought, one movement and what is particularly important, one organization. Hence, the development of this concept of sampradāya marked the transition between Vaisnavism of the pre-Rāmānuja phase on the one hand and the Rāmānuja and post-Rāmānuja phase on the other. The significance lay in the fact that it introduced seminal ideas, which became important philosophical postulates of the community. Textually, it generated and influenced different genres of religious literature, which had ramifications for the community. The theological and philosophical tradition of the Srīvaiṣnavas was also attributed with the beginning of a concrete, unified liturgical system represented in the complex structures of temples and matha organizations. These institutions were supposed to translate the abstruse philosophical ideas into tangible perceptive ritual forms, thereby making Visistadvaitism available to the entire community.[18]Hence, they were also considered the part of the sampradaya. A

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18 Rāmānuja is associated with several temple reforms at various Srīvaiṣnava sites. The Koil Oḷugū

strong religious ideology as reflected in the *sampradāya* projected an uniform Śrīvaiṣṇava community, which became important not only for articulation within the community but also *vis-a-vis* the others. In this way, the *sampradāya* contributed towards the identity construction of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas. The three significant religious leaders associated with this theological tradition were Nāthamuni, Yāmunācārya and Ramanuja. All of them were considered the *ācāryas* of the community. They were different from the Alvārs, who were steeped in complete devotion. These *ācāryas* were the philosophers who systematized the tradition and placed it intellectually at par with the other religious traditions.

According to tradition, Nāthamuni was the first *ācārya* who systematically laid the organizational foundations of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community.[19]One, he organized, compiled and edited the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* for the canonical tradition. Two, he institutionalized the ritual of hymnal singing by establishing a group of singers called *araiyars* thus ensuring the perpetuity of the hymnal tradition.[20]Therefore, Nāthamuni emerged as the progenitor of the genealogies of the *araiyars*. Three, he was the first Vaiṣṇava saint to cross the Tamil border and go on a pilgrimage to the North.[21] Although the tradition of pilgrimage had already been mapped out in the sacred geography of Tirumaṅgaiālvār's hymns, the itinerant aspect was supposedly, introduced by Nāthamuni, who personally went from one temple to another collecting the hymns.[22]If Nāthamuni's biographical account is true, then one can already see the beginning of a pan-Indian pilgrimage network. Alternatively, probably the later Śrīvaiṣṇavas in order to prove the

refers to him as the leader of Cēran *matha*, the first instance of a *matha* at Srīrangam. The *Koil Oḷugū* p.43.

[19]According to K.A.N. Sastri, the Anbil plates of Sundara Cōla (957-973 A.D.) mention a Śrīnātha from Vīranārāyaṇacaturvedimangalam who can be identified with Nāthamuni. This centre was a *brahmadeya* founded most probably by Parāntaka-I (907-915 A.D.) who was a patron of Srivaisnavism. He was also known as Vīranārāyaṇa. The Viṣṇu temple at this centre was dedicated to Maṇṇanār or Lord (of Dvāraka) and hence the present name of the site Kāṭṭumaṇṇārkōil. K.A.N. Sastri, 1955. Pp.638-639.

[20]According to the tradition Nāthamuni appointed his two nephews to continue with the tradition of hymnal singing. From them the tradition of *araiyars* i.e. ritual singers began.

[21]The traditional biography of Nāthamuni begins with the account of a pilgrimage that he took along with his family members, visiting the sacred places in North India, associated with Lord Kṛṣṇa. The family decided to settle on the banks of Yamunā at a spot where Viṣṇu had lived on earth during his incarnation as Kṛṣṇa. However, Maṇṇanār, the form of Lord Viṣṇu present in Nāthamuni's village temple at Vīranārāyaṇapuram ordered him to return. On his return he was given a house and a position of some responsibility in the temples.

[22]It has been said that it was Tirumaṅgaiālvār who began the practice of ritual singing which could not be continued. Hence, Nāthamuni's efforts at the recovery of the hymns and instituting a continuous practice of hymnal singers became significant.

antiquity of the ritual of pilgrimage traced it to Nāthamuni to make it more authentic. Four, Nāthamuni is said to be the first *Śrīkāryam* of Ranganāthasvāmī temple at Śrīrangam. Thereby for the first time, an administrative or executive authority was attributed to a spiritual leader.[23]Hence, this legitimized the primacy of Śrīrangam that appeared later, inscriptionally as well as textually, as the main centre of Srivaisnavism.

From Nāthamuni emerged the beginning of the canonical tradition. Although all the four aspects did not evolve any philosophy but provided the context in which theology developed. Institutionalization of the hymns provided a channel for dissemination, pilgrimage to northern sites attributed a pan-Indian status and the position of *Śrīkāryam* held by Nāthamuni for the first time defined the base of the *ācāryas* i.e. the temple. Therefore, in all the above said developments attributed to Nāthamuni, temple emerged as an arena for acaryic discourse and its transmission to the local population.[24]

The popular base of temple and its emergence as the focus of community inspired Yāmuna's *Āgamaprāmānya*. It was in his *Āgamaprāmānya* that for the first time one comes across a major ideological shift from an exclusive, metaphysical approach as represented in *Vaikhānsa Āgama* to a more popular, ritualistic and incorporative approach as represented in *Pāñcarātra Āgama*. However, this shift, which asserted the validity of the Pāñcarātra, was a notional one and later on became the ideological basis for the textual elaboration of the liturgical practices in the post-Rāmānuja period, when the concept of a community became more broad-based. His *Stotraratna* articulated the intellectual aspects of *bhakti-yoga*, which laid down the ideological postulates that were later elaborated.

Nāthamani and Yāmuna were projected as the precursors of the *sampradāya* tradition, which later on consolidated itself under the aegis of Rāmānuja. To Rāmānuja, the construction of a Śrīvaisnava community was attributed. He was regarded as its philosopher-founder, as he systematized the theology and organization and therefore gave

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[23]The hagiographical texts attach a lot of importance to the office of *Śrīkāryam*. All the *acaryas*, right from Nāthamuni onwards to Rāmānuja were supposed to be the *Śrīkaryam* of the temples.

[24]Yāmuna while dying deputed Rāmānuja to fulfil three duties. First was to establish the doctrine of *Visistadvaita* by formulating a commentary on the **Brahamasūtras** of Badaryāyana (Vyāsa). The second was to immortalize the holy renderings of Nammālvār. The third was to endorse an act of gratitude to *Bhagavān* Parāsara and Vyāsa. Rāmānuja took a vow to fulfil these three tasks with the divine grace of the Lord and the great line of preceptors of this tradition. This legend is mentioned in all the versions of the

a cohesive structure to the Śrīvaiṣṇava exegesis. Rāmānuja's *Viśiṣṭadvaita* emerged as a coherent philosophy and inculcated theological ideas that placed Srivaisnavism on an equal footing with other religious traditions, which had already developed a concrete philosophy by them.[25]The main features of the philosophy were:

1.   It propounded a credible doctrine of complete identity between the God and the Absolute. The individual soul, was made by God, returned to Him and merged with Him but was always conscious of itself as an I. If this self-consciousness were lost, it would cease to exist. It was one with God, yet separate; hence, for this reason the system of Rāmānuja was called Viśiṣṭadvaita.[26]

2.   It harmonized God's transcendence *(paratva)* with his accessibility *(saulabhya)*. This was very significant for establishing a personal relationship with god. The concept of godhead with attributes, i.e. *Saguṇa Brahman* paved the way for a better socio-ethical approach and made the religion more acceptable to the common man. Rāmānuja's supreme self was the one who was extremely compassionate and full of love for his devotees. Unlike the impersonal formlesss god, i.e. *Nirguṇa Brahaman* of Sankara, Rāmānuja's god needed a man and vice-versa.

3.   It indicated the highest type of devotion without belittling the part of intellectualism and social duties in man's spiritual life. It taught the way to be away from the phenomenal world, but at the same time to live within it, by surrendering the fruits of action at the feet of the lord.

4.   Viśiṣṭadvaita of Rāmānuja incorporated selectively Sankara's Vedantic tradition with its monism, but modified it to make it comprehensible for the non-intellectual, emotionally involved devotees. This was crucial for the social base of the community. Sankara's *advaita* preached that salvation can be achieved through abstinence and denial of vices and worldly aspects and that realization of Godhead was possible through introspection. *Viśiṣṭadvaita* accepted the social obligation of *Jīva*

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hagiographical texts and its implications will be discussed in the main text of the next chapter.

[25]Although Rāmānuja systematized the philosophy of *Viśiṭadvaita*, its origin is traced back by the tradition to an earlier religious teacher called Dramiḍācārya who is said to have first articulated a system of thought evolving its basic doctrines. However, one does not find any reference to Drayiḍācārya in any hagiographical texts. The Śrīvaiṣṇava oral tradition refers to him. The works of this teacher are not available similarly; the Viśiṣṭadvaitic ideas are traced even to the writings of Yāmunācārya.

[26]For detailed understanding of Viśiṣṭadvaitic philosophy, see John B. Carman, 1981.

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(man).

Rāmānuja structured these religious ideas in the mould of the Upanishadic tradition through commentaries. Hence, emerged a new literary tradition, where the exposition of philosophy took the form of elaborate interpretations and discourses. Because of his commentatorial and interpretive skills, Rāmānuja has been called the *Bhāṣyakāra* by the Srīvaiṣṇavas. The tradition attributes Rāmānuja with the introduction of two significant exegetical characteristics that imparted a distinction to the Srīvaiṣṇava community. The first one was the concept of Srī and the second idea was the notion of *bhakti*. Rāmānuja did allude to these concepts, but his interpretations were different from what the community tradition attributes him with.

The position of Srī, which has been one of the crucial issues of the schism emerged with the incorporation of the Pancaratric doctrines under Yāmunā. However, this was a selective process. Lakṣmī, in the Pāñcaratra School occupied the central position of the creator, preserver and destroyer.[27]This supremacy of Lakṣmī was not reflected in the tenth century Srīvaiṣṇava philosophy, where she was accorded the secondary position of a benign consort whose status was derived from Viṣṇu.[28]After cataloguing the inseparable association of Lakṣmī with Bhagavān in his *Svarūpa* (natural beauty), *vigraha* (body) and *avatāra* (incarnations), Srī was also considered an equally important means (*upāyam*) along with Viṣṇu to attain *mokṣa* (salvation). Thus, it was made explicit that she had attained an equal eminence with her lord because of his eternal relationship with her.[29]It should be noted that Yāmunā's works did not miss the pre-eminence of Lakṣmī as the goddess of power and wealth as described in the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. This representation had to be diluted, so that it did not contend with Viṣṇu as the supreme power. Therefore, the deliberate marginalisation of the goddess through the notion of the divine consort was in congruence with the larger community philosophy of Viṣṇu, as the

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[27]Srī's position as the sharer of all power and responsibilities with her consort Narayana is emphasized by the word *Srīsampradāya*. It is believed that Visnu who then handed to Nammālvār.

[28]The *Lakṣmī Tantra*, a *Pāñcaratra* text, describes the cosmic function of Lakṣmī: I alone send (the creation) forth and (again) destroy it. I absolve the sins of the good. As the (mother) earth towards all beings, I pardon them (all their sins) I meet everything out. I am the thinking process and I am contained in everything. From David Kinsley, *Hindu Goddesses, Vision of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition*, Delhi, 1987, p. 30.

[29]Prof. C. Jagannathacariar, tr.,*Catuṣślokī of Alavandar*, Madras, 1983, p.6.

puruṣottama, i.e., pre-eminent amongst the gods:

> Who else but you are the sole resting place of even Lakṣmī, the goddess of all prosperity and liveliness...who has made his chest the abode of Śrī, whose birthplace is your beloved abode.[30]

This concept of the goddess continued in the twelfth century works of Rāmānuja Śrī continued to be an important qualification of the supreme Brahman as is evident from the dedicatory verses in his commentaries on the *Vedānta Sūtras*, reference to Śrīyāhkaṇṭa (beloved of Śrī) and Śrīmat (united with Śrī) in the *Vedāntadīpa* and Śrīnivāsa (in whom Śrī dwells) in the *Śrībhāṣya*.[31]No further reference to Śrī was made in any of these works. In this connection, it should be pointed out that the reference to Śrī as the mother in Rāmānuja's *Śaraṇagatigadya* was restricted to the introductory portions only. The separate invocation to Śrī was because of her identity, as the consort of Viṣṇu.[32]The rest of the work does not allude to any distinct function of the goddess.

Marginal allusions to Śrī in Yāmuṇa's and Rāmānuja's works can be understood in the context of community construction from the twelfth to the sixteenth century AD. The main concern was the systematisation of philosophy in order to provide an intellectual and theological basis for Srivaisnavism. In this context, *Visiṣṭadvaita* which placed Srivaisnavism at par with the already consolidated religious traditions of that period, focused on Visnu to portray one thought, one movement and most important, one organisation. Based on exclusive monotheism, this philosophy attributed Viṣṇu with qualities of transcendence *(paratva)* and immanence *(saulabhya)*. It was emphasized that both were the characteristic of the same god and hence not dichotomous. Further, the image of Viṣṇu as the complete god was highlighted through Śrī as the chief consort *(mahiṣi),* who qualified his status and action. Thus like a mortal wife, she managed his household.

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[30]Swami Adidevananda, ed. and trans., *Stotraratna. The Jewel Hymn of Yāmuṇācārya,* Madras, 1950, Verses 12 and 37.

[31]John Carman, 1981, p. 238.

[32]Oh! Śrīdevī! Mother of the entire world and more particularly my mother! The crowned and divine queen of supreme lord of all the Devas! Pure and Faultless, ever inseparably united with Him, full of all auspicious qualities, with a charming from, with the most wonderful infinite collection of adorable qualities such as greatness, rulership and high virtues worthy and matching those of Bhagavan Nārāyaṇa and to his utmost liking having no other resort to look to, I seek these as my refuge (since) you are the sole resort of the helpless. From *Gadyatrayam,* V.V. Ramanujan, ed. and trans., 1994, op.cit., verse, 1.24.

Beholding Bhagavāna Nārāyana seated on the body of serpent Ananta by the side of
Lakṣmī who fills the world of Vaikuntha and all its divine wealth of appurtenances with
the splendour of her form and gives orders to all the attendants like Adiseṣa in various
states and situations, who is in every way worthy of him by her nature, beauty character
and charms *(sila-rūpa-guna-vilāsa-ādi).*[33]

Hence, care was taken not to emphasize the immanent nature of Srī as the divine female
energy (Sakti) because it would interfere with the projection of Viṣnu as the supreme
god. No separate functions were assigned to Srī and all efforts were made to subvert any
development that could create a distinct theological construct around Lakṣmī and
become an ideological basis for a separate identity.

The philosophy of Visiṣtadvaita by its associatioin with the Vedic texts was
structured within a highly Sanskritized framework, not comprehensible to the common
man. It was left for the Srīvaiṣnava theologians of the sixteenth century to evolve a Tamil
tradition through the structuring of canonical literature and finally attempting to merge
the Tamil and Sanskritic traditions. Hagiographical literature as well as recent religious
historiography portrays Rāmānuja with a catholic outlook for he broadened the social
base of Srivaisnavism. [34] He is supposed to have gone beyond mere metaphysics and
introduced institutional reforms in the temple to incorporate non-*brāhmana* participation
in the ritual as well as the organizational aspects of temple worship. The catholicity of
Rāmānuja is further highlighted by showing that *prapatti* was an integral part of his
philosophy. This was a reaction to the viewpoint that *prapatti* has been marginalized in
Rāmānuja's scheme of religious doctrine. The Srīvaiṣnava theologians in their own way
resolved this controversy by showing that *prapatti* as a concept was central in Rāmānuja's
Gadyatrayam.[35] However, a careful observation would reveal that Rāmānuja's *bhakti* was
more intellectual than popular. The heavy Sanskritic bias cannot be ignored. Perhaps
Rāmānuja never intended to address the lay devotee. Rather his concern was to evolve a
coherent theological base for Srivaisnavism, thereby making it ideationally significant for
the community, through a intellectually well articulated and emotionally more appealing
philosophy and theology *vis-à-vis* others, particularly the *advaitins.* The principles of
varṇāsramadharma were never questioned. Neither did Rāmānuja intend to do so. For

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[33]M.R. Rajagopala Ayyangar, trans. "*Vaikunthagadhya,*" *Gadyatraya of Rāmānuja,* 1956 para 4.
[34]For instance see N. Jagdeesan, 1977 and K.K.A. Venkatacari, 1978.
[35]K.K.A. Venkatacari, 1978 and Robert Lester, 1966, pp.266-282.

the caste identity was the primordial identity and a complete rejection of it implied the disruption of the social order. A social revolution was not what Srivaisnavism needed. It required a strong base with a legitimizing force of the *brāhmaṇas*. Many non-brahmanas incorporated in the temple were rarely accorded a priestly status. That Rāmānuja and other Srīvaiṣṇava *ācāryas* as well as the *mathādhipatis* were *brāhmaṇas* was no coincidence.

The construction of Srīvaiṣṇava identity was systematically achieved in the *Sampradāya*. First, it provided a context for the development of theology by creating a sense of community. This sense of community was based on the temple through ritual singing, pilgrimage and administrative organization. The theological basis of all these developments was expressed in Yāmuna's *Āgamapramāṇya*. Finally, it was Rāmānuja and his Viśiṣṭadvaita, which systematized the community and provided the much needed homogeneity.The *Sampradāya* laid the basis for the commentatorial tradition.

III. Commentatorial Tradition

The commentatorial tradition began in the post-Rāmānuja period. This tradition represented a complex stage during which the notion of community identity assumed significant proportions, and sectarian affiliations emerged. The most significant of these developments was the schism into Vaṭakalai and Teṇkalai. This schism has its origin in the notional duality of Sanskritic and Tamil during this period but by the end of the Vijayanagar period (i.e. the seventeenth century) it ossified into distinct sub-castes. The commentatorial tradition in the post-Rāmānuja period reflected a trend towards interpreting the attitude of the Srīvaiṣṇava community and its textual tradition and the institutional forces (temple and *maṭhas*) within this sectarian paradigm.

The antecedents of the commentatorial tradition can be traced back to Nāthamuni who collected and edited the *Prabandham*. This act involved his subjectivity and hence the *Prabandham* became a commentary. It was in fact a 'ritual commentary' on an oral text. Moreover, Nāthamuni's composition also provided the subject for ritual singing in the temples by the *araiyars* in a festival called *adhyāyanotsavam* that was especially instituted in the Vijayanagara period when the entire corpus was put to music. These *araiyars* during their performance explained the hymns through gesticulations (which got

codified into a dance form) or *mudras*, which gave space for individual expressions. By this logic, the *araiyars* can also be called commentators on the compositions of Nāthamuni, as they interpreted his text, which became easier for a devotee to comprehend as well as to enjoy. Their performance also had a large audience, which also participated through observations and collective singing of crucial hymns.[36]

It was with Rāmānuja that commentatorial tradition received a concrete shape. The *Srībhāsya* – a commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* and the *Gītābhasya*, a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā* are two of his works well known within and outside the community. His *Vedānta-dīpa* and the *Vedāntasāra* were brief commentaries on the *Brahmasūtra*, which probably were intended for the beginners.[37] In fact, the Viśistadvaita of Rāmānuja represented the culmination of the 'cognitive structures' of the Vedas, Alvārs, Nāthamuni and Yāmunācārya, thereby encapsulating the past exegesis with a subjective analysis.[38]

After Rāmānuja, his disciples are believed to have carried on with his commentatorial tradition. The commentaries often claimed to record the oral discourses of the *ācārya*, which conveyed the transmission of ideas from one generation to another. For instance, in a later text written by Vaṭakkutiruvīdipiḷḷai (i.e. the *Itu*), there were two different interpretation of a certain phrase given by Kūreśa, one of the immediate disciples of Rāmānuja, suggesting that Kūreśa had given the same discourse several times. Embār, another of his immediate disciples never wrote a commentary himself, but ideas attributed to him were recorded. The commentaries also recorded Rāmānuja's (oral) discourses whose contents do not figure in the works of Rāmānuja himself. There were several instances of this kind in which the oral discourses were claimed to be codified by various texts, implying their formalisation as a canon.

The vast body of commentatorial literature, which concentrated on interpreting and commenting on the pre-existing texts itself, became the subject of further commentaries and interpretations. Hence, at both stages, there was scope for additions and elaborations. For instance, Vedānta Deśika, on the one hand and Piḷḷai Lokācārya

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[36] Vasudha Narayanan, *The Vernacular Veda. Revelation, Recitation and Ritual*, Columbia, 1994, pp. 67-114.

[37] John B. Carman, 1981, pp. 25-27

[38] Ibid, pp.29-35

followed by Maṇavāḷa Māmuni on the other, produced copious texts – philosophical as well as commentatorial – which developed and produced important theological concepts over which numerous debates took place. Later Śrīvaiṣṇavas started identifying themselves directly and strongly with these ideas than with those of Rāmānuja, thereby producing intellectual polarization. This drift away from Rāmānuja's ideas (which represented a single community ideology) was visible not in the works of the immediate disciples of Rāmānuja but in the later works and commentaries. The significance of the commentatorial tradition lay in the dynamics of these polemical debates, which became the essence of the religious exegesis and the foci of the community. At a later stage, multiple affiliations of Śrīvaiṣṇavas groups under various ācāryapuruṣas became so strong that there arose the need to assert identities, which were numerous.

The commentaries were also intended to clarify certain key concepts relating to prapatti, bhakti, role of Śrī as the mediatrix and so on. Even the teachings of Rāmānuja had several loose ends. In the process of the explication of these ambiguities, conflicting explanations emerged creating their own space with their own sets of followers within the community. The commentatorial tradition created a southern milieu of growing inclination towards the analysis of the Tamil texts. Simultaneously, the Sanskrit works of Yāmunā and Rāmānuja were also commented upon and identified as a part of this southern milieu. After Rāmānuja no southern religious leaders commented upon either Brahmasūtra or Gītā which are the northern Sanskritic texts. The ignoring of the northern Sanskritic textual tradition points to the limiting of the community's boundaries to the southern region.

(i) Language of Commentaries:

From the late twelfth century, the religious literature particularly the commentatorial literature was composed in a language, which was called Maṇipravāḷam. In this so-called new language, Tamil words were interspersed with Sanskrit words just as ruby and coral (maṇi – ruby; pravāḷa – coral), strung alternatively in a necklace. For the first time a vernacular (Tamil) was used alongside Sanskrit and both were accorded a scriptural status. This represented somewhat a radical departure. Moreover, this linguistic approach conformed to the ubhaya vedantic tradition and on a more basic level appeal to non-brahmana devotees.

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The Śrīvaiṣṇava commentators themselves did not use the term *Maṇipravāḷam* for the language they were writing in. However, they appear to have been conscious that they were constructing a language whose application did not have any precedent. This conscious construction implied that the *Maṇipravāḷam* style in the textual tradition had a specific purpose. It represented the ideology of the Śrīvaiṣṇava exegesis, which was characterized by a dualism, viz., Sanskrit and Tamil traditions.[39]Hence, as the medium of expression of this ideology, *Maṇipravāḷam* became very significant for the community identity in the post-Rāmānuja period. Thus, the language assumed dimensions that went beyond its syntactic structure.

The structure of Tamil *Maṇipravāḷam* was such that both Tamil and Sanskrit words could be easily recognized at times. At other times, Sanskrit words were provided with Tamil verbs and nouns endings.[40]In the case of Śrīvaiṣṇava *Maṇipravāḷam*, the transformation was only in the verb and noun ending. However, there was no grammatical treatise for standardizing the language. Hence, the aim of the *acaryas* was not to systematize the language through a grammar, but was to project the philosophy of *ubhaya-vedanta*. The *ācāryas* were drawing from the existing environment and creating a linguistic style distinct to the Śrīvaiṣṇava community.[41]The advantage of having dual linguistic tradition was realized particularly when this language became the direct and effective medium of transmission and dissemination of Śrīvaiṣṇava community's ideology.

As the *ubhaya-vedantic* philosophy got entrenched, there was a progressive development in the number of Tamil words. The semantic structure changed in favour of Tamil. Increasingly Tamil works came to be used as proof texts to validate or explain a

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[39]Broadly speaking, *Maṇipravāḷa* means that it is an intermixture Sanskrit and a vernacular. As a language and style it has been in use since 837 A.D., when a mixture of Sanskrit and Prākṛt was used in Jaina commentary called *Jayadhavala* by Jinasena. It was predominantly used. The standardization took place in composition of a grammatical treatise called *Līlātilakam*. *Maṇipravāḷam* should not give the impression of being writ Kannada and Telugu literature also used similar style and literature, *Maṇipravāḷam* was used in the poetic work of the K.K.A.Venkatachari, 1978.

'ayalam that the language teenth century with the was clearly stated that iskrit but in Malayalam. In the context of Tamil century. For details, see

[40]One of the important reasons for the schism into Vaṭakalai and contradiction that emerged in the linguistic domain.

as been stated as the

particular philosophical idea. In fact, the use of the hymns of the Ālvārs as proof texts increased.[42]The entire style gradually changed from heavy Sanskrit to simpler Tamil and more similes and metaphors were used from daily life to address a large audience. Hence, there was an intensification of the Tamil community identity. By the time of Periyāvāccānpiḷḷai, (fifteenth century A.D.), the language became more systematic and meticulous. A common Srīvaiṣṇava *Maṇipravāḷam* vocabulary emerged, where *acaryas* used phrases borrowed from the Alvars and works of Rāmānuja. This tendency was pronounced especially in the sectarian religious literature.

Usually *Maṇipravāla* was written in Tamil script with *grantha* characters or it was in Telugu script. The reason lay in the socio-political context of thirteenth-fourteenth centuries. During this period, Telugu migrations to Tamil region began which led to Srivaisnavism acquiring a strong Telugu base. Telugu warriors and Srīvaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇas* allied together for establishing authority relationships. The use of Telugu script thus became more regular, frequent, and started dominating *Maṇiprāvḷam*.

The language of the commentaries also adopted a distinct technique of using similes, metaphors, illustrations and elaborations to elucidate the meaning of a text, philosophy and ideas. Hence, while instructing the people, these linguistic methods would clarify abstruse philosophical concepts. Possible analogies were drawn from situations in every day life to enable individuals to relate religious discussions to their own experiences

> Therefore, *Maṇipravāḷam* was a "situational language" for: while on the one hand, it is a natural type of parlance in that many of the Sanskrit terms employed are common speech of the *bhāgavatas*, thus ensuring the general intelligibility of the language, it is a situational language, in that it developed in specific circumstances to expound the *ubhaya-vedānta* to a diverse religious community whose mother tongue was Tamil and was used in specific contexts like religious instructions involving the larger task of writing *Vyākhyānas* and *sampradāygranthas* concerning the tradition.[43]

The *Maṇipravāla* commentatorial tradition was never static. There were larger structural changes, from one genre of literature to another that is from the *Vyākhāyanas* to the *Sampradāyagranthas* and thence to *Rahasyagrantha*.[44]

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[41]K.K.A.Venkatachari, 1978, 47-50

[42]This becomes more obvious when the Telugu script was also used for those sounds that did not exist in Tamil or it was completely written in Telugu script with addition of the Tamil characters.

[43]For details, see K.K.A.Venkatachari, 1978, pp. 45-61.

[44]Ibid, Chapter II – *Maṇiprāvala Commentaries*, pp. 47-94.

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As for the *Vyākhyānagranthas* (the commentatorial texts), the first commentary seems to be that of Tirukkurukaippirāṇpiḷḷāṉ, the immediate disciple of Rāmānuja. This was called the *Ārāyirappaṭi* (i.e. the six thousand units written in the thirteenth century A.D.).[45]Being the first *Maṇipravāḷa* commentary, Piḷḷāṉ's work became the trendsetters for the later commentaries. In addition, in many ways, the Śrīvaiṣṇava *sampradāya* considers Piḷḷāṉ's work a reflection of Rāmānuja's teachings, hence providing continuity in the *sampradāya*. Another significant aspect of this commentary was that, Piḷḷāṉ's work, despite belonging to the Vaṭakalai tradition cut across the sectarian boundaries and was regarded as equally important by the Teṉkalai tradition. This is not the case with other commentaries on the *Tiruvāymoli*.[46] Piḷḷāṉ's commentary therefore, made a clean break from the main Sanskritic tradition by concentrating on a text of vernacular medium (i.e. the Tiruvāymoḷi), written by a *Veḷḷāḷa* (i.e. Nammāḷvār). After the *Vyākhyānas*, the *Sampradāyagranthas* (works dealing with the Śrīvaiṣṇava theology and traditions) are especially important for understanding the systematization of Śrīvaiṣṇava philosophy both in the post-Rāmānuja period and in the Vijayanagar period when the community identity construction was at its peak.

The third category of *Maṇipravāḷa* literature is the *Rahasyagranthas*, which represented a later stage in the commentatorial tradition. Literally meaning 'the texts containing the secrets', this genre of literature dealt with the Śrīvaiṣṇava philosophy and the methods of dissemination to the community. The *Rahasyagranthas* focussed upon main themes viz., *śarīraśarīribhāva* (i.e. relation of the soul and body); *kainkarya* (service tot he Lord); *prapatti, ācārya* and *Śrī* as the mediatrix. Most of the *Rahasyagranthas* used Rāmānuja's works to validate certain arguments. However, it is doubtful whether Rāmānuja himself was aware of these themes. For instance, *kainkarya* and *prapatti* were two themes that appear to be somewhat marginalized in the works of Rāmānuja. Nevertheless, these texts had an impact on the development of the Viśiṣṭadvaitic philosophy, with the commentators themselves acquiring positions of importance as religious leaders. For the present discussion, the concept of *Drāviḍa Veda*

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[45]John B. Carman and Vasudha Narayanan, *The Tamil Veda: Piḷḷāṉ's Interpretation of the Tiruvyāmoḷi*. Chicago, 1989.

[46]The commentaries on the *Tiruvāymoḷi* are viz., Nāñjīyars *Onpatiṉāyirappaḍi* (9000); *Irupattiṉālāyirappaḍi* (24,000) of Periyavāccāṉpiḷḷai and *Itu Mupattiārāyirappaḍi* (36,000). These are appropriated by the Teṉkalai tradition.

and the position of Srī will be taken up to show how they were adapted within the commentatorial tradition.

(ii) The *Drāvida Veda*

Commentatorial tradition created a distinct southern identity of the Srīvaiṣṇava community by focussing on the Tamil texts. This was a departure from Rāmānuja's exclusive commentary on the Sanskrit texts. Thus, the major concern of the commentators was to project a Tamil orientation along with the Sanskritic one through the concepts of *Drāvida Veda*, *ubhayvedānta* and *Maṇipravāḷam*. This attracted believers from both the linguistic section of society. Further exposition of the philosophy through the commentaries by the *ācāryas* helped in disseminating the tradition to the devotees. Thus, an enduring relation between the *ācāryas* and his disciples was established.

However, several problems remained. The *ācāryas* were conscious of the fact that they needed legitimacy from the Vedic tradition to justify the appellation of the *Dravida Veda*. This legitimacy was attempted through an artificially engineered comparison between the Sanskrit Vedas and *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*. For the Tamil Veda was neither a translation nor a parallel rendering of the Vedas. Hence, several analogies were drawn between the two texts and often, they appeared incongruous. As K.K.A.Venkatachari points out:

> When *ācāryas* such as Piḷḷāṉ reflect upon the parallels between the *Tiruvāymoḻi* and the *Upanishads*, their reflections have substance and demonstrate philosophical acumen. But when they deal with the larger comparison of the Tamil *Veda* and the Sanskrit *Veda*, their thoughts are almost superficial. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the numerical equations that are made between the two Vedas.[47]

Vēdānta Dēśika's *Drāmiḍopaniṣattātparyaratnāvali* (The Necklace of the Meaning of *Dramiḍopaniṣad*) dated to the fourteenth century explained the concept of *Tamil Veda* in detail. While stating that the *Tamil Veda* contained the teachings, which were essential for a Srīvaiṣṇava, he compared the *Tiruvāymoḻi* with the Sanskrit Veda.[48] In his *Guruparamparāsāram*, Dēśika sums up the process of the Tamil hymns becoming *Dravida Veda* as follows:

> God created all the *śāstras* and also devised a number of ways to explain them to the people of the world: He created Brahma, who gave the *Upaniṣads*, for instance to explain

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[47]K.K.A. Venkatachari, 1978, p.45

[48]K.K.A. Venkatachari, 1978 p.13

the Vedas and the Śāstras to the people. When he found that people still could not understand the various features and the purport of the *Vedas* and *Śāstras*, he created the ten Ālvārs as the ten new incarnations. Just as the clouds take the water from the sea and supply this water to all for their enjoyment, the Ālvārs also took the essence of the *Vedas* and the *Śāstras* and gave this to the people in their hymns. When God found that there were still some people who could not understand the tenets of the *Vedas*, he created the *ācāryas* to explain the works of the Ālvārs.[49]

From this passage one can clearly infer that an attempt was made to establish the Tamil hymns of the Ālvārs as an explanatory guide to the Vedas, thus making the latter accessible to everybody. The role of the *ācāryas* was to make the hymns meaningful to the people. Therefore, they were the carriers of the hymnal tradition.

The low caste authorship of some of the hymns incorporated in the *Drāviḍa Veda* posed a problem of legitimacy to the subsequent theologians of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community. The question arose as to whether the composition by low caste authors could be accorded the status of a Veda. Several commentaries discussed this issue and asserted that caste was ascriptive and a person had r control over it. What made him great was his scholarship and devotion to god. According to Nanjiyar, then, Nammālvār who was a *Vēlāḷa* was so great that even god himself desired his knowledge and wisdom.[50] Vēdānta Dēśika also reiterated that it was not proper to discuss the caste of the Ālvārs. Since they were the ten new incarnation of god, they were excluded from this social criterion.[51]

Ascription of scriptural status to Tamil also caused some tensions. This is best reflected in the commentaries. Nanjiyar's *Oṇpatiṇāyirappaṭi* reiterated the importance of Tamil, by first presenting a critique of Tamil and then a systematic defence. He contended that Tamil was not inappropriate as a scriptural language, for god could be praised in any language. Moreover, easy accessibility to the scriptures never polluted them, but popularized the divine message. Nañjīyar's defence indicated that there was a controversy about Tamil within the community. Critics of Tamil did so on the ground that it did not possess an universal character. These critics probably belonged to the Sanskritic school of thought, which later was regrouped as the Vaṭakalais. Therefore, the counterpart to the Sanskritic school would be the Tamil one which subsequently was categorised under Teṇkalais.

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[49] Vēdānta Dēśika, *Guruparamparāsāram*, p.7 in K.K.A. Venkatachari, 1978, p.13.

[50] K.K.A.Venkatachari, 1978, pp. 25-27.

[51] *Rahasyatrayasāram* of Vēdānta Dēśika, pp.62-92.

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The debate and discussions on the efficacy of Tamil as the sacred language indicated that there was a definite shift in the perception of the community identity in the post-Rāmānuja period. The *Ācāryahṛdayam* of Aḻagiyamaṇavāḷamāmuṇi emphatically stated that to reject the verses of the Āḻvārs (which were in Tamil) was sinful.[52] The author while launching a diatribe against those who expressed their reservation against Tamil also demonstrated that in several ways the *Tiruvāymoḻi* of Nammāḻvār surpassed even the *Bhagavad Gītā* in its exegetical excellence.

However, it should be pointed out that neither of the two important ideologues of Srivaisnavism viz., Yāmuna and Rāmānuja had commented upon the corpus nor had they written in Tamil. However, one cannot rule out the possibility that both Yāmuna and Rāmānuja were aware of the hymns and were influenced to a considerable extent by them. They were more concerned with the philosophical postulates than with the idea of popular devotion. This lack of theological interests in the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* on the part of the two *ācāryas* writing exclusively in Sanskrit posed problems for the Srīvaiṣṇava philosophers in the post-Rāmānuja period. One of the persistent themes in the hagiographical and commentatorial texts was the continuity in handing down of the scriptural knowledge right from the Āḻvārs to Rāmānuja and finally to the *ācāryas* of the later period. Since this continuity was difficult to establish due to the time gape between the Āḻvārs and *ācāryas,* several stories were invented to project an unbroken line of transmission. This construction of continuity gave legitimacy to the Srīvaiṣṇava community. The story of recovery of the hymns by Nāthamuni emphasized on the translations of the hymns by Nammāḻvār to him. The *Guruparamparāprabhāvam* (the Teṅkalai and Vaṭakalai version), the 24,000 by Periyavāccānpiḷḷai and the *Iṭu* (36,000) of Vaṭakkuttiruvītipiḷḷai, inform that Yāmuna taught the *Tiruvāymoḻi* to the disciples, one of whom was Tirumālaiyāṇḍān, who in turn instructed Rāmānuja on *Tiruvāymoḻi.*[53] It is believed that Rāmānuja passed the knowledge of *Tiruvāymoḻi* to his disciples and

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[52]*Ācāryahṛdayam, surnais* 71 and 72. The author says that Tamil also contains the Vedas: 'The half learned have the Vedas to them seem to be confusing. But those *Vedas* when they are delivered through Nammāḻvārs, who is an abode of goodness and wisdo, they became clear and capable of showing all the meanings hidden in them.... Just like that the vast ocean of Vedas when coming out as the words of Nammāḻvār became useful to all at all times.'

[53]This fact does not seem to be mentioned clearly in any other hagiographical texts. The Teṅkalai text informs that the third wish pronounced by Yāmuna at the time of his death was that the hymns of the Tiruvāymoḻi should be popularized.

commissioned one of them, Piḷḷān, to write a commentary on it.[54] However, there was a gap of one century between the two. One can then assume that Piḷḷān's commentary was inspired by the religious milieu of that period (i.e., the thirteenth century A.D.).[55]Thus, like the hagiographies, *Maṇipravāḷa* commentaries also project the continuous transmission of ideas through the *guru śiṣya paramparā*, thereby delineating the concept of a community. These commentaries validated a particular idea by giving an impression that it was already orally discussed by the *ācāryas* while interacting with their disciples.[56]

(iii) The Position of Śrī in the Commentaries

It was in the commentaries that the position of Śrī expressed in the works of Yāmuna and Rāmānuja as the divine consort was elaborated upon and presented as the divine mother in the Śrīvaiṣṇava ideology. This imaging enhanced the accessibility of Viṣṇu, attracted followers and accorded an active role to the goddess who was now a mediatrix (or *puruṣkāra)* between the god and his devotees whose social status was of no consequence. This accessibility of Śrī was analogous to mother's love *(vātasalya)* and the-not-so accessible god was analogous to a stern father. Hence, the delineation of the divine parents imparted a sense of belonging to the followers.

The theologians consciously attempted to construct a goddess tradition as the goddess now had emerged as the new focus of cultic cooperation and integration of the local traditions into the larger community network.[57]The *Ārāyirappaṭi* (of Piḷḷān), the first extant commentary in Srivaisnavism, articulated the role of Śrī as the *puruṣkāra* for the first time:

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[54]'It should be noted that Śrīvaiṣṇava believes point to the fact that Piḷḷān preserved the views of Rāmānuja in his commentaries as the work largely resembled Rāmānuja's thoughts. Since Piḷḷān was the immediate disciple of Rāmānuja, this influence was but natural. But whether Rāmānuja commissioned the commentary or not is a little problematic to accept due to the unacknowledged influence of the entire Āḷvār tradition on Rāmānuja's Sanskrit works.' Cited in K.K.A.Venkatachari, 1978, p.17.

[55]According to Carman and Narayanan the reason by Rāmānuja himself never wrote the commentary was because it would freeze the literary and intellectual tradition and leave no space for debates as his "words were authoritative and deemed as the final interpretation on the subject. And it appears that Rāmānuja wished to keep the spirit of debate alive". John Carman and Vasudha Narayanan, 1989, pp.3-11.

[56]Piḷḷān wrote in a highly sanskritized Tamil. In this sense, he is credited with the new language of *Maṇipravḷa*. Though majority of the words are in Sanskrit, yet the community considers the commentary as Tamil.

[57]See Chapter II, Section IV for details.

Being without any other refuge and without any ,
Other aim, after having taken the great goddess [Srī] as my
Mediatrix (*puruṣkāra*). I have taken refuge with Thee.[58]

On the one hand, the eagerness to present a maternal identity of Lakṣmī was obvious. However, on the other, lack of any scriptural validation and ambiguous references by early theologians, Yāmunā and Rāmānuja on an otherwise key concept presented a complicated situation. These tensions are evident in the texts themselves. For instance, Parāśara Bhaṭṭar in the *Srīguṇaratnakōsa* presented a defence regarding independent treatment of Lakṣmī. The argument was that even though Vedas, *Itihāsa and Purāṇas* do not comment on her independent status, it could not be taken as proof of her non-existence. For it was an established fact that she was an integral part of the lord and corroborated his glory.[59]

Hence, despite allusions to the superiority of Srī, the concept of the divine consort was never ignored and inextricably linked to that of the divine mother. The inseparability from Viṣṇu was emphasized and extended to his incarnation on earth. As the consort, Srī enhanced the qualities of her lord, and was the co-performer of his duties (*sahadharmacārinī*). Therefore, the status of the divine mother emanated from the privileged position of the divine consort.The reconciliation between the powerful divine energy as the sources of creation and prosperity and the ideal of an obedient wife was effected in the works of the theologians of fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. The goddess in these works was a benign consort possessing three essential traits that ensured fruitful mediations as the divine mother. The first was compassion for the suffering masses, as Lakṣmī pleaded on behalf of the sinners for salvation to the lord.[60] Second was the subservience to the god as to be able to compel his attention to her pleadings. Third was exclusive dependence on him, inculcating in him a personal sense of belonging and identity of interests with her. Thus, when she was with the lord, she influenced him and

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[58]Nancy Ann Nayar, Praise Poems to Viṣṇu and Srī. The Stotras of Rāmānuja's Immediate Disciples. Bombay, 1994, p. 203, verses 20 and 284.

[59]*Srī Guṇa Ratnakōsa* of Parśara Bhaṭṭar, in, Nancy Ann Nayar, 1994, verses 9 –14.

[60]May we see you perpetually seated in the centre of the lotus-conch with one lotus-foot folded under you and the other hanging down (in readiness) to receive my salutation, with your sweet, charming face [overflowing] with billows of wide and compassion-filled sidelong glances and your lotus - hand positioned in a gesture inviting fearlessness, Mother! In *Srī Guṇa Ratnakōsa of Parśara Bhaṭṭar, Nancy Ann Nayar, 1994, verse 5.

when away from him, she influenced his devotees to shed their fear and inhibitions and take refuge in him.[61] If the lord refused to grace the sinners then Lakṣmī used her beauty to enthral him. In addition, through her grace, the deviants were radically transformed and brought within the folds of Srivaiṣnavaism.[62]

IV. The Hagiographic Tradition

The dynamism of the textual tradition lies in providing continuity to apostolic succession. The hagiographic texts provided a cogent narrative, woven with myths and metaphors. They constructed an ancient past, perpetuated it and provided continuity. These texts explicated the historical processes of community formation and the construction of its identity. The aim of these texts was to put forth, the notion of a *parampara*, and *sampradāya*, emanating from antiquity and ultimately from the divine fountainhead, Visnu. The entire process of a divinely ordained *sampradāya* emanated from a dialogue between Viṣṇu and his consort Lakṣmī. The divine paradigm was also the reference point for several issues like the composition of the hymns in the presence of the Visnu and the canonization of the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* through divine intervention.[63]

Śrīvaiṣnava hagiography was not a uniform, monolithic tradition. The hagiographical texts can be categorized into several genres, which projected their respective affiliations:

(1)   Some texts supposedly had a non-sectarian, non-partisan approach. *Divyasūricaritam* is the only example of this kind. The non-partisan character of this text was probably because its composition preceded any sectarian difference within Srivaisnavism. Alternatively, it aimed at portraying the undivided or unified perspective of the community until Rāmānuja.

(2)   Certain texts with sectarian overtones presented the biographical sketch of important Śrīvaiṣnava sectarian leaders. These texts based on their respective   affiliations

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[61](The qualities) essential to the *puruṣkara* are mercy, dependence (upon the lord) .and not being subservient to another (other than the lord) The goddess's first separation revealed her mercy. Her Dependence (on the lord) is revealed in the middle separation. The final separation revealed her not being subservient to another. Puruṣkāra -hood manifested in both union and separation. From*Srīvacana Bhuṣaṇa of Piḷḷai Lokācārya,* Robert. C. Lester, ed and trans., Madras, 1979,para 7, 8, and 9

[62] *Srīvacana Bhūsaṇa,* Robert C. Lester, ed. and trans., ibid., para. 10.

[63]The hagiographic tradition gives detailed accounts of the composition of the hymns by the Ālvārs in the

represented a Sanskritic or a Tamil tradition. The duality of Sanskrit and Tamil after the seventeenth century developed schismatic tendencies and led to the emergence of the Vaṭakalai and Teṅkalai sects. This identity became a dominant one and the philosophy and hagiography were appropriated as Vaṭakalai or Teṅkalai based on their Sanskritic or Tamil approach respectively. In this section from now, onwards these texts would be referred by their sectarian affiliations. *Teṅkalai Ārāyirappaṭi Guruparamparāprabhāvam, Tenkalai Muāyirappaṭi Guruparamparā prabhāvam, Vaṭakalai Muāyirappaṭi Guruparamparāprabhāvam, and Vaṭakalai Muāyirappaṭi* are the texts of the Teṅkalai and Vaṭakalai groups respectively. *Rāmānujadivyasūricaritam (Teṅkalai)* and *Yatindrapravaṇṇa Prabhāvam (Teṅkalai)*, both being the life history of Rāmānuja and Maṇavāla Māmuṇigaḷ respectively belonged to the Teṅkalai traditionally

(3)   The last categories of hagiographic tradition are the *guruparamparās* associated with the *brāhmaṇa* and non-brahmana families. Through the genealogies they asserted their individual community identity and emerged as sub-communities within the Srīvaisṇava tradition. However, gradually either of the same sub-communities was with the Vaṭakalai or the Teṅkalai in the seventeenth century.

The hagiographical texts reflected the social location and ideology of the different groups and sub-sects. They provided legitimacy to multiple identities during contest over power and control of resources. While they established these multiple identities, they nonetheless had a common perception of the Srīvaisṇava community. This was indicated by the fact that they drew from a common pool of ideas and events in their hagiographical texts.

The hagiographical tradition attempted to achieve the dual task of developing a soteriology and ecclessiology revolving around the biographies of the saints, thereby creating the collective ethos of the Srīvaisṇava community. Composed in the post-Rāmānuja period i.e. after the twelfth century, these texts projected through the biographies a tradition with which a follower could identify with. The process of mythicisation in the life-stories of these holy saints accentuated their importance by projecting them as a representation of divinity. For example, Nammālvār was considered to be the link between the divine and the temporal. It was said that it was at the behest of Viṣṇu, Viśavakasena initiated Nammālvar with the *pañcasaṁskāra* and *mantropadeśa*,

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presence of the lord. The collection of *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* follows a similar trend.

and handed down the doctrines.[64]

The holy saints became significant as religious leaders and the divinely ordained Viśiṣṭadvaita philosophy could be propagated, interpreted by them and disseminated through the *guru-śisya parampara*. Hence, in this context the succession that involved the passing down of the tradition through the office of the spiritual leaders became the major concern of the hagiographical tradition. Historically speaking, Śrīvaiṣṇava leadership had considerable time lags pointing to a disjointed succession of the religious leaders. The role of the hagiographers was to fill these gaps and create a sense of continuity. This was particularly the case when the succession from the last Ālvār to the first *ācārya* and from Rāmānuja to his successors, characterized by yawning gaps were bridged by fabricated events in a linear, continuous fashion. Hagiography in this case thus became the legitimizing mechanism succession of these spiritual leaders. The arrangement among the Ālvārs themselves; sometimes among the Ālvārs and *ācāryas* and sometimes among the *ācāryas* only, presented a sense of a 'communitas' through the saints who notwithstanding their different periods interacted with each other. For instance, the story of *Mudal* Ālvārs meeting together attributes contemporaneity which otherwise is difficult to establish. The three Ālvārs in course of their wandering arrived at Tirukkōvalūr one night at a difference of an hour from each other in the same sequence as they are presented in the *guruparamparas* (viz. Poygai, Bhūdatt, Pēy). They took shelter in a choultry, near the Viṣṇu temple at Tirukkōvalūr. As the place was limited, just enough for three people to stand, the entry of the god created a problem and each Ālvar became conscious of a stranger having squeezed in. They realized subsequently that it was the lord himself. The Ālvārs lit the 'spiritual lamp', had a *darśan* (vision) of Viṣṇu and composed instantly hundred verses each in Tamil, known as *Mudal Tiruvantādi, Iranṭāntiruvantādi* and *Munṟam Tiruvantādi*.[65]

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[64]These are Śrīvaiṣṇava initiation rites, and are a part of *dīkṣai* that is initiation. This comprises of five features:

(a) *tapas*, or branding the shoulders with conch and discus

(b) *puntaram*, wearing of the *nāmam* or the sect mark symbolising Lord's feet.

(c) The giving of divine name to the initiator *Nārāyaṇadāsa*.

(d) *Mantirattrayam* – imparting of certain sacred utterances.

(e) The handing over of a *śaligrāma*,, a black ammonite stone or similar objects of daily worship.

[65]Similarly, the narrative of Nāthamuni recovering the hymns by seeking Nammālvār's personal help, Yāmuna's three finger story and many more, which will be discussed in this dissertation are seen as

One of the ways in which continuity was expressed was through the composition of the *taniyan*. Though these *taniyans* did not form a separate genre of hagiographies, their contents were primarily biographical in nature. Literally, *taniyans* mean 'only one stanza.' praising the Ālvārs and *ācāryas* and prefixed to the various texts. Until day, they form an integral part of the daily recitation emphasizing the notion of a community.[66]Since the *taniyans* are short verses, the information in them was precise and included those aspects that were crucial to the community identity and had direct relevance for the dissemination of the community and sectarian traditions.The first documented evidence of taniyan is found in Yāmunā's *Stotraratna*, dedicated to Nāthamuni:

> Obeisance to the contemplative saint Nāthamuni, who is an unfathomable ocean of divine love and the embodiment of knowledge and renunciation- unthinkable, marvellous and spontaneous.[67]

The authors of the *taniyans* are often difficult to establish. However, the tradition attributed their composition to the *ācrāyas*. Of special mention were the composition of the *taniyans* on Nammḷvār's *Tiruvāymoḷi*, ascribed to Nāthamuni, Yāmunā and Rāmānuja. For instance, the composition of the following verse was attributed to Nāthamuni, whose extant works are not available until day to the community:

> I bow down to that ocean of Tamil Veda (*drāvidaveda*) which is nectar for all *bhaktas* and joy for everyone, where we can find all [important] meanings comprising the words of Sathakopa, where you have all the thousand branches (*sākhas*) of the Upaniṣads.[68]

Similarly, another *taniyan* was attributed to Nathamuni's son Iśvaramuni:

> The *Marai* of Tamil is one thousand (stanzas) given by Sathagopa is composed in praise of Araṅka who is at a place.......... those hymns are nursed by Rāmānuja.[69]

A *taniyan* on Tirumangai's *Tiruveḷukkūrrirurkkai* containing the import of the *Vedas* was attributed to Ramanuja.

> "I bow down to those feet, which are our refuge, of the one who has given the entire meaning of the *Vedas* in the form of *Tiruveḷukkūrriru·kkai* which is composed in good Tamil for the uplift of the world, which is the great one and which is the non-satiating ambrosia".[70]

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attempts in the direction of establishing a continuous unbroken line of *gurus*.

[66]K.K.A. Venkatacari, 1978, p.19.

[67]*Stotrratna of Yamuñācārya*, Verse1

[68]Quoted in K.K.A. Venkatachari, 1978, p.15.

[69]K.K.A.Venkatacari, 1978, p.19

[70]K.K.A.Venkatacari 1978, p.17

It should be remembered that neither of these *ācār·yas* commented or referred to the hymns of the Alvārs. Such an association was probably a deliberate attempt to connect the Tamil and the Sanskritic traditions.Perhaps such an artificial relation was engineered when the four thousand hymns of the Alvars were compiled, edited and redacted as a single scriptural corpus , the *Nālāyira Divya Prabadham*.

Therefore, through the regular, daily chanting of the *taniyans* the concept of a community was further reiterated. The *taniyans* also contained the genealogy of the each preceptor of individual lineages. At the time of initiation, the disciple at the behest of the *guru* repeated the *taniyans* of the concerned *ācāryas*, emphasizing the affiliations.[71] The theology of the goddess at the liturgical level was also reiterated through the daily recitation of the *taniyans*, i.e. the list of the lineage of preceptors. One usually began with ones own *ācārya, ācārya's ācārya* and so on through the most revered teachers, such as Rāmānuja and Śrī, right up to Viṣṇu himself.[72]The issue of succession assumed significant dimensions in the post-Rāmānuja period when the various hagiographical texts attempted to establish their credibility through the apostolic line of succession. These texts thus emerged as the ideological basis for the subsequent sectarian identity/conflict. The Vaṭakalai and Teṅkalai *guruparamparās* became the textual basis for the schism, which by after the sixteenth century ossified into separate sects.

The hagiographical tradition portrayed the socio-religious and political contexts in which their compositions became essential for the construction of Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition and community. Sectarianism *vis-a-vis* other religious tradition (viz., Jainas, Buddhists, Śaivas and *Advaitins*) formed a significant part of the narration. For instance, Tirumangaialvar's stealing of the golden idol of Buddha to finance the construction of the boundary wall of the temple at Śrīraṅgam was a popular hagiographical theme. The narratives regarding the life of Rāmānuja enhanced his intellectual superiority *vis-a-vis* the *advaitins*. One of them happened to be his *guru* Yādavaprakāśa who ultimately

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[71]This tradition continues till day. The disciple repeats the *taniyans* of the genealogy of the *ācāryas* down to his own preceptors. The preceptor's *taniyan* is recited by one of his disciples and then is repeated by the new disciple.

[72]This *guruparamparā* or acaryic lineage is a part of daily domestic recitation and was collected during my field trip undertaken to various Śrīvaiṣṇava centres for the doctoral thesis. There are some seventeenth century manuscripts of the *guruparamparās* composed by collecting these *taniyans* of the respective preceptors.

surrendered to Rāmānuja, thereby acknowledging the Visiṣṭadvaitic faith.[73]The biographical account of Rāmānuja will be discussed in the next chapter. The hostility against Saivism that formed a significant portion of the sectarian narratives could be related to the royal patronage extended to Saivism and marginalization of Srivaisnavism during the Cōḷa period. The hagiographers as anti-theses to the faith used such a politico-religious context. The stories of persecution by the Cōḷas of the Srīvaiṣṇavas saints, particularly Rāmānuja were presented as heinous acts for which the lord punished the rulers.[74]The ability of the Srīvaiṣṇava saints to withstand royal persecution established the invincibility of the faith. Some of the narratives also established Srivaisnavism as a subversive ideology within the political framework. The example of Tirumangaialvar illustrates this. He served as a chieftain of a Cōḷa ruler, but came into conflict with the king as he started diverting the state resources towards the service of the Vaiṣṇava bhaktas (a virtuous act, according to Srivaisnavism). Finally, Tirumangai lost his chieftaincy and took to robbery in order to continue his act of serving the devotees. The case of Ālavandar and Kulaśekhara (a Cēra King), who renounced their kingdoms for the faith reflect an aversion to power and material benefits. This portrayal of incompatibility between political authority and religious ideology in the hagiographies were a total reversal of the complementary relationship that existed between the Āḻvārs and the royalty. The Āḻvār hymns provided a strong legitimizing force for royalty and formed the ideological basis for the iconographic representations in the Vaiṣṇava temples, particularly in the late Pallava and early Cōḷa periods (eight to the tenth centuries AD). Subsequently due to the conscious efforts of the Cōḷas in the eleventh century to consolidate the Saiva basis of their ideology, there was a conspicuous absence of patronage to Vaisnavism. Therefore, the delineation of a hostile polity not only explained the neglect or marginalisation of Srivaisnavism as compared to Saivism, in this period; it also instilled the feeling of superiority and pride in the community. The successful

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[73]The animosity of Yādavaprakāśa against Rāmānuja reached such proportions that former conspired to kill the latter, who was saved by his cousin Govinda Bhaṭṭar. The differences were mainly over the interpretations of Vedic texts. Rāmānuja finally in deference of his *guru* opted out of the school and became the sisya of Tirukaccinambi. Later on, the tradition cites that at the behest of Lord Varadarāja of Kāñcī, Yādavaprakāśa amended himself and was consecrated by Rāmānuja with traditional *sanyāsrama* and the name Govinda Jīyar.

[74]The Cōḷa ruler is supposed to have met with a deadly disease and died. The hagiographies refer to him as Kṛmikaṇṭha Cōḷa, i.e. whose throat was infected with worms. The identification of this ruler is a controversial issue.

handling of the royal persecution projected immunity due to its faith and highlighted the determination to face any crisis.

However often in real sense, the Srīvaiṣṇavas used the legends in the hagiographies for attracting royal patronage. For instance, the narrative of Aṇṭāḷ became significant in this context for patronage to her temple at Srivilliputtur. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Aṇṭāḷ had emerged as a popular patron goddess by the twelfth century, which coincided with her religious popularity. The first commentary on her works was composed around 1170 .The shrine of Aṇṭāḷ at Srivilliputtūr drew pilgrims from all over South India and consequently Pāṇḍyan donations followed. By fourteenth century with the decline of the Pāṇḍyas the fortunes of the temple also declined. Around 1453, the poor *brāhmaṇas* of the temple sent a written petition in the words of the goddess herself to the Vijayanagar general, Saluva Narasimha pleading for donations. In the petition, the legend of Aṇṭāḷ as present in the hagiographies was included to highlight the sacred importance of the temple, region and the saint-goddess.[75] The hagiographical account is as follows:

> Bhūdevī took the form of a girl child beneath a basil plant in the temple garden at Srivilliputtūr (forty-eight kilometers from the Pāṇṭiya capital, Maṭurai) while ploughing the field, Viṣṇucitta found her and took her home and named her Gōdā. When she grew up, she was in the habit of adorning herself with the garlands made by Viṣṇucitta to be offered to the lord. On discovering this,Viṣṇucitta reprimanded Gōdā and asked the lord for forgiveness. To his great surprise lord expressed his pleasure to wear the already worn garland and ordered Periyālvār to reassign the task to his daughter. When Gōdā reached puberty, she expressed her desire to marry Lord Raṅganātha of Srīraṅgam (south of Madras) with whom she had already fallen in love, when Viṣṇucitta was extolling his virtues along with those of one hundred eight. Lord Raṅganāth appeared in Viṣṇucitta dream and directed him to come to Srīraṅgam with Gōdā. On reaching Srīraṅgam, Gōdā dressed as a bride merged with the icon, thereby completing the nuptial process. Thereafter she was called Aṇṭāḷ (she who rules) and enshrined in all the temples separately where regular prayers are offered to her until day. [76]

This strategy worked for the Vijayanagar general made donations and 'put the goddess above all want and positive affluence.'[77] For, unlike the Pāṇḍyan ruler, Saluva Narasimha was not concerned with the local status of the goddess. Probably the legend of her divine marriage impressed him. The lavish endowments to the temple was with the purpose 'that the wife of the god could receive her due, so that the people could worship her joyfully and seek her beneficence, and so that the general's name would be glorified as the land

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[75]See for details, David Ludden, 1989, pp.31-32 and 46.

prospered.'[78]

Finally, the most important social concern of the hagiographies was related to the question of caste. Caste attributes were presented as secondary to that of the Śrīvaiṣṇava faith and identity. This became significant as four of the Ālvārs happened to be non-brāhmaṇas viz., Tirumaḷisai, Nammāḷvar, Tiruppāṇāḷvār and Tirumaṅgai.The stories of birth of these Ālvārs are ambivalent in nature. While on one hand the low caste background was constantly justified, on the other hand it was deliberately highlighted in the narratives about their birth in order to project a broad social base and attract the followers. Nammāḷvār was a Vēḷāḷa,Tirumaṅgai was a chieftain of Kaḷvar robber clan and Kulasēkhara was Cēra ruler. Further, the birth of Tirumaḷisai was associated with the sage Bhārgava and an apsarā (divine nymph). He was born as a mass of flesh and abandoned in a bush. However, through divine intervention of Viṣṇu, he was revived and brought up by a Vēḷāḷa. Similar ambiguity is found in the birth story of Āṇṭāḷ, when Periya Āḷvār found her in the garden.[79]Tiruppāṇāḷvār and his work, the Amalaṉātippiraṉ became popular with the later hagiographers, as the Ālvār was a low caste pāṇār. The taṇiyaṉs and the hagiographies refer to the story of Tiruppāṇ being denied entry into the temple by the temple brāhmaṇa who insulted and injured him. Later, on Viṣṇu's admonishment the sage carried him on his shoulders inside the temple.[80]

The irrelevance of caste was further highlighted when Rāmānuja was supposed to have flouted the orthodox norms by proclaiming the Dvaya mantra aloud from the temple tower at Tirukkōttiyūr, for everybody to hear. This mantra was meant exclusively for the brāhmaṇas. Interestingly, the hagiographies while delineating the accounts of the acāryas did not compromise on their brāhmaṇa background. Probably, the organization of the community by brah/ maṇas accorded greater legitimacy. However, the hagiographers

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[76]The Divyasūricaritam, Chapters 9-12.

[77]David Ludden, 1989, p.46.

[78] Ibid.

[79]In many ways, the classical Sanskrit texts and epics inspired the legends in the hagiographies. Kalidās's Abhijñāna Shākuntalam and the Rāmāyaṇa influenced the birth stories of Tirumaḷisai and Āṇṭāḷ.

[80]I bow to Tiruppāṇāḷvār, who rode on, The shoulders of Lokasāranga Muni, And enjoyed the vision of the lord who, Reclines in Araṅgam between the, loins of Kāvēra's daughter, The river, Kāvēri, He sang of the lord from foot to head and declared that his, eyes will see naught else.(1); We praise the feet of the Pāṇār who, Saw the lord through song. He entered the sanctum on the Muni's shoulders and sang of the feet, vestures, navel, Cummerbund, chest, neck, lotus lips, Eyes and face. (2).Taṇiyaṉs to Amalaṉātippiraṉ.

while projecting the social tensions also attempted to resolve them. The reconciliation was sought not by rejecting the caste hierarchy, but by providing an alternative solution i.e. the importance of being a Srīvaiṣṇava.[81]

The hagiographical tradition contributed to the construction of identity in three ways. One, it created a community of religious leaders, with which the devotees could relate. This community of saints was further legitimized by justifying some of the anomalies in the Srīvaiṣṇava history (like caste, issue of succession and lack of royal patronage during the Cōḷa period). The hagiographies presented a complex of institutions as the centre of all religious activities for example the temple and the matha. The temple that had a long history as an integrative force in the society became the arena where community consciousness came to be articulated at various levels. The matha over which the religious leaders presided as the custodian of the canon became the powerful institution in the organization of the community through intellectual discourse, t popular liturgical activities and the interaction between the two. Three, hagiographies created sub-traditions within Srivaisnavism. Through the lineages, the assertion of identities took place, particularly in relation to resource appropriation in the temples.

V. The Liturgical Tradition:

The textual tradition gradually also became closely associated to the temple. Religious interaction and ritual participation by the community in the temple's activities emphasized the importance of the Agamic texts. The Āgamas formed the basic canonical texts of the ritual performances in all the brahmanical religions. Thus, they played an important role in intensifying community consciousness and identity.

As ritual texts, they mainly prescribed the rules of image worship, laid down canons relating to temple architecture like selection of site, iconography, role of priests

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[81]Vaṭakkuttiruvīdipiḷḷai in his Iṭu explains the criteria of being a Srīvaiṣṇava. The two main ideas were service to devotees and considering others sufferings as ones own. The commonality of the hagiographical and the commentatorial textual tradition regarding the understanding of a Srīvaiṣṇava lies in the fact that both emphasized that all Srīvaiṣṇavas are equal before God and other devotees. See K.K.A.Venkatachari 1978, pp.30-33. For references on this issues in Iṭu see the following sections of Bhagavad Viṣayam: Book I p.192 Iṭu, 1:4:5 Book II p.234, Iṭu, 2:7:1; Book III p. 174, Iṭu, 3:5:8; p.232, Iṭu, 3:7:1; p.240-41, 3:7:3; p.160, Iṭu 3:5:4; Book IV, p. 287-88, Iṭu 4:8:2; Book VI p.16, Iṭu, 6:1:2; p.320, Iṭu, 6:7:9; Book VII p.401, Iṭu 7:10:8; Book VIII p. 312, Iṭu, 8:10:3; P.237 Iṭu, 8:40:8

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and so on. Although generally considered as temple texts, they also governed household rituals and behavioural patterns of religious communities. The *Āgamas* have a history of incorporation, constantly including the ritual practices and forms of worship from folk and popular traditions into the brahmanical system. The orthodox Vedic tradition regarded the Agamic tradition as heterodox and often assigned a lower status to them. Indeed, the resolution of dichotomy between orthodox Vedic tradition and heterodox Agamic tradition became a major philosophical concern in Srīvaisṇava exegesis.

The most significant aspect of the *Visiṣṭadvaitic* philosophy has been the reconciliation of the Vedic with non-Vedic elements in order to bring about a synthesis of Sanskrit (orthodox) with the regional or popular forms of worship. It is true that Srivaisnavism never completely severed its ties from brahmanical Vedantic tradition. Nor did it evolve an alternative paradigm to articulate the new synthesis in religion. That perhaps was never its intentions. Its basic aim was to make the Vedantic tradition more accommodative so that it acquired a broad social base. One such innovation was the introduction of the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. This was represented not as an innovation but more as a transformation from the *Vaikhānsa Āgama* to the *Pāñcarātra*, which had crucial ideological underpinnings. It indicated that Srivaisnavism or rather *Visiṣṭadvaitic* philosophy by adopting and assimilating the regional elements of worship was attempting to establish a strong base in the Tamil region. This implied a great deal of flexibility, openness and accommodation of elements that were never a part of the Vaiṣṇava tradition. Therefore, the pre-existent, more orthodox and rigid *Vaikhānsa Āgama* represented a conservative worldview of devotion, whereas the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* represented a liberal worldview.

The hagiographic tradition point out that Rāmānuja introduced the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* in the temples. It was introduced first at Srīrangam. The *Kōil Oḷugu*, the chronicle of Rahganāthasvāmī temple at Srīrangam observes:

> Feeling that the sacred shrine of Tiruvarangam should be governed only by the *Pāñcarātra Āgama as established in the śāstras* (emphasis added) and not by *Vaikhānasa*, he forsook the *Vaikhānasa* priests.........The daily worship was performed by him according to the procedure laid down in the *Paramēśvara Samhita* of *Pāñcarātra*.[82]

The *Kōil Oḷugu* is a late seventeenth century text and must have derived its narrative

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[82]The *Kōil Oḷugu*, 1961, pp. 45-46

from the previous hagiographical texts.[83]What is interesting here is the phrase 'as established in the *śāstras*'. This implies that there was a textual-scriptural basis for this transformation. Notionally, Yāmunācārya propounded the idea of the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* in his famous treatise *Āgamapramāṇya* in the eleventh century A.D.[84]

However, Rāmānuja is silent regarding the doctrine and religious practices of the *Pāñcarātra*, perhaps because he did not wish to alienate the brahmanical inclined section of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community. Another reason was that 'the cosmogonical doctrine which most of the philosophic superstructure of *Pāñcarātra* consists (ed) was of no immediate concern to Rāmānuja's ontological preoccupations'.[85]

Tradition projects the practical manifestations of the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* in the post-thirteenth century, when the temples were ritually transforming themselves, through the adoption of this *Āgama*. The introduction of the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* represents some important aspects of the development of community identity. The context in which the entire concept of *Pāñcarātra* was advocated was in the eleventh century A.D., when Yāmūna wrote his treatise and presented an ideological justification. The pre-existing *Vaikhānsa* tradition representing a conservative outlook was now juxtaposed with *Pāñcarātra*, which assimilated the popular Tamil tradition and imparted a broader religious outlook. The ground had been already prepared by the Tamil hymns of the Āḷvārs. Therefore, Yāmuna's treatise derived its catholicity from the Tamil tradition. At the same time, it made an attempt to provide Vedic authenticity to the *Pāñcarātra*.

The *Āgamapramāṇya* while advocating the adoption of the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* was polemical in tone, preempting any attack on it. The adherents of the *Vaikhānsa* and other religious traditions were of the opinion that the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* with its folk rituals was non-Vedic. Thus, if Srivaisnavism adopted this *Āgama* then the community's validity would be dubious. Yāmuna by comparing the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* with

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[83]This is an approximate date, as the chronology of the text is not yet fixed. However, the arrangement of the text shows that it was probably a compilation. The *Olugu* ends with an account of Vaṭakalai-Teṇkalai dispute settled in favour of the latter by Wallace in 1803.

[84]*Yāmuna's Āgamaramāṇyam or Treatise on the Validity of Pāñcarātra with SanskritText and English Translation*, J.A.B. Van Buitenen, ed. and trans., 1971.
Āgamapramāṇya is devoted to vindicating the authority of the *Pāñcarātric Āgamas*. The work is written in a mixture of *slokas* and prose.

[85]*Āgamapramāṇya*, 1971,pp.28-29.

brahmanical scriptures called it the *Fifth Veda*. This Vedic association imparted legitimacy to the community and countered the criticism against its validity.

Yāmunā provided an interesting discourse on the importance of the *Pancaratra*. He claimed that the followers of *Pāñcarātra* called *Bhāgavatas* were also *brāhmaṇas* even if they were ritually not ascribed the brahmanical status.[86]This seemed to be an attempt to broaden the base of Śrīvaiṣṇava followers particularly to expand the membership of the priestly groups. The role of the *Pāñcarātra* temple *brāhamaṇas* as ritual priests assumed importance and was clearly an elaboration on the role of the *Vaikhānasa* priests. Van Buitenen rightly points out:

> Through out his work the impression he (Yāmuṇā) creates is that of a high temple priest who is not content routinely to continue the temple services as they had grown in Śrīraṅgam, but is apostolic in his fervour, to persuade orthodoxy not only of existence, but also of the truth of a complete Vaiṣṇava philosophy and theology. He may rightly be called the first apologist of a Vaiṣṇava theology.[87]

Therefore, *Pāñcarātra* ideologically came to be associated with liberalism and *Vaikhānasa* with conservatism. In the thirteenth century with the changing socio-religious situation the temple base of Srivaisnavism became stronger as it attracted a number of non-*brāhmaṇa* devotees. The decline of the *brahmadeyas*, increase in the number of temple functionaries and major pilgrim participation intensified the feeling of community. Against such a context, the *Pāñcarātra* became an important textual basis for the broadening of the liturgical base. In fact, the introduction of the *Pāñcarātra* *āgama* cuts across the sectarian boundaries of Vaṭakalai and Teṇkalai. The popularity of *Pāñcarātra* was also because as a detailed manual it encapsulated the *Visiṣṭadvaitic* philosophy. Burton Stein rightly points out that:

> By medieval times, over one hundred systematic handbooks of ritual on Visnu worship had come to be prepared from the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* and this ritual had become the basis for many, if not most of the south Indian temples devoted to Viṣṇu, replacing the other major ritual tradition among Viṣṇu worshippers, the *Vaikhānsa Āgama*.[88]

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[86]Here the followers of the *Pāñcarātra* who were known as *Bhāgavatas* were mostly temple functionaries, whom *smriti* described as the fifth or the *satvata*. According to the *sūtra* 16 of *Āgamapramāṇya*, they for a living perform *pūjā* to the deity, undergo their consecration, eat themselves the food which is offered to the idols, observe deviating sacraments – from the prenatal *garbhadāna* rite to the funerary rituals – omit to perform the *srauta* ritual and avoid contact with *Brāhmaṇas*. These and other habits show exclusively that they cannot be *Brāhmaṇas*.

[87]*Āgamapramāṇya*, 1971, Van Buitenen, p. 5.

[88]Burton Stein, 'Social Mobility and Medieval South Indian Hindu Sects,' in *Social Mobility and the Caste System in India: An Interdisciplinary Symposium*,James Silverberg, Paris, 1968,pp. 78-94.

The *Vaikhānsa Āgama* came to be marginalised by the *Visiṣṭadvaitic* tradition. This was the brahmanas dominated the *Vaikhānsa Āgama* rituals in the temples that were primarily in Sanskrit, thereby restricting popular participation. Conversely, *Pāñcarātra Āgama* developed significantly due to its incorporative attitude towards the Tamil hymns, the deification of the Ālvārs and *ācāryas* – all of which were outside the purview of the Vedic paradigm. However, the practical manifestations of the *Vaikhānsa* and *Pāñcarātric* Āgamic injunctions were very different. Both developed a large corpus of *Saṁhitas* after the tenth century A.D., which reflected the popularity of both the *Āgamas*. Therefore, it would be erroneous to say that a transformation took place from *Vāikhānsa* to *Pāñcarātra*. Rather, the *Pāñcarātra* was introduced alongside the *Vaikhānsa* and both developed their own sets of polemics. The so-called transformation was only in the textual tradition and thus the existences of differences between the two were merely notional. The supposed dichotomy between liberal/*Pāñcarātra* and conservative/*Vaikhānsa*, which is associated with Teṇkalai and Vaṭakalai temples respectively, is not valid in the practical realm of the community identity. Srīveṅkateśvara temple at Tirupati and the Vaṇmāmalai temple at Nāngunērī though of the Tenkalai affiliation follow the *Vaikhānsa Āgama*..In fact, inscriptions reveal a strong community of *Vaikhānsa* priests. Epigraphical evidence indicates that the *Vaikhānsa Saṁhitas* were composed before the ninth century A.D. and majority was written in the fourteenth century A.D. when the community identity was at its crucial stage.[89]Other inscriptions after the tenth century A.D. continue to show the rising influence of the *Vaikhānsa* priests as they were granted tax-free lands ritual powers in the temples. Even the *Vaikhānsa* tradition was changing and incorporating popular elements. It gave special prominence to Srī as the embodiment of nature, fertility and as *sakti* (as the power of the lord). This represents a non-vedic *śākta* doctrine. In fact, the temples may have followed *Vaikhānsa*, but still allowed *sudra* participation. Probably one can assume that during the composition of *Āgamapramāṇya* (i.e. eleventh century A.D.) *Vaikhānsas* existed as an independent Vaiṣṇava tradition.

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[89]For a study on the *Vaik. hānasa* Āgama, Aspects *of Early Vaisnavism*, Utrecht, 1954; Idem, *Vismuism and Sivaism: A Comparison*, London, 1970; idem, 'Some Notes on the Use of Vedic Mantras in the Ritual Texts of the *Vaikhānsas*,' *Indo-Iranian Journal*,1-31, 1970; idem, *Medieval Religious Literature in Sanskrit*, Wiesbaden, 1977.

In the twelfth century A.D., when Srivaisnavism evolved as a well articulated religious tradition, the *Vaikhānsa* was retained. Very often, both the agamas existed side by side. This was the case at Tirupati and Tiruvananthapuram, where *Vaikhānsa Āgama* existed, yet Rāmānuja's reforms associated with the introduction of the *Pāncarātra* were introduced. Similarly, at the Nārāyaṇasvāmī temple at Mēlkōṭe the *Īsvara Saṁhita* of the *Pāncarātric* genre does not form the basis of the temple architecture though the temple follows that particular *Saṁhitā* in worship. Instead, *Padma Saṁhitā* of *Vaikhānsa* genre was followed. It is only in the Rangaṇāthasvāmī temple at Srīrangam, that the transformation materialized. This was probably related to the growing local identity of the *Pāncarātra* priests, who wished to enhance their status in the temple. Since Srīrangam was the focus of the community, any development there was presented as the development of the entire community. Thus, these developments at Srīrangam gave the impression that there was a clear transformation from the *Vaikhānsa* to *Pāncarātra* everywhere. The rising importance of the temples where the both the Agamic practices were prevalent aided this process. This led to the existence of a strong *Pāncarātra* community and strong *Vaikhānsa* community and their desire to assert their individuality has two distinct Agamic traditions. Thus the liturgical tradition, attempted to broaden the community base by notionally advocating the *Pāncarātra Āgama* in the temple practices. The aim was to broaden the social basis by incorporating local tradition and providing an uniform and integrative paradigm for the Srīvaiṣṇava identity.

VI. Sthalamahātmyas and Sthalapurāṇas

These are different genre of religious texts and cannot be classified as canonical texts. They represent pilgrimage literature attracting pilgrims by glorifying a particular centre and its temple. Starting from the mythical/legendary origins of a temple, its history, and the spiritual leaders associated with that particular centre, these *sthalapurāṇas* provide the legendary cum historical account in order to establish the primacy of a *sthala* (centre) in the Vaiṣṇava or Saiva tradition. In developing or contributing to the community consciousness, these *purāṇas* had a more popular role than the religious canonical literature that were intended mainly as the basic text of doctrine, theology, philosophy and ritual. Festivals were incorporated directly into the

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sthalapurāṇas as such festivals attracted pilgrims, worshippers and patrons to a centre. The *sthalapurāṇas* are later texts, (probably written between fifteenth and eighteenth centuries) when the institutional network had become well consolidated. A study of these *puranas* and *mahātmyas* indicate an interesting trend.They do not mention the sectarian affiliations of temples they discussed as Vaṭakalai or Teṇkalai. This was an attempt to integrate the temple and the region to the larger Śrīvaiṣṇava community and its sacred geography. Significantly, the *sthalapurāṇas* often contained Sanskrit myths or reworking of Sanskrit myths, which were then locally adopted. The *sthalapurāṇas* thus tried to relate themselves with the pan-Indian tradition. They also assimilated the local legends, articulating the relevance of the temple at the micro-level of region and community.[90]

The Śrīvaiṣṇava *sthalapurāṇas* begin with the divine association or origin of the area said to be chosen by god to represent him. The introduction is in the form of a dialogue where the sages would ask the divine messenger (Nārada or Suthapurāṇika) about the glory of the place. After the legitimacy of the site was established, these texts moved on to the significance of the locale in the epic-puranic legends, for example in the *Mahabhārata* and the Rāmāyaṇa. From the epic-Puranic paradigm, the narrative moved on to the Śrīvaiṣṇava aspect beginning with the association of the Āḻvārs especially Nammāḻvār, progressing to Rāmānuja and then further to the *ācāryas* and then to the legends of the temple in the post-Ramanuja period. Hence, *sthalapurāṇas* and *sthalamahātmyas* drew from a common pool of legends that were associated with Srivaisnavism, thus integrating and assimilating them according to their relevance. After the thirteenth century A.D. the narratives become more focussed on particular sites. For example, the *Totādarī Mahātmyam* after discussing Nammāḻvār's association with Śrīvaṇṇāmalai deity immediately focuses on the fifteenth-sixteenth century to discuss the spiritual preceptors associated with the temple. However, in Śrīraṅgam the post-Rāmānuja period finds an elaborate mention but the split is not alluded to. Therefore, at one level these texts brought into focus the regional concept of Śrīvaiṣṇava identity, but at another level identified with the larger Śrīvaiṣṇava community as well. As well as illustrated the religious principle of *bhakti*, which emphasized the needs for a tangible space to the devotee to relate to God and pray for salvation. By incorporating Sanskrit

[90]This will be discussed in detail in Chapter V.For details on the *sthalapuranas*, see, David Dean Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in South Indian Saiva Tradition*, Princeton, 1980.

legends and identifying with the Northern Vaiṣṇava sites, the concept of pilgrimage that was the underlying theme of these texts place Srivaisnava centres on the pan-Indian religious map.

On the one hand, these *sthalapurāṇas* incorporated metaphysical elements of the devotional exegesis, through the notion of accessibility and omnipotence, but on the other, they formed the means through which the legitimacy of the role of brahmanical priests was authenticated. This oscillation from the spiritual to the mundane was related to the idea that complete surrender and unification with the divinity was possible only by undertaking arduous pilgrimage to these holy places. In these holy places, the interaction with the divine occurred through ritual performances in which the priest or the *ācārya* played a significant role.[91] These texts collectively articulated the institutional network of the community. Each one of them, individually by propagating the importance of the particular site claimed superiority over the others, to attract pilgrims as well as to reinforce their primacy in the community identity. Kulke points out:

> The *Mahātmyas* may be said to be the "official" medium by means of which the tensions between the priests of the various temples were fought out. The *Mahātmya* is of extreme importance because the text which finally was incorporated into it sooner or later became part of the official dogma of the temple tradition, so long as no internal contradiction arose".[92]

Conclusion:

Seen from an overall perspective, the textual tradition through its components aimed at creating a community consciousness and structuring of the identity in a patterned manner. Through the hymnal tradition, *sampradāya* and liturgical tradition it created and uniform identity. The dynamism of the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition lay in its dual character viz., the sanskritic and Tamil one, which never fused in a manner of perfect harmony. Their mutual contradiction as well as complementarity contributed to the proliferation of texts written as well as oral in the post-Rāmānuja period. Therefore, the textual tradition through the commentaries and hagiographies also engendered this dual identity, which later on ramified into multiple ones.

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[91] Hermann Kulke, Cidāmbara *Mahātmya: Eine untersuchung der religionsgeschich Hichen und historischen Hintergrunde fur die Entstehung der Tradition einer sudindischen Tempelstadt.* Wiesbaden, 1970,p p. 221-225.
[92] Ibid, p. 224-225.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II

(a) THE NĀLĀYIRADIVYAPRABANDHAM

The arrangement of the Nālāyiradivyaprabandham (NDP) doesnot follow the spiritual order. That is, the contents of the text are donot correspond with the order of the āḷvārs. The conscious compilation of the text was an effort to project the gradual progression of bhakti from its simple to mystical form. The arrangement of NDP is as follows:

Table2: *The Nālāyiradivyaprabandham*

Book I: *Mutalāyiram* (the first thousand)		
1.	*Tiruppaltāṇṭu*	Periyāḷvār
2.	*Periyāḷvārtirumoḷi*	Periyāḷvār
3.	*Tiruppāvai*	Āṇṭāḷ
4.	*Nācciyārtirumoḷi*	Āṇṭāḷ
5.	*Perumāḷtirumoḷi*	Kulasēkhara
6.	*Tiruccantaviruttam*	Tirumaḷisai
7.	*Tirumālai*	Toṇṭaraṭippoṭi
8.	*Tirupaḷḷiyeḷucci*	Toṇṭaraṭippoṭi
9.	*Amalaṉātipirāṉ*	Tiruppāṉ
10.	*Kaṇṇinuṉciruttampu*	Madurakavi
Book II: *Periyatirumoḷi* (the second thousand)		
11.	*Periyatirumoḷi*	Tirumaṅgai
12.	*Tirukkuṟuntāṇṭakam*	Tirumaṅgai
13.	*Tiruneṭuntāṇṭakam*	Tirumaṅgai
Book III: *Iyarpā-Short Metres* (the third thousand)		
14.	*Mutaltiruvantāti*	Poygai
15.	*Iraṇṭantiruvantāti*	Pūtam
16.	*Muṉṟantiruvantāti*	Pēy

17.	*Nāṉmukaṉtiruvantāti*	Tirumalisai
18.	*Tiruviruttam*	Nammālvār
19.	*Tiruvāciriyam*	Nammālvār
20.	*Periyatiruvantāti*	Nammālvār
21.	*Tiruveḻukkūṟṟirukkai*	Tirumangai
22.	*Ciṟiyatirumaṭal*	Tirumangai
23.	*Periyatirumaṭal*	Tirumangai
Book IV: The fourth thousand		
24.	Tiruvāymoḻi	Nammālvār

Note: Raṅgattamutaṉ Āḻvāṉ's *Rāmānujaṉūṟṟantāti*, which was composed in the twelfth or the thirteenth century A.D.

(b) THE STOTRA TRADITION

Stotras literally mean praise poems. In this case, they are the benedictory verses revolving around Viṣṇu. However, in this thesis, the *stotra* tradition has not been included in the Śrīvaiṣṇava textual tradition because as a genre of religious literature, the *stotras* are not exclusive to Śrivaisnavism only. They form a part of the Vedic texts and figure in the everyday recital of a Śrīvaiṣṇava as well other devotees. For instance, the Viṣṇu *Sahasranāma* (i.e. the thousand names of Viṣṇu) is a most popular *stotra* in general and is not a Śrīvaiṣṇava composition. It forms a part of the *Santiparva* of the *Mahābhārata*. The tradition says that it was composed by Sanaka, one of the *Kumāras* (eternal youth) and was transmitted to Bhīsma who recited it in the presence of Kṛṣṇa to the Pandavas.

The *Sahasranāma* occupies an important place in the Śrīvaiṣṇava *stotra* tradition as it establishes the status of Viṣṇu as the Supreme Godhead. Kureśa and Parāśara Bhaṭṭar, the immediate disciples of Rāmānuja, commented profusely on the *Sahasranāma*. They are also attributed with the evolution of the *stotra* tradition Śrivaiṣṇavas are proud about the fact that even Śaṅkarācārya did not miss its significance and wrote a commentary on it. According to the tradition, Śaṅkara initially wanted to write a commentary on *Lalitā Sahasranāma* and asked a disciple to bring the text. Instead, the disciple brought the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*. This happened twice and Śaṅkara was flustered. Finally he was put out of his predicament when a divine voice ordered him to write a commentary on this text only.

The *stotras* possess a strong element of popular devotion. The popular dimension emerges particularly through the recollection of iconic incarnations, graphic descriptions of lord's physical and metaphysical attributes and the natural environ of the incarnation. For instance, in the *Sahasranāma* Viṣṇu is projected as someone who is calm and beautiful lying on the serpent bed in the Milky Ocean, has lotus shaped eyes, complexion like, that of the clouds and possesses four arms, two of them bearing the *Sankha* and *Cakra*. This notion of Saguṇa Brahman induces the aesthete and stimulates spontaneity in devotion, which is totally personalized.

Simlarly, the theology of Śri finally crystallized into an ideology in the *stotras* of the thirteenth-century. The position of Śrī was clearly outlined as that of a mother, who established a support between the god and devotee. It was because of a prior relationship with her that one could approach god for grace. The divine mother was projected making an impassioned plea on behalf of the erring humanity to the lord to forgive the faults of their children for nobody was free from shortcomings. Therefore, it was prescribed that one must first perform the act of surrender to the lord:

Sometimes, O Mother
(wanting to punish his children for their faults)
With his mind confused
(by your beauty and words)
What is this?
Who is without fault in this world?
He becomes a stream of welfare
For fault-filled people.
Having caused him to forget our sins
You make us your very own children.
So you are our mother

Srī Guṇa Ratnakośa of Parśara Bhaṭṭar, verses 52 and 298.

The *stotras* while acknowledging the pre-assigned role of Lakṣmī as the source of all prosperity further extolled her role in creation, preservation and dissolution. The source of creation lay in her powerful glance, which was more powerful than the cosmic dance of Śiva:

I join my palms together in supplication of Srī who makes fruitful by her approving glances the effort of Hari (expended) in the creation of the entire (universe of) sentient beings and insentient matters.

Srī Guṇa Ratnakośa of Parśara Bhaṭṭar, verse 1.

Hence, the everyday recital of the *stotras* particularly the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma*, helps a devotee to attain direct communion with the Lord through *prapatti* (i.e. unconditional surrender). Another aspect of this popular literature is that anybody can chant the *stotras* irrespective of his social status. The *Stotra* recitation is regarded as efficacious for obtaining a wish. Bhaṭṭar's famous commentary on the *Viṣṇu Sahasranāma* emphasizes the efficacy in chanting the thousand names, with pure devotion. In fact the *Sahasranāma* itself recommends daily recitation in the concluding verses collectively called the *mangala śloka:*

If a devotee, gets up early in the morning, purifies himself, repeats this hymn devoted to Vāsūdeva, with a mind that is concentrated on Him, that man attains great fame, leadership among his peers, wealth that is secure and the supreme good unsurpassed by anything. He will be free from all fears and be endowed with great courage and energy and will be free from all diseases...Free from all sins, a man devoted to Vāsudeva and completely dependant on Him, attains the eternal status of a Brahmana. Apart from being a part of the daily household rituals, the *stotras* are also of significant in the Śrivaiṣṇava liturgical recitations. Hence they involve the community through their collective chanting, thereby contributing to the Śrīvaiṣṇava identity.

CHAPTER III

ŚRĪVAIṢṆAVA COMMUNITY: UNIFORMITY, MULTIPLICITY AND DUALITY

The delineation of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas in the textual tradition as a homogenous community by its predominantly brahmanical leadership involved the structuring of a cohesive and distinct identity around Viṣṇu as the supreme universal god, with a subordinate position of Śrī as the divine consort whose energy (i.e. Sakti) emanated from the god (i.e. Saktiman). The notion of a universal divine couple emerged as the symbol of integration and imparted a stable character to the community. Such a normative projection of homogeneity often deliberately camouflaged the diversity of affiliations and multiplicity of identities that existed. The non-brahmanical elements, possessing distinct identities in the form of caste, occupational groups and regional origins, were not highlighted, although they were an integral part of the community. However, the discourse on a single universal community structure was never final. The consolidation of religious network implied the development of a broad social base. This required continuous interaction and assimilation of the autochthonous traditions, majority of which were centred on the cult of local goddesses. Although the community hierarchy accommodated all these traditions reflecting the supremacy of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community, there were tensions in such a structured incorporation. The local cultic identities never were subsumed. Rather, the Srivaisnava identity was added on to them.[1] These developments had important ramifications for the notion of a 'community'. Multiple regional identities remained distinct and were acknowledged within the larger uniform Śrīvaiṣṇava framework..

It is difficult to delineate the stages through which multiple affiliations developed. Neither the hagiographical nor the *guruparamparā* texts of the post-Rāmānuja period clearly reflect upon these developments. By tracing the organizational aspects of the community and the processes through which the multiple affiliations and identities had

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[1] Although direct inscriptional evidence on regional affiliations is not available, the ethnographic details from several field researches and gazetteers reflect the persistence of the village and regional affiliations despite being appropriated to the canonical sects.

developed in the Śrīvaiṣṇava community, an attempt is made here to show that the Śrīvaiṣṇava community at no point of time could sustain its claim to uniformity and homogeneity. This chapter also attempts to understand the dual identities of the community as the Vaṭakalai and Teṉkalai and locate them in the context of the evolving community consciousness.[2]

Therefore, the notions of uniformity, multiplicity, and duality have been applied in this study to understand the Śrīvaiṣṇava identities and their structures. Uniformity implied belonging to one single Śrīvaiṣṇava community. This was the first important identity of the Śrīvaiṣṇava believer. The concept of uniformity revolved around the personality of Rāmānuja. Various Śrīvaiṣṇava groups often had distinct traditions but represented uniformity in their hagiographies by tracing their respective descent to Rāmānuja. The concept of multiplicity was represented at two levels: the primordial level of caste and regional affiliations and the level of institutions of the temples, individual Śrīvaiṣṇava leaders and mathas, with which the former was associated. The process of community construction evolved certain broad paradigms around which multiple identities coalesced. These paradigms expressed themselves through the dualities into the Sanskritic school and the Prabandhic school, which finally crystallized into the over-arching dual affiliations of the Vaṭakalai (Sanskritic) and Teṉkalai (Tamil). Hence, the Śrīvaiṣṇava identity can be understood as follows: an individual was a Śrīvaiṣṇava, and belonged to a particular caste and region. These were associated with particular temples, leaders and mathas, each of which was a Vaṭakalai or a Teṉkalai (see table 3)

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[2]The dualism as represented in the Sanskrit and Tamil tradition became the ideological context for the northern (Sanskritic) and southern (Tamil) divisions, which crystallized later into Vaṭakalai and Teṉkalai sects respectively. Depending on their respective ideology, the matha and the ācāryapuruṣas came to be regrouped under this dual division.

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Table: 3 The Śrīvaiṣṇava Identity

Śrīvaiṣṇavas

Uniformity

Vatakalais → Duality ← Tenkalais

Multiplicity

Caste   Region   *Ācāryapuruṣas /Mathas*

Caste   Region   *Ācāryapuruṣas /Mathas*
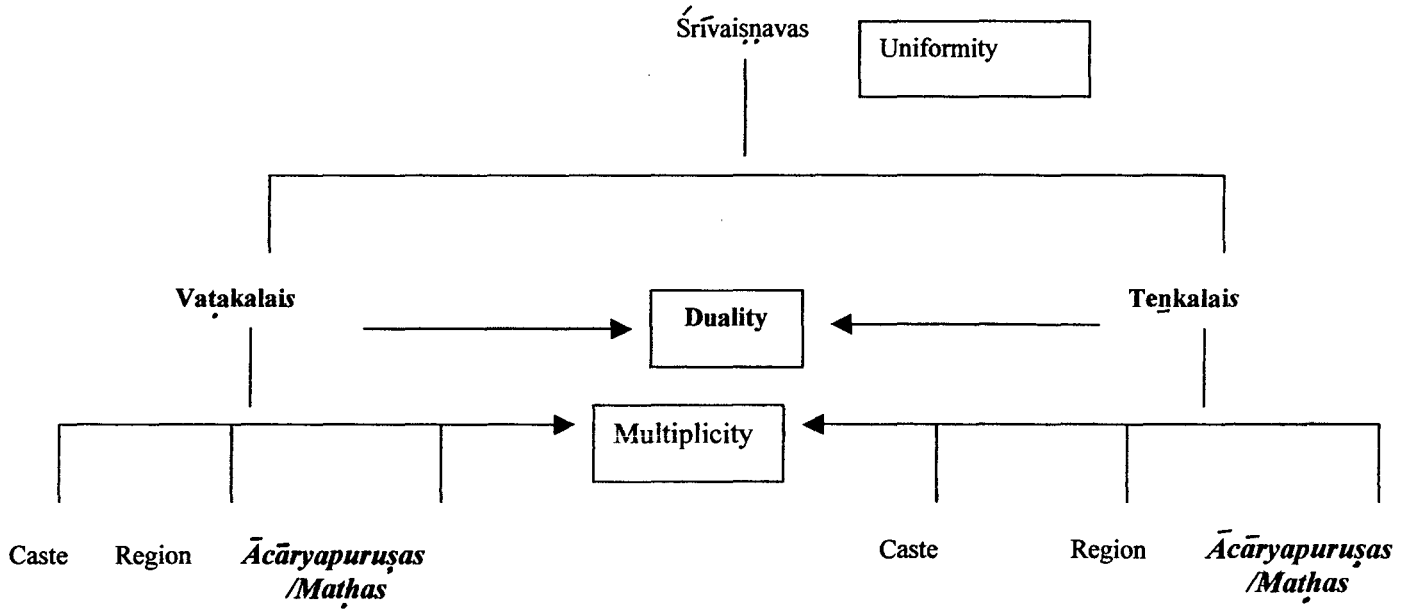
I. Uniformity

Uniformity emerged as a dominant theme in the construction of the Śrīvaiṣṇava identity, Uniformity implied a strong, well-consolidated community wielding an universalistic influence which transcended narrow local boundaries. The projection of this uniformity became a major preoccupation of the various sub-traditions each of which claimed to represent the community. It is in the personality of Rāmānuja as the *ācārya* of the community that this concept of uniformity was represented. The concept of uniformity can be understood at two levels. One, at the level of actual efforts made by Rāmānuja to organize the community. This was indirectly corroborated by epigraphical evidence. For example in the pre-Rāmānuja period, the Śrīvaiṣṇavas were mentioned in the early Cōḷa temples as independent religious groups. Their protection was invoked in a formulaic or stylistic statement at the end of the inscriptions.[3] However, from the mid-eleventh century A.D., the inscriptions testify to the increasing dominance of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas in the temple administration and the increasing network of interaction among the Śrīvaiṣṇava temple centers. Therefore, by the mid-eleventh century A.D., the Śrīvaiṣṇavas had emerged as a well consolidated supra local group due to the supposed innovations introduced by Rāmānuja (1017-1137 A.D) and others theological and institutional reforms. Two, at the level of Rāmānuja's contribution to the development of a uniform Śrīvaiṣṇava community as reflected in the hagiographical texts. The two main themes that emerge in this context are his early life and his role as the acaryic head of the community, which are discussed below

(i) The Early Life of Rāmānuja

According to the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, the appointment of Rāmānuja as the *acaryic* head of the community was divinely pre-ordained. The hagiographical texts inform us that he was not born a Śrīvaiṣṇava. Rāmānuja belonged to the *Vaḍama* sub-caste of *brāhmaṇas* -the followers of the *smārta* tradition. Rāmānuja's *guru* was Yādavaprakāśa –

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[3] *Srivaisnava Raksai* i.e. "the protection of Srivaisnavas"

a famous *Advaitin*.[4]Rāmānuja broke away from his *guru* when he criticized his *guru's* interpretation of the *Upaniṣads*.[5]The texts further inform us that his independent thinking and the fact that his *acaryic* position was already pre-ordained attracted Yāmuña's attention, who made repeated attempts to meet Rāmānuja but failed. Finally, it was at Yāmuña's funeral that Rāmānuja got the opportunity to know the three last wishes of the *ācārya* (i.e. Yāmuña) and promised to fulfil them. The three wishes of Yāmuña were *viz*, the veneration of Vyāsa; the propagation of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* (i.e. the Tamil tradition) and the composition of a commentary on the *Vedāntasūtra* of Vyāsa (i.e. the Sanskritic tradition). Therefore, the promise made by Rāmānuja implied the synthesis of all the three aspects, which became the basis of the consolidation of Srivaisnavism into one community. Particularly significant in this context were the last two wishes. They became the basis of the subsequent *ubhaya-vedantic* tradition. Rāmānuja's promise to fulfill Yāmūna's wishes established an element of continuity between the two *acaryas* (which is otherwise historically missing) and the position of Rāmānuja as the successive *ācārya* of the community.

Since a direct *guru-śiṣya* relationship was missing between Yāmuña and Rāmānuja, the tradition assigned five spiritual preceptors to Rāmānuja who were the direct disciples of Yāmuña and could be said to represent him. This idea emerged clearly in hagiographies, when Periya Nambī, one of the *gurus* while initiating Rāmānuja stated:

> Of old, Srī Rāmacandra, being prevented by his promise to his father from reigning in
> person in Ayodhyā, left with Bhārata his sandals as his representatives and proceeded to
> the forest Similarly, my master, being prevented from initiating you himself has placed

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[4]The *smārta brāhmaṇas* usually follow the *Advaitic* tradition of Sankara. They worship five deities – Viṣṇu, Siva, Pārvatī, Gaṇeśa and Sūrya. However, the *smārtas* are not initiated into either of these religious traditions and therefore, their leanings are not sectarian *vis-a-vis* these religious traditions. Similarly, Ramanuja's family despite being the *smārtas* had Vaiṣṇava leanings as their family ties with Periya Nambī shows.

[5]There are several incidents in the hagiographical texts on the intellectual incompatibility between Rāmānuja and Yadavaprākaśa. In fact, the rivalry was so intense that Yadavaprakāśa conspired to take Rāmānuja's life. Consequently, Rāmānuja was saved none other then Viṣṇu.

his sacred feet on my head and deputed me the responsibility. So it is he from you (sic) have received your initiation and not from me. [6]

The five preceptors individually imparted the five different tenets of Srivaisnavism to Rāmānuja. Tirukōṭṭiyūr Nambi (i.e. Ghoshṭipūrṇa) imparted the *dvaya mantra* as well as the secret interpretations of *Tirumantaram*. Tirumalai Āṇḍān (i.e. Māladhar) imparted the text of *Tiruvāymoḷi* and the traditional commentaries on it. Tiruvaranga Perumāḷ (i.e. Ranga) disseminated the *stotras* and other customary rituals, while Tirumalai Nambi (i.e. Śrī Śaila Pūrṇa) taught the *Rāmāyana* to Rāmānuja at Tirupati. Finally, Periya Nambi (i.e. Mahāpurṇa) performed his *pañcasaṁskāra* and initiated him formally into Srivaisnavism.[7] Interestingly, Tirukacci Nambi (i.e. Kāñcīpūrṇa) is not included in this list though he exercised tremendous influence on Rāmānuja.

This account of Rāmānuja's five preceptors had connotations for the community. First, it established the concept of uniformity in Rāmānuja's profile, where all the five elements merged as one. Thereby, it followed that Rāmānuja was the first to organize the community by bringing the scattered ideas together into one organization and philosophy. Second, the concept of more than one *guru* (Rāmānuja officially had five) was a significant deviation from the long established *Oṟān* tradition, i.e. single preceptor-disciple *parampara*.[8] This continued in the post-Rāmānuja period, when the Śrīvaiṣṇava leaders as well as the devotees had more than one *guru*. This multiplicity of *gurus* became the basis of multiple identities within the community. Third, the *guru* was always a *brāhmana*.

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[6] *Ārāyirappaṭi Guruparamparāprabhāvam*, pp.150-154.

[7] *Yatirāja Vaibhava* differs in this context. The text designates Periya Nambī (i.e. Mahāpurṇa) as the only *guru* of Rāmānuja: 'At that place, he (Mahāpūrṇa) gave to Rāmānujācārya the marks with conch and discus, the sectarian mark, the method of worship, the *mantras* together with their meaning, the great *mantra* and also other *mantras*. He (Mahāpūrṇa) who was (then) much pleased taught him (Rāmānuja) the three thousand hymns (of the *ālvārs*) and the meaning of *sutras* of Vyāsa *(Brahmasūtra)*. Rāmānuja too worshipped the preceptor and his wife by leading a desirable (worthy) way of life. *Yatirāja Vaibhava* of Āndhra Pūrṇa, *ślokas* 44-47.

[8] The *Oṟān* tradition comprised of Viṣṇu as the *paramācārya* who passed on his teachings to Śrī From Śrī, it was disseminated to Visvakasena, then to Nammālvār, to Nāthamuni and finally to Yāmunā who had five disciples.

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(ii) Rāmānuja as the Ācārya of the community

Rāmānuja is supposed to have undertaken certain measures for the consolidation and spread of the Viśiṣṭadvaitic faith. Noteworthy amongst them are his temple reforms and the establishment of a strong organization to carry on the tradition after him. Rāmānuja is credited with the institutional organization of the community through a series of temple reforms collectively known as the *Code of Uḍaiyavar*.[9] Introduced at Śrīrangam, this code was gradually made mandatory in other temple centers. This had three important implications. First, the Rañganāthasvāmī temple at Śrīrangam being the base of Rāmānuja emerged as the institutional focus of the community.[10] Second, the pattern of worship and the temple organization at Śrīrangam was replicated in other Vaiṣṇava centers, thereby integrating the otherwise dispersed groups into one community organization, with Rāmānuja as its spiritual head and the Ranganāthasvāmī temple as its institutional head. Third, the *Code of Uḍaiyavar* broadened the social base of the community by encouraging non-brahmanical participation in the temple affairs.[11] The hagiographical narratives associate this with the catholicity of Rāmānuja. The account of Rāmānuja publicly proclaiming the previously exclusive *dvaya mantra* from the temple tower at Tirukkōṭṭiyūr was a favourite theme amongst the hagiographers to project Rāmānuja's universalistic approach. Consequently, Rāmānuja is said to have had a large following from all sections of the society. For example, Rāmānuja's followers comprised of seven hundred *sanyasins*, twelve thousand and three *ekāngīs* and three hundred *korramai* (i.e. women followers).[12]

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[9] The *Kōil Oḷugu*, pp. 41-112

[10] According to the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, as the *ācārya* of the community, Rāmānuja at Śrīrangam gave discourses and performed priestly functions. However, he was not an ordinary priest (*arcaka*). The tradition clearly states that Lord Ranganātha assigned him the control and management of the temple and gave him the title *Uḍaiyavar*, which meant the possessor or the owner.

[11] The reforms at Nārāyaṇasvāmī temple at Mēlkōṭe and Ranganathāsvāmī temple at Śrīrangam are well known for including as well as increasing the non-brahmanical participation in the community. For further discussions on the non-*brāhmaṇas*, refer to the section on *Multiplicity* of this chapter.

[12] The numbers of the disciples vary, in various hagiographical texts. However, this variation is minor and is of no consequence.

Another factor, which led to the dissemination of the faith, were the peregrinations, of Rāmānuja. His tours to various centers within and outside South India established the supremacy of the Viśiṣṭadvaita faith, and enlarged the limits of the community beyond the geographical boundaries delineated by the Ālvārs. This endowed the community with a pan-Indian status. During the course of his tours, he is supposed to have impressed upon the peole of other faiths to convert to Srivaisnavism voluntarily. The examples of the Hoysaḷa King Viṣṇuvardhana (i.e. the twelfth century A.D.) converting from Jainism and the Muslim princess from Delhi converting from Islam are well known.[13] Rāmānuja achieved further homogenization and uniformity through the introduction of the deification of the Alvars and the introduction of the *adhyāyanostsava* festival both of which emerged as important elements in the Srīvaiṣṇava community identity.[14]

The structuring of the line of descent into a cohesive organization further established the credibility of Rāmānuja as the *ācārya* of the community.[15] A list of special disciples called Srīvaiṣṇava *Mudalis* are given in these texts. However, this list is different from the *guru-śiṣya* lineage, which was the major organizational innovation of Rāmānuja. He is said to have appointed a group of "seventy four" to spread the teachings of Srivaisnavism. The hagiographical texts give a list of these seventy-four names, some of which are also repeated in the list of Srīvaiṣṇava *Mudalis*. According to the *Yatirāja Vaibhavam* of Āndhra Pūrṇa (i.e. Vaḍuga Nambi), the disciple and contemporary of Rāmānuja:

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[13] Hagiographies inform that the *utsavamurti* of the deity at Mēlkōṭe was with a Muslim princess of the north, who had already started considering the idol as her husband. So strong was her devotion that when Rāmānuja recovered the idol and brought it to Mēlkōṭe, she came along. Later she was deified as Talukka Nācciyār or Bībī Nācciyār and placed next to the deity.

[14] The *adhyāyanotsava* festival involves the recitation of the Sanskrit Vedas as well as the Nālāyira divya Prabandham in the presence of the god, Ālvārs and *ācāryas*, thereby sysmbolically involving the entire community.

[15] See *Yatirāja Vaibhavam, slokas* 107-110 and 113. According to the tradition, after Rāmānuja became an ascetic he established his own *matha* at Kāñcīpuram, near Varadarājasvāmī temple. His first disciples were Mudaliāṇḍān (Dāsarathī), Kurattāḷvān (Kūreśa) and Nadadūr Ālvān. The name of Nadādūr Ālvān amongst the initial disciples of Rāmānuja figures only in the Vaṭakalai list.

> The great Rāmānujācārya, the chief among the ascetics and *ācāryas* made some persons as the heads of the religious seats known as seventy fur persons.[16] Even among them he made four chief persons for the chair of *Śrībhāṣya* and his spiritual son (Piḷḷān) amongst them, as the foremost chief for both the *Vedānta.* [17]

Interestingly, the early preceptors of the Vaṭakalai and Teṇkalai lineage belonged to this group of seventy-four.[18] Further, the powerful sectarian families in the Vijayanagar period (for instance the Kandāḍai family and the Tātācārya group) also traced their descent from one of the seventy-four and referred to themselves as the *Ācāryapuruṣas.*[19] Since this group of seventy-four was personally chosen by Rāmānuja, a claim to their lineage would bestow legitimacy on these sectarian leaders.

According to the Śrīvaiṣṇavas, these seventy-four were householders, who performed the *pañcasaṁskāra* for their respective disciples. Hence, the claim to being their successors empowered the sectarian leaders i.e. the *ācāryapuruṣas* to conduct an initiation that was a privilege. For the *matha* head, being a *sanyasin*, i.e. an ascetic renouncer could not touch the fire, as per Dharmasastric laws.[20] Interestingly, at Tirukkōvalūr, after the forty-fifth *jīyar*, the subsequent heads became householders and performed *pañcasaṁskāras.*[21] The importance of the seventy-four therefore, appears to be tremendous for the Śrīvaiṣṇava community, and they are referred to as the *simhāsanapatis*, an honorific title which however, does not find any mention in the hagiographical and *guruparamaparā* texts.[22]

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[16] These four main persons were Kurattālvān, Naḍāḍūr Ālvān, Kīḍāmbī Āccān and Mudaliyāṇḍān. All belonged to the Vaṭakalai lineage.

[17] *Yatirāja Vaibhava, sloka* 108.

[18] It is not possible to give the names of all the seventy-four here. The hagiographical texts provide the list, the contents of which vary from text to text.

[19] Although in the inscriptions, the term *ācāryapuruṣa* is used in a generic sense as a recipient of some honours in the temples along with other Śrīvaiṣṇava groups.

[20] In the late nineteenth century, a court case was filed by an *ācāryapuruṣa* against the head of a *matha* at Kāñcī, for the latter had appropriated the rights of initiation and was performing the *pancasamskara*.

[21] This information was made available to me personally by the present *jīyar* of the *matha* at Tirukkōvalūr.

[22] Probably, this title of *simhāsanapati* was used to enhance the prestige of the institution of the *ācāryapuruṣa*.s. Most of the hagiographies composed after the thirteenth century referred to the seventy-

Therefore, the idea of uniformity emphasizing on adherence to one single community (tracing its descent from Rāmānuja) was important to Śrīvaiṣṇava identity despite the presence of multiple traditions within the community. In fact, the multiplicity sought its legitimacy from uniformity. That is, the later Śrīvaiṣṇavas asserted themselves based on their being the direct descendants of Rāmānuja, who personified uniformity. In the post-Rāmānuja period, i.e. from the thirteenth century onwards every temple had an Udaiyavar Emperumānār Kōil. The deification of Rāmānuja indicates that he had emerged as the focus of the community. The hagiographical sources inform us that Rāmānuja's deification began during his lifetime. The story goes that the people at Śrīperumbudūr requested Rāmānuja to consecrate his own *vigraha*. Rāmānuja obliged and installed his own image. According to the *Rāmānujadivyasūricaitam*, the godof Śrīrangam ordered the Śrīvaiṣṇavas to perform the *Śatakalaśa Abhiśekham* of Rāmānuja and take his image in a palanquin around the temple. Thereafter, the god blessed him as the *ubhaya-vibhūtinātha*, i.e. the Lord of both Vaikuntha and Śrīrangam. This practice is followed until day and is a part of festival celebrations. The construction of *Rāmānujakutam, Rāmānuja Tiruvīdi, udaiyavar Kalvay Paṭṭdai* was outward visible marks of Rāmānuja's influence. The epigraphical invocations of the post-thirteenth century A.D. testified that Rāmānuja also imparted homogeneity to the community and hence was the most exalted/venerated *acarya*

II. MULTIPLICITY

From the thirteenth century, a plurality of identities based on multiple traditions emerged within the Śrīvaiṣṇava community. Each of these traditions preserved the names of all its *ācāryas* in a succession list and attributed several *taniyans* (i.e. praise poems) to them. These *ācāryas* were either independent *ācāryapuruṣas* or *maṭhādhipatis*.

four in detail. Probably, such focus emerged to ascribe an impressive network of organisation to either Rāmānuja or to one of his successor. In the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries, one comes across the seventy-two; i.e. *bahattara-niyoga* in the temples of the Telugu country. According to a legend, when Kumāra Kampaṇa, the Vijayahagar chief conquered the southern regions, he or one of the chief *nāyakas* established the institution of the seventy-two *nāyakas*. This would perhaps be the political proto-type of the seventy-four religious heads in Srivaisnavism.According to N. Jagadeesan, Rāmānuja was probably inspired in this move by the examples of the Jainas who had seventy-two religious *samasthanas*. However, Jagadeesan does not provide the reference. According to him, the Saiva canon, which speaks of the sixty-three *nāyanārs* is a precedent of the sixty-three Jaina *ācāryas*. See N. Jagadeesa, 1977, P.47.

However, both of these categories were associated with the brahmanical temples and *maṭhas,* which emerged as the convergence points of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community and its activities.

The basis of the multiple traditions and therefore identities based on the institution of *ācāryas* and temples was the caste and the regional affiliations of a Śrīvaiṣṇava individual. These were primary affiliations of an individual, formed the core of an individual's identity and manifested during occasions like marriages, performance of rituals, ceremonies, and so on. In the post-Rāmānuja period, the caste and the regional identities were linked in a complex maner with the religious identity. Despite the overarching community, sectarian and institutional affiliations, the caste and the regional identities never got margnialized and remained integral to the entire social set up. (See table 4)

Hence, the concept of multiplicity should not be seen as a disintegrative force. Each level, viz, caste, region, *maṭhas, ācāryapurūṣas* and temples was linked to one another within the larger Śrīvaiṣṇava community framework. Despite the fact that this well-knitted structure coalesced around the dual category of Vaṭakalai (Sanskrit) and Teṇkalai (Tamil) ultimately, the larger community identity as a Śrīvaiṣṇava was always preserved, be it for a *brāhmaṇa* or a non-*brahmana* follower.

Table 4 Identity Formation of a Śrīvaiṣṇava Devotee

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                    ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                    │     Śrīvaiṣṇava Devotee     │
                    └─────────────────────────────┘
                              │
          ┌───────────────────┴───────────────────┐
      Vaṭakalai                              Teṇkalai
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Vaṭakalai

Brāhmaṇa
a. Family deity
b. Region
c. *Maṭhas*
d. *Ācāryapuruṣas*
e. *Svayamācāryas*
f. Brahmanical Temples.

Non-Brāhmaṇa
a. Family deity
b. Caste or occupational groups
c. Village god
d. *Maṭha*
e. *Ācāryapuruṣa*
f. *Svayamācārya*
g. Brahmanical Temples.

Teṇkalai

Brāhmaṇa
a. Family deity
b. Region
c. Maṭhas
d. *Ācāyapuruṣas*
e. *Svayamācārya*
f. Brahmanical Temples

Non-Brāhmaṇas
a. Family deity
b. Caste or occupational groups
c. Village god
d. *Maṭha*
e. *Ācāryapuruṣas*
f. *Syayamācāryas*
g. Brahmann icalTemples

(i) Primary Affiliations: Region and Caste

(a) Region: The socio-economic and political context in which the Śrīvaiṣṇava multiple identities emerged have already been discussed in the chapter two of this dissertation. However, two things need to be restated here. One, the changing socio-economic base particularly with the establishment of the Vijayanagar empire was due to the rise of new social classes as well as the rising prominence of the old ones. Two, there was a political integration of three different linguistic zones-viz, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesha. Consequently, Srivaisnavism not only had to expand its social base, but also its regional base beyond the Tamil region. Therefore, local variants of Srivaisnavism and Śrīvaiṣṇava communities with strong regional affiliations emerged. For example, Māṇḍyattars, Hebbārs and many others from Karnataka are prominent regional Śrīvaiṣṇava groups.[23] The textual tradition of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas began to be articulated in regional languages like Kannada and Telugu. Some of these works contributed towards the general Śrīvaiṣṇava community consciousness. Regional affiliations were further asserted when migrants to the Tamil region preserved their regional identities. For example, the Telugu warrior-class and landed communities who migrated from the Andhra region. However, conversely the *brāhmaṇa* migrants from Tamil Nadu to Andhra and Karnataka region often were assimilated completely into the regional setup, thereby subsuming their Tamil identity.

These regional *brāhmaṇa* and non-brahmana Śrīvaiṣṇava groups of the Karnataka and Andhra region were usually named after the *gurus,* place of settlements or place of origin. These groups were usually endogamous and had their own specific customs and practices. The Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇavas regarded them as inferior.[24] The regional identity did have considerable importance, as seen from the hagiographical texts which always mentioned the place of origin, the migratory pattern and the place of settlement of a Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācārya.* This is best illustrated in the case of Tātācāryas, whose different stages of migration before settling down at Kāñcīpuram is a subject of the hagiographies.

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[23] See the Appendix attached to the present chapter for details.

[24] This information is however not historically attested. The Tamil Śrīvaiṣṇavas until day do not marry the Śrīvaiṣṇava from regions outside Tamil Nadu.

(b) Caste affiliations: The *brāhmaṇa* affiliation was always been an integral part of the Śrīvaisnava community. All the *ācāryas* of the community and the heads of the *maṭhas* were *brāhmaṇas*. This elitist brahmanical base was responsible for the initial limitations of the Śrīvaisnava community in the pre-twelfth century A.D. Tradition attributes Rāmānuja with the introduction of certain social reforms, including participation by the non-brahmanas. These reforms consequently broadened the social basis of the community. In the post Rāmānuja period, the social milieu underwent a transformation. The rise of non-brahmana landed class, emergence of the merchants and the migration of the Telugu warriors and landed magnates to the Tamil region led to the evolution of a distinct Śrīvaisnava non-brahmana identity. Since these groups were powerful and influential, they emerged as major benefactors of the temples and the sectarian leaders. A network of redistribution and exchange between the non-brahmana *and brāhmaṇa* elite groups developed that brought into the temple arena the former and provided a regular channel to for patronage to the latter. (This has already been discussed in detail in Chapter II). Hence, caste affiliations got interwoven with the community-class paradigm. That is Srivaisnavism became the integrative factor between the *brāhmaṇa* and the non-brahmanas, when powerful sections of both the castes groups joined in an interactive/productive relationship.

The presence of non-brahmanas in the community influenced the Srivaisnava discourse on society. New concepts like *ubhaya vedanta* and *prapatti* were evolved, which were all inclusive. Vernacular came to be emphasized along with Sanskrit. Some of the brahmanical religious leaders like the Kandāḍais and Periya Jīyar at Tirupati had non-brahmaṇas as their disciples. Referred to as *ekākis, ekāngīs* and *sāttada Śrīvaisnavas*, these non-brahmmanical groups figured prominently as the recipient of several shares in temple offerings. The *Kōil Oḷugū* states that Rāmānuja first recognized their importance and included them in various activities in the temples.[25]However, it appears that these non-brahmaṇa groups were not given any priestly functions. Their activities were to be mainly confined to:

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25 The *Kōil Oḷugū*, p. 142

> Decorating with followers the tirumandapas during festivals and the Alagiyamanavālan tirumandapa daily; making garlands and offering them for the starting of processon; raining (see) flowers (on special occasions); proceeding in two rows holding ceasors, two folded cloths, eight gold torches and twenty silver torches and waving two pieces of cloth; forming a rear batch, with hands folded behind the row by the waists reciting the last two lines of each stanza; bearing the Rāmānuja sword and acting as the bodyguard of the *Jīyars* and the Śrīvaisnavas.[26]

Hence, these groups played a marginal role in the actual ritual activities. One can conclude that despite efforts to include non-brahmanas in the ritual activities, Srivaisnavism remained highly brahmmanical in its outlook. *Varṇāśramadharma* was upheld. Even the elite amongst the non-brahmanas (i.e. the political leaders and other powerful agrarian and mercantile groups) could participate in rituals only symbolically. The social thinking of that period continued to be centered on caste even within the supposedly broad spectrum of Srivaisnavism. The *brāhmaṇas* and the non-brahmanas both attached importance to their caste identity. There is no evidence of corporate social mobility.[27] The non-brahmana groups asserted their respective caste identity vis-à-vis the brahmmanical ones while competing for temple resources. For example, in the fifteenth century A.D., the members of the *ceṭṭi* community claimed a *Traivarṇika* status for their mercantile community. That is, they claimed that they were thrice born as opposed to the twice born *brāhmaṇas* and therefore, were entitled to a higher social status, especially in the temples.[28]

The identities of the temple non-brahmanas were linked to their respective religious leaders and hence were a monolithic one. For instance, an *ekaki* or a *śāttāda Śrīvaiṣṇava* attached to Kanadai Rāmānuja Ayyangar was distinct from an *ēkaki* or *śāttada* Śrīvaiṣṇava associated with the Periya Jīyar *maṭha* at Tirupati. Their power and the privileges stemmed from their being disciples of these influential Śrīvaiṣṇava leaders. With the waning influence of their respective preceptors, these groups also lost their importance. From the sixteenth century, (i.e. durihg Saluvas Narasimha's time) the *Śāttadas* attached to Kandāḍai Rāmānuja Ayyangar enjoyed numerous privileges and made donations in the name of their preceptors. Nevertheless, in the later period, when the influence of Kandāḍai was

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[26] The *Koil Olugu*, p.46

[27] Burton Stein, ' Social Mobility and Medieval South Indian Hindu Sects', in *Social Mobility and the Caste System in India: An Interdisciplinary Symposium*, James Silverberg, ed, Paris, 1968, pp. 78-94.

[28] *South Indian Inscriptions*, Volume XXIV No.385, 426 and 432.

diminishing the Śāttadas do not appear to have enjoyed the same status. It should be noted that despite holding positions of prominence in the respective institutions of their leaders, the non-brahmana could never assume leadership or be the head of a *matha*. The successor to Kandādai Rāmānuja as the head of the *Rāmānujakūtam* was always a *brāhmana*, for instance, Kandādai Rāmānuja Mādhvayyangar.Thus; the Śrīvaisnava attitude towards the non-brahmana devotees was characterized by an element of duality. On the one hand, endowments were encouraged irrespective of caste and there developed a close nexus between the religious and political leaders. On the other, they retained a brahmmanical organization within the temple structure and the community. The former attitude was a result of religious exigency than of religious/theological liberalism. For the *mathas* and temples could not survive without the patronage of political rulers.

(ii) The Acaryic Affiliations: Individual Srivaisnava Families and the *Matha* Organisations.

Of all the levels of identities, the one at the level of the *ācāryas,* viz., *ācāryapurusas, svayamācāryas* and *mathādhipatis* (head of the matha), became significant as it linked the disparate groups into the mainstream Śrīvaisnava community, through the *acaraya's* institutional organizations.[29]The emergence of these *ācāryas* can be seen from the thirteenth century when various political and social changes took place. The *ācāryas* then became the disseminator of Srivaisnavism, which developed as an integrative ideology for the different social groups. The *ācāryas,* brought about the integration of the society through their control of the temples and their respective resource base,in order to consolidate their position in the politico-religious hierarchy.

However, these *ācāryas* were also instrumental in propagating sectarianism and sectarian affiliations, which promoted multiple identities. One of the ways in which the plural identities were constructed was by developing multiple traditions, which primarily

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[29]The understanding of the terms- *mathas* and *accāryapurusas* is extremely complex and is full of ambiguity. Currently it is used in the manner of an institutional structure. Some of the *ācāryapurusas* refer to themselves as *svayamācāryas* i.e. they were not attached to any temple *per se* and had an independent following. The Tātāchāryas refer to themselves as *syayamācāryas*. Since, the *svāyamācārya* are usually *ācāryapurusas,* a separate discussion on them is not taken up in the present chapter.

concentrated upon evolving a cohesive *acaryic* lineage. This well constructed lineage provided a focus around which various sub-communities developed. It also enabled the sectarian leaders to project an independent and strong identity, which became the basis for establishing power and authority and a large following. The composition of the genealogies to create an antiquated lineage embellished with myths and legends was an important textual exercise for the Srivaisnavas in the post-Ramanuja period particularly when the *acaryapurusas* and *matha* leaders frequently tried to establish a strong institutional organization with a large following.

There were some sectarian leaders, who claimed their descent from the seventy-four *simhasanapatis* (the direct disciples of Ramanuja, like the Kandadais) or from Ramanuja himself. Some acaryic groups claimed lineage from the preceptors of Ramanuja, to obtain a more exclusive and antiquated status (like Tatacaryas and Uttamanambis). Some of the professional Srivaisnava groups like those of *Araiyars* and *Tallapakkam* claimed descent from Yamunacarya and cultivated few disciples. The importance of the lineage was further highlighted when it became the legitimizing source for competing claims over the temple resources during tensions and conflicts, particularly during the Vatakalai-Tenkalai schism. For example, the Bhattars constructed a lineage from Kurattalvan, the first disciple of Ramanuja to claim control over resources at the Ranganathasvami temple. However, the Bhattars never aimed to cultivate followers. The *mathas* attributed their origin to either Vedanta Desika or Manavala Mamunigal (who then were linked to Ramanuja), thus, exhibiting the Sanskritic and Tamil affiliations of the *mathas*. However, there were some later *mathas* (like the Yatiraja *matha* at Melkote), which attributed their foundations to Ramanuja directly.[30]

The construction of the genealogies ensured the authority of the leaders and clarified the position of the successor. This established a continuous line of teachers and a hierarchical organization on a permanent basis, giving the community a legitimate status. The *acaryapurusas* as well as the *mathas* had their respective retinue of servants, system

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[30]See, Appendix attached to the present chapter for details on lineage of the various *acaryapurusas* and *matha*.

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of recruitment and organization comparable to any political system.[31]The influence of the *jiyars* and *acaryas* was so pervasive that they were even deified and worshipped.

The sectarian hagiographies and the other *guruparamparas* while evolving their respective apostolic lines of succession developed an important institution that became the basis of community organization. This was the concept of *guru.* The head of the acaryic lineage, his successors and the heads of the *mathas* were all designated as *gurus.* By the virtue of being a *guru*, the *acaryas* emerged as the foci of the sectarian/multiple identities. *Guru* and *acarya* were often interchangeably used. (a practice that continues till day).

The importance of the *gurus/acaryas* lay in their role as disseminators of the canon and the *guru-sisya parampara*, i.e. the preceptor-disciple relationship was the transmitter of tradition. The *guru* was indispensable to the devotees who sought his help for attaining salvation. This point was emphasized by Vedanta Desika in his *Rahasyatrayasaram.*[32] According to the *Srivacanabhusanam* of Pillai Lokacarya, a *guru* was *upakaraka* and *uddharaka*, i.e. 'he who gave knowledge and showed the way to salvation and he who took the disciples as it were by hand and led him to salvation.'[33]

The Srivaisnava tradition provides more details on the role of the *acarya/ guru.* The *acarya* initiated the disciple into the community through the initiation rites of *pancasamskara.* He was instrumental in the dissemination of three main texts (i.e. *granthas*) viz, the *Sribhasya*, the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* and the secret *mantras* like the *Dvayam* and *Tirumantaram.*[34]The discourses of the *acarya* that explained the theological meaning of the texts became a part of the exegesis.

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[31]For instance, Kandadai Ramanuja Ayyangar had a group of disciples called the *Sattada Srivaisnavas* who managed the institution of *Ramanujakutam*, which was headed by him.

[32]*Rahasyatrayasaram* of Vedanta Desika, p.5

[33]*Srivacanabhusanam* of Pillai Lokacarya, p.32. The *marjara-markata* analogy is used by the Vatakalai- and Tenkalai affiliation to explain the *guru-sisya* relationship. For further details, see section on the schism.

[34]This information was gathered during the field trip to various Srivaisnava centres, where I had discussions with several Srivaisnava *acaryas* and lay devotees.

The two roles of the *guru*, the initiatory and expository got institutionalized into *acaryaparampara* and *granthaparampara* respectively. Hence, the importance of the *guru-sisya parampara* not only ensured continuity but also legitimized the validity of the teacher as the preceptor of the tradition with the added authority to interpret. Lineage or *parampara* bestowed ideological and textual legitimacy to the sectarian leaders (both to the *acaryapurusas* and the *mathadhipatis*). In the practical context, there were four spheres of competitive control, which contributed towards their legitimacy and dominance. The first was the theological sphere, where the leaders had to prove the validity of their ideas through the debates within not only the community but also vis-à-vis other religious traditions. Hagiographical texts refer to many debates, which enhanced the position of the leader/*guru*. The sectarian *guruparamparas* provide several examples of the intellectual superiority of the *guru*. For example, the *Vatakalai Guruparampara* mentioned an instance at Srirangam, where the prominent Srivaisnava *acrayas* could not face a challenge from one *advaitin*. Hence, the Srivaisnavas of Srirangam invited Vedanta Desika from Kancipuram to save them from this predicament. Desika argued effectively with the *advaitin* who later became his disciple.[35]

Secondly, the socio-economic sphere of control was equally important. The predominant feature of the Vijayanagar economy was the appropriation of maximum surplus, which created tensions between the existing and the newly emerging social classes. This can be seen particularly at centers like Kanci, Srirangam, Tirupati and Melkote. Srivaisnava sectarian leaders took advantage of this social tension to increase their body of followers and thus enhanced their position. They with their particular group of followers converged at the temple, which provided the normative and super-ordinate institutional base. Hence, religious ideology and social developments complemented each other, leading to the rise of the sectarian affiliations.

Thirdly, the temple was also a sphere of competitive control. It was the source of ritual legitimation of the authority of new warrior class.[36]The establishment of ritual

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[35] *Vatakalai Muayirappati Guruparamparaprabhavam*, p.68.

[36] Arjun Appadorai, 1981,pp 85-86 Appadorai; Arjun, and Carol A. Breckenridge. 1976. "The South Indian Temple: Authority, Honour and Redistribution." *Contribution to Indian Sociology* 10,2:187-212.

control over a temple through gifts (for rituals and festivals) became an important agency for the enhancement of power and domination of this class. The powerful sectarian leaders were often the intermediaries through whom the warrior class made gifts and in return obtained 'honours' and 'authority'.[37]The *matha* leaders and *acaryapurusas* who were the recipients of these privileges from the ruling class also gained greater control over temple organization and administration. This was the 'redistributive process' at the center of which Visnu was the 'paradigmatic sovereign.'[38]The sectarian control of this redistributive process was the essence of the entire power structure in the temple. Therefore, on the one hand, there developed a two-way relationship between the sectarian leaders and the Vijayanagar rulers and on the other, temples emerged as the power base for the sectarian leaders. Arjun Appadorai points out that an asymmetrical relationship existed between the rulers and the sectarian leaders. While the rulers conferred 'honour' as well as resources to the latter, the latter only rendered honour and not material resources. However, the religious leaders were the vital link between the local population and the new class of rulers, thereby enabling the establishment of authority over the newly conquered areas. Hence, the 'sectarian control of the redistributive capacities of the temples' promoted the efficacy of the faith and enhanced the position of the religious leaders, making them virtually indispensable in the politico-religious system. Caste became secondary in order to accommodate the Telugu warriors in the temple activities. This not only satisfied the religious desires of the donors, but also imparted a universalistic character to an otherwise brahmanical system. The inscriptions on the walls of the temples indicate that donors wished not only to record their donation and hence be remembered by posterity but also to be recognized as a figure of authority ('little kings').[39]

Fourthly, another arena for competition over authority and influence was the administrative affairs of the temple. In almost every festival and ritual, the religious leaders figured prominently as administrators as well as the recipients of the *prasadam*.

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[37]Ibid 99-105

[38]Ibid, pp 88-89

Thus, as the *acaryapurusas* and the heads of *mathas*, the sectarian leaders established religious, political and economic control over the society and legitimized themselves as central figures of the community. The example of the various Srivaisnava families as well as the *matha* organisations discussed in this chapter projected these developments. In fact, the assertion of the identities became so strong, that from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century A.D., the *acaryas* as well as the *mathas* were affiliated to the Bhasyic school of thought (i.e. Sanskrit) and the Prabandhic school of thought (i.e. Tamil) that ultimately crystallized into the dual divisions of the Vaṭakalai and Teṇkalai respectively.

(a) *Individual Śrīvaiṣṇava Families of the Ācāryapuruṣas*

Some religious leaders developed a nexus of power and resources by establishing themselves in various temple centres, thereby acquiring supra-local influence. These leaders made a particular centre their base and their pattern of movement corresponded to the migratory pattern of the political leaders. Some of them received royal patronage and emerged powerful enough to develop an elite clientele. The leading examples are the Tātācāryas and the Kandāḍais, both of whom are today well known *acaryapurusa* families. The Tātācaryas belong to the Vaṭakalai sect with their base at Kāñcīpuram and the Kandāḍais are affiliated to the Teṇkalai sect with their base at Śrīrangam.

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[39] Ibid, pp 103-106

Table 5 Identity Formation of a Śrīvaiṣṇava spiritual Leader

Śrīvaiṣṇavaspiritual Leader

Vaṭakalai

Teṇkalai

Maṭhas *Ācāryapuruṣas*

Svayamācārayas

Maṭhas *Ācāryapuruṣas* *Svayamācārayas*

(Source of Identity)

a)Temple affiliations

b) Geneology

c) Following (mainly
    local /supra-local)

(Source of Identity)

a) Fluid Temple affiliations

b) Geneology

c) Following (mainly supra-
    local)

(Source of Identity)

a) Temple affiliations

b) Geneology

d) c) Following (mainly
    local /supra-local)

(Source of Identity)

a) Fluid Temple affiliation

b) Geneology

c) Following (mainly
   supra-local)

131(a)

1.Tatācāryas .

The Tātācāryas claimed their descent from Periya Nambi (i.e. Tirumalai Nambi) of Tirupati - the maternal uncle and *guru* of Ramanuja. This lineage, traced to the preceptor of Ramanuja attributed to the Tatacaryas an exclusive identity, compared to the other sectarian leaders, who claimed descent from Ramanuja onwards. The idea of a separate independent identity was further reasserted in the *Prapannamrtam* of Anantacarya, which stated that the Tatacaryas were the *pratamacaryas* or the first *ācāryapuruṣas*. This is so because, Venkatesvara himself designated Periya Nambi as the *tata* (i.e. the wise one) and *tola* (i.e. a friend). Hence, Periya Nambi's descendants were called Tatacaryas or Tolappar. [40]

The most significant aspect of the Tatacaryas was their migratory nature. They moved out of Tirupati in different directions and settled in different places under different group names. For example, Tatacaryas of Kancipuram, Patracarya of Kumbhakonam and Tatayyangar of Tirupati reflected this trend. The pattern of migration was related to the availability of royal patronage on which the Tatacaryas depended. For example, after the downfall of the Vijayanagar Empire, the Tatacaryas in the seventeenth century shifted their allegiance to the Wodeyars of Mysore.[41]Hence, by becoming the spiritual preceptors of the political leaders, they acquired the much- needed resources to establish religious control over the temple and the Srivaisnava community.

However, *Prapannamrtam* explained this migratory character as the commitment on the part of the Tatacaryas to spread Srivaisnavism all over South India. In this context, the text narrated an incident of two Tatacarya brothers viz, Ettur Singaracarya his younger brother Sri Rangachari, who came to Hampi from Ettur and introduced Vaisnavism in the Vijayanagar empire which was predominantly Saivaite.[42]By the sixteenth century, the

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[40]Anantacarya was one of the disciples of the Tatacaryas. The text is a biographical account of the Tatacaryas.The date is tentatively around sixteenth century A.D.

[41]See K.V.Raman, 1975,p.92.

[42]According to the legend, King Virupaksa (1467-86 A.D.) had executed all his relatives in order to destroy any opposition. Consequently, the deceased kith and kin turned into ghosts and started haunting the

Tatacaryas had emerged as a powerful Srivaisnava family. One of the descendants of the Etturu brothers, Etturu Lakshmi Kumara Tatacarya wielded influence in the Vijayanagar Empire. He was the royal preceptor of Sriranga and Venkata II. By 1572, he had settled down at Kancipuram and assumed the office of *Srikaryam Durantara* in the Varadarajsvami temple.[43]It has been said that he was so influential that King Venkata I offered him the entire kingdom. According to the *Koil Olugu*, Tatacarya's appointment as the *Srikaryam Durantara* at Kanci was strongly opposed by the *sthanattars*. However, the royal order favoured the Tatacarya, and marginalized the *Sthanattar's* role in the temple administration.[44]

The conduct of the Tatacarya was equivalent to that of the royalty. Like the king, he also performed the *tulabhadra* ceremony. Sanskrit verses were composed in his honour and there are references to him having several wives. He was the recipient of several honours and endowments and himself figured as a major doner. The construction of a huge tanks by the Tatacarya indicatedthe a large amount of resources at his disposal. The position of Kumara Tatacarya was a dominant one. He was the dispenser of several rights and privileges to the other Srivaisnava leaders visiting Kanci. For example, in Tiruppallani in Pandyaamandalam, he granted certain services to Sri Purankusa Tiruppani Pillani.[45]In 1583, Satagoppayyangar of Melkote was allotted a certain amount from the proceeds of the village Nallampillaiperral from which he had to provide certain offerings in the name

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king and his palace. In the meanwhile, two brothers Ettur Singaracarya and Sri Rangacari reached Vijayanagar city in the middle of the night in search of livelihood. They entered the haunted palace and met the ghosts. The latter got to know about the expository skills of these two brothers especially in the *Ramayana*. The recitation was arranged, in the end, the spirits were liberated, and they left the palace. The king was very impressed with the two brothers, and rewarded them. One of them became his spiritual *guru*. Hence, when the king converted from Saivism to Vaisnavism at the instance of the Tatacaryas, his subjects also followed suit. For details, see *Prapannamrtam*, chapters 123 to 126.

[43]The earliest mention of the Tatacaryas at the Varadarajasvami temple at Kanci is in 1535 A.D. (i.e. during Acyutadevaraya's time) Kumara Tatacarya had an agent Ramanuja Tiruppam Pillai who was involved in an agreement over certain land transactions. For details, see, *South Indian Inscriptions*, 1919.

[44]The *Koil Olugu*, p. 142.

[45]413 of 1919

of the Tatacarya at Kanci. The above two instance show that Tatacarya had developed a following among other religious leaders in South India.[46]

The administrative authority of Kumara Tatacarya was not only restricted to Kanci but also included Sriperumbudur and Tirunirmalai. His son Ettur Immadi Tatacarya was the manager of the temple at Sriperumbudur around 1634 A.D. Apart from Kanci, in other temple centres, like Melkote, the influence of Kumara Tatacarya was effected through Srirangaraya, the Vijayanagar ruler, who granted him a village there. The king issued a permanent charter in his name to renew the grant that had become defunct.[47]The Tatacarya was also granted a *desantri* seal. This indicated that he had a major role to play in certain decisions regarding the temple administration.[48]In 1585 A.D. along with other Srivaisnava leaders, he issued an order to the group of fifty-two, which was mainly involved in this temple's administrations, to institute the recital of *Yatiraja Saptati* of Manavala Mamunigal.[49]At Tirupati, the Tatacarya did not have any administrative role. He figured as a donor and was given a share in the temple offerings.

The Vatakalai-Tenkalai schism has attributed a controversial position to the Tatacaryas. Though commonly identified as Vatakalai, there are Tenkalai Tatacaryas also. The epigraphical evidences of the Varadarjasvami Temple do not refer to any sectarian affiliations. On the contrary, the regional affiliations of the Tatacaryas are mentioned. For example, Lakshmi Kumara Tatacarya is referred to as *Etturu Tirumalai Kumara Tatacarya* and *Tirumaliruncolai Kumbhakonam Kumara Tatacarya*. The former denoted the places he hailed from, hence his migratory nature and the latter denoted his sphere of influence, hence his peripatetic nature.

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[46]423 and 427 of 1919

[47]*Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol.VIII, no. 145.

[48]Ibid, no. 146.

[49]Ibid, no. 132.

2.The Kandādai Family

The Kandadai family claims its descent from Mudaliandan, the immediate successor and disciple of Ramanuja. Mudaliandan was one of the seventy-four *simhasanapatis* and was appointed as the superintendent of the temple by Ramanuja, when the latter went on a pilgrimage to the north. According to *Periya Tirumudi Adaivu,* Mudaliandan got the mace of authority from the lord himself and thereafter the temple came under his full control.[50]This legend presets the contestation of authority and control by the Kandadias in the latter period in various temple centres, particularly at Srirangam.[51]The first reference to this family was in 1128 A.D. in the Ranganathasvami temple at Srirangam. However, it was from the fifteenth century that the power of the Kandadai family was on the rise. The most important member of this family was Kandadai Ramanuja Ayyangar who was patronized by Saluva Narasimharaya.

The rise in the power of the Kandadais was simultaneous with creation of *Ramanujakutam* by the Vijayanagar king. Kandadai was appointed as the manager of the *Ramanujakutam* at Tirumala-Tirupati and Srirangam. The control of the administration of the *Ramanujakutam* became an important source of power and authority for the Kandadais.One, it gave him tremendous control over the community. For *Ramanujakutam,* besides being a feeding hall for the pilgrims was a centre of Srivaisnava activities. It was a place where several life-cycle rituals and religious discourses were conducted, thereby providing a space for the community interaction.

Two, through the institution of *Ramanujakutam,* Kandadai Ramanuja Ayyangar was able to gradually marginalize the power of Uttamanambis and Sriranga jiyar *matha* at Srirangam, in the sixteenth century. The presence of the institution at Srirangam, gave the Kandadai several opportunities of itinerant visits, when he donated to the deity and gradually appropriated numerous privileges and acquired a group of followers.[52]The

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[50]N. Jagadeesan, 1977, p. 82

[51]The *Koil Olugu,* pp. 113- 153

[52]Kanadadai Ramanuja Ayyangar was the first member of the family, who moved out of Srirangam and established a base in other temple centers. He is referred to in the inscriptions as well as the

epigraphical evidences point out that from the mid-sixteenth century A.D., the Kandadais were major donors at the temple of Srirangam and the recipients of several shares during important occasions like Sri Jayanti Uriyadttirunal Brahmotsavam and Mahanavami celebrations. Besides Srirangam, Melkote and Kancipuram also witnessed the influence of the Kandadais through the consolidation of *Ramanujakutam*.

Three, Kandadai Ramanuja Ayyangar developed his own group of disciples called the *Sattada Srivaisnavas* who were non-brahmanas and were all involved in the administration of the *Ramanujakutam*.[53]By virtue of their association with the Kandadai, the *Sattadas* received numerous privileges which otherwise do not fit into the Srivaisnava brahmanical world-view. The *Sattadas* recited the *Tiruvaymoli* along with their *brahmana* counterpart and were recipient of the donors share. They were also permitted to be present in the *sanctum sanctorum* at the time of *tirumanjanam* (i.e. divine bath) and participated in the conduct of the rituals.[54]

Four, being the manager of the *Ramanujakutam* gave the Kandadai so much power that he executed his own grant and was the first Srivaisnava to be empowered to distribute the offerings to his disciples, thus overriding the influence of the other temple functionaries who usually apportioned the share of distribution. Even the *sthanattars* were made to accept all his proposals.[55]Kandadai Ramanuja constructed a temple for

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hagiographical texts as the disciple of Alagiyamanavala Jiyar and is attributed with pilgrimage to all the one hundred and eight centres or *divyadesas*

[53]The *sattadas* served their *guru by* carrying his endowments to the temple daily at the time of the *Alagappiranar Tirumanjanam* and offered them to the deity.

[54]As stated earlier, the *sattadas* never became the head of the *Ramanujakutam* who was invariably a *brahmana* like Kumara Ramanujayyangar and Kandadai Madhvay yangar. Infact, after the death of the Kandadais, the privileges of the *sattadas* were discontinued.

[55]According to T.K.T. Viraraghavacari, from 1467 to 1470 A.D., the maximum control by Kandadai Ramanuja Ayyangar was due to Saluva Narasimha's engagements in the military preparations near Masulipattnam. Hence, it could have been only by a show of his (i.e. Kandadai's) influence that the *sthanattar* and others were made to accept all the arrangements proposed by the Kandadai. See T.K.T. Viraraghavachari, 19, pg. 481.

3. The Uttamanambis

According to the *Uttamanambi Vamsaprabhavam*, the Uttamanambis were the descendants of Periyalvar who migrated from Srivilliputtur to Srirangam. Periyalvar's grandson was one Pillai Aiyan Uttamanambi, the earliest in the family to have the title.[61] Hence, by tracing their lineage to an Alvar, and not to Ramanuja, the Uttamanambis projected an exclusive lineage with an independent identity. According to the *Koil Olugu*, the Uttamanambis have been one of the most ancient families at Srirangam. By the sixteenth century, there were more than seventy-three generations of them managing the temple.[62]Unlike the Tatacaryas and the Kandadais, they were not peripatetic in nature.

The rising power of the Uttamanambis is first evident in 1413 A.D. (i.e. during Vira Bhupati's time) when the entire management of the temple festivals was entrusted to them. The concerned inscriptions convey a royal order, which enjoined that there should be no official participation in the management of these festivals. Therefore, it was evident that the temple control was from now onwards to be in the hands of the Srivaisnava leaders.[63]From the time of the Uttamanambis, Sri Ranganthasvami temple gained prominence and recorded a large number of donations from the royalty, the benefactors of which were the Uttamanambis.[64]In 1423 A.D. (i.e. during Devaraya's time), Uttamanambis became the *sthanika* of the temple. They had become so powerful, that on the behalf, of Sriranganarayana Jiyar, they received lands in four villages, viz., Sundakkayil, Govattakkundi, Todaiyur and Karugdilam. The incomes from these lands were utilized for a service instituted in the name of Devaraya Maharaya. In return, the

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[61]N. Jagadeesan, 1977, p. 64

[62]See the *Koil Olugu*, pp. 136-189 on a detailed account of the activities of the Uttamanambis at the Ranganathasvami temple in Srirangam. The seventy-fourth Uttamananbi is said to have been Garudavahana Pandita,the author of the *Divyasuricaritam* and in-charge of the Dhanvantri shrine.

[63]South Indian Inscriptions, Vol. XXIV, No. 370 and 408.

[64]Ibid, No. 372 and 413, 414, 415.

king made the Uttamanambi and his brother, the *Karttas* of the temple, exempting them from the payments of *jodi* on the granted lands.[65]

The *Koil Olugu* ascribes to the Uttamanambis, the role of the representative of the Srirangam temple to the Vijayanagar court.[66]They also actively participated in the affairs of the temple and authorized important decisions independently. For example, the seventy-ninth Uttamanambi, Krsnaraya (1317 A.D.) settled a boundary dispute between the Saivas of Tiruvanaikka and the Srivaisnavas of Srirangam.[67] Further, the *Koil Olugu* attributes the role of the mediator to the Uttamanambis, during the conflicts between various groups in the temple, mainly, Sriranganayarayan Jiyar, the Kandadai and the Bhattars.[68]Very often, the Uttamanambis themselves tried to appropriate power and privileges, which led to several tensons. Srirangacarya II, is supposed to have clashed with a certain Bhattar Tirumalacari at the Ranganathasvami temple. The Uttamanabi interfered in the domestic matters of the Bhattar, by insisting that the Bahttar's childless daughter should adopt his children, thereby clearly wishing to consolidate the temple privileges enjoyed by the Bhattar in the temple.[69]

Not much is known about the Uttamanambis from the mid-fifteenth century A.D. It is obvious that they had lost their importance. According to the *Olugu*, one of the latter Uttamanambi, Periya Krsnaraya became the follower of the descendants of the Periyanambi *matha*.[70]In the *Peryia Tirumudi Adaivu*, the Uttamanabis are referred to as

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[65]Ibid, No. 414 and 415.

[66]The *Koil Olugu*, pp.122-142.

[67]Ibid, p.130.The dispute arose because a procession of Vishnu coming from the Kaveri had to cut across Siva's territory at Tiruvanaikka to which the latter temple objected.

[68]Ibid, p.142.

[69]Ibid, pp. 178-179.

[70]Ibid, p.152.

the disciples of the Kandadais.[71]Therefore, the Uttamanabis appear to have lost their independent identity as the religious leaders.

(b) The Matha Affiliations

One encounters greater ambiguity regarding the nature of the matha organization and its head - the *jīyars*. The sources present a complex picture of the matha, a term which is used not merely for an episcopal monastic organisation. Rather it is used somewhat indiscriminately for various types of small and big organisations including the monastic one. Here it is virtually impossible to draw a linear progression in the development of the mathas.[72]Before the period of Ramanuja, i.e. in the eleventh century A.D. references at Tirupati, Srirangam and Tirukkovalur to the matha seem to refer to a physical space within the temple where the Srivaisnavas were fed or lived. Donations were made for this purpose and the matha was named after the donor, like the Kadavaraya matha and the Madurantaka matha at Srirangam, the Pallavarayan matha at Tirupati and Chitrameli matha at Tirukkovalur. These mathas did not have a head. During Ramanuja's period, epigraphical reference to the matha is absent. However, the hagiographical sources mention Ramanuja as the head of a Ceran matha at Srirangam.[73]It is only from the fourteenth century A.D. onwards, that the epigraphical references to mathas point towards an institutional organization with a hierarchy of religious functionaries with a *jiyar* as the head having a large number of disciples. For instance, the Peryajiyyangar matha at Tirupati had *ekaki* Srivaisnavas and *kaikkolas* as the servants of the matha. Therefore, one can conclude that initially matha was loosely structured and hence was a mere physical space within the precincts of the temple. In the Vijayanavar period, this physical space was transformed into a concrete institutional organization with a well-structured lineage.

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[71]N.Jagadeesan. 1977, p.112

[72]The concept of a matha as a structural space with an organized hierarchy and genealogy is attributed to Sankara who is supposed to have established mathas in four different places, viz, Dvarka, Badrinatha, Puri and Kanci.

[73]The *Koil Olugu*, p. 148

Most of these *matha* claimed their descent from Vedanta Desika and Manavala Mamunigal, thereby allying themselves with the Sanskritic (i.e. Vedanta Desika) and the Tamil (i.e. Manavala Mamunigal) tradition. Interestingly, at Srirangam, there were *mathas*, which belonged to both the lineages. Tirupati and Melkote, although located in the northern areas had *mathas* belonging to the Tamil tradition only. Both these *mathas* in their respective *guruparamparas* claimed descent from Ramanuja, a fact which none of the hagiographical texts mention. In fact, in these texts, the foundation of any *matha* was not attributed to Ramanuja at all.

Associated with the institution of the *matha* has been its leadership. According to the *matha parampara*, the head of a *matha* was called a *jiyar* who was an ascetic. However, from the epigraphical evidences, it appears that not all jiyars were heads of the *mathas*. A large number of them were associated with the management of a flower garden or a particular shrine within the temple. Some of them were also the preceptors of a *nayaka* or an elite Srivaisnava devotee. Therefore, the term *jiyar* need not indicate a *mathadhipati*. Similarly, not all jiyars were necessarily ascetics as has been commonly perceived. In fact, the hagiographical tradition itself refers to names with *jiyar* suffixes in the group of seventy-four *simhasanapatis* who were supposed to be householders.[74] Therefore, it was possible that *jiyar* was used as an honorific title and assumed specific meanings depending upon the context with which it was associated.

However, the head of the *matha* from the late thirteenth century onwards was a *jiyar*, who was initially a householder but became a renunciate while assuming the leadership of the institution.[75] Unlike the *advaitin sanyasin*, the Srivaisnava ascetic did not renounce his sacred thread or the tuft of the hair. He possessed a three stick staff instead of the usual one stick one; and was referred to as the *tridandin*. Thus, the symbols of brahmanical association were important for a Srivaisnava *jiya*, despite renouncing all the worldly ties. The *matha guruparamaparas* give details about the

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[74]This information was collected in the course of numerous visits to several Srivaisnava *mathas* in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesha.

[75]The concept of a *sanyasin*, a renouncer is vital to Srivaisnavism and established the supremacy of the personality. Ramanuja and the subsequent heads of the community became renouncers.

initiation rites of a newly designated *mathadhipati*. Known as *pattabhisekam, which* literally means "coronation" to the episcopal throne, it involved a series of rituals with the entire community participating. This resembled the coronation of a political leader.[76]Thus, the *matha* head emerged as a powerful personality in the Vijayanagar period with an impressive hierarchical organisation as well as networks of interaction and control.

Compared to the *acaryapurusas*, the *mathas* have been the more crucial factor in the sectarian identity of the community. As a powerful institution within the larger community structure of the temple, the *mathas* were either a competitive unit *vis-à-vis* the temple authorities or participated along with them in various transaction. Very often, they came into conflict with other groups in the temple like the *acaryapurusas* over the control of resources. The social base of a *matha* was determined by it being attached to a temple in some form or the other. Some *mathas* were associated with a single temple and hence were localized and became the controllers of the administration of that temple. The Periya Jiyar *matha* and the Cinna Jiyar *matha* at Tirupati belong to this category. Other *mathas* made a particular temple their base drew supporters from all over South India and then became involved in numerous ways in the temples' transactions of other places. The Van Sathagopa Jiyar *matha* at Ahobilam belonged to this category. This is in contrast to the *acaryapurusas*, whose temple base was either not strong or not very long lasting. In major temple centers, one finds, one family of *acaryapurusas* being marginalized and the rising importance of another. For example, the Uttamanambis gave way to the Kandadai group at Srirangam in the sixteenth century A.D.At Tirupati, the influence of the Kandadais waned after the sixteenth century, when the *Vaidika brahmanas* became prominent.

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[76]In today's context, *pattabhisekam* begins with the presentation of temple honours like `sathari', tirtham, parivattam, candanakappu and tiruman* to the candidate and then carrying him around the temple accompanied by the chanting of the Vedas and *Prabandham*. At each of the shrines of the temple, the candidate is honoured and the new name is loudly proclaimed. The consecration consists of devotees showering the candidate with flowers and rice, thus consecrating him to the throne, *simhasana* from which he will rule. After sitting on the throne, he is honoured by each of the dignitaries representing the major Srivaisnava temples. He gives them a gift of turmeric rice and a *mantra*. Even the devotees get similar gifts.

Therefore, as the core of all the sectarian activities, the *mathas* emerged as the most important institution of the Srivaisnava community in the post-Ramanuja period, particularly from the fourteenth century onwards. Even today, despite being classified as Vatakalai and Tenkalai, *mathas* have remained distinct and have retained their own sets of traditions and lineages. For instance, the followers of Ahobila *matha* celebrate Janmashtami, a day later than the followers of the Andavan *ashram*, although both belong to the Vatakalai sects.

Today, there are approximately twelve *mathas* in Srivaisnavism, which belong to either the Vatakalai or Tenkalai sect. The Vatakalai *mathas* are Ahobila Jiyar *matha* at Ahobila,in Andhra Pradesh, Brahmatantra Parakala *matha*. in Karnataka and Andavan *asrama* at Srirangam in Tamil Nadu. The Tenkalai *mathas* are, the Periya and Cinna jiyar *matha* at Tirupati and Tirumala in Andhra Pradesha; Sri Yadugiri Yatiraja Jiyar *matha* at Melkote in Karnataka; Sriranganarayana Jiyar *matha* at Srirangam, Yatiraja *matha* at Sriperumbudur; Emperumanar Jiyar *matha* at Tirukkovalur, Udaiyavar Koil Jiyar *matha* at Alvar Tirunagari, Vanamamalai Jiyar *matha* at Nanguneri and Sri Perarulala Yatiraja Ramanuja Jiyar *matha* at Tirukkurungudi – all in Tamil Nadu.

Among the *mathas*, it is the Adi Van Sathagopa Jiyar *matha* and the Brahmatantra Parakala *matha,* which developed alternative bases at various temple centers. Popularly known as the Ahobila *matha*, the Van Sathagopa Jiyar *matha* created another base at Tirupati, while retaining the one at Ahobila. It had a large Telugu and Tamil following. The *matha* also developed another base in the Varadarajasvami temple at Kancipuram. Probably, both the Tirupati and the Kanci *mathas* were the branch *mathas*. At Kanci, the Van Sathagopa Jiyar had the important privilege of reciting the *Kausika Purana*.[77]In 1509 A.D., there was a land grant in a village named Van Sathagopapuram by a certain Appaya Pillai, to whom the Jiyar had originally granted the land. Narayana Jiyar and Parankusa Jiyar who made provisions for certain festivals in 1559 A.D., in which they figured prominently, succeeded him.[78]

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[77]373 of 1919

[78]374 of 1919

At the foothills of Tirumala, opposite the Govindarajaperumal temple, there is a collateral branch of the Ahobila *matha*. According to inscriptions and the *Sannidha Guruparamapara*, the fourth Adi Van Sathagopa Jiyar established a *matha* at Tirumala in 1506 A.D.[79]The epigraphical evidence refers to the *ekaki* Srivaisnavas as managing the *matha* and receiving the donors share. The *jiyar* was attributed with the propagation of Srivaisnavism during his stay at Tirupati and developed a group of disciples who made endowments to the temples. Around 1525 A.D., the members of the *matha* made some offerings at the Van Sathagopam Mantapam in Tirupati. The representatives of the donor made the grants in the name of the *jiyar*. Therefore, the Ahobila *matha* by establishing a network of interaction with Tirupati, was trying to integrate the regional Telugu Srivaisnavas with the main structure as well as enhance their social base which was perhaps difficult from the isolated hilly area of Ahobilam. The *Sannidha Guruparamapara* attached importance to Tirupati by associating the activities of all the *jiyars* with the temple. Similarly, Kancipuram also was highlighted as the centre of the *matha activities*. Hence, this peripatetic nature attributed to the *jiyars* was associated with their enthusiasm to spread the faith.

The Brahmatantra Parakala *matha* had a different history. It did not create any alternative base but instead migrated to other temple centers. The epigraphical evidence refers to the establishment of the *matha* in Varadarajasvami temple at Kanci around 1360 A.D. when a certain Brahmatantrasvatantra *jiyar* was granted a *matha* and some lands. The inscription interestingly refers to an order issued by the deity of the temple, Varadaraja himself on the request of the temple authorities *(Bhattas)*, stating the purpose of establishing the *matha*. 'It would contain the books that he had accumulated and propagate here, "Ramanuja – *darsanam*" or the philosophy of Ramanuja, after him the disciples in succession would take the possession of the *matha* and continue the work.'[80]From Kanci, the *matha* shifted its base to Tirupati and finally to Mysore. The *matha guruparampara* provided the following reason:

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[79]Tirumala Tirupati Devathanam Epigraphical Series, Vol III, Nos. 275 and 276

[80]574 of 1919.

> Moreover, there was no long the need felt for a continuous stay in Tamil land, which had been the home of ever-ranging religious controversies between the various schools of thought like Dvaita, Advaita and Visistadvaita etc.[81]

Further, it stated that Tirupati being away from the controversies and worries of patronage was the right place for the *matha*. From the *guruparamapara*, one can conclude that Kanci had emerged as the center of intellectual debates, where the Brahmatantra Jiyar found it difficult to establish himself. Lack of patronage may have prompted him to shift to Tirupati, which was fast developing as a major center of Srivaisnavism. However, at Tirupati, one does not find any record of the *matha*, indicating its failure to get any patronage. The *matha parampara* stated that Maharaja Yaduraya Wodeyar in 1399 A.D., a devout follower of Srivaisnavism needed a responsible person for the management of the shrine at Melkote. Thereafter, the deity of Venkatesvara at Tirupati appeared in the *jiyar's* dream and asked him to take up the responsibility. Hence, the *matha* shifted and finally established itself in Mysore.[82] The constant shifting of the Brahmatantra Paraakala *matha* provided an interesting connection between the patronage and the Srivaisnava sectarian leaders. With the establishment of the Vijayanagar Empire, and constant movement of the Telugu warriors, the religious leaders also shifted their base and tried to establish themselves in those temple centers, which attracted a lot of patronage. Srirangam and Kancipuram were already well established centers and Tirupati emerged as a major center of pilgrimage due to its patronage by the Vijayanagar rulers.

Associated with the peripatetic and migratory characteristics of the Srivaisnava *mathas* and their leaders was the concept of the *desantri*.[83] The term implies an immigrant, i.e. somebody who does not belong to that particular area. Most of these *desantris* were powerful individuals who wielded a lot of influence over the royalty and consequently received privileges due to the royal patronage and established *matha* with a

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[81]N. Rangachari, 1919, p. 11.

[82]N.Rangachari, 1919, p. 13.

[83] This concept of *desantri* also applies to the Srivaisnava *acaryapurusas*. However, in the case of the *mathas,* a discussion becomes essential, as the most prominent ones were all *desantris.*

well-organized lineage. The *desantri mudre*, a seal that legitimized power and privileges was stated to be important for laying claims in the temples.[84]In other words, the *desantri mudre* became the source of authority for the *matha* and its leaders.

From the hagiographical sources and the *matha parampara* it can be observed that the assertion of the authority by a *desantri* was always met with a lot of opposition from the other Srivaisnava groups present within the temple. Interestingly, Ramanuja was also supposed to be a *desantri*. According to the *Koil Olugu*, Ramanuja came to the temple of Ranganathasvami at Srirangam and became the head of a certain Ceran *matha*. By the virtue of being the head of the *matha*, he also became the *Srikaryam* of the temple.[85] The *Olugu* cites an instance, when Ramanuja faced opposition from the pre-existing groups, who went to the extent of poisoning him.[86]Similar instances are cited in the case of Kuranarayana Jiyar who became the head of the Sriranganarayana Jiyar Adina *matha* in the temple during the thirteenth century. In fact, the establishment of the *matha* was met with a lot of opposition from the Kandadai group.[87]

The epigraphical references at Melkote and Tirupati indicate the *mathas* and their leaders to be *desantris*. In Melkote, at Narayansvami temple, during 1458 A.D., a *desantri matha* called the Ranga *matha* was established with the donation of a *mahapradhana*.[88] The initial purpose of the *matha* was to conduct the feeding to the devotees. The head of the *matha* was a certain Vedanti Ramanuja Jiyya – a disciple of Kandadai Anna of Sriranga and the preceptor of the *nayaka*, who had appointed him.

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[84]According to the *Koil Olugu*, the *Anjaneya mudra* that was desantri was the most superior one in the temple and gave extensive and exclusive privileges to the peripatetic leaders. See the *Koil Olugu,*_pp. 164-171.

[85]The *Koil Olugu,* pp 43-45. The Ceran *Matha* was also an important space for conducting various transactions. Ramanuja from this *matha* granted various privileges.

[86]The *Koil Olugu,* p.45

[87]The *Olugu* states that the devotees of the temple were very keen for an installation of the *matha* in name of the Kuranrayana Jiyar but Kandadai Tolappar who was the *Senapati Durantara* brushed the idea aside. Finally, the Cola rules intervened and "assigned to the *Jiyar,* the *matha* of Udayavar, the Udayavar seal and the ring of the sacred conch." See the *Koil Olugu,*_pp.115-129.

[88]E.C. Volume VIII, NO. 129

Subsequently, the *matha* came to be known as the Vedanti Ramanuja Jiyya *matha*. [89]From the inscriptions, the power and the authority of the *jiyar* is discerned He was to collect all the income from the villages and lands belonging to the *matha* and was responsible for its maintenance. In 1544 A.D., the fifty-two of the temple who were previously independent administrators seem to have become a part of the *matha*.[90] The reference to the disciples of Vedanti Ramanuja Jiyya indicates the presence of a well-developed lineage of the *matha*.[91]

Similarly, at Tirupati, the Jiyar *matham* that figured prominently in the inscriptions also was a *desantri matha*.[92] The *matha* was established by the Yadavaraya feudatory chief Immadi Rahuttarayan Madappan-Singaya-Dannayakkar, who installed the *desantris* as the manager of the *mathas*. [93] It was also stipulated that the *sthanattar* was to appoint a *desantri* for the service in the temple. Interestingly, the inscriptions record a '*desantri* custom', according to which the newly appointed Jiyar had to pay a sum of 400 *panam*, into the *Sri-Bhandaram* as the capital towards offerings, 'for his being enable to utilise the living settled for him.'[94] In course of time, the *desantris* who managed the *matha* became so powerful that they also acquired the right to manage two important *nandavanams* (i.e. the flower gardens) viz., Arisanalayan-*nandavanam* and Vanasathagopan-*nandavanam* at Tirumala. As *jiyars* of the *matha* they also appear to have gained considerable influence in the temple affairs especially those relating to the conduct of the *asthanams* on festive occasions and to the admission of articles of provision into the temple with the permission of *jiyars* (*Jiyar-eluttitta-pravesa-sittu*).

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[89]E.C. Volume VIII. No. 197.

[90]Ibid, Nos. 129, 130, 131, 132.

[91]Ibid, Nos. 129 and 130

[92]*Tirupati Tirumala Devasthanam Epigraphical Series,* Vol, 354 T.T.

[93]Along with the *matha* the two flower gardens were also established. From the inscriptions, it is clear that the *Jiyar matham* had two branches at Tirumala and Tirupati, which later on were known as the Pedda Jiyangaru *matha* and the Cinna Jiyangaru *matha*. The same inscription (i.e. 354 T.T.) refers to certain offerings required to be made to the processional images in the two gardens . It also registers some arrangements pertaining to the management of the *matha*.

[94]Ibid.

The *mathaparamparas* of both the Emperumanar Jiyar *matha* at Tirukkovalur and Vanamamalai *matha* at Nanguneri did not refer specifically to the heads as *desantris*. However, since the founders of the *mathas* came from regions outside Tirukkoalur and Naguneri, the *desantri* origin was inevitable. Both these *mathas* appeared to have a link with the temple at Tirumala-Tirupati. A panel on the wall of the *matha* at Tirukkovatur depicted a certain Srivaisnava *acarya* giving *diksa* (initiation) to the first *jiyar* of the *matha*. The *acarya* is said to have come from Tirupati.[95] Similarly, the first *jiyar* of the Vanamamalai *matha* was assocaited with the jiyar *matham* at Tirumala-Tirupati. According to the tradition, he first accepted the *asramam* of the *sanyasin* at Tirupati, at the hands of his *guru* Ramanuja Jiyar, the head of the *matha* during Krsnadevaraya's time. Vanamamalai Jiyar then moved southwards to Sri Varamangai or modern Nanguneri and established a *matha* there. Finally, he returned to Tirupati and spent his last days in the service of this temple.[96]

These associations with Tirupati of these two mathas indicated the influence of the former in the Srivaisnava institutional network from the fourteenth century onwards. Similarly, Srirangam and Kancipuram also became the focus of the institutional structure and sectarian affiliations, which further determined the *matha* associations with either the Sanskritic or the Tamil tradition. The identity of the Srivaisnavas was determined largely by the developments at these three temple centres. Hence, the Ranganathaswami temple at Srirangam, the Varadarajasvami temple at Kancipuram and the Venkatesvarasvami temple at Tirumala-Tirupati contributed significantly to the evolution and consolidation of the multiple identities of the Srivaisnava community.

The Srivaisnava religious leaders were the main contributors to this multiple identity formation. The pattern of their movement determined their influence over the

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[95]The present matha head at Tirukkovalur gave this information to me. It is hard to get any authentic evidence on the *matha* organisation at Tirukkovalur. The present *matha* probably evolved by the end of the fourteenth century A.D Situated in the Tondaimandalam region, the temple attracted patronage from the mercantile community of Kancipuram in the fourteenth-fifteenth century. By Sadasiva Maharaya's time, [1530-42 A.D], the administration of the temple was controlled by the Emperu manar *matha*. See ARE 342, 344, 345, 346, 348, 351, 355, 356 and 357 of 1900.

[96]S. Subrahmanya Sastri, *Report on the Inscriptions of the Devasthanam Collection with Illustration. Vol. VII.* Delhi, 1984, pp. 93-95.

community of that particular area and the subsequent interaction with the mainstream Srivaisnavism. For instance, the Kandadais with their distinct non-brahmmanical following were administratively powerful at Srirangam and Tirupati – the centres of the Prabandhic School. They were prominent at Kanci, - the centre of the Bhasyic school but did not have any administrative control. Similarly, the Tatacaryas administratively prominently at Kanci, but at Tirupati and Srirangam they were mere donors without any administrative control. Thus, the Tamil and the Sanskritic base of both the Kandadais and Tatacaryas were obvious. Van Sathakopa Jiyar *matha* had a strong base at Kanci and Tirupati but not at Srirangam. Hence, it remained distinctly northern in its approach, despite the *mathaparampara* reiterating that the *jiyars* took pilgrimage to the southern part, i.e. Alvar Tirunagari and Nanguneri. Such a projection accorded a supra-local broad status to the leader. Similar duality between the text and the practice is visible in the Brahmatantra Parakala *matha*, which remained distinctly northern in its approach. The southernmost Srivaisnava centres like Alvar Tirunagari, Nanguneri and Tirukkurungudi however remained distinct in their southern identity. The textual traditions established a distinct connection between these centres and Srirangam. Hence, the notional dualism between the Tamil and Sanskritic tradition became the basis for the sectarian affiliations that later crystallized into the Vatakalai and Tenkalai sub-castes.

(iii) The Institutional Affiliations: The Temples

By the end of the thirteenth century A.D., Srivaisnavism emerged as an organized religious community. From this time onwards, the dominance of various religious leaders in the different temple centres also became prominent. Therefore, the temple emerged as an arena, where patronage, power and religiosity converged and enhanced the importance of the religious leaders as well as the centre itself. In fact, the complexity and competition for control over resources within a single temple centre or over a group of temples in a region or beyond was a characteristic feature among the sectarian leaders during this period. As a centre of community activity and community interaction, temples emerged as important institutions, association with which had significant ramifications. Therefore, the nature of association with a temple centre, had an influence on the identity formation of a Srivaisnava. The Narayanasvami at Melkote and Narasimhasvami temple

at Ahobilam drew local patronage and therefore, fostered the regional identity. The Varadarajasvami temple at Kancipuram, the Ranganathasvami temple at Srirangam and the Venkatesvarasvami temple at Tirupati became the focus of the community across the local and supra local boundaries, thereby fostering macro level identities. In this section, these centres are taken up for the analysis and an attempt is made to determine the local and supra-local influence of individual sectarian leaders and *acaryapurusas vis-à-vis* the temples in fostering the community identity.[97]

(a)   Mēlkōṭe and Ahobilam

The temple centres at Melkote and Ahobilam indicate the development of a strong regional identity within Srivaisnavism. The local Srivaisnavas community rallied around these temples. Additionally, the local chieflyl patronage and the presence of local sectarian leaders contributed towards the further regionalization of the temple and thus the community. Furthermore, the language of the inscriptions was either Kannada or Telugu respectively, thereby linking the development of regional identity to the use of the vernacular.[98]

1. Mēlkōṭe:

Situated in the Mandya district of Karnataka, Melkote emerges in the hagiographical sources as an area developed by Ramanuja while in exile escaping the persecution of the Cola ruler in the twelfth century A.D. Ramanuja went to Karnataka through Tondanur and Saligrama and finally established the Narayanasvami temple at Melkote. Ramanuja's sojourn brought this part of Karnataka, which was initially populated by the Jainas within

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[97]Numerous Srivaisnava texts of theological importance have been written in Kannada and Telugu. Despite their vernacular identity, they do relate to the main Srivaisnava context.

[98]Ramanuja is also supposed to have defeated the Jainas in a series of intellectual debates. However, there are several versions of this account. According to *Arayirappati Guruparamparaprabhavam*, the defeated Jainas voluntarily converted to Srivaisnavism. As per *Ramanuja Divyasuricaritai*, the Hoysala ruler Visnuvardhana after his conversion grounded the Jainas in the stone mills. The *Vatakalai Muayirappati* states that the Jainas themselves offered to be ground in the stone mills. However, Ramanuja intervened on their behalf and requested the king to spare them *Yatiraja Vaibhava* states that the Jainas had their bodies bruised, probably implying persecution.

the ambit of Srivaisnavism.[99]The presence of the Hoysalas at Srirangam around twelfth-thirteenth century A.D. further integrated Melkote within Srivaisnava institutional network, thereby broadening the community network of Srivaisnavism.By the fourteenth century A.D., the legend of Ramanuja's visit to Melkote had become popular and enhanced the temple's importance in the local as well as supra-local Srivaisnava organizational network.[100]Like in other temple centres, Ramanuja was the source of legitimacy and credibility for the temple organization, rituals and festivals of Melkote. For example, the temple functionaries i.e. - the group of fifty-two as well as the *matha* itself traced their lineage through their respective association with Ramanuja. Although, theoretically Melkote related itself to mainstream Srivaisnavia identity through its association with Ramanuja, in practice, it developed as a regional centre, with a distinct regional community called the *Mandya Srivaisnavas*. The regional character of Melkote was further highlighted through the local patronage of the Kannada *nayakas*. By the seventeenth century, the Wodeyars of Mysore had become its major patron.

Apart from the local patronage, sectarian *paramparas* also contributed to the emergence of Melkote as an important Srivaisnava centre. The Tenkalai *guruparamparas* state that Nanjiyar, the Tenkalai *acarya* was from Tirunarayanapuram, i.e. Melkote. Similarly, the first *jiyar* of Van Sathakopa *jiyar matha* of Ahobilam was also supposed to be from Melkote. Hence, Melkote was an important place for the Srivaisnavas, as it was the native place of some of their *acaryas*. The epigraphical evidences refer to sectarian leaders of Kannada origin who figured as prominent independent donors without having any direct association with the temple activities. There are also references to sectarian leaders of Tamil origins who gradually were localized in Karnataka (see Table Five for the details on the sectarian leaders).

Within the temple, the pattern of control and domination was extremely complex and involved other Srivaisnava groups apart from the individual sectarian leaders. Till

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[99]The epigrahical evidences of the fourteenth century already reflect the contribution of Ramanuja towards Melkote in their introductory part (i.e. the *prasasti*).

[100]Most of the inscriptions refer to the fifty-two as the 'establishers of the philosophy of Ramanuja, first disciples. Ramanujacarya' *Epigraphia Carnatica*, Vol VIII, no. 134, 140 and so on.

the sixteenth century A.D., it was the group of fifty-two who monopolized the entire temple administration. According to the tradition, Ramanuja during his visit to Melkōte in the twelfth century A.D delegated them the duty to look after the temple. By the time Vijayanagar Empire was established, they had already emerged as an independent establishment. Information regarding their social background is not available. However, based on the inscriptional evidence about their administrative functions one may conclude that they were possibly local Srivaisnava *brahmanas* specific to Melkote only. However, according to the tradition, these Fifty-two were non-*Brahmanas* installed by Ramanuja to carry on the administration of Melkote. The Tirukkurungudi *sthalapuranas* states that some of them who became the part of the fifty-two migrated from Tirukkurungudi on Ramanuja's request.

From the sixteenth century onwards, the temple administration appeared to be in the hands of two *matha* organisations, viz. the Vedanti Ramanuja Jiyya *matha* and Ranga *matha*. The group of fifty-two also seemed to have been associated with the Vedanti Ramanuja Jiyya *matha* thereby indicating that it had lost its independent identity in the sixteenth century. These two *mathas* exercised influence and created loyalties and affiliations not only within the temple but also within the Srivaisnava community in Karnataka. The temple was not only an arena of competitive and conflicting interests, it also provided occasions for corporate activities and concerted measures amongst the Srivaisnava groups. For example the endorsement of the regular recitation of the *Yatiraj Saptati* in 1574 A.D. and the ratification of Kumara Tirumala Tatacarya, the preceptor of Srirangadeva-*maharaya* with a seal and certain honours, involved the fifty-two, *acaryapurusas*, jiyars and the other Srivaisnavas.

The importance of Melkote and the Narayanasvami temple was considerable in Kannada society and politics. In the nineteenth century, the temple became a focus for several local *acaryapurusas* and the Brahmatantra Parakala *matha* which had shifted to Mysore from Tirupati. The Wodeyars despite their Saiva leanings patronized the temple

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at Melkote and took active interest in its affairs.[101]In the late nineteenth century, Tipu Sultan granted to the deities of Tirunarayanasvami and Narsimhasvami twelve elephants.[102]

2. Ahobilam

From the fourteenth century onwards, the Narasimhasvami temple at Ahobilam emerged as the focus of the Telugu Srivaisnava identity. Its rise was associated with the rising importance of the local Telugu *nayaka* chiefs who were the major patrons of the temple. Interestingly, the epigraphical evidence does not refer to contending Srivaisnava groups. Right from the fifteenth century onwards, the Van Sathagopa Jiyar *matha* was in complete control of the temple administration. However, the *matha* was not the recipient of any direct endowments that were focussed towards the main shrine. The direct patronage to the *matha* came from its interaction with the Srivaisnava community at Tirumala-Tirupati where it had established a strong base in the fifteenth century. Although the Narasimhasvami temple at Ahobilam was the primary institutional base of the *matha*, it was never involved in the *mathas* activities at Tirupati *vis-à-vis* the larger community network. Hence, the temple largely remained the centre for regional/Telugu Srivaisnava identity.

Although, the textual tradition attach importance to the centre at Ahobilam, the epigraphical evidence point towards another Srivaisnava centre of regional (Telugu) character - the Lakshmi Narasimhasvami temple at Simhacalam. The hagiographies mention that Ramanuja briefly visited Simhacalams. Irrespective of that appears to have been a strong Srivaisnava community there from the mid-thirteenth century (i.e. the time of Eastern Gangas), much before the rise of Ahobilam. The network of interaction of

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[101]The *Vairamudi* festival celebrated every year in April is conducted under the auspices of the Wodeyars. The *Vairamudi* is a crown made up of black uncut diamonds and throughout the year is kept in the Mysore Palace of the Wodeyars. Just before the festival begins, it is brought to Melkote.

[102]*Epigraphia Carnatica* Vol VIII, No.197

the temple was wider than that of Narasimhasvami *Koil*. Pilgrims came from distant places like Quilon, the Kanarese country and the Kannad *desa*.[103]

(iii) Kāñcīpuram, Śrīrangam and Tirupatis

The temple centres at Kanci, Srirangam and Tirupati developed into strong local bases for the sectarian leaders and their institutional organisations and drew numerous followers from all over South India. The importance of Kanci, Srirangam and Tirupati lies in their Cankam and Prabadhic lineage that betowed them a Tamil antiquity. Furthermore, Ramanuja operated primarily in these centres. Therefore, association with these temple centres provided a strong institutional base and legitimized the sectarian leaders. These three centres, from the time of Vijayanagar period emerged as the source of the network of control that spread and crossed the Tamil as well as the South Indian border. Important Srivaisnava families like the Tatacaryas, Kandadais and Van Sathagopa Jiyar developed their power base in all the three centres. Consequently, these centres witnessed interaction as well as contradiction between numerous *acaryapurusas* and *jiyars*

Of particular importance were the temples of Ranganathasvami at Srirangam and Varadarajasvami at Kancipuram. These two centres were significant for the larger community consciousness as well as for the sectarian identity. On one hand, the biographical accounts of Ramanuja's association with these centres represented a uniform community on the other, the narratives regarding the association of Vedanta Desika and Manavala Mamuni with these centres emerged as the predominant theme of the sectarian hagiographies. Finally, the contestation over power and resources which led to the polarization of the community into the Vatakalai and Tenkalai also got associated with these two centres. Srirangam emerged as the Tenkalai institutional base and Kanci as the Vatakalai institutional base. Clearly then, the concept of uniformity was a theoretical/textual construct. The presentation of the *acaryic* lineage in the texts from Ramanuja, in a continuous linear manner makes it difficult to segregate uniformity from sectarianism.

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[103]241, 275, 282 and 293 of 1889

1. Kāñcīpuram

Political patronage of the Vijayanagar rulers was crucial for the emergence of the Varadarajasvami temple as an arena for religious control.[104]In1533 A.D., Acyutadevaraya performed the *mukta-tulabhara* ceremony at the temple along with his wife and made numerous gifts to the Srivaisnava *brahmans*.[105]In the same year soon after his coronation, the king ordered his minister Saluva Nayaka to grant villages of equal worth to the temple of Varadaraja and Ekambranatha.However, the latter gave more lands to the Ekambranatha temple. On hearing this, Acyutadeva personally went to Kanci and affected the equality between the land grants to the two temples by casting lots.[106]

The presence of the powerful sectarian leaders, especially the Tatacaryas, Kandadais and Alagiyamanavala Jiyar further contributed to the temple as the centre of power contestation. In the sixteenth century, there was also an influx of other independent sectarian leaders, most of whom made land-grants from the Tondaimandalam area and established a connection with the temple. Interestingly, the *matha* as an institutional structure does not figure at all in Kancipuram.

2. Śrīrangam

Despite its Tenkalai affiliations, thetemple of Ranganathasvami remains until day, the

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[104]Despite the religious and economic importance of the city of Kancipuram, the temple of Varadarajasvami does not develop before the Vijayanagar period.

[105]432 of 1919

[106]584 of 1919

the primary institutional base of the community. Right from the introduction of the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* to the reforms of Ramanuja, the temple was the centre of all the changes and innovations, which set the models for other temples to follow. Therefore, any development in the Srivaisnava institutional network in general was attributed to the temple of Ranganathasvami for its acceptability to the entire community. The hagiographical accounts further highlighted the importance of the temple by invariably associating with it the activities of the Srivaisnava *acaryas* irrespective of their sectarian affiliations. For example, the Vatakalai *guruparamparas* describe in detail the account of Vedanta Desika saving the idol of Ranganathasvami from Muslim persecution.[107]The aim of the narrative was undoubtedly to project Vedanta Desika's commitment towards the faith, and Srirangam provided the context for it.

The inscriptions point towards the presence of the religious leaders from the thirteenth century onwards, when for the first time the expansion of the administrative structure was effected. Apart from the pre-existing temple functionaries, a *sanyasin* and a *desantri* was introduced for the first time. The concerned epigraph appears to be a royal order specifying that the ascetic was to be selected from Pangayachchelviyur alias Vellarai, Parantaka Caturvedimangalam alias Saligramam and Nalayiravar *Brahmadeyam* in Pandyamandalam. The entire administration of the temple and the safety of the deity's properties at the places, where it camped were entrusted to the ascetic who was to be accompanied by two *Velaikkaras* (guards). The name of the ascetic however is not given. The creation of a pontificate, whose name or designation is not given, provides some interesting insight to the temple administration. For the first time, a religious leader was entrusted with power and authority. Probably, this ascetic was the preceptor of the Pandyas and his induction in the administration implied the establishment of the control of the Pandyas in Srirangam.[108]Alternatively, perhaps the previous administrative

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[107]The story of saving the idol of the Srirangam temple is a favourite of most of the hagiographies. However, the saviour is usually different. For instance in the *Koil Olugu*, it is the temple *devadasi* and other servants which protect the idol from Muslim attack. See, *Koil Olugu*, pp.24-29

[108]Situated in the Colamandalam region between the two rivers, viz,, Kaveri and Collidum, Srirangam possessed tremendous potential for agricultural development from the thirteenth century. With the decline of the Colas, this area became the target for various political powers, mainly the Pandyas and Hoysalas,

arrangement had become problematic and the creation of a pontificate was an innovation to smoothen the angularities. Whatever may be the case, the elaborate arrangements made in the record indicate the complexities in the administration of the temple arising out of the increase in wealth and expanding services.

However, with the rise of the Vijayanagar and the expansion of the temple activities, the influence of the ascetic declined (as the subsequent inscriptions do not refer to him). In the fourteenth-fifteenth century, the Srivaisnava families of Uttamanambi, the matha of the Sriranganarayana Jiyar and finally the Kandadais controlled Srirangam. According to the *Koil Olugu*, these three Srivaisnava groups were contemporaries of each other and often, there were instances of tensions between them.[109]This contestation of power led to the shifting of importance from one family to another in the administrative organization of the temple. The importance of the Uttamanambis in the early part of the fifteenth century was later marginalized by the Sriranganaraya Jiyar *matha*, and finally, it was the Kandadai family, which gained administrative control of the temple.

Apart from these powerful leaders, in the sixteenth century, there was an influx of sectarian leaders to the temple. Many of them made grants in the name of their preceptors or their disciples who were usually a powerful chieftain or a *nayaka*. Considering that most of them came from regions outside Srirangam, the endowments and the ensuing privileges enabled them to establish a relationship with the temple and hence enforced the Srivaisnava community identity.

3.Tirupati

From fourteenth century onwards, the development of the Srivenkatesvara temple at Tirumala-Tirupati as a major centre of pilgrimage and Srivaisnava activities was due to the royal patronage of the Vijayanagar Empire.[110]The epigraphical reference mentions

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who were constantly attempting to enhance their resource base. They made numerous grants to the temple. The *Koil Olugu* refers in details to the benefaction of Jatavarman Sundara Padya in the temple. See the *Koil Olugu*, pp. 92

[109]The *Koil Olugu*, pp. 89-120.

[110]Incidentally, the idol of Venkatesvarasvami was the tutelary deity of Krsnadevarya.

numerous *acaryapurusas jiyars, mathadhipatis* and *Vaidika brahmanas* - all of whom at different points of time exercised some kind of control over the temple organization.

Many of them came from regions outside Tirupati. For example, the Kandadais came from Srirangam. Even the *mathas* at Nanguneri, Tirukkurungudi and Alvar Tirunagari appear to be donors at Tirumala-Tirupati. This highlights the institutional significance of the temple for the Srivaisnava community identity, as these *mathas* of the southern most regions did not seem to figure in the other two temple centres (viz., Kancipuram and Srirangam). The Periya Jiyar *matha* and the Cinna Jiyar *matha* based at Tirumala-Tirupati also drew followers from all over South India.

From 1445 A.D. to 1504 A.D. (i.e. during Saluva Narasimha's time), the sectarian leaders, especially the Kandadai family with its hold over *Ramanujakutam* emerged prominently. However, in the subsequent period, i.e. from 1509 A.D. to 1531 A.D. (i.e. during Krsnadevaraya's time), the influence of the Kandadai family declined. The *mathas* (i.e. the Cinna and Periya Jiyar *mathas*), the *Vaidika brahmanas* as well as certain local religious leaders and even temple accountants appeared as prominent donors with numerous privileges in the temple. The temple administration was controlled by a *sthanattar*, a royal appointee; indicating a somewhat direct management by the Vijayanagar ruler. The local Srivaisnavas of Tirupati also emerged as important functionaries in the temple administration.

From 1530 A.D. to 1574 A.D. (i.e. during Acyutadevaraya and Sadasivadevaraya's time), similar trends continued. However, the Vaidika *brahmanas* as donors appeared significantly. Most of them were preceptors of *nayakas* usually from regions outside Tirupati. They made donations on behalf of their followers and received a share in the temple *prasadam*. Some of the Vaidika *brahmanas* instituted rituals and festivals in their names. The influence of the Vaidika *brahmanas* is evident in their association with the Vijayanagar *rulers*. Of special importance were Malaiyapparaiyam and his brother Venkatadri Ayyan from Chandragiri. From the inscriptions, it appears that in 1535 A.D., Malaiyapparaiyam accompanied Acyutadeva to Tirumala as one of his religious functionaries. Sadasivaraya appointed his brother Venkatadri Ayyan to the government of

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Udayagiri province. In 1536 A.D., he gifted a village Changellu for the merit of Acyutadeva.[111]However, by the seventeenth century the prominence of the sectarian leaders was completely overshadowed by the political leaders as well as the local Srivaisnavas who now started monopolizing the temple resources.

III. Duality: The Vaṭakalai and Teṇkalai–The Schism in Srivaisnavism.

The division into Vaṭakalai and Teṇkalai sects is the most dominant form of identity for the Śrivaiṣṇava community today. Temples and *mathas* are affiliated to a distinct Vaṭakalai or Teṇkalai tradition. The attempt to articulate and reiterate these boundaries was made in the colonial context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when a new political formation emerged and the temples and the sectarian leaders had no role in the establishment and the expansion of the British power in India.[112]As mentioned earlier, in the pre-colonial period the Śrivaiṣṇava community had fluctuating boundaries, which contributed towards the construction of multiple identities amongst the followers (as has already been discussed in the previous section). However, the schism, which emerged in the colonial period, was a manifestation of the duality of the Sanskrit and the Tamil tradition, which had previously provided the ideological context for various sectarian leaders. Therefore, contradictions were always present in the history of Srivaisnava philosophy and community before the eighteenth century but the forms of articulation were at the level of intellectual and theological disputes.

The basic difference between the Vaṭakalai and the Teṇkalai sects lie in their respective acaryic lineage immediately after Rāmānuja. For the Vaṭakalai, Vēdānta Dēśika (1268-1369 A.D.) systematized and interpreted the philosophy of Rāmānuja and hence was the *acaryic* head of the Vaṭakalai lineage. For the Teṇkalai lineage, Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇi (1370-1443 A.D.) was the *acāryic* head. The importance of these two *acaryic* heads for their respective sects lie in the fact that they were in direct line of descent from Rāmānuja onwards, and hence claimed to be his legitimate successors. Therefore, it

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[111]164 of 1892

[112]For details, see Arjun Appadorai, 1981.

followed that, the interpretations of Rāmānuja's teachings by Vēdānta Dēśika and Maṇavāḷa Māmuni were a logical continuation to Rāmānuja's teachings and were valid.

Much has been written about the meanings of the terms Vaṭakalai and Teṇkalai. It is in the hymns of Tirumangaiāḷvār that a duality was first indicated in the reference to the Sanskrit and Tamil language.[113]However, in the context of community identity, the implications go beyond the linguistic affiliations. Vaṭakalai means north, i.e. northern part of the Tamil country with Kāñcīpuram as its cultural centre and Teṇkalai means south of Tamil country with Śrīrangam and Kāvēri delta as the cultural center although in both these centers, the Vedic (i.e.Sanskritic) and Prabandhic (i.e. Tamil) tradition flourished.[114]Today, the Vaṭakalai are projected as adhering to the Vedic tradition and are therefore linked to Kāñcīpuram.[115]The Teṇkalais emphasizing on the Prabandhic tradition are inevitably linked to Śrīrangam.The historiography on the schism has followed two broad trends. The first reflected the sectarian bias of the historians who belonged to either of the two sects.[116]According to them, the schism was an unfortunate development in the history of Srivaisnavism. These historians hold *others* responsible for the split, thereby exonerating their own sects of any responsibility. Hence, fixing the onus of the split has always been a major historiographical preoccupation. According to the Teṇkalais, since Vēdānta Dēśika was chronologically before Maṇavāḷa Māmuni, therefore, the Vaṭakalais

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[113]N. Jagadeesan, 1977, p. 45. *Kalai* also means language.

[114]In both the centres, both the Vedas as well as the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* are sung on various occasions with great devotion.

[115]Since Kāñcīpuram was a multi-temple centre- different religious traditions developed. It has been stated that Kāñcī emerged as the major centre for various inter-religious theological debates. Consequently, the Śrīvaiṣṇavas had to rely on the Vedic-Upaniṣadic tradition to establish their legitimacy. See Patricia Mumme, *The Theology of Maṇavāḷamāmuṇi: Toward an Understanding of the Teṇkalai-Vaṭakalai Dispute in the Post-Rāmānuja Śrī Vaiṣṇavism.* Madras, 1987; idem.,*The Sri Vaisnava Theological Dispute: Maṇavāḷamāmuṇi and Vēdāntadēśika.* Madras, 1988.

[116]One of the well-known historians is V. Rangachari. See V.Rangachari,'The Successors of Rāmānuja and the Growth of Sectarianism among the Sri-Vaishnavas', *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24, 1914-1915, pp.102-136; idem, 'The Life and Times of Sri Vedanta Desika', *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24, 1914-1915,pp. 277-312; idem, 'The History of Sri Vaishnavism. From the Death of Sri Vedanta Desika to the Present Day', *Quarterly Journal of the Mythic Society* 7,2 (January), 1917, pp.106-118 and 7,2 (April), pp. 197-209; idem., 'Historical Evolution of Sri Vaishnavism in South India', in *The Cultural Heritage of India,* ed. H.Bhattacharya Vol. 4. Calcutta, 1953-1954, 163-185.

generated the schism. The Vaṭakalais counteracted this by tracing the genesis of the shism not to Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇi, but to Piḷḷai Lokācārya (1264-1372 A.D.), who was a Tenkalai leader and a senior contemporary of Vēdānta Deśika.[117]There is another interpretation to this chronological difference. Since Vēdānta Deśika was placed before Maṇavāḷa Māmuni, the Vaṭakalais asserted that they were more ancient than the Tenkalais. Hence, it followed that Rāmānuja was a Vaṭakalai and the Tenkalai system being a later development was an aberration.[118]Conversely, Tenkalais feel that since they were always larger in number, the Vaṭakalais developed as an opposition and until day consolidating themselves.[119]The implication of these interpretations is that both Vaṭakalai and Tenkalai have always asserted that they are the true representatives of Srivaisnavism.

Another dimension to this sectarian viewpoint is the pride of place given to the respective *ācāryas* of both the sects as having made significant contributions towards Srivaisnavism. For instance, V.Rangachari's essay on Vēdānta Deśika portrayed the latter in eulogistic terms whose achievements even the Tenkalais acknowledged. K.V. Raman's monograph on Varadarājasvāmī temple at Kāñcipuram put forth the valuable contributions made by Tenkalais towards the development of the temple as the center of Srivaisnavism.[120]In this context, Raman referred to Aḷagiyamaṇavāḷa Jīyar (1420-1468 A.D.) as the most significant religious leader at Kāñcī Varadarājasvāmī temple. In Raman's words:

> Several inscriptions datable to the latter half of the fifteenth century and the earlier half of the sixteenth century speak of his (i.e. Aḷagiyamaṇavāḷa Māmuṇi's) services to the temple and his eminent position in the temple affairs at Kāñcī.[121]

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[117]This conclusion is based on the belief that since Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇi had commented extensively on Piḷḷai Lokācārya's work, the *Śrivacanabhūṣana* being the most important one, hence, the former precede the latter.

[118]V. Rangachari, 1914-1915, p.103.

[119]This view was expressed by Mr. Tiruvengadathan of Chennai, in course of a discussion.

[120]K.V. Raman, 1975 pp 59-94.

[121]Ibid, p. 76.

The epigraphical evidences from which Raman drew his conclusions however, pointed towards a different situation. Of approximately sixty-two inscription of Varadarajasvāmī temple, only three belong to Alagiyamanavāla Māmuni who was the *kōyil-kelvi*, i.e. the 'overseer' of the temple-undoubtedly an important position. However, his contributions appeared to have been just some gifts of land to the temple.[122] Epigrahical evidence refers to the Tātācaryas as the major functionaries involved in the temple activities.[123] The forty-five inscriptions in which they appear prominently were ignored by Raman evidently as he wanted to highlight the Tenkalai leaders' importance. The Vatakalai response to Raman's understanding and highlighting the Tenkalais was hostile and alternatively highlighted the contribution of the Tātācaryas.[124]However, it is difficult to conclude whether Tātācaryas were representing the Vatakalais. For epigraphical evidences, do not refer to this affiliation. Rather, it appears that the Tātācarya emphasized their independent identity.

The second historiographical viewpoint is a simplistic unilinear view where the twentieth century understanding of the Vatakalais and Tenkalais was extrapolated to the historical development of sectarianism in Srivaisnavism from the twelfth to the seventeenth century A.D. According to K.A.Nilkantha Sastri, in the post-Rāmānuja period differences in interpretations arose which were instrumental in creating doctrinal differences under Vēdānta Dēśika and Manavāla Māmunigal.[125]N. Jagadeesan takes the antecedents of the schism further back to Nāthamuni.[126]According to him, after Nāthamuni, schismatic tendencies developed amongst the immediate disciples of Yāmunā and then Rāmānuja. The philosophies of Pillai Lokācārya and Vēdānta Dēśika, which evolved consequently, were stabilized by Manavala Mamuni and Brahmatantra Svatantra Jiyar (1545 A.D.-1595 A.D.) respectively. Further he says: 'When the schism weakened the Vatakalai developed sub-divisions like the *Munitreyam*, Ahōbilam *matha* and

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[122] 433, 447 and 495 of 1919.

[123]347, 354, 363, 379, 381, 382, 383, 421, 462, 475, 479, 499, 531, 586, 587, 588, 649, 650, 651, 651, 655, and 663 of 1919.

[124]V Varadachari, Two Great Acharyas. Vedanta Desika and Manavala Mamuni. Tiruvellikeni, 1983.

[125]K.A.Nilkantha Sastri, 1963. Pp. 82-85.

[126]N.Jagadeesan, 1977, Chapter 11, p.182.

Parakāla-*matha* and Teṉkalai Kandādais, Telugu- Srīvaiṣṇavas, the *Soliyār*, the *Sikkiliyār*.[127]However, while referring to the weakening of the schism, Jagadeesan does not explain how and when the process took place, nor has he been able to appreciate the independent developments of some sects (which he has referred to) without any affiliation to the Vaṭakalai-Teṉkalai paradigm. Therefore, both Sastri and Jagadeesan failed to analyze the diachronic history of development of sectarianism.

The present study attempts to understand the concept of schism and its relationship to the community identity from the end of the twelfth century to the seventeenth century A.D. It is stated here that the Srīvaiṣṇava commentatorial and theological tradition reflected a notional duality of the Sanskritic and Tamil tradition, which at no point of time aimed to project two distinct communities. However, it is the hagiographical tradition, including the *guruparamparās*, which accepted this duality as the ideological basis of their respective lineages.

It has often been maintained by scholars working on the history of religion in South India that the Srīvaiṣṇavas were able to successfully achieve a syntheses of the northern Sanskritic and the Southern Tamil traditions, almost a fusion of the two, especially under Rāmānuja.[128]However, this duality could be discerned even in the hymns of the Ālvārs that reflected an awareness of these two distinct linguistic traditions. However, this did not prove to be a theological barrier to the Ālvārs, as they did not attempt to evolve a philosophy for a community construction. Rāmānuja's Visiṣṭadavaita attempted for the first time to reconcile this duality. The systematization of theology and organization of the community being the major concern, Rāmānuja's commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* i.e. the *Sribhāṣya* emphasized "qualified monism" bringing together for the first time the concepts of *karma, jñāna* and *bhakti*.[129]Reacting against Sankara's monism *(advaita)* and *Nirguṇa Brahman*, Rāmānuja argued that the philosophy of the Veda held that the soul

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[127]Ibid, p.182.

[128]Even Sankara's *advaita* is an attempt to resolve the duality. Hence, it is resolved by adhering to advaitism, thereby negating the concept of *Saguṇa Brahman*.

[129]John Carman, 1981, pp. 41-43

and the world were in a "qualified way" different from the god or *Brahman* and therefore *bhakti* was not a lower form of religion but the true realization of *moksa*. However, the philosophy of Visistadvaitism had several ambiguities, which were open to different interpretations.

By the end of the twelfth century, the emergence of a well-developed Srīvaisnava community solved the major concerns of the organization. The theological questions assumed more importance and numerous interpretations evolved. In this context, the philosophy of *ubhaya vedanta* and the development of Manipravalam emerged as another attempt at reconciliation. Therefore, the philosophy of Vēdānta Dēsika and Manavāla Māmunigal reflected the concerns of the theological issues centering on the ubhaya-vedantic framework. Vēdānta Dēsika's *Rahasyatrayasāram*, Pillai Lokācārya's *Srīvacanabhūsanam* and Manavāla Māmunigal's *Tattvatraya* presented a comprehensive theological treatise which evolved certain concepts for the community: the nature of god and soul, the nature of *bhakti* and the life pattern of *prapanna*, the status of Srī and other minor issues. These conceptual issues as discussed by these *ācāryas* emerged as the exegetical framework for the Vatakalai and Tenkalai sects in the post-seventeenth century period. In this section only, only some issues will be taken up as they were of ideological relevance for the community. An analysis of other issues that became the cause of disagreement generating schismatic tendencies is beyond the scope of this research.

Both the sects appropriated the philosophies of both Vēdānta Dēsika and Manavāla Māmuni, but interpreted them in their own way that generated contradictions and exegetical polarities. The first issue that was interpreted and discussed was the nature of god and soul. According to Vatakalais god is transcendental and coexists with the soul, which was atomic in size and finite. It followed therefore that god's grace, which was essential to attain salvation (*mukti*) was only possible through the efforts of the soul. Hence, divine grace was *sahetukakrpa*, and the effort made by the soul was similar to *mārkata-nyāya*, i.e. monkey rule, where the calf of the monkey clutched the mother with its own efforts. According to the Tenkalai philosophy, god's grace was free-flowing i.e. *nirhetukakrpa* and he was transcendental as well immanent within the sentient and non-sentient objects of the world. Hence, the soul did not need to make any effort like the

kitten who was carried by the cat in its mouth; hence *mārjala nyāya*.[130]Interestingly the monkey-cat simile does not figure in the works of either of the two *ācāryas*.

To the Vaṭakalais, *bhakti* and *prapatti* were two different goals. Status by birth, knowledge and capability were pre-requisites for *bhakti* Prapatti did not require any qualifications and could be attained by any ordinary human being. It followed that *bhakti yoga* was the main *sadhana* and *prapatti* was just an *aṅga* (i.e. an auxillary). According to the Teṇkalais, since *bhakti* required individual effort, it was inferior to *prapatti*, which was effortless and depended on total surrender to god. Hence, a devotee seeking salvation and refuge in god should first have the desire to accept god's protection with total faith in him.[131]Therefore, the Vaṭakalais felt that a devotee should follow either *bhakti* or prapatti as an *upāya* with the *aṅgas* and for achieving both human effort was essential. The issue of the life pattern of *prapaṇna* was related to the notion of *kainkarya* (or service to the god). According to the Vaṭakalais, *kainkarya* was to be performed according to the *sastric* rules. Steeped in his own world of deeds (i.e. *karma*), man committed many sins. Hence, god's redemption and compassion was needed for the peace of the soul. Further sin was to be avoided as it would incur nullify all efforts and incur god's displeasure. To obtain forgiveness *prapanna* (i.e. the devotee) should follow certain *prayascitta* (atonement) rules. The Teṇkalais did not give importance to the sastric injunctions for performing the *kainkarya*. In fact, *prāsyascitta* was not required at all and it was assumed that god would forgive and protect his devotee from all his sins, even those committed after *prapatti* and *kainkarya*.

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[130]According to Vedanta Desika: 'The Lord who is unconditional *sesi* of all, unconditionally autonomous and true-willed, withholds this will to punish from the first moment the words of surrender are uttered. He jealously devours the heaps of sins of this devotee without showing any strain. He desires to favour his followers, allow them to expiate their deliberate sins through remorse' *Rahasyatraysāra* of Vēdānta Dēśika, pp 571-2; 'Like a man who looks but doesnot see the faults of his wife and sons, the faults (of the Lord's devotee) donot even enter this mind...like a man who delights in the dirt on the body of his beloved, he takes their sins as delight,' *Tattvatrāya of Piḷḷai Lokācārya with Maṇavāḷa Māmuni's commentary*, pp.178-251.

[131]For the one fruit - attainment of the Lord he has taught 1) the path of *bhakti* which is difficult because ... it is accompained by means of the *angas* of *parma*, jñāna etc, ever many births and 2) the path of *prapatti*, which is easy because, it is performed once and for all, upon ceasing all one's own activity.... Thus, the grace of the Lord must be the *upaya* and not *bhakti* or *prapatti*, *Mumukṣupaṭi of Piḷḷai Lokācāraya.*

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Both the sects agreed on the importance of Srī as Viṣṇu's consort who acted as a mediator between the soul and God. She also advised the soul to seek refuge in him instead of withdrawing due to the fear of punishment and execution. According to Vaṭakalais, the status of Srī was equal to that of God. She acted as *upaya* and *upeya*. The devotees could rely on her totally, and she would take care of their emancipation. However, according to the Teṇkalais, Srī wass finite *jīva* and did not have such powers. She was not equal to god, but was rather subservient to him. Her role as a mediatrix was no doubt important, but was not *upaya* or *upeya*.[132]However, it should be remembered that neither Vēdānta Dēsika nor Manavāla Māmuni had ever consciously attempted to evolve a distinct community, probably due to their different religious attitudes; they were identified with the Sanskritic school of thought and Tamil school of thought respectively. Nor did the other theological and commentatorial works that took inspiration from them, reflected a distinct Vaṭakalai or a Teṇkalai status. Therefore, the duality was only notionally evident in Srīvaiṣṇava exegesis.

It were the hagiographic texts including the *guruparamaparas* which evolved their *acaryic* lineage on the basis of the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions in order to project a strong community identity whose articulation became important in the post-Ramanuja period when competition for control over resources intensified. However, it should be noted that the projection of theological precepts was not the concern of these hagiographical writings. At the time of their composition, the notional duality as well as the association of certain religious leaders with this duality was clearly developed. Hence, it became easier for these texts to use their names, especially that of Vēdānta Dēsika and Manavāla Māmuni to fabricate or construct an *acaryic* lineage that would give legitimacy to the respective communities.

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[132]'Even though he is onmmscient and all powerful, by the special (function of) mediation, which he cannot refuse, just as in the case of palace attendants (favoured by the queen), he will forgive all the sins which obstruct gaining access to their, and will remain accessible as if ignorant of those sins', *Rahasyatrayasāram*. 11, pp. 375-6.According to *Mumuksupaṭi* 119,'While the Lord is the one who grants the desired result and removes (the soul's) *anista*.... without her intercession which makes it so that he protects without regarding (the soul's) sins, the Lord will not save.'.

However, while projecting the importance of *guru* for the dissemination of the philosophies, both the Vaṭakalai and Teṇkalai texts referred to Vēdānta Dēśika and Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇigaḷ as *ubhaya-vedantin* i.e. one who is an expert on both the Vedas (Sanskrit as well as Tamil). In fact, the qualities attributed to Rāmānuja came to be replicated in the personalities of these two *acaryas*. Today, the Teṇkalais consider *Ārāyirappaṭi Guruparamparāprabhāvam* of Piṇbaḷagiya Jīyar, *Panniāyirappaṭi* and *Muāyirappaṭi* (authors not known) as their sectarian *guruparamparās*. The Vaṭakalais consider *Vaṭakalai Muāyirappaṭi* as their hagiographical text. Significantly, both sets of texts were composed between the thirteenth and the seventeenth century and projected a linear succession from Rāmānuja onwards, which is otherwise very difficult to trace.

However, neither of the texts reflected such a well integrated, all-inclusive and a continuous lineage. The account of Peryavāccāṇpiḷḷai, the Teṇkalai *ācārya* occurred only in the *Panniāyirappaṭi*. Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇi's biography is the theme of a separate hagiographical text *Yatindrapravaṇaprabhāvam*. According to this text, Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇi appointed eight successors called *aṣtadigga-gajas*, who were attributed with foundation of the Tenkalai *maṭhas*.[133] For instance, the *maṭha parampara* of the Vāṇamāmalai *maṭha* at Nānguṇērī, traced its lineage to one of the *aṣtadigga gajas*. Nevertheless, the *maṭhas* of Mēlkōṭe and Tirupati traced their lineage to Rāmānuja, though they did mention that of one of their *acaryas* became the disciple of Māṇavāḷa Māmunigaḷ.[134]

Similarly, the *Vaṭakalai Muāyirappaṭi* written by the third Brahmatantra Parkāla Jīyar (1545-1595 A.D.) of the Parakāla *matha* also projected the *matha* lineage. The first *jīyar* was supposed to be the disciple of Vēdānta Dēśika. However, the Ahōbila *maṭha* as well as other Vaṭakalai *ācāryapuruṣas* like the Tātācaryas did not follow this genealogical pattern. As stated earlier, the Tātācaryas traced their descent from Periya Nambi and later, one of their predecessors was supposed to have become the disciple of Vēdānta Dēśika.

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[133]*Aṣtadiggagagajas* also figured in the royal court of Vijayaṇagar rulers. Probably the borrowing from the court language was with the purpose of imparting legitimacy to the line of succession after Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇigaḷ. Further, it also implied the assertion of power.

[134]See, for details on the *guruparamparās*, the *Appendix, Section (b)*.

The Ahōbila *matha* in its *guruparamparā* called the *Sat Samprādāya Guruparamaparāprabhāvam* followed the Teṇkalai lineage until Vaḍakkutiruvīdipiḷḷai.[135] Similarly, just as the Tenkalai tradition branched off with Pillai Lokacarya as the next in succession after Vaḍakkutiruvīdipiḷḷai, the Ahōbila *matha* tradition branched off with another disciple of Vaḍakkutiruvīdipiḷḷai named Kīḍāmbī Rangachārī whose successor, Kīḍāmbī Srīnivāsavārya was the founder of the Ahōbila *matha* in 1398 A.D. This *acaryic* lineage was observed during the initiation rites of *pañcasāmskāra* and the *Bhagavad Viṣayaparamparā*, in which the rendition of the *Srībhaṣya* formed a major component. Therefore, the various sectarian affiliations between the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries had evolved their individual *acaryic* lineages, thereby reflecting an independent assertion of the respective identities.[136] In these apostolic lines of succession, two points were fixed. One, that of Rāmānuja. Two, that of Vēdānta Dēśika and Māṇavaḷa Māmuṇigaḷ. Thus, the ideological context of a well consolidated Vaṭakalai and Teṇkalai lineage in the post-seventeenth century was already laid before this period.

The 'schism' as understood in the colonial period by the historians involved a series of disputes between the Vaṭakalais and Teṇkalais over the temple administration. This feature was also characteristic of the pre-colonial period. Although direct evidence is not available, it can be inferred from the epigraphical as well as textual sources that tensions between various sects and religious leaders existed. The case of Uttamanambis, Srīranganārāyaṇa Jīyar and Kandāḍais at Srīrangam has already been discussed. Besides, the presence of several prominent leaders in a temple center would hardly encourage peaceful co-existence. However, over a period, the alignments across Sanskritic and Tamil ones were gradually crystallizing into strong sub-sects. The coming of the British and their interactions with the religious institutions led to the reworking of the entire power relations. In the early years of the colonial rule, the British government decided the temple disputes. Perhaps, then the need arose to establish distinct sectarian identities cutting

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[135]*Sat Sampradāya Guruparamparāprabhābam*, p.96.

[136]For instance, *Vaḍakalai Muāyirappaṭi* does not mention the eight disciples of Nāthamuni. However, the *Guruparamparāsāram* that forms the first chapter of the *Rahasyatrayasāram* mentions the eight disciples. Another texts *Panniāyirapaṭi* gives a detailed lineage of Nammālvār and attributes a *kṣātriya* status to him. Other texts of the same affiliation do not give such details.

across the regional frontiers based on common interests. Therefore, the Sanskritic affiliations came to be identified as the Vatakalai and the Tamil ones as the Tenkalai.

According to Arjun Appadorai, in the early part of the colonial rule there was a 'shift from a Hindu political context to a British mercantile environment.'[137]The British attitude towards the temple was pragmatic, as the latter were very wealthy. Therefore, the temples were economically advantageous to the new rulers. However, the British did not directly deal with any religious group or leader. Rather, they depended on the 'natives' as intermediaries. These natives were usually merchants who themselves played a crucial role in the temple politics. [138]They, through politics and manipulations assumed the role of 'beneficiaries of active transactional relationship between the king and the deity', a role previously performed by the sectarian leaders in the Vijayanagar period. As Appadorai puts it:

> Taken together, these departures from the previous indigenous structure of relationships created tensions and dialectical pressures that altered temple politics in crucial respects ...This 'structural' rise of indigenous merchant-broker types in temple affairs in the eighteenth century Madras was short-lived and starting in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the burgeoning bureaucratic center of English rule placed increasing constraints on these men and their successors in temple control.[139]

Today, the Vatakalai-Tenkalai notion of Srivaisnavism has altered the entire identity pattern of the community. The daily practices of both the sub-sects have too much specificity that has the rational for the assertion of Vatakalai-Tenkalai identity. For instance, the external sect marks (like the namam) and other rituals of the respective sects reiterate the differences that strengthen the sectarian affiliations for the Srivaisnava psyche. However, a problem arises when direct connections are made with the historical situations. For instance, it is assumed that these sub-sects had existed right from the post-Ramanuja period. Second, the assumption that Tenkalais attached secondary importance to caste and Vatakalai stressed on caste injunctions is not correct. The entire history of Srivaisnavism right from Ramanuja's time indicates the domination of the brahmanical

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[137]Arjun Appadorai, 1983, 83

[138]Ibid, p. 84

[139]Ibid, p.230.

hierarchy, where *varṇāśramadharma* was always upheld and readjustments and realignments were made within this framework. Third, Kāñcipuram as the center of Sanskritic school (hence Vaṭakalai) and Śrīrangam as the center of Tamil school (hence Teṇkalai) is historically over emphasized. Both Kāñcī and Śrīrangam emerged as major centers of Srivaisnavism in the post-Rāmānuja period. The traditional presence of the Kandāḍais at Śrīrangam, which was the southern center and their subsequent attachment to the Tamil lineage, made Śrīrangam the center of the Prabandhic School. Similarly, the Tātācāryas migrated to Kāñcī in the fifteenth century from the north, and through their influence imparted a northern character to the temple. However, the textual references themselves do not clearly account for such associations. Both Vēdānta Dēśika and Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇi are shown to be influential in both the centers in the biographical narratives of the hagiographies. Therefore, it becomes narrow to attribute the Prabandhic /Tamil and Vedic/Sanskrit affiliations to Śrīrangam and Kāñcī. Rather the characterization of Kanci as the northern center and Śrīrangam as the Southern center seems more appropriate.

CONCLUSION

The modern works on Srivaisnavism have presented the notion of uniformity, multiplicity and duality as discrete, non-interactive categories. However, as this chapter has attempted to show the various levels of the Śrīvaiṣṇava identities were mutually interactive and influencing each other and constantly underwent a transformation.the identities were fluctuating and depended on the context against which they were articulating. Similarly, the duality of the Vaṭakali and Teṇkalai sects that ossified into sub-castes were not exclusive categories. Several overlapping areas between them made the Srivaisnava identity more complex. Nevertheless, the sense of belonging to one single community was always adhered to and the claim of being the direct-descendant of Rāmānuja was a major exercise on the part of all the sectarian affiliations of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community. There were moments when the sectarian affiliations were muted and the single identity was reasserted. One such moment was the pilgrimage process and tradition that will form the subject of the next chapter.

APPENDICES TO CHAPTER III

(a) UNIFORMITY

The uniformity for the Srivaisnava community identity could be seen in the spiritual order until Ramanuja, after which the order bifurcated into the Vatakalai and Tenkalai succession order. The spiritual order before the schism of the Visistadvaita tradition comprised of the names of the Alvars and acaryas in a particular sequence. Even today, the recital of this spiritual order is significant for the Srivaisnava identity as it is a part of *Srivaisnavadinacarya* (i.e. everyday routine) and finds an inevitable place on special occasions like festivals, marriages and *upanayana* ceremonies.

Alvars: The following table shows the names of the Alvars in an order, which is widely accepted.

Table 6. Names of the Alvars

TAMIL NAME	SANSKRIT NAME	PLACE OF BIRTH	APPROXIMATE DATE
Poygai	Saro Yogi or Kasara Muni	Kancipuram	Fifth-sixth centuries.
Bhudatt	Bhuta Yogi	Mahabalipuram	"
Pey	Bhranta Yogi	Mylapore	"
Tirumalisai	Bhaktisara	Mahisara (2 miles west of Punamalai)	"
Madhurakavi	Madhurakavi	Tirukkovalur	Sixth-seventh centuries.
Nammalvar	Parankusa, Sathakopa	Alvar Tirunagari.	"
Kulasekhara	Kulasekhara	Tiruvanjikkotam	"
Periyalvar	Visnucitta, Bhattappiran	Srivilliputtur.	"
Antal	Goda Devi	Srivilliputtur	"
Tontaratippoti	Bhaktanghri-renu	Madangudi (Trichinopoly)	Seventh-eight century.
Tiruppanalvar	Pananatha, Yogivaha	Uraiyur (near Tiruchchirapalli)	"
Tirumangai	Parkala	Tirunagari(near Shiyali)	"

However, the hagiographical texts vary in the presentation of this spiritual order of the Alvars. For instance after the profile of Tirumalisai Alvar, the texts followed a different pattern. Both the Vatakalai and the Tenkalai *Muayirappati* placed Nammalvar after Tirumalisai, i.e. in the fifth place. Whereas, the Tenkalai texts, the *Arayirappati* and the *Panniayirappati Guruparamparaprabhavam* positioned Kulasekhara next to Tirumalisai, while recounting the lives of these Alvars. In these texts, the profile of Nammalvar was placed at the end, immediately preceding Nathamuni's biography. This was probably with the intention of re-iterating the fact that Nammalvar was the direct preceptor of Nathamuni. Although, the

Divyasuricaritam and the *Tenkalai Muayirappati* described at length Antal's association with Periyalvar and her marriage to Ranganathasvami of Srirangam, they did not delineate her as the Alvar of the Srivaisnava community.

Acaryas: The following table gives a list of *acarayas* till Ramanuja revered by both the Vatakali and Tenkalai sects.

Table7 *Names of the Acaryas*

TAMIL NAME	SANSKRIT NAME	PLACE OF BIRTH	APPROXIMATE DATE
Nathamunigal	Nathamuni	Viranarayanapuram or Kattumannar Koil (South Arcot)	Ninth tenth century
Uyyakondar	Pundarikaksa	Tiruvallarai (ten miles, north of Tiruchchirapali)	"
Manakkalnambi	Ramamisra	Manakkal (East of Tiruchchirappalli)	"
Alavandar	Yamunacarya	Kuppanguli	"
Tiruvarangapperum al Araiyar	Sriranganayaka Gayaka	Srirangam (Tiruchchirapalli)	Eleventh century
Periya Nambi	Mahapurna	Srirangam (Tiruchchirapalli)	"
Tirukkottiyur Nambi	Gosthipurna	Tirukkottiyur (Madurai)	"
Tirumalai Antan	Maladhara	Alagar-Tirumalai (Madurai)	"
Tirukacci Nambi	Kancipurna	Punamalai	"
Emberumanar, Udaiyavar or Ilai-alvar.	Ramanuja.	Sriperumbudur (Chingleput)	1017-1137 A.D.

Where the acaryic order was concerned the *Upadesa Ratnamalai* of Manavala Mamunigal and *Rahasyatrayasaram* of Vendanta Desika made some interesting digressions. For instance, in the *Upadesa Ratnamalai* neither Nathamuni nor Yamuna did not find any mention. The text grouped Antal, Madurakavi and Ramanuja together as *acaryas*. On the contrary, the *Rahasyatrayasaram* gave a comprehensive acaryic lineage from Nathamuni onwards. Vendanta Desika, the author of the *Rahasyatrayasaram* acknowledged, Nammalvar as the *acarya* of Nathamuni:

Since Nathamuni received the sacred tradition from one of the spiritual descendants of Madurakavi, and was blessed with spiritual wisdom from a study of Tiruvaymoli and

since, in his yogic contemplation, Nammalvar appeared to him and taught him the sacred lore; his *acarya* was Nammalvar himself. [1]

The text listed the *acarya parampara* in two ways-one, preceptor-disciple relationships; two, familial connection, that is through the father and son. Interestingly, no other hagiographical texts or *guruparampara* gave such a comprehensive acaryic list. Perhaps, the reason for providing such details by Desika was to highlight the Sanskritic lineage, as both Nathamuni and Yamuna wrote in Sanskrit exclusively. Correspondingly, Manavala Mamuni in the *Upadesa Ratnamalai* omitted the names of the two *acaryas* keeping in tune with the Tamil tradition that highlighted the linguistic superiority of Tamil. Hence, the spiritual order of the *Visistadvaitic* tradition was not unilateral. It became most complicated, where the *acaryas* were concerned, even in the pre-Ramanuja period. The following is the genealogical table of the *acaryas* before Ramanuja, in which d is for disciple and s is for son.

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[1] *Rahasytrayasaram*, p.5

Nathamuni

Kurukai avalappan   Doksyyut Silbasn   Erutiruvudaiyar   Uyyakondar   Nambikarmuker Dasar   Vanmadai Andan   Tirukkanamangai Andan
Urppatturachan Pillai   d

Tiruvallikeni Pan Permal   Araiyar Manakkal Nambi   Nattalur Illaialangar   Sri Pundarika Dasar   Ulagapperamal Nangai

d

Deivattukkarasu Nambi Acchi Alavandar Gomatam Tiruvinnagar Appan   Siruputtur Avudaiya Pillai

d

Allavandar   Tirumalai   Tirumkettiyar   Periya   Tirumalai   Isandam   Siriyandan   Tirumer   Tirumair   Deva SrImagngar
Alvar   Andan   Nambi   Nanbi   Nambi   Divavari Andan   Appan   Nambi   Penemae   Abiyar

Pillai Tirumablirumdai Darar   Maraner Nambi   lkodi

d

Emperumanar (Ramanuja)   Malai Kuniya Ninrar   Arya Sathakopa Darar   Aniranrattanudanar Tiruvoykula mudiyan Patar Tondai Nambi

Father to son genealogical list

Nathamuni
| s

Isvara Bhatta
| s

Yamunacarya
| s

Sottai Nambi
| s

Enanacchan
| s

Pillaiyappar
| s

Tolappar

(b) MULTIPLICITY

As already discussed in the chapter, the multiple identities revolved around three main aspects of affiliations- (a) caste and region (b) *acaryapurusas* and *mathas* (c) the temples.[2] The present appendix is associated with the primary affiliations (i.e. caste and region) and the *acrayic* affiliations (i.e. *acaryapurusas* and *mathas*). Where the former is concerned, a list of regional sects from Karnataka and Andhra region are presented here. Some of them have both the *brahmana* and the non-*brahmana* groups while others exclusively belong to either of the castes. Where the latter is concerned, an attempt has been made to show in the present appendix, the genealogies or the succession list of the *acaryapurusas* and *mathas*, which became the basis of distinct sectarian identities within Srivaisnavism. It should be noted here that most of the information was collected from the members of the Srivaisnava families and the *mathas*. Hence discrepancies in the information is unavoidable

(i)Primary Affiliations: Caste and Region

There are certain Srivasnava sects especially in Karnataka, which have both the *brahmanas* and the non-*brahmanas* caste groups. These regional sects are usually named after their *gurus*, place of settlement or origin.[3] The two most prominent amongst them are:

1.Hebbar This group comprises of immigrants from Srirangam, Kancipuram, Kumbhakonam, and Rajamannar Koil. They settled in different parts of Karnataka. They are usually divided into five sub-groups called *Pancagamas* who intermarry with each other. These five groups are named after the five villages. Hebbars speak Tamil and are affiliated to both the Vatakalais and Tenkalai

2.Mandayattar are immigrants from Mandayam near Tirupati. They settled in Melkote and Mandaya in Karnataka. There are several legends about the name Mandya in the community tradition.[4] One version says that the name Mandya is derived from Mandava *rsi* who is supposed to have meditated in this region. According to another version, in the Dvapura Yuga, king Indravarma, the son of Somavarma created an *agrahara*, constructed a fort, and named it Visnupura. The fort was also called Manadaivam, i.e. "My God" which in due course of time became Mandya. According to another view, king of Triupati, Vittaladeva become a Srivaisnava and granted some villages to a saint Tiruvanandalvar and other disciples of Ramanuja in Srirangapattnam. Since these people came from Tirupati, which was also known a Balamandya, the new *agrahara* at

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[2]The list of Srivaisnava groups presented is not comprehensive. This appendix is based on the information that was available through private interviews and family histories at the time of research. However, a detailed study will be useful to understand the social heterogeneity within the community. However, currently, such a study is beyond the scope of this work.

[3]Although these regional sects were supposed to be endogamous, but today intermarriages occur between these various groups.

[4]Information about Mandyas was acquired from various field interviews.

Srirangapattnam was called Ilayamandya.[5]Anantacarya and Govindacarya were two Srivaisnava *brahmanas* who were renowned for their knowledge of *Visistadvaitism*. A text called *Nandigrantha* that contains the horoscopes of some of the Mandya ancestors describes in detail the glory of Anantacarya and Govindacarya who later established the Mandya lineage.[6]The non-*brahmana* Mandya groups are a powerful section of the community today. Some of them were *praadhanas* (local village chiefs) of the Wodeyars of Mysore in the seventeenth century. They had their own organisation and were usually Tenkalai.

The Brahmana Regional sects

1.*Hemmigeyar* are *vaidikas* of the Vatakalai sect. They settled in Hemmige in Narasipur in Kanataka.

2.*Tirumalaiyar* are descendants of Kottikanigadanam Tatacarya of Kancipuram. They are usually Vatakalais and speak Tamil.

3.*Nallan Chakravartis* are Vatakalai immigrants from Kancipuram to Mysore. They are *vaidikas* and speak Tamil.

4. *Embars* Those who migrated from Srirangam to the Andhra and Karnataka region are the Embars, the Prativadi Bhayankarattar. They are usually *vaidikas* and belong to both the Vatakalai and Tenkalai groups.

5.*Kilanattar* is a group of Srivaisnavas who are settled in Mysore. The very name suggests 'those belonging to the country down below the *ghats*'. This explains their area of origin.

6.*Soliyar* they migrated from the Colanadu region. They are also called *purvasikha brahmanas* as they once upon a time wore their tuft in the front part of their head. They were considered lower in status amongst the brahmanical groups. They are usually been associated with temple worship. Some of the prominent Srivaisnavas like Uyyakondar, Tirukottiyur Nambi Engal Alvan, Periyavaccan Pillai and Tiruvaymoli Pillai were all *purvasikhas*. It has been suggested that since these *brahmanas* were inferior in their status, Srivaisnavism provided the opportunity to acquire a new social status, which otherwise would not have been possible.[7]

The Non-Brahmana Regional Sects

1.*Padmasalay* is the weaver community in the Tamil and Telugu region. They consider the Tatacaryas as their *gurus*.

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[5]In 1516 A.D. Kandadai Ramanujayyangar is said to have donated some villages in Srirangapattanam to one Govindaraja Udaiyar. These villages were collectively called Krsnarayapura and later on as Mandya.

[6]Nandigrantha is the Mandya hagiographic text.

[7]N. Jagadeesan, 1977. p. 323.

2.*Ettluttu Margham* are usually Shanar (i.e. toddy tappers) in Tiruchchedinur taluk in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu. They were supposed to have migrated from the Candagiri-Tirupati region, which explains their current affiliations to the temple at Tirupati. However, they are also worship *Sakti worshippres.*

3.*Saurastra or the Pattunulkarans* were the silk weavers who migrated from the Saurashtra region. Before finally settling down at Madurai, they had temporarily established their settlements in the city of Vijayanagar in Karnataka, from where they moved to Kacipuram.After finally settling down at Madurai, ober a period of time they acquired the *cetti* caste status. Epigraphical evidences also mention these groups at Tirumala-Tirupati.[8] Interestingly, they call themselves Saurashtra *brahmanas* and wear the sacred thread. According to the Saurashtras in Madurai, in1705 A.D, one Mangammal after the advice from a *pandita* authorized them to wear the thread.[9]

The Acaryic Affiliations: Individual Srivaisnava families and the Matha Organizations.

Individual Srivaisnava Families

(i)   Lineage starting from Ramanuja

(1)   Uttamanambis
The succession list of the Uttamanambis begins from tPeriyalvar who was also a temple *brahmana.*This justified the claims of Uttamanambis to the resources of the Ranganathasvami temple at Srirangam. However, Uttamanambis remained confined only to Srirangam and did not appear to have evolved and consolidated any hierarchical institutional organization with disciples and followers

The succession list of the Uttamanambis is as follows:[10]

Uttamanabi Succession List

Periyalvar (eight century)   Antal (foster-daughter)
|
Ramandar (son)
|
|
Pillai Aiyar Uttamanambis
|

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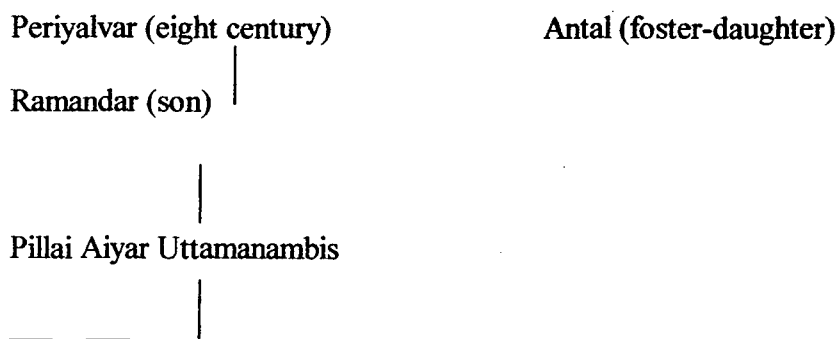
[8]See *Tirumalai- Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Series,*Vol. I, Nos. 38 and 45 T.T.

[9]There is no information about the identity of Mangammal. Probably she was the goddess of the Saurashtra belief system.

[10]The information in this list is based on the *Uttamanambi Vamsavali.*

73 Uttamanambis follow

74 Uttamanambi - Garudavahana Pandita?
(Contemporary of Ramanuja, manager of Dhanvantri shrine.)

75 Uttamanambis-Srirangacary I: Present at Ramanuja's death

79 Uttamanambi Sons-Periya Krsnaraya (1383 A.D.-1397 A.D)[11]

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[11]See N. Jagadeesan, 1977. p. 71, for further details Srirangacarya II was provided with a separate Adinam at Srirangam by Devaraya II (1422-1446 A.D.). He is supposed have conducted numerous repairs and construction of idols

Lineage starting from the immediate disciples of Ramanuja

(1) The Kandadai Family begins their lineage from Mudaliandan who was one of the seventy- two *Simhasanapatis* supposed to have been selected by Ramanuja.

The Kandadai Genealogy

Mudaliandan

Kandadai Andan

Kandadai Tolappan

Periya Vara or Ayi (responsible for the installation of Sriranga Jiyar matha. Also excommunicated from the family due to criminal charges)

Iyan Ramanujacarya

Amman Devaraya

Tirukkopurattu Nainar

Deivarigal Perumal Tolappan

Siddannar

Devaraja Tolappar

Srirangarajanathan Vadhula Desikar

1   2   3   4   5   6
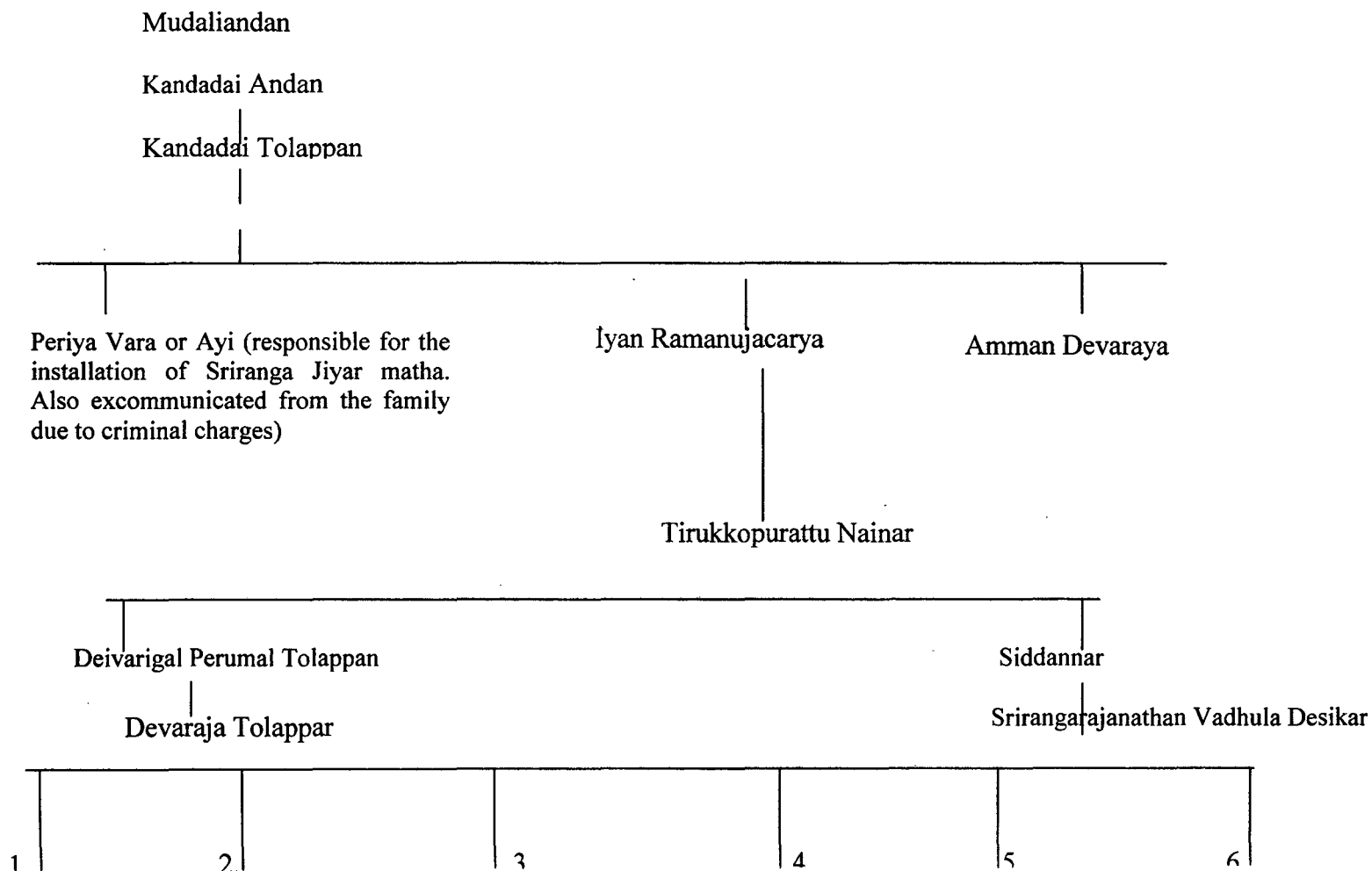
Koil Kandadai Appan and his successors were associated with the temple of Venkatesvarasvami at Tirupati and Koil Kandadai Annan and his successors were associated with the Ranganathasvami temple at Srirangam.[12]Koil Kandadai Annan was one of the eight disciples of Manavala Mamuni.Probably, it is to this branch of the family that Kandadai Ramanuja Ayyangar belonged. His successor was Kandadai Madhavajyyangar, who in turn was succeeded by Kumara Ramanujayyangar. All the three were related to each other, for the Kandadai *guruparampara* clearly states the father to son lineage. These three Kandadais belonged to the Srirangam groups somewhere in the fifteenth-sixteenth century A.D. [13]

However, apart from the Srirangam and Tirupati branch, there were other branches of the Kandadai family. It appears from the *guruparampara* that the Srirangam and the Tirupati branches were the main ones and the rest were off shoots of them.[14]These collateral branches emerged due to the peripatetic nature of the Kandadais, who went to various places, acquired disciples (*sisyas*) and began a lineage of their own. One such branch has been the Sholingur branch. Kandadai Vedantacarya alias Doddayayyangar Appai was a member of this collateral branch. In 1519 A.D. He appears to have donated some moneyfor the propitiation of the deity at Tirupati.[15]He was the son of a famous Sanskrit scholar Venrumalaiyittaperumal Nayanar of the Vadhula *gotra* and Apastamba *sutra* and resided at Ghatikacalam or Sholingur.[16]Other groups that figure in the epigraphical evidence are the Tanjaneri Kandadai family, in Krsnarayapuram, a suburb of Chandragiri and the Kantanavolu family.

Since the Kandadais were based mainly in and around Srirangam and Tirupati, they remained Tamil/Pranbandhic in their outlook and later, and in the nineteenth century professed the Tenkalai affiliation. The *dhyana sloka,* which is recited everyday, begins with the name of the *acarya* who had initiated the disciples and then goes on to the predecessors till Koil Kandadai Appan or Annan as the case may be.[17] Koil Kandadai Annan who was supposed to be the disciple of Manavala Mamuni, emerged as the acaryic head of the regular Tenkalai lineage follows:

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[12]See *Tirumalai- Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Series, Vol.III,* TTDI No. 354 G.T., 655 T.T; Report on the Inscriptions of the Devasthanam Collection, Vol VII, pp. 295-296.

[13]See, the Report on the Inscriptions of the Devasthanam Collection Vol. VII, pp. 216- 217.

[14]As, in the respective *guruparamparas* of these collateral branches, the origin of the lineage is traced to the Kandadais of Srirangam and Tirupati.

[15]*Tirumalai- Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Series Vol.II,* No. 38 T.T. and 379 T.T.

[16]*Tirumalai- Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Series Vol.II* No. 38 and 37 T.T.

[17]The *dhyana sloka* includes the name of the *gurus* and their achievements and is recited everyday.

The Kandadai Tenkalai Lineage

Kandadai Annan
|
Tiruvaymoli Pillai
|
Pillai Lokacarya
|
Nampillai
|
Nanjiyar
|
Parasara Bhattar
|
Mudaliantan
|
Kurattalvan
|
Embar
|
Ramanuja
|
Periyanambi
|
Yamuna
|
Mannakkal Nambi
|
Uyyakondar
|
Nathamuni
|
Nammalvar
|
Sri Ranganatha

Lineages of the professional groups:

Here the professional groups imply the singers and poets attached to the temple organization. Araiyars and Tallapakkam are two such well-known groups and their genealogies show that at one point of time they belonged to the same family. Araiyars trace their descent from Nathamuni who collected the entire *Nalayira Divya Prabandham* and put it to music. In fact, Araiyars specialize in singing the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*, whereas the Tallapakkam composed and sang various songs apart from *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*. However, the genealogy of the Araiyars and Tallapakkam

could not be obtained for the thesis. Based on the inscriptional sources, the linage of Tallapakkam family could be delineated. These two groups of professional singers evolved a lineage of disciples and often were the spiritual preceptors of the various *nayakas*. However, these two groups did not have any organized institutional hierarchy and their following was not at the scale of other Sriviasnava *acaryapurusas*.

Tallapakkham family

This was a family of Srivaisnava musicians/poets originally from Tirupati.[18]They composed numerous compositions dedicated to Venkatesvarasvami and contributed significantly towards the popularity of Tirumala-Tirupati. However, they were peripatetic in nature and figured as donors at Srirangam and Kanci. One does not come across a large following of the Tallapakkam poets, but they appeared as the spiritual preceptors for some of the *nayakas*. For instance, during Acyutadeva raya's period, at the behest of Tallapakkam Tirumalayyangar, a *sarvamanya* grant was made at Ahobaleasvara temple at Vonigunutalapalli by the *karyakarta* of the king.[19]Similarly in 1536 A.D. Rayasam Vengalappa, son of Udayagiri Viranodayala Timmaraja, in the name of his guru Tallapakkam Tirumalayyangar gifted some land and consecrated the image of Laskshmi in the temple of Tiruvengalanatha at Moyillakalva. Tiruvengalanathayyangaru, son of Tirumalayyangar received a village in 1546 A.D.

Form the epigraphical evidence of Srivenkatesvarasvami, four generations of the Tallapakkam family appear to have participated in various temple activities from the fifteenth to the sixteenth countries A.D. Annamacarya is the earliest member of the family but no records are available for him. According to the tradition, Annamacarya was *smarta* Telugu *brahmana* of the Nandavarika sect and belonged to Tallapakka village in the Rajampet taluk of the Cuddapah district.[20]Later he migrated to Tirupati and converted to Srivaisnavism.

Annamacarya's son was Peda-Tirumalayyangar who received political patronage during the period of Acyutadeva *maharaya*.[21]His earliest record is dated to 1517 A.D.- the first half of Krsnadevaraya's reign, where he made some endowments to the temple.[22] However, it is during Acyutadevaraya's period that he appeared as a major benefactor of

[18]They were supposed to be staunch followers of Sri Vaisnavism and their compositions were sectarian in nature, where they derided the *advaitins*.

[19]For details, see, S. Subrahmanya Sastri, *Report on the Inscriptions of the Devasthanam Collection,* 1984, pp.295-306.

[20]S.Subrahmanya Sastri, *Report on the Inscriptions of the Devasthanam Collection with Illustration. Vol. VII.* Delhi, 1984, p.281.

[21]*Tirumalai- Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Series,* Vol. III, No. 76 T.T; Vol. IV, No. 589 T.T, 544 T.T., 588 T.T, 497 T.T, 287 T.T, 270 T.T, 102 G.T, 683 T.T, 682 T.T, 681 T.T.

[22]Ibid, 76 T.T.

the temple, introduced various types of ritual singing and conducted several repair works. He also became the spiritual preceptor of some of the *nayakas*.

After Peda Tirumalayyangar, his son Cinna Tirumalayyanngar followed his father's footsteps. The earliest record is dated around 1547 A.D.[23] However, Cinna Tirumalayyangar was already prominent in the temple affairs during his father's lifetime.[24] Similarly, Cinna Tirumalayyangar's son Tiruvankatayyan appears along with him as donors of villages and cash during 1547 A.D. Inscriptionally, one finds reference of him until 1553 A.D. In the prefaces of Tirumalayyangar's works, the genealogy of the family from Annamacarya down to himself is available to us.
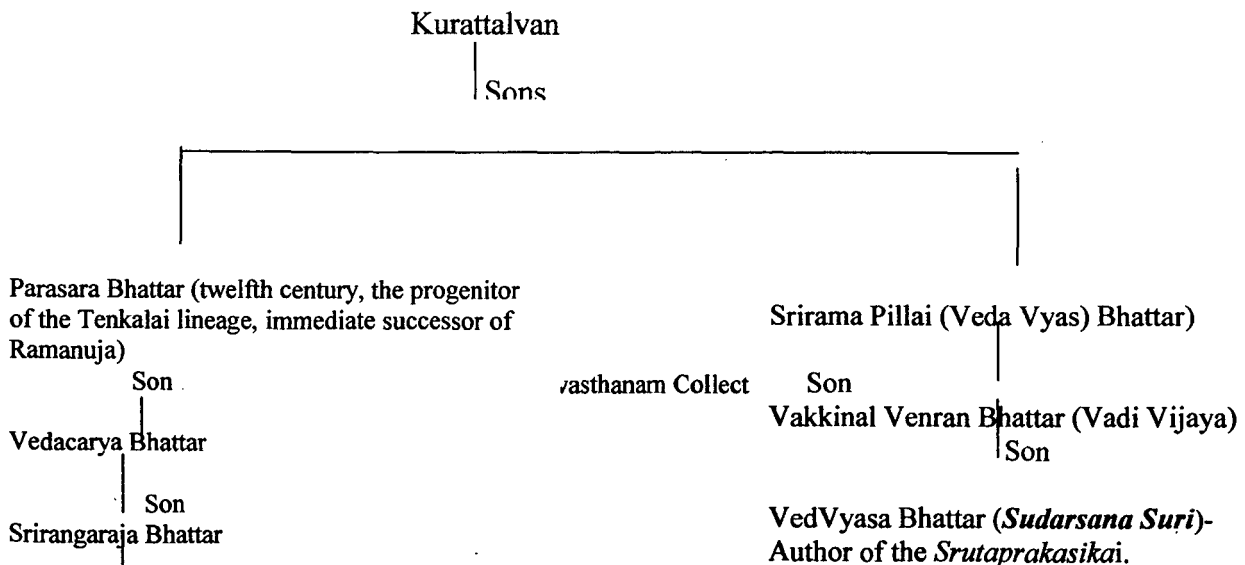
(IV) Lineage evolved for contesting control: the Srivaisnava families with such a lineage were usually temple functionaries. They did not aim to have any hierarchical organization nor any following. Based on their succession list that employed myths and narratives to represent a cogent lineage, they asserted their legitimacy in the temple organization.

The Bhattars

The Bhattars belonged to Srirangam and figured prominently in the *Koil Olugu* as one of the important functionaries at the Ranganathasvami temple.[25] The founder of the Bhattar family was Kurattalvan, also known as Sri Vatsacihna Misra. He was supposed to have been the first disciple of Ramanuja and is said to have saved him from the famous Cola persecution.

Like the Tallapakam, the Bhattars did not have major following but enjoyed important privileges in the temple. The Bhattar family from Kurattalvan downwards was entitled to recite the *Puranas* in the presence of the deity at Srirangam. One of them, i.e. Parasara Bhattar, the seventh in descent was probably the *guru* of Mummadi Nayaka of the Telengana region. The *nayaka* donated a village to the Bhattar. The Srirangam plates of Mummadi Nayaka furnish the genealogy of the Bhattars:

The Genealogy of the Bhattars

Kurattalvan
|
Sons

Parasara Bhattar (twelfth century, the progenitor of the Tenkalai lineage, immediate successor of Ramanuja)
Son
|
Vedacarya Bhattar
|
Son
Srirangaraja Bhattar

vasthanam Collect

Srirama Pillai (Veda Vyas) Bhattar)
|
Son
Vakkinal Venran Bhattar (Vadi Vijaya)
|
Son

VedVyasa Bhattar (*Sudarsana Suri*)-
Author of the *Srutaprakasika*i.

The Sri Vaisnava Matha and their lineage[26]

The *mathas* of the Tenkalai Affiliation

The *mathas* traced their lineage to Manavala Mamunigal or Vedanta Desika, thus affiliating to the *Prabandhic* or the *Bhasyic* School. Later on, they came to be identified as the Tenkalai and Vatakalai.

(1)   Melkote

The Yatiraja Jiyar *Matha* was said to have been founded by Ramanuja. The first *jiyar* of the *matha* was *koyil kelvi* Tirunarayana Jiyar. However, the Vedanti Ramanuja Jiyya matha is represented in the inscriptions from the fourteenth century onwards. However, the *matha parampara, Yatiraja Paramparaprabhavam* attributes the existence of the *matha* in the temple from the time of Ramanuja who is also attributed with the foundation of the *matha:*

Jiyars of the Yatiraja Jiyar Matha (according to Yatiraja Paramparprabhavam

Ramanuja (twelfth century)

|

Sridesai Tirunarayana Jiyaru (twelfth century)

|

Sri Yatirajajiyaru (twelfth century)

|

Sri Yadugiri Narayana Jiyar (thirteenth century)

|

(11 more *Jiyars*, from the thirteenth to mid fourteenth centuries A.D whose names are not given)

|

Sri Ramanujajiyaru (fourteenth century)

|

Sri Yatiraja Ramanujajiyaru (fifteenth century)

|

Sri Vedanti Ramanuja Munigal
(Fourteenth in line – sixteenth century A.D.)

|

Sri Sampatkumara Ramanuja Jiyar (sixteenth century).

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[26]In most cases, the dates are not citied as it is difficult to establish any chronological sequence. The cases where chronology is given are taken from the texts themselves and are subject to doubts.

Interestingly, all the *jiyars* appear to be from Melkote (Tirunarayanapuram) itself, thus contradicting the epigraphical evidence regarding the *matha* being *desantri(*foreign) in origin.

Vanamamalai matha of Nanguneri (Tirunelveli).

According to the *Gaganagirimueni Guruparampara Prabhavam* (the *matha parampara*), the early inhabitants of Nanguneri were the S*oliyars*, who were *smartas* of Vaisnava leaning and the *Sevaiyars*, a set of Vaisnava *brahmanas* who were supposed to have belonged to the Vedic tradition. However, Manavla Mamunigal came from Srirangam, brought these various Vaisnava groups together, and took over the management of the Vanamalai temple. As stated, Manavala Mamuni had eight disciples called *Astadiggagajas*. One of them was Ramanuja Jiyar Svami, the first pontifical head of the *matha.*[27] According to the text, Manavla Mamuni became the spiritual preceptor of the ruler of Alvar Tirunagari under whose jurisdiction, Nanguneri emerged as the Srivaisnava centre.[28]Thereafter the king granted the permission for the installation of the *matha* and the appointment of Ramanuja Jiyar as its head:

Deed if gift executed by *Pushpanjali Yati* in favour of Ramanuja *yati* on the eighth of Panguni Kollam Andu 622 Amarapaksha Dvitiyai. Whereas we have this day handed over by means of this gift *pattayam*, the Vanamanalai Perumal temple situated in the town of Srivaramangai in the Vanavanad country and the masonry *matha* given to us by our *guru* Puspanjali *sanyasi* to the said Ramanuja *yati* who is entitled to enjoy as long as the sun and the moon lasts and to the subsequent *swamigals.*[29]

The *Gaganagirimuni Mahatyam* gives details about twenty-seven *jiyars* (i.e. till 1933). The information about the first ten *jiyars* is presented here:

(1) Ramanuja jiyar (1447-1448 A.D.): was a Seidaveliyar *brahmana* of Nanguneri. After he became the head of the *matha*, he got several grants from the Travancore rulers, visited north, secured disciples from Tirupati and Srirangam, where Manavala Mamuni is said to have handed to him the Aranganagarappan idol, now in the *matha*. From Srirangam, the *jiyar* also brought four *arcakas* of the *Vaikhansa Agama* tradition and installed them in the temple .The *Jjyar* introduced several festivals and rituals and conducted repairs. His descendants until day enjoy the first *tirtham(*honours of worship) in the temple.

(2) Kalamur Varadamunisvami (1483-1502 A.D.) He was a native of Melkote. During his period, his sons and relatives came and resided in the *matha*. Consequently, this

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[27]According to the tradition, Ramanuja Svami belonged to the Nanguneri area.

[28]Manavala Mamuni is said to have come from Srirangam to Alvar Tirunagari to organize the Tenkalai Srivaisnavisa order.

[29]Brass Copper plate inscription cited in R. Varadacari 1972, p. 37.

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became a source of tension between the *jiyar* and the *sthanathar* of the temple. Finally, the *jiyar* left for Melkote and spent the rest of his life there.

(3) Sendalankarar Svami (1502-1520 A.D.) He conducted several constructions in the temple and granted his private property at Shermadevi in the name of the *matha*.

(4) Anaitttalagum Kanda Rangappa Svami (1520-1526 A.D.) came from Srirangam.

(5) Timmayyangarsvami (1526-1544) a Kondagai Sholiyar belonging to the family of Tiruvaymolipillai and a native of Tiruvottiyur in Maravarnadu of Ramnad district. He instituted the *matha* at Tirunarayanapuram and Alvar Tirunagari.

(6) Emperumanar Svami (1544-1599 A.D.) member of the *Vinjimur* family.

(7) Periya Tiruvenkatasvami (1599-1607 A.D.) was a native of Coladesa.

(8) Konappasvami (1607-1617 A.D.) was a member of the Vitthalapuram family of Astagotram.

(9) Cinna Rangappasvami (1624-1637 A.D.) came from the northern districts.

(10) Nadu Tiruvenkatasvami (1637-1700 A.D.)

The activities of the last four *jiyars* revolved mainly around the protection of the *matha* from the Maravas who wanted to appropriate the temple resources and eliminate the *matha* control over the temple. However, due to strong *nayaka* patronage, the *matha* were able to maintain their position of authority and power. Infact the tenth *jiyar* is supposed to have intervened on behalf of the people of Nanguneri who were protesting against the taxes levied by the Travancore ruler.

3. Sriranganarayan Jiyar Matha at Srirangam is of the Tenkalai affiliation. The first pontiff was the disciple of Kurattalvan-a disciple of Ramanuja. The *Koil Olugu* and *Sriranganarayana Jiyar Guruparampara* place this *jiyar* in 1126 A.D., while the *Annam Tirumaligai Olugu* place this *jiyar* somewhere in the fourteenth century.[30]

The other Tenkalai mathas are the Tirukkurungudi *matha* and Emperumaner *Matha* at Tirukkovalur. The head of the Tirukkurungudi Jiyar *matha is* known as Sri Perurlala Jiyar. One does not come across much inscriptional evidence on Emperumanar Jiyar *matha* except that the *jiyar* and his *matha* are mentioned in an inscription recording a gift of land for offerings in the temple at Tirukkannapuram.

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30   N. Jagaeesan, 1977. p. 17.

2. The Jiyar matham at Tirumala-Tirupati. The epigraphical reference of Sri Venkatesvarasvami point towards some kind of a lineage from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries A.D.[31]

(1)   Mullai Tiruvenkatana Jiyar (1387-1392 A.D) was an agent of Harihara II and arranged for the celebration of a festival in the name of the king in return of a certain amount of payment. The *jiyar* was the manager of *Arisanalayan-nandavanam*.

(2)   Emperuanar Jiyar (1445-1439 A.D.)-The *Koil Kelvi* and manger of the *Pankayachchelli-nandavanam*.

(3)   Anusandhanam Tiruvenkata Jiyar (1504-1520 A.D.) was the *Periya Koil Kelvi* and manager of *Tiruvenkatamatham nandavanam* and *Perarulalan nandavanom*.

(4)   Ramanuja Jiyar (1520-1527 A.D.) was the manager of the *Parikayachchelli-nandavanam*.

(5)   Vada Tiruvenkata Jiyar (1527-1535 A.D.)was the manager of the *Parikayachchelli-nandavanam*.

(6)   Yatiraja-Jiyar (1535-1541 A.D.) was the *Koil-Kelvi*, the manager of the *Parkayachchelli-nandavanam* and *Perarulalan matha*.

(7)   Vanamamalai Jiyar (1541-1545 A.D.) was the disciple of Ramanuja Jiyar-the fourth pontiff of the *matha*.

(8)   Annan Ramanuja Jiyar (1594 A.D.) was the *Koil Kelvi* and the last known representative of the *matha* and was powerful during the reign of Venkata I.

The *mathas* of Vatakalai Affiliations

1. **Brahmatantrasvatantra Parakala Matha at Mysore** As mentioned earlier, the epigraphical evidence refers to a certain *Brahmatantra Svatantrasvami* and a *matha* in the Varadarajasvami temple at Kancipuram in 1360 A.D. Thereafter, the inscriptional evidence on this *jiyar* and the *matha* are not available. However the *Granthopasamhara* of the Alankara Manihara, the *matha parampara* and *Vatakalai Guruparampara Prabhavam* state that the *matha* shifted to Tirupati and from there to Melkote and finally to Mysore. Both of them also inform that the Brahmatantrasvatantra Svami was the founder of the *matha* and hence the first *jiyar*. His original name was Perarulalayyan of Viravalli. He was the disciple of Vedanta

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31*Tirumalai- Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical Series*, Vol. I, 103 T.T, 57 T.T, 43 T.T; Vol. II, Nos. 106, 48, 15 and 369-T.T. and 190 and 411 G.T; Vol. III, 333 .T.T, 472 T.T.

Desika, and accompanied him to various places.[32]Vedanta Desika is supposed to have handed over certain idols, particularly that of Hayagriva to him to be installed in the *matha*. According to the texts, Ramanuja handed down these idols to the initial *acaryas* of the Vatakalai lineage. Thus through the lineage, the texts established a direct connection between the *matha* and Ramanuja.

The *matha paramparas* cite interesting reasons for the shifting of the *mathas* to various temple centres. At the behest of Lord Venkatesvara, the first *jiyar* accepted the trusteeship of the temples. During his tenure, he is supposed to have established an image of Vedanta Desika in the *matha* at Tirumala, and in a *mantapa* in the Govindarajasvami temple at Tirupati. Similarly, at the request of the *dandanayaka* Yadyuraya of Mysore, the *jiyar* shifted to Melkote:

> In recognition of his services to the faith, Lord Venkatesa appeared, in Brahmatantrasvatantra's dream and commanded him to take up the supervision of the management of his shrine and regulate also the services to be conducted therein, in accordance with the Srivaisnava S*ampradayam* as had been laid down by Sri Ramanuja.[33]

Therefore, it has been projected that the *matha* shifted its base from one temple centre to another at the behest of the god, who wanted the *jiyars* to spread the *Visistadvaitic* faith. So strong was the commitment of the various *jiyars* towards the faith that in the seventeenth century, Aurangzeb was very impressed and is said to have permitted the erstwhile *jiyar* to build a Desikar temple anywhere in South India.[34] According to T.A. Swaminatha Aiyar the first eleven chiefs of the *matha* were subjected to the Ahobilam *matha* because the Parakala *matha* tradition includes the recitation of certain *taniyans* specific only to the Ahobila *matha*.[35] However, since both the *mathas* are of the Vatakalai sect, probably the *taniyans* are a part of the Vatakalai tradition. The following are the first fifteen names of the *jiyars* of the Brahmatantra Parakal *matha:*

(1) Sri Perarulala Jiyar Brahmatantrasvatantra Svamigal.

(2) Sri Vatsya Vedanta Ramanuja Brahmatantrasvatantra.

(3) Srinivasa Brahmatantrasvatantra (the author of the Vatakalai *Muayirappati Guruparamparaprabhavam*).

(4) Sri Parakala.

(5) Sri Vedanta Ramanuja.

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[32]This also includes Satyamangalam, where Vedanta Desika is said to taken refuge while escaping from the Muslim persecution. Vedanta Desika was trying to save the *utsavamurti* of Ranganatha.

[33]This episode is narrated in details in the *matha parampara*. Here only a summary is presented

[34]T.A. Swaminatha Aiyar *Acarya Sarithira Malai (Appendix),* in, N.Jagadeesan, 1977. p. 159.

[35] Ibid.,

(6) Srinivasa Brahmatantra.

(7) Sri Narayana.

(8) Sri Ramanuja.

(9) Sri Brahmatantrasvatantra.

(10)   Sri Yatiraja.

(11)   Sri Varada Brahmatantrasvatantra.

(12)   Sri Parankusa.

(13)   Sri Kavitarkika Simha.

(14)   Sri Vedanta Yativarya.

(15)   Sri Jnanabdhi Brahmatantra Parkala.

2. The Van Sathagopa Jiyar Matha at Ahobilam:

> The *Sannidhi Guruparampara,* the hagiography of the *matha* and the inscriptional details furnish a comprehensive genealogy of the Van Sathagopa Jiyar *matha.*[36]According to the text, the formal head of the *matha* is the deity itself, Alagiya Singar (i.e. Lakshmi Narasimha). Therefore, all the *mathadhipatis* are called Alagiya Singars:

(1) Srinivasa, *son of Kidambi Kesavacarya of Tirunarayanapuram* (Melkote) 1398-1458 A.D.- founded the *matha* in 1398 A.D. It is said that he established the *matha* through divine inspiration Lord Narasimha appeared in his dream, ordered him to take sanyasrama, and bestowed on him the title of Sathagopa Jiyar. He is said to have traveled widely. At Alvar Tirunagari, he reconsecrated the image of Nammalvar, converted the Pandya king to Srivaisnavism and got back the throne for Mukundadeva of Orissa.[37]At Puri, the *jiyar* established the images of Nammalvar and Ramanuja.

(2) Shasti Prabardha Nirmata (1458-73 A.D.).

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[36]There is a discrepancy between the *matha parampara* and the epigraphical evidence regarding the dates cited for the *jiyars.* According to the report on the inscriptions of Tirumala-Tirupati, the second *jiyar's* data is around 1506 A.D. followed by the third *jiyar.* Thereafter the fourth *jiyar,* Srinivasa's date is form 1506-1528 A.D., when he visited Tirumala and established a *matha* called Van Sathakopan Matham (276 T.T.) and made numerous donations. See, S. Subrahmanya Sastri, *Report on the Inscriptions of the Devasthanam Collection with Illustration. Vol. VII.* Delhi, 1984, pp. 214-216

[37]The shrine at Alvar Tirunagai is said to have become a centre of Saiva worship. The *jiyar's* installation of the image of Nammalvar reconverted it to Srivaisnavism.

(3)   Pararikusa Jiyar I (1473-1485 A.D.) founded several *brahmana* settlements at Uragadam, Kalattur near Kanci.

(4)   Srinivasa I (1485 A.D.-1493 A.D.)

(5)   Van Sathagopa II (1493-99).

(6)   Shasta Parankusa (1499-1513 A.D.).

(7)   Sathagopa III.

(8)Parankusa III.

(9) Narayana II.

(10) Sathagopa IV.

(11)Srinivasa II.

(12) Narayana III.

(13) Vira Raghava I.

(14) Narayana IV.

(15) Vira Raghava II.

(16) Sathagopa V (1694-98 A.D.).

Interestingly, the *Sannidhi Parampara* states that the first *jiyar* installed the *matha* in order to spread Srivaisnavism amongst the hill tribes at Ahobilam. This seems to be quite improbable considering the fact that the *matha* has been a Vatakalai, and hence conservative in its outlook.. According to P.B. Annangaracariar, the *matha* was derived from the lineage of Vadakkuttiruvidi Pillai and was of *Tenkalai* affiliation and from the seventh *jiyar*, onwards the *matha* became a Vatakalai.

3. The Srimad Andavan Asrama[38]

This Asrama is based in Srirangam but does not have any institutional base. It belongs to the *Munitreya Sanyasins* who are called *Andavans*. The long lineage presented by the *Munitriya* tradition is as follows.   There are two theories about the origin of the Andavan Asrama. According to one, Gopaladesikan also known as Tirukkundandai Desikan of Kumbhakonam belonged to the sixteenth century. He had three disciples viz, Vatrajiruppu Srinivasa Mahadesikan, Cheyyanam Ranganatha Mahadesikar and Vatuttur Vedanta Ramanuja Mahadesikan. Hence the *Munitreya Sampradaya* as the name suggests was represented by the three, *munis* or *sanyasins*.The second theory asserts that

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[38]The entire account of Andavan *Asrama parampara* was given to me by S. Rajagopalam, Chennai.

the Munitreya tradition is much older and refers to the whole body of the Srivaisnava faith handed down by the three *acaryas* Nathmuni, Yamunacarya and Ramanuja. However, the first theory is more popular.

Of the three disciples, Vaduttur Ramanuja Mahadesikan had a major following at Srirangam. He was the founder of the Andavan Asrama and was the first Andavana. He had three disciples from whom again three different traditions emerged. Thus, Vadattur Ramanuja Mahadesikan was considered as the founder of two different Srivaisnava institutions, viz, the Asrama, which was a parallel of the *matha* and its head, were *sanyasins* (ascetics, renunciates) and *acaryapurusas* who were *grhstas* (householders i.e.,the Navalppakam and the Kedantapatti family). However, the date of all three *sanyasins* is not available, although the beginning of the Andavan lineage can be dated approximately to the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries A.D., approximately the time of the founding *acarya,* Vadattur Ramanuja Mahadesikan.

(c) DUALITY

After Rāmānuja, the spiritual order of the *ācāryas* bifurcates into the sectarian division of Vaṭakalai and Teṅkalai. Although there are several variations in the sectarian spiritual order, (as discussed in the chapter) but here the most commonly known one is presented.

Table 8. Vaṭakalai Guruparampāra

Tamil Name	Sanskrit name	Place of Birth	Date (App)
Tirrukurughappirān Pillāṇ	Kūrukeśa	Śrīrangam	Twelfth century
Engal Ālvān	Viṣṇu citta	Śrīrangam	Twelfth-to thirteenth century
Nadādūr Ālvān	Varadācārya	Kaṇupuram	Thirteenth century
Rāmamya Appillāṇ	Ātreya Rāmānuja	Śrīrangam	Thirteenth century.
Vedanta Deśika	Venkatanātha/Vedantācārya	Tuppil (near Śrīrangam)	1268-1310 A.D.

Table 9. Teṅkalai Spiritual Order (Post-Rāmānuja)

TAMIL NAME	SANSKRIT NAME	PLACE OF BIRTH	DATE (APPROXIMATE)
Anantālvān	Ananta Sūri	Siruputtur or Kiranjur (near Srirangapatnam)	Contemporaries of Rāmānuja.
Kuraṭṭālvān	Kuranātha or Kūreśa	Kuram (Kāñcī)	
Mudaliyāṇtān	Dāsarathī	Pacchapperumal Kōil (near Punamalai)	
Embār	Govinda-Deśika.	Madura-maṅgalam	1024-1129
Periya Bhaṭṭar	Parāśara Bhaṭṭar	Śrīrangam	1062-90
Nañjīyar	Nigamānta Yogi or Vedānta Yogi	Śringerī	1112-1213
Nampillai	Jagadācārya	Nambūr (near Tiruchchirapalli)	1207-1321
Periyavāccānpillai	Kṛṣṇāsamahvaya	Sēṅganmūr (near Kumbhakōṇam)	1226-1321
Vaṭakkuttiruvīdippiḷḷai	Kṛṣṇapāda-pādabja	Śrīrangam	1226?
Udagariyāṇ	Lokācārya (Piḷḷai)	Śrīrangam	1264-1327
Tiruvāymoḻi Piḷḷai	Śrīśaileṣa	Āḻvār Tirunagarī	14th century
Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇigal	Rāmānuja Jāmātri, Yatindrapravaṇṇa Vara-Varamuni.	Āḻvār Tirunagarī	1370-1443

CHAPTER IV

PILGRIMAGE NETWORK AND THE ŚRIVAIṢṆAVA COMMUNITY

The concept of pilgrimage contributed significantly towards the consolidation of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community in the post-Rāmānuja period. On one hand, pilgrimage provided an arena for group/community interaction and presented a collective consciousness. On the other, it provided a single context for the assertion of multiple identities within the overarching community paradigm. This is well reflected in the epigraphical records that clearly stated the sectarian and multiple statuses of the donor and donee and their affiliation with a particular shrine.The structure of the Śrīvaiṣṇava pilgrimage tradition comprised of a religious network that linked up one hundred and eight sacred sites, most of which had temples. These sites were not only confined to the southern boundaries, but were present in the northern region also, thereby attributing a pan-Indian status to Srivaisnavism. This delineated a sacred geography for the community and provided an area of circulation for the Śrīvaiṣṇavas.

The ideological context of the pilgrimage network with sacred centers and shrines was provided by the *arcavatāra* concept, which was elaborated upon in the philosophical treatises of the fourteenth - fifteenth centuries. The implications were that the *paratva* (transcendental) lord became *saulabhya* (accessible) through the *arcavatāras* i.e. incarnations in the form of temple images, an idea already stated in the hymns of the Ālvārs. Situated at a particular time and place, an *arcavatara* was different from the usual *avatāra,* which transcended the temporal and spatial boundaries. The pilgrimge tradition was associated with this *arcarvatāra* image.[1] Further textual exposition in the hagiographies and the *sthalapurāṇa, sthalamahātmyas* and *oḷugūs* through myths and legends enhanced the accessibility of the divine.[2] In these texts, the individual sacred centres, the *divyadeśas* became the locale for sacred deeds, miracles and redemption,

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[1] Friedhelm Hardy, "Ideology and Cultural Contents of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Temple," in *South Indian Temples: An Analytical Reconsideration,* Burton Stein ed, New Delhi, 1978, pp.119-15.

[2] For a detailed study of the *sthalapuranas,* see, David Dean Shulman, *Tamil Temple Myths: Sacrifice and Divine Marriage in South Indian Saiva Tradition,* 1980, Princeton.

thereby linking the supernatural with the mundane, almost replicating the heavenly abode of the god.

Thus, the notion of pilgrimage was centred on the composite nature of the sacred centers and the network between them. The actual practice of pilgrimage was reflected in the enactment of the textual ideas in the form of sacred performances in the festivals and rituals that involve the various sections of the community. Besides, the journey to the scared shrines within a well-defined area of circulation strengthened the spatial identity of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas.[3]Circulation implied not only movement and interaction of the people, but also transmission, exchange and circulation of ideas and beliefs, which influenced and enriched the community ideology. In this context, the pilgrimage sites became the meeting ground for the *ācāryas*, the *maṭhādhipatis*, and their respective followers, where the former could symbolically assert their claims as the spiritual mediator between man and god.

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to show that how through various stages of community construction, the pilgrimage network developed as a concept as well as a process, that coincided with the various stages of community construction and finally emerged as a system in the post-Rāmānuja period. Section one focuses on the pre-history of the Śrīvaiṣṇava pilgrimage tradition. Section two focuses on the hymns of the Āḻvārs, in which pilgrimage was merely an ideational expression of *bhakti* associated with the omnipresence of the divine at various sites. Section three and four will deal with the post-hymnal phase, particularly from the twelfth century onwards, when the concept of *divyadeśa* emerged in the hagiographies and was further developed in the *sthalapurāṇas*. Two ideas were introduced for the first time. One, the actual journey to the sacred places. Two, pilgrimage as a socio-cultural institution where each site with its individual history, legends, rituals and deities was associated with the collective consciousness of the community.

Divine Marriage in South Indian Saiva Tradition, 1980, Princeton.
[3]The concept of circulation has been borrowed from Burton Stein, "Circulation and the Historical Geography of Tamil Country," *Journal of Asian Studies* 37, 1970, 1: 7-26.

HOLY PLACES INCLUDING 108 DIVYA DESAS OF THE SRIVAISNAVAS

PUNJAB

● Badrika

● Salagrama

Mathura ●

● Ayodhya

● Nanisaranyam

BIHAR - BENEGAL

RAJASTHAN

● Kenduli □ 14

GUJARAT

● Dvaraka

ORISSA

INDIA

■ Purusottama-Puri

ANDHRA

KARNATAKA

□ 15 Himbapura

● Ahobilam

Tiruchchanur

Sriperumbudur
■ b.1017

Tirumala ●

Tirupati ●

Tirumalisai □ 4

Mallante

Yadavagiri □

Kanchipuram □ 1 □

Mallapura □ 3

Mysore ●

Mallai □ 2

● Brukkavalur

Srirangam ●

Tirunandaragudi □ 9

12 □ Vanji

8 □ d.1137 ■

Viranarayanapuram □ 13

6 & 7 □ Srivilliputtur ●

Tirukkurungudi

Rangamari ●●

● Kurugur □ 10 & 11

Alvar Tirunagari

SRI LANKA

DIVYA DESAS

Tondainadu	22
Colanadu	40
Nadunadu	2
Pandiyanadu	18
Caranadu	13
Vadanadu	11
Total	106

Note: 2 in the Other Work

LEGEND

● Holy places with Mathas

■ Sites marking outer limits of travels of Ramanuja and other places of particular importance in their mission

■ b Birthplace of Ramanuja

■ d Place of death of Ramanuja

□ Principal pithas (religious centeres) assosiated with Ramanuja

I. The Pre-history of the Śrīvaiṣṇava Pilgrimage Tradition (as reflected in the Cankam texts)

The beginning of the pre-history of the pilgrimage tradition in general can be traced to the tinai concept of the Cankam period that associated the divinity with five different ecozones. This was the beginning of the locative tradition, where a particular deity was associated with the geography of a place.[4] The conception of the divine was simple and did not involve any reference to a structural shrine. The tiṇai concept involved the association of the diverse forms of subsistence with geographical location, nature of the terrain, material culture and the level of technology.[5] The Cankam texts speak of five specific tiṇais, whose ecology, cultural and material factors influenced the characteristics of the corresponding divinity.

The various forest tribes with their main occupation of hunting, food gathering inhabited the hilly and forested area termed as kuṟiñci. Murugaṉ was the lord of the kuṟiñci and was associated with warrior like qualities. His lance or spear was the much-referred weapon in the Cankam texts, which acquired metaphorical meanings. Mullai comprised of the pasturelands with low hills and thin forests inhabited by the shepherds whose main occupation was cattle rearing and shifting cultivation. The lord of the mullai landscape was Māyōṉ/Māl who was later identified as Viṣṇu. The Cankam references to Māyōṉ emphasized on the notion of a perfect lover. Marutam or the agrarian areas were mostly in the fertile river valleys. The people of the marutam were mostly the ploughmen engaged primarily in the paddy cultivation. The lord of marutam was Indra or Ventaṉ. Mainly the fishing community inhabited neytal, the littoral landscape. Varuṇa was the lord of the neytal. The paḻai zone was a seasonal phenomenon of the summer. During summer, cultivation was not possible due to scarcity of water. Therefore, they took to wayside and cattle lifting. Koṟṟavai was the goddess of the palai region possessing fierce and aggressive qualities.

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[4] Diana L.Eck, 'India's Tīrthas: Crossings in Sacred Geography,' *History of Religion* 20,4, 1981,pp. 320-342.According to Eck, it was a locative tradition in which genii loci under a variety of names-*yaksas, nagas, ganas, matrikas* were associated with groves and pool, hillocks and villages, wielding power for good or ill within their areas of jurisdiction.

The late Cankam texts mainly the *Paripāṭal* and the *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* of the fifth-sixth centuries A.D. represented the northern epic-Puranic ideas that influenced the *tiṇai* perception of the divine and transformed the localized deities into universal transcendental godheads.[6]Murukaṉ was fused with Skanda, the Aryan god of war. Māl/Māyōṉ was identified with Visṇu. Ventan and Varuna of the *marutam* and *neytal* *tiṇais* were gradually marginalized and in the subsequent period do not find any mention. Korṟavai, the goddess of *palai* was important but the process of her absorption in the Saiva pantheon as Durga, the consort of Siva already begins.

The *Paripāṭal* and the *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* articulated for the first time a new devotional milieu.[7]The notion of a personal devotion, i.e. *bhakti* to the transcendental god appeared in the poems dedicated to Murukaṉ and Māyōṉ in these texts. The poetical expressions were in the vernacular, i.e. Tamil, and thus providing for the first time an alternative to Sanskrit as the religious language. *Bhakti* became the ideational basis for introducing the temple milieu for the first time. The deity in the temple symbolized the immanence of the transcendental god. The immanence was mainly understood, as the divine will to reside amongst the people and remove their sorrows. Hence, was the beginning of the ideas on the temple, which became central to the devotional culture and the notion of pilgrimage from seventh century onwards.

The temple milieu delineated a sacred geography that became a spatial network for future religious interaction. The *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* presented a sacred geography of the Murukan temples at Parankuṉṟam (Madurai), Tiruvavinankūṭi (Palaṉī), Tiruvērakam (Swāmimalai), Palamutircōlai (Tiruchchendūr), Cenkōṭu and Erakam. In this text, a sense of pilgrimage was visible in the description of these places by a Murukaṉ devotee, who directed others to go to the god's shrines and obtain his grace.[8]A notion of Vaisṇava sacred geography did not emerge in the Cankam texts. The *Perumpāṉarruppaṭai*, the *Cilappadikāram*, the *Kalittokai*, and the *Paripāṭal* referred to the temples of Māyōṉ

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[5]For details, refer, Chapter II, Section 1, *The Beginning.*
[6]For details, see, R.Champakalakshmi, 1996,pp.136-138; idem, *Trade, Ideology and Urbanization: South India 300 BC to AD 1300*, New Delhi, 1996, p.60.

[7]For further details on these texts, see, A.K.Ramanujan, 1993,pp.109-117; R.Champakalaksmi, 1981,pp.2-35; idem, 1996,p.136; Friedhelm Hardy, 1983,202-207.
[8]An analysis of the *Tirumurukārruppaṭai* for the theme of pilgrimage will be useful for a comparative study. However, currently it is beyond the scope of this work.

worship at Vehkā (Kāñcī), Tirumāliruñcolai (near Madurai), Ātakamātam (the Golden Hall in the Cera region), Puhār (Manivannan), Turutti (future Srīrangam) and Vēngadam (future Tirupati). However, one does not come across any references to structural shrines with ritual specialists. Since the construction of a Vaisnava community had not yet begun, the concept of pilgrimage also did not develop. The case of Tirumaliruncolai stands out as an exception as the *Paripāṭal* gives vivid details about the natural surroundings of the site reflecting the nature landscape of the Cankam poetry such as hilly areas, forests and forks of rivers.

Nevertheless, the Visnu sites in the Cankam period indicated that permanent sacred centres for Māl/Visnu had emerged by the fifth-sixth centuries. These sites provided the blueprint for the Srīvaisnava sacred geography in the hymnal tradition that inspired the future development of the pilgrimage network. Srīrangam, Kāñcīpuram and Tirupati emerged as dominant pilgrimage sites later in the medieval period, because of their Cankam lineage that bestowed upon them a respectable antiquity.

II.   The Proto-history of the Srīvaisnava Pilgrimage Tradition: The Hymnal Phase

The hymns of the Ālvārs mark the beginning of the sacred geography that represented the fusion of the folk and the Puranic tradition. The *tinai* concepts with its emphasis on the ecological association with the divinity provided the inspiration for the landscape poetry in the hymns. For the first time, a spatial distribution of sites dedicated to Visnu emerged coherently.[9] This final transformation and accommodation of Māyōn worship in Puranic Vaisnavism took place in the context of the *bhakti* of the Ālvārs and the emergence of a formal universalistic religion under the Pallavas and the Pāndyas from the seventh to the ninth centuries.

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[9] It is to be noted that in the *Tirumurukārruppaṭai*, already a comprehensive spatial distribution of Murukan shrines had emerged. Vaisnavism did not evince such a sacred geography. For details on the sacred geography in the Ālvār poetry, see, Friedhelm Hardy, 1978, pp. 122-126; idem, 1983, pp. 256-261.

The hymns of the Ālvārs represented a progression in religiosity starting from mysticism to a gradual transformation into a sectarian cult devoted exclusively to Viṣṇu. In this connection, the temple assumed importance, for it represented in concrete terms the divine presence within a structural shrine thus making Viṣṇu accessible in a specific place or places to everybody irrespective of their caste status. The *arcavatāra* concept, i.e. incarnation became the basis for projecting the accessibility of the deity. Further, this concept also projected the omnipotence and heroism of Viṣṇu, as is evident from the repeated emphasis on certain *avatāra* figures of Vāmana (Trivikrama), Kūrma (tortoise), Varāha (boar) and Kṛṣṇa. Later on, particularly in the hymns of Tirumgaiālvār, Narasimha (lions) finds a special mention. Therefore the conception of the godhead as a complete personality, that is a good lover, a good warrior, full of compassion (*saulabhya*) corresponding with the ideal theory of kingship propagated by the Pallavas and Pandyas through various myths and iconographic forms. The devotion of the Ālvārs assumes further dimensions when an attempt was made to link Viṣṇu's omnipresence with several shrines on this earth, i.e. other than those mentioned above. Several local shrines were identified as abodes of Viṣṇu through this important process.[10] The hymns describe these local gods as none other than Viṣṇu who has taken various forms to live amongst his devotees. At one level, these local shrines were integrated into the Vaiṣṇava fold, while on the other; the hymns retained the locality's individual status among the Viṣṇu shrines. According to Hardy, 'Not only did the Ālvārs take great care in describing the local setting of the individual temple, but they also began a trend which then in the course of Śrīvaiṣṇava history became standardized to address the local god by his own specific name.'[11]

The location of the various shrines associated with Viṣṇu mapped out the sacred geography of Srivaisnavism in the hymnal literature. This comprised of the region from Vēngaḍam to Madurai, and from Cape Comorin to the southwest coast of Kerala, which

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[10] How only certain local shrines came to be identified as Vaiṣṇava sites by the Ālvārs is not clear. Probably there was already a pre-existing tradition in these areas that exhibited some showed proclivity towards Vaisnavism.

[11] Friedhelm Hardy, 1978, p.124.

included Emakulam and Coimbatore (i.e. Kongu region).[12]This geography also formed a 'circulatory region' of Vaisnavism, which emerged because of the movement of the Vaisnava saints, who were like the itinerant bards in search of patrons, here the God himself being the patron. This spatial distribution of shrines became the basis for the development of a Tamil regional pilgrimage network and more elaborate South Indian and Pan-Indian links in the Vijayanagar period, when the community identity was articulated.

However, it is through the collective perception of the entire corpus of the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* that an overall sacred geography can be discerned. An analysis of the hymns of each Ālvār throws an interesting light on the individual understanding of the concept of pilgrimage and its relation to the community consciousness. This individual perception corresponded with the character of *bhakti* as expressed by the Ālvārs themselves.

(i) The Early Ālvārs

The integration of the Tondaimandalam region under the Pallavas resulted in the formalization of the Puranic religion (of Vaisnavism and Saivism) with the temple as the super-ordinate instrument appeared in the seventh century. Vēngadam, Kāñcī, Mallai (Mahābalipuram), Māyilai (Mylapore) and Tiruvallikeni (Triplicane) "sung" by the early Ālvārs mark the core of their itinerary in the Tondainādu apart from their familiarity with the southernmost shrine at Tirumāliruñcōlai. (See Table : for details). However, the Vēngadam/Kāñcī area was more popular with the early Ālvārs as their home towns were situated in this environ. Kāñcī was the hometown of Poykai, Mallai was the hometown of Bhūtam and Tiruvallikeni was the hometown of Pēy.

Sites referred to by the Early Ālvārs with a *vigraha* concept did not emerge significantly. Although Puranic metaphors were used to describe the god, the sectarian overtones were not emphasized upon. In fact, the Vaisnava and Śaiva characteristics were fused:

> My Lord, the inhabitant of Tirumālai with winding and rushing torrents, has long a
> flowing braided hair *jaṭa* and a high crown, a handsome ace and a disc, an encircling

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[12]ibid, 1983, pp.256-261.

serpent and a gold waist and accordingly appears to possess a unific form of two natures of Hara (Śiva) and Hari (Viṣṇu) and this state is wonderous.[13]

Such a metaphysical perception was related to the nature of *bhakti* of the early Āḷvārs, which was more intellectual than emotional. Therefore, the concept of pilgrimage was not well developed in the poetics of the early Āḷvārs.There was no reference to a physical journey to the shrine. Nor did they emphasize on the ritualistic system of worship that was an important part of the pilgrimage activity. However, in some ways, the early *antātis* were a rudimentary attempt to develop the concept of pilgrimage and a community. For instance, the merit of a place through descriptions of its natural environ and sacred association with Viṣṇu, especially, in the case of Vēngaḍam was to highlight the efficacy of the site and probably motivate the community to visit it.[14]The sacred geography intended to project a community of *bhaktas* whose spontaneous devotion conjured up the images of Viṣṇu at various places.[15]

[13]Pēy Āḷvār's, *Muṉram Tiruvantāti*, 63. Quoted from, Sadhu Subrahmanya Sastri, *Tirupati Śrī Vēnkaṭēśwara*, Tirupati, 1998, p.117.For the first time, Vēngaḍam is referred as Tirumālai.

[14]The lord who came in the yore as a wild boar. And lifted the Earth on its tusk teeth resides in Vēngaḍam, where the elephant bull in rut pairs with its cow and separates, then rams angrily and pierces its tusk into the Earth, spilling pearls. Pēy Āḷvār, *Muṉram Tiru vandādi*, 45; Bright rivulets flowing down Vēngaḍam make the dark hill look like the radiant Śrī-graced gem- hued lord Senkanmal with strings of bright pearls over his chest. Attaining his feet, I have learnt to live again. Pēy Āḷvār, *Muṉram Tiru vandādi*, 59; Singing, "Vēnkaḍan is the hill", devotees wrap the lord's Tulasī on their coiffure and proceed to bathe on all fasting days, taking it as a dip in the ocean where the strong armed lord reclines. Pēy Āḷvar, *Muṉram Tiruvandādi*, 69.

[15]That we tpo may see and enjoy him, he resides in Vēnkaḍam,Kudandai,Paḍakam, and in my heart. He is the lord of Srī. He reclines in the ocean on a serpent. He is the lord of all in heaven, the Tulasī garland lord. Pēy Āḷvar, *Muṉram Tiruvandādi*, 30.

Table 19 Temples mentioned by the Early Ālvārs[16]

Vaḍanāḍu	Veṅgaḍam
Toṇḍaināḍu	Vehkhā, Kaḍanmāllai, Allikeṇi, Kaṭikai, Evvul, Nīrmalai
Naḍanāḍu	Tirukkōvalūr
Cōlanāḍu	Araṅgam, Tañjāvūr, Kuḍandai, Viṇṇakar, Pēr, Aṇbil.
Pāṇḍianāḍu	Tirumāliruñcolai, Koṭṭiyūr, Taṇkāl.
Malaināḍu	Nil.

In order to describe the temple and its locale, the Ālvārs applied the landscape metaphors in the *aṟṟupaṭai* (guide) poems of the Caṅkam literature, in which the king and his country were eulogized. Nevertheless, the association of the divine with the natural environ of the *sthala* or locale assumed more importance than the temple itself. For instance, 'My Lord, the inhabitant of Tirumālai with winding and rushing torrents", illustrates this.[17]

Temple was undoubtedly important but in a theological sense, whereby it was related to the transcendental as well as the immanent concept of Viṣṇu. The presence of numerous shrines implied the omnipresence of the god. For example, the Ālvārs identified Vēṅkaṭeśvara with Rāma, Krṣṇa, Narasimha, Nārāyaṇa and mentioned him as being present simultaneously in Kāñcī, Ghatikacalam, Kumbhakōnam, Śrīrangam, Tirukkōttiyūr, Tirukkōvalūr and Tirunīrmalai. Naturally, then the mode of worship was simple emphasis being on the yogic forms of meditation and thus, a structural shine with a network of religious interaction obviously did not evolve:

My eyes call to each other 'look! Look!'

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[16]The information for this table and the subsequent ones in this chapter are derived from the following: J.S.M. Hooper, *Hymns of theĀlvārs*, Calcutta, 1929; K. Venkatasvami Reddi (ed.), *Nālāyiradivyaprabandham*, Madras, 1973; Srirama Bharati. *Selvamudaiyanpettai Araiyar, The Sacred Book of Four Thousand.Nalayira Divya Prabandham Rendered in English with Tamil Original. Based on the Commentaries of Purvacharyas,* Chennai, 2000; Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, pp.256-261. For the works of the individual Ālvārs that have been used to complied the tables in this chapter, see, *Editions and Translations Cited,* in the Primary Sources of the Bibliography.

[17]See footnote 13 in this section.

And rejoice in [looking at] the body of gold

Of him whose chest is radiant with ornaments and garlands,

I worship with my hands the anklets of fine gold

And sing in about his deeds.[18]

(ii) Nammālvār (late seventh-early eight-century A.D.)

In the hymns of Nammālvār, the sacred geography broadened including the southernmost regions of modern day Tamil Nadu and Kerela – i.e. the entire Pāndya country. Ālvār Tirunagari, i.e. Kurugūr situated in this area was the hometown of Nammālvār and this influenced Nammālvār's conception of a sacred network. According to Hardy, Nammālvār knew of Vēngadam only indirectly through the pāsurams of the early Ālvārs and he sang its praises as they sanctified it. Further, Nammālvār also knew of the other shrines in the Cōlanādu and Tondianādu regions through the hymns of the early Ālvārs only.[19]For instance, in the Tiruvāymoli, although Vēngadam is sung about approximately eight times, it is incidental to the description of the various incarnations of Visnu which is the focus of the decad.[20]The landscape of the site, an integral prerequisite for delineating the importance of the place for the sacred geography does not receive any vivid description. Only one and a half decad is fully dedicated to Vēngadam. Srīrangam also received similar treatment, where it is referred to only once in four stanzas of a single decad. This is in contrast to the shrines of Pāndiyanādu and Malainādu, which have one or two whole poems dedicated to them with vivid description not only of the flaura and fauna, but

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[18]Pey Ālvār, *Munram Antāti*, 3.5, Quoted from Friedhem Hardy, 1983,p.299.

[19]Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, p.259.

[20]Our own lord, Wears Tulasi, Rides the bird, Lives with eternals.(1); Though lord of all, He took birth. As red-eyed Krisna, He tore Kesin's jaws. (2); Always dear as eye, To celestials and mortals He rules over Vengadam Where gods vie to serve. (3); Forever I shall praise the lord who stood, Holding a mountain high, That revealed his glory. (4); Without doubt, the lord who stole butter, And ate from both hands, Is blended in me.(5); Blending into my soul, He bears my good, As a charming lad, He measured the earth.(6); He Swallowed the seven worlds, He stew seven bulls, His cool resort, Is my consciousness.(7); For love of me, He became the cowherd, and the fish,And the boar too.(8); Our lord, Who appeared in all forms, Bears a discus and conch, On beautiful hands.(9); My lord, master, Who measured the earth, Is praised by the Vedas,like waves of the ocean.(10); This decad by Sathagopan, In the thousand songs, Sings the glories, Of the ocean-hued lord. (11). Nammālvār, *Tiruvāymoli*, 1.8. Similarly, see, 2.6,3.3,3,5, 3.9, and 4.5 and so on of the *Tiruvāymoli*.

also of the economic and demographic situation.[21] Clearly then Nammālvār was more familiar with the southernmost portion, where he had a direct experience due to his residence in one of the towns. This also creates an impression of widespread Vaisnavism in these areas.

Interestingly, for the first time, the north Indian sites find a mention, though not a significant one. However, this shows that Nammalvar did have an awareness of these sites as related to Vaisnavism. By the seventh-eighth century, a well-developed Vaisnava situation emerged with the Cankam and *Puranic* metaphors blended and prolifically used by Nammālvār. This corresponded with the character of Nammālvār's *bhakti*, which was more emotional than metaphysical. The singing to the divine form in these sites by Nammālvār clearly reflected the spontaneity in his devotion.

Table 11 : Temples mentioned by Nammālvār

Vaḍanāḍu	Vēngaḍam.
Toṇḍaināḍu	Tiruṭṭānka, Vehkā
Naḍanāḍu	Tirukōvalūr.
Cōḷanāḍu	Viṇṇakar, Kuḍandai, Tāñcai, Arangam, Kaṇṇapuram, Pērnakar

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[21]For instance, Nammālvār describes his hometown, Ālvār Tirunagarī or Kurugūr in the *Tiruvāymoḷi* : ...In fair Kurugūr where jewelled houses rise like mountains, He stands as Ādipirāṇ, then what other god do you see? (4.10.1); ...With unending goodness and fame, he resides willingly in Kurugūr; Temple surrounded by balconied palaces, sing and dance and praise him, roaming everywhere. (4.10.2)...Who resides in radiant Kurugūr city surrounded by walls? (4.10.4)...This is the sport of the clever lord of Kurugūr city, where golden paddy and lotus flowers abound; figure this out and run! (4.10.6); Then it was Nārāyaṇ's grace which protected Mārkaṇḍeya, When he took refuge in the naked-god (Siva), When the great Ādipirāṇ stands in Kurugūr city, Surrounded by stork-white Pandanus hedged, what other lord do you praise? (4.10.8); ...He resides in fertile Kurugūr where pady and sugarcane grow tall.(4.10.10). Similarly, while describing Tiruvallavalin the same text: ...Resides in fertile Tiruvallaval amid marshy fields abounding in flowers. Where sugarcanes sway sweetly and golden paddy ripens filling the quarter (5.9.8)

Pāṇḍyanāḍu	Tirumāliruñcōlai, Mōgūr.
Malaināḍu	Nāvāy, Mūḷikkalam, Kāṭkarai, Ceṅkuṉṟūr (Puliyūr, Vallavāḷ, Vaṇvatṉūr, Kaḍittāṉam, Āṟaṇvilai), Ananthapuram, Tirukkuṟuṅgudi, Ciṟīvaramaṅgai, Vāṭṭāṟu, Vaṇparicāram, Kurugūr (Tollaivillimaṅgalam, Puḷiṅkuḍi, Teṉtiruppērai, Ciṟīvaikuntam, Varaguṇamaṅgai, Koḷūr, Kuḷantai).

The pattern of spatial distribution of the shrines as well as the nature of *bhakti* reflected a rudimentary beginning of the pilgrimage concept. While the ritualistic aspect of worship and the focus on the structural shrine was still relatively weak, the descriptions of the sites also included the temples with their respective icons. 'He resides in southern Kuruṅguḍi, as an icon shining subtly like molten gold'; 'in temple amid fertile groves' (while describing Tirumāliruñcōlai); 'lord as Ādipirāṉ, residing in the temple surrounded by balconied palaces' (while describing Kurugūr) are some of the examples.[22]Nammāḷvār was also aware of the concept of visiting the shrine and the efficacy of such a visit:

> Ere the radiance of youth fades
> It is easy and wise to visit
> The radiant lord of Māliruñcōlai (1)
>
> Ignoring sweet calls of young maidens
> It is wise to rise and worship
> The thundering discus lord of Māliruñcōlai
> In his temple kissed by the moon.(2)
>
> Futile are these Karmas too, O heart!
> Go by the Māliruñcōlai
> Where rain clouds pass kneeling low
> He breaks the chords of Karmas strong, so join him. (4)
>
> The Lord of discus in Māliruñcōlai
> Amid groves and sweet water lakes
> Destroys evil by the power of his will
> Reaching that hill is our only karma. (5).[23]

In the *Tiruvāymoḻi*, references to multiple sites with the shrines point towards two interesting ideas that had significance for the pilgrimage tradition of the Srivaisnavas in the medieval period. One, a typology of these sites based on natural geography was

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[22]See footnote 21 for details.

[23] *Tiruvāymoḻi*, 2.10.1-2.10.5. For the rest of the decad, see 2.10 in the *Tiruvāymoḻi* for similar details

emerging. Certain areas were surrounded by groves and forests (Tirumālirun̄coḻai), certain areas were on the hill (Vēngaḍam), some were surrounded by water (Araṅgam), some were prosperous cities (Kurugūr) and some were prosperous agrarian settlements (Ananthapuram). Nammāḻvār also mentioned the posture of the deity in these places, like standing in Vēngaḍam, sleeping in Araṅgam and so on. This perception of the temple geography is very similar to the Puranic concept of *tīrtha* and probably influenced Nammāḻvār.[24]

Two, though the southern most area was the centre of gravity, due to Nammāḻvār's familiarity with it, the other sites were not ignored. However, the sub-regional concentration of Vaiṣṇava shrines reflected that the concept of pilgrimage had not yet evolved in a supra local sense thereby creating a universal southern identities. Besides, the sacred geography fostered a network of interaction through an oral circulation of hymns only. This was evident in the influence of the Mudal Āḻvārs over Nammāḻvar's poetics in the delineation of the northern part of the Vaiṣṇava scared geography. Therefore, there was some kind of a Vaiṣṇava community consciousness, which was probably restricted to the hymnists and was not socially broad based.

(iii) Tirumaṅgaiāḻvār (eighth century A.D.)

It is in the *Periya Tirumoḻi* of Tirumaṅgaiāḻvār, the last of the Āḻvārs, a comprehensive sacred geography emerged systematically, which transcended the local boundaries by integrating the various Vaiṣṇava shrines into a single pilgrimage network.[25]This southern temple geography was linked ideationally to the North Indian sites, thereby attributing a pan-Indian status to Vaiṣnavism. The entire processes of circulation began from Pīritī in the Himalayas and after visiting a few sites in the north, viz., Badri, Badrikāśrama, Sāligrāma and Naimiśāraṇyam.[26]Thereafter the peregrination begins in Ahōbilam to Vēngaḍam in the north, and then moved towards the South through the multiple temple

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[24]For the Puranic concept of the *tirthas*, see, Diana L.Eck, p.328.

[25]This work of Tirumangai is a systematic, logical arrangement of ninety songs dedicated to various *divyadeśams*.
[26]*Periyā Tirumoḻi*, 1.2,1.3,1.4,1.5,1.6 are dedicated to Piriṭī, Badri, Badrikasrama, Sāligrāma and Naimiśāraṇyam respectively.

centres of Tāñjāvūr and to Kuruṅguḍi, its southernmost point and then the *tīrhayātra* ends in Kōṭṭiyūr. According to Hardy, a pattern of pilgrimage emerged in a *pradakṣiṇā* (moving around the main shrine in a particular direction) form through South India, which imitated the *digvijaya* of the king.[27]

The idea underlying the pilgrimage was 'that the Āḷvar wants to lead his audience from a fairly detached encounter with Viṣṇu, the god in the temple, via the fascinating figure of Kṛṣṇa (the lover of the *gopīs*) to the god of beauty, who dwells in the heart and creates passion and ecstasy.'[28]However, Tirumaṅgai's sacred geography did not integrate all the sites mentioned by the previous Alvars. Cōḷanḍu formed the centre of gravity, as his hometown Āli Tiru-nagarī, was situated there. The selective elimination of some of the sites by Tirumaṅgai probably implied their relative marginality during his period. Similarly, those mentioned only by him reflected their rising importance. Therefore, Tirumaṅgai's sacred geography was a consciously demarcated area for the Śrīvaiṣṇava religious network, which crossed the southern boundaries.

Table 12(a) Geographical locations of temples mentioned by Tirumaṅgaiāḷvār

Vaḍanāḍu	Vēngaḍam, Ahōbilam, Ayodhyā, Naimiśāraṇiyam, Badrikāśrama, Tirukkanḍan, Dvārkā, Śālagrāma.
Naḍunāḍu	Tiruvāhindipuram, Tirukkōvalūr
Cōḷanāḍu	Tiruccitrakūṭam, Kalliccirama-Viṇṇagaram, Pārttaṇpaḷḷi, Nāṅgūr (seven temples), Kuḍandai (six temples), Araṅgam (six temples), Tāñjai (five temples), ĀliTiru-nagarī (four temples), Indaḷūr, Talaicaṅkanāṇmaṭiyam, Aḷuntūr, Cirupuliyūr, Kaṇṇapuram, Nākai, Kaṇṇaṅkuṭi, Kaṇṇamangai.
Pāṇḍianāḍu	Tirumāliruñcōḷai, Tirukkōṭṭiyūr, Pullāṇi, Meyyam, Mōgūr, Taṇkāl, Kūḍāl, Tirukkuruṅguḍi.
Malaināḍu	Nāvāy, Mūḷikkalam, Vallaval, Puliyūr.

This pan-Indian characteristic in the hymns of Tirumaṅgai addressed a community of believers beyond the hymnists and their locale, reflecting a considerable expansion of the Vaiṣṇava community. The sacred geography while delineating an area for religious

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[27]Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, pp.260 and 372.

[28]Ibid, p.374.

interaction also created cohesion amongst the community of believers. Therefore, the pilgrimage concept was most well developed in the poetics of Tirumaṅgai, as it attempted to portray a broad Śrīvaiṣṇava community. The context lay in the *bhakti* of Tirumaṅgai that was highly sectarian, intensely emotional and emphasized on the *saguṇa* aspect. The ritual of worship was described in the hymns that emphasized the efficacy of a place, an important qualification for a pilgrimage site.[29]However, the importance of a structural shrine as the converging point for the pilgrims, as well as the peripatetic characteristic were somewhat neglected. It is only in the post-Āḷvār stage, from the twelfth century that pilgrimage process crystallized into a well-developed pilgrimage network.

Table *12(b)* Temple sites not mentioned by Tirumaṅgai

Region	Sites	Mentioned by other Alvars
Cōlanāḍu	Tirukkavithalam	Tirumaḷisai
Pāṇḍianāḍu	Śrīvilliputūr	Periyāḷvār, Āṇṭāḷ
	Āḷvār Tirunagarī	Nammāḷvār
	Tolaivillimaṅgalam	Nammāḷvār
Temples at Kurugūr	Cirīvaramaṅgai (Nāṅgūnerī) Tirupperari Śrīvaikuntham Śrī Varaguṇamaṅgai Tirukkulāṇḍi	Nammāḷvār
Malaināḍu	Ananthapuram	Nammāḷvār

[29]You are the Earth, Water, fire, Wind and the cloud-bearing sky. Carrying a wound-festered body, I have come groaning, weak and tired. O Lord of sky-touching Tiruvengadam hills, my Elder! I have come to you. Pray take me into your service. *Periya Tirumoli*, 1.9.6; My Lord Gopala who broke the fragrant blossoming Kurundu tree, my lotus-eyed lord who reclines in the conch-filled ocean-deep, my lord of the *Puranas* who ripped the jaws of the demon horse Kesin,-resides amid tanks brimming with fish, in Tiruvengadam,- thitheward, O Heart. *Periya Tirumoli*, 1.8.1; O heart! The Lord accepts those who worship him, with floral garlands, and takes them to his heavenly abode. He resides in Vengadam ruling the Earth from his temple, where bees swarm and sing his glory. Today you too have entered his service. *Periya Tirumōḷi*, 2.1.3.

	Vāṉparicāram	Nammālvār
	Kaṭkarai	Nammālvār
	Tirucchitrāru	Nammālvār
	Tiruvaṉvandūr	Nammālvār
	Tiruvattāru	Nammālvār
	Tiruvitthuvakkōḍu	Nammālvār
	Tirukkadittāṉam	Nammālvār
	Tiruvāraṉviḷḷai	Nammālvār

(iv) Later Āḷvārs

With the later Āḷvārs, (ninth-early tenth centuries A.D.) a different trend emerged. Tiruppāṉāḷvār, Toṇṭarippoṭi, Periyāḷvār, Āṇṭāḷ and Kulaśekhar focused on Śrīraṅgam.[30] The Raṅgaṉāthasvāmī temple at Śrīraṅgam from this period onwards emerged as the main institution for the Śrīvaiṣṇava activities. They did sing about Vēṅgaḍam, but largely it remained isolated. The importance of Śrīraṅgam in the hymns of later Āḷvārs is interesting, considering the fact that the hometown of these Āḷvārs was nowhere near it. This was a digression from the hymnal pattern of the earlier Āḷvārs, who sang about the centres near their place of origin.[31]In the hymns of Kulaśekhara, the description of the icon, the temple at Śrīraṅgam and the intense mad longing to be present at Śrīraṅgam and Vēṅgaḍam show that these two sites had emerged as important centers of pilgrimage and paying a visit to them was mandatory.[32]The temple and the temple image of

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[30]Fiedhelm Hardy, 1983, pp.426-442.

[31]See the Appendix for the hometown of the Āḷvārs.

[32] When then will the day of great bliss when my eyes shall see the beautiful figure in the large temple of Tiruvaraṅgam? (When then will be the day of praising Māyōṇ so that my mouth will ache...(2), of meeting His servants there and scattering flowers at His Feet...(3), of praising Him with joyful poems in lovely Tamil and in the Northern language..(4), when my heart will totally melt away on seeing the sacred face and mixing with the crowd of sages...(6), when dancing and looking at Him, praising Him and melting away, remembering Him and weeping floods of tears-mind's water of joy-without satiation, I sing his many qualities and join the crowd of His servants...(9), when I too become one of His servants, seeing them in great joy in the sacred hall of Araṅgam...(10). Kulaśekhara's Perumāl Tirumōḷi, quoted from Friedhelm Hardy, 1983, pp.430-431.

Ranganāthasvāmī at Srīrangam inspired the *Amalanādippiṟān* of Tiruppāṇālvār and the *Tirupalliyelucci* and the *Tirumālai* of Toṇtaratippoṭi and the *Tiruccāntaviruttam* of Tirumaḷisai.[33]Although, the *Kaṇṇinuṇciṟuttāmpu* of Madhurakavi was a typical temple poem, it instead of referring to the god of Kurugūr referred to Nammālvār as the lord of Kurugūr, as if the latter was deified in the temple and was an object pf the pilgrimage.[34]

Table1, Temple Sites mentioned by later Ālvārs

Region	Sites	Mentioned by other Ālvārs
Vaḍanāḍu	Tiruvēngaḍam	Periyālvār, Kulasekhara, Āṇṭāl, Tiruppāṇ Toṇtaratipoṭi
Toṇḍaināḍu	Kāñcī	Tirumaḷisai
Cōḷanāḍu	Srīangam	Āṇṭāl, Kulasekhara, Tiruppāṇ Periyālvār Toṇtaratipoṭi
	Cittirakūtam	Periyālvār, Kulasekhara.
	Kudandai	Periyālvār, Āṇṭāl, Tirumaḷisai.
	Kaṇṇapuram	Periyālvār, Kulasekhara.
	Pērnakar	Periyālvār
	Kuṭal	Kulasekhara
	Veḷḷarai	Periyālvār
	Koli Hills	Kulasekhara
	Koṅku	Kulasekhara
	Tirukōṭṭiyūr	Periyālvār
	Srīvilliputtūr	Periyālvār, Āṇṭāl
	Tirukkuṟuṅguḍi	Periyālvār
Malaināḍu	Vittuvakōṭu	Kulasekhara

As stated earlier, the concept of pilgrimage and its relation to the community was not a well-developed phenomenon in the hymnal period, despite a comprehensive sacred geography laid down by Tirumangaiālvār. The notion of group solidarity was relatively weaker. The emphasis was on personal devotion and relation with the divine. There were cases of group functions for instance in ritual singing, but it was only to heighten the emotional involvement of each individual.

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[33]For example, If all being on earth-who may not enen know how to praise Visnu-called out'Arankam!', hell would grow like grass and vanish. Tontaratippoti's Tirumalai, 13.

[34]Madhurakavi's *Kaṇṇinuṇciṟuttāmpu*: I spelled his name and found my joy, I served his feet and found the truth,I donot know another god, I sing his songs and roam the street.(2); I roam but everywhere I see, My Tevapiran, his charming face, Through service to the Kurugūr King, This lowly self has found his grace.(3); The Kurugūr mansioned city's king, Has made me sing his praise by rote, Henceforth through seven lives, He shall never fail me, note.(6).

One of the most important aspects of pilgrimage has been the glory of the site and the shrine. More than the shrine, the site acquired the focus of devotion and its ensuing merits, further eulogized it. The Puranic myths and legends were associated with the power of god and did not as such highlight the efficacy of the place, whose natural landscape remained the only focus. The Ālvārs were more interested in the projecting the transcendent and the immanent form of Viṣṇu and accordingly associated Viṣṇu with the shrines. This was not the case with the later *sthalapurāṇas*, which shall be discussed shortly. Hence, a development of an institutional complex and physical travel to the sacred place as practiced and conceived by a religious group/community did not emerge in the hymnal phase.

The hymnal phase however prepared the context for the development of pilgrimage in the later period. First, religious network with the sacred centres as the foci became the basis for the pilgrimage map in the later years. Vēngaḍam, Kuṭaṇḍai (Kumbhakōṇam), Araṅgam and Kāñcīpuram emerged as the core area, which later on became significant for the Srīvaiṣṇava community and its institutional development.[35] For instance, the prominence of Srīraṅgam for the later Ālvārs (ninth-tenth centuries) formed the logical background for the temple as the centre for musical compilation of the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* and the subsequent Srīvaiṣṇava religious activities.

Second, the hierarchy that emerged in the sacred geography clearly followed the political geography. On one hand, the Ālvārs protested against the brahmanical domination of the temple service, on the other, they emerged as conformists by acknowledging the royal power as the patron of the shrine and the cult. For the early Ālvārs, Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam under the Pallavas and for Nammāḷvār, Pāṇḍiyamaṇḍalam and Malaināḍu under the Pāṇḍyas was the focus. However, except Paramēśvara Viṇṇagaram (the Vaikuntha Perumāḷ temple at Kāñcī), none of the temples sung by the hymnists developed as major shrines till the ninth century AD. That is why for Tirumaṅgai, the Cōlamaṇḍalam under the Cōḷas emerged as the centre of gravity with forty temples in it.

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[35]Friedhelm Hardy, 1983. p. 258.

Third, the rudiments of the notion of pan-Indian identity were visible. The areas in Vaḍanāḍu were increasingly crossing the southern borders. However, the southern area was still the focus and proper integration had not yet taken place. Srivaisnavism gives one hundred and eight, the sacred number-as the figure for the total number of temples referred to in the Corpus. Ninety-seven are temple sites of pilgrimage located in South India, while the remaining *sthalas* are in the North, which is called the Vaḍanāḍu region. Ayodhyā (TiruvĀyotti), Naimiśāraniyam, Sāligrāmam, Badrikāśrama, Devaprayāga, Joṣimaṭha, Dvārkā, Mathurā, and Vṛndāvana are situated in the Vaḍanāḍu .In the hymnal literature, they are referred to as sacred sites where Viṣṇu manifested himself, but not as pilgrimage centers with structural shrines in them. Ahōbilam and Tirupati are included in the Vaḍanāḍu region. Tiruppāḍkaḍal (Ocean of Milk) and the *Paramapadā* are conceived as heavenly sites. Fourth, the typology of the various sites based on natural landscape as well as the iconography of the deity became an important theme in the later *sthalapurāṇa* literature. Hence, the Āḻvārs phase formed the proto-history for the pilgrimage tradition.

III. *The Hagiographical Phase*

In a literal sense the history of pilgrimage for Srivaisnavism commenced around the thirteenth century AD, when in the hagiographies, for the first time, the notion of pilgrimage emerged as a norm enjoining the devotees to physically visit the one hundred and eight shrines in order to attain merit and salvation. The element of obligation implied that pilgrimage was equivalent to and even more efficacious than the exclusive brahmanical rituals and sacrifices. This development occurred in the context of medieval Srivaiṣṇava philosophy due to the impact of Rāmānuja's teachings in developing a broader social base.[36] Such a religious ideology emerged as the motivating factor for the evolution of a pilgrimage network, which not only included the shrines of the southern region, but also included the north Indian Vaiṣṇava sites. Although the Āḻvārs referred to these northern sites, the hagiographies highlighted them as important temple centres, the

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[36] See chapter III for details on Ramanuja's theology

pilgrimage to which was inextricably linked to the community identity. Linking the regional centers to the various centers of the north imparted a pan-Indian spectrum to the religious geographical space. This legitimized the pilgrimage network, as the northern sites had greater antiquity and longer history because of their early epic, and Puranic (Bhāgavata) associations. Such an exercise in constructing a cohesive sacred geography became crucial for the hagiographers as they attempted to create a religious and social context for bringing together various traditions, different social groups and regions as a Vaiṣṇava divyadeśam.

In this context the structure of the sacred geography was stabilized by fixing the number of sites that a Srīvaiṣṇava must visit as one hundred and eight. Being a traditionally auspicious standard number, the one hundred and eight facilitated further identification and reassertion of the community vis-a-vis other religious traditions. This numerical framework retained and included the other world sites, Tirupādkaḍal (i.e. Milky Ocean) and Paramapadā (i.e. heavenly abode), as they imparted a divine legitimacy to the pilgrimage network and linked Viṣṇu with his devotees. It also implied that by visiting all the hundred and eight, union with god or mokṣa was possible. This broadened the scope of religious network, whereby a context was created for the mutual interaction between the north and the south.

Table 14 The geographical distribution of one hundred and eight

Vaḍanāḍu	11
Toṇḍaināḍu	22
Cōlanāḍu	40
Nadanāḍu	2
Pāṇḍiyanāḍu	18
Cēranāḍu	13
Other world (Tirupādakaḍal and Vaikuṇṭham)	

According to the Srīvaiṣṇava tradition, the structure of the pilgrimage network was standardized in the Nālāyira Divya Prabandham.Such a belief had important implications for the community identity, for the hymnal reference bestowed a certain antiquity that enhanced the position of the community for the believers and restated in context to the others. However, this conviction did not correspond with the history of the Srīvaiṣṇava

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community. As a scriptural text, the *Prabandham* was collected and compiled much later than the period of the Ālvārs.The individual Ālvārs including Tirumaṅgai, in whose hymns the notion of pilgrimage was most well developed did not refer to all the sites and a consolidated number of one hundred and eight. Rather, the hagiographies from the thirteenth century onwards, (i.e. post-Rāmānuja period) standardized the notion of pilgrimage as comprising of the one hundred and eight sacred places, the *divyadeśas*. This was not a mere empirical representation. It had ideological implications as it delineated a fixed area of religious interaction, thereby demarcating the community boundaries.

In this context, the hagiographies relied on the Śrīvaiṣṇava past codifying the hymnal connection with reference to the fixed number. The *Divyasūricaritam*, considered as the trendsetter of the hagiographical convention concentrated extensively on the hymnal association. The dialogue between Periyāḷvār and Āṇṭāḷ introduced and highlighted the notion of pilgrimage through the identification of the hundred and eight shrines.the conversation further emphasized that by merely listening to the glory of these one hundred and eight, an individual could attain *mokṣa*. It should be noted that both Periyāḷvār and Āṇṭāḷ were *brāhmaṇas* associated with the temple and its activities. The context of the composition of the hagiographies coincided with the development of the temple and its activities, which generated resources for the temple functionaries. Pilgrimage activities involving festivals, donations and ritual participation of the pilgrims further enhanced the resource base of the temple and those attached to it. Therefore, the agency of Periyāḷvār and Āṇṭāḷ in the hagiographies by stressing the pilgrimage was attempting to consolidate the institutional network and those attached to it. Although the text enjoined the physical journey to these as an important religious obligation, it also realized such a prescription was not viable in practice. The Periyāḷvār-Āṇṭāḷ dialogue stated that mere listening to the descriptions of these sites would accrue same kind of benefit and merit that was acquired by visiting them. This gave a choice to the devotee and enabled him to participate in the pilgrimage setup of the community.[37]The establishment of a network of interaction amongst these centres in the *Divyasūricaritam*

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[37]The *Divyasūricaritam* of Garuḍvāhana PanditaChapter 10 and 11.

and subsequently in the other hagiographies further enhanced the community consciousness. The theme of the wedding of Āṇṭāl provided an occasion for asserting the consciousness as the gods of all the one hundred and eight shrines came together to attend the wedding. The text did not miss the hymnal connection and inserted Nammālvār and Madhurakavi in the gathering of the invited guests. Thus, the constant reference to the divinities in the *Divyasūricaritam* provided a legitimizing factor to the entire pilgrimage network.[38]

Certain sites of the hymnal phase assumed more importance in the hagiographies due to their association with the birthplace and sphere of activities of the Ālvārs and *ācāryas*. They are, viz., Kāñcīpuram, Mahābalipuram, Mylapore, Tirukkōvalūr, Ālvār Tirunagari, Śrīvilliputtūr, Śrīraṅgam, Tirukkōṭṭiyūr and Tirumāliruñcōlai. These sites emerged conspicuously in the concept of one hundred and eight *divyadeśa*. Clearly, then the aim of the hagiographers was to highlight the sacredness of these areas, thereby attributing an enhanced status.

Table 15 Sites associated with the lives of the ācāryas

Sites	Ācaryas
Vīranārāyaṇapuram (South Arcot)	Nāthamuni
Tiruvēllārai (ten miles north of Tiruchchirapalli)	Uyyakōnaḍān.
Maṇakkal (East of Tiruchchirapalli)	Manakkālanāmbī
Puṇamalli	Tirukaccinambī
Śrīperumbadūr	Rāmānuja
Siruputtur or Kiranjūr (near Śrīrangapaṭṭanam)	Anantālvān
Paccaperumāḷ Kōil (near Punamalli)	Mudaliyāṇḍān
Maduramaṅgalam	Embār
Sṛngeri	Nañjīyar
Nambūr	Nampiḷḷai
Senganmur (near Kumbhakōnam)	Periyavāccānpiḷḷai
Kaṇupuram	Nadādūr Ālvān
Tuppil (near Śrīraṅgam)	Vedanta Desika

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[38]Interestingly, the text weaves the entire concept of *divyadeśams* around Viṣṇucitta and Āṇṭāl only. The two phases are unique to this text.

Although the concept of one hundred and eight *divyadeśams* reiterated the spatial of identity for the Śrīvaiṣṇavas, this was merely notional. The sacred geography of the Śrīvaiṣṇava pilgrimage expanded with the inclusion of sites other than the regular hundred and eight around the twelfth-thirteenth centuries. These sites became significant due to their association with the Śrīvaiṣṇava leaders, especially Rāmānuja, Vēdānta Dēśika and Maṇavāḷa Māmuni. The inclusion of these sites corresponded with the emergence of community consciousness, which presented a greater unity by stressing on the concept of universality. Hence, the "pilgrimage catchment area" spread beyond the pre-existing sacral-spatial boundaries.[39]The prominence of Mēlukōṭe in Karnataka region and Siṃhācalam in the Andhra region represented the spread of the community network beyond the Tamil region.[40]Therefore, all the hagiographical texts without exception highlighted the evolution of the pilgrimage network that corresponded simultaneously with the construction of the community and the development of its subsequent identity. In this connection, the narratives of the pilgrimage journeys undertaken by the *ācāryas* acquired significance for the systematization of the community and its philosophy.

The hagiographies attributed the first pilgrimage undertaken across the Tamil border as well as within the southern boundaries to Nāthamuni (tenth century AD) who was also the first *ācārya*. The textual representation of Nāthamuni's pilgrimage to some place in the north called 'Govardhana' on the banks of Yāmunā was the beginning of an attempt to relate to a large Vaiṣṇava tradition and establish a pan-Indian Śrīvaiṣṇava identity. The Tamil context of Nāthamuni's pilgrimage focussed on his itinerary to various temples for the collection of the hymns and finally setting them to music, thereby evolving an oral scripture:

> Once, some Vaisnavas from Kurugūr (Ālvar Tirunagari) arrived at Vīranārāyaṇapuram and sang the ten verses of Nammālvār's hymn. Nāthamuni heard them was moved to tears. He immediately left for Kurugūr, the hometown of Nammālvār.After paying respect to the god in the temple there; he came to the famous tamarind tree

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[39]Victor Turner, *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca and London, 1974, p.179.

[40] The index of one hundred and eight temple appended to the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* lists these sites as *Abhimāna Kṣetra*.

in whose trunk Nammālvār was residing. The intense desire to meet Nammālvār and learn the rest of the hymns made Nāthamuni recited twelve thousand times the ten stanzas of Madhurakavi's hymns. Finally, Nammālvār with Madhurakavi appeared before Nāthamuni and transmitted his four works, which explained the meaning of the four Vedas. On his arrival at Vīrañarāyana, Nāthamuni set these Drāviḍa hymns to music in the temple at the behest of the god.[41]

Another instance of the relevance of pilgrimage to the recitation of the *Tiruvāymoḷi* was narrated in the texts with respect to the Festival of Recitation (Adhyāyanotsava). Yāmuna, the next *ācārya* was listening to Tiruvaraṅga Perumāḷ Araiyar sing and dance the Tiruvāymoḷi.The *araiyar* looked at Yāmuna constantly and sang again and again a verse from the hymn in which the poet urges everyone to visit Tiruanathapuram.[42]Moved, Yāmuna immediately undertook the pilgrimage to Tiruanathapuram. Yāmuna's pilgrimage to Srīraṅgam, Tirupati, Hastigiri, Kāñcīpuram, for organizing the community in these areas and finally returning to Srīraṅgam delineated a definite pilgrimage route.

The charting out of a comprehensive pilgrimage network comprising of one hundred and eight shrines and a visit to each of them appeared prominently in the biographical narrative of Rāmānuja. The hagiographers clearly marked the route he took, starting from Srīraṅgam, the major Srīvaiṣṇava centre. His first visit was to Tirukkōvalūr, the meeting place of the *Mudal Ālvārs*. From there, he proceeded to Kāñcī and then to Tirumala-Tirupati. From here, he again came back to Srīraṅgam. Then he proceeded to Tirukuḍandai, (Cōḷa country, Tañjāvūr district), Aḷagar Kōil, Srīvilliputtūr, Madurai, and Tirukkuruṅgudi (Pāṇḍya country). From Tirukkuruṅgudi, he reached Tiruvānpariśāram, Tiruvattānu and finally Tiruananthapuram (Malaināḍu). Then, he proceeded towards north along the western coast to reach Dvarakā, Mathura, Vṛndāvana, Govardhana, Naimśāraṇya, Puruśottama, Badrikāśrama and Śālagrama (Nepal). Then he began his return journey through Kāśi (Uttar Pradesh), Jagannāth Purī (Orissa), Srīkurmam, Siṃhacalam, Tirumalai (Andhra region) and finally reached Srīraṅgam. The entire pilgrimage narrative of Rāmānuja forces on four main ideas that influenced the sacred geography of the Srīvaiṣṇavas in the post-Ramanuja period:

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[41]The *Divyasūricaritam* of Garuḍavāhana Pandita, Chapter 16,pp.333-336.

[42]All our obstacles will vanish on uttering the name Kesava, The wicked Yama's messengers too shall not come near, so let us go anon to Anantapuranagar, of happy fields, Where the lord reclines on his venomous serpent couch. *Tiruvaymoli*, 10.2.1

(1) The pilgrimage to the northern sites was characterized by Rāmānuja's successful assertion of Viśiṣṭadvaitic philosophy through various debates with the Advaitins and asserting a distinct Srivaisnava identity. This was further magnified in the portrayal of Rāmānuja's ability to perform in intellectual debates with the divine personalities. In one instance, Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning who demanded an explanation of a particular Vedic text, confronted Rāmānuja on his way to Sarasvatīpīṭham at Badrikāsrama. Impressed by Rāmānuja's interpretation she honoured him with the appellation of *Bhāsyakāra* and presented him an idol of Hayagriva. Since Rāmānuja was symbolic of an uniform Srīvaiṣṇava community, the association of a consolidated pilgrimage network with him further highlighted this uniformity.

(2) The pilgrimage within the southern boundaries always focussed on the organizational aspects of the community. In all these places, Rāmānuja was credited with the establishment of a new temple organisation and the *Pāñcarātra Āgama* and the significant introduction of non-brahmanical participation. The *Code of Udaiyavar* at Srīrangam provided a comprehensive framework for temple reforms.[43] At Tirupati, Rāmānuja was supposed to have accepted Vitthaladeva, the local ruler as his disciple and got the place settled with thirty Srīvaiṣṇavas.

(3) The emergence of Srīrangam as a major centre of Srivaisnavism is clearly illustrated. Srīrangam emerged as the starting and the culminating point of the entire journey. In fact, the entire pilgrimage narrative is punctuated with references to Rāmānuja's organisational and intellectual activities at Srīrangam, especially the composition of *Srībhāsya* a commentary on the *Brahmasūtra* of Vyāsa. By combining the liturgical and intellectual characteristics at Srīrangam a focal point of pilgrimage network emerged.

(4) Inclusion of new sites which otherwise do not figure in the hundred and eight but became significant due to their association with Rāmānuja. Melukote in Karnataka is one such example. Rāmānuja's sojourn from Tonnur to Mēlukōte (during the times of the Hoysaḷas in the twelfth century) in the Karnataka region marks out a pilgrimage route in that region which was linked then to the larger pilgrimage network. Similar was the case

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[43] The *Kōil Oḷugū*, pp.41-100.

with Siṃhacalam and Śrīkākulam. Even Jagannāth Purī was introduced in the pilgrimage network as Rāmānuja was attributed with the establishment of a *maṭha* there.

The sites associated with Rāmānuja and his activities during his peregrinations became the model for the *ācāryas* in the hagiographies. For instance, the hagiographies refer to Vēdānta Dēśika's pilgrimage journey to all the centers, including the northern sites. His escape to Satyamaṅgalam near Mysore and Mēlkōṭe following the Muslim invasions from the north are reminiscent of Rāmānuja's sojourn in the Karnataka region. Similarly, the *guruparamparās*, especially *Yatindra Pravaṇṇaprabhāvam* gives a lengthy account of the Muslim invasions and the flight of Piḷḷai Lokācārya, the Teṅkalai leader from Śrīrangam with the idol of Raṅganātha to Mēlkōṭe and Mysore. Piḷḷai Lokācārya due to old age could not bear the strain and diedon the way. Thereafter the followers continued with their flight and carried the idol to Tirumalā-Tirupati and were finally successful to reinstall it in Śrīrangam after peace was established.Such a journey clearly marked the pilgrimage route. In fact, in all the accounts, the pilgrimage commenced from the hometown or the base of the *ācārya* and terminated there. Nāthamuni came back to Vīranārāyaṇapuram, Rāmānuja always retuned to Śrīrangam and Vēdānta Dēśika returned to Kāñcī.Therefore, in the hagiographical texts, the sanctity of the site was associated with the lives of the saints and therefore assumed a pilgrimage status. The presence of the divine though significant was taken for granted. Consequently, Puranic myths and legends did not receive much prominence. A certain kind of a typology of the pilgrimage sites emerge, when the hagiographical and the inscriptional evidences are juxtaposed to each other:

(a) In these texts, sites like Kāñcī, Śrīrangam and Tirupati, which had a pre-existing tradition from Caṅkam period, became the focus of the Śrīvaiṣṇava activities. Due to their repeated emphasis in the hagiographical sources, a historical account of these sites can be delineated. These sites bestowed legitimacy to the activities of the Āḻvārs and *ācāryas* associated with them and in turn became important for the Srivaisnava community. In the epigraphs, Tirupati, Kāñcī and Śrīrangam emerged as centres of macro-level importance by involving the entire community. The sacredness of these three sites was further enhanced, when the powerful sectarian leaders established their control
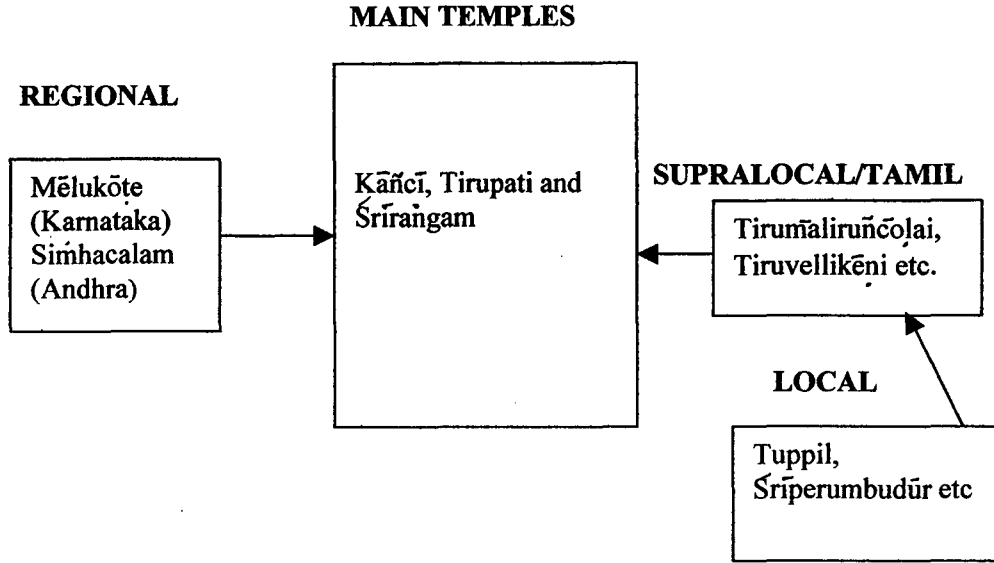
in these temples and drew followers from all over South India, who flocked as pilgrims to these centres. Hence, pilgrimage became a major channel through which resources by means of endowments were transferred to the temples to be redistributed amongst various sections of the devotees.

(b) Tirumāliruñcōḷai (near Madurai), Tiruvellikkēṇi (in Chennai) Uppilli Appan Kōyil (in Tirunāgēśvaram in Tañjāvūr) though they were hagiographically important did not assume a macro-level dimension. They drew the regional /southern community. Visiting these sites was considered equivalent to visiting large centres. For example, pilgrimage to Tirumāliruñcōḷai was considered in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries equivalent to visiting Tirupati.

(c) Vīranārāyaṇa··puram, Śrīperumbudūr, Tuppil, Ālvār Tirunagarī despite their association with the lives of the *ācāryas* remained as areas of local importance. The marginal importance of the *divyadeśas* despite being geographically located in a favourable area and being associated with the *ācāryas* was primarily due to the limited political patronage.

(d) Sites like Mēlukōṭe and Siṃhacalam and Ahōbilam came up due to their regional political patronage in the Karnataka-Andhra region. Hence, they emerged as regional pilgrimage centres.

Tirupati, Kāñcī and Śrīrangam were the big brahmanical temples in which all the identities through pilgrimage converged. The local pilgrimage shrines integrated (Śrīperumbudūr, Ālvār Tirunagarī and so on) the local population,and through a religious network was associated with the southern Tamil shrines (Tirumāliruñcōḷai) and then subsequently became a part of the network of the big brahmanical temples. Regional northern sites (Mēlukōṭe, Siṃhacalam) also were connected to Tirupati, Kāñcī and Śrīrangam. Thus in these three brahmanical temples, the local, the supra local and the regional Kannada and Andhra identities converged, establishing a hierarchy in the pilgrimage network.

MAIN TEMPLES

REGIONAL

| Mēlukōte (Karnataka) Simhacalam (Andhra) | → | Kāñcī, Tirupati and Śrīraṅgam | ← | **SUPRALOCAL/TAMIL** Tiruṁāliruñcōḷai, Tiruvellikēni etc. |

LOCAL

Tuppil, Śrīperumbudūr etc

Pilgrimage became the link which integrated every level of community interaction-be it local, regional, supra regional and pan-Indian. The expansion of the pilgrimage network beyond one hundred and eight in the hagiographies was to project a larger more broad-based community. The concept of a *divyadeśa* (or a holy site) emerged focussing on the locale and an attempt to project its merits was a major concern. However, this was done only in association with the biographical narratives of the *Āḻvārs* and *ācāryas*. In the hagiographical phase, pilgrimage emerged as a well-structured institution with its deities, locations, legends and symbols. It provided an arena for community interaction as well as a means for the diffusion and dissemination of the Śrīvaiṣṇava ideas.

IV The Pilgrimage Literature- the Sthalapurāṇas

The concept of pilgrimage received exclusive treatment in the *sthalapurāṇas*. Unlike the hymnal and the hagiograpical literature, which presented a collective pilgrimage network, *sthalapurāṇas* were more individualistic in their approach. Their singular treatment of a particular site and a shrine was more with the intention of highlighting the importance of the place. In this sense, the concept of pilgrimage they were promoting did not in any way aim to integrate the entire community. It represented

the interests of the priestly class and other temple functionaries of that particular place, who wished to attract patronage to the temple.[44]

In general, the *sthalapurāṇas* with the Puranic and the local legends glorifying the concerned site were meant to attract royal patronage as well as the religious community. Therefore, they emerged as the representative texts of the sites and the particular temple. By considering themselves as a part of the Sanskrit *mahāpurāṇas*, the composers of the *sthalapurāṇas* (who were mostly the temple priests) not only linked the texts but also the site to the larger pan-Indian narrative tradition. For instance, the *Vēnkaṭacala Mahātmya* considered itself a part of the *Brahmāṇda Purāṇa*, and the *Kuruṅguḍikśetra Mahātmyam* was supposed to be a part of the *Vāmana Purāṇa*. The enhancement of the status as well as the popularity of the sites and the temples had advantages for the priests (*arcakas*) and the temple functionaries. Hence, the *sthalapurṇās* in many ways, asserted the identity of the priestly class. With the decline of the Vijaynagar Empire and the emergence of several power groups, the *sthalapurāṇas* widened their scope. By incorporating more local legends, they became the reference point for establishing claims over the temple resources.

As a text type, the pilgrimage theme in the *sthalapurāṇas* not only received an independent treatment but also represented the author's perspectives. Hence, these texts provided a greater sense of freedom to experiment with the narrative pattern. This is particularly the case with the epic-puranic paradigm, from which the writers of the *sthalapurāṇas* heavily borrowed, but reworked the legends in the specific context. Consequently, the traditional themes like that of the incarnation did not receive much attention. Similarly, the origin myths of a particular place used Puranic characters and metaphors, but it never corresponded with the usual Puranic myths of the origin of the universe. The logic of the existence of the site was usually presented in a dialogue between the sages (Nārada) and the divine (Śiva, Brahma) and between the sages themselves (Śaunaka and Sanat Kumāra). For example, Śiva in the introductory portion of the *Totādarī Mahātmyam* informed Nārada that Totādari (i.e. Nāṅguṇērī in Tiruneveli)

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[44]For instance, the *Cidambaram Mahātmya* was composed in the twelfth-thirteenth century AD by the priests of the temple at Cidāmbaram. See Hermann Kulke, 1975, p. 5.

was the locale where Ganges originated from his knot and flew in the form of river Tāmraparaṇi. Similarly, the *Kurugakṣetra Mahātmya* of Tirukkuṟuṅguḍi depicts Nārada, Vyāsa, Brahma and Ganga in a conversation extolling the beauty of Triukkuṟuṅguḍi. (See the Appendix for details). Hence, the locale and the shrine were the focus of the *sthalapunāṇas*. The milieu emerged as a space for the enactment of the divine feats, its flaura and fauna being synonymous with the heavenly abode and its potential of redemption from the sins was analogous to the divine intervention.[45]The shrine then became the centre that initiated and connected the devotee into the other world.

The contents of the *sthalapurāṇas* reveal a strong tendency of mythicization of the place, deity, rituals and shrine. Though the local legends were presented in their original form, often their mythicization took place whereby creating an element of credibility which appealed to the psyche of the pilgrims. Apart from the epic-Puranic framework, the texts also borrowed legends from the Caṅkam literature, the hymnal corpus, especially regarding the shrine/site, and the biographical accounts of the *Ālvārs* and the *acaryas* as depicted in the hagiographical texts. Very often, the later *sthalapurāṇas*, like the *Kōil Oḻugū* (See the Appendix) also recorded the events culminating in the Vaṭakalai-Teṉkalai split and the subsequent sectarian affiliations. In this sense, the *sthalapurāṇas* presented an integrative picture of the narrative and textual tradition of the community viz., the hymnal tradition, the *Sampradāya*, the commentatorial, hagiographical and liturgical traditions, and contributed towards the reinforcement of the collective consciousness and identity of the community.

(i) Types of Sthalapurāṇas

The Srivaisnava *sthalapurāṇas* should not be seen as an omnibus genre of pilgrimage literature. Based on their myths and legends, they can be classified as follows:

(1) There were texts that used the Puranic and epic motifs in the representation of the shrines and highlighted, which focussed on mainly the Puranic, the epic legends/myths, and their associations with the sites. This genre of texts known as the *mahātmyas* (i.e.

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[45]Sometimes the healing qualities of the environ is described in detail. The oil well at Nāṅguṉērī is supposed to be good for various skin diseases.

greatness) were primarily composed for those sites that had an institutional significance for the Śrīvaiṣṇava community. For instance, *Śrīrangam Mahātmaya, Kāñcī Mahatmya* and *Vēnkaṭacala Mahātmya* within their framework applied the epic legends to enhance the pan-Indian aspects of these temple sites.[46]This category of the *sthalapurāṇa* with its pan-Indian/Sanskritic association projected a greater degree of legitimacy to the community. The narratives of the *divyadesas* of local importance also adopted this generic term *Mahātmya*, while delineating the relevance of that site for the local community. For example, the *Totadārī Mahātmya* of the Vānamāmalai temple in Nāṅgunērī enhanced the status of the temple site through an equivalent delineation with the big brahmanical structural shrines of pan-Indian importance, thus, sharpening the focus of the local identity in Nāṅgunērī.

(2) Some *sthalapurāṇas* presented the histories of the sites starting from myths/legends of their origin and their association with the *Āḷvārs, ācāryas* and local events. Hence, these *sthalapurāṇas* were a combination of myths and histories and aimed to attract a larger Śrīvaiṣṇava community.

(3) Some texts were especially composed to provide new associations for the site, which were already well-established sacred centres. Hence they were not only for pilgrimage purposes alone, but more for establishing new claims to the temple resources. In the eighteenth century, these *sthalapurāṇas* and *sthalamahātmyas* had become the reference points for settlement of disputes and fixing legitimate claims. For instance, the *Vēnkaṭacala Mahātmya* composed around 1491 AD showed the deity as paying his debts to the 'rulers of the land'. The *Mahātmya* also mentioned a certain Hattirāma Bhāvaji who presumably came to the temple around 1500 AD. He established a *maṭha* called Hattirama *maṭha* and gradually became powerful as the Mahanta.It is to him that the god at Tirupati was in debt and was repaying it gradually. Such an account implied the power of an individual/s in controlling the resources of the temple. The narrative further explained that Venkatesvara, the god of Tirupati lost to Hattirāma Bhāvaji in the game of

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[46]The author of the *Vēnkaṭacala Mahātmyam* was one Pasindi Vēnkaṭatturaivar-a *brāhamaṇa* ascetic doing service in the temple. He is said to have compiled the *Mahātmyam* out of the old *Purāṇas* and the *mangalaślokas* -the adulatory verses of the Āḷvārs. See the Report on the Inscription, Volume VIII, p. 240.

dice purposely and rewarded him with the temple and his (Vēnkaṭeśvara's) image. This legend became the basis of the East India Company's handing over of the resources to Hattirāma's disciple Sevadāsji in 1843 AD. The inscriptional evidence at Tirumala-Tirupati date the Hattirāmji *matha* in Tirupati to 1844 AD and refer to Sevadāsaji as the head of the *matha*. Since it is difficult to establish with certainty the origin of the *matha* it may be concluded that this incident was a later interpolation into the *Mahātmya*.

(4) Chronologically, some texts were dated from the Vijayanagar period, while others were composed after the decline of Vijayanagar Empire. In both the historical cases, the emergence of new social classes provided the potential patronage to the temples. Therefore, the *sthalapurṇas* focussed on the sanctity and antiquity of the particular site as a pilgrimage centre to attract the prospective patronage to the temples. The texts created a context for these sites as centres of attention by establishing their sanctity and antiquity. For instance, Ahōbilam, Siṃhacalam and Mēlukōṭe received patronage during the Vijayanagar period. They derived their legitimacy by copious references to Rāmānuja and his activities in these shrines. The *sthalapurāṇa* of Siṃhacalam narrated that after his victory at the debates in Purī, Rāmānuja stayed at Srīkurmam at Siṃhacalam, where he entered into a debate with the Śaivas and won. Thereafter he took personal possession of the temple and converted it into a Vaiṣṇava shrine. Interestingly, these stories are similar to those mentioned in the hagiographical accounts of Tirumala. Hence, the *sthalapurāṇas* of these shrines were borrowing from the legends of the already established sites. Such inter-textual borrowings depict a common mythic milieu and shared ideas of community consciousness.

(5) Some texts were clearly a compilation over a considerable period. The *Kōil Oḻugū* is representative of this genre of text. The compilation of the *Oḻugū* has been a selective process, which focussed on important temple functionaries and their contributions in the temple. Beginning from Nāthmuni, the narrative went on to Rāmānuja, Bhaṭṭars, Kaṇḍāḍai, Srirāṅganārāyaṇa jīyar, and Uttamanāmbis. The narrative finally concluded with the assertion of the Teṇkalai affiliation of the temple. The Puranic legends and biographical accounts of the Āḻvārs hardly received any attention except for those with Triumaṅgai's association. Clearly then, the aim of the text was two. One, to enhance the

importance of the temple within the community by projecting it as the centre of major Srīvaiṣṇava activities. Two, to establish the legitimacy of the Teṉkalai affiliation and subsequently provide a context for resource appropriation.

(ii) Typology of the narratives in the *sthalapurāṇas* and *sthalamahātmyas*

In general, the *sthalapurāṇas* contained several commonalities in their mythical narratives. In other words, they shared a standard literary form. Certain paradigms can be discerned within which the myths and legends were reworked in a fashion which gave all the relevant information to the pilgrim.

(a) The Epic-Puranic paradigm

This paradigm provided a repertoire of myths and legends that connected the northern sites with the southern ones, thereby bestowing on the latter, a pan-Indian identity. Hence, the *sthalapurāṇas* adopted these myths for their own purposes 'often transforming them in the process'.[47] According to Shulman:

> The deity of each shrine will have both a local name and mythological history, and an entire complex of names, attributes and myths derived from the northern classical deity with whom he is identified...The Tamil local *purāṇas* are thus a subcategory of the puranic literature, generally, as incorporated in the Sanskrit 'great' *puranas* (the so-called *mahapurāṇas*).[48]

These legends usually appeared in the introductory portion of the texts, especially in the narratives on the origin of the shrine. The various deities and sages were described as having sanctified the sites by their miraculous deeds, austerities and sacrificial performance. For instance, in the *Totādarī Mahātmyam*, Tāmraparṇi is supposed to be the extension of Ganges. The greatness of the site was linked to the birth of Brahma, his penance, the dual combat between Viṣṇu and Madhu Kaitabha, the severe penance of the goddess of Earth and the appearance of Viṣṇu before her. Hence, the association of divinity invested the site with a mythical aura and emphasized their sanctity.

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[47]David Dean Shulman, 1980, p. 4.

[48]David Dean Shulman, 1980, pp. 4-5.

Another role of the epic-Puranic paradigm was to integrate and assimilate certain sites, their local folk population and religious beliefs to within the Śrīvaiṣṇava paradigm through the concept of divine marriage and the multiple consorts of Viṣṇu.[49]In this connection, the myths used the context of the temples for the concrete projection of the goddesses as the spouses of the deity, where each goddess was situated in a particular local tradition. Since temple was analogous to the cosmic world, the marriage between the god and the goddess was a re-enactment of the divine marriage.[50]The spousification of the god through marriage myths provided an ideological legitimacy to this interaction in a manner, which was acceptable to all the devotees belonging to different castes. Through a myriad of puranic and Tamil myths, an integrated Srivaisnava identity (comprising of Sanskrit and Tamil elements) was articulated in a particular temple. Therefore, the mythic paradigm provided the rational of god's presence in a particular temple by virtue of being the husband of the goddess. Thus, the goddess was always present, localized in the tradition, but the god had to be imported.[51]

The integration of the local population through the spousification of the goddesses also consolidated the pilgrimage network. Already the blueprint of the Vaisnava shrines was laid down in the hymns of the āḻvārs (fifth to eighth centuries AD.) when they associated the local cult centres with Viṣṇu to highlight the immanence of the divinity. However, the development of these sites as important pilgrimage centres with an elaborate institutional set up was only possible through the appropriation of the cultic goddesses as the consorts of Visnu. Hence, the marriage myths in the shtalapurāṇas with Puranic as well as folk elements within the epic-Puranic paradigm provided the

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[49]The notion of the multiple consorts was first mentioned in the hagiographies of the thirteenth century, where Viṣṇu was represented with three consorts viz, Śrīdevī, Bhūmidevī and Nīlādevī. Within this divine framework, Bhūmidevī and Nīlādevī were subordinated to Viṣṇu. See,K.K.A. Venkatacari and R. Sampatkumar, ed. and trans. *The Divyasūricaritam of Garuḍavāhana Paṇḍita.* (Bombay: Anantacarya Indological Institute, 1991), Chapter 1. Along similar lines Other hagiographical works that discuss are: S. Ananatacari, ed. *Teṇkalai Muāyīrappaṭi Guruparamparāprabhāvam.* (Tiruvellikeni: Brahmatantra Parakala Matha, 1964); *Muāyīrappaṭi Guruparamparāprabhāvam of Tritiya Brahmatantrasvatantra Parkālasvāmī.* (Madras: Lifco, 1968); Arangasvami Mudaliyar, ed. *Pannīāyīrappaṭi Guruparamparāprabhāvam.* (Madras: Srivisistadvaita Pracarini Sabha, 1952); Srikrsnasvami Aiyangar, ed. *Piṇbalagiya Perumāḷ Jīyārarūḷiya Ārrāyīrappaṭi Guruparamparāprabhāvam* (Tirucci: Puttur Agraharam, 1972).

[50] David Dean Shulman, 1980, pp. 138-421
[51]ibid, p. 267.

legitimising framework for the entire process and finally contributed to the pilgrimage network by appealing to the society.

Since in all marriage myths the goddess was attached to the centre, she was instrumental in the presence of the god in the temple of that centre. The context for the establishment of a shrine was always the marriage of the goddess. In this sense the role of the goddess as the *pratiṣṭha* was enhanced. Hence, a shrine's or a "*sthalas*" existence was dependent on the prior presence of the goddess. The myths clearly represented the earthy bride to be the second bride, the first being Lakṣmī / Śrīdevī.

The presence of numerous goddess shrines within a temple can be understood as an appropriation of several local traditions in Srivaisnavism. However, the myths always depicted the god following or wooing the goddess, hence indicating that the interaction between the brahmanical and the local tradition was not always unequal, rather mutually interactive. After all, it was the second bride who was a focus of the pilgrimage process. In all the temples, the marriage celebrations were an important part of the festivals and attracted numerous devotees. For example, Lord Raṅganātha at Śrīrangam, marrying all the goddesses of the temple or Viṣṇu marrying the three hundred sixty sisters in Tiruvaṭanṭai (south of Madras) reflected the popularity of the concept of multiple goddesses. In this sense, the goddess as the second bride contributed to the *saulabhya* of the god, by making him accessible to the local population.

Very often, the process of spousification reflected the tensions that arose while expanding the religious network of the community. The marriage myth at the Narasimhāsvāmī temple at Ahobilam in Andhra Pradesha reflected the contradictions that existed at the level of political expansion of the frontier states during the Vijayanagar period. The cult of Narasimha, in its brahmanical forms was represented in the Viṣṇu temple at Ahobilam, while as a folk cult it was represented by the aniconic symbol of a pillar drawing followers from the local tribes, pastoralists, hunter-gatherers and peasant

society.[52]The *Ahobilamahātmyu*, the *sthalapurāna* of the Narasimhasvāmī temple records both the folk and the puranic version. According to the folk version:

> While wandering in the Nallamallā forest, which was the habitat of the Cēncūs (the hunting - gathering tribes), Narasimha fell in love with the daughter of the Cēncū chief and asked her hand for marriage. Since Narasimha was not a Cēncū, the Cēncū king tested him to as certain his eligibility. Narasimha was successful and the marriage took place.[53]

The puranic version however is not so precise and presents an integrated picture of the folk and the brahmanical variant:

> Hirnayakasipu, a demon went on a rampage after getting a boon from Siva. The terrorized gods approached Visnu for help who intervened on their behalf by assuming a man-lion incarnation (Narasimha) and killed the demon. Thereafter in a fit of rage, he wandered in the Nallamallā forests and encountered the Cēncū princess. Mesmerized by her beauty and mistaking her for Laksmi, Narasimha sought the Cēncū king's permission for Narasimha insisted on marrying her and took her to Vaikuntham and named her Cēncūlakshmī.

Another variant of the puranic myth is:

> Cēncū princess being an expert huntress herself encountered lion in the forest who transformed into a man- i.e. Narasimhavāmī. They fell in love and after testing his prowess, sent him to her parents to get the consent. The parents had already heard the glory of Narasimha from the sage Nārada who also informed them that their daughter was none other than Bhūdevī herself. After their marriage, she was named Cēncūlaksmī. There were frequent quarrels between Laksmi and Cēnculaksmī and ultimately, Laksmī deserted him and went away.

Similar motifs are also found in the myths of the Vēnkatēsvara temple at Tirupati

> Laksmī angry with Visnu came down to meditate at Kohlapur. After sometime Visnu went in search for her and came to Tirupati., which was a beautiful spot. Here he fell in love with the daughter of the local king Akāsarāja who was born in the lotus and was named Padmavati. However, Padmāvatī spurned his love and lord became lovesick. Thereafter, he sent his servant Bakulamalikā, Fearing that she would fail; he took the form of a fortuneteller and followed her. Finally, the marriage took place, Since Laksmi had left him, he was without money and took loan from Kubera for the marriage. According to the contract, witnessed by Brahma and Rudra, the principle of the loan is due at the end of the Kali Age, and god must pay interest every year. Thereafter on hearing about the marriage, Laksmī in a fit of anger arrived at Tirupati. The lord fled in fear to Kumbhakōnam leaving a form of himself with Padmāvatī. Laksmī followed him at his heels, but as soon as she entered the sacred site of Kumbhakōnam, her anger disappeared. She became a child lying on the thousand petalled lotuses in the tank

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[52]The *Sannidhi Guruparamparā* attributes the first *jīyar* with the spread of Srivaisnavasm among the hill tribes in Ahōbilam.

[53]Sri Govindacarya, ed,.*The Ahobilamahātmayu of Peddāru Aiyangar.*,Madras, 1936, pp. 45-92; M.L.K. Murty,"The God Narasimha in the Folk Religion of Andhra Pradesha, South India," *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 113, pp. 179-192.

(Porṟamaṟai); after she had performed *tapas* for many years in that tank, the god married her again.[54]

Interestingly, the practice of paying a bride price was a tribal custom. It was also stated in the *Mahatmya* that the human founder of the idol was one Toṇḍaiman Chakravarthy who was the ruler of a certain locality with his capital near Vēngaḍam. He built the temple in the first century AD and organized festivals and worship. Clearly, the *Mahatmya* distinguished between the site, which was discovered by Viṣṇu and hence was sacred, and the temple built by a local ruler bestowing a certain amount of historical antiquity.

These myths represented a process by which the frontier areas were extended by the Vijayanagar Empire through the integrative paradigm of religion, therefore having implications for the sustenance of kingship and state. This politico - religious phenomenon reflected in the 'Visnuization' of the local cults and 'tribalization' of the brahmanical faith explains the process by which new elements were introduced into Srivaisnavism and which subsequently crystallized into sectarian identities. The temple that was already a part of the sacred geography and community identity became an arena for the re-enactment of the myth, at the centre of which was the goddess. Tensions generated in such an interaction with the goddess (indigenous culture) and Viṣṇu (brahmanical) are evident at various levels. Narasiṃha had to undergo rigorous tests like collecting honey, digging up termite mounds, hunting, other tribal activities to prove himself acceptable to Cēñcūs in general, and the Cencu princess in particular. In the sculptural panels at Ahōbilam Narasiṃha is shown as a small figure removing the thorn stuck in the foot of the Cēñcū girl, who is wearing a leaf skirt and leaning on her bow. Such tensions are evened out by Cencus incorporation into the rituals at the temple. Every year during *brahmotsavam* gypsies and hunters bring wedding gifts for Cēñcūlakṣmī.[55]

The tensions between the second bride and the brahmanical bride are palpable in both the instances. The brahmanical bride was always presented as the "golden

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[54] *Venkaṭacala Mahatmyam*, Tirupati, 1980; David Dean Shulman, 1980, pp.267-271.

[55]There are inspirational references to leaders of huntsmen donating to the temple at Tirumala. TTDI, Vol. No. 34, 38 and I.

complexioned", peaceful and superior.[56] The second bride who is the autochthonic goddess and, to whom the lord was attracted is dark and earth bound. She represented the fertility as in most instances she was the incarnation of Bhūdevī (the goddess of earth). However, these contradictions were resolved within the mythic paradigm through several ways. One such way was situating the goddess in the puranic framework. For instance, Padmāvatī was Sītā is past birth and Ahōbila was a site of Viṣṇu and Ādilakṣmī once.

Another way was to rework the Sanskrit myths within the local context was through an attempt to relate with the pan-Indian Vaisnavism and normative Hinduism. It is in this context that the goddesses being an incarnation of Srīdevi, Bhūdevī and Nīlādevī should be seen. An instance of the goddess of the Pārthasārathasvāmī temple is Vedavalḷi Tāyar may be cited here. According to the legend:

> Lakṣmī descended to earth as she was angry with the Lord and took the form of a small child under the sandalwood tree. In the meanwhile, the seven ṛṣis while chanting the Vedas meditated upon the goddess in the forest. On their way back to the hermitage, they saw the child, whose face was like a lotus bearing striking resemblance to the goddess they had meditated upon. Since the child was found after the chanting of the Vedas, she was named Vedavalḷi. After sometime, Viṣṇu came down looking for Lakṣmī in the form of a handsome prince and met Vedavalḷi who immediately recognised him and addressed him as Mannātha (my husband) by the ṛṣis also requested the lord to stay in their hermitage so that they could worship Him. Subsequently the marriage between the god and Vedavalḷi was performed. Thereafter both took their place separately in the Parthasārthasvāmī temple as Vedavalli Tayar and Mannānātha respectively. [57]

In the real sense, the dichotomy between the presence of Lakṣmī and the cultic goddesses within the same temple complex was reconciled through a hierarchy in the epic-Puranic framework of the myth. The main deity (arca) was iconographically represented with Srī, Bhūmi and Nīlā and the 'rest' had separate shrines arranged around the sanctum sanctorum or within the temple precincts. This hierarchy reflected a continuum between the notions of uniform and multiple identities. Thus the various local affiliations represented through the respective goddess cult became a part of the larger Srīvaisnava community.

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[56]David Dean Shulman, 1980, ibid, pp. 267-271

[57]M.S. Ramesh, 108 Vaisnavite Divya Desams. Vol 1., Tirupati, 1993, pp. 4-35.

(2) *The Political Paradigm:*

The political paradigm associated the sites with the erstwhile ruler in order to attract patronage. The narrative usually began with the chance discovery of the idol of the main deity by the royal preceptor or priest and was interpreted as the context for constructing a shrine at the hallowed spot under the sponsorship of the royal priest. In the *Kōil Olugū,* the benefactions of the Pāṇḍyas regarding the construction of the various parts of the temple was described in great detail to project a precedent for royal patronage.[58] The conversion of the ruler to Srivaisnavism became an important part of the narrative in this connection. The conversion of the Hoysala rulers Biṭṭiga and Viṣṇuvardhana from Jainism to Vaisnavism and the subsequent prosperity in their kingdoms in the twelfth century was another mechanism to attract political patronage. The *sthalapurāna* of the Nārāyaṇasvāmī temple at Mēlkōṭe narrates:

> Rāmānuja imbued with indomitable missionary zeal, travels to various places, converts people to Srivaisnavism and revitalizes the derelict Srīvaiṣṇava temple centres. He never wavers in this, not even in times of crisis. One such crisis is the persecution of the Srīvaiṣṇava community by a Saivite Cōla ruler. Rāmānuja flees in disguise and arrives at Toṇṇūr in Karnataka, the provincial capital of the Hoysalas. Here Rāmānuja cures the Hoyasala ruler's daughter who was mentally afflicted for a long time. Impressed by Rāmānuja's abilities, the ruler, a Jaina, converts to Srivaisnavism.He appoints Rāmānuja as the royal preceptor. Thereafter, the Jainas are forced to leave the kingdom or convert to Srivaisnavism. One day, Viṣṇu appears before Rāmānuja in a dream and reveals that the god of Yadugiri (Mēlkōte), Sampatkumāra, is lying buried under an anthill, waiting to be consecrated. The myth informs us that Yadugiri was already a Vaisnava centre due to the presence of the *tiruman,* the holy white ash used by the Srīvaiṣṇavas. With the help of Viṣṇuvardhana, the converted Hoysala ruler, Rāmānuja clears the forests at Yadugiri, builds a temple, and installs the god in it.

(3) *The Historical Paradigm*

This involved narratives regarding the local history of the site before the advent of Srivaisnavism highlighting the pre-existing importance of the place. The historical legends also involved narratives on how various people were redeemed by offering worshipping on these sites. The aim of the historical paradigm was also to present a contrast between the ancient past and contemporary Srīvaiṣṇava one. This became significant when the Srivaisnava organization and temple activities were highlighted. For example, at Nāṅguṉēri, the Nambūdiri Brāhmaṇas of Kerala managed the temple, before

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[58] The *Kōil Olugū,* pp.16-24.

the Śrīvaiṣṇava ācāryas took over, therefore representing the transformation and its implications for the religious community.

(4) *The locative paradigm:*

The texts through this mythic model emphasized on legends specific to the place, which were not duplicated for any other site. The main themes were:

(a) The description of the sacred topography and subsidiary shrines in relation to the main deity.

(b) Local practices, rituals, and benefits that accrued from worshipping the shrine.

(c) The local politics within the temple and contention over the resources. The *Kōil Oḷugu* is full of such events recording the tensions between the various groups within the temple.

(d) Festivals celebrated in a particular shrine formed a considerable portion of the texts. Particularly, *brahmotsavam*, (the main ten day annual festival) received a graphic description.

(5) *The hagiographical paradigm*

The hagiographical paradigm focusing on the lives and movements of the religious leaders established linkages and network of religious interaction between the various sites. The *sthalapurāṇas* in this connection borrowed from the hagiographical narratives and projected three kinds of pilgrimage complexes around the big centres of Tirupati, Kāñcī and Śrīraṅgam:

(a) The northern regional one with Tirupati as the focus. The texts mentioned that the Nallamalai or Śrī Parvata hill ranges extend to Ahōbilam, Śrīsailam, and Tirupati, where Tirupati represented the head of the Ādiśeṣa, Ahōbilam the body and Srisailam the tail.

(b) The northern Sanskritic one, with Kāñcīpuram as the focus, which became the centre of intellectual debates.

(c) The southern Tamil one, with Śrīraṅgam as the centre. The story of the image of Nammāḷvār being brought from Āḷvār Tirunagarī to the Raṅganāthasvāmī is well known. The movement of the various Āḷvārs and *ācāryas* towards this shrine further highlighted its primacy.[59]

The hagiographical paradigm in the *sthalapurāṇas* while describing the activities and contributions of the Āḷvārs, *ācāryas* and *jīyars* in the shrine gave special importance to the association of Rāmānuja with that shrine, specially where the reformulation of Srivaisnava faith and institutional organisation was concerned. Hence, the *sthalapurāṇas* of each shrines emphasized the visit of Rāmānuja. Apart from Rāmānuja even Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇigal was also attributed with the organization of *Vaikhānsa* Śrīvaisṇava worship at Vāṇamāmalai temple at Nāṅguṉēri. Sometimes the *matha paramparā* formed a part of the *sthalapurana* text (the *Totadāri Mahātmyam* and the *Kōil Oḻugu*). In this connection, some of the *sthalapurāṇa* texts also included the genealogies/lineages of the *acaryapurusas* and sometimes the important contributions of the *matha* leaders. For instance, the *Ahōbila Mahātmya* does not incorporate the *matha* lineage, but gives a long account of how the temple of Narasiṃhasvāmī came to be established by the first *jīyar* (Śrīnivāsa) of the *matha* who had a divine revelation that out of nine caves which represented nine Narasiṃhas, it was the Malolan Narasiṃha cave which was to be consecrated. The *sthalapurāṇa* further stresses the importance of the *jīyar* who was supposed to have received a *mantropadeśa* (divine instruction) from the lord to establish a *matha* and institutionalize the worship.

One of the important borrowing from the hagiographies in the *sthalapurāṇas* was the legend of the marriage of Āṇṭāḷ, the only female Āḷvār. The incorporation of this marriage myth probably reflected the canonization of an already existing popular tradition. The delineation of Āṇṭāḷ in the texts as the saint - goddess reflected such a trend and related the household to the larger structure of the community.

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[59]Periyāḷvār and Āṇṭāḷ came from Śrīvilliputtūr, Pāṇḍyanāḍu to Śrīraṅgam. The first *jīyar* of Vāṇamāmalai, Pāṇḍyanāḍu came to Raṅganāthasvāmī temple and took four Vaikhānsa *arcakas* to Nāṅguṉēri to institute the Vaikhānsa system of worship at the temple.

The unusual birth of Āṇṭāḷ and her unflinching devotion to God which culminated into a divine marriage became the reference points for relegating her to sainthood and finally to the status of goddess. The "root paradigm" in all the versions has been her *bhakti*, which delineated her as the chaste bride, where chastity was equivalent to devotion and a source of divine power.[60]In the inscriptions, she is referred to a Sūdikkoduththa Nācciyār, i.e. a consort who first wore the flowers and then gave them to the lord. The underlying implications of such a portrayal have been interpreted as the subversion of the patriarchal norms of marriage. However, this was not the concern of the mythic consciousness whose aim was to the situate *bhakti* above the ascriptive status. Therefore, chastity/*bhakti* became the determinant of Āṇṭāḷ's bridal union to the lord - an union which every *bhakta* longed for. Emanating from the status of a divine consort was the concept of *nityasumaṅgalī*, i.e., the eternal bride, a concept popular amongst the women of the community.

The sainthood of Āṇṭāḷ in the mythic paradigm expressed the religious concerns of the community. The later *sthalapurāṇas* also associated Āṇṭāḷ (eighth century AD) with Rāmānuja (twelfth century AD) as her elder brother whom she is supposed to have embraced, an aberration, for Āṇṭāḷ refrained from any kind of physical contact with the opposite sex.[61]The inclusion of Āṇṭāḷ as a lady saint was a part of a conscious endeavour to project the Āḻvār connection, thereby making the community ideology more universalistic. In fact, the popularity of Āṇṭāḷ was related to the emergence of Tamil identity, around the fourteenth century AD when commentaries began to be written on her works, viz., the *Tiruppāvai, the Nācciyār Tirumōḻi*, and her deification took place.[62]The marriage to Raṅganatha provided the context for Āṇṭāḷ's veneration as a

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[60]The term *root paradigm* has been borrowed from Victor Turner's formulations. Victor Turner, Ithaca, 1974, pp. 6-42.

[61]According to the legend, Āṇṭāḷ had promised that after singing one thousand hymns for the Viṣṇu deity at Tirumāliruñcōlai, she would light one thousand lamps. But she was unable to do so, so Rāmānuja fulfilled her vow. Thereafter when Rāmānuya went to Śrīvilliputtūr to her temple, Āṇṭāḷ emerged from her image and embraced Rāmānuja. This was an exception made by Āṇṭāḷ as she had vowed she would never embrace any other man except Viṣṇu.

[62]At the Govindarāja Perumāḷ shrine at Tirupati, the first reference to the shrine was in 1308 AD, implying that it must have existed before the thirteenth century AD. Subhrahmanya. S. Sastri, *Tirumala -Tirupati Devasthanam Inscription, Vol.1.*,Tirupati, 1931,No. 31 of G.T. At Kāñcīpuram and Śrīrangam, the first

goddess in all the temples. An independent temple was constructed in Śrīvilliputtūr in her name. Festivals and rituals were instituted in her honour and the *Tiruppāvai* formed an integral part of the liturgical recitation.[63]One of the most popular festivals was the ritual re-enactment of her marriage with Viṣṇu in all the temple centres on *Panguni Uttiram* day. Āṇṭāl was the only goddess who was taken out alone on certain occasions to the temple and given a special bath during the *Mārgali-Niruttam* festival. On her way back in the evening, she distributed turmeric, sandal paste and leaves to married women. In the course of her procession, Kṛṣṇa was taken out to meet her on the way.[64]Today, on *Makarasankranti* day; she is seated in the *Uñjala-maṇṭapam* outside the temple and is offered *nivedana* (offerings).

Since the hagiographic paradigm in the *sthalapurāṇas* popularized the sainthood of Āṇṭāl and provided the context for her deification that emerged finally into a goddess cult, sectarian leaders of the community used the Āṇṭāl motif to enhance their charisma and networks of influence. In 1495 AD, on his birthday, Kaṇḍāḍai Rāmānuja Ayyan at Tirupati made provisions for Āṇṭāl along with the god and goddess (his consort) to be taken to the foothills to receive the offering sent from Tirumala.[65]Similarly, Ettūr Kumāra Tirumalai Tātācarya at Kāñcī, the royal preceptor of Vēnkeṭa II, and the Vijayanagar ruler donated a village for conducting festivals for Āṇṭāl.[66]Both Ayyan and Tātācarya were important sectarian leaders of the Śrīvaiṣṇava community.

At times, the certain aspects of the sampradyā were disseminated through the myths of the *sthalapurāṇa*.For instance, the theological position of Śrī as the mediatrix

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evidence of an Āṇṭāl shrine is dated to the thirteenth-fourteenth century. *South Indian Inscription. Vol.XXIV*, Delhi; *Annual Reports of South Indian Epigraphy (Govt. Published)*, 447 of 1909 and 586 of 1919. The *Koil Oḷugū*, chronicle of the Srirangam temple tells us that it was Ramanuja who was responsible for the installation of Āṇṭāl's image and services in her name. The *Koil Oḷugū*, p. 129.

[63]P.S. Sundaram, tr. Antal: *Tiruppāvai and Nācciyār Tirumoli*,Bombay, 1987. The *Tiruppāvai* is recited in almost all the Tamil households everyday as a part of daily worship. The *Tiruppāvai* means a holy vow undertaken by a girl. The main theme is the famous *Kātyāyanī Vratam*, which earlier had been observed, according to the epic accounts, by the *gopīs* (cowherd maidens) in order to win the grace of Kṛṣṇa and secure him as the husband of every one of them. Another objective of this vow was its association with fertility, to secure timely and abundant rains.

[64]Subhrahmanya. S. Sastri, *Report on Devasthanam Collection*, Tirupati,1930, pp. 286-288.

[65]V..Vijayaraghavacharya, ed. and trans., *Inscriptions of Kṛṣṇadevarāya's Times. Vol.III.* Tirupati ,1939,No. 186 of G.T. and No. 292 of TT.

was popularly disseminated through the mythization of Sri's status in the liturgical texts. According to one such myth:

> One of the *alvars*, Tirumangai, visited the temple of Bhaktavatsala Perumal, at Tiruninravur (thirty kilometres from Madras city). Since the god did not notice him, Tirumangaialvar left without singing about the place. Goddess realized an error on god's part and told him that it would reflect badly on the lord, since one of his sincere devotees left the place in anger, without even singing in his praise. The lord conceded and pacified Tirumangai who thereafter composed a couple of *pasurams* for him. Therefore, the goddess acted as the mediatrix and since then is known as *Ennai Petra Tayar* (the mother who gave birth to me, i.e., Universal Mother) [67]

Conclusion

The Srivaisnava *sthalapuranas* while conforming to text-type of general *sthalapuranas* were not mere pilgrimage texts. However, the primary purpose being to attract the pilgrims, these texts full of Puranic myths and local events highlighted the importance of the shrine and the locale as well as the religious leaders, thereby fostering a strong community consciousness. Therefore, one may conclude, that the *sthalapuranas* in their own may reflected the multiple Srivaisnava identity, viz, pan-Indian, Vaisnava southern (common) Srivaisnava, sectarian and regional. At the mythic level, real concerns of the community emerged for it reflected the interaction of the community with the people. A context had to be provided for the integration and the consolidation of the community network. The pilgrimage network of the Srivaisnavas by linking several groups of temple presented a collective consciousness of the community. This network of communication provided an arena for interaction and thus reasserted the identity. Hence, pilgrimage norms removed the Srivaisnavas from their "pre-occupation with small groups and placed them into another context of existence - i.e. the activities and feelings of the larger community".[68]In this network, the devotees irrespective of their social status came together. This awareness of belonging to one community was further reasserted through rituals, ceremonies and festivals that provided an occasion for pilgrimage. Sectarian and social differences were present but in a modified form, therefore projecting a universal,

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[66] *Annual Reports,* 1919, No. 586.

[67] Ramasvamy Ramanujam, *Srivaisnava Divya Desangal,* Madras, 1973, chapter 5, pp. 49-82.

uniform structure. The pilgrimage textual tradition at every step portrayed the development of 'communitas' and communion, and highlighted the merits of the actual act of pilgrimage. Thus, the one hundred and eight *divyadesas* along with some other shrines, connected together through a network of common goals, presented a composite structure, viz., southern as well as a pan-Indian one and reinforced the community identity.

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[68] Victor Turner, 1974, p.186.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV

THE STRUCTURE OF THE ŚRĪVAIṢṆAVA STHALAPURĀNAS

In this appendix, the *sthalpurānas/mahātmyas* of three pilgrimage sites, viz., Tirukkuruṅguḍi (Tirunelveli,Pandyanadu), Nāṅgunēri (Tirunelveli, Pāṇḍyānāḍu) and Śrīrangam (Tiruchchirapalli, Cōḷanāḍu) are taken as samples to present the myths, legends and events discussed within structural paradigms. The specific texts taken up for discussion are the representatives of the three text-types of the pilgrimage literature, which are as follows:

a) The first category of the text-type of the *sthalapurānas*, or *mahātmyas*, are those conforming to the epic-puranic paradigm that attempted to situate the site within the pan-Indian framework. For the discussion, the *Śrī Kuruṅgakṣetra Mahātmyam*, of Tirukkurungudi has been taken up.

b) The second category of the text-type is those *sthalapurānas* of sixteenth-seventeenth century, which give the history of the shrines and the *mathas* attached to it. The text under discussion is the *Totādari Mahātmyam*

c) *Sthalapurānas*, which present the myths and legends but focus mainly on presenting the details of various groups and functionaries in the temples and their activities, are the third category of the text-type. Very often, this genre of the *sthalapurānas* became the basis for laying claim over the control of resources over the temple and hence legitimizing such claims. The *Kōil Oḷugū* is one such example.

TYPOLOGY OF MYTHS

(i) The Origin Myths:

Śrī Kuruṇgakṣetra Mahātmyam

a) Nārada praises Viṣnu.

b) Dialogue between Vaiṣampāyana and Vedvyāsa on the glory of the shrine.

c) Ganga Devi extolling the virtues of this place to Nārada.

d) Incarnation myths of Viṣnu are imported and applied to the divinty at Tirukkuṛṅgudi for glorifying him and the temple where his *vigraha* is.

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The Totadari Mahatmyam

a) Suthapuranika narrates how he acquired knowledge about the exixtence of this holy place.

b) Narada informs the sage about the virtues of this site.

c) Narada receives the information about this sacred locale from Siva, who extolled the virtues of river Tambraparani and asserted that the river was an extension of Ganges. Hence, no doubt about the sacrality of the place remains.

d) Siva's source of information is Visnu. Hence, a divine lineage is set up which gives legitimacy to the divine presence and qualifies Nanguneri as the Srivaisnava *divyadesa*.

e) Nanguneri is also the place for the performance of divine activities. The birth of Brahma, his penance, the dual combat, between Visnu and Madhu Kaitabha, penance of goddess of Earth and the appearance of Visnu before her occur on this sacrosanct place.

The Koil Olugu

a) Brahma obtains the *vimana* of Srirangam temple and worships it in the Satyaloka for many years.

b) After he finished his worship, he passes it on to Iksvaku.

c) From Iksvaku it is passed on to Rama, who then gifts the *vimana* of the temple to Vibhisana.

d) Vibhisana places it on the banks of Chandrapuskarani between the two tributaries of the Kaveri river, where Srirangam is actually situated.

(ii) The Glory of the Site/Shrine

Sri Kurungaksetra Mahatmya

a) Kurungaksetra is located on the Mahendra mountain that has always been a sanctified spot since the days of the *Ramayana.*

b) The topography is even, the soil fertile and climate is moderate throughout the year. This place has an exotic collection of flaura and fauna, some of which are the favourites of various divinities.

c) Specific qualities of this place are as follows:

i) Visnu assumed Vamana *avatara* form in this place.

ii) Visvamitra did penance here.

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iii) The god of Tirukkurungudi, Kurungudi Nambi has the special power to remove the sins and sorrows of his devotees and delivers them from the worldly ties.

v) The virtuosity of the place generated an intense argument between the *brahmanas* and *raksas*. The latter despite their evil reputation were aware of the vitues of this place.

vi) The tensions between Rudra, and Brahma, lead to a warbetween the two and Rudra is victorious. Subsequently, Rudra repents and chooses Tirukkurungudi for his penance. Finally, he gets rid of his sin of *Brahma-hatya*.

The Totadari Mahatmyam

a)   Lord Siva explains the greatness of Totadari to Parvati.

b)   The *Mahatmyam* stresses the importance of charity done here.

c) Rudra tells Parvati about the penance done by Lakshmi, Garuda, and Ananta here. He further informs that they were granted finally salvation by the god here.the text in detail refers to Laksmi's penance.

d) There are legends regarding the glory of Totadri that was realized by Ghantkarna, Banasura and Bhasnasura.

e) The text further refers to the penance of Urvasi and Tilottama and their final salvation.

f) The god grants boon to Garuda

h) The Mahatmyam states that this was also the place of the Churning of the Milky Ocean.

i) The events leading to the darsan (appearance) of the god to the sage Romasa at Totadari

j) Brahma, Saptarsis, Vyasa, Parasara, Bhisma, Narada and others reap benefit coming to Totadari and expressing their devotion to the god here.

k) This place relieved Dharmavatsala of leprosy.

The Koil Olugu

Nil

(iii) The Pilgrimage Network:

Sri Kurungaksetra Mahatmyam

a) The text mentions that Kurunga ksetra was one of the holy sites of Visnu on earth.

b) There is a reference to the sacred geography: Anantapuram, Badari, Dvaraka, Tirupati, Kanci, Srirangam, Madurai Tirukkottiyur, Darbhasayanam and Srivilliputtur Narada went to all these places and finally came to Tirukkurungudi and settled here.

Totadari Mahatmyam

a) This was the place of the establishment of the new town Sri Vallimangai or Romasanagar, the five states of Visnu, the five holy places and their greatness.

b) The *jiyar* of the Vanamamalai *matha* went for the holy pilgrimage to north-viz., Badrikasrama, Saligrama, Dvaraka and Ayodhya and established his intellectual superiority in all these places.

The Koil Olugu

Nil

(iv) The Historical Paradigm

Sri Kurunga ksetra Mahatmyam

a) A Pandyan king was saved from the cruel attack of an *asura* by the lord of this place.

b) Colas, Pandyas, Ceras and the rulers of Karnataka visited the shrine and worshipped here.

c)   Narada narrates both these episodes to Vedvyasa.

Totadari Mahatmyam

None

The Koil Olugu

a) The *Olugu* mentions a series of benefactions by Dharmavarma, Killi Cola, Rajamahendra Cola, Nanda Cola, Kulasekhara Perumal, Colandrasimhan, Gangaidwar ⸝ Singanan Dandanayakkar, Vikramalola, Sundara Pandaya, Kulottunga Cola and others

b) The Muslims, i.e. the Tulukkas invade and plunder the temple at Srirangam and carry away the *utsavamurti* or the festival image. The *Olugu* gives a long narrative of how the temple *devadasis*, functionaries and ordinary devotees brought back the idol that was finally reinstalled in the main *sanctum sanctorum*.

Sri Kurunga Ksetra Mahatmyam

a) The temple servants against all odds save a *brahmana* here.

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(v) Local legends:

Totadari Mahatmyam

a) The local ruler was cursed, the virtues of this place relieved him from it.

b) Priyamvada-a *brahmana* and the four divine maidens were trapped in the form of ghosts. When they visited this place, they were relieved from their accursed forms.

c) The text narrates a story a staunch Saivite *brahmana* who disregarded the order of Siva in naming his son Narayana. The son suffered from leprosy and finally by the greatness of the lord at Totadari was completely cured and becames healthy and rich.

The Koil Olugu

Nil

(vi) The Hymnal Association:

Sri Kurunga Ksetra Mahatmyam

A general reference of the hymnal association is recorded in the text. Ved Vyasa came to worship the lord here and the latter revealed to him that in Dvapar Yuga he would be born as Periyalvar, Bhumiduri would be born as Antal.

Totadari Mahatmyam

a) The association of Nammalvar with Totadarinath.

b) Nammalvar's incarnation and his Yoga.

c) Madhurakavi becomes the disciple of Nammalvar.

d) The composition of the *Tiruvaymoli.*

e)   Nammalvar's deep interest in Totadari and his greatness.

The Koil Olugu

The *Olugu* describes in detail the contribution of Tirumagaialvar.

(vii) The Hagiographical Association

Srī Kuruṅga Kśetra Mahātmyam

Nil

Totadarī Mahātmyam

Nil

The Kōil Olugū

a) Nathamuni and introduction of the ritual signing of the *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*.

b) The introduction of the festival of Adhyayanotsva and a detailed account of its celebrations.

c) The *Code of Udaiyavar*, that is the reforms of Ramanuja in the temple organization, which particularly emphasized on the induction of the non-brahmana groups, mainly the *Kaikkolas* in the temple rituals and services.

d) Biographical Account of Ramanuja

e) The lineage established by Ramanuja.

(viii) The History of the shrine

Sri Kurunga Ksetra Mahatmyam

Nil

Totadari Mahatmyam

The great historical past of the *matha* is recorded in the text. The laudable achievements of the heads, *mathadhipatis*, are recounted in the text in detail.Of special importance are the achievements of Ramanuja Jiyar svami who consolidated the *matha* organization, Ponnadikkal Jiyar , who established the *Oran Vazhi Acarya Pitham* and installed Aranganagarappan as aradhya (consecrated) deity. Further,the *Mahatmyam* gives an account of Ponnadikkal Jiyar also performing important service rituals in the divine marriage of the deity Devanayaha to Sri Varamangai . The meeting of Sri Vanmamalai Jiyar with Ramanuja forms a significant part of the text. Finally, the text records the establishment of the tradition of Ramanuja Jiyar.

The Koil Olugu The *Olugu* vividly describes the history, lineage, achievements and the activities of the prominent Srivaisnava groups in the Ranganathasvami temple at

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Srirangam. These family groups were those of the Uttama-nambis, Sriranganarayana Jiyar Matha, Bhattars, and the Kandadais.The tensions between these groups, between the Vatakali and Tenkalai sects that ultimately led to the appropriation of the temple by the Tenkalais during the period of the colonial government are described in details.

CONCLUSION

This work is a study of the Śrīvaiṣ.ṇava community and its identity. An attempt has been made to understand the processes that contributed to the evolution of a cohesive community structure and the subsequent identity/identities associated with it from the twelfth century A.D.

As a community, Srivaisnavism existed before the twelfth century A.D. as is evident in the hymns of the Āḷvārs and the works of Yāmunācārya. These works reflected consciousness of being a Śrīvaiṣ.ṇava. However, a systematic philosophy projecting a normative tradition and the institutionalization of the faith in the temples and the *mathas* did not emerge. These developments from the twelfth century onwards provided an integrative paradigm and imparted a cohesive community structure. Non-brahmana participation particularly in the temple activities, projection of a low caste background of the Āḷvārs, and equating the Tamil *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham* (NDP) with the *Vedas* in the hagiographical texts, the textual traditions and popularization of the temples through the Agamic forms of worship, all contributed towards the construction of a popular social base. Further, the concept of a *guru* (spiritual guide) as reflected in the institution of the *ācāryas* (religious leaders) provided the much-needed focus to a devotee of the community.

Hence, by the end of the thirteenth century AD, Srivaisnavism emerged as an organized religious community, which provided the context for interaction within and outside the community. This had an influence on the community identity which subsequently crystallized into sectarian affiliations, i.e. Vaṭakalai (northern) and Teṇkalai (southern) However, mere perception of the community, split into Vaṭakalai and Teṇkalai sects is a narrow understanding of Srivaisnavism and its relations with the society. Understanding the community identity requires an appreciation of the historical processes that go into the making of the community. This work has attempted to contextualise the Śrīvaiṣnava community developments and understand its identity through three concepts, viz., uniformity, multiplicity and duality.

Uniformity implied belonging to a single Śrīvaiṣnava community. The textual tradition whose component texts developed as scriptures of the community reiterated the normative notion of a single homogeneous uniform community. A cohesive and distinct

identity was constructed around Viṣṇu with his spouse Lakṣmī as the universal divine couple, with Viṣṇu as supreme, the symbol of integration, which imparted a stable and uniform character to the community. The scriptures further developed this uniform identity in the charismatic portrayal was Rāmānuja, whom the Śrīvaiṣṇavas considered as the philosopher founder. Rāmānuja was attributed with the organization of the community and his philosophy of *Viśiṣṭadvaita* provided a religious ideology to the Śrīvaiṣṇavas. Rāmānuja is supposed to have introduced temple reforms to include the non-brahmana participation in the ritual and temple activities. Therefore, the idea of a uniform identity meant belonging to a single Śrīvaiṣṇava community with Rāmānuja as its head. Uniformity became the dominant theme in all the sectarian hagiographies that provided the respective sects with a lineage. The origin of the lineage in most of cases was traced to Rāmānuja. In this manner, each sect with its lineage claimed to represent the uniform Śrīvaiṣṇava community. Projection of a uniform community became important for establishing claims in the competitive spheres of resource control in the temples. It represented an integrative framework, whereby devotees could be from any section of the society. Therefore, the concept of uniformity made the caste ascription secondary to that of a community.

Multiplicity implied that within the overarching Śrīvaiṣṇava community there were sub-communities with their respective traditions. Multiple identities were based on caste, region, *maṭha*, and individual *acaryas* who were either associated with the *maṭha*, or temple or were independent (i.e. *svayamacarya*). Plural identities were evident at two levels - one, at the level of an Srivaisnava believer, two, at the level of an Śrīvaiṣṇava *ācārya*. For a Śrīvaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇa* believer, the basic affiliation was related his family deity followed by his *ācārya* and *ācārya's matha* or temple or independent institution and finally a brahmanical temple. For a non-*brāhmaṇa* believer, affiliatory pattern included his occupational or caste status, followed by the village deity, the region, then the *ācārya* who may be the *maṭhadhipati* (i.e. the head of a *maṭha*) or an *ācāryapuruṣa* or *svayamācārya* and finally a brahmanical temple.

In the multiple identities, the *ācārya* emerged as the focal point in which the pre-existing affiliations converged. The concept of a *guru* was epitomized in the *acarya* who was the spiritual guide as well as the initiator into the community. Hence, of all the levels of identities, the one at the level of the *ācārya* became important as it linked the disparate

groups into the mainstream Srivaiṣṇava community, through the *acaryic* institutional organization. The *ācāryas* then became the disseminator of Srivaisnavism by rearticulating the tradition according to the changing context and need of the community. These religious leaders projected an independent identity that became the basis for establishing power and authority and a large following. In this context, the composition of a genealogy to create an antiquated lineage became an important textual exercise for the Srivaisnavas in the post-Ramanuja period particularly when the religious leaders tried to establish a strong institutional organization with a large following. Hence, within the community, multiplicity created a hierarchy of identities, with the acaryic one at top, which was followed by the identities of the *brahmanas* and the non-brahmana elites. At the bottom of the hierarchy were those groups of non-brahmanas who occupied a low *varṇa* status within the caste system.

Today, the division into the Vaṭakalai and Teṅkalai sects represents the *duality* within the Srivaisnava community. Vaṭakalai, meaning north, i.e. the northern part of Tamil region with Kāñcīpuram as the religious center is supposed to be Sanskritic, therefore brahmanical in orientation. Teṅkalai, i.e. southern part of Tamil region with Srīraṅgam as the center is projected as adhering to the Prabandhic or the Tamil tradition. The identity of a Vaṭakalai and Teṅkalai has become an enduring one so much so, that even the historical past of the Srīvaiṣṇava community is identified along these sectarian lines. For example, several of the hagiographical texts have been referred to as belonging to either of these sects. For instance, *Rāmānujadivyasūricaritam* is considered a Teṅkalai text and *Prapaṇṇamrtam* as a Vaṭakalai text. Similarly, the institutional set ups of the temples and *mathas* have acquired the sectarian affiliations as is evident from the religious centers of both the sects, *viz.*, Kāñcīpuram (Vaṭakalai) and Srīraṅgam (Teṅkalai) respectively. However, none of these texts referred clearly to a Teṅkalai or a Vaṭakalai affiliation. The historiography on the schism attributes the emergence of the Vaṭakalai and Teṅkalai to the religious developments of the thirteenth-fourteenth century A.D. They refer primarily to two issues of conflict and debate. One is the question of the successors of Rāmānuja. The question of succession was centred on the identity of the legitimate descendant of Rāmānuja. The claim to this legitimacy was laid based on the lineage of Vēdānta Dēśika (1268-1369 AD) the Vaṭakalai and Maṇavāḷa Māmuṇi (1370-1443 AD) the Teṅkalai *guru* being in the direct line of descent from Rāmānuja onwards.

Two, the main theological issues that perpetuated the schism were the concept of *guru*, *prapatti* and the position of Śrī. Therefore, it followed that the teachings of both the acaryic heads, viz., Vedānta Deśika and Manavāla Māmuni particularly on these issues represented the correct interpretations of the teachings of Rāmānuja and his *Visiṣṭadvaitic* philosophy. The historiographical works finally conclude that the differences between the two powerful religious leaders with their large following resulted in the schism in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries AD.

However, this above view of schism overlooks the historical processes of the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries AD. Within the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, the notion of duality was established in the texts in the philosophy of *ubhaya-vedanta*, i.e. Tamil *Veda* (i.e. the *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*) and Sanskrit *Vedas*. This notion of duality crystallized into Tamil tradition and Sanskritic tradition that was reflected in the hagiographical texts which were constructing a lineage for their respective sects. Hence, some of the *ācāryas*, their *guruparamparās*, the *mathas* and temple that were the centres of acaryic and community activities acquired a Tamil or a Sanskritic identity as the case may be. Interestingly, the acaryic lineages emerging from Vedānta Deśika and Manavāla Māmuni associated the two *ācāryas* with the Sanskritic and Tamil traditions respectively. Therefore, multiple affiliations emerged between the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries that did not coalesce around the Sanskritic and Tamil traditions to form a distinct Sanskritic or Tamil sect. The purpose of these lineages was to assert a sectarian identity for the appropriation of resources in the temples and create spheres of control in them.

The emergence of the present day sectarian identities of the Vaṭakalai and Teṉkalai may be traced to the colonial period. The coming of the Britishers and their interactions with the religious institutions led to the reworking of the power relations. In the early years of colonial rule, the British Government litigated in the temple disputes. Perhaps then the need arose to establish distinct sectarian identities cutting across the regional frontiers based on common interests. Hence, the pre-existing alignments across the Sanskrit and Tamil traditions gradually crystallized into distinct sects.

Thus, the concepts of uniformity, multiplicity and duality explain the complex Śrīvaiṣṇava identity in the post-Rāmānuja period. This identity was further reinforced in the textual traditions as well as the pilgrimage centers and pilgrimage network of the

Śrīvaiṣṇavas. In both cases, a collective community consciousness was represented. The different genres of texts presented a "tradition". This Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition represented a past, a particular kind of religious ideology, canonical or scriptural basis and an institutional organization. The process of the construction of tradition began from the twelfth century AD. Keeping the contemporary needs in mind, the tradition as reflected in the texts codified pre-existing ideas along with the interpretations and commentaries of the codifier, thus stabilizing the identity of the Śrīvaiṣṇava. The dynamism of this textual tradition lay in its dual character, viz. the Sanskritic and Tamil. This duality was notionally presented in conciliation with each other and this crystallized into the philosophy of *ubhaya vedānta*, i.e. the dual *Vedas*. Such a philosophy for the first time, accorded a sacred status equivalent to that of the *Vedas* to the Tamil hymns of the Ālvārs compiled as *Nālāyira Divya Prabandham*. This was reflected in the language of the texts, *Manipravāḷa* that was a mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit words.

It was in the pilgrimage process that the uniform identity of the community was projected. This pilgrimage process formed a network between the pilgrimage sites. In this manner, it laid down the spatial boundaries for the community to identity with. The origin of the pilgrimage network can be traced to the Ālvar phase when a sacred geography was projected in the hymns. However, this sacred geography was itinerant in nature and did not evolve into a formal pilgrimage network until the thirteenth century when a community consciousness emerged. The sacred geography was extended beyond the southern boundaries to incorporate the northern Vaiṣṇava sites, fixing the number of the pilgrimage centers to one hundred and eight. The extension of the community boundaries beyond the southern frontiers reflected an attempt to identify with the pan-Indian Vaiṣṇava tradition. Therefore, through the pilgrimage network of one hundred and eight centers, the community consciousness went beyond the southern boundaries and acquired a pan-Indian identity. However, the number, one hundred and eight was merely notional. Certain centers emerged for the first time in the post-thirteenth century AD, which acquired a pilgrimage status. For instance, the Nārāyaṇasvāmī temple at Mēlkōṭe became a pilgrimage center, more important than the some of sites in one hundred and eight were. The pilgrimage network while projecting temple geography also evolved a hierarchy. Some centres were of regional importance and hence enforced a regional identity. Then some centres promoted a supra-local identity, and drew pilgrims from all over south

India. Lastly, some pilgrimage sites became the center of the Śrīvaiṣṇava activities and assumed a pan-Indian status. For example, Śrīraṅgam was the major Śrīvaiṣṇava center and epigraphs refer to *brahmanas* of 'Kāśmīradeśa' in the fourteenth century AD. Similarly, in the seventeenth century, Tirupati had emerged as the center of Hathīrām Jīyar *matha*, which was of north Indian origin.

Thus, the Śrīvaiṣṇava community identity is understood through the analysis of the textual tradition, institutional organization, viz., the *mathas*, and temples and finally the pilgrimage network. It is also stated that the community emerged as a coherent structure when the normative tradition as represented in the texts evolved a religious philosophy that became the ideological basis of the institutions and the pilgrimage process in the post twelfth century AD. However, none of these categories through which the community identity has been understood were stabilized until the end of the sixteenth century AD. They were constantly evolving and modified upon and, contributed to the fluidity in the community consciousness and its sectarian affiliations. The socio-political context against which the identity construction took place and crystallized thereafter also contributed to the fluidity within the Srivaisnava community.

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