THE SOCIAL BASE OF SRĪ VAIṢṆAVISM IN THE POST-RĀMĀNUJA PERIOD : FROM THE 13th CENTURY TO 16th CENTURY A.D.

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "THE SOCIAL BASE OF ŚRĪ VAISṆAVISM IN THE POST-RĀMĀNUJA PERIOD: FROM THE 13th CENTURY TO 16th CENTURY A.D. submitted by **RANJEETA DUTTA** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of this University is her original work and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or any other University to the best of our knowledge.

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PREFACE

The study of the religious theology and its impact on the society has always been of great interest to many research scholars. This dissertation also reflects such an inclination by taking up the case of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism in the Vijayanagar period. Perhaps the most significant development was the integration of Tamiḷ as an important linguistic element with the Ṣanskritic traditions. Tamiḷ represented the common people, whose <u>varṇa</u> status was not very high and Ṣanskrit was representative of the elite brāhmanical class who had migrated from the north. It was a complementary as well as contradictory relationship between the indigenous population with the immigrants. The Vaiṣṇava shrines at Tirupati, Śrīraṅgam, Kāñcīpuram and Melukōṭe, today, owe their performance and prosperity to this development from the ninth century A.D.

My interest in South Indian studies was generated while writing an M.A. seminar paper. I am thankful to Prof. Muzaffar Alam for introducing me to this area of study which had never figured in my academic curriculum for long. However, it was under the able supervision of Prof. R. Champakalakshmi that the object of the study became coherent. There are no words to express my gratitude to her for constant encouragement, inexhaustible patience which I have often severely tested.

I take this opportunity to thank Dr. K.K.A. Venkatachari at the Indological Research Institute in Bombay with whom numerous discussions helped me to further my research. I am highly obliged to him and his library staff for the spontaneous help extended to me.

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However, I am solely responsible for the error and omissions committed in this work.

21.7.94

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation attempts to discuss the development of Srī Vaiṣṇavism within the larger framework of religion and society in medieval South India from the thirteenth to sixteenth century. The area of study concentrates on the present state of Tamil Nāḍu, Karnāṭaka and Andhra Pradesh.

Rāmānuja in the twelfth century A.D. propounded the concept Srī Vaiṣṇavism. At the core was the <u>Viśiṣṭadvāita</u> philosophy (qualified non-dualism). What is striking here is that there was a synthesis of the already existing Tamil culture and the northern sanskritic culture under one organisation add one philosophy. The synthesis is at least as old as the <u>Bhāgavata Purāṇa</u> in the ninth century A.D. Here a common ground was created to merge the Tamil hymns of the <u>ālvārs</u> with the <u>Vēdic</u> tradition in order to appeal to the more orthodox Vaiṣṇavites. However such an effort did not meet with much success. It was only with the advent of Rāmānuja that such an effort was given a concrete shape. What Rāmānuja was doing was to systematize it and provide philosophical basis by bringing in Śaṅkara's Vēdāntic tradition with its monism but modifying it to make it easier for non-intellectual, emotionally involved devotees. Consequently, the followers came from both the sections of the linguistic and cultural domains. This formed the social base of Srī vaiṣṇavism which became more flexible in the post-Rāmānuja period.

The discussion regarding the social base is at two

levels. One from outside the religious core and the other within the religion . Focus is on the temples and maṭha organisations, from where all other relations 'vis-a-vis' the temples can be best understood. Temples were not mere religious centres, but should be viewed as the larger process of social, political and economic developments.

The fourteenth century, after a period of political chaos, witnessed the emergence of Vijayanagar rule which presided over a series of new developments. These are visible for the Śrīvaiṣṇava aspect of religious history. Hence, for the sake of convenience and due to their importance, four major Vaiṣṇava temples have been taken up. They are viz.,

a) Śrī Raṅganāthasvāmī's shrine at Śrīraṅgam.

b) Śrī Venkaṭeśvarasvāmī's shrine at Tirupati

c) Śrī Varadarājasvāmī's shrine at Kāñcīpuram

d) Śrī Nārāinsvāmī's shrine at Mēlukōṭe

The choice is not made at random. At some point of time or the other they were connected with Rāmānuja's life. At Kāñcīpuram Rāmānuja started his religious career as a disciple of Tirukkaccināmbi - a low caste Śrī Vaiṣṇava. After staying here for a considerable period of time when his ideas relating to the advāita philosophy were being shaped, he moved to Śrīraṅgam, where he became the manager of the temple. It was here that Rāmānuja clearly propounded his Viṣiṣṭavāita (qualified monism) and at the same time

instituted several reforms which became the model for the other Śrīvaiṣṇava centres to follow. Śrīraṅgam was the headquarters where all the Śrī Vaiṣṇava acāryas came and stayed for some time. It was here that after Rāmānuja the schismatic tendencies were first visible between the Prabandhic school and the Bhāṣya school, where the former laid emphasis on the Tamil hymns of the alvars and the latter on the Sanskritic hymns and Vedic tradition. Gradually Śrīraṅgam appeared as the centre of the Prabandhic school which in late seventeenth century crystallised into a sectarian community called the Teṅgalāis (the southern branch). The centre for the Bhāṣyic now was the Varadarājsvāmī shrine at Kāñcīpuram which crystallized into the sect of Vaḍagalāis (the northern branch).

It was perhaps due to the active persecution (as referred to in the Divya-Sūricaritam) during the reign of Kṛmikāntha Cōḷa identified with Kulottunga II or the lack of royal patronage that made Rāmānuja leave Śrīraṅgam for Mēlukōṭe in Karnātaka. Here he established the tradition of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism by constructing a temple dedicating to Śrī Nārāiṇsvāmī. Gradually this temple assumed importance in the Vijayanagar times as a Śrī Vaiṣṇava centre. Rāmānuja while returning from Mēlukōṭe is said to have visited Tirupati. According to the tradition, a debate was going on at Tirupati regarding the identity of the idol, as to whether it was that of Murugan (the Tamil deity equated with Subrahmanya) or Viṣṇu. Rāmānuja intervened and settled the

dispute in favour of the Vaiṣṇavas. Staying there for a while and introducing reforms based on those of Śrīraṅgam, Rāmānuja left for Śrīraṅgam.

The inscriptional evidences of these temples and some texts have been used to study the progress of Śrīvaiṣṇavaism and its place in the changing social milieu. Regarding the textual references, the choice has been restricted to some due to the non-availability of authentic translations of the others.

Chapter I discusses the growth of Śrī Vaiṣṇavaism through three evolutionary stages. The first stage was that of the ālvārs where Vaiṣṇavism first emerged as a rival sect first against the Jainas and Buddhists and then against Śaivaism. But emphasis was on bhakti as the only means to salvation and worship of the image in the temples and pilgrimages to the sacred centres. The second stage discusses the age of ācāryas from Nāthamuni to Rāmānuja. The first attempt of institutionalization is visible when Nāthamuni collected the hymns of the ālvārs and after editing and compiling them, set them to music. They were to be sung simultaneously with the Sanskrit hymns in the garbhagrha at Śrīraṅgam. It was however from the time of Rāmānuja, a complex set of developments took place. Philosophically, the hymns of the ālvārs and hymns of the Vēdas were all packed under one doctrine giving Śrī Vaiṣṇavavism a semblance of unity making Viṣṇu the Saguṇa Brahman or the universal soul into which all else merge.

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Temples and powerful mathas emerged where a hierarchical order was maintained amongst the Śrī Vaiṣṇavas. Section three, happens to deal with the most complicated stage when the schismatic tendencies were visible, but it is not clear when they assumed the form of Vaḍagalāis and Teṅgalāis. The schism was not only religious but also sociological. Rāmānuja is considered the dividing line between ancient Vaiṣṇavism and medieval and modern forms of the Vaiṣṇavism. Hence frequent references are made to him and his teachings, in the third section to understand the process of continuity and change.

Chapter two deals with the changing society under Vijayanagar. There was the emergence of the new warrior class and the older social structure was gradually giving way to the newer one. Central to this change was the idea of legitimacy based on ideological and institutional support to the new society. In this context the temples which were already important had a central role to play. They not only provided effective means of legitimacy to the rulers and contributed to the economic prosperity through the investment of numerous land and money grants for irrigational purpose, but also emerged very strongly as the centre of religious hierarchy and powerful control. The various Śrīvaiṣṇava families residing in the mathas and temples with their large number of disciples became extremely powerful and almost autonomous. They took decisions in all administrative and religious matters. But

at the same time, the royal order was followed when issued. But this was not very often. Nevertheless it did indicate the royal presence whose patronage was very essential for the survival of the entire institutional structure. Chapter three explores the growth of the matha and its leaders who formed the link between the temple and the state. Many new Śrīvaiṣṇava families emerged who controlled the temple property and the temple administration. Within the temples and the mathas there was a constant struggle for authority and the assertion of one's supremacy. The situation became extremely complicated especially due to the presence of strong Śrīvaiṣṇava leaders. This provided a fertile ground for the schism whose tendencies were already apparent in the tension filled atmosphere. In the seventeenth century, the illusion of unity and doctrinal oneness was completely shattered.

It was the broadening of the social base which effected the various developments. Each school of thought emerged coherently and strongly, because each could attract a large, economically prosperous social class whose endowments and patronage made the sectarian leaders confident enough to break from the natal group and start a separate movement of their own.

CHAPTER I
RĀMĀNUJA'S TEACHINGS AND DUALITY IN ŚRĪVAIṢNAVA EXEGESIS

INTRODUCTION

In this Chapter, an attempt is made to trace the development of ŚrīVaiṣnavism from the time of the ālvārs to the polarization of the community into two sects -the Vaḍagalai - the northern school and Teṅgalai - the southern school. This entire period is marked with many interesting developments sociologically, historically and politically which had a bearing on the history of Śrī Vaiṣnavism. As the title of the Chapter suggests, Rāmānuja and his teachings have been taken as the starting point, going backwards in the past, to see how his philosophy evolved and then proceeding ahead to see its repercussions.

Credit goes to Rāmānuja for bringing the early works of Tamiḷ bhakti saints and various ideas of classical Hinduism into one thought, one movement and what is particularly important, into one organisation. Hence he is considered the dividing line between ancient Vaiṣnavism on the one hand and medieval and modern on the other. To use the words of Victor Turner[1], Rāmānuja belongs to the 'liminal' stage.

In this theology, four core concepts need to be elucidated. They are, viz., the concept of Śrī, Bhakti, Prapatti and Viśiṣṭadvāita, which is the philosophy of Rāmānuja. Śrī or Lakshmī is the divine consort of Viṣnu,

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"The one who rests on the serpent couch in loving embrace with the Lady of the Lotus (Srī) is the primordial cause for the two (Brahmā and Siva)....[2]. Rāmānuja accepts this important doctrine as is evident from his Gītabhāshya.

> The 'Lord of Lakshmī' He who is the opposite of everything that is evil and the sole seat of all auspiciousness....who possesses countless divine weapons, which are worthy of him, variegated, infinitely wonderful, faultless and unsurpassably auspicious, who is the beloved consort of Lakshmi the multitude of whose unlimited unsurpassed and innumerable auspicious qualities....[3]

In the Vaikunthagadya there is a brief description of Sri :

> "Beholding...Bhagavān - Nārāyaṇa seated on the body of the serpent Ananta by the side of Lakshmī, 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 Adiśēsha and Viśvaksēna to render the services due to the Lord in various states and situations, and who is in every way worthy of Him by Her nature, beauty, character and charms (sīla-rūpa-guṇa-vīlāsa-ādi)[4].

Here Srī plays a vital role as the 'mediatrix' and the link between the Lord and a devotee whose social status is of no consequence. Her position as the sharer of all power and responsibilities with Her consort Nārāyaṇa is emphasised by the word Srī in "SrīVaisṇavism or "Srī Sampradāya". Srī Vaisṇavas are of the belief that Lord transmitted the divine teachings of the Pañcarātra[5] Srī who in turn passed down to Viśvaksēna, who then handed them to Nāmmālvār. Thus the

line of Śrī Vaiṣṇava preceptors start with Śrī, then with Viśvaksēna, Nāmmāḷvār and many successive ācāryas. Rāmānuja comes eighth in the line. Hence it is a combination of mythical with the temporal.[6]

This is followed by the doctrinal significance of the terms 'bhakti' (complete devotion) and 'prapatti' (complete surrender). These two are related to 'karma' (deeds) and 'moksha' (liberation). The aim of the devotee is complete communion with God, so that the very self is immersed in Him. But this is never complete because of Karma which follows man from the previous birth. The karma is related to the saṁsāric cycle, ignorance and enticement of sense experience". The goal for which the devotee strives, is the freedom or moksha from the saṁsāric cycle in order to have 'an intimate unimpeded communion with God'. In its most basic sense, bhakti implies "devotion", "devotional faith" or "loving devotion". When related to prapatti it becomes Bhakti Yōga. It is the "upāya" for moksha involving devotional meditation on the Lord, as expounded by Ramanuja in his Śrībhāṣya.[7]

In the concept of bhakti, there is a strong emotional element which was visible in the works of the āḻvārs. It is a way of experiencing the reality of God and the means by which God's presence may be known. According to E.O. James,

> "....Revival of the doctrine of bhakti or sacrificial union between the Gods and men introduced a new ideal of salvation which

found expression in devotion towards a personal deity and the reality of the human soul capable of redemption by divine grace."[8]

By prapatti is meant "self-surrender to God". Śrīnīvāsadeva defines it as "he who, being characterized by the attributes of being helpless and devoid of other refuge resorts to Bhagvān"; there follows, then a description of the ritual act of performing that surrender either for the purpose of liberation itself or for liberation along with the other ends. It requires no individual effort, training, or qualification of birth or status. Implicit trust in God and total involvement of self are needed. All these factors are absent from bhakti. Hence, one need not even attempt the difficult types of devotional meditation. In fact, this is the idea of service to the Lord as itself man's supreme goal rather than as simply the means to reach that goal. In Śrībhāṣya, it is written, "it is appropriate for the Supreme Person who is the object of attainment, to be Himself the means of attaining Him" and that 'the scripture declares that none else can be the means (of attaining Him than He Himself)"[9]. This doctrine of prapatti became very important for the later Śrī Vaiṣṇavas.

The conception of Supreme Self by Rāmānuja was the one who was extremely compassionate and full of love for his devotees.[10] Unlike the impersonal world of soul of Śankara, which made illusory universe in a sort of sport (līlā), Rāmānuja's God needed a man and vice-versa. The individual soul, made by God, returned to Him and merged with Him, but

was always distinct. It shared many divine qualities but was always conscious of itself as an I. If this self-consciousness was lost, it would cease to exist. It was one with God, yet separate, hence for this reason the system of Rāmānuja was called Viśistādvāita or "qualified monism".

The name Viśistadvaita shows that it is neither pure Dvāita nor pure Advāita. It teaches that the sentient souls (jīvas) and non-sentient objects (acetanā) are as real as Brahman, but both of them are only a mode (i.e. a Viśesana or an attribute) of the Parabrahman and are not independent of the Brāhmanas as the Dvāitins hold. Brahman is the spreme Godhead and it has innumerable and auspicious qualities and attributes and is not nirguna or nirviśesa (devoid of all attributes). Here the conception of Saguna Brahman implies that His playground is the entire universe from whom all the animate and inanimate emanated and in whom all merge ultimately. This goes as a compromise between absolute monism of Ādi Śankara[11] and the distinctive separation of Dēva and Jīva of Ānanda Tīrtha. Another important aspect is that, of Śankara's Advāita preaches salvation through discard and denial of vices and worldly aspects and realisation of Godhead through introspection, Viśistadvāita accepts the social obligation of Jīva and teaches 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 that Supreme Self manifested in the form of Śrīmān-Nārāyana. The concept of Godhead with the

attribute paved the way for a better socio-ethical approach and made the religion more acceptable to the common man.

Śrī Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭadvāita is noted for the following features:

(a)   It propounds a credible doctrine of complete identity between God and the Absolute;

(b)   It harmonizes God's transcendence (paratva) with His accessibility (soulabhya); and

(c)   It inculcates the highest type of devotion without belittling the part of intellectualism and social duties in man's spiritual life.

While the doctrine first gained articulation as a system of thought in the now unavailable writings of Dramidācārya and later in those of Yamunācārya.   It was Rāmānuja who put those devotional traditions coming from the ālvārs down, into the mould of the Upaniṣadic thought by embodying them in the form of commentaries based on the Vēdantic scriptures.

The above concepts discussed briefly are in the essence the doctrine of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, as given credence under Rāmānuja.   About two centuries after Rāmānuja, the sect split into two, but both branches regard Rāmānuja as their most important teacher.   The concepts of Ubhaya Vēdānta as propounded by Rāmānuja was the two-fold scripture of Sanskrit śruti or revealed tenets and the Tamiḷ hymns of the

ālvārs which were two contradictory characteristics synthesized in a doctrine in a complementary manner could not sustain for long. This split resulted into two strong communities - the Vadagalais or the northern school and Teṅgalai or the southern school. The implication of this fission is extremely significant. It portrayed a constant assertion of Tamil as a linguistic entity which naturally came into conflict with sanskrit - the language of the Vēdas. In fact, this trend is nothing new and Rāmānuja had nothing to do with it. Right after the Sangam age, the process of Aryanisation from the North brought in many Sanskrit and Brāh; maṇical elements which influenced the works of many saints. ālvārswere amongst them. The Tamil elements and Sanskrit elements had a different social base, the indigenous Dravida were representatives of Tamil element, the vanguard of sanskrit were the Brahmānas. This element of duality hence can be traced right back to the Saṅgam age (i.e. the early historical period). However, this manifested in various ways historically depending on the political, economic and social conditions, which is evident till today.[12] The period under review, the Vijayanagar times exhibit tremendous dynamism in the social context. Various new classes were emerging which were mainly non-Brāhmanical and came into conflict with the already consolidated Brahmanical structure. However, if one goes back further, it was present even in the Cōla times. Nothing could be better for a religious philosophy, if its social base consists of the representatives of both

these elements. It was on these fertile grounds that Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭadvāitism, Śrī Vaiṣṇavism with the underlying concepts of Ubhaya-vēdānta got consolidated.

The situation in Vijayanagar times was slightly different, when with the expansion of the empire through the conquests and cultivation of non-fertile lands, there was migration from the neighbouring areas to the Tamil heartland,[13] thereby contributing to a large warrior class, who gained control over large tracts of land through the Nāyaka system, whereby they administered their own territories called Nāyakkattanam and in lieu provided army during the time of warfare to the rayas. It was during this time, we witness a growth of vernacular literature apart from Tamiḷ.[14] In this environment, the Śrī Vaiṣṇava doctrine underwent change resulting in the split into two communities, the Vaḍagalai and Teṅgalai, thereby creating an atmosphere of strong sectarian consciousness. The vaḍagalai gave importance to the Sanskrit Vēdas and Teṅgalai gave priority to the Tamiḷ Prabandhas, thereby dividing the social base of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava community. Hence the duality which was inherent in the āḷvār tradition right from the beginning manifested in the post-Rāmānuja period, after the entire philosophy was given cogency by the great ācārya. His Viśiṣṭadvāita was the interpretation of the āḷvār's works as well as the Sanskritic texts which he reconciled, but left them ambiguous and open-ended. With the result, varied interpretations arose which finally could no longer

exist simultaneously. Therefore, the metaphysical concepts as well as the social and political developments interplayed upon each other.

This Chapter will not study the exegetic literature only, but try to understand the developments in Śrī Vaiṣṇavism historically, since the source material at hand is limited and contradictory, an effort has been made to present a picture which has some accuracy. For the convenience of presentation, this Chapter has been divided into three sections:-

I.   The Age of Ālvārs

II. The age of the Ācāryas (from Nāthamuni to Rāmānuja)

III. The age of the Ācāryas in the post-Rāmānuja period.

I.   THE AGE OF THE ĀLVĀRS

It was Nāthamuni who first collected the hymns of the ālvārs into a "Corpus of Four Thousand Stanzas" called the "Nalayīra divya-prabhandam"[15] and set them to music to be sung in the famous Vaiṣṇava temple at Śrīraṅgam. However, the credit goes to Rāmānuja for organising the Vaiṣṇava tradition in such a manner as to give it a strong institutional support in the temples and make them known for posterity by writing commentaries on the ālvārs works. This

āḻvārs and not to Rāmānuja, who was the main force behind Śrīvaiṣṇavism. Nowhere did Rāmānuja mention that we had expounded the faith but paid his debts to the āḻvārs. The question arises in one's mind that why is this so?

As a part of the bhakti movement[16], Śaivism enjoyed a prominent position from a very early stage. It was patronized greatly by the Cōḻa rulers as is evident from the numerous Śaiva temples which grew into prominence. However, royal patronage did extend to the other religious institutions, but saivism enjoyed a prominent position. The Śaiva mathas find frequent reference in the inscriptions, more often than their Vaiṣṇava counterparts. The period from seventh century to the ninth century A.D. witnessed significant religious developments due to the 'brāhmanical' Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva sects conflict on one hand and of Budhism and Jainism on the other[17]. The Nāyanārs set out on pilgrimage from one sacred centre to the other, thereby propagating the temple deity and the faith. The mathas became a strong centres for giving discourses to the devotees. Some of the Nāyanārs themselves took the task of establishing the mathas. Thirunammakkarasar, himself founded a matha in Tiruppunduruthi in Thanjavur district, where he stayed and composed some devotional songs.[18] Śaivite monasteries appeared during the ninth century and that of Śrīvaiṣṇavas during the eleventh century. Temples were here fast emerging as the institutions and ideological base of the movement. They received numerous endowments.

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The most important was dēvadāna (granting of lands to the temples). These lands were controlled by brāhmaṇa trustees and were the focuses of huge corporation of non-cultivating as well as the non-brāhmanical cultivating class. The geographical concentration was mainly the Kāverī valley which was the nuclear zone of the Cōḷa empire.[19]

The newly established monarchy was dependent on the brāhmaṇical order for the legitimization of the royal authority. Inscriptions bear the fact that the head of the matha was usually the rājaguru in the royal administrative affairs.[20] Hence the tradition of the Śaivite theology had a stronger foundation than the Vaiṣṇavs, who were at that time not organized and did not have much of a sectarian coherence. The āḻvārs did not come together to form a coherent organisation. Even Divyasūricarita ṃ mentions no such instance.

By the time Rāmānuja came on the scene, the Śaiva position was stronger. Hence the onus fell on his shoulders. He thereby, brought into existence the Viśiṣṭadvāitic philosophy where all the works of the āḻvārs were acknowledged. Perhaps what was important was to establish the antiquity of the faith at par with the Śaivas. Hence to prove the strong theological basis of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas, it became extremely essential to trace the lineage to the āḻvārs, in order to present an unbroken sequence of gurus right from the beginning of the bhakti movement in south. The importance of creating a parampara (tradition) led the

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ācāryas to consider themselves the direct descendants of the ālvārs. This is common to both the traditions despite their differences.

In <u>Divyasuricarita</u>;m the author acknowledges the ālvārs and compares their achievements to that of an elephant who leads an ant. Hence the author was following the path paved by the ālvārs.[21] He also mentions a commentorial tradition by the ācāryas on the works of the <u>Divyasūris</u>[22]. In fact, the entire first Chapter establishes the divine tradition of ŚrīVaiṣṇavas to Viṣṇu then Śrī and finally <u>Viśvakséna</u>[23].

Interestingly enough in <u>Yatindramatadīpikā</u>, Śrīnīvās, does not mention the ālvārs. This work is of the seventeenth century when the <u>Vaḍagalais</u> and <u>Teṅgalai</u> sects were formed. The author says, "I bow to <u>Yatīśvara,</u> <u>Vēdāntarāya</u> and <u>Mahāguru</u> and I begin to compose <u>Yatindramatadīpikā</u>, for the instruction of the beginners.[24] <u>Vēdāntarāya</u> is <u>Vēdāntadeśika</u> and Mahāguru <u>is</u> <u>his</u> <u>preceptor</u> <u>Doḍḍayyācārya</u>. Perhaps, by this time, ŚrīVaiṣṇavism was entrenched on firm footings and the situation demanded an unbroken line of preceptor from <u>Rāmānuja</u> onwards. Hence the need for acknowledging the ālvārs was not there. Another assumption may be that Śrīnīvās being a <u>Vaḍagalai</u> did not wish to acknowledge the <u>Prabandhic</u> tradition.

Sources for the time of ālvārs are inscriptions and later commentaries[25] Although the commentaries form a very

important source for the study of the time of the ālvārs;
one thing should be kept in mind. Being interpretations,
they present many problems as the interpreters were not
conscious of the atmosphere in which the ālvārs composed the
songs. These later ācāryas writing within the doctrinal
premises of Viśiṣtadvāita applied ideas and concepts thereby
subsuming the spirit of these songs.

The works of the ālvārs reveal one factor - there was
an awareness of Viṣṇu being the Supreme, Kṛṣṇa being the
avatāra, hence the avatāra concept and the feeling of bhakti
and prapatti. Consider the following passages written by
Nāmmālvār:

"The one who rests on the serpent couch in loving
embrace with the Lady of the Lotus (Śrī) is the primordial
cause for the two (Brahma and Śiva)....(II.8.1)"

> "His creative activity is readily manifest everywhere,
> as He becomes Brahma who creates, Śiva who
> destroys....(II.8.3.). He is everywhere, pervading
> himself....(II.8.8)."

O, Unique one, the driver of the beautiful chariot, the
carrier of the auspicious disc, graciously tell me how you
yourself can be many yugas, as well as the one who stands
there changeless under the changing objects in the Yugas: O
you who are knowledge itself, make known to me your
contradictory ways" VII.8.1).

This is an example of the works of the ālvārs which "is the progressive integration and fusion of the southern Śankam culture. (particularly of the Tamil renaissance) with the new form of sectarian "Kr̥ṣnaism[26] from the northern fringe of Tamil Nāḍu (Kāñchī and Vėṅkaṭam)[27]. An awareness of the supremacy of Viṣṇu means that Śiva and Śaiva pantheon were second. Hence the ālvārs were aware of a pronounced sectarian ideology and a highly emotional form of bhakti (from Nāmmālvār onwards) which integrated" many of the religious and poetic features."[29]

Hardy points out :

> In fact both the Śaivite poetess (Karaikkal Ammaiyar) and early ālvārs start from a situation which is not encountered in the Sangam corpus and which therefore may be assured to be of sanskritic origin. They clearly propagate a religious polarization 'Vaiṣṇavism' versus 'Śaivism'. The general Viṣṇu myths and his 'manifestations' are far more important for the early ālvārs - - - from about 550 A.D. Inscriptions appear in Tamil, Jain (and Buddhist) religious and cultural influence is combated by strong brāhmanical ('Hindu') revival exemplified on the political level by the Pāṇḍyas and Pallavas and on the popular level by the ālvārs and Śaivite Nāyānārs. This rather rapid and extensive religious transformation has been explained by the emigration of large groups of northern intellectuals, religious leaders, artists etc. to the south following the collapse of Gupta empire. The construction of temples in the south on a large scale from this date onwards has also been connected with this immigration." [30]

The background to the ālvārs' religious and poetic achievements is linked with the classical Sangam period, where Māyōṉ figured as one of the chief deities.[31]

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The name Māyōn signifying the black one (Mā = black) is considered to be the deity of the Mullai or the forest region and is equivalent to Viṣṇu' Krṣna. This concept of Krṣna as the avatāra of Viṣṇu was also known. When the ālvārs came to the scene, this element got fused with the Northern tradition. The ālvārs exhibit an awareness of both the Vēdas and Krṣna. Māyōn as the God of the temple is conceived of. Andāl's Tiruppāvai[32] is one such work. Here we come across an observance of the vow by the maidens of Gōkul in the month of Mārgali to seek union with the Lord. They take a dip in the pond early in the morning and abstain from fatty food and bad words, adornment with jewels, etc. Andāl refers herself as the Gōpī and wakes up the girls and together they go to the house of Nandagōpa, foster-father of Lord Krṣna and ruler of Gōkul with a view to meeting the Lord. Here the house is equivalent to the temple. The girls wake-up Nandagōpa Yaśōda, Balarāma and Nīladēvī and finally Lord Krṣna himself. This observance of vow is mentioned in Bhāgavata. Thus Srivilliputtur became Gōkul, the Lord of the temple there Krṣna and Andāl was Gōpī praying for Krṣna's grace.

Here we find localisation of the Krṣna myths/stories in the brāhmanized temple religion. It is true that the alvars wrote in Tamil extensively but they were definitely not unaware of the upaniṣadic ideology. K.K.A Venkatachari[33] provides such evidences:

O Kaṇṇaṉ (skst. Kṛṣṇa), O Creator of the four-
faced one (Ta. nāṉmukaṉ: skt. caturmukha
brahmā), O Cause (of the Universe), O witness,
I, who am Your slave, do not consider that day
as the starving (i.e. fasting) day when I have
not taken my food. But the day which is the
starving day for me (is the day) in which I am
not continuously thinking (the Tamil of the
maṇtra) Namō Nārāyaṇa, worshipping You with
the flowers of Īruk (skt. Ṛk), Ecur
(Skt. Yajus) and Sāma (Skt. Sāma) Vēta (Skt.
Vēda).

      (Periyālvār Tirumoḻī, 5:1:6).

Hence the Vēdas were part of the temple life and the
ālvārs referred to them as part of their religious heritage.
Perhaps the ālvārs were not against the Vēdic traditions
associated with Lord Viṣṇu, but simply sang His praise in
Tamiḻ, which was native to them.[34]

The accounts in Divyasuricaritⅿam refers to the period
of Pāṇḍyas, Pallavas and Cōḷas. Temple became the centre
through which the purāṇic ideology of bhakti got
transmitted. Hence temple became the institutional base for
the bhakti cults where the ālvārs and Nāyanārs played a very
significant role.

About ninety five temples are mentioned in the works
of the ālvārs and provide the structure of the movement.
Srīvaiṣṇavism gives the number to be one hundred and eight
and these are called Divyadēsas. These temples are the
centres of pilgrimage. There are ten temples which are
frequently referred by the ālvārs. They are Vēṅkaṭam
(Tirupati), Araṅkam (Srīraṅgam), Kuṭantai (Kumbakōnam),

Tirumālirum --> Cōlai, Kāñcīpuram, Naraiyur, Vehkā (in Kāñcīpuram), Kurunkuti Kōttiyūr and Āli.Ālvārs related to four major environment Vēnkatam/Kāñcī, the Pāntiyanātu South of Maturai, (East of Kumbhakōnam and Tanjore and finally Srīrangam. Ālvārs seem to have been aware of the temple rituals, and the use of flowers, incense and other commodities for a 'beautiful vigraha' was known. The rituals established the relationship between the God and the devotee and this was manifested in the temple services.

Andāl's Tiruppavai refers to such details "Offer Him fragrant flowers, sing His praise and meditate upon with reverence"[35]; "who is in deep yogic sleep, in the ocean of milk, on the coils of the great serpent Adisésha and who is the seed of the Universe"[36] and "You lovely lady with eyes like lotus flowers enfolding bees within and those of deer, know you that all the girls have reached the place of the ritual, singing the glories of the Lord."[37]

The Kōil Oluqu also refers to the activities of the ālvārs at the temple of Lord Rahganāthasvāmī in Srīrangam. Among them Tirumangai Ālvār seems to have been discussed at length. He constructed the various buildings of the fourth prākāra known after him as 'Ālinādan tiruvidi' and made arrangements for the recitation of Tiruvāimoli. Tirumangai Ālvār lived in the eighth century and is usually regarded amongst the later ālvārs. (At that time Madurakavi Ālvār installed the image of Nāmmālvār in Tirunagari). Tirumangai

placed the Tamil hymn of Nāmmālvār at par with the <u>Vēdas</u> and both of them were to be recited during the <u>Adhyāyanōtsava</u>. Later on, Madhurkavi is said to have visited the temple with the image of Nāmmālvār, recited the <u>Tiruvāimoḷi</u> and then gone back to Tirunagarī. Hence from this time onwards, this trend of carrying <u>Nāmmālvār's</u> image from Tirunagarī to Srīraṅgam and back, started, to be discontinued by Rāmānuja. From the <u>Oḷugu</u>, the presence of Kulaśekhar Ālvār and ˻ .....˼, ˼ ˼ ˼ ˼ and Toṇḍaraḍippaḍi Ālvār[38] is also known.

At Tirupati, the epigraphical evidence do not speak of direct presence of these holy sages.‾ But the inscriptions belonging to Vijayanagara times show that the practice of deifying the <u>ālvārs</u> had become very important and their birthdays were celebrated. The twelve <u>ālvārs</u> and Rāmānuja find mention in an inscription, wherein provision was made for the recitation of particular portions of <u>Prabhandam</u> on the days of the actual birth-star of each of them.[39] Hence this establishes an unbroken line of Vaiṣnava leaders.

Regarding <u>Kāñcī</u>, it is referred to in the literary works as one of the many centres. The Viṣnu temple at Veḥkā in Kāñcī was al ready known from the Saṅgam period. Through the hymns of the <u>ālvārs</u>, eighteen temples at Kāñcī are known and Srī Varadarājaswāmi temple happens to be one of them. It was first mentioned by Bhūdattālvār. But it was the temple at Veḥkā which finds prominence. It was referred to by Poigai and Pēy Ālvārs, along with Srīraṅgam, Vēngaḍum,

Kuḍandai and Viṇṇagaram. Tirumaḷisai seems to have sung about Vehkā in the most passionate manner. It was only during the age of ācāryas that Śrī Varadarājaswāmī temple started gaining importance.

The āḷvārs went from one place to another, singing and dancing about the glories of Viṣṇu and his avatāras. Even Tiruvāimoḷi was sung with gestures. This attracted a lot of devotees to them and to the temples where they sang. The lyrical quality of their works was very charming and they not only sang about Viṣṇu but also glorified his beauty, thereby making it easier for the people to understand -- 'O, my Accutā, with beautiful garland of cool tulacī on your crown'; "O you whose eyes are as pleasant as the lotus ripe with nectar" and so on. Their philosophy did not appear to be complicated and neither did it have any trace of power contest. They never attempted to unite the doctrinal propositions into a coherent ideology which was feature of later Śrī Vaiṣṇavism.

For this dissertation, the temples taken up are: Śrī Nārāiṇasvāmy Temple at Mēlukōṭe, Śrī Raṅganāthasvāmī Temple Śrī Venkaṭeśvaraswāmi temple at: at Śrīraṅgam and Śrī Varadarājasvāmī temple at Kāñcīpuram. They have not been selected randomly. The importance of these temples lie in the fact that at some point of time they were associated with the life of Rāmānuja and during the Vijayanagar period developed as the leading Vaiṣṇava centres. Except Mēlukōṭe, the other three, find mention in

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the hymns of the ālvārs too, thus imparting great antiquity to the institution.

II. AGE OF THE ĀCĀRYAS

According to Divyasūricarita: m[40], there was a gap of two hundred years between the last ālvārs and the first ācāryas. We will here deal with the time period of tenth century onwards when Nāthamuni came on the scene. He can probably be called the next important Vaiṣṇava teacher after Tirumaṅgai Ālvār who lived in the eighth century. Nāthamuni's presence marks a new stage in the history of Srīvaiṣṇavism. After two hundred years, there was a revival in the form of the codifications of the hymns of the ālvārs. Nāthamuni recovered them, according to the Vaiṣṇava tradition, by means of yogic power, collected and edited them and finally arrangements were made for their recitation.

The Kōil Oḷugu does not mention the reason for such a gap:

> "For a long time, after the Perumal had granted to the Tiruvāimoḷi, a place of equality with the Vēdas on the Tiruadhyayanōtsava day of the month of Mārgaḷi, for the sake of Tirumaṅgaimannan, He continued to hear the prabandhas. But as an effect of the bad days (that followed) the prabandhas receded into obscurity and the learning and teaching of the hymn died away. Hence there was no occasion for the alvār (Nāmmālvār) to go over to the temple.[41].

The Oḷugu offers no explanation of the "bad days". The

Muslim attacks came later. There was also no social or political upheaval in the country. It was the period of the rise of the Cōḷas. According to V.N. Hari Rao[42], the "bad days" is evidently a fiction created by the chronicler, who was eager to tell a continuous tale and anxious to give some sort of explanation for a period in which no saint flourished. Perhaps, these "bad days" have nothing to do with political upheaval, but were "bad days" for Vaiṣṇavism in general. Cōḷa rulers patronized the 'Saivas' and made numerous grants to them. Saiva temples, especially from the time of Rājarāja I, the bhakti of the Saiva <u>Nāyanārs</u> and the Saiva temples form a strong ideological base for the emerging Cōḷa monarchy who consciously adopted and promoted to 'integrate the Tamiḷ macro-region into a regional polity with a distinct regional culture'.[43]

The number of inscriptions during the Cōḷa period at Srīraṅgam are not many and are mainly grants of money. Inscriptions do not reveal any repair work. Even at Tirupati, one does not see much of the Srīvaiṣṇava influence. Except for the reign of Parantaka I (907 - 950 A.D.)[44], most of them make scanty reference to the Vaiṣṇavas, whether it be the shares attributed to them or in the administrative affairs of the temple.

Hence at Srīraṅgam which was already a leading Vaiṣṇava Centre, for over two hundred years, do not at least inscriptionally refer to the <u>Prabhandhams</u> of the <u>ālvārs</u> being sung alongside with the Sanskrit rituals. The <u>Kōil</u>

Olugu tells us an interesting story about "The Code drawn up by Śrimad-Nāthamunigaḷ".

> "When he (Nāthamuni) came to Kumbakōnam from Mannār Kōil (Vīraṇārāyaṇapuram) during his religious tour he heard only the 'ten' beginning with 'ārāvamudi' of the work of Nāmmālvār recited. He came to Tirunagarī and heard the 'Kaṇṇirun-ciruttambu' of Madurakavi Ālvār in praise of Nāmmālvār, recited by Parānkuśa Nambī, a follower of Madura Kavi Ālvār's headship. He did penance, met the ālvār and through him learnt the works of all the sacred shrine of Tiruvaraṅgam and took over the office of the Śrīkāryam. He was immensely pleased when he heard of the astonishing favour that the Perumāḷ had rendered to the Tiruvāimoḻi for the sake of Tirumaṅgaimannan, and of the divine grace shown towards Nāmmālvār."[45]

Nāthamuni's works of collecting the hymns into the 'Corpus of Four Thousand' or Nalayīra Divya Prabhandas' was not a mere edited literary work. He also put them into practice to be sung simultaneously with the Sanskrit Vēdas and consequently received the Vēdic status and were called the Draviḍa Vēdas. He made his disciples learn the sacred works and arranged for their continuation down the ages. He fixed the time of the commencement (upakarma) and temporary suspension of the recital (utsarjana) as they were for the Vēdas. Accordingly, 'utsarjana' was to be during the Kārtikai festival and 'upakarma' on the day of 'sukladasami', during the Adhyāyanōtsava in the month of Mārgaḷi. The deity of Nāmmālvār was to be smeared with the divine oil and the rest was to be distributed among the devotees.[46] The four prabhandas of Nāmmālvār were to occupy

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the places of the four Vēdas and the prabhandas of the other ālvārs were to be their auxiliaries. This was similar to the structure of the vēdas which had itihāsa and purānas as their auxiliaries (aṅgas and upaṅgas). Nāthamuni began the festival of Tirumoḷi, when Tiruvāimoḷi was recited. According to the Kōil Oḷugu, this tradition was carried on by his sister's sons, Kīḷaiyagattāḷvān, Mīḷaiyagattāḷvān to sing to tune the Divyaprabandhas of the ālvārs and appointed them to sing and worship like Nāthamuni himself, during the Tirumoḷi and Tiruvāimoḷi festivals.

Hence Nāthamuni was the first ācārya to have taken the first step towards the correct expression of Vaisnava philosophy. It was his contribution that led to the emergence of Srīraṅgam as the Headquarters of the Vaisnava movement. This collection from different local and oral traditions started a new period in the history of southern Vaisnavism by placing it at par with the Saiva hymns which were collected in Tirumurai or sacred text in the period of Rājarāja I (985 - 1014)[47], during the tenth - eleventh century.

Rāmānuja, with his new philosophy of Visistadvāita marked a turning point. Exegetically, there were clear and well-defined concepts under one organisation. Rāmānuja went a step ahead of Nāthamuni. He not only concentrated on the Dravida Vēdas, but also on the Sanskrit ones. This twin concept of Ubhaya vēdānta thereby laid the foundation of the later schismatic developments. No doubt Rāmānuja was

greatly influenced by the _Divya_ _Prabandhas_ of the ālvārs but
he gave a lot of importance to the _Vēdantic_ philosophy. His
Gītabhāsya and repeated use of _Upanisadic_ ideas prove this.
He possibly could not ignore this element, considering the
mileu of the twelfth century, where he was living. Temples
as an institution of the brāhmanical structure had emerged
in a significant way and the _brāhmadēyas_ contributed to the
exalted position of the brāhmanas. The brāhmanas were not
only the guardians of the temple, its rituals and
activities, but also lent a legitimizing support to the Cōla
monarchy where there was a marked absence of the _Ksatriya_
lineage. By endowing lavishly to the temple functionaries
and in turn being promised a share, gave the Cōla chiefs a
chance to participate in this brāhmanical institution.
These endowments gave a strong economic backing to the
Brāhmanas who depended upon royal patronage.

In such a milieu, Rāmānuja could not totally disregard
the Sanskritic influence, for then ŚrīVaisnavism would be
losing a very strong legitimizing force. Neither could he
ignore the Tamil population, who were emerging as merchants
and craftsmen into an already existing powerful agrarian
community.[48] ālvārs were definitely aware of the _Vēdas_ and
their work showed _Vēdic_ influence, Nathamuni was also aware
of them. But it is in the _Visistadvāitic_ philosophy that a
conscious attempt has been made to amalgamate both the
lineages but in such a manner that their separate identity
was maintained. In this manner, Rāmānuja broadened the

social base of Śrīvaiṣṇava movement and gave it a new lease of life. He did not stop at mere metaphysics. Perhaps the greatest contribution of Rāmānuja lies in the strong institutional base he gave to Śrīvaiṣṇavism. He not only instituted new reforms at the existing Vaiṣṇava temples of Śrīraṅgam, Tirupati and Kāñchīpuram, but also established a new temple at Mēlukōṭe. Temples became central to the Śrīvaiṣṇava philosophy where Viṣṇu who was transcendental was housed in concrete, as an object to whom the people could direct their prayers. The concept of Saguṇa Brāhamaṇa emphasized on elaborate rituals; offerings and adornment of the deity made it attractive to the people. Numerous temple festivals were initiated to give everybody a sense of being a part of the sampradāya and a share in the offerings of prasādam, irrespective of the varṇa status. Hence the caste barriers were relaxed to a great extent, encouraging people to join the community.

Rāmānuja was careful not to stretch the egalitarian character too far. For that would lead to serious problems for the different varṇas themselves gave a community feeling, with which the people identified themselves strongly. Besides a social revolution was not what Śrīvaiṣṇavism needed but a strong base with the legitimizing force of the Brāhamaṇas. Therefore, it was a conscious move to make the priests brāh.maṇas, who sang both the Sanskrit and Vēdic hymns and performed the rituals. Many non-brāh.maṇs were incorporated in the temple administration[49]

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but were rarely accorded the priestly status. That Rāmānuja was a Brāhmaṇa and wrote in <u>Sanskrit</u> only, is something which should not be ignored totally.

It was first at Śrīraṅgam, where Rāmānuja was the manager of the temple, that a series of reforms were instituted giving a new institutional base and setting a model for the other Vaiṣṇava temples. It is surprising that Rāmānuja is not mentioned in the inscriptions of the temples. This applies also to his immediate predecessors and successors. But the inscriptions of the eleventh and twelfth century do contain important references, to the affairs and organisations at Śrīraṅgam. An inscription of <u>Kulōttuṅga</u> I dated 1088 A.D. and another of <u>Māravarunan Sundara</u> Pāṇḍya I (1229) contain such references and do confirm the traditional account of Rāmānuja's activities at Śrīraṅgam. A couple of inscriptions supply information about the rare and interesting management of certain shrines like the <u>Dasavatāra</u> shrine and the <u>Tirumaṅgai</u> <u>Ālvār</u> <u>sannidhi</u>, to the new officers and their duties.[50]

In the <u>Kōil Olugu</u>, Rāmānuja is referred as <u>Udayavar</u> or 'possessor' (of the <u>ubhaya</u> <u>vibhūti</u> <u>aiśvaryam</u>, i.e., the wealth consisting of <u>nitya</u> <u>vibhūti</u> or eternal bliss and <u>leelāvibhūti</u> or worldly happiness).

> "We have given you all our wealth and power to be employed as you wish and desire; and as the 'possessor' and bestower of eternal bliss (<u>moksha</u>) you look after our affairs". He also commanded the <u>parijanas</u> to take Udayavar to

the ' Chēran mutt, the first house in the
eastern half of the North Mada street, within
the Trivikramman enclosure."[51]

Thus Rāmānuja assumed the duties of the
Srīkāryam of the temple. We notice a very
interesting development. This Chēran mutt
mentioned here had become the centre of
rivalry between Rāmānuja and Pēriya Nambī who
was one of the powerful officers of the temple
and from whom Rāmānuja ultimately received the
hereditary office of the high priest and the
right to read the purānas in the temples and
the documents registering those gifts.[52]

Ramanuja appointed Akalanga Nāttālvān[53], his disciple

to look after the income from the temple lands. The shrine

of Dhanvantari which was long neglected was renovated and an

image of Dhanvantari - the divine physician was installed.

He removed the Vaikhānsa priests and instituted the system

of worship described in the Paramēśvara samhita of the

Pāñcarātra agama. A new set of priests called the Bhāgavata

Nambīs were created for this purpose. An inquiry into the

state of accounts was conducted and the exercise of

authority under the seals of Garuda, the Discus and the

Conch were reshuffled, with Rāmānuja retaining the Discuss,

the Bhāgavata Nambīs the Conch and Garuda continued to

remain under the Tālaiyiduvār or Stānattār. There was

reform in the procedure of the conduct of the annual

Adhāyanōtsava and installation of the deity of Nammālvār in

the temple which was brought permanently from Tirunagirī.

He also installed in the temple the images of the ālvārs,

Andāl and Nāthamuni and made arrangements for the

celebration of many festivals in their names. In the

immediate vicinity of the temple a huge cattle shed in

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Śōlanganaṭṭūr for the supply of milk was installed along with the image of Kṛṣṇa.

The most important set of reforms was the expansion in the number of temple servants, Brāhmaṇas and non-Brāhmaṇas into a group of ten each. It is noticed that the Brāhmaṇas servants were in some form or the other intimately connected with the deity or the temple rituals. Here one notices a hierarchy which was established in the other Vaiṣṇava centres. The hierarchical order amongst the temple servants reveals a power structure which is the mirror image of the court. Hence among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas, egalitarianism did not figure much.

"As the Sēnāpati Durantara, of the class of the Kovaṇavar, Udayavaṇ was the 'Chief of the Śrīvaiṣṇavas of the sacred shrine of Tiruvaraṅgam. He caused to amalgamate the permanent services of Garuḍavāhana Paṇḍita, like the offering of the medicinal decoction with those of the group of Tiruppatiyār. This group enjoyed the first place. Hereditarily, the Koḍavar enjoyed the second place. The third place was given to the Bhāgavata Nambīs appointed by him to help the 'Tōdavattitūimaraiyōr, by handing out to them the articles of worship"...."the fifth is the Uḷḷūrār, the sixth the Talaiyiḍuvār, the seventh the Tirukkaragakkaiyar, the eighth the Viṇṇappan-Saivāṣ, the ninth the Āryabhattāl, the tenth the Dāsanambīs and the eleventh the Vīttirapāṇis. These eleven groups along with

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the Bhattāl have all their respective duties. The Bhattāl have no place in these groups".[54]

Certain permanent duties were assigned to the 'SāttādaMudalīs', i.e., the non-brāhamana servants of the temple.[55] There was also hierarchy amongst the Sāttāda vaisnava. They were in order of their ranks: (1) Vellālas, (2) KaikkōlāMudalī (3) Emberumānadiyar(Dēvadasīs) (4) Tiruvelakkārar (5) Artisans - kannālas (6) Handicraftsmen like the "needle workers', carpenters and weavers; (7) washermen (8) Potters (9) boatmen (10) Alagiyamanavālan group of musicians.

The Kōil Olugu mentions an instance when Rāmānuja was hesitant to appoint a non-Vaisnava to the post of an accountant. Rāmānuja was interested to appoint a Vaisnava brāhmana as a fresh accountant which was contrary to the ancient custom. Hence a certain Velāla Vilupparaiyan was appointed as the 'Kōil Kanakkan' and 'gave to Kīranūr Kilavan whom he made his disciple, the name of 'Satakōpa dāsar' and 'stala samprati' (temple accountant). The task of offering coconut to the God was being done by Kaikkōlā Mudalī. It seems Rāmānuja had some objections to that. Although the Olugu does not directly refer to it, but it says that 'the Mudalīs appealed that a brāhamana should be appointed in his place. The Mudalī was called and asked, "which tree contains the tender coconut agreeable to Alagiyamanavāla Perumāl?", to which he replied

"Alagiyamanavāla Perumāḷ knows it". Since he was pure his services were continued'[56]

Sāttāda Mudalīs were holy teachers who did not wear the sacred thread, and were described as "outsiders" - meaning that they were new entrants to the temple. They were ascetics and were allotted an important position in the performance of the rituals in the temples. What is significant is that by remaining ascetics, they were coming at par at least with the ēkāṅgīs while performing the rituals. In fact, no conscious attempt was made to retain their caste identity or give them the status of brāhmaṇa.

Hence Rāmānuja deliberately created a brāhmanical elite in the temples who exclusively performed the rituals in front of the deity. Nevertheless, the credit goes to him, that he incorporated the non-brāhmanical classes in the temple activities and also allotted to them a certain amount of share. But the distance remained. Never was the head of the pontificate at Srīraṅgam a non-brāhmaṇa and Rāmānuja himself chose his Brāhmaṇa successors for important positions in Srīraṅgam. In fact the Srī Vaiṣṇava āchāryas, whether they were Vaḍagalais or Tēṅgalais were always brāhmaṇas. Even today, this trend exists. At Srīraṅgam, the code of Rāmānuja was maintained, though in later years, especially after the Muslim invasion and establishment of the Vijayanagar empire in 1370s, it was abandoned (according to Kōil Oḷugu) and this seriously

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undermined the rights and privileges of the non-Brāh.manas. Perhaps, Rāmānuja himself was ambiguous on the privileges and positions of these class, that in later years, the streak of conservatism crept in making Srivaiṣnavism elitist in outlook.

At Mēlukōṭe, Rāmānuja for the first time instituted the shrine of Srī Nārāiṇaswāmy and thereby developed a temple and the temple town around it.[57] One of the most important contribution of Rāmānuja here was the establishment of a matha called the Yatīrāj matha whose administration he gave to an ascetic. He granted privileges of entry to low ascetic Hindus called panchamas and gave them the title tirūkkulattār. He also established an office of fifty-two Srivaiṣnava brāhmaṇas for conducting the services in the temple.[58] That Rāmānuja visited Mēlukōṭe gets indirect evidence from an inscription of 1544 A.D.

"Whereas the dēsāntri mudra (seal) was granted previously by Acyutarāya mahārāya of Dēvagiri to the temple of God Chelapiḷerāya of Tirunārāyaṇapura alias Mēlukōṭe in Srirangapaṭṭaṇa-shrine which had been bestowed upon us for our chieftaincy by the King Sadāśiva dēva mahārāya and whereas Srī Bhāshyakāra (Rāmānujācārya) who had once resided in the Etirāja-matha gave this dēsāntri mudré (to that matha), we granted it to Chelapiḷerāya's temple....."[59]

An idol of Rāmānuja was already installed. Traditional accounts say that Rāmānuja established it by himself. But

there is no epigraphical evidence to prove this. The earliest inscription of Mēlukōṭe belongs to the twelfth century which registers some service to God Nārāyaṇa of Yādavagiri by mahāpradhāna Heggaḍé Surigeya Nāgidēvanra[60]. The inscription begins with 'Be it well' and 'obeisance to the illustrious Rāmānuja' which is referred for the first time in Śaka 1457 and there onwards figures in all inscriptions. We have frequent references in the later inscriptions to 'after prostrating to Vēdantī Rāmānuja-jīya, disciple of illustrious establisher of Vēdic religion, teacher of two vēdāntas....." Hence, there is a clear reference to the deity of Rāmānuja. However, by 1256 A.D. Bhāshyakāra Sannidhi i.e. a shrine for Rāmānuja was built and for a Rāmānujakūtam, a grant of two villages and wet lands was made by Kētiyappa-sēṭṭi son of Chennappa sēṭṭi at Tarakaṇāmbī. This shows that the traditional account which mentions the establishment of the shrine by Rāmānuja himself is erroneous. It might have come into existence soon after Srī Rāmānuja's return to Mēlukōṭe.[61]

The problem with the inscriptional evidence at Mēlukōṭe is that the earliest one refers to the twelfth century and thereafter the second one refers to the reign of Acyutadēva-mahārāya in 15345 A.D. During this gap of two centuries nothing is known. Probably there was no development in the temple worthy of being recorded. From the later inscriptions, one may conclude the reforms instituted by Rāmānuja.

Similar inconvenience is encountered while analyzing the inscriptional evidence of Rāmānuja's active presence at Tirupati and his participation in the temple affairs. A damaged inscription[62] during the time of <u>Telugū Cōlas</u> refer to mere words '<u>Rāmānuja</u>' and '<u>Emperumān</u>'. The next inscription[66] is found at the base of Rāmānuja's shrine in Śrī Gōvindarājasvāmī Temple in Tirupati in the '50th year of the reign of <u>Tribhuvanachakravartīgal</u> '<u>Śrī Vīra Narasimha Yādavarāyar</u>. The inscription mentions the offering of flower garlands (<u>tirumālai</u>) and lighting of lamps (<u>tiruvilakku</u>) in the temples of <u>Emperumannār</u>. Inscription No.103[64]. below the inner <u>gōpura</u> in Śrī Gōvindarāja's Temple in <u>Tirupati</u> refer to the presence of Rāmānuja. The village of Tirupati was originally a <u>tīrunāmattukkāni</u> and was converted into a <u>sarvamānya</u> grant by <u>Tiruvēnkatanātha Yādavarāya</u>. Some of the lands situated at the north sluice of the big tank in <u>Tirupati</u> were at some time granted to <u>Emnperumannār</u> (Rāmānuja), towards the expenses of his daily worship and by the 3rd year of <u>Śrīrānganātha</u>, those lands were neglected and cultivation ceased.

One thing which emerges clearly from this inscription is that after Rāmānuja left Tirupati, his ideas and institutional reforms were not consolidated and perhaps fell into disuse, to be recovered later during the reign of Yādavarāyas and made powerful during the Vijayanagara times. There is no mention of the <u>ēkāngīs</u>, <u>sāttāda</u> Śrīvaisnavas and

other activities in the inscriptions till late thirteenth and early fourteenth century.

In the above said inscription, during this period, i.e. the date of the inscription, these lands were cleared of the overgrowth and irrigation facilities were installed. A sum of 200 panam was presented as Tirumunkānikkai to Tiruvēṅkaṭamuḍaiyān to draw water from the tank belonging to the God. In Inscription No.107, for the first time, we come across the reference of the Tiruvāimoli.

Divyasūricarit.ṣam[65] records Rāmānuja's presence at Tirupati. He is said to have installed the idol of Śrī Gōvindarāja, as well as the images of ālvārs in Tirupati, decided the dispute as to the Śaiva or Vaiṣṇava nature of Śrī Vēṅkaṭēśa and directed the cultivation of flower garden at Tirumala. He also became the devotee of Lord Rāma.

If the traditional accounts are to be considered, then Rāmānuja came to Tirupati, constituted the reforms and reorganised the temple administration on the lines of Śrīraṅgam and left for Kāñcīpuram. Thereafter, due to lack of patronage, as well as disorganisation, the temple did not seem to evince any development. It was during the time of Vijayanagara, that we see an escalation in the functions and festivals of Tirupati.

Rāmānuja's association with Kāñcī goes back to the time when he moved to Kānchī as a young disciple and learnt

Vēdānta under Yādavaprakāśa, the Advāitic scholar at Kāñcī.
Due to certain theological differences with his teacher, he
went to Tirukkaṣhināmbī in the temple of Lord
Varadarājsvāmī. Tirukkachināmbī being a Vaiśya refused to
accept Rāmānuja as his disciple. But Rāmānuja persuaded and
won. Impressed by his devotion, Tirukkachinambi asked
Rāmānuja to bring daily a jarful of water from a well,
called śāla-well, two miles away from the temple, which
Rāmānuja obediently did. Even today, this practice is
prevalent in the temple and endorses the Śrī Vaiṣnava
philosophy that bodily service or Kainkārya to God is
important for it imparts a sense of humility. From Kāñcī,
Rāmānuja went to Śrīrangam, where due to his reforms, it
became the headquarters of Śrī Vaiṣnavism.

Although Kāñcī does not figure prominently in his later
life, after Tirupati, Rāmānuja went there to seek the
blessings of his guru However, his frequent visits to Kāñchī
left a great influence there. From the inscription dated
1129 A.D.[66], during his life time, the Tamil prabhandhams of
Pogai Ālvār and Bhūttattālvār were popular. A record of the
fourteenth century refers to the recital of Tiruvāimoli of
Śaṭargōpa. Many of the reforms were introduced following
the reforms at Śrīrangam. His influence at Varadarājasvāmī
temple at Kāñcī is evident, when in 1191 A.D. after fifty-
five years of his death,[67] Iḷaiāḷvān Kālingarājan Neṭṭūr, a
Cōḷa chieftain, installed the image of Rāmānuja and donated
all taxes forthcoming from two villages to meet the expenses

for the offerings to the deity and made special arrangements for <u>Bhāshyavritti</u>.[68]

Hence from the time of Rāmānuja, Śrī Vaiṣṇavism was consolidated in these temples which were the forms of all kinds of socio-economic and religious activities. Perhaps, these reforms were not continued and fell into disuse. But a beginning was made somewhere. When the Cōḷa empire declined and Vijayanagara came to power, these temples emerged very strongly. Numerous festivals were celebrated and the number of temple servants increased greatly. Mēlukōṭe particularly during the time of Vijayanagar became one of the greatest centre for Śrī Vaiṣṇava activities. Therefore, as a true <u>ācārya</u>, Rāmānuja worked at two levels. One was the theological level and the other was the practical level. Creating a united, coherent ideology which was firmly backed up by the temple activities, made Śrī Vaiṣṇavism not an abstract theology, but a concrete one which gained a wider popular base then before Rāmānuja.

III. THE AGE OF ĀCHĀRYA - THE POST RĀMĀNUJA PERIOD

Rāmānuja passed away 1137 A.D. From the middle of twelfth century onwards, certain very important developments seem to have taken place in the history of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. Perhaps the most important development was the <u>schism</u> that the Śrī Vaiṣṇava philosophy faced into two sects - the <u>Vaḍagalais</u> and <u>Teṅgalais</u>. This was a clear indication of a sectarian consciousness something which Rāmānuja did not

foresee for he strove to organise the Sri Vaisnavas under one philosophical tradition. The schismatic period reveals an extensive power struggle over the temples and here the mathas became very important centre for all kinds of development. This was also the period, when Srīrangam, Tirupati, Melukōṭe and Kāñcīpuram developed into very important Śrī Vaisnava centres.

When does this occur is not very definite. However, it is said that Vaḍagalais and Teṅgalais came into being two hundred years after Rāmānuja's death. During the two hundred years certain developments occurred which could no longer contain the unity of the Viśiṣṭadvāitic philosophy. The Vaḍagalais, i.e. the northern school of thought considered Vēdānta Deśika as their preceptor and Teṅgalais, i.e. the southern school of thought considered Maṇavāla-māmuni as their preceptor.

Lack of inscriptional evidences regarding the schism makes the treatment of the entire issue extremely difficult. Inscriptional records of Śrīrangam, Tirupati Kāñchipuram and Mēlukōṭe do not evince any reference to these terms - "Vaḍagalai" or "Teṅgalai". Only, when we come to the eighteenth century, legal records of the British administration are full of disputes between the Vaḍagalai and Teṅgalai over the control of rights in the temple affairs. In fact, no one temple has only Vaḍakalais or Teṅgalais, but the co-existence of both which never peaceful. Perhaps, this was because they were already

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existing in the temples or that there was no such division before and crystallisation occured later in the eighteenth century only.

Secondary works on Vaiṣṇavas which are based on Guruparamparais accept the occurrence of this schism sometime in the later half of the fourteenth century. Due to the non-availability of these paramparais for this study, it has become difficult to come to any conclusion. Hence, further writings in this section are derived from the secondary sources.

V. Rangachari in his article "The successors of Ramanuja and the growth of sectarianism among the Srī Vaiṣṇavas (1138 - 1310)"[69] has studied both the set of Guruparamparais and based his analysis on them. After Rāmānuja's death in 1137 A.D., Vēdāntācārya, considered as the apostle by the Vadagalais was at Srīraṅgam in 1310; while his contemporary Pillai Lokācārya, the apostle of the Teṅgalais died in 1327, immediately after the sack of Srīraṅgam by the Muslims. The differences between the two schools, therefore, became stereotyped into dogmas and creeds in the first half of the fourteenth century. Hence the two centuries elapsed after Rāmānuja's death till the split. These two hundred years were a transitional phase and were "an age of growing party spirit, and not of actual party split" and that "the gradual development of minute differences in philosophy and actual conduct of life into

sectarian dogmas till the strong personalities of Pillai Lokāchārya and Venkatanātha or rather the enthusiasm of their respective admirers gave a finishing stroke to the whole movement and converted the parties into divisions of creed and cult."[70]

The following table[71] given by Rangachari sums up the two set of Guruparamparāis:-

RĀMĀNUJA (1017 - 1137)
(common to both)

Piḷḷāṅ (1157 - 1161?)	e.mbār (1024 - 1129)
e.ṅgal Āḻvār (1161?-1200?)	Bhaṭṭar (1062-90)
Varadāchārya (1200?-1275?	Naṅjīyar (1112-1213)
Rāmānuja Appiḷḷāṅ (1275?-1290?)	Nampiḷḷai (1207 - 1321)
Vēdānta Desika (?1290-1310 when he became universal āchārya at Srirangam)	Peria Āchchaṅ Pillai (1226-1321) vadakkutitirividiPillai 1226? Pillai Lokāchārya (1264 - 1327)[72].

In the time of Varadācārya, the Bhāshya simhāsana became one instead of four, thereby concentrating the entire power in the hands of one ācārya. It was during this period that we notice "the geographical origin of the two sects". Varadācārya either due to the devotion to God Varadarājsvāmī or his own preference shifted to Kānchīpuram, thereby transferring the headquarters of Srīvaiṣṇava activities from Srīraṅgam to Kāñcīpuram. This gave an opportunity to the 'new party' for consolidating their power. This 'party' became Teṅgalais and came into existence after Rāmānuja and

were already propagating the pre-eminence of the _Prabandhic_
school. The other group at Kāñcīpuram, under Varadāchārya,
started strengthening themselves. Varadāchārya's disciple
and successor preferred to stay in Kāñcīpuram and at
Srīraṅgam his 'brother-disciple _Sudarśanāchārya_ took the
charge.

The _Teṅgaḷai_ _Guruparamparās_ mentions Nampiḷḷai to be
the contemporary of _Eṅgaḷ Āḻvār_ and Varadāchārya. It
mentions an incident, where _Nampiḷḷai_ was reprimanded by
Tōḷappa, descendent of _Kondāḍai Mudaḷī Āndan_ for being
against the Bhāshya school. However, Tōḷappa's wife's
admiration for Nampiḷḷai and her anger made Tōḷappa ask for
forgiveness from the _Prabandhic_ teacher and said "Sire, I
have all along been thinking that you are the _Ācārya_ of a
few people alone; but now I find that you are the _Ācārya_ of
the world". According to Rangacharya, this is extremely
important for "It tells us in a clear and unmistakable
manner how the _Prabandhic_ movement was looked upon as
hetrodox, how it began in a small scale and how it gained
strength in the time of Nampiḷḷai by bringing round even
such orthodox men as the Ā cāryic Kandāḍais." Nampiḷḷai's
"genius or industry seems to have been the cause of that
partisanship which was later on to stereotype itself into a
caste".[75] When Varadāchārya moved to Kāñcīpuram, Nampiḷḷai
got the golden opportunity to consolidate his position.

The _Kōil Oḷugu_ does not mention any line of succession
to the pontifical seats of Srīraṅgam. But there is a

mention of __Bhāṭṭār__ and perhaps calls him the successor of Rāmānuja:

"While under the Commands of __Bhāṣyakārar,__ __Bhaṭṭar__ was administering the __darśana,__ the __Perumāl__, who wanted to continue the tradition of __Udayavar__, offered him the divine honours and appointed him to vanquish __Vēdantī__ in religious disputation and bring him under the Vaiṣṇava __dharma.__"[73].

Here __Bhaṭṭar__ is also mentioned with __Nañjīyar__ and __Aryar__ 'administering the darśana' and he recited the __Tirumanjana__ __śloka__ in his own time and the __Kaisika__ __purāṇ__ with his commentary. There is a long reference to the achievements and services of __Kuranārāyaṇa Jīyar__, a contemporary of Nañjīyar.[74] His magical achievements made him popular and at the request of the __parijanas__ was given some important rights in the temple. he thereafter became the first __Śrī__ __Raṅganārāyaṇa Jīyar__. He was however a 'foreign __Jīyar__ (i.e., unattached to the temple)' and 'manage the temple and patronize it (sic).. He was attached to the __matha__ while conducting his services. This reveals that the __matha__ had become extremely powerful, as this Kuranārāyaṇa Jīyar was assigned "the __mutt__ of Udayavar, the Udayavar seal and the ring of the sacred conch." We also find a mention of Kandāḍai Tōḷappar who was the __Sēnāpati Durantara__. He is similar to Tōḷappa mentioned before, but the __Oluqu__ does not refer to any incident of the aforementioned kind.

Pillai Lokācāryar[75] is mentioned in the context of Muslim invasions when the image of Lord Raṅganātha was being taken away to place of safety. Interestingly, the Oḷugu never mentions Vēdānta Deśika or Varadācārya. Probably the early reference to Bhaṭṭar conforms with the Teṅgalai Guruparamparā. Even a section is dedicated to Maṇavāḷa Mahāmuni or Periya Jīyar[76] and his stay and activities in Srīraṅgam. The chronicle finally concludes with the decision of John Wallace that the temple was Teṅkalai and not Vaḍakalai. It is clear that the Oḷugu was written during the time of the Britishers and refers to a strong Teṅkalai control. The chronicle cannot be wrong, going by the judgement of John Wallace (surprisingly, the contribution of Vēdānta Deśika and other gurus belonging to the Vaḍagalai paramparāi do not even find a single reference). One can only assume that the preceding years saw the consolidation of the Prabandhic school over the Sanskṛitic one at the temple which finally culminated in the 'Teṅkalai' control (i.e. the names of Teṅgalai and Vaḍagalai occur later).[77]

Patricia Mumme [78] is of the opinion that struggle broke out in the eighteenth century. There is no doubt about the fact, in the thirteenth century, the Srīraṅgam ācāryas were propagating the Tamiḻ hymns of the āḻvārs in the popular Maṇipravāḷa style, whereas the ācāryas at Kāñcī concentrated on popularizing the Viśiṣṭadvāita Vēdānta in formal Sanskrit. There were many debates and the emergence of new

interpretations. Hence it was a theological dispute and not a sectarian one. "In their own ways, both ācāryas were above all seeking to promote the integrity of the ŚrīVaiṣṇava faith and the closeness of the community of those following the tradition of Rāmānuja's Ubhay vēdānta. The bitter struggle between the Teṅkalai and Vaḍakalai sects that broke in the eighteenth century would have certainly dismayed both the ācāryas in whose names it was carried out. The hagiographical works beginning from the seventeenth century divided into two different groups, each tracing their lineages to Vēdānta Deśika (Vaḍakalai) and Pillai Lokācārya and Maṇavāḷa Māmuni (Teṅgalai) and finally both go to the preceding years to establish the antiquity of their tradition by acknowledging Rāmānuja to be the preceptor.

The temple at Śrīraṅgam was controlled by a powerful group of non-brāh.maṇa and land holding devotees. Besides the temple was the first one to start the tradition of reciting the Nalayīra Divya Prabandham (thereby giving the Prabandhic school in the later period a strong base). There after, Rāmānuja and successive ācāryas even till today give discourses on the āḻvār's works to the devotees. This attracted the ŚrīVaiṣṇavas from all communities come and listen. "According to tradition, Nāthamuni, Yāmuna and Rāmānuja who managed to win the influence and leadership for the ŚrīVaiṣṇava brahamana community by their support for the recitation of the āḻvār's hymns, the more liberal Pāñcarātra method of worship and participation of śudras in the liturgical life of the temple".

Kāñcīpuram on the other hand was the centre of trade and all schools of Sanskrit philosophy. Śrī Varadarājasvāmī temple and the brāhmaṇas who were controlling the shrine received extensive royal patronage. It was only in Rāmānuja's life time that in this temple, Nalayīra Divya Prabhandham was incorporated. Since Kāñcīpuram was the centre of all Sanskrit schools, like Śaivism, Vēdānta, Mīmāṁsa and Nyāya, and Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, there were constant debates. In this atmosphere, the Śrīvaiṣṇava brāhmaṇas and their disciples strengthened themselves intellectually and consequently became defensive and orthodox.

According to Mumme,[79] initially the relationship between both the centres was complementary, as the Viśiṣṭadvāitic philosophy of Rāmānuja was still strong. Besides, "every religious movement needs its popular preachers as well as its systematic theologians and apologists". But this soon evolved into conflict due to a wide gap and geographical differences, thereby leading to actual exegetic difference between both the schools.

One can only assume that because of the social composition of the devotees and royal patronage, both these centres found strong support for their doctrine. If one agrees with Mumme, then the lack of inscriptional evidence can be explained. Probably, the political upheaval and the extension of Vijayanagar empire into non-agrarian lands as well as regions away from Tamiḷ Nāḍu, saw the emergence of

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new classes which were mainly non-Brāh..imaṇas. This was bound to affect the Śrī Vaiṣṇava temples. One also sees the influx of new religious leaders like the Tātācāryas, who played the game of power control. In the presence of such variegated developments, contradiction was bound to occur. This was coupled with the numerous loose ends in Viśiṣṭadvāita exegesis which were open to questions and interpretations. These are broadly divided into three categories:- (a) The Concept of Guru; (b) The theological schism; and (c) Growth of Maṇipravāla literature.

(A) THE CONCEPT OF GURU;

The importance of guru has always been present in the Indian religious tradition. In Śrī Vaiṣṇavism the consciousness of a preceptor became very strong, especially from the time of Rāmānuja. However, in the works of āḻvārs, a need of a guru is mentioned, where he is considered to be the means by which the devotee attains salvation and gains divine knowledge. In Kulaśekhara's Mukuṇḍamāla one comes across such a need:

"Thou art the Lord of the worlds. O, remember me as the servant's servant's, servat's servat's servant of the servant.[80]

Āṇḍāl's strong desire for ultimate communion with God evinces the requirement of a preceptor:

"Guard of the mansion of Nandagōpa, our leader and keeper of the gate with flags and festoons, left the latch of the _guru_ set doors. Yesterday, the mysterious one, of the sapphire - blue complexion promised to give the drum to us, the cow-herd girls. We have come here in all purity to wake Him with songs. Pray, do no hinder us, O beloved one; please open he twin doors, which stand close like friendly neighbours."[81]

Here Nandagōpa is considered to represent the great preceptor, who will secure God. The sentinels at the gate are like preceptor's assistants, one might say the junior preceptors. Similarly:

"O rain God, do not stint your gift to the slightest extent. Go deep into the middle of the majestic ocean, drink full and ascend high uproariously. Then, getting dark in form, resembling the primeval Lord, dazzle by your lightning, like the discus in the broad and handsome hand of _Padmanābha_ (the Lotus-navelled) strike thunder like His Conch and send forth without delay, showers like the unceasing rain of arrows from his bow _saranga_, so that the land may prosper and we may have joyously our ceremonial bath."[82]

Esoterically, the cloud is said to represent great preceptors, large-hearted and helpful to humanity. They gather the essence of knowledge and spread it everywhere, without expecting anything in return, so the rainfall is

showering of divine knowledge and auspicious qualities. Hence guru had become important not in initiating the disciple in a ritualistic way but also for the attainment of knowledge and salvation.

Initially, the guru-śiṣya relationship was one to one, but after Ramanuja, there was more than one ācārya. Rāmānuja created a large band of disciples who became missionaries in the sacred duty of spreading his teachings, hence making the guru-śiṣya line vast and diverse. N. Jagadeesan points out, " In fact, the idea that a preceptor was essential not only for the acquisition of knowledge but for the attainment of salvation steadily grew. And it became a part of their philosophy later that a guru was necessary for initiating the disciple in a ritualistic way into the mysteries of the religion, i.e. Samāśrayanam and that different gurus were needed for different purposes. The Śrī Vachana Bhīshnam considers the ācāryas as the cause of spiritual regeneration. There can be two kinds of ācāryas: the uppāraka and the uttāraka (i.e. he who gives knowledge and shows the way to salvation and he who takes the disciple as it were by the hands and lends him to salvation He is both the Upāya and the Upeya i.e. he functions both as a signpost and a conveyance)"[83]

Rāmānuja left behind seventy-four sisyas as his personal disciples who were called Simhāsanādipatis and numerous Śrī Vaiṣṇava Mudalīs who were usually sanyāsīs, ēkāngīs, women and people from other castes. Hence there

was no one line of succession. This combined with the concept of <u>Ubhay Vēdānta</u> which was itself dual. Consequently, there were many interpretations which crystallised chiefly in two schools of thought mainly. Śrīnivāsāchārya writing later mentions this confusion:

"(Some) sages declare that Reality is one. The <u>rsis</u> explain It to be two, dividing (the Reality) as self and non-self. The <u>ācāryas</u>, on the basis of this scripture, teach the three-fold character of the Reality as the enjoyed, the object of enjoyment and the controller. Some <u>ācāryas</u> ascertain (the Reality) by making a four fold division as <u>heya</u> (what deserves to be avoided), its removal, <u>upādeya</u> (what deserves to be attained) and its means. Other teachers explain (the same) in a five fold manner as <u>prāpya</u> (end), <u>prāpta</u> (seeker), <u>Upāya</u> (means), <u>phala</u> (fruit) and <u>vārodhī</u> (obstacles to the end). Other teachers enumerate and describe in a six fold manner, the very same five-fold principles by adding 'relation' to them. The determination of these became possible on the basis of the respective attributes which divide them"[84]

In the light of such variations, confusion was bound to arise. The <u>guruparamparās</u>[85] themselves appear to be extremely contradictory while trying to trace the lineage. Hence diversity of thought and interpretation was bound to effect the organisational unity of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism which was one under Rāmānuja.

(b) THE SCHISM:

Today Sri Vaisnavism is divided into two strong sects -
the <u>Vadakalai</u> and <u>Tengalai</u>. Hence what was notional
initially gave way to sectarianism. Srī Vaisnava exegetic
literature exhibits mainly the interpretations of the
teachings of Rāmānuja. Both these sects had strong
preceptors whose perceptions and thoughts formed a separate
theology. Each considered their philosophy as the valid
one. However, one factor was common. Rāmānuja was the
fountainhead for both of them. Neither is there any dispute
regarding the writings attributed to him, nor are there any
contradictory accounts of his life.

It is true that Rāmānuja neither envisaged nor
intentionally purported this schism. In fact his works are
marked by a strong tendency of fusion rather than fission of
many traditions. But indirectly his teachings were the
cause behind this trend. He left many loose ends. For
example, he never defined most of the string of Divine
attributes that he so frequently listed before the Divine
name, especially those terms that expressed the virtues of
the finite spirit. These were the various terms designating
God's relation to the cosmos in the respects of creation,
rule and so forth and the attributes mentioned in the
<u>Upanishads</u>. This was because probably Rāmānuja never felt
the need to do so. He answered to the needs of his time.[86]

The concept of Ubhay Vēdānta could not sustain for long. The Tamil Prabandhic school and the Sanskrit or Bhāshyic school took a theological shape in the beginning thereby leading to the formation of Tengalai and Vadakalai respectively. The doctrinal differences between the two are many. Some of them are discussed below:

Prapatti, i.e. total self-surrender forms one of the major issues of doctrinal differences. Tengalais think that no angas (contributing factors) are essential for prapatti, although one may adopt them. But to Vadakalais to acquire prapatti, the angas are a pre-requisite and for this a preceptor is very much needed; although for initiation into Brahma Vidyā, a brāhmāṇa preceptor is required. Hence a lot of stress is laid on the individual effort. Just as a monkey, takes its first lesson to safeguard his security by clinging to his mother, the individual must endeavour in the same way to achieve liberation. According to Srīnīvāsa, who belonged to the Vadagalai tradition:

> "Nyāsavidya is self-surrender. What is called prapatti is to conceive what is in conformity (with the will of Isvara) to reject what is disagreeable (to Isvara), to have firm faith as "He will save me", to seek Him alone as the protector, and to surrender one's self to Him in all meekness. Thus it has five constituents. Nyāsa denoted by 'saranagatī' and other terms, is that particular state of consciousness which grants liberation at the finis of this body and which is to be performed but once. This (doctrine of) prapatti has to be known from the month of the preceptor and esoteric works in the traditional manner...."[87]

In Varadarājapañcāsat of Vēdānta Deśika, it is mentioned that first one has to obtain the friendship of the Lord which is the root cause for prapatti. If his friendship to all beings is not accepted, there is no certainty that all efforts towards liberation, will be fruitful, and the teaching of prapatti based on firm faith will not be suitable:

> "You have entered inside every creature, O Lord, Lord of the tail of elephants, and you stand very near; but I am very far from you; may this very I be again and again thus far from you; your compassion, indeed is spontaneous, if there is no obstance"[88]

Śrīnīvāsa lays down certain caste restrictions regarding bhakti and prapatti:

"The qualification for the (path of) bhakti belongs to the (members of the) three Varnas only. The dēvas and the like are qualified (for bhakti) on account of the possibility of supplication and capability in them.

The śudras are not qualified, since (such qualification) is contrary (to the teachings of) the adhikaraṇa of "the non-śudras".

Prapanna is he who, being characterized by the attributes of 'being helpless and devoid of other refuge' resorts to Bhagavān...Every one (irrespective of caste or profession) is qualified for surrender"[89].

This is a conservative streak in Vadagalai line of thinking. Vadagalais also gave a lot of importance to preparatory rituals:

"The liberated is one who, after accepting (prapatti), as the means, performs all nitya (regular) and naimittika (incidental) religious duties as ends in themselves, since he regards them as consecrated service enjoined by Bhagavān...."[90]

To Teṅgalais necessity of effort on the part of the devotee is not at all needed. They think that God's grace is merely to be awaited. The refusal to link human effort with God's grace is a special characteristic of Pillai Lokāchārya's teachings. According to Maṇavāḷa Māmmuni:

"You who lack the wisdom to know how to do the work (of saving) yourself; you who even if you did know - lack the ability to do it successfully; you who - even if you were able - do not have the right (prapatti) to save yourself; you who, in the light of this, have relinquished all dharmas and taken me alone as an upaya which needs nothing else (nirapakṣapāya)".[91]

Although prapatti is performed easily, it does not mean that one can misuse it. Prapatti done in confusion, with the idea that it is an upāya, is equivalent to sin:

"Prapatti does not tolerate repeated performance - it is done once and for all, Prapatti done again, by one

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confused or ignorant of its nature, with the idea it is a means to get rid of what is unwanted or to attain a desire, is equivalent to an offence just like the other upāyas. As it is said: "since you are mortally afraid of sins, (O Bhārata, don't do these things you have given up and be devoted to Nārāyaṇa)"[92].

Teṅgalais contented that God leads His children, as a cat carries the kitten in its mouth. Thus the Teṅgalais avoided the preparatory difficulties to which Vaḍagalais attach great importance. To Tengalai, the caste rigidity was not a serious issue, but they never denounced the Varṇāshrama dharma.

The position and nature of Lakshmī as a consort is a controversial issue. In Rāmānuja's Gītabhāṣya and Śrībhāṣya Lakshmī is confined only to the introductory verses. These references are relatively brief and leave the metaphysical status of Śrī somewhat in doubt. This fact is reflected in the doctrinal difference between the two schools. The Vaḍagalais consider Śrī to be infinite, like the Lord, whereas Teṅgalai consider Her to be the first among finite spirits, who played the role of a mediator between the sinner and the saviour.

One of the main points of dispute between the two schools in the different importance they attach and the antiquity which they assign to the Tamil and Sanskrit languages. The Teṅgalais assign considerable age to the

Prabhandhas while the Vadagalais consider Sanskrit to be truly hoary and sacred. Although the literary works of both are written in Tamil and Sanskrit. The actual conflict between the Tengalai and the Vadagalai in this matter is the priority given to the recitation of the Tamil Prabhandham or Sanskrit vēdas in the temples. The Tengalai gave preference to the Tamil hymns, whereas, the Vadagalai gave preference to the sanskrit hymns.

It was the Tengalai group which had become acceptable and more flexible as compared to the Vadakalais. In fact, it had factors of tremendous social appeal as it laid a lot of stress on Tamil Prabhandhas and did not emphasize on the Varna system. Besides their leader had organised in an efficient manner in the temples and systematized their teachings. Maṇavāla Māmunigal's reforms in Śrīrangam greatly consolidated the sectarian position. The appointment of Ashta Diggajas, that is eight disciples, by Maṇavāla Māmunigal greatly helped in a systematic spread of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. The absence of a similar organised group on the Vadakalai side and the fact that the greatest Vadakalai apostles, viz., Vēdānta Deśika and his son Nainarāchārya had predeceased the Ashta Diggajas. This had brought about a favourable climate to Tenkalaism often driving the Vadakalai group to be on the defensive and in a minority position. The Tengalais seemed to have established their doctrinal position earlier than Vadagalais who were all along defensive tending to be orthodox.

(c) THE GROWTH OF MAṆIPRAVĀLA LITERATURE[93]:

Ubhay Vēdānta with its dual implications was also reflected in the medium of instruction which the later Srīvaiṣṇava adopted. It consisted of Tamil and Sanskrit words. This is the Maṇipravāla style and an enormous body of literature has been produced in this literary style. It consists of Tamil words interspersed with Sanskrit words even as ruby and coral (maṇi-ruby pearl, pravāla - coral) are strung together alternatively in a necklace. The Vaiṣṇava commentators themselves never called their own writing by this term, but were aware that they were using a language that is comprehensible to all the Srī Vaiṣṇavas, women and members of the lowest social order.

Rāmānuja himself never wrote in this language, but following the tradition of Nāthamuni acknowledged the Tamil hymns to be sung with the sanskrit Vedas. It was Nāthamuni composed a taniyan for the text of Nāmmāḷvār's Tiruvāimoḷi acknowledging the significance of Tamil:

"I know down to that area of Tamil Vēda (dravida vēda) which is a nectar for all bhaktas and joy for everyone, where we can find all (important) meanings comprising the words of Saṭhagōpa, where you have all the thousand branches (sakhʼās) of the Upanishads".

Despite their differences over the preference for the Divyaprabandham or sanskrit Vēdas, none of the preceptors of Vadagalai as well as Teṅgalai wrote impressively in this

language. Both Pillai Lokācharya and Vēdāntadeśika, as all
the other ācāryas had a thorough training in the languages
and tenets of both sides of ubhay vēdānta. The difference
between themes not based on language, but rather lies in
their concepts of who is qualified to be an ācārya, how
varnāshramadharma is to be related to prapatti, how the
qualities of God are to be defined, or how the status of Sri
is to be determined.

Dr. Venkatachari classifies the Manipravāla works into
two categories that distinguish the two places of
development, namely the vyākhyānas (the commentaries) which
represent the earlier phase and the sampradāyagranthas (the
traditional works) which represent the somewhat later phase.
The sampradāyagranthas, in turn are classified into sub-
types: the rahasyagranthas and "other independent works".
Rahasyagranthas (literally, the secret works) are treatises
which contain information necessary for the one who spires
for salvation (the mumukṣu). Such topics as the three
secret mantras (rahasyatraya) the three entities of earliest
matter or cit, incentient matter or acit, and the Lord or
Īśvara (tattvatraya), Lakshmī as interveness between God and
man, surrender (prapatti) ācārya or preceptor and so on.
The category of "other independent works" include diverse
works in Manipravāla such as Ācāryahrdayam, which describes
the greatness of Nāmmālvār and guruparampāri prabhāvam,
which relate the biographies of the ālvārs and the āchāryas.
The study of the Sampradāyagranthas is especially essential

for the understanding of the systematization of Sri Vaisnava philosophy in the post-Rāmānuja period.

In the Manipravāla commentaries, there is a distinct technique of using similies, metaphors, illustrations and elaborations to elucidate the meaning. This is because, while instructing the people, such linguistic method would clarify obstruse philosophical points and illustrate the relevance of the religious concepts. whenever possible analogies were drawn to the situations in everyday life to enable individuals to relate religious discussions to their own concrete experiences. For instance, similies and metaphors almost always made some kind of comparison with human relations,daily activities, animal behaviour, or nature. For example, PillaiLokāchārya draws analogies between God and the mother. He says that "when man strays from the right path and forgets God, he will experience much grief, and at that time he may turn around and blame God for his own predicament. According to him, it is natural for him to do so, just as a child who falters and falls in the street comes rushing home, and in his anger and mortification, beats his mother. Moreover, he continues, it is not merely the affected person who will blame God for his predicament but even others will charge God, not merely with indifference and carelessness , but even with the deliberate intention of giving trouble. It is as, when a child crawls to the edge of an open well under the very nose of his mother and falls into it, people will blame her and she is

the cause of the child's falling into the well"[94]

Similarly, Vēdānta Deśika uses similies based on incidents from nature. He says that if a person makes a hole in a tree and fills it with asafoetida, the asafoetida will eat away the inner vitals of the tree in due course, as a result of which the tree will fall. The question as to when the tree will fall, depends on many factors, like the stamina of the tree to counteract the effects of the asafoetida, the quality of the asafoetida, and the influence of the weather. In the same way, God's grace will wash a man's sin in due course, but the time taken will be in proportion to the degree and the quality of his sins"[95]

Thus this technique of Manipravāla style had a strong social appeal in the Tamil country for such easy and allegorical references and also because the Tamil hymns of the ālvār , the Nalayīram (the Four thousand) or the Divyaprabhandham came to be acknowledged as scriptures on a par with Sanskrit tents like the śruti and Vēdas and Upanishads. This was was indeed a radical innovation, for it marked the first time a language other than sanskrit claimed to express, "revealed truth" as well as to possess the sanctity and authority of the vedas. That there could be a Tamil Vēda (dravida vēda) is a most important antecedent to the use of Tamil grace or Manipravāla in the commentaries and later Samradāyagranthas; understanding of them will show how the Vaiṣṇava bhakti tradition in Tamil

Nāḍu found its religious inspiration in its mother tongue (as well as sanskrit), allowed all its religious community to have the knowledge of the scriptures- even the "secrets" - (rahasyas) - and through the acaryas provided a religious literature in a common language to expound to ubhayavēdānta, the philosophical teachings, and the religious discipline (sadhana)[96].

CONCLUSION

The above discussed theological themes point towards the duality in Srī Vaiṣṇava exegesis. If one examines this in the context of Rāmānuja's teachings, then it becomes comprehensible. But the antecedents can be traced right back to the teachings of Ālvārs.

The Srī Vaishṇava philosophy as it appears to be, was of an egalitarian nature. This had a strong social acceptability. This is evident from the numerous temple grants made to the Sri Vaisnava temples during the Vijayanagar times. In fact, the most outstanding characteristic of this religion was that it effected certain reforms of democratic nature without having to break away from the main currents of Hinduism, despite certain provocative reforms like undermining the prestige of caste and evolution of Draviḍavēda. This was because Rāmānuja took care not to strain beyond the breaking point and nor did he outrightly reject the Vēdas, but based the entire philosophy on Vēdic texts. Whether in the works of

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Vaḍagaḷais or Teṅgaḷai, they do not away with the vēdic texts and make them the basis of their works. Despite the fact that Teṅgaḷai do not lay emphasis on them, they do not endorse its outright denial. This was unlike the Liṅgāyats, Jainas and Buddhists who were strongly hostile and had severed from the mainstream of Hinduism.

Although at the start, the movement appeared quite radical, but gradually it mellowed down and consequently ossified into two strong sub-castes. Even today, Srī Vaiṣṇavas are strong adherents of the caste system. Perhaps, the only major ideological stand they take is that the 'inferior or castes' are capable of attaining mokṣa directly without having to pass through each one of the higher castes before salvation is achieved.

Hence, in the case of Srīvaiṣṇavism, one observes sectarianism at three levels. Ālvārs were aware of the superiority of Viṣṇu and individually propagated Vaiṣṇavism. The second level is that of Rāmānuja's time when a strong coherent ideology emerged and third level belongs to the post-Rāmānuja period which gradually crystallised into Vaḍagaḷais and Teṅgaḷais making them autonomous and conservative.

1. Victor Turner - <u>Dramas, Fields and Metaphors</u> -Foreword

2. Nammālvār - <u>Tiruvāymoli</u> II. 8.1. from "God Far, God Near - R.D. Taylor and K.K.A. Venkatachari - Page 23.

3. Rāmānuja -The <u>Gītabhasya</u> - Translated by Prof. M.R. Sampatkumaran, Anantacharya Indological Research Institute, 1985, Page 261. Other reference of Sri are in Note 2; 1.173nj, 180n., 272, 307, 464n.

4. The same idea is reflected in Śrnagatīgadyas and works of <u>Alvars</u>. In <u>Śrī Vishnu Sahasranāma stōtram</u> (thousand names of Viṣnu), He is referred as Śrīnīvāsan, i.e. in whom Lakshmī remains always (Ōm Śrīnīvāsay Namaḥ).

5. Pāncarātra literally means five nights.

6. From Śrī to Viśwaksēna is the metaphysical concept. From Nammālvār starts the temporal line of the <u>guru</u>. Nammālvār was of low caste. This is nothing new in Śrī Vaiṣnavism, as many preceptors werenon-Brāhmins By tracing the lineage to Śrī or Lakshmī through Viśwaksēna, a legitimacy was imparted through divinity.

7. The concept of <u>bhakti</u> has a mystical element. It was an important influence on the works of the <u>Alvars</u> who craved for a complete union with God.

8. E.O. James, <u>The Cult of the Mother Goddess</u>, Thames and Hudson, London, 195a Pg. 40.

9. <u>Śrībhāsya</u> - III.2.34. In Ramanuja's <u>Gītābhāshya</u> this is mentioned. Arjuna seeks protection through prapatti, when at the beginning he begs Śrī Krṣna to teach (11.3). After noting Arjuna's overwhelming diffidence in the face of the difficulties presents by the paths of <u>Karma</u>, <u>jñāna</u> and <u>bhakti</u>, Śrī Krṣna advises him not to despair but to surrender himself entirely to divine grace. In this way, the <u>Gītā</u> is regarded as saying its last words advocating prapatti.

10. These thoughts are time and again reflected in <u>Tiruvāymoli</u> of Nammālvār. op. cit.

11. Sankara's <u>Advaita Vēdānta</u> is based on the concept of <u>Nirguna Brahma</u>. In his doctrine <u>Vēdānta</u> was very important. His was the Impersonal God and this non-dualistic approach did not leave any scope for idol worship, and the relationship of "I" and "Thou" between the devotee and the deity. Hence, according to Śankara the ultimate Reality was one and the only <u>Brahman</u>. Whereas Śankara's <u>advaita</u> is an undifferentiated monism, that of Rāmānuja is <u>visista</u> or qualified.

12. The conflict between DMK and AIDMK is a clear example. The former tries to prove the Tamil or 'Dravidian' origin and the later claims that it was Brāhmaṇism which brought culture and religion to the south.

13. This point will be discussed in the next Chapter. For the time being it will suffice to say that many new areas come under the Vijayanagar as it was expanding and hence many social classes were also incorporated modifying the social structure.

14. Vaiṣṇava literature in Kannaḍa started from the sixteenth century with the translations of Sanskrit classics. This was followed by Teḷugū literature. See J.T.F. Jordeas. "Medieval Hindu Devotionalism" - A cultural History of India - A.L. Bashyam (Ed.)., Oxford 1975. Page 278 - 280.

15. Nalayīra Divya Prabandham means "Four thousand holy compositions". Tamil Nal 'four', ayīram 'thousand', divya 'holy' and prabandha 'composition, literary work', then 'collection and compilation. It is divided into four parts. Book One is Mutal -Ayiram 'the first thousand'. Book Two is Periya - Tirumoli. Book Three is yarpa (short metres) and Book Four is Tiru Vaymoli. The first two books are of popular nature and concern the daily ceremonies. Book three consists of short poems. Book Four is sung only once a year.

16. Here, the term 'bhakti movement' is used loosely and does not have a molithic, Euro-centric meaning which Krsna Sharma emphatically refutes. See Krishna Sharma - Bhakti and the Bhakti Movement - A new Perspective - Munshi Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1987.

17. C.K.Sivaprakaṣam - "Origin of Saiva Monasticism in the Tamil Country," Page 200-203.

18. Ibid., Page 202

19. Kesavan Veluthat - The Temple - Base of the Bhakti Movement in South India."

20. R.N. Nandi -'Origin and Nature of Saivite Monasticism - The case of Kalamukhas." Indian society : Historical Probings, R.S. Sharma (Ed), Page 190-201.

21. Garuda Vahana Pandita - D ivyasuri Caritam with Hindi rendering by Pandita Madhavacharya (Edited) T.A. Sampath Kumaracharya and K.K.A. Venkatachari. Anantacharya Indological Institute, Bombay 1978. Page 2, Verse 5,Chapter I.

22. Ibid., Verse 4.

23. Ibid. - Page 1 - 22.

24. Srinivasa - Yatindramatadipika, Translated by Swami Adidevananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras - Avatar I Introductory Verse 2.

25. Due to the non-availability of translated works, the dissertation is dependent on very few works.

26. The Sangam sources which have reference of Krsna or Mayan are Cilappadikaram, Paripadal, Manimekalai and many others.

27. Friedhelm Hardy - Viraḥ-Bhakti. The early history of Krsna devotion in South India, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1983. Page 241.

28. Ibid., Hardy.

29. Divyasuricaritam, op.cit. Page 22-41. Chapter 2 Verse 68 - 77.

30. Hardy, op. cit.

31. The other Chief deities were Murugan belonging to the Saiva pantheon and Balarama, Pinnai, Pradyumna and Anirudha belonging to Vaisnavism.

32. Tirruppavai of Gada - S.L.N. Simha (Tr.). Anantacharya Indological Institute, Bombay, 1982.

33. K.K.A. Venkatachari -Sri Vaisnava Manipravala Anantacharya Indological Institute, Bombay 1978, Page 5-6

34. K.K.A. Venkatachari. op. cit. Page 7

35. Tiruppavai, op. cit. Stanza 5, Mayan, Pg. 14.

36. Ibid., Stanza 6 Pulluvum, Pg.15

37. Ibid., Stanza 13, Pullinvay Pg. 22

38. Koil Oluqu - The Chronicle of the Sri Rangam Temple with Historical Notes (Ed.) V.N.Hari Rao, Rock house and sons, Madras 1961, Page 6 - 13.

39. No.200 - T.T.

40. Divyasuricarit. aam - op.cit. Chapter 2, Page 22.

41. Koil Oluqu op. cit. Page 33-34.

42. V.N. Hari Rao - _History of Srirangam,_ Page 34.

43. R. Champakalakshmi -"Patikam Patuvar : Ritual singing As a Means of Communication in Early Medieval India." Page 1 - 22.

44. Inscription Number 22. TTDI-I

45. Kōil Oḻugu, op.cit. Pg. 33 - 34.

46. This has a lot of significance. It means the oil being offered to the Lord was smeared on the throat for soothing it after long hours of singing. This tradition continues even till day in all the Vaisnava temples.

47. The word Tēvāram is of later origin, perhaps during the sixteenth century and consists of 796 hymns (a total of 8,284 stanzas) see R. Champakalakshmi Page 3 (op.citO.

48. For example the vel_alar were one such agrarian community who had become very powerful and assumed warrior like status.

49. This becomes clear in the later pages while talking of the reformers at Srirangam in Lord Ranganāthasvāmī Temple.

50. South Indian Inscriptions Vol. XXIV.

51. Kōil Oḻugu - op. cit. Page 43

52. Ibid- Page 43 - 44. It was in this Chēran matha that Rāmānuja along with his two disciples Āḻvān and Aṇḍān stayed till Rāmānuja expired in 1137 A.D.

53. Akaḷanga Nattāḻvān was perhaps a Chōḷa feudatory chief who became the disciple of Rāmānuja. There are numerous references of him in several inscriptions during the time of Rājādhīrāja II and Kulettunga III under the name Virrundān sēman.

54. Kōil Oḻugu - op. cit. Page 50 and 90.

55. Sāttāda SrīVaiṣnavas are the non-Brāhmaṇa class of Vaiṣnavas. Sāttāda means "those who do not wear the sacred thread.

56. Kōil Oḻugu. op. cit. Page 46

57. According to the traditional accounts, Rāmānuja to escape the persecution of the staunch Saivite King, Kulottunga I, came to Karnāṭaka. The route he followed was via Mithila - Salīgramma to Tanpūr and then finally to Mēlukōte. At that time the Hoysala king Viṭhaladēvarāya. The legend goes that Rāmānuja ran short of tiruman - the wholy white earth. Thereupon, Lord Nārāyaṇa came in his dream and advised him to go

to the hills of Mēlukōṭe where it would be found. Rāmānuja on reaching there, bathed in the pond called Vedopushkarini and changed into saffron to become an ascetic. As per the drām, he discovered the image of Lord Nārāiṇaswāmy buried in an anthill and also found the tiruman. He personally worshipped the image after reinstalling it according to the pancaratra agamic rituals. Thereafter, a new township grew around the hill and the temple became popular. Numerous donations were made. Festivals, daily, monthly and annually, were conducted properly. This date of Rāmānuja's arrival at Mēlukōṭe is recorded as 1099 A.D.

This legend finds indirect reference in the inscription number 25 on the slab to the north-west of the Garuda shrine dated 1319. It states that Mādappa-daṇṇāyika, son of Perumāḷudēva-daṇṇāyaka, both of whom were granted the title Immaḍi-Rāhuttarāya, gave the land, originally noticed by Emberuman ār as tiruman. See B.R. Gopal's Sri Ramanuja in Karnataka - An epigraphical study. Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1983.

58. The inscriptions of Mēlukōṭe are found in Epigraphia Carnatica Vol.VIII, B.L. Rice (Ed.)

59. Ibid. - No. 130

60. Ibid. No. 124

61. B.R. Gopal. op. cit. Page 25 - 26.

62. No. 79 - TTD-I

63. No. 89 - TTDI-I

64. No. 103 - TTDI-I

65. Divyasūricaritam - Chapter 18. Verse 20-35, Page 390-95.

66. South Indian Inscription Vol.III, No.80

67. 572 of 1919

68. 493 of 1919

69. V. Rangachary - "The successors of Ramanuja and the growth of sectarianism under Sri Vaisnavism (1138 - 1310)" Journal of Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society 24 (1915-16) : Page 102 - 136.

70. Ibid. Paged 102-03

71. Ibid. Page 126

72. Ibid. Page 121

73. Kōil Oḷugu op. cit. Page 113-114

74. Ibid. Page 114-122

75. Ibid. Page 129

76. Ibid. Page 135

77. Ibid. Page 201 - 105

78. Patricia Y. Mumme - The Śrī Vaiṣṇava Theological Dispute. Maṇavāḷa māmuni and Vēdānta Deśika. New Era Publications, Madras 1988.

79. Ibid. Page 2

80. The Mukundamāla - (The Lord's wrath) - By Kulaśekara, Translated by T.N.C. Srinivasa Varadachariar- Stanza 27, Page 22.

81. Aṇḍāḷ - op.cit. Stanza 16, Nayakanai, Page 25

82. Ibid. - Stanza 4, Aḷi Page 13.

83. Jagadesan - History of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism - Post Rāmānuja period, Page 42.

84. Srinivasadasa - op.cit. stanza 21, Adravayam - Avatāra X, Page 15.

85. Guruparamparai means the line of instruction from guru to disciple to his subsequent disciple and so on; thus the spiritual lineage of an individual oratist.

86. John Carman The Theology of Rāmānuja Ananthacarya Indological Research Institute, Bombay, 1991, Page 50.

87. Śrīnīvāsadāsa - op.cit. stanza 25, Dharmabhūtan - Avatāra 9.

88. Vēdānta Deśika Varadarājpanchāsat - translated by Pierre Sylvasa Filliozat, Bombay 1990. Stanza 33, Page 41.

89. Śrīnīvāsa - op. cit. stanza 18, 19, 21.

90. Ibid., Stanza 23.

91. The Mumukṣupati of Pillai Lokāchārya with Maṇavāḷa māmunnigaḷ's commentary Page 177.

92. Ibid., Page 179.

93. Due to the lack of translated materials and my own ignorance as well as the incomprehensibility of this

kind of literary work, much research was not possible. Hence I have relied for primary sources on Dr. K.K.A. Venkatachari's pioneering work 'SrīVaiṣṇava maṇipravāla", Bombay, 1987. However, my debt to him can never be repaid for the immense help he offered to me and listened to my comments with great patience.

94. Pillailokāchārya op.cit.

95. From K.K.A. Venkatachari - op. cit. Page 36

96. K.K.A. Venkatachari - Ibid. Page 4.

CHAPTER II

THE VIJAYANAGAR PERIOD - A CHANGING POLITICO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

A new social formation emerged in the fourteenth century which had an impact on the ideological postulations of ŚrīVaiṣṇavism. The Society during that period was in a constant state of flux.   New classes with strong resource base were fast becoming the co-sharers in the power structure and economy. Rise of locally powerful lineages of the Vijayanagar nāyakas in the fifteenth and sixteenth century is clearly attested by the numerous temple inscriptions.   There was a constant change in the boundaries of the state coupled with a restructuring of the state administration particularly towards the close of fifteenth century.   The state officials called pradhānīs were gradually replaced by nāyakas (former military commanders) who were granted large territories by the King.   In their territories, the nāyakas tried to control production by encouraging artisans and merchants.   They also associated themselves with the temples which had large tracts of land and were economically important. The new groups of land holders composed of non-brahmanas like the Veḷāḷas were also incorporated into the regime.   The nāyaka rule was legitimized by the king as shown in the inscriptions and accounts of the foreign travellers.   The temple inscriptions which were generally donative in character, show nāyakas

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seeking the permission of the king for matters such as tax remission and land grants. The frequent use of the phrase 'for the merit (punniyam or dānmam) of the king on the occasion of donation indicates the same. In the Śrīrangam inscriptions the king appears as the grantor of the village more frequently in fourteenth century than in the later period, when there are frequent references to the nāyakattanam bestowed by the king to the nāyakas. An example can be seen in a Sanskrit inscription in grantha character.[1] It deals with the restoration of the image of Ranganātha by Gopanna, a general of Kampana II who was ruling as the viceroy from Chenji. From this time onwards, there was an expansion in temple activities. Gopanna was a Telugū warrior, whose mention here signified the influx of the Telugū warrior class in the Tamil country.

The enthusiasm of the nāyakas in the sixteenth century in making charitable donations to the temples can be explained in the share in prasādam and many privileges which were hereditary (kāniyātci) bringing in a considerable amount of income. The study of such developments shall comprise Section I.

Section II will analyse the emergence of new merchant classes like the Kaikkōlās, Vāniyas, Sīkku-Vāniyas, Vyāpārī, Cetti, Māyilatti, Kanmalas and many others, revealing a brisk development of trade. The trading class was closely connected with the temple activities and administration especially the Kaikkōlā-Mudalīs who were among the members

of the management in the temple at Śrīrangam. They were induced by temple authorities or other local leaders to come and settle in the temple villages. The significance of trade is borne out by the Tirupati inscription of 1554 A.D.[2] recording the king's order for the remission of certain taxes levied on 'nine types of aromatic merchandise brought from various places for the temple.' In this record the taxes on some articles such as teppattu pachchaivadam (cloth), ghee and ennei (oil) were excluded. The Kāñcīpuram inscriptions record the same trend.

There was a rise of new class of landholders who were of different communities and grew very powerful as they were in possession of vast tracts of land. The examination of epigraphical evidence indicates that Reddis, Kaikkōlās and Gāvundas and Manradīs were assuming warrior-like status. The emergence of non-brāhamanas as landed magnates holding titles like araiyan, udaiyan, etc. shows that there was loss of land and power by the brah manas who had flourished in the Cōḷa period. There was constant tension between these new landlords on the one hand and newly emerging class of artisans and cultivators who had organised themselves into Valangai and Idangai groups, on the other.

Against the background of newly emerging society, ŚrīVaiṣṇavism gained ground. The near egalitarian philosophy drew numerous people irrespective of their caste and social status. The ŚrīVaiṣṇava leaders provided the

links between kings and temples and became a part of the nexus for ritual and economic transaction between the warrior chiefs and the temples. Hence temples became fundamental for the maintenance of legitimate authority. This shall form the main purpose of Section II.

SECTION I

(a) THE BACKGROUND

The beginning of the decline of the Cōḷa empire generated the foundation of numerous small kingdoms who were strong contestants for power. Rājarāja III ruling in the early thirteenth century could no longer sustain the Cōḷa empire and subjugate the rival contestants. Consequently, there was a complete fragmentation of power. The core area of the kingdom called Cōḷāmaṇḍalam was no longer under the control of Rājarāja III. North of Kāverī, the rise of several families of landed magnates emerged. From Kāverī to Pennār river the area was controlled by a dynasty claiming descent from the Pallavas. They were the Teḷugu Pallavas. Another ruling family exercising control over the Kṛṣṇa – Gōdāvari claimed their descent from the Cōḷas. Kākātiyas of Wāraṅgaḷ established themselves in the interior Teḷugu country. South of Cōḷamaṇḍalam witnessed the revival of Pandyas. In the Karnātaka region, Hoyasalas with their capital at Dvārsamudra emerged as a formidable force to deal with. These numerous kingdoms were at constant war with each other, trying to encroach the boundaries of the other

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kingdoms, thereby creating a scene of fierce power contest. These shaped the new kingdom of Vijayanagar which was established in the fourteenth century.

It is very essential to keep in mind the 'geopolitical' context of these kingdoms. The kingdom of Hoysala and Kākātiya belonged to the area of low rainfall and the topography was extremely rocky. Under such conditions, high-yielding crops could not be cultivated. Trade was also conducted in limited commodities. Hence the resource base of these powers were extremely fragile and had to be extended to maintain a large army which was the need of the time. Comparatively, the kingdoms of Pāndyas and Cōlas were in an area of high agricultural yield with highly developed trade centres on the coast. These became the target of Hoyasalas and Kākātiyas. They also took control of the rich trading coasts, the Kākātiyas taking over the area from Telengana to the rich deltaic lands and ports of Krsna Gōdāvari delta and Hoyasalas occupied the western coast from the Kōnkan to Goā, south to Mālābār. Since these two were in the northern part of the peninsula, so they were the first ones to be attacked by the Sultanate of Delhi. Within a short span in the fourteenth century, they were wiped out by the Muslims thereby leaving the field clear for the establishment of Vijayanagar.[3]

The area of Kāverī Valley and south of Kāverī being extremely fertile became the focus of the concentration of the Hoyasalas. Their capital Dvārsamudra being extremely

rocky and not very fertile was shifted to Kannanūr near the Kāverī delta. The temple at Śrīraṅgam did not indicate any decline in the prosperity as reflected in the numerous grants made by the Hoysala and Pāṇḍya chiefs. The Kōil Oḷugū records the presence of both the kingdoms.[4] The Oḷugu mentions the presence of Hoysalas in the first half of the thirteenth century at Kannanur near Śrīraṅgam. The Hoysala kings Narasiṃha and Rāmanātha and the Hoysala chiefs like Cingaṇa Daṇḍanāyakka, Kambaya Daṇḍanāyakka and Kariyamāṇikka Daṇḍanāyakka are mentioned as important benefactors. An inscription dated 1257 A.D., indicates the foundation of Ārōgyaśāla (hospital) by the donation of Cingaṇa Daṇḍanāyakka who was the pradhānī of Vīra Rāmanāth[5]. He donated a land situated in Mummaḍisōḷa Caturvēdimaṅgaḷam for this purpose. We find similar references in other inscriptions which are corraborated by the Kōil Oḷugu. However, inscriptions from 1232 A.D to 1248 A.D. seem to refer to Rājarāja III as the ruler and not Narasiṃha II or Sōmeśvara. Rājarāja III was defeated, lost his throne and was even imprisoned temporarily in a place in South Arcot district. Later, he was 're-instated' by the Hoyasalas. Hence, their inscription and Pāṇḍya inscription are found in Śrīraṅgam in the intervening period. By 1258 A.D. the political scenario had changed in the Kāverī Valley. Jaṭāvarman Sundara Pāṇḍya I (1251 - 68 A.D.) drove the Hoyasalas from Kannanur and made Rājēndra Cōḷa III accepted his suzerainity by paying tribute. The long Sanskrit record

belonging to Sundara Pāṇḍya I reveals the enormous wealth concentrated in his hands which he magnanimously gifted to the temple for numerous constructions and performance of rituals. The K̄ōil Oluqu describes the section on this Pāṇḍya king in great detail.[7] The extent of his power can be understood from an inscription in **Maṇavāḷa Mahāmuni matha** at Śrīraṅgam. It was constructed by Varantaruvān Eḍattakai Aḷagiyān alias Pallavarāyan of Tunjalūr. It was called Sundara Pāṇḍyan matha and was built for the welfare of Perumāḷ Sundara Pāṇḍya. The two officers the Āriyar and the Uḷḷūrār were appointed to guard the treasury of the temple.

Inscriptions from 1256 A.D to 1269 A.D. belong to the regnal years of the Hoysala king Vīra Rāmanātha. Most of them deal with lavish endowments of cash and commodities and lands for the purpose of flower gardens. Even under the successors of Pāṇḍyas and Hoysalas, the grant continued unabated. The area around the Raṅganāthasvāmī temple situated in the fertile Kāverī valley became the centre for power struggle to control the revenue from the high yielding agricultural crops. The numerous donations made to the temple are not only in the form of cash or commodities but are land-grants also whose revenue yield was very high.

Similar trend is noticed in Kāñcīpuram in the north in Chingleput district. It had extensive cultivable lands dotted with lakes and ponds and river Vēgavati which flows by the southern side to join river Palar. Epigraphical evidence at Śrī Varadarājasvāmī temple mention numerous

Hoysala Mahāpradhānīs, Daṇḍanāyakkas from 1226 A.D. to 1240 A.D.[8]; Teḷugū Cōḷas and Pāṇḍyas rule is also attested. Numerous gifts and land endowments were made to the temple. Besides, Kāñcīpuram was an active centre of trade and had numerous prospects. Hence, the control of Kāñcīpuram implied a dual benefit, which no power would have liked to lose.

In contrast to Kāñcīpuram and Śrīraṅgam, Tirupati was not that fortunate. Lord Vēṅkaṭēśvara's shrine situated on the hill did not get much response from these contending powers who chiefly concentrated on the fertile zones. Inscriptions of Teḷugū Cōḷas and Pāṇḍyas do not seem to mention such heavy endowments. Land hardly formed a part of the donation since it was not fertile. In the pre-Vijayanagar days, the temple hardly came into the possession of few villages. It was only in the thirteenth century that a family of chieftains called Yādavarāyas made grants for investment in the land for irrigational purposes. During this time, a certain chief of huntsmen Tiruikkāḷattidēvan initiated a dēvadānam to the temple comprising of "all the nañjai (wet) and the puñjai (dry) lands comprised within the four boundaries of Kuḍavūr, together with all taxes including Kaḍamai-āyam, Pāḍikāval, Veṭṭichcharikai...Kōlvari and Paṭṭampon, and Pon-vari and Kāṇikkai; and Porkalaṅgal including Kāṇikkai...."[9] Another record mentions in detail the irrigation of flower gardens, an excavation of the pond and installation of a lift for the water to be 'baled out,

if the tank dries up'.[10]   Out of the thirty-eight
inscriptions, approximately twelve allude to the gifts of
land to be irrigated. However, during the Vijayanagar days
the situation improved tremendously.

When Vijayanagar first came to power, the capital was
no longer in the fertile Kāverī valley but at Hampi in
Karnātaka. It was somewhere in the fifteenth century that
Tamil Nāḍu was included into the dominion thereby
integrating the entire southern peninsula south of river
Kṛṣṇa which witnessed total fragmentation after the downfall
of the Cōḷa empire.   There was shift from the old riverine
core area to the dry upland zones. Vijayanagar inherited
the 'mixed rural economies' of farmers, herdsmen and
huntsmen. These landed peasantries came into severe
conflict with the herdsmen and huntsmen and vice-versa when
each tried to approximate their revenue at the expense of
others. Hence a warring peasant class developed. Reḍḍis
and Veḷāḷas of Andhra and Vānnaiyars of Tamil Nāḍu were some
of them. These areas were dependent on tank irrigation.
The only way for a systematic agricultural development lay
in the resource management by temples who were entrusted
lands and money endowments for irrigational investments.
The development of Mēlukōṭe and Tirupati as important temple
towns indicate this trend. Production of cash crops like
cotton and indigo took place on an extensive scale. Hence
the areas of limited agricultural opportunities transformed
into that of high-yielding mixed agriculture of food and

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cash crops coupled with the growing and flourishing trade. Such an economy supported highly complicated social and political institutions which in turn controlled it, and the rāyas whole-heartedly endorsed the process.

(b) FROM THE FOURTEENTH TO FIFTEENTH CENTURY;

From now onwards,the inscriptions of Śrī Raṅganāthasvāmī temple at Śrīraṅgam, Śrī Varadarājasvāmī temple at Kāñcīpuram, Śrī Veṅkaṭeśvara temple at Tirupati and Śrī Nārāiṇaswāmy temple at Mēlukōṭe will be analysed to show the increase in the warrior-class whose resource base were the lands and legitimizing authority of the rāyas through the institution of the brāhammanical temples.

One of the most important factors that emerged due to the constant changing of boundaries and agricultural frontier which contributed to the expanding warrior class was migration. Due to the cultivation of dry upland zones, several new settlements emerged. This is particularly true for Mēlukōṭe and Tirupati where the development of temple towns with flourishing trade took place due to the social process of migration. Incorporation of hill and forest dwellers into the settled pattern of agriculture increased the agrarian class. The aforesaid inscription at Tirupati where the chief huntsmen Tiruikkālattidēvan initiated a dēvadānam with all the taxes registers the incorporation of the huntsmen[11]. The pace of migration increased particularly with the occupation of Tamil Nāḍu in the

beginning of the fifteenth century. Inscriptions record as donors the nāyakas, pālayakkāran, tōttiyar, kambalatār, beydarus and many others. In some cases, the entire community migrated and in some cases one or two families migrated together. Probably there were merchants, weavers and artisans who were attached to the temples and employed there. The inscriptions at Tirupati register a constant increase in the cultivable area by extension of forest lands particularly in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. The displaced foresters either got absorbed in the new formation or migrated further interior. The Kannada and Telugū speakers were generally soldiers and many of them became poligars. The Pattunūlkārar who were the silk weavers migrated from Saurāshtra and for a time being settled in Vijayanagar city before finally establishing themselves in Kāñcīpuram. The settlement of Telugūs in central Deccan and Tamil country during the fifteenth century form a very important element in the complicated land relation in Vijayanagara times. Besides being a powerful agrarian class, they were also warriors who were constantly on the look out of maximising their revenue. This implied displacing or subordinating the older Tamil peasants already settled there and often it meant the opening of new tracts of land based on well and tank - irrigation. Both proved to be the resource base of numerous small chieftains who in turn allied themselves to the Telugū Commanders of Vijayanagar armies that conquered parts of Tamil country

during the fifteenth and sixteenth century. "The Teḷugū settlements in Tamiḷ country follows the distribution of black soils there quite closely as a result of which Teḷugū farmers and merchants came to constitute major elements of the population". These landed magnates paid tributes to the Vijayanagar rulers. The temple endowments shift from payment in kind to payment in cash or grants of lands to the religious beneficiaries.'

From the fourteenth century, Mēlukōṭe[12] emerges as prominent ŚrīVaiṣṇava religious centre as the major benefactors in these temples were the Śrīvaiṣṇava Ācāryas. There are three inscriptions of fourteenth century, which refer to mahāpradhāna Mādappa-daṇṇanāyaka, son of Perumāḷndēva-daṇḍanāyaka as the donor. He made a gift of wet land to Lakshamaṇadāsa who was supposed to supply 15 gulas of elavatti to Śrī Nārāiṇasvāmy temple. Another important donor in the reign of Mallikārjuna was mahāpradhāna Tirumaṇṇa daṇḍanāyaka and his wife Raṅganāyaki. He renovated the temple and later some additions were made by his wife in 1458 A.D. She constructed maṇaṭapa raṅga in front of the shrine Yadugīri-amma, the consort of Sampatkumara. She also constructed a dēsāntri-maṭha on a fallow land in her possession and named it after her as Raṅga-maṭha.

The following are the chieftains and other classes mentioned in the inscriptions at Melūkōṭe:-

Table I

Occupation	Donor	Date	Ruler	Insc. No
Chieftains and Warriors	1. Tirumalarājaya	1534 A.D.	Achyutadēva	127
	2. Koṇḍarājadēva mahā-arasu	1564 A.D.	Sadāśivādeva	128
	3. Mahāmaṇḍalēśvara Nārāyadēva Mahārasu, son of Narasiṅgadēva mahā-arasu of Nandyāḷa	1545 A.D.	"	129
	4. Nārāyadēva, son of Narasiṅgadeva of Nandyāla	1544 A.D.	"	130
	5. Appayaṅgār, son of Enkaraya and maha-maṇḍalēśvara Tiru-maydēva-mahāarasu, son of Narasiṅgadeva mahāarasu of Nandyāla	1551 A.D.	"	131
	6. Rāyaka-nāyaka, son of Chitrakoṇḍama nāyaka of Velugōḍu	1530 A.D.	"	132
	7. Mahāmaṇḍalēśvara Manukrīlu Chennadeva Chōḍa-mahāarasu	1550-51 A.D.	"	133
	8. Kṛṣṇarāya-nāyaka son of Kāmanāyaka	1528 A.D.	Kṛṣṇadeva	134
	9. Lakshmipati sēṭṭi son of Oḍeyāra Tikkasēṭṭi	1528 A.D.	"	135
	10. Perirāja, son of Harigila Akkaraja	1534 A.D.	Achyutadēva	138
	11. King Chikadēva maharāja Vaḍērayya	1678 A.D.		149
	12. Dēvarāja-Voḍeya	143 A.D.		153
	13. Gaṅgaṇa of Nāgamaṅgala	1646 A.D.		157
	14. Beṭṭa Chāmarāṭ	1646 A.D.		214,215, 216

The maximum number of grants were made during the time of Sadāśivarāya. Most of these chieftains seem to have migrated and settled here. The donors in No.3, 4, 5, hailed from a place called Nandyāla and Rāyaka-nāyaka in no.6 seems to have hailed from Vellugōḍu. No.11,12,13,14 refer to Voḍeya of Mysore who were minor chiefs in the time Vijayanagar empire. Their chief was Beṭṭa Chāmarāṭ or Chamaraja whose domain was comprising of few villages along the Kāverī. By 1570's the chieftaincy had thirty villages and by 1581 A.D. it had emerged as a principality under Rāja Woḍeyār. Towards the end of the sixteenth century they must have established themselves firmly and by 1646 A.D. when these three inscriptions make appearances, there is no acknowledgement to Vijayanagar rulers who were already on the way to decline. In fact the Woḍeyārs were originally from Mysore as it seems. One of the inscriptions while tracing their lineage mentions:

"Some, born in that race, came to the Karnāṭa country to visit their family fod Ramāramana the ornament of the peak of Yadugiri. Seeing the beauty of the country they were greatly pleased and settled in the city of Mahīśūru" (Mysore).

What is strange is that in Mēlukōṭe, there does not seem to have been any indication of flourishing trade or of dominant agricultural class. The donors as the list shows were usually the nāyakas or pradhānīs of daṇḍanāyaka who

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granted lands with tanks and other irrigational facilities. The area seems to be receiving scanty rainfall when in 1545 A.D. Mahāmandéleśvara Nārāyadeva mahā-arasu granted the nearby villages of Ballālapura in Śrirangapaṭṭana-sime and Varāhanakalahalli in Moḷanaḍa-sthala of Kaṃambādi-sime for several services in the temple. It specified that though the amount of income from these villages was 2000 varahas, but due to famine conditions was reduced to 1200 varahas. Perhaps, because of this we do not see very many wealthy trading and agrarian families. The temple town probably employed tradesmen, craftsmen and weavers and agricultural labourers. An inscription during the rule of Kṛṣṇadēvarāya in 1528 A.D. recorded not only a gift of Kṛṣṇarāya-nāyaka of the villages Kāmenāyakanahaḷḷi, Gollarachaṭṭanahaḷi and the income from several taxes like santheya-āya 'Mēlugōte', talavarike of Sindagaṭṭa, hogedre, sthala-sunka, āḍakeya-sunka, āḍadere and rāyasta - vartane, but also recorded that since formerly the cultivators of the temple land were carried off to Toṇḍanūr for ploughing the lands there, those lands have now been granted. This was because more lands were brought under cultivation and there was need for these labourers. Hence in Mēlukōte, we have the chiefs who acknowledged the supremacy of the ruler of Vijayanagar and held land grants granted by the rāyas on the one hand and probably a class of cultivators on the other.

Lord Vēnkaṭēśvarasvāmī's shrine on the hill of Tirupati during the time of Vijayanagar rulers witnessed a tremendous

spurt in prosperity through numerous donations which are unparallel to the other three shrines epigriphical evidence. Since there are over two thousand odd inscriptions approximately, it will not be possible to analyze them one by one. The following table enumerates the various occupational classes under each Vijayanagara ruler.

Table II

RULER	OCCUPATION	TOTAL NUMBER
Bukkarāya and Harihara	Commanders and chiefs	4
	Religious Personalities	3
	Merchants	-
Dēvarāya Mahārāya	Commanders and chiefs	9
	King himself	4
	Religious Personalities	10
	Sthānattar	14
	Merchants	2
Saluvā Narsimha	Temple Accountant	13
	Public works officers	3
	Sabhayār	6
	Vaidika Brāhmáns	7
	Ekākī - śrīvaisnavas	3
	Religious leaders (Jīyars, spiritual teachers and Achāryapurushas)	33

Table II Contd.....

RULER	OCCUPATION	TOTAL NUMBER
Krishnadēvarāya 1509-1531 A.D.	The Emperor and his	54
	Quuen Chinājidevi and Tirumaladevi	
	Chieftains	19
	Royal and Palace Officers	10
	Merchants	10
	Temple Accountants	10
	Poets	4
	Vaidika Brāhamins	12
	Sabhaiyār	3
	Ēkākī ṠrīVaiṣṇavas	3
	Religious leaders	8
Achyutadēvarāya	Emperor and the royal family	12
	Commanders, and Chiefs	27
	Palace officer	1
	Palace servants	4
	State officer	24
	Vaidika Brāhmins	15
	Poets and scholars	16
	Temple accountants	11
	Merchants	9
	Devadāsīs	12
	Religious leaders	10

Table II Contd.....

RULER	OCCUPATION	TOTAL NUMBER
Sadāśivadēvaraya 1541-1574 A.D.	Emperor	5
	Commanders and chiefs	33
	Vaidika Brāhmins	9
	Poets and scholars	20
	Temple Accountants	11
	Merchants	7
	Dēvadasīs	10
	Religious leaders	12
Vēṅkaṭapatirāya 1586 - 1614	Emperor	1
	Generals and chiefs	10
	Merchants	4
	Religious leaders	5
	Vaidika Brāhman	1

Table III:-

	Donors	Total Number of Grants
1.	Emperors	76 approximately
2.	Commanders, Chiefs Viceroys and generals	117 app.
3.	Merchants	28 app.
4.	Temple accountants	53 app.
5	Religious Personalities	76 app.
6.	Temple dēvadasīs	22 app.

Table III Contd.....

Table III Contd.....

7.	State officers	27 app.
8.	Royal officers	10 app.
9.	Poets/scholars	40 app.
10.	Vaidika Brāhmins	43 app.
11.	Ekākī śrīvaiṣṇava	10 app.
12.	Sabhaiyār	12 app.

At Tirupati, there was an emergence of several new occupational classes who actively participated in the temple affairs and made numerous donations thereby making it one of the greatest centre for śrīVaiṣṇavism. The largest number of donations made by the warrior elite, followed by the emperor himself. Maximum donations by the chieftains were made during time of Sadāśivarāya in whose reign the donations amount to a comparatively large number and variety. Although the king himself does not make numerous grants like his predecessors Krishṇadēvamahārāya and Acyutadēvamahārāya, Aliya Rāmarāja and chiefs of the Araviḍu family had become very prominent. Now at Tirupati there were no longer gifts in kind but in cash and land. Hence a complicated landed relation had emerged, whereby these chiefs were granted land who in turn paid a tribute or tax and supplied army at the time of war. This was an extremely powerful class, as is evident from the large number of inscriptions belonging to the Araviḍu family. Aliya Rāmarāja was the most influential one and was the minister of the king. The royal gifts and grants were ratisfied by him. He not only obtained the royal

writ (rāyasam) from Sadāśiva but secured the executive order (tirumukam) from Rāmarāya for the exemption of taxes from the village of Mutyālapaṭṭu Tāḷḷapākam, Tirumallayyangar (No. 681 T.T.). In the grant (No. 393 T.T.) by Sadāśivarāya to Śrīnivāsa and others, of a portion of the prasadams previously arranged by Acyutarāya, the executor of the grant was Aliya Rāmayyādēvamahāraja. Gifts of some of the officers are also found to have been made for the merit of both Sadāśiva and Rāmarājya. These Aravidu chieftains were linked together through strong family ties and matrimonial relations. During sixteenth century the emergence of such strong warrior chiefs was a common phenomenon.

Merchants as a community does not seem to be very strong in Tirupati donations. However, they had come up and were very important endowers. Some of them were merchants of Tirupati and others came from a nearby town called Chandragiri. Saraṇu - Śeṭṭiyār, Nārāyaṇa - Śeṭṭiyūr, Pēriya Sāmu- Śeṭṭiyār were some of the Tirupati merchants and Kṛṣṇappā - sēṭṭi and Sādayapalli Nāmi - Śeṭṭiyar were some of the Chandragiri merchants. The Changragiri merchants here as Tirupati merchants made land as well cash grants. Kṛṣṇappā - sēṭṭi usually made gifts in cash usually.[donated sixteen dōṣai - padi offerings to Śrī Vēṅkaṭēśvara as his Ubhaiyam on the days of summer festivals, car festival and he also deposited the sum of 640 panam as capital. [No. 87 T.T. IV]. Nāmi - Śeṭṭiyār also gave 1230 panam for the purpose of conducting Pādiya Vēṭṭai (hunting) festival for Śrī Gōvindarājan and Śrī Acyutaperumāḷ in Tirupati and presented certain

offerings in his mantapam. [92 - G.T.,V]. On the other hand Saraṇu - sēttiyār granted one share of wet land and deposited the sum of 1000 narpaṇam into the temple treasury with the object of propiating Srī Gōvindarāja [12 - T.T. IV]. Pēriya - Sāmmu - sēttiyār granted a village Uttamnallūr situated in Padaivīdu district for daily offerings to Srī Vēṅkatēsa. He also arranged for 13 appa - padi offerings on the 13 days Sravaṇam star festival, being the monthly birth star of Srī Vēṅkatēsa to be celebrated in the shrine of Srī Rāmānuya in Tirumala Temple.

It was at Kāncīpuram that merchants emerged as a strong community. In fact right from the cōla period, Kāncīpuram was a logical meeting place for the merchants of its hinterland. These merchants were extremely powerful and also possessed lands. They were also possessing a martial tradition. The weavers at Kāncīpuram emerged as a strong caste and organized themselves into guilds. Numerous donations are recorded by groups like Kaikkōlās, Chēttiyārs, Vānniyārs. In the fourteenth century, the Kaikkōlās in Chingleput made donations to the temple. What is significant here is that the number of donations of Srī Varadarājaswāmī temple is comparatively less than the other nearby Saiva temples, where the merchant weaver donations appeared in large numbers.

In comparison, Srī Raṅganāthasvāmī temple had incorporated the Kaikkōlār caste in important ritual activities. The ritually symbolic rite of breaking the

coconut was assigned to the Kaikōḷā mudalīs, or the teacher.
An inscription dated in 1524 A.D. records a gift of 10,500
chakra-paṇam by Rāmānujadāsār alias Lakshmipatī-seṭṭi and
his brother Antappa, son of Tippu-seṭṭi who was a disciple
of Kandāḍai Nayiṉār-Ayyaṅgār, for the midnight offerings to
the god. The money was required to be invested in tanks and
channels and the resultant revenue was to be spent for the
purpose. This inscription also records an important gift by
Lakshmipatī-sèṭṭi for certain ornaments to the images of the
Ggoc and Goddess.

New groups of landholders were fast emerging during the
Vijayanagar period who were rapidly displacing the earlier
Brāhmaṇa landholders and gaining more land in the core of the
Tamiḷ region. They were generally Reḍḍis who migrated from
Andhra Pradesh.

These classes of merchants and agriculturalists were
organised into vaḷangaị and iḍangaị. Vaḷangaị means 'right
hand castes' and iḍangaị means 'left hand caste'.

Hence what becomes very clear from the above discussion
is that land was becoming an important link between 'the
migrants and indigenous peasant settlement into a single
socio-economic system.[14] The land relation patterns had
undergone a change and were becoming extremely complicated.
It was to integrate all the land and systematize the
production that the nāyaka system was created. Most of the
money endowments in Tirupati and Mēlukōṭe were invested for

repairing and building tanks and wells. One would perhaps agree with Carol Breckeridge that:

The links, however, that were established between centres and peripheries in this context of change and (and uncertainty) should not be viewed as a one way process in which leaders at these centres unilaterally managed the process of agrarian development. This would be a misleading impression for two reasons. In the first place the petty chiefs or 'big man' of the newly colonized agricultural areas themselves increasingly initiated donative activities that linked them to religious institutions, particularly temples, in pre-existing centers. In the second place, given the importance of temples to both directions in the process of political linkage.......[15]

Section II:-

Against this background, the social base of Śrvaiṣṇava temples was broadened increasingly. Most of the migrants happened to be practising Śrīvaiṣṇavism. The Voḍeyārs of Mysore are one such example. Similarly the bedaru (hunters) who were soldiers, came from Tirumala at the base of a Tirupati temple and settled in Tamiḷ Nāḍu, they called their lineage deity Tirumala Dēvaru. Most of these migrants were the followers of the sectarian ŚrīVaiṣṇava leaders. The instances of merchants palace servants and dēvadāsīs making gifts to the temples reflects the power of ideology which did not stress so much upon caste and social status.

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In fact it was a two way process. The new emerging social class needed a strong institutional support in the temples and these temples depended on the donations made to them for their economic prosperity and consequently their existence. The Vijayanagar empire witnessed a constant assertion and shifting of power structure which proved to be very advantageous to the Śrīvaiṣṇava sectarian leaders, who with their powerful discourses and charismatic personalities attracted the donations. During this period, we see the rise of many individual jīyars and religious leaders who not only were the benefactors but also made numerous donations themselves. At Tirupati, the religious and the secular temple servants contributed to the maximum number of endowments, thereby, contributing to the emergence of Śrī Veṅkaṭesh shrine significantly.

According to Carol Breckeridge,[16] temples became storehouses. The temples at Śrīraṅgam and Tirupati, Kāñcīpuram at Mēlukōṭe had huge store houses - pōr-bhaṇḍāram for various storage purposes. There were also numerous storerooms in which various donors kept their provisions and commodities to be supplied for the ritual services. The possession of these individual storeroom was very prestigious. Priests, temple servants, and donors who got their share of the prasādam did not consume it but 'leased' their share to the 'leaseholders' who in turn sold to the pilgrims. This brought additional income to the temples.

Therefore, the Śrīvaiṣṇava temples with devotional
bhakti incorporated new social classes in their movement.
They performed social and economic functions. As the social
base increased, the temples became increasingly hierarchical
and authoritative. They provided a nexus for the ritual and
economic transactions for the Teḷugū warriors and the
Vijayanagar kings with the sectarian leaders who were in
lookout for means and ways for legitimizing their authority.
This was so particularly in the fertile areas of Tamiḷ Nāḍu.
The sectarian leaders became strong contestants for power
and resource control in the temples and this finally led to
the schism into Vaḍagaḷai and Teṅgaḷai crystallizing in the
eighteenth and nineteenth century, when the texts and court
records mention them as two sects.

1. All the inscription of Lord Raṅganāthasvāmī temple at Śrīraṅgam are compiled in the <u>South Indian Inscription</u> Volume XXIV, Mmanager of Publications, New Delhi. No.389, Page 304.

2. <u>TTDI,</u> Volume No.

3. It is said that Harihara and Bukkā the founder of Vijayanagar empire were soldiers in the army of Kaṁpiḷidevarāyaa when Muhammad bin Tughlak attacked Kampili. They converted to Muslims and were employed by the sultan to govern Kampili.

4. <u>Kōil Oḷugū</u> - Page 13-23.

5. <u>South Indian Inscription</u> XXIV   Op.cit. and EIXXIV. pg. 90

6. <u>SII XXIV</u> and also <u>EI VI.,</u> V.N. Hari Rao in <u>History of the Śrīraṅgam Temple</u> also deals with this inscription pg.75.

7. <u>Kōil Oḷugū</u> - Op. cit. pg.15-16.

8. <u>Epigraphical Report of 1919</u> - No.13.

10. Ibid. No.122.

11. See page 8.

12. The inscriptions of Mēlukōṭe and Tirupati are dealt here in detail as they come up significantly during the Śrīvaiṣṇava period.

13. R. Champakalakshmi - "Urbanisation in Tamil Nadu" in Romilla Thapar and Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (ed.) - <u>Situating Indian History</u>. Oxford New Delhi, page.67.

14. Carol Breckeridge-<u>social storage in Medieval Vijayanagar</u>. Pg. 15

15. Ibid. page 30.

16. Ibid. page.34.

CHAPTER III

THE CHANGING SOCIAL BASE OF ŚRĪ VAIṢṆAVISM

The most significant development in the Śrī Vaiṣṇava temples from the time of Rāmānuja was the emergence of the matha and matha organizations[1]. Set in the milieu of political changes, social dynamism and hyper economic activities, particularly from the fourteenth century onwards this institutional and religious establishment emerged as the centre for power and resource management. The infrastructure of the matha was extremely hierarchical. Hence, it closely resembled the papacy where wealth and power was the bone of contention.[2]

It was Rāmānuja who popularized the mathas[3] in various Śrī Vaiṣṇava temples. The four main temples discussed here indicate hectic institutional growth in the post- Rāmānuja period. This can be well exemplified in the case of the Tirupati temple. The earliest epigraphical evidence points out that it was during the ninth century in the reign of the Pallava ruler Koppātra-Mahēndra Panmar that land was purchased from the Sābhaiyār of Tiruchchukanūr situated in the Tirukkuḍavūr-nāḍu in Śri Venkaṭa Kottam and from Lakshmaṇaṇambi residing in the matha. The money was paid to the God Tiruvilankōyil - Perumāḷ and was exempted from taxation. Proceeds from here were utilized for performing special services for the deity. What is significant is that the manager of the temple was the mādāpatyam (the head of the matha)[3]. The next occurrence of the matha was during the time of Yādavās

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in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In the temples of Tirupati and Tirumala, a matha in the name of Sitakaragandan Immadi Rāhuttarāyan Singaya - Dannayākkar was established.[4] However it was not until the reign of Vijayanagar that one comes across frequent references to the matha organizations. While in the shrine of Śrī Nārāinswāmy at Melukōṭe and Śrī Venkaṭeśvara at Tirupati it was in the post-Rāmānuja period that this institutional development was the strongest. At Śrī Ranganātha Swāmī's shrine at Śrīrangam, a matha was already in existence when Rāmānuja came there. Similarly, at Varadarājswāmī's temple at Kānci, the establishment of the mathas was well consolidated.

The emergence of the matha and its growing importance which reached the zenith during the time of Vijayanagar was an important landmark in the history Śrī Vaiṣnavism. The tradition of such mathas was already present in Śaivism placing Vaiṣnavism at a disadvantage. Rāmānuja by concentrating on this aspect gave Śrī Vaishnavism a status of parity with Śaivism. Perhaps the most significant institutional innovation made by the great ācārya was the establishment of the Rāmānujakūtam. Literally translated, it means the 'Feeding Hall'. This was a lodging place for many Śrī Vaiṣnava devotees who came for pilgrimage. In course of time, celebration of festivals increased tremendously. This attracted a large number of pilgrims

from distant places. To accommodate them, additional facilities were made which added to the significance of Rāmānujakūtams. This is evident from the fact the rulers themselves sponsored these facilities very often, at the instance of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava leaders who were the actual managers of Rāmānujakūtam. The importance of this institution is attested to by the evidences regarding the dominance of some Vaiṣṇava preceptors who wielded great influence in the administration of not only the temples, but also in the empire. Kandāḍai Rāmānuja Āyyaṅgār was one such personality, who apart from being the head of the Rāmānujakūtam at Tirupati, was the spiritual preceptor of Saluvā Narasiṃha. In fact, Rāmānujakūtam contributed immensely to the prosperity of the temples.

At the head of the matha organization was a powerful Śrī Vaiṣṇava ācārya or 'sectarian leader' who wielded great influence in all matters and situations. The prerequisite of such a leader was a strong philosophical beast of mind, acute critical perception, excellent orational and commentorial skills combined with a charismatic personality which made them infallible. Rāmānuja, Vēdānta Deśika, Pillai Lokacārya, Maṇavāla Māmunigaḷ and many others possessed these qualities. Rāmānuja's organizational innovations continue till today. The personality of Vēdānta Deśika and Maṇavāla māmunigaḷ was so strong that today the Vaḍagaḷais and the the Teṅgaḷais regard them as their initiators, respectively.

The dominance of these matha leaders, jīyars and ācāryas pervaded at three different levels. The first level was the theological one, where the leaders were under constant stress to prove the validity of their philosophy. This was again at two levels. One was within the religious sect and the another was with the other religious sects. This took the shape of intra and inter sectarian debates. Kāñcīpuram was one such place, where an active religio-intellectual environment existed. The Vaḍakalai Guruparamparāi mentions an instance at Śrīraṅgam regarding the Teṅkalai school which could not sustain the challenge from one Advāitin. Hence they invited Vēdānta Deśika to save them from this predicament. Deśika went and effectively argued with the Advāita who later on became his disciple.[6] One of the most important consequences of such discussion was the theological dispute which crystallized into two exegetic schools of thought – the Prabandhic school at Śrīraṅgam and Bhāshya school at Kāñcīpuram.[7]

The second level operated within the socio-economic circumstances. As discussed earlier[8], the predominant feature of the Vijayanagar economy was the maximum appropriation of surplus which created tensions between the existing and emerging social classes. At Śrīraṅgam and Kāñcīpuram, due to the river irrigation and fertility of soil, agricultural yield was high. When the new warrior class migrated here they clashed with the agrarian class who were entrenched there. Many changes took place. One was

the disintegration of brāhmanical settlements, as brāhmaṇas
due to economic necessity gradually sold their land to the
new class to pay their debts.   In 1489 A.D., Kandāḍai
Rāmānuja Āyyaṅgār brought two villages from brāhmaṇas. Hence
the new brāhmaṇa families were gradually emerging more
significantly than the older ones who were already settled
there[9].

At Tirupati and Mēlukōṭe, extra efforts were made to
increase the yield to optimum.. Almost all epigraphical
evidences contain certain requirements for investments in
irrigational facilities. Here the new classes were
constantly engaged in bringing land under cultivation and
then approximating the produce, under such conditions of
stress and competition (for controlling the resources),
religion acted as a binding force in bringing all these
classes together who converged at the temple and made
endowments in the form of land and money. In turn, they got
their share of produce or prasādam which was sold to the
pilgrims. This generated additional income. At the apex of
such a complicated socio-economic process were the mathas
which were headed by the jīyars whose charismatic
personality and religious discourses attracted numerous
endowments and large number of devotees. The temple property
as well as those endowments were controlled by the powerful
preceptors.

The third level, where the jīyar exercised powerful

influence and authority was in the administrative affairs of the temple. In almost every festival are ritual the _ācāryas_ had a share. They made administrative innovations and recruited new people in the temple organisations. One such example is of Kandāḍai Rāmānuja Āyyaṅgār whose _sāttāda_ _śri_ _Vaiṣṇava_ disciples were involved in looking after the flower gardens in the temple at Tirupati.

Hence the tradition of such centres of power with strong leaders started by Rāmānuja continue till today. The influence of the _jīyars_ and _ācāryas_ was so pervasive that they were deified and worshipped. These dynamic sectarian leaders provided the bridge between the temples and kings and powerful personages whose need for legitimacy was immense. In this manner, they were all involved in the redistributive process through land and money endowments.

However, one cannot ignore the role of the _rāyās_ in the temple management. In many disputes, they arbitrated and effected a compromise. The names the of king was definitely acknowledged in the _praśasti_ of the inscription. But the day-to-day management remained in the hands of the _matha_ leaders. Hence the king was more of an 'administrator' and less of a 'legislator'[10] whereby his authority was invoked at times of need, indicating the acknowledgement of such authority as constant. But the sectarian leader or the head of the _matha_ was both an 'administrator' and a 'legislator', whose orders got codified in ritual activities and festivals.

Hence on one hand, we have a two-way relationship between the sectarian leaders and the Vijayanagar rulers (where both needed each other), and on the other, we have sectarian rulers using temples as their base for power control and making endowments too. This was a symbiotic relationship. Arjun Appadurai[1] points out an asymmetrical relationship between the rulers and these sectarian leaders. While the rulers conferred 'honour' as well as resources to the latter, the later only rendered 'honour' and not material resources. But taken in the context of Vijayanagar period, sectarian leaders were the medium of establishing the control of different warrior classes, as well as the king over regions which would have been otherwise impossible. This was only possible 'through sectarian control of the redistributive capacities of temples', and the Telugū warriors were permitted to enter these temples, make endowments, irrespective of the caste, and this also contributed to the proper functioning of rituals and various festivals. In return, they got their share from the redistribution of the resources as well as ceremonial honours. The purpose of inscribing records on the walls and gateways of of the temples is indicative of the fact that the donor wished to be remembered till posterity. It was a certificate for the assertion of the authority of these 'little kings' and revealed a well knitted relationship which was 'rendered public, stable and culturally appropriate'. <u>Matha</u> leaders used this situation to their

advantage by seeking the support of the political rulers for the consolidation of their authority within the temples as well as over their counterparts. Therefore we have here an elitist network which sustained for a long time. This will become clear, when an analysis of the role of the four most important ācāryas is viewed in this framework. They were:

a)   Kandāḍai Rāmānuja Āyyaṅgār

b)   Uttama-Nambīs

c)   Van Saṭṭagopa Jīyar

d)   Tātāchārya

a) **KANDĀḌAI RĀMĀNUJA ĀYYAṄGĀR** - From the inscriptional references in Tirupati, particularly during Saluvā Narasiṃha's time (1445-1504 A.D.), Kandāḍai Rāmānuja Āyyaṅgār comes across as a very powerful Śrī Vaiṣṇava leader. More than thirteen inscriptions refer to him making donations of significant ammount. The first epigraphical evidence of Kandāḍai Rāmānuja Āyyaṅgār glorifies him for his achievements for contributing the Rāmānajakūtam for the Kōyil (Śrīraṅgam temple) and the Perumāḷ - Kōyil', i.e. the Kāñcīpuram temple. "Having constructed a resorvoir and having obtained a lease hold at the hands of the Tirupapaṇippiḷḷai,'[12] he was also associated with the 'Vaikundan (Vaikuṇṭha) gate and the big gate at Tirumala.'" Hence his presence at Śrīraṅgam Kāñcīpuram is clear from this inscription. He was the disciple of Aḷagiyamaṇavāla-Jīyar[13] and was the manager of Rāmānujakūtam. In all the

inscriptions, he is associated with it. The extent of his influence comes across clearly after 1490, when he wxecuted his over grant:[14]

1. having purchased land with your own money in the Tirupparipillai - śirmai, constructed a Rāmānujakūṭam and formed a flower garden therein.

2. while Nambimār Siṅgar Piḷḷai provided a Śirappu (offering) on the occasion of the Tiruvāymoli-tuvakkam, and the Śirappu for the Śāttumurai provided by Singappiḷḷai.

3. while you were pleased to direct.... to arrange for (the offering of) of Tiruppōnakam, this Tiruvāymoliśirappu (shall be offered in th ename of) your ācārya Aḷagiyamaṇavāḷa Jīyar.

4. (the articles) shall be supplied. The Rāmānuja-kūṭattar (shall receive) the donor's share of the offered prasādam.

5. you will be responsible for carrying on all your charities........[15]

This inscription though incomplete, is very significant. Uptill now, no Śrīvaiṣṇava leader or brāhmaṇa had been empowered with the privilege of distributing the endowments. So important Kandāḍai had become that the offerings were made in the name of his preceptor Aḷagiyamaṇavāḷa Jīyar. For the first time we notice the authority of a person so

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explicity. Previous epigraphical evidence drawn in favour of various Śrīvaisnava ācāryas like Mullai-Tiruvenkaṭa Jīyar during the reign of Harihararāya made donations and got their share. But such records in the end added a line revealing the presence of other temple servants: "This is the writing of the temple accountant, Tiruninra-ūr-uḍaiyān, with the permission of the Śrī Vaisnavas." May the Śrīvaisnavas protect (this)!"[16] Although an instance is mentioned when Mullai - Tiruvenkaṭa Jīyar executed a grant in the name of Harihararāya, but the attestation of Tiruninra-ūr-uḍaiyan was present.[17]

Kandā,.ḍai Rāmānuja Āyyangar maintained a hierarchy with himself at the apex. He maintained a retinue of disciples who often seved their guru by carrying his endowments to the temple daily at the time of the Alagappirānār-tirumañjanam and offered them to the deity. out of this offering a share was given for the Rāmānujakūtam with the mention of his name. This share the disciples were to 'present' to him.[18] Kandāḍai controlled a substantial part of the temple property. What is remarkable is that the disciples were the Sāttāda Śrīvaisnavas. They were non-brāhmanas also reciting the Tiruvāīmoli along with their Brāhmana counterpart. They were extremely significant, for not only Kandāḍai's share, but every other donor's share went to them. Strangely enough, they never became the leaders of Rāmānujakūtam, who were always the Śrī Vaisnava brāh manas, like Kumāra-Rāmānujāyyangār and Kandāḍai Mādhavāyyangār.

In most of the inscriptions where Kandāḍai RāmānujaĀyyaṅgār figures as the donors, all the endowments in the form of cash or land were invested in the development of irrigational produce and a share of considerable amount was alloted to him. In one instance, the income derived from the land (a sarvamānya grant) granted by Kandāḍai was exclusively utilised for Rāmānuja kūṭam and was free from all taxes. Kandāḍai Rāmānjāyyaṅgār constructed a temple for Kulasekhara ālvār in 1468. The stānaṭṭars granted a tax-free land for the various services to be performed at Kulasekhara Ālvār's shrine.[19] Several new festivals were initiated. Apart from being the manager of the kūṭam, Kandāḍai was in charge of the Pōr-Bhandāram. Festival budgets were drawn up by him.

According to Vīrarāghavachārī, from 1467 to 1470, Saluvā Narasiṃha was engaged for military preparations near Masūlipattnam. Hence it could have been only by a show of his influence with Saluvā Narasiṃha that the sthānattar and others were made to agree to all arrangement proposed by Kandāḍai.[20] One thing emerges clearly from the epigraphical evidencve that the donor's share of the prasādam always went to the disciples of Kandāḍai. This arrangement was for the lifetime.

At Srīraṅgam,[21] in 1472, land and four odd houses were purchased from the Uttama-nambīs for services to the God in the name of Aḷagiya-Maṇavāḷadāsar - the preceptor of

Kandāḍai RāmānujaÂyyaṅgār.[22] Rāmānuja Āyyaṅgār gifted two villages Chaṭṭuvaṇtāṅgal and Arapperuñchelvi on the sourthern bank of the Pā฿āru in Paḍaiviṭṭu-usāvaḍü, Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam. The income from these lands were used for offerings to the God during Rāmānuja-avasaram and his share would go to the Srīvaiṣnava Brāhamaṇas in Rāmānujakūtam. What is interesting here is that Kandāḍai seems to have purchased these lands from the Brāhmaṇas who got them as a gift from the Vijayanagar ruler.[23] The extent of Kandāḍai's influence apears to be enormous, as he donated lands in Toṇḍaimaṇḍalam which was nearly 200miles North of Srīraṅgam. Kandāḍai seems to have come and stayed at Srī Raṅgnāthasvāmī's shrine for a considerable time. That a powerful religious leader of Tirupati goes all the way to Srīraṅgam to consolidate the Rāmānujakūtam and make offerings in name of his preceptor Aḷagiya-Maṇavāḷadāsar - which does not happen anywhere raises an important question as to the primacy of Srīraṅgam .The most likely explanation seems to be that Srīraṅgam continued to be the traditional headquarters of Srī Vaiṣṇavism. Hence attachment to the shrine lent the much needed credibility to the Srīvaiṣṇava leaders. Although Kandāḍai makes donation in the name of his preceptor, yet, significantly Kandāḍai here appears to be somewhat secondary to the Uttama - Nambīs in the administration of the temples. One may therefore conclude that the prominance of Uttama-Nambīs is to be attributed to their nativity in Srīraṅgam which was assigned primacy even from the pre-Rāmānuja period.

At Mēlukōṭe, there is a record of a sale deed by the temple treasury in the name of Kandāḍai for purchasing a land for the Rāmānujakūṭam. His association with Kāñcī is through his guru Aḷagia-maṇavāḷa Jēyar of Kāñcī, There, at Srī Varadarājaswāmī's shrine he was the manager of Rāmānujakūtam, during 1487. So powerful was his influence that he gave money to Virūpākshadannāyaka who was a chieftain of Saluvā Narasiṃha for the construction of the image of Perundēvī Tāyār (Goddess) in the temple and ordered that one fourth of the produce should go to the kūṭam.

It is said that after Saluvā Narasiṃha's death in 1492 A.D. Kandāḍai tried to become an all powerful personality.[24] There was a separate department called Tiruppaṇi Bhaṇḍaram under the sthānattar which financed the repair works. Kandāḍai got a rāyasam (royal writ) from Immai-Narasiṃhāraya "intimating that from this day onwards authorised to carry on necessary repairs to the temple - jewels ..... and deliver them, as a rule, with due accounting, to the Srī-Bhaṇaḍāram; and directing that a silāśāsanam be executed to the effect that this jewellery store-room shall continue to be your hereditary charge (kāṇiyākshi) (to be transmitted by you) to your disciples in succession....[25];

The expenditure for the repair was to be met in the following manner:-

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(a) 1000 <u>panams</u> was to be saved from the sale of the

Prasādams in the <u>kūtams</u>.

(b) 1000 <u>panams</u> was to be saved from teh income of the

grants made to Kulasekhara Ālvār's shrine.

(c) 1000 <u>panams</u> from the village grants for variosu

services.

(d) The balance was to be met from other temple funds.

This was in 1496 A.D. He made arrangements for the celebrations of his birth star through an endowment of 5000 <u>panams</u>. After the prasādam was offered to Lord Śrī Vēṅkatēśa it was brought down to Tirupati. This was to be received by Sudikkudutta (Śrī Aṇḍāl) and Nāchchimār (other consorts) who along with Gōvindarājan were brought out of the shrine to welcome the <u>prasādam</u> with all honours. A reception was then arranged.[26] This was a grand display of power when the <u>ācārya</u> instead of going to the shrine for offering the <u>prasādam</u> made the deities come out in procesion. Besides the donor's share which previously went to the <u>kūtam</u> and the <u>sāttādas</u> was appropriated totally by him.

One of the most significant innovations of Kandādai was the inclusion of the dancing girls, sweepers and the <u>prabandham</u> reciters to be entitled for the cash payments.

The family of Kandādai continued to remain in the temple. Kandādi Mādhava Āyyaṅgār was appointed as the successor to the <u>Rāmānujakūtam</u>. He was succeeded by Kumāra Rāmānuja, the son of Kandādai Rāmānuja. The epigraphical

evidences regarding them are not many and they do not figure significantly in them. Kandāḍai Mādhavāyyaṅgār executed an agreement with the donor and Settlement officers at Tirupati. From the income of the land given to the Rāmānujakūtam, the managers were to furnish Ṣappa-paḍi yearly and were obliged to observe as per the prevailing custom the share of the donor. In 1530 A.D., during the time of Achyutarāya, Kumāra Rāmānuja āyyaṅgār constructed a wooden car for Śrī Rāma enshrined in Tirupatifor the 'merit'of the emperor.[27] These ācāryas seem to have lost some of their authority. Despite the fact at Kāñcīpuram and Śrīraṅgam, they were the donors and donees, yet as compared to their predecessor, their position was not so strong. The institution of Rāmānuja kūtam thereafter did not figure that significantly and perhaps lost its prominence. Why this happened is not clear. Perhaps the royal patronage was withdrawn which means that without royal patronage the local spiritual leaders could not wield much authority. Royal control time and again manifested in the temple disputes and the order of the rāyas was obligatory on the part of the temple servants to follow.

(b) **UTTAMA-NAMBĪS** : From the time of the Uttama-Nambīs, Śrī Raṅganāthasvāmī shrine gained prominence and record a large number of donations from the royalty. One of the most important development during the time of Uttama-Nambīs was the introduction of Viṭṭavan-Viḻukkāḍu, meaning the donor's share during the Vijayanagar times particularly. In very

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rare cases, the donor appropriated the share for himself and mostly the share was alloted to the Uttama-Nambīs.

It was in 1413 we come across an inscription, which records, that the king increased the expenditure for conducting certain festivals from 80 poṇ to 135 poṇ to be conducted on the day of his natal star. It was stipulated that there should be no official participation in the management of these festivals the conduct of which was entrusted to Uttama Nambī. The Uttama Nambīs were recipients of several honours from the rāyas, No.308, records a precise of Uttama Nambi in Sanskrit language and grantha characters. The sthānika of Śrīraṅgam was restored to the Uttama-Nambīs. Certain concessions alongwith land grants were made. All the directions pertaining to the temple made by Uttama Nambi were executed. Infact so powerful they had become that at one instance, Uttama Nambī, on the behalf of sthānika and Śrīraṅga Nārāyaṇa Jīyar received land in four villages Suṇḍakkāyi, Gōvattakkuṇḍi, Toḍaiyūr and Karugḍilam. The income from these lands were utilized for a service instituted in the temple in the name of Devarāya Mahārāya I. Inreturn, the king made the Uttama-Nambī and his brother Chakrarāya the Karttās (agents)of the temple, exempted them from the payments of the jodi on the granted lands. Numerous documents were attested by their signatures alongwith that of Śrīraṅga-Nāryāṇa Jīyar, Tirunanar and Brahmārāyar.

Uttama-Nambīs have been one of the most ancient

families at Śrīraṅgam tracing their descent to Periāḻvār in the eight century. According to tradition there were more than seventy-three generations of them managing the temple. The seventy fourth Uttama-Nambī is said to have been one Garudavāhana Paṇdita, who was made incharge of the Dhanvantri shrine which was renewed by Rāmānuja during his stay at Śrīraṅgam.It seems that Rāmānuja while residing in the Chēran matha met with opposition from the high priest of the temple Pēriyā Nambi. But the dispute got resolved and Pēriya Nambi became Rāmānuja's disciple. However Rāmānuja took the hereditary office of the high priest, right to read the purānas in the temple and documents registering the gifts. But this was not the end. Time and again the Kōil Oḻugu refers to several incidents where the Uttama-Nambīs tried to enhance their control. This was particularly with reference to the Chēran matha. When Kuranārāyana Jīyar (laer on Śrī Raṅganārāyana Jīyar) who did not belong to Śrīraṅgam, gained a strong following he desidered to become the head of the matha which was at that time controlled by Kandādai Tōḷappar. The latter with the help of Uttama-nambī tried to dislodge the Jīyar but failed due to the Cōḷa king's, intervention. Thereby Śrīraṅganārāyana was assigned the matha, Uḍayavar seal and the ring of the sacred conch all of which were Kandādai Āyi's. The Kōil Oḻugu mentions several instances, when these Uttama-Nambīs clashed with many officials at the temple, particularly with the Bhaṭṭars during the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Gradually the succession line of these Uttama-Nambīs could no longer be

maintained and they lost power and authority. The Uttama-nambīs, although they were not associated with any matha emerged prominently during the Vijayanagar period. This was propably due to the royal patronage to them.

(c) **VAṆ SAṬAGŌPA JĪYAR** :- is associated with establishment of the Jīyar matha, which is later or known as the Ahōbilam matha. Vaṇ Saṭagōpa jīyar was one of the most influential Srī Vaiṣṇava Brāhamaṇas. A record dated 1509 refers to the gifts of a land in a village named Vaṇ Saṭagōpapuram evidently after his name [28]. He is said to have come from Mysore.

The Jīyar matha also known as the Jīyyaṅgār matha was an important organisation in the temple. The earliest reference to this matha was during the reign of Harihara II, when a certain Mullai Tiruvēṅkaṭa Jīyar became powerful and executed grant in the name of the rāya. Mullai Tiruvēṅkaṭa Jīyar is usually mentioned as the manager of the Ariśāṇālayan - nandavānam (flower garden).[29] He was succeeded by Emperumānār - Jīyar (1445-1493) who is referred to as the Kōyil-keḷvi, whose duty was to conduct the religious functions of the temple. He was the manager of Paṅkayachchelli-nandāvam[30] and was succeeded by Rāmānuja Jīyar, the successor to Rāmānuja Jīyar was Anusandhānam Tiruvēṅkaṭa Jīyar of the Tiruvēṅkaṭanāthan nandavānam (1504-20 A.D.) during the reign of Kṛṣṇadēvarāya's reign. In 1504 A.D. (266 T.T.), he contributed 2,000 panam for certain

offerings to be made to Śrī Veṅkateśa and Śrī Gōvindarāja and also during the festival of <u>Adhyayānōtsavam</u> and <u>Vaikāsi</u> and <u>Ānī</u> <u>Brahmōtsavam</u>. The one-fourth of donor's share would go the Śrīvaiṣṇavas signing the <u>Iyal</u> and remaining three-fourth was to go to the Ēkākī-Śrīvaiṣṇavas who managed the maṭha. 'Out of the sugiyan-padi offered, 7 sugiyan was to go to the Śrīvaiṣṇavas chanting the Iyal and 2 sugiyan to the Jīyar of Uḍaiyavar-<u>kōyil</u> and the remaining sugiyan was to be delivered to Tiruveṅkaṭanāthan - <u>maṭha</u>. What is significant is that, the offerings made to Rāmānuja's shrine was to be distributed among the Śrīvaiṣṇavas who sung the <u>prabhandham</u>. Hence this practice of giving the share to the <u>prabandha</u> singers shows the keenness on the part of these religious leaders to carve out a permanent place for them.

Anusandhānam was succeeded by <u>Kōyil-kēlvi</u> Rāmānuja Jīyar (Saka 1449)[31]. He was in turn succeeded by Vaḍa Tiruveṅkaṭa Jīyar of the <u>Pankayachchelli-nandavam</u> (1535 A.D.)[32]. During the same <u>Kōyil-kēlvi</u> Yatīrāj Jīyar succeeded him as the head of the <u>maṭha</u> till 1541. He was the disciple of Aḻagiyamāṇavaḷa Jīyar of Kāñcī just as Kandāḍai Rāmānujāyyaṅgār was and one of the powerful Śrīvaiṣṇava Brāhmaṇas Yatīrāj Jīyar passed down the leadership of the <u>maṭha</u> to Vānamāmalai Jīyar who occupies this post for six years (1541-1546 A.D.)

The leaders of this <u>maṭha</u> had aggregated their power and wealth through numerous donations. It seems, the donor's share went to the <u>Ēkākīśrīvaiṣṇavas</u> who managed the <u>maṭha</u>.

However, none of them could emerge as prominently Kandāḍai Rāmānuja āyyaṅgār.

(d) **TĀTĀCĀRYAS** :The family of Tātācāryas came from Karnāṭaka. They were extremely important and gained tremendous social support among the migrant warrior-chiefs, whose past affiliation to Vaiṣṇavism made them easily identity with these Tātācāryas who were themselves migrants.

The descendants of Pēria Tirumalai Nambi are generally known as Tātācāryas.[33] They became influential during the time of Vijayanagar. Lakshmī Kumāra Tātācārya was the guru of Veṅkaṭa I (1585-1614). There are not many inscriptional references to them in Tirupati. Whatever there are, they point towards enormous amount of money endowments and land grants by these Tātācāryas. The donor's share was always distributed freely amongst the pilgrims, which was unlike the tradition at Tirupati, where the 'bonafide' pilgrims were always sold the offerings.

The earliest epigraph mentioning the Tātācāryas is 1574[34] Here the Tātācārya was Ēṭṭūr-Kumāra Tirumalai Tātācārya. It is said that prefixes Eṭṭur and Tirumalai added to his name reveals his native place[35] There is an inscription at Tirupati by Ēṭṭūr Kumāra Tirumalai Tātācārya in 1583 A.D. during the reign of Veṅkaṭapatīrāya. He is referred as the son of Ayyāvayyaṅgār and the grandson of Tōḷappācārya, one of the Tirupati ācārya puruṣas. For the

celebration of Kaiśika-purāṇam festival, uri-aḍi festival, Friday tirumañjanam, Flower crown festival Arpaśi Brahmōtsavam and daily offerings for Śrī Veṅkaṭeśa in the temple at Tirupati Tirumalai, as his ubhaiyam, he granted four villages for the temple of Śrī Veṅkaṭeśa.[36]

In the Kāñcī epigraph, Kumāra Tātācārya is mentioned in connection with the sale of offerings from certain services. An inscription (479 of 1919) dated 1582, refers to him as the Śrī kārya Durantāra of the temple. Here one gets information about the festivals conducted in honour of the āḷvārs and ācāryas. The āḷvārs mentioned are deified and some of the ācāryas are Rāmānuja, Nāthamuni and Manavāḷa Mahāmuni. An agreement was drawn up by the treasurer (Śrī Baṇḍarāttār) of the temple and Tātāc.ārya with military commanders of the Vijayanagar kings for providing offerings, during the festivals. With the downfall of Vijayanagar empire, the Tātācāryas lost a considerable degree of royal patronage. Some of them migrated to Mysore, where the Vōdeyārs of Mysore adopted them as their spiritual preceptor.

An inscription at Mēlukōṭe[37] to Kumāra Tātācārya being honoured by Śrīraṅgarāya through the grant of Tirumalānagarī. The influence of Kumāra Tātācārya appears to be very powerful on the king as the latter issued a permanent charter of his own wishing to renew the grant which had become defunct, Kumāra Tātācārya was referred as

"the best among among the preceptors, the noble-minded, one who is well-versed in two vēdas (i.e. Vēdas, and Dravida-Prabandha?). the moon to the ocean the family ..... one who is an inhabitant of the illustrious Eṭṭūru, celebrated in the world was honoured in the presence of good people on the top of Śrutigīr". In 1574 A.D. an arrangement was made[38] between Śrīrangarāya, his son Rāmarāja-arasu, Parānkuśa-jīya, Vēnkaṭēśa-bhaṭa and all other ācārya-puruśas and Śrī Vaiṣṇavas regarding the recitation of Yatīrāja-Saptati. The fifty-two were asked to set up a stone charter Rāmānuja's shrine regarding the recitation. Yatīrāja - Saptati daily in front of God Nārāiṇswāmy and also on the occasion of annual birthdays after i.e. the recitation of the Divya-Prabandhas. This was composition of seventy verses in honour of Rāmānuja and was composed by Vēdānta Deśika. Parānkuśa-Jīyar was probably the sixth head of the Ahōbila-maṭha and the Tātācārya was Kumāra Tātācārya . (B.R. Gopal - Pg.35, Sri Rāmānuja in Karnāṭaka). In 1585 A.D., Kumāra Tātācārya was given a mudré (seal) in the presence of God Nārāiṇswāmy.[39] The above instances show that this Tātācārya had gained influence in the temple administration and was empowered by the rāya.

As is evident, Tātācāryas were one of the strongest Śrī Vaiṣṇava families, when the warrior class was constantly looking for ways and means to legitimize their rule, the Tātācāryas themselves being migrants were easily associated with the former. They created a socialbase for their own

advantage and overtook the temple authority. By becoming the spiritual preceptor of the political rulers, they got the much-required resources in the form of endowments which was essential for their sway over the temple affairs.

Apart from the above discussed four Śrī Vaiṣṇava Brāhmaṇas, there were others also who emerged in a significant way. One such person was Saṭakōpadāsar Narasiṃharāya - Mudalīyār in 1475 A.D. He constructed a temple at Tirupati and installed an image of Raghunātham in 1482 A.D.[40]. Here it may be noted that Mudalīyār was a term attributed to non-Brāhmaṇa Śrī Vaiṣṇava preceptor. Narasiṃharāya Mudalīyār even had a large following. He paid 200 paṇam as a capital, into the Tirumaṅgai - Āḷvār's temple treasury for the purpose of holy bath (tirumañjanam). Particularly important is the arrangement made for bringing Śrī Gōvindarāja to the temple of Tirumaṅgaiyāḷvār during the celebration of the latter's birthday.[41] 200 narpaṇam was deposited by him for the purpose of providing an offering for Rāmānuja on the occasion of his annual birth star[42] There was a succession of disciples of Mudalīyār. The arrangement was to be functional not only thoughout the succession of disciples of Kandāḍai Rāmānujāyyaṅgār but also through the lineage of Saṭ.akōpadāsar Narasiṃharāya Mudaliyār "till the lasting of the moon and the sun".

At Mēlukōṭe, the fifty two ayyās or the Śrīvaiṣṇava Brāhmaṇa figure prominently. All the inscriptional records required the attestation of the fifty-two. Certain festivals

and offerings were only to be made by the fifty-two only. They were the members of the Vēdantī Rāmānuja - jīyas matha and controlled the resources from the large number of endowments made to this matha. They were granted the dēsāntri mudré (real) by Nārayanadēva - Mahā - arasu, a chieftain of Acutayarāya mahārāya. Provisions were made for this in the treasury of the temple for money grant, jewels and clothing. A piece of land (Natu - Nadu?) was also granted for maintaining Hanumanta - mudré. (The fifty - two were Rāmānuja's innovation). They were authorised to affix their signature, grant their consent and employ their own men whose wages were to be paid from the temple treasury. They were also authorisged to put their seal along with the royal seal and the Rāmānuja seal.[43] During the reign of Vēnkatapatirāya, they seem to have lost considerable importance to Tātācāryas.

Hence, a milieu emerges, in which there are many contestents for economic resources in power. In the temples, these Śrī Vaisnava families coexisted. Although there seems to be no epigraphical evidence alluding to any kind of dispute, yet there was an underlying feeling of contempt for each other. The tension was implicit in the system, where each of them made enormous donations to the deity, instituted new festivals and constructed new shrines of the ālvārs and ācāryas to prove their lineage and devotion to them. All these ācārya pur.uś.as were extremely competent in theological debates and tried to marginalise the other by

gaining maximum royal support. The emergence of new classes, who were seeking strong basis for their presence turned to the already existing temples and most importantly the _mathas_ and gained 'honour' through endowments. The Śrī Vaiṣṇava leaders utilized this situation to optimum advantage by becoming the spiritual preceptors of these rulers and chieftains. The patronage that came from a multitude of donors, irrespective of their caste greatly enhanced the social base of their _matha_ organization. This formed a strong foundation for the split to take place which finally polarized into two sects - the _Vaḍagalais_ and the _Teṅgalais_ in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.

While on one hand, Śrī Vaiṣṇavism externally became socially broad by encouraging numerous donations from all kinds of people, on the other, it also broadened the services to the temple by initiating the people placed low in Varṇāśramadharma in to administrative affairs. At Śrīraṅgam, there were _Kaikkōḷār_ Mudalīyār or leaders of the _Kaikōḷārs_ who performed the ritually pregnant tasks of breaking the coconut. At Tirupati Kandāḍai Rāmānuja Āyyaṅgār being an '_aśāttāda parama ēkāṅgi_' had for his disciples the _Sāttāda_ Śrī Vaiṣṇavas. These non brāhmaṇas were also employed in great number at Śrīraṅgam. Even Narasiṃha Mudaliyār as the name indicates was a non-brāhmaṇa Śrī Vaiṣṇava preceptor. Hence an effort was definitely made towards incorporating members belonging to the lower caste. But, this doesnot seem to have continued for a very long

time. As we proceed, inscriptional evidences regarding the Sāttāda - Ēkāṅgīs seem to be diminishing in number. Although in Kandāḍais time the donor share was invariably distributed amongst them, but later on, they donot figure at all. No doubt they had the privelege of carrying the offerings from Rāmānuja Kūṭams to the main shrine, but later on this privelage no longer sums to have been associated with them. At Śrī Raṅganātha Svāmī's shrine they were reduced to the services in flower gardens only. The Tirupati inscriptions too do not have any inscriptions of Narasiṃha Mudaliyārs successors after Kriṣṇadēvārāya's time.

No doubt Śrī Vaṣṇavism had a near egalitarian philosophy but that was not followed in practice. When Rāmānuja created a band of Sāttāda servants, he was careful not to allot them responsibilities concerning the garbhagriha. Kandāḍai Rāmānujāyyaṅgār had a large band of brāhmaṇa disciples, but never chose any one of them to be his successor of Rāmānujakūtam. His choice ultimately fell on a staunch brāhmaṇa Kandāḍai Mādhavāyyaṅgār. Besides the Sāttāda - Ēkāṅgīs were mainly engaged in activities in the flower gardens. Very few instences seem to be mentioning them in partaking in ritual activities. This was in keeping with the 'Code of Uḍaiyar' where the duties of sāttādamundālīs were:

> Decorating with flowers the tiru mandapas during festivals and the Aḷagiyamaṇavāḷ.an tirumaṇḍapa daily; making garlands and offering them for the starting of procession;

raining flowers (on special occasions;)
proceeding in two rows holding ceasors, two
folded cloths, eight gold torches and twenty
silver tarches and waving two pieces of cloth;
forming a rear batch, with hands folded,
behind the row by waists reciting the last two
lines of each stanza; bearing the Rāmānuja
sword and acting as the bodyguard of the
Jīyars and the Srīvaiṣṇavas".

There was infact, no attempt to uplift the Sāttādas
from theirn low varṇa status. Hence they were made ēkāṅgīs,
that is an ascetic, to be at par with the Srī Vaiṣṇava
ascetics. Hence caste barriers were definitely maintained
strictly and special category was created outside the varṇa
system to place them at the level of brāhmaṇas. There was an
illusion of equality.

The tradition maintains that Teṅkaḷais because of their
stress on the importance of Divyaprabandham are more
flexible and less orthodox than the Vaḍagalis. The merchant
and weaver class appeared to have belong to the Teṅkaḷais
sect. But this is not correct. Paul Younger[44] relates an
interesting eye - witness account of the Adhayāyanōstava
festival in Srīraṅgam in the twentieth century.

The Adhayānōtsava festival is the longest festival and
attracts a large number of crowd. It mainly concerns with
the recital of the Nalayīra Divya Prabandham of the Tamil
ālvārs. In addition to the ālvārs the ācāryās viz,
Tirukkachinambi, Rāmānuja, Kūrattālvān and Pillai Lokacārya
are brought out of shrines and arranged in particular manner
with the images of the other ālvārs. What is significant in

this festival is the "importance of the hundreds of Brāhmaṇas who serve the deity, the primacy of the Teṅkaḷai half of the brāhmaṇa company which alone can give "honours" in this temple, and special primacy of certain priestly lienages which claim the they were given special tasks by Rāmnuja and therefore the first to receive the honours, to receive food or to lead any procession with the image."[45] There is an arena, within which the Śrī Vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇas sit infront of the images of the <u>ālvārs</u> and <u>ācāryas</u> giving an appearance of a 'divine court' of which the brāhmaṇas form a part, setting them aside from the worshippers. The priest after offering water and food to the deity and <u>ālvārs</u> and <u>ācāryas</u> calls out the name of the various priestly families, whose representatives come and take the <u>prasādam</u>. After the recitation is over a large feast is held, in which only brāhmaṇas can take part. There seems to be no place for the non-brāhmaṇas. This twenteieth century account must be having its antecedents in the past, although, one has not come across any evidences in this connection.

No Śrī Vaiṣṇava <u>ācārya</u> or the leader of the <u>matha</u> has ever been a non-brāhmaṇa. This was never the case. The <u>Sāttāda</u> – <u>ēkāṅgīs</u> hardly form the class of donars. They always under the wing of the brāhmaṇas. Hence a queston arises, why was there a contridiction in Śrī Vaiṣṇava temples, when on one hand donations irrespective of caste were encouraged and on the other the non-brāhmaṇas were marginalized in the temple administration? The answer lies

in the complex socio economic conditions during the Vijayanagar times. As repeatedly mentioned the warrior kings needed legitimacy from the tempels, as they did not have a <u>kśatriya</u> lineage. Sectarian leaders conferred 'honours' on them and received in turn numerous donations which made them economically able to gift large amounts to the temple for various ritual purposes. In turn they got the donors share which was mainly appropriated for themselves and their <u>matha</u>. They also got 'honour' from the temple which consolodated their influenced within and outside the institution. Since the Śrī Vaiṣṇava leaders were greatly dependent on the patronage from an elitist non - brāhmanical class hence to them it was essential to potray an egalitarian ideology which was all - embracing. Perhaps one of the reasons for deification of the <u>ālvārs</u> in the temple after Rāmānuja was that a facade of equality was maintained to please the donars. Thefore the sectarian leaders themselves followed a duel policy. On one hand, they portrayed themselves as liberal to gain patronage, but on the other hand they maintained staunch brāhmanical organisation within the temple, because the patron wanted it for seeking legitimacy of his existence. In the case of merchants and weavers, due to their powerful resource base they contributed generously to the sectarian leaders. These murchants and weavers themselves belonging not to a very high caste aspired to be placed at par with the rest of the royal population. They, therefore, in their own way were seaking a strong brāhmanical backing.

All this contributed to an elitist elements in Śrī Vaiṣṇavism which gradually became orthodox and closed as reflected in the communities of <u>Teṅgalais</u> and <u>Vaḍakalais</u>.

NOTES

1. The various discussions with Dr. K.K.A. Venkatachari reveals that there is no appropriate translation for the word matha. In this context, it doesnot imply monasticism as propounded by Buddhism. Henceforth the word matha will be used only.

2. N. Jagadeesan - History of Śrī Vaiṣnavism in the Tamil Country (Post Rāmānuja), Koodal Publishers - 1977., Madurai page 148

3. According to Nilakanta Sastri, these Mathas were the offspring of ancient caves in which the ascetics stayed. These cases were called guhāis. K.A. Nilakanta Sastri: Development of Religion in South - India, First Edition, Orient Longman , p.117. Also see N. Jagadesan - Op. Cit., page 147 - 153.

4. TTDI, Vol. I, No.8 (18 T.T.).

5. Ibid 54 T.T., 434 T.T., 676 T.T. and 354 T.T.

6. V. Rangachari - "The successors of Rāmānuja and the growth of sectarianism in Śrī Vaiṣnavism" (1138-1310)", Journal of Bombay Branch of Royal Asiatic Society 24 (1915-16): Page.107-08.

7. Ibid., page 78.

8. See Chapter 2.

9. SII Vol.XXIV, No.246.

10. Arjun Appadorai - "Kings, Sects and Temples in South India, 1350-1700 A.D." in Burton Stein (ed.) South Indian Temples, Vikas, New Delhi, 1978. Pg. 51, Appadorai quotes Robert Lingat that "Although the intervention of the king in judicial matters may be decisive, it brings no new element to interpretation. In setting disputes between his subjects, the king merely does his duty, which is to secure order and peace in realm. This is the effect of an administrator and not a legislator. "[Robert Lingat, The Classical Law of India, Delhi 1973, p.229, fn.54]. Acording to Appadorai, such occurrence of royal arbitration is a kind of 'context-sensitivity which is widespread in various aspect of Indian culture. "As in the validity of royal commands, so also in the machinery of making

and enforcing such decisions, context-sensitivity was the rule. In much of the inscriptional evidence describing cases of royal arbitration, the "staff" that makes and carries out the decision is complex and contextually variable, resting of local individuals and corporate individuals and corporate groups, forming a single, unique, interlocking systems, linking the king, his agents, local assemblies, sectarian groups and leaders, temple functionaries, and in some cases, local worshippers. There was thus no single, centralized, permanent bureaucratic organization, but a temporary affiliation of local groups, authoritatively constituted by, or in the name of, the king and empowered to make public decisions on specific matters." (Page 51).

11. Ibid., page. 53-55.

12. Tiruppaṇippiḷḷai was an officer of Public works.

13. <u>TTDI</u>, <u>Vol.I</u>, No.492 T.T.

14. Ibid., 493 T.T., 494 T.T.

15. Ibid., 494 T.T.

16. Ibid., 494 T.T.

17. Ibid., 103 - A - T.T., 57, A - T.T., 43 T.T.

18. Ibid., 61 T.T.

19. Ibid., 295 G.T.

20. TKT Vīrāraghavachāry - <u>History</u> <u>of</u> <u>Tirupati</u>, Volume II, pg.481.

21. Ibid., Pg.485.

22. Śrīraṅgam Inscriptions Volume XXIV, No.343.

23. <u>Kōil Oluqu</u> also refers to the presence of Kandāḍai Rāmānuja Āyyāṅgar.

24. Śrīraṅgam Inscriptions, No.346.

25. TKT Vīrarāghavacharī, Op. Cit., p.416 - 425.

26. TTDI - Vol.I., 133 T.T.

27. Ibid., 624 T.T.

28. 411 of 1919

29. _TTDI_, Vol.I, No.57 T.T.

30. Ibid., No.106 T.T., 48 T.T., 369 T.T.

31. _TTDI_, _Vol.III_, No.598 T.T.

32. Ibid., No.472 T.T.

33. N. Jagadeesan, Op. Cit., Page. 81.

34. 323 of 1919.

35. K.V. Raman - _Sri Varadarājasvāmī Temple Kāñchī. A study of its History, Art and Architecture_ Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1975, Page. 83.

36. _TTDI_, Vol.VI, Part I, No.671, T.T.

37. _Epigraphia Carnatica_, B.L. Rice (Ed.)

38. Ibid., No.138. 39. Ibid., No.140.

40. _TTDI_, Vol.II, No.310 G.T.

41. _TTDI_, Vol.III, No.411, G.T.

42. Ibid., No.55 G.T.

43. _Epigraphia Carnatica_, Vol.III, Op. Cit., No.130.

44. Paul Younger, "Singing the Tamil hymn book in the Tradition of Ramanuja : The Adhayayanotsava festival at Srirangam" in _George. W. Spencer (Ed.)_, Page.169-201.

45. Ibid., Page.172.

CONCLUSION

Today Śrī Vaiṣṇavism is divided into two sects - Vaḍagalāi, the northern School and Teṅgalāi - the Southern school which have themselves ossified into sub-castes. They are intolerant towards each other and are extremely strict about the observation of the conventions and customs. The schism which is now obvious no doubt had its antecedents in the past. Through many stages, Śrī Vaiṣṇavism evolved and at every evolutionary stage, some characteristics were modified, some were maintained and some were completely lost. It is these various stages that become very important for historical analysis in order to comprehend the logic behind the emergence of a strong community consciousness.

Sectarianism as a concept underlines all religious theory and ideology. Hence, the awareness of Viṣṇu as the supreme deity was always present right from the time of the ālvārs. Even Rāmānuja while propounding the Viśiṣṭadvaitic philosophy was trying to consolidate the Vaiṣṇava sect. This form of sectarianism further led to sub-sectarianism- that is Vaḍagalāis and Teṅgalāis which traced their lineage to different preceptors. Hence sectarianism on one level was regarding divinity and on the other was concentrated on the concept of the guru. Particularly, in the post-Rāmānuja period, this concept of guru was so vital that the various ālvārs and ācāryas were deified and worshipped and their

birthdays were celebrated with great fervour and in a grand manner. Hence the status of divinity was attributed to them.

Related to the importance of a preceptor was a very important institutional development within the temples. The mathas housed the various Śrī Vaiṣṇava leaders. They became the focus for power and economic control. Numerous donations were made to them and the matha leaders were themselves very important donors. Under their supervision, there were a number of temple servants. Comprising of brāhmaṇas and non-brāhmaṇas. The mathādhīpati (mādāipati in inscriptions) was on many occasions the spiritual preceptor of the Vijayanagar rulers and also took interest in the administrative affairs. These sectarian leaders with a large band of disciples formed separate schools of thought which created schismatic tendencies within the religion.

A complicated system of relationship developed within the matha hierarchy, between the matha and the political leaders, between matha and temple organisation, between matha and other social classes like the merchants, weavers and traders. In such a structure the symbols of power and authority manifested in terms of rituals and their meticulous performance.

The court paraphernalia (upacāra) was similar to the one in the temple (dēva upacāra). The ceremonial and ritual formalities performed for the deity were

duplicated in the royal household. The word _kōyil_ is used as a temple - palace both for the deity and the ruler.

The celebration of _Mahānavamī_ festival within the walled city of Vijayanagar was to ascertain the kingship through the usage of divine symbols of _Brahmōtsavam_. According to Paes, the rituals were conducted in the '_House of Victor_' and "_The King's Audience Hall_". These two structures were constructed by Kṛṣṇadēvarāya in 1513 A.D. after his victory over the Gajapati King of Orissa. The King sat on his throne and received gifts and homage from the warrior-chiefs. Sometimes the idol (which is not recognised) was placed on the throne and the king sat on the foot. Together, they went out for a processional celebration. At times the idol was placed in the royal chamber and the king alongwith the brāhmaṇa priest performed numerous rituals. Apart from this, entertainment and fireworks were some of the highlights of the festival. The presence of the deity in the festival and the treatment of a king as 'sacred' shows that attributes of divinity were extremely vital as a legitimizing force.

The _matha_ leaders were instrumental in such a relationship and were the moral and religious beacons for these kings. Even the _matha_ paraphernalia was similar to the royal paraphernalia and each _mathādhīpati_ behaved like 'little kings' themselves. The entire religio-socio-political structure was underlined with the concept of

authority and subservience.

Against such a background where hierarchy and stratification were the basis of organisation, any question of equality was impossible to arise. Rāmānuja by involving non-brāhmaṇas in the temple affairs broadened the social base of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. But, there was no social revolution, where the varṇa system was completely done away with. In no way were the non-brāhmaṇas attached to any kind of priestly duties. In fact even the elite amongst the non-brāhmaṇas could take part in the ritual only symbolically. No political ruler is shown to perform any priestly functions. It was the exclusive prerogative of the brāhmanical order. Perhaps the social organisation during that period did not permit such a drastic change. The Varṇa system formed an integral part of the theoretical basis of society and it was unthinkable for Rāmānuja and other Śrī Vaiṣṇava leaders to do away with it completely. There are no instances when an entire jātī moved up the varṇa ladder. There was a constant struggle no doubt to have a high social status which would give recognition to economic power. Therefore, not only amongst the brāhmaṇas, but amongst the non-brāhmaṇas also the varṇa system had a great degree of acceptability and they were all reluctant to do away with it. Hence, it becomes essential to understand the social structure during the Vijayanagar periods, when the brāhmanical order was firmly entrenched and gave strong support to the ruling power. The institution of temples

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became very important. Besides being the centre for devotion (bhakti), it was a part of larger social, economic and cultural processes, it performed the function of a local government body. The ideological content of the Śrī Vaiṣṇava temples with a strong theology and near egalitarian outlook, alongwith the concept of Saguṇa Brāhman, became a binding force amongst the people and involved them in some way or the other in these functions. Perhaps one can understand all this clearly with regard to the developments in the Śaiva religion and Śaiva temples which need to be explored at the level of comparative religious analysis.

It is clear that although a symbiotic relationship existed between the matha and the political rulers, the former could not survive without the latter's patronage. The shift in the patronage during many instances resulted in the decline of these structures, which many times gave place to the new ones or was revived once it received the patronage.

Thus to understand the history of any religious sect, it is very essential to view it from outside and within. Care should be taken not to apply the twentieth century world view to the fourteenth century one - a trap which most of us are likely to fall into.

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